Contemporary British Literary Culture, Higher Education, and the
Diversity Scandal

by

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Abstract

Sociologists have demonstrated that neoliberal British education policies reproduce cultural and racial homogeneity in creative industries workforces. These policies have made fine art and design programs key pathways to work in the creative economy. Yet escalating tuition and the reliance on unpaid internships to gain course credit have meant that students are increasingly drawn from the more affluent socio-economic communities – often predominantly white. The impact on contemporary British literature, particularly writing by minoritized authors, has been remarkable. Despite efforts to increase diversity in the literary book trades, the vast majority of publishing professionals are white, independently wealthy graduates of elite universities. Scholars have said little about how the literary field responds to, manifests, and perpetuates this escalating – and racialized – inequality, whose ramifications are evident in everything from Brexit to the emboldening of the anti-immigrant alt-right movement. My research takes up this task. I discuss how neoliberal education policy has privileged a relatively homogenous creative class, whose hegemony resonates across literary production and literature itself. I analyze responses to this class' control over the literary sphere in chapters studying the reading charity BookTrust, the *decibel* program's prizing of Hari Kunzru's 2005 novel *Transmission*, and Spread the Word's Complete Works Scheme for poets of colour.

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Introduction:

Racialized Access to British Education and Contemporary Literary Economies in the UK

General Overview

This dissertation is not a work of cultural sociology. Rather, it is a set of readings of particular diversity initiatives that have been designed to redress the whiteness of contemporary British literary publishing and specific works emerging from or promoted as part of these initiatives. The purpose of this study is to provide information that will lead to a better understanding of the literary writing that authors are producing within the context of these initiatives. This dissertation is the first study of how contemporary British literature has been shaped by, within, and against the rise of the neoliberal university – in which job training for work in the globalized economy has become a dominant priority, student interest in seeking higher education credentials is encouraged from early ages, and students are increasingly likely to emerge with substantial debt and in search of lucrative employment.[1] One of the core emphases of this dissertation is that a current lack of diversity in the British literary industry reflects the dramatic failure of neoliberal British education policies to "widen participation" in arts and cultural

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[1] Since Larry L. Leslie and Sheila Slaughter's ground-breaking *Academic Capitalism* (1997), innumerable studies which analyze and object to the corporate takeover of universities have been published. Especially significant to my thinking on the impacts of the marketization and commodification of British higher education have been Roger Brown with Helen Carasso's *Everything For Sale?*, and Joyce E. Canaan and Wesley Shumar's edited collection, *Structure and Agency in the Neoliberal University*.

education and work as promised. Britain's New Labour government was in office under Prime Minister Tony Blair from 1997-2010. Outlined in *The Future of Higher Education* (DfES, chapter 6), New Labour's policy of widening participation was introduced by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and continues now under Department for Education (DfE) oversight (see "Statistics: widening participation"). Sociologists have demonstrated that features of this and other policies, despite being presented as able to pull swathes of aspiring students from minoritized racial, ethnic and faith communities into university and, through this, into cultural work, have worked to reproduce cultural and racial homogeneity in creative-industries workforces. As Daniel Ashton and Caitriona Noonan's edited collection *Cultural Work and Higher Education* discusses, these policies have since the early 2000s placed unprecedented importance on fine art and design programs as pathways for any individual to work in the UK's burgeoning arts and cultural sectors. However, a number of obstacles have prevented such pathways from developing. Tuition fees were introduced in the UK in 1998 and calculated based on a family income. These fees were increased to a cap of £3,000 in England and Northern Ireland in 2006-2007 and in Wales in 2007-2008. The Browne Review of 2010 rose the cap to £9,000 per year. Escalating university tuition is now capped at £9,250 per year in most countries in the UK.[2] Furthermore, the reliance on unpaid internships as a primary means for gaining course credit has meant that students in creative arts and design programs are increasingly drawn from the more affluent socio-economic communities –

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[2] There is some variance to the capped fee currently in place, notably the lack of fees for Scotland and EU residents studying in Scotland.

often predominantly white.[3]

The impact on contemporary British literature, particularly writing by minoritized authors, has been remarkable. Despite efforts to increase diversity in the literary book trades, recent estimates are that between only 8 and 10 per cent[4] of publishing employees are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic – or "BAME" – backgrounds (Flood, "90% white").[5] While these ratios are not radically disproportionate to the racial demographics of Britain nationally,[6] they are to those of London – the hub of UK publishing with many firms, agencies and media outlets that are eager to promote marketable authors. According to the most recent census, taken in 2011, of London's 8,173,941 people, only 59.7 per cent identified themselves as "White" (Office for National Statistics).

The British literary industry's current lack of cultural diversity persists despite the important strides which have been made in postwar black and Asian British publishing.

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[3] In addition to the contributions of David Lee and Kate Oakley to *Cultural Work and Higher Education*, on the whiteness of fine arts and design student demographics see: Mark Banks, *Creative Justice: Cultural Industries, Work and Inequality*, Ch. 4; Mark Banks and Kate Oakley, "The Dance Goes on Forever"; Penny Jane Burke and Jackie McManus, "Art for a few"; Caitriona Noonan, "Constructing Creativities"; and Kate Oakley and Dave O'Brien, "Learning to Labour Unequally."

[4] Note that the *Writing the Future* report or Alison Flood's article that I cite in this sentence do not specify whether the statistics they cite about the diversity of publishing employees include authors.

[5] The term "BAME" is used in common parlance in the UK to refer to people from these backgrounds. An example of its commodification in the literary field is the so-called "BAME angle" in marketing strategies, which is scrutinized in the recent *Writing the Future* report on the diversity of the British publishing industry. Authors from minoritized communities argue that when publishers identify them as "BAME," this lumps them into a monolithic group signifying to creative elites and consumers a particular set of token assumptions about them and their works, cultures and heritages.

[6] 85.3 per cent of England's population, or 53,012,456 people, identified as "White" on the most recent census, with the remaining people identifying as a member of an "Ethnic Group" (Office for National Statistics). In terms of geography, the further away from London and its surrounding area, the BAME populations of regions, cities and towns increasingly lessens (Office for National Statistics).

According to Kadija Sesay, this genealogy can be directly traced to the SS *Empire Windrush*'s landing at the Port of Tilbury on 22 June 1948: "This historical event marked a change in British history that also changed the direction of black publishing. The influx of these peoples from the Caribbean brought about the need and desire from a new community of people to have access to news and information that reflected their own interests and needs" (344). The meeting of this demand is reflected in the number of newspapers such as *The Jamaican Gleaner* and *Caribbean News* that began to be published by newly arrived immigrants shortly thereafter. In the book publishing field, the first press to be established by postwar Caribbean migrants to Britain was New Beacon Books, instantiated by John La Rose and Sarah White in 1966. 1967 saw the founding of Allison & Busby, another independent press specializing in black British writing, and throughout the 1970s more presses followed in their tracks. In the 1980s more firms opened, such as Peepal Tree Press, leading up to publishing in the 1990s by firms such as the X Press, which I detail in chapter two.[7]

Despite efforts like these, the mainstream of the contemporary British literary industry does not reflect the diversity of its host city. I argue that a factor here is its reliance on universities as suppliers of employees. As revealed in *Writing the Future: Black and Asian Authors and Publishers in the UK Market Place*, a recent report examining the diversity of the literary industry which I discuss at length in chapter one, the vast majority of publishing professionals are white, independently wealthy graduates of elite universities. This correlates with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's

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[7] See also Alison Donnell, *Companion to Contemporary Black British Culture*; and R. Victoria Arana and Lauri Ramey, editors, *Black British Writing*.

(DCMS) 2014 report, *Creative Industries: Focus on Employment*, which states that 68.7

per cent of UK book publishing workers held some form of higher education

qualifications, with 60.5 per cent of this workforce holding university-degree or

equivalent qualifications (15). In *Writing the Future*, we read that only about 11 per cent

of Britain's university-educated milieu are from BAME backgrounds (Kean, "Could do

better" 23).

University degrees, I thus argue, function as a conduit to professionalization that

has helped to render literary production an increasingly exclusive set of practices. In turn,

the prevalence of university degrees functioning as a gatekeeper for working in the

literary industry constrains the work of writers and publishing workers from minoritized

racial, ethnic and faith communities in the UK. This reproduces the historical fact of the

connection between cultural prestige, wealth and literary production, with race

functioning as a differential which shapes the field. The field excludes people without the

requisite capital, people who are members of disproportionately racialized communities.

Because the field defines the terms of inclusion, access is more often granted to certain

well-trained non-white writers and publishing workers who offer a marketable and

therefore acceptable sheen of difference. Broadly speaking, these writers and publishing

workers are restricted from participating in the literary field in a relatively free way, one

that is devoid of the racializing constraints which are rarely – if ever – comparably

applied to the work of white writers and publishing workers.

Yet it should be noted from the outset that the purpose of this dissertation is not

simply to corroborate accounts of a lack of diversity in the British literary field. Nor is

the purpose of this study to reproduce a hegemonic industry perspective that increasing

diversity throughout the literary field, from the realms of authorship to the upper-tiers of publishing company management, will lead to a better, more representative form of literary culture. To do these things would assume the broad compatibility of, on the one hand, the contemporary, increasingly corporatized literary production establishment, and, on the other hand, British social cohesion across classed and racialized boundaries. This compatibility is hardly achievable. One of the main reasons for this is the manner in which the industrialized processes of contemporary literary publishing work to diminish the force of a counterhegemonic or decolonial message that may be present in a given literary work by a writer from a minoritized community. The best way to understand contemporary British literary production is therefore by querying the impacts that corporatization, commodification, and mainstreaming have on racialized writers – and how the industry uses ideas about race as a way to market to certain niches and to fashion itself as a proliferator of liberal-cosmopolitan values. Neoliberal British education policies – policies tending to transfer the burden of responsibility for paying for education onto students and their families – have played an integral part in reproducing the racial stratification in the literary industry which is often at the root of such impacts.

These changes did not start with New Labour. Some clarification on postwar educational reformation will be useful here. One thing to note is that we can't truly think of UK higher education as "private" because public subsidy still undergirds the creation of student places and the government loans that students take out to go to university. I agree with Nick Foskett, and Roger Brown with Helen Carasso who, themselves each following Julian Le Grand, argue that it is best to understand UK higher education in quasi-market terms. This is because some private capital and investment supports higher

education; the supply model has been transformed to function as a service provider meeting demand; yet "the hand of government provides significant guidance and influence on how the market operates" (Foskett 30).

Margaret Thatcher's conservative fiscal policies, which drove the marketization of UK higher education, were informed by thinkers such as Friedrich von Hayek, Gary Becker, and Milton Friedman, who argued for "the market as an effective mechanism for the 'management' of the education sector" (Foskett 29). They posited that markets driven by consumer choice would create the competition between providers necessary for them to continuously improve the quality and price of services and products offered (29). Foskett writes:

> Market mechanisms, therefore, were seen to stimulate quality improvements, raise standards of achievement and also enhance the libertarian values of 'choice.' And in addition, competition should drive down unit costs, which should enable governments to grow the education sector without a proportional increase in public expenditure. (29)

Even by the mid-1980s only 60 universities existed in the UK, and participation rates were only about 6 per cent. To combat this, toward the end of the 1980s and in the 1990s "enhanced marketisation emerged through a number of policy and statutory changes" (Foskett 29). The results have been the "competition for resources among universities," the cost-sharing between the government and the student, and the "concept of a customer-provider relationship" – all "enshrined" in the 2009 Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (DBIS) policy document *Higher Ambitions; The Future of Universities in a Knowledge Economy* (Foskett 29). By the mid-2000s, the number of UK higher education

institutions had risen to 140 (which included both universities and university colleges), and undergraduate participation rates were at 42 per cent (Foskett 25).

As I write this in 2019, participation rates for higher education in the UK have reached their highest ever. One of the core reasons for this is that in 2016 the government lifted caps on student enrolment, whereas previously there were limits on the number of student spaces available at each university. Yet other changes have ensured that these spaces remain inaccessible to people unable to pay high tuitions or take on significant debt burdens. These include changes to the student loan system, such as introducing a "grad tax" for university graduates earning over £25,000, and the dropping of the old bursary system, changes which increase opportunities to take on personal debt in order to pay. There is rhetorical emphasis on openness and increasing access by making more spots available, but inattention to raced and classed disparities structuring whether one can afford university and meet requirements for admission.

Changes to the higher education system have privileged a relatively homogenous creative class, whose hegemony resonates across literary production and literature itself. Compulsory and higher British education are the sites that construct and educate members of this class, and the continued marginalization of people from BAME backgrounds in these formative institutional spaces makes it exceedingly difficult for some people to enter the literary industry – let alone to even aspire to enter this industry by firstly identifying with how literary culture works to understand racialized British politics of identity.

One of the broader concerns throughout this study is how and why reservation over the constraints that are placed on BAME authors and publishing workers are

expressed and circulated in literary culture. I consider these lines of flight from the restrictions that are placed on literary production overall as a result of the homogenous creative class' domineering control. These lines of flight are evident in educational, economic, and cultural policy documents; in surveys and reports written by industry practitioners; and in literary works emerging from within this milieu. I present case studies of specific diversity initiatives developed by corporate publishing firms and state-funded literary organizations. I interpret such initiatives as indicative of a branded response to the intersecting pressures of general industry contraction and a scandal over a lack of diversity in the literary industry – a scandal that some people in the field hope will prove lucrative. Both of these pressures have been of growing and increasingly unavoidable significance to British publishers over the past two decades.

Contemporary British Literary Production

Racialized and classed disparities within the literary field have been exacerbated by neoliberal cuts to state spending that were meant to repair the stagnating global economy. Following Giovanni Arrighi and David Harvey, I argue that neoliberal modes of production became preferred in the early 1970s as a means of staving off overproduction and stock pileups via small-batch, "just-in-time" processes carried out in geographically disparate production zones. An attendant attack on social spending, presented as another cost-saving measure, was a key part of an effort to renew the economic and political power of wealthy elites. As Thomas Piketty has shown, the result has been a rapidly increasing – and racialized – global income inequality.

Meanwhile, prioritizing the creative industries has been hailed as a strategy for revitalizing urban centres imperilled by post-industrial decline. From the 1980s on, British governmental policies have increasingly emphasized the arts as an urban regeneration force and growth-sector for employment particularly in response to the degeneration of manufacturing. Arts Council England's (ACE) 2003-2008 *decibel* program, designed to make the arts more inclusive, is just one initiative in a long line of agendas to make capital of culture in Britain: from policy documents like *The Economic Importance of the Arts in Britain* (1988, Policy Studies Institute) and *Culture as Commodity?* (1995, Policy Studies Institute), to Tony Blair's 1998 formation of the Creative Industries Task Force. These agendas have included promises to incorporate and manage an increasingly diverse population of cultural producers and consumers. Many of them stress the importance of having a university degree for entering a cultural field (see Oakley and O'Brien).

Toward this end, my research accords with what Mark Banks has recently suggested in *Creative Justice: Cultural Industries, Work and Inequality*.[8] The current lack of creative-industries diversity reflects a further entrenchment of a longstanding association between the advantages afforded to members of an elite sociolect and the overseeing of British cultural development. While postwar art schools facilitated social mobility for *some* members of hitherto uneducated class-fractions, Banks argues that the "popular wisdom" (96) that access to artistic production dramatically increased during the "long boom" of cultural capitalism (1945 to the early 1970s) is not wholly accurate.

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[8] There is an expansive body of scholarship on the contours of contemporary cultural production. See for example David Hesmondhalgh, *The Cultural Industries*; Stephanie Taylor and Karen Littleton, *Contemporary Identities of Creativity and Cultural Work*.

On the one hand, more working-class *men* began occupying cultural jobs, and more "ordinary" male and female characters began appearing in the narratives of cultural products (97). On the other hand, employment statistics from this time show that working-class practitioners often held peripheral, "low-paid and unglamorous" roles, with the decision-making rung remaining a privileged haunt (97). Furthermore, access to cultural work among women and members of ethnic minority groups was very low during this period (98-102). Interestingly, that an increase of proletarian authors and stars *was* publicly registered – there are many stories celebrating the working-class roots of David Bowie, Judy Dench and the like – might have uncannily justified the myth of inclusiveness by functioning as a distraction. As Banks writes: "behind the scenes, in management, in high art fields, as well as in the routine structures of cultural work, many of the long-established class inequalities remained intact" (97).

Fast forward to the creative economy, and we see how the scandal over a lack of diversity is a comparable symptom of broadly sweeping political and economic transformations; despite Blairite multicultural ideology, these transformations have resulted in a further perpetuation of racial disparities in the UK. According to Banks, in what he calls the "creative-economy context," 1997 to the present, or the New Labour and post-New Labour years, the popularity of debates about the lack of diversity in the cultural and creative industries is a unique effect of post-Global Financial Crisis austerity and growth in critical research, which have together worked to make the public more aware of the social inequalities which have always plagued the arts (106-110). It is simply that, contrary to affirmative accounts of creative-economy development, neoliberal economic downturn has urged more investigative journalism and research into

the sociological reasons for industry whiteness. This dissertation explores the degree to which literary firms and individual authors have begun to shape their products in attempts to forge a posture of appeasement in response to this public outcry. I analyze how the authors being promoted by a surge of specifically BAME literary festivals, prizes, and promotional campaigns are becoming more visible because corporate publishers and state-funded literature organizations are working together to expand their markets by branding their own development of racialized market niches as community-minded activism and fixes to creative-industries whiteness.

Indeed, what is usually presented as open and free access to education and work in the creative industries is actually highly classed and racialized, and ongoing socio-economic inequality has a galvanizing impact on the kinds of representation in and identification with culture afforded to people from marginalized communities (see Banks, *Creative Justice*, chapter 4; Lee). While Creative Skillset, in *The Creative Media Workforce Survey 2014*, has boasted that 78 per cent of its "world-leading" workforce is university educated, with 51 and 24 per cent holding either creative media or graduate degrees (7), statistics show that only 6.6 per cent of creative-industries workers identify as BAME ("Creative Skillsets Employment Census"). What we glean here is how the ideal creative worker – comfortable with increasingly flexible, contract-based labour and breaking down the barriers between their art, work and life (see Brouillette, *Creative Economy*, chapter 2) – is an able-bodied, white, educated male. As Pierre Bourdieu or Étienne Balibar with Pierre Macherey would say, access is uneven to the social, cultural and educational capital which underlie the hegemonic practices of aesthetic appraisal that are fabricated from wider class-based and power-laden values. These forms of capital are

themselves heavily mediated by race. Scholarly attention to these realities is especially

significant when we consider that works emerging from this milieu often in their content

support the kind of equal opportunity that does not in fact exist where literary production

occurs.

We cannot conceive of racial stratification in the literary field separately from the

widespread changes which have happened in the book industries in recent decades. As

book historians such as Eric de Bellaigue, Claire Squires, and Paul Delany have shown,

the 1980s saw a palpable shift in power within publishing firms, from editorial offices to

marketing departments; this shift was increasingly important as firms were themselves

incorporated into transnational media companies. The emphasis on marketing has been

all but inevitable for publishers and bookstores, especially during the periods of sizeable

industry contraction that are most relevant to this study, those owing in large part to

general economic recessions in the UK in the early 1990s and late 2000s. Marketing has

also emerged in response to cuts to public funding to literary institutions like libraries,

and to losses of market share to more popular forms of media like film, television, and

increasingly digital multimedia. The combination of these trends impacting publishing

revenues is not new; they have been prevalent for the British publishing industry in the

1960s and 1970s (see Bingley 3-4; Sutherland xv-xvi), in the 1980s and 1990s (see

Debbie Hicks; Owen), and today. Industry contraction over the last decade has especially

exacerbated the increasing strength of discount retail outlets which demand expensive

marketing provision to accompany publishers' delivery of new product (Kean,

Introduction 2). One of the many adverse effects of the emphasis on marketing

campaigns in the book production process is an editorial method in which a given non=-

white author's potentially subversive mode of expression is blunted when marketers and editors design and package texts for mass distribution.

Indeed, what publishers may conceivably produce and place in the market is constrained by what Benjamin D. Brewer calls the "cultural turn" of late capitalism (see "Cultural Turn"), with dominant production firms inclined to privilege products that are likely to yield relatively large sales in chain-store, supermarket and online retail environments. Anamik Saha has shown that the nature of this retail market uniquely affects producers from minoritized communities in the UK. What Saha describes as localized "counter-narratives of difference" are dulled during the early editorial stage of commercial cultural production ("Locating MIA" 739), when art directors, marketers and production managers commodify and package works for mass distribution, in accordance with what data they can gather about the aesthetic tastes of certain consumer niches. Such practices, which take place before works are published, play a role in determining their reception after the fact. Promotional paratexts are produced for broad circulation by members of in-house marketing departments within publishing companies.[9] These paratexts are also created by critics and reviewers occupying the more peripheral promotional roles in what C. Wright Mills would call the "cultural apparatus" – "all the organisations and milieux in which artistic, intellectual, and scientific work goes on, and by which entertainment and information are produced and distributed" (qtd. in Sinfield 26). In the creative-economy context, there is much evidence of the calculated ways that

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[9] The term "paratext" is Gérard Genette's for the many sites that materialise in the event of a given book's publication, which ensure that meaning is conceived beyond the content within the actual physical book – in the elements which "surround [the text] and extend it, precisely in order to *present* it . . . to ensure the text's presence in the world, its 'reception' and consumption" (1; his emphasis).

publishing companies and creative-economy pundits work to distance themselves from a tradition of promoting racial stereotypes in promotional paratexts. Indeed, race having functioned as a "unique selling point" (Saha, "The Marketing of Race" 513) among advertisers is an increasingly disputed public issue; publishers recognize that market value attached to their brands can be derived from a particularly liberal-cosmopolitan disposition toward it. A large part of my focus is on how marketing particularly highlights and construes minority authors' biographies in relation to the content of their works in what Squires calls "marketing stories" – the ways in which the central themes and motifs of literary texts are represented (and often misrepresented) in promotional material (119). I also analyze how the industries of marketing manipulate paratexts depending on the economic and symbolic interests motivating a given publisher, and how these motivations are fuelled by a desire to find literary products with marketing stories which underline these publishers' branding.

Beyond a handful of reports produced by ACE, and by ACE-funded literature organizations such as Spread the Word, the National Literacy Trust, and the Royal Society of Literature, as well as a number of articles by industry practitioners and racialized authors in *The Bookseller*, *The Guardian* and *The Independent* (see for example Akbar; Cain; Okojie; Shaffi, "Publishers 'must do better'"; Shaffi, "People just like me"), little has been written about how the British literary field responds to, manifests, and perpetuates the rising tide of racialized inequality. This dissertation takes up this task. The same inequality that defines the British literary field is evident of course in everything from Brexit to the emboldening of the anti-immigrant alt-right movement. It is thus of primary and pressing concern to materialist and multidisciplinary literary

scholars.

Something similar to what Juliana Spahr and Stephanie Young have called, referring to an American context, the contemporary literary industry's "mainly white" demographic is also evident in the UK. They argue that this phenomenon has risen from postwar educational expansion's consolidation of a period of literary history – what Mark McGurl calls the "program era" – which has been especially marked by the shaping influence of the higher education institutions through which the majority of its main proprietors have passed – authors, agents, editors and marketers. In a similar vein, Jodi Melamed has recently shed light on the "particularly neoliberal-multicultural direction" (140) of literary studies in America, which espouses an ostensibly humanistic ideal that minoritized literature bears the potential to inform members of the professional-managerial class on how to manage themselves and others in globalized marketplaces which employ people from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds (141). One of the few scholars to consider contemporary intersections between literary and educational institutions in the UK is Sandeep Parmar; she argues that creative writing university programs instruct students to mimic certain formalistic qualities that are traditionally associated with British poetry, and that these privilege a default white perspective. My dissertation builds on the claims of these scholars, providing a contribution to this important emerging body of scholarship on such issues in the UK.

Guiding Frameworks and Terminology

My analytical approach for this project is a multidisciplinary economically focused version of cultural materialism. Cultural materialism analyzes and contextualizes how literary representation is mediated and valued as a way to justify, support or challenge wider politicized agendas or movements. It consists of close readings of literary texts informed by how conditions of production influence literary representation.[10] To understand these conditions, I look at cultural and educational policy, cultural industries research, and the history of publishing.

In analyzing the relationships between contemporary British literary culture, higher education, and the scandal over literary-industry whiteness, I have reviewed various British educational and cultural policy documents, and works of scholarship in policy studies and cultural sociology. This has required deciding which policy documents and scholarly works to include within this dissertation. The rationale for why I have included certain texts instead of others is related to how I read policy documents and scholarship. I do not read these texts as if the ideas and policies advocated for and critiqued therein have not themselves gone through some form of mediation. Rather, I query these texts as expressions of state discourse that is suggestive of hegemonic cultural currents and ideas about the value of cultural-industries diversity. These currents and ideas are particularly marked in the texts I analyze and critique, making them exemplary of wider trends in state discourse.

Another methodological question concerns how I define literature. For the purposes of this study, the term "literature" refers to the B-format genre produced for and

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[10] See Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*.

marketed toward an educated target audience, the publication and celebration of which is often delinked from society, the economy and politics.

I should also address why the scandal over the whiteness of the British literary publishing field has been construed as a problem throughout the creative economy context, or New Labour and post-New Labour years. This is because the industry needs to diversify in order to continue to accumulate significant and sustainable revenues, especially in response to the fact that cultural consumers are becoming increasingly less interested in literature. Literary-industry whiteness has become such a pressing concern for publishers because of the professed business case for diversity across the British arts.

In terms of how I interpret race, this is based on a multidisciplinary variety of theories which, when put into play, help emphasize the following: the hegemonic discursive constructions of race that we become familiar with in the form of, for example, stereotypes; the material circumstances underpinning the prevalence of these constructions; and how these constructions are often reinforced – and perhaps sometimes produced – by the cultural industries.

A dominant foundational strain of postcolonial theory, pioneered in particular by Edward Said and Homi K. Bhabha, has substantially informed my thinking about race as a discursive construction. Said and Bhabha each argue that certain ideas about race and racial identity become hegemonic because of how discourse works to maintain the dominance of certain powerful sides of binary oppositions. According to Michel Foucault, we are immersed in discourse, a term which denotes almost the same thing as the common structuralist definition of a "signifying system," but emphasizes how power

resides in a signifying system's or language's attempts to maintain and reproduce binary oppositions.

Said, Bhabha, and indeed many other postcolonial theorists, see Foucault's theory as liberating. For instance, Said defines orientalist discourse as "the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism is a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (3). Said argues that colonial and orientalist discourses maintain an illusion of colonial power through consistently presenting and performing into existence the idea of the East being a natural foil to the West.

For Bhabha, while Said's model of the East/West binary is groundbreaking, it is also too rigid. Bhabha highlights the ambivalence of colonial discourse, an element that allows for two main phenomena that I illuminate in literary representation and the discourses used in literary marketing and promotions. Firstly, Bhabha theorizes the possibilities for self-representation via hybridized identities which do not conform to the assumptions about subjectivity proposed in oppositional models of East/West, white/non-white, dominant/other, and so on. According to Bhabha, hybritity denotes the composite nature of cultures, communities, identities, and other sites of self-representation, and emphasizes the intersections of identity categories based on race, class, sex, gender, ability, and so on. Secondly, what Bhabha calls "colonial mimicry" has lent to my understanding of literary discourses. This is the manner in which colonial discourse

allows the subjects of its gaze to redirect colonial power onto the colonizer through subversive modes of fashioning, performing and expressing identity.[11]

Stuart Hall has also greatly influenced my dissertation's guiding theoretical framework. In theorizing an idea of British diasporic subjectivity, Hall has cited Frantz Fanon's critique of négritude as a way to help break through the essentialism in dominant ways of thinking about identity. Négritude was an early-twentieth-century movement pioneered by Aimé Césaire and Léopold Senghor, who argued that colonized peoples share one, common identity which should be formed via a nostalgic return to the precolonial past. Fanon argued that this romantic perspective obfuscates the fact that a precolonial past can never be recovered because the colonizer overwrote the historical memory of the colonized with a version of history promoting white supremacy. Hall uses Fanon's critique as a way to introduce the concept that diasporic identity is constantly being remade. Significantly, he counters hegemonic views which see racialized groups as part of one monolithic expanse, arguing that colonized peoples should understand identity as continuously changing if they are going to challenge the legacy of colonial discourse attempting to define what it means to be human.[12]

The ideas of Said, Bhabha and Hall serve as the basis for my interpretations of discursive representations of race and racial identity. In highlighting how these discursive constructions are represented in literary texts and materials produced to market and promote the literary industry's products, I also borrow insights from a political-economic approach to cultural industries research, especially a recent strain pioneered in particular

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[11] See Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*.
[12] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora."

by David Hesmondhalgh and Anamik Saha.[13] This is cognisant of how hegemonic industry-produced ideas about race, ethnicity, and identity politics are circulated in mainstream commercial culture.

Saha's work has particularly influenced this dissertation's theoretical outlook. He has analyzed how in the contemporary British literary field, in what he calls the "postcolonial cultural economy in this particular neoliberal conjuncture" ("Rationalizing/Racializing Logic" 4), literary production has become subject to the "rationalizing/racializing logic of capital in cultural production," whereby the recycling of "neocolonial ideologies that attempt to totalize and homogenize difference" emerges as smart business practice (5). The dominant commercial publishing firms attempt to expand their markets based on information they gather through the point-of-sale tracking software Bookscan. This software provides both bookstores and publishers instantaneous data on the sales figures of individual titles – data which is useful for standardizing book design and promotions, but which also uniquely impacts the "acquisition and promotion of 'multicultural fiction'" (1). As the projected sales of a novel within this sub-field "are calculated based on the sales of a similar book," the so-called "economics of pigeonholing" emerge, meaning that the exoticized branding and aesthetic design of previous saleable titles is replicated in the design of soon-to-be-published books (7). Saha's research opens up a world of insight for materialist studies of the relationship between contemporary British literature and the education system. It reveals how minoritized authors' books are "the product of industrial, rationalized production that is

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[13] See David Hesmondhalgh and Anamik Saha, "Race, Ethnicity, and Cultural Production."

inextricably bound up in the way that the cultural text appears at the point of consumption" (Saha, "Locating MIA" 740). Saha's work also points toward how "anthropological criticism" – or (mis)reading literature as accurate documentary of stereotypically disenfranchised life within a foreign community (Pucherová 16-17) – is reproduced via new media technologies underpinning attempts at rapid expansion and growth of the book industries.

Saha has also outlined what he calls a "politics of production" methodology for demonstrating how mechanisms in place within increasingly commercialized and industrialized cultural production processes "make race" through specific aspects of commodification (*Race* 57). He argues that cultural commodification involves instrumental practices "to reproduce particular discourses of race and ethnicity" (57) – discourses which ultimately function as "a way of managing the production of racial epistemologies as embodied in media representations" (66). Saha describes his method as a "dialectical way of understanding media power" (72), and it combines insights mainly from two camps within cultural studies. The first is a dominant strain of research concerned primarily with the "politics of representation." Saha contends that in its attempts to demonstrate constitutive features of black and Asian British aesthetics, this strain of research relies too much on textual reading practices to analyze innovations in discursive representations of race, ethnicity, and race relations in postwar British society. Saha agrees that this focus illuminates the racialized cultural politics inscribed in cultural products, and the performative, potentially consciousness-raising effects that these inscriptions may have on consumers. Yet he argues that to fully understand the nature of such inscriptions we need to shed light on the increasingly industrialized processes of

manufacturing and distributing texts. These processes bear acute relation to what the aesthetic surface of a published text can be said to signify – everything from the reasons behind a firm's acquisition of a given producer's works, to the subsequent editing, packaging, promotion and circulation of those works. To this end, Saha demarcates a methodology for analyzing representations of racial and ethnic identity in cultural products which fits into what David Hesmondhalgh has called the "cultural industries" tradition in political economy primarily indebted to the research of Bernard Miège and Edgar Morin:

> As Hesmondhalgh outlines, Miège and Morin challenge the idea of commodification as a blanket process where culture has been subsumed already by capital. Rather, its spread is actually uneven and incomplete, and the production of culture is always contested. In this way Hesmondhalgh conceptualizes cultural commodification as a 'complex, ambivalent and contested' process. (Saha, "Locating MIA" 4-5)

A great deal of the insight from the political economy lineage in cultural studies hinges on the so-called "central contradiction" of capitalist cultural production. This queries the uncanny fact that if capital is interested in standardizing and homogenizing commodity production by replicating the practices employed in the production and marketing of previously saleable commodities, then the cultural commodity – whose defining marketable features are difference and distinction from what already exists in the market – runs up against the imperative for continuous accumulation. This contradiction is particularly relevant for artistic producers from minoritized communities. Their personal identities upon the acquisition and subsequent editing and promotion of their works are

often perceived as the most marketable aspect of their artistic activity, and dominant discourses in cultural marketing often reduce these identities to racist stereotypes. Herein lies an "enabling" feature of cultural commodification for Saha. Despite its "constraining" effects, for instance marketing minoritized culture through exotic tropes, producers from minoritized communities can exploit the racialization or exoticization of their texts – often employed to ensure wide market appeal – in order to counter-pose subversive symbols and narratives against the apparently stable white hegemony of the Western nation-state. Saha interprets this phenomenon to derive from what he sees as a certain predetermination for capitalist hegemony to at times fray and thereby make space for enclaves of counter-discursive symbolic production:

> As capitalism attempts to expand into the cultural sphere through the process of commodification, it leaves tears or fissures where its integrity is weakened, which become the locations where cultural political interventions – or [what Barnor Hesse calls] 'transruptions' – can destabilize the patterns of racial settlements. The nation in turn responds by activating archaic forms of nationalism, what Hesse [sic] refers to as a highly dubious race relations narrative of governance that is structured discursively around a perception of the problem of national identity and the presence and proximity of racialized bodies. (*Race* 78)

Finally, I should clarify the terms I use when discussing racialized writers. Ways of conceiving of and pinpointing racialized groups in the UK have changed over time, and there is the potential for confusion without some explication. When I am attempting to articulate my voice, I often use "racialized," "marginalized," and "minoritized" to emphasize that there are people who are subjectified by a gaze imposing what it means to

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be other. I interpret each of these terms to have a common emphasis on the process of mainstream culture excluding certain people on racist grounds. In turn, when I am referring to state discourse and the areas of the literary market where it has become a commonplace marker for non-white British citizens, I use "BAME" to refer to these people.

Chapter Breakdown

My dissertation consists of four chapters, each of which studies a particular facet of contemporary British literary production with contextual grounding in the socio-political historical circumstances undergirding recent publishing trends. These are trends which themselves have emerged in response to the intersecting pressures of general industry contraction and the diversity scandal that I note above. My analysis also pays particularly close attention to marketing and journalism's preoccupation with highlighting the perceived racial difference of authors and books which are slotted into particular multicultural genres; and racialized access to British education, with an emphasis on how both multicultural literary teaching and publishing have been particularly significant areas of industry interest.

In outlining some of the historical circumstances which have made working in the book industries so exclusive in the UK, the core interests of chapter one serve to update and broaden a primary focus of literary sociologists such as John Guillory, Raymond Williams, and Étienne Balibar with Pierre Macherey, on literature's function in the university as a mechanism for regulating elite access to literacy. Returning to this focus

affords a novel perspective on the whiteness of contemporary publishing, as I interpret this whiteness as a further entrenchment of the longstanding relationship between access to elite education and literary production and consumption. This chapter also addresses a gap in Sarah Brouillette's and Graham Huggan's respective materialist studies of the postcolonial literary market, which argue that corporate publishing often promotes ethnic writers' novels as exotic experiences in attempts to make them palatable to Britain's presupposed white readership. Whereas these critics do note educational expansion's role here in terms of edifying generations of readers equipped with university degrees, I show how it also sparked design innovations that became the purview of a powerful and homogenous strata of corporate literary marketing professionals.

Chapter one investigates how many of the expedient connections between literary production and education at play in recent policy were established after World War II. As Mark Banks and Kate Oakley have shown, policy changes supported by the ideology of meritocracy made a number of artistic design programs in regional art schools widely accessible to students from families hitherto left out of higher education. These so-called "working class universities" trained the art directors – figures such as Germano Facetti at Penguin – who made graphic design central to the book publishing system in the 1960s. These people went on to play important roles in publishing houses being incorporated into transnational media conglomerates from the 1980s on, when, as Bellaigue and Squires have both argued, the new emphasis on marketing reflected the new pressures that publishers faced. I add to this research by suggesting that literary marketing's ascendency is symptomatic of a broader economic restructuring toward a "buyer-driven" mode of production. As Brewer has argued, since the onset of neoliberalism advertising

has increasingly become the primary function of Western firms no longer directly involved in producing and distributing physical goods, but brands alone (see "Cultural Turn"). As this has occurred alongside the marketization of higher education – with art schools being absorbed into universities, and admissions applications and work placement initiatives favouring high levels of social and cultural capital – gaining a fine arts degree, and through it a publishing industry job, is effectively limited to privileged people, very often white. The result is an editorial and marketing establishment which is overwhelmingly made up of white professionals imposing expectations on BAME authors to portray, in tokenizing ways, aspects of "their" cultures.

One of the key interests of my doctoral research are the several costs which result from the process of mainstreaming formerly peripheral racialized writing – one of the industry's central strategies for redressing a lack of diversity while simultaneously attempting to expand markets. The work of racialized writers is of course not new on the British publishing scene. In chapters two, three, and four, some of the recent developments in the publishing of British postcolonial and multicultural literary texts that I shed light on are unique to the creative-economy context. These chapters analyze, respectively: how multicultural books are mobilized to meet the requirements of New Labour multicultural education policy – a relatively recent phenomenon in British education history; how Penguin's turn to discourses of Corporate Social Responsibility allows the publisher to brand itself as an antidote to racialized access to British education and cultural work; and how the recent attempts at mainstreaming so-called "race" or "identity" poetry, a subgenre only recently incorporated by corporate publishers, are related to racial marginalization in British creative writing programs. These chapters

reveal how as they are eager to expand their markets, British publishers have facilitated the innovation of marketing tactics for postcolonial and racialized niche genres of literature that have proven viable and worthy of publishers' attention throughout the post-World War II era. These tactics increasingly function as a kind of cover for the whiteness of the literary industry overall. Often in a clearly targeted manner, publishers' incorporation of formerly peripheral racialized literary writing offers symbolic redress to the reality that elite access to fine art and design programs in universities continues to be a key yet generally inaccessible pathway to cultural work.

Chapter two studies multicultural programming by BookTrust, an ACE-funded educational and reading charity which acts as a conduit for commercial publishing firms in distributing books to UK schoolchildren. BookTrust's recent programming underlines ACE's overarching policy aims of encouraging cultural cohesion through opening access to arts and cultural participation. This chapter explores how, in attempting to meet these goals, BookTrust has been involved in and reliant on recent innovations in the commodification of black British literature. I consider the so-called "New Black Writing" of the 1990s, paying particular attention to how works were marketed as "urban novels" whose authors' race is markedly highlighted, presenting them as the ostensibly "authentic" voice of black British millennials. I argue that the pressures on corporate publishing to exploit the identities of minority authors explains the discrepancy between the marketing of black and white authors here.

BookTrust's work with British compulsory primary and secondary schooling cannot be conceived separately from how discussions of the lack of literary-industry diversity proliferate, especially as persistent links between the racial dynamics of the

corporate publishing establishment and elite universities continue to come to light (e.g., in Spread the Word's report, *Writing the Future*). BookTrust's multicultural programming demonstrates how government funding for diversity initiatives both springs from the decline in public subsidy for the arts – and especially the minority arts – and is awarded to organizations who favour BAME writers whose work can be marketed to young adults. The intention here is to support writing whose content and whose authors' personae address certain iterations of cultural diversity policy that have been designed to generate interest in creative-industries consumption and employment from an early age. Such publishing largely springs from the lack of funding for higher education yet uncannily helps to legitimate the policy of widening participation and ACE's related 2012-2022 "Creative Case for Diversity" (see ACE, *Equality, Diversity and the Creative Case*).

Chapter three focuses on recent diversity initiatives developed by Penguin, one of the biggest producers of English-language books in the world. Penguin's British headquarters recently announced that it no longer requires new employees to have university degrees, a move intended "to open up opportunities to attract more varied candidates into publishing" (Weale). The company is also currently launching the *WriteNow* program in partnership with the regional ACE-funded organizations Spread the Word, Commonword, and Writing West Midlands. *WriteNow*'s purpose is "to find, mentor and publish new writers . . . from communities underrepresented on the nation's bookshelves" ("PRH UK launches WriteNow scheme" 8). Penguin partners with Spread the Word, which I argue in chapter four was partly founded with the intention of exploiting market demand for racialized literature produced outside of the formal

educational establishment. Their marriage suggests that Penguin's attempt to diversify its authorial rosters is fuelled by a desire to be seen as an inclusive and ethical company whose practices chiefly benefit communities local to its offices.

As an example of Penguin's book promotion and packaging, I turn to the *decibel*-Penguin Prize, which was sponsored by the British Book Awards and Penguin as part of the wider *decibel* program, a 2003-2008 initiative to make the arts more inclusive. Informed by the work of several scholars, I interpret this prize as a commercial attempt to generate interest in consuming and producing minority literature (Brouillette, *Creative Economy* 117-18; Lacroix 153-55). Chantal Lacroix has argued that the *decibel*-Penguin Prize is representative of how new prizes are founded to give up-and-coming BAME writers initial consecration necessary for opportunities for contracts with multinational publishers and winning prizes like the Booker. The specific motivation behind the *decibel* program was to nurture the social mobility of immigrants by marketing minoritized literature to young people from ethnic minority backgrounds with a purpose of simultaneously generating interest in reading and the career path of authorship, and raising literacy levels of children of immigrants (which New Labour identified as a key improvement area) (Lacroix 154-70). Via a reading of the marketing story for Hari Kunzru's novel *Transmission* (2004) – which won the inaugural *decibel*-Penguin Prize in 2005 – I add to this research by suggesting that this prize was designed not only to target school-aged children of immigrants, with a goal of sparking interest in reading, school, and a potential career in the literary industry, but also to address the racial dynamics of the publishing industry. *Transmission* is about Arjun Mehta, an Information Technology worker from New Delhi who immigrates to Silicon Valley after being recruited to work

in what he is led to believe will be prosperous technology firms; when he realizes that the work he is offered comes in the form of precarious, terminally entry-level, and ultimately short-lived contracts, he releases a computer virus as revenge. Critics and reviewers praise this text as a critique of a racist division of labour in the globalized knowledge economy. When the book was originally released in 2004 on the Penguin Group's smaller imprint Dutton, its cover did not emphasize race. In 2005, after *Transmission* won the *decibel*, Penguin released new editions in the UK and US with cover-images that evoke Kunzru's Indian ancestry. The prizing and subsequent publishing of new editions of this title, like Penguin's other recent diversity initiatives, was designed to construct an image of the publisher as a progressive company through a particular discourse of Corporate Social Responsibility, one which attempts to promote the minoritized authors who critique the role of transnational media corporations like itself in perpetuating racial stratification.

Chapter four analyzes how the rise of creative writing programs in British universities has further consolidated literary professionalization with particularly cascading effects on who is afforded access to authorship. Even though over 100 creative writing programs teach thousands of students each year, and a recent poll found British citizens' ideal career to be "author" (Dahlgreen), these programs' cultural and economic functions have not been widely researched. In the UK, one of the phenomena that we begin to see is that routine representation of culturally diverse authors with creative writing degrees serves to disguise that the majority of these programs enrol far fewer BAME students compared to their white counterparts. These schools encourage students to mimic marketable genres, and star author-professors such as Hanif Kureishi and Ian

McEwan offer routes into winning awards and media attention – chief ways that, as James F. English and Claire Squires have each shown, authors and their works gain recognition in contemporary publishing. However, this does little for aspiring BAME writers who likely feel deterred by the writing workshop's reputation for, in the words of Bambo Soyinka, head of Creative Writing at Bath Spa University, a "narrow view of literary quality" which marginalises "different cultural influences or . . . new ways of seeing" (Kean, "Plus ça change" 15). Despite the creative writing program's image as any interested student's way to be an author, it is better understood as another literary-institutional site governed by social and cultural capital – access to which is itself heavily mediated by race.

I use this background of the racialized access to British creative writing programs to inform a case study of the charitable organization Spread the Word's recent publishing initiative for poets of colour, the Complete Works Scheme. I argue that the Complete Works reflects Spread the Word's general motivation for supporting and promoting minoritized writers – a unique attempt to both correct and capitalize on the low representation of BAME literary industry employees by forging a space in publishing for autonomy from reliance on universities as ready suppliers of writers. In response to *Free Verse* (2005), its investigation of the poetry industry which reported that less than one per cent of published British poets were from BAME backgrounds, Spread the Word began the Complete Works, which pairs BAME poets with established poet-mentors and has printed the former's work in the *Ten* anthologies published by Bloodaxe. I interpret the Complete Works Scheme as an unprecedented, uniquely contemporary form of literary

production which springs directly from and exploits a gap in the market created by the decline in public subsidy for community arts programs and education.

Unique in its theoretical scope, informed by literary, educational and policy studies, economics, and cultural sociology, this project reveals foundational links between literary publishing and broader economic and political transformations. It sheds crucial light on the constitutive force of racial inequity within the literary field – a force which is inseparable from the broader racialized conflict which has in recent years become such a pressing site of political struggle and debate within the UK and elsewhere. As I outline in my conclusion, one of the logical next steps in this research is to broaden my focus from how the neoliberal university constructs and educates members of the literary field's mainly white creative class, and how writers and publishers use their literary products as modes of registering disinterest with this fact, to how British postcolonial and multicultural literary production has been and is being developed to cater to all levels of schooling in Britain.

Chapter One:

"This really is a posh boys' and girls' job"[1]: The Postwar Book in and beyond the Art School

1.1 Introduction

Media coverage of racial stratification in Britain's book publishing[2] establishment has been frequent recently. In late November 2015, the blogger known as Dan L (@UtterBiblio) initiated the "#DiverseDecember" social media campaign in response to the dearth of novels by BAME authors on the list for World Book Night.[3] #DiverseDecember evolved into the year-long "#readdiverse2016" campaign, which helped generate public support for the inaugural Bare Lit festival for writers of colour in February 2016. As #DiverseDecember snowballed, Marlon James made some controversial claims at a *Guardian*-sponsored event shortly after his novel, *A Brief*

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[1] Quotation of anonymous author in Kean, "Plus ça change" 15.
[2] For the purposes of this chapter, book publishing will be understood as one area of all text-based media production, both in print and digital formats, which is itself subdivided into two broad sections: general trade (fiction, non-fiction, children's, etc.), and educational (primary, secondary, and higher educational textbooks, and other books, like novels, published in editions specifically intended for sale on the educational market). While my primary concern will be the particular literary niche within general trade fiction, I will at times focus on the book publishing sector as a whole, because the economics of book publishing practices function in such a way that marketing decisions about certain genres depend on the sales of other genres, a basic financial practice throughout postwar publishing which I flesh out in some detail in this chapter.
[3] This was first reported on by Nikesh Shukla on *The Bookseller*'s blog. World Book Night is an annual promotional campaign for which fifteen titles are chosen from publishers' nominations. People are then encouraged to make donations in exchange for twenty copies of one of the books, which they in turn are expected to give to people they know who may not otherwise be inclined to read fiction.

History of Seven Killings (2014), won the Man Booker Prize. James called out publishers

for in his words "pander[ing]" to an "archetype of the white woman" (qtd. in Cain). He

stated that his work to date could have been published more extensively if his writing

conformed to the tastes of publishing professionals interested in a "crafted kind of story"

reflecting "a cultural tone set by white women" – the demographic which apparently

purchases two thirds of the books in the UK (Cain).

This presents a startlingly different image of literary culture than the one

constructed by the highlighting of culturally diverse authors, for example, the high-

profile promotion of writers from minoritized racial, ethnic and faith communities in the

UK as part of work-placement initiatives between British publishers and Arts Council

England (ACE). While most certainly providing opportunities for numerous up-and-

coming writers, editors, and creative workers, these programs also disguise the literary

industry's makeup of mainly white people holding degrees from a handful of elite

universities. One of these programs is the Complete Works scheme, a mentorship

program for Black and Asian poets of colour developed by Spread the Word, whose work

has been collected in anthologies published by Bloodaxe Books (see chapter four). From

2015-2017 Spread the Word also ran Flight 1000, a three-year "associate scheme"

designed "to provide high quality training and experience in publishing for a small cohort

of writers on a yearly basis who, for a number of reasons, have struggled to access such

opportunities" ("About Flight Journal"). Flight 1000 was in other words something of a

university internship for racially marginalized people who aspire to be authors, editors, or

promotional agents. Spread the Word has also recently begun the London Short Story

Prize for BAME writers, whose winners and nominees it has published in anthologies on its own imprints, Flight Press and Spread the Word Books.

Some other organizations which have emerged to support the work of minoritized literary writers in Britain are Equality in Publishing (or EQUIP for short), the successor of the now defunct Diversity in Publishing Network (or DipNet), which is backed by the Publishers' Association and the Independent Publishers Guild "to promote inclusivity across UK publishing, bookselling and agenting, by driving forward change and increasing access to opportunities within the industry" ("Equality in Publishing (EQUIP)"). The major thing which Equality in Publishing has done is developed the so-called "Publishing Equalities Charter," an impromptu bill of rights for how to make cultural diversity a real issue in the British publishing field which many publishers have signed on to and agreed to follow. Furthermore, Creative Access, a governmental body supported by Creative Skillset, the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, funds paid internships for BAME people in partnership with the publishers HarperCollins, Hachette, Penguin Random House UK, Bloomsbury, and the well-known agencies Curtis Brown and Aitken Alexander.

These programs were implemented to correct the homogeneity of publishing highlighted by James and others. A prominent early exploration of the lack of diversity in the industry was the 2004 report *In Full Colour: Cultural Diversity in Book Publishing Today*, funded by *decibel* (an ACE initiative designed to diversify the cultural sectors), which came out as a supplement to *The Bookseller*, the UK publishing industry's trade journal. According to the editor, Danuta Kean, this report "uncovered disturbing evidence of institutional bias" in which an editorial and marketing establishment overwhelmingly

made up of white professionals imposed expectations on BAME authors to write about very stereotypical, tokenizing aspects of their cultures (Introduction 2). The report argued that this situation had prevailed in large part due to BAME people occupying peripheral, entry-level jobs in publishing, and that all this might be fixed by putting these people into greater positions of power, for example through some of the above-mentioned internship and work experience schemes.

However, an over-arching lament in Kean's follow-up report, *Writing the Future: Black and Asian Authors and Publishers in the UK Market Place* (2015), is that not much has changed as a result of these initiatives. In particular, the report suggests that amid post-2008 sales declines, the trade has "retrenched" and produced a "risk-averse culture" in which publishers' output is yoked to "the demands of major retailers . . . pressur[ing] [publishers] to focus on obvious markets rather than anything more nuanced" (Kean, "Plus ça change" 14). One reason for this is because big box chain stores and online sites like Amazon are the most common places where people buy books. These retail outlets privilege mass-market bestsellers, especially e-books in recent years, and demand that publishers come to the table with intense marketing budgets for them (Kean, Introduction 2). As a survey of 203 UK-based novelists reveals, the result is that BAME authors experience a similar type of marginalization to that reported in 2004. In the author Aminatta Forna's words: "an orthodoxy whereby the presumed reader is totally mono-cultural, White middle England" prevails (Kean, "Plus ça change" 14). Agents and marketers pressure authors to make their writing palatable by, in Kean's synopsis, "upping the sari count, dealing with gang culture or some other image that conforms to White preconception" (Kean, "Written off" 8). And while it is increasingly difficult for

any literary writer to find success outside of a handful of A-list lead authors who receive

any significant amounts of marketing from publishers, it is within the particular literary

niche that most BAME authors can get publishers' attention at all. For Kean this "means

effectively, that as a published Black or Asian writer you will probably write in a genre

that not only earns little but sells little too. Consequently BAME writers were at a

disadvantage if they wanted to be full time novelists" (9). Kean states:

> The survey found that 42 per cent of respondents from a BAME background
>
> wrote literary fiction, making it by far the biggest genre for BAME writers in the
>
> poll. The next biggest genre was young adult (YA) fiction at 26 per cent with
>
> romance/women's commercial fiction far behind at eight per cent of respondents.
>
> Of the biggest selling genres, crime accounted for four per cent of BAME
>
> novelists' output, the same amount for women's commercial fiction and erotica.
>
> Science fiction and fantasy was written by eight per cent of respondents and
>
> horror by 10 per cent. The propensity of the industry to publish writers of colour
>
> under the 'literary' banner, respondents felt, effectively distanced them from the
>
> mainstream, a finding also confirmed by the qualitative research undertaken for
>
> this report. (9)

On the one hand, this is a familiar picture of the UK literary industry. As Graham

Huggan's and Sarah Brouillette's materialist studies of the globalized marketplace for

postcolonial literature have argued, typical of this field are marketing strategies which

posture novels as exotic literary experiences offering cosmopolitan readers imaginary

access to far-off locales; the practice of publishing professionals designing book covers

and other promotional paratexts with easily consumed and understood "authentic" art and

expressions; and driving the circulation of newly published literary works by BAME authors by crafting what the 2015 publishing report calls a "BAME angle," which "focuses on the most obvious aspects of an author's life" (Kean, "Plus ça change" 13).

On the other hand, the *Writing the Future* report makes apparent something which Huggan and Brouillette ignore: that university degrees, especially from prestigious schools indexed closely to cultural and economic capital, function as a conduit to professionalization which keeps literary publishing a privileged domain. As Kean writes, recent industry contraction has not only influenced publishers to focus on marketing literary products which are deemed to become sure sellers; publishers' aversion to risk also means that they have "become more conservative in their . . . *employment choices*" (Introduction 2; my emphasis). According to Kean: "Nowhere is [a lack of industry diversity] more obvious than in the rise of the unpaid internship as a primary route into the business – a practice that immediately discriminates against those without the economic power to support living and working in London unwaged" (2). In a survey of 66 publishers and 49 literary agents – 38 per cent of whom were from companies employing over one hundred people and thus those expected to register with Creative Access:

> only 11 per cent of respondents had ties with non-Oxbridge universities or developed educational programmes for state schools. Again, all the effort is focused on entry-level recruitment. Virtually no respondents did cultural awareness training in-house, or audited their business for cultural bias that may hamper the prospects of BAME employees or authors. (Kean, "Could do better" 23)

In other words, as one anonymous author put it, publishing is a "posh boys' and girls' job" (qtd. in Kean, "Plus ça change" 15).

I argue in this chapter that this industry homogeneity reflects the impact of recent arts and cultural higher educational policies created by Britain's New Labour government. Advantageous access to university and the unpaid work experience that it offers, both of which tend to be limited to people from privileged backgrounds in the UK, reproduces socio-economic class inequality within the publishing industry for people occupying both authorial and non-authorial roles. I argue further that this inequality is symptomatic of broader structural changes in the literary field, themselves rooted within the symbiotic rise of corporate publishing and neoliberal education policy. In particular, as graphic design has occupied a more significant role in maintaining publishers' corporate identities, a number of cascading effects on who is afforded access to literary production have ensued.

The chapter analyzes how the increasing control of self-styled creative and design professionals over the acquisition of books and their placement in the market has deepened the conditions for racial marginalization in publishing. Publishers continue to maximize profits by acquiring the most marketable authors, speculated on as literary properties to be branded across media platforms and market segments matching lifestyles or interests to consumer niches. But the university degrees functioning as a mode of entry into literary marketing jobs are more accessible to white, privileged people than to anyone else.

Racism is a dominant force beyond material circumstances. Access to higher education and the literary and cultural industries is racialized in various ways, for

instance through the persistent privileging of individuals who can acceptably conform to the expectations of sanctioned cultural capital. The chapter suggests how racialized marginalization in the publishing industry and access to university are directly related, such that the former is a result of the socio-economic class inequality maintained by the latter. Racialized marginalization is a reality for both authors and creative workers in non-authorial roles in publishing. For example, a recent survey of workers in publishing houses suggests that pre-established industry connections led to 40 per cent of people's first jobs, making publishing a "closed shop" for those excluded by networks "dominated by white, middle-class, Oxbridge graduates and their friends" (Shaffi, "Publishers 'must do better'"). Thus, I suggest that a materialist study of contemporary British literary culture must consider how it has been shaped by, within and against the neoliberal educational establishment.

Toward this end, this chapter develops in perhaps some unforeseen directions a primary focus of literary sociologists. This focus is one that John Guillory nicely summarizes, when he writes that the history of British literary production cannot be conceived separately from

> the systematic effects of the *educational system* in the determination of who writes and who reads, as well as what gets read, and in what contexts. The educational institution performs the social function of systematically regulating the practises of reading and writing by governing access to the means of literary production as well as to the means of consumption (the knowledge required to read historical works). (18-19; Guillory's emphasis)

Guillory's work is indebted to foundational 1970s research by Raymond Williams, and by Étienne Balibar with Pierre Macherey, on how literature has often served as crucial instruction in the preservation of the bourgeois sociolect. For example, following Renée Balibar and Dominique Laporte's pioneering study of France's late-eighteenth century introduction of literary texts as tools for instruction in schools, Balibar and Macherey argue that the "bourgeois 'cultural revolution'" instilled a new dominant ideology primarily via a division

> between different practices of the same language. Specifically, it is in and through the educational system that the contradiction is instituted – through the contradiction through the basic language, as taught at primary school, and the literary language reserved for the advanced level of teaching. (281)

These critics highlight a novel way for understanding the whiteness of contemporary literary culture as a further entrenchment of the historically determined relationship between literary production, consumption and access to education. What remains unclear is the effect of the neoliberal university as the site that constructs and educates members of a relatively homogenous creative class involved in corporate publishing, marketing and promotions, which hold significant decision-making power for what and how books get published, and, in turn, for what we know as the literary.

1.2 Higher Education and the Creative Economy

The cultural policy of Britain's New Labour government was presented as a way to consolidate Tony Blair's brand of "Third Way" politics, which mixed laissez-faire

economics and social inclusion and placed unprecedented importance on the arts and cultural sectors as *the* "solution for economic growth in the UK" (Comunian et al. 292).[4] As such, New Labour was one of many Western governments in the late 1990s to embrace trendy creative-economy discourse, such as that popularized by Richard Florida's *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002). This widely celebrated book and author taught British MPs how to brand "creativity as the particular form of expertise that would secure a postindustrial UK's viability within the global economy" (Brouillette, *Creative Economy* 6). Under the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) established in 1997, the Creative Industries Task Force presented the idea of a heavily supported creative economy as an attractive one to the public: 982,000 people, or 1 in 5 workers, were said to be employed in the creative industries, generating £50 billion in revenue and £6.9 billion in exports annually (26). In later policy iterations the creative economy was said to have added 8 per cent to Gross Value Added in 2004, and a 2008 report stated that between 1997 and 2006, the number of creative industries jobs jumped from 1.6 to 1.9 million, a 2 per cent growth, double the national rate of employment overall (26).

That New Labour's mission was entwined with diversifying and opening access to the arts was signalled by the many initiatives to develop participation in institutions in regions outside of the Greater London Area (GLA). Tens of millions of Arts Council and Treasury funds were devoted to endeavours such as the "Find Your Talent" program of

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[4] There is a vast body of cultural-sociological research on New Labour cultural policy. Strong instances include David Hesmondhalgh, "Media and Cultural Policy as Public Policy"; Munira Mirza, "Aims and contradictions of cultural diversity policies in the arts: a case study of the Rich Mix Centre in East London"; Mark Banks and Justin O'Connor, "After the creative industries"; and Eleonora Belfiore, "On bullshit in cultural policy practice and research: notes from the British case."

exposing school children to culture for five hours per week, or the New Audiences

program to "focus on diversity, disability and social inclusion" in the theatre (Hewison

74). After several white papers and *Creative Industries Mapping Documents*, in 2003

ACE formalized its core priorities for social cohesion: "'issues such as age, class, faith,

gender and sexuality; working with refugees and asylum seekers; and responding to

issues around community development such as urban regeneration, anti-poverty

initiatives and the whole rural agenda'" (qtd. in Hewison 86).

Meanwhile, art and design programs offered by British higher education

institutions were being rebranded by New Labour as the primary pathway for any

individual to find employment in the creative economy. In its first few years in office the

government went about dismantling the "polarity" between "the trajectories of education

and of cultural practice" enshrined in Margaret Thatcher's 1988 Education Reform Act,

which David Buckingham and Ken Jones summarize well:

> In curricular terms, state schooling in England was organised around: strong
>
> centralised control of provision, through national curriculum legislation;
>
> opposition to local diversity, and in particular to any strong response to ethnic or
>
> class-based sub-cultures; a defence of tradition against innovation and nation
>
> against cosmopolis; an emphasis on print-centred culture, and a rejection of new
>
> media cultures. Outside the school, the principles of cultural organisation were
>
> different: new forms of communications technology proliferated; the regulated
>
> duopoly in television was brought to an end by deregulation and channel
>
> multiplication; the audience for mass media fragmented; and cultural hybridity
>
> became – at least in some cultural sectors – a norm. (1)

Part and parcel with New Labour's forward-looking stance on nurturing a diverse milieu of cultural consumers and producers, widening participation among students from hitherto uneducated families in what Comunian et al. call "Bohemian" disciplines, an extensive range of study fields designed to train people for specific jobs said to be in demand by DCMS and Creative Skillset, became a marquee component of Third Way policy (297). Programs in fine arts institutes, universities and more market-facing colleges throughout the UK were staffed with experienced industry professionals turned "teacher-practitioners," as well as admissions agents and researchers to oversee and promote equal opportunity in schools and policy (Burke and McManus 700). The heavy promotion of all this, "combined with almost a decade of economic stability . . . had an impact on the growth of interest and student numbers" (Comunian et al. 292). Between the 2003-4 and 2011-12 schoolyears undergraduate enrolment in creative arts and design rose a record 30 per cent (Banks and Oakley 49).

It is well established that a number of social problems arose from or were exacerbated by New Labour's creative-economy policy. In Mark Banks and David Hesmondhalgh's analysis, DCMS' various *Creative Industries Mapping Documents* leading up to the 2008 launch of *Creative Britain*, the flagship agenda to expand the cultural sector of the economy, affirmed a blinkered view of creative labour as "*intrinsically* progressive," a "utopian," fun and "freely chosen *vocation*" suggesting that "anyone can 'make it'" (416-18; their emphasis). Banks and Hesmondhalgh argue that in line with Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello's theory of capitalism's appropriation of the bohemian "artistic critique of capital," the subject of New Labour policy resembles the figure of the DIY artist formerly antithetical to hierarchy, bureaucracy and, significantly,

art produced directly for institutional or corporate pursuits (417). Now, this subject –

what Justin O'Connor explains as the rebel-worker who thinks outside the box which

emerged in 1980s managerial manuals (41), valorized by some as the rosy-eyed "bobo"

of Florida's creative class – is the autonomous, flexible, self-actualizing entrepreneur

desired by neoliberal capital (Banks and Hesmondhalgh 419). This Romanticized notion

of the creative labourer obfuscates the insecure and often anxiety-ridden conditions of

attempting to make a career in what are in fact extremely competitive and stratified

employment sectors.

Similarly, what wasn't clearly communicated in educational policy was that all

the "hype" around studying in creative fields "created an 'economic bubble' that . . .

further expanded the provision of those skills without real corresponding opportunities"

(Comunian et al. 305). Even though arts students continued to represent a low proportion

of UK graduates – only 12.88 per cent in 2004-2005 – they were "often presented as a

key element in national and local economic development" (293). In particular, New

Labour endorsed participation in art and design programs as part of "creative city"

projects, in which universities and regional creative "clusters"[5] cooperated in economic

regeneration initiatives (Oakley 27). Here, the gentrification endemic to creative-

economy frameworks dovetailed with educational development as a particular result of

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[5] In *The Politics of Cultural Work*, Mark Banks reviews the debate around the concept of
the creative cluster. Essentially, this is a localized area of creative production anchored
outside of the metropolitan centres where this production thrives most. On one side of the
debate, people celebrate creative clusters as proof of the creative economy's ability to
nurture economic development and cultural activity in peripheral communities. On the
other side, critics generally agree that these clusters reproduce the uneven access to work
opportunities prevalent in metropolises, while initiating gentrification, and only offering
short-term economic growth (Banks, *Cultural Work* 133-145).

the widespread adoption of unpaid internships, or "knowledge-transfer" schemes, offered

to students as a means of attaining university credits. As Kate Oakley has argued, the

increase in internships offered by universities was a possible effect of New Labour's

underlying drive to replicate "a particular kind of milieu in which cultural industries often

thrived." This milieu arose more or less organically from the socio-economic conditions

created by "the experience of full student grants and the practice of leaving home to study

as an undergraduate" – an experience that was common as little as twenty years ago (27).

Yet the attempt to reproduce similar links between university and cultural production

through creative city directives stymied attempts to provide post-graduate working

opportunities for people from a wider social layer (25). This is because to provide

internships, universities in areas outside of the GLA had to partner with smaller cultural

production firms; these firms rely on interns for content production and promotion more

than the big ones do, but do not have the financial means to provide paid work after

graduation (26).

Among the effects of this situation is lower levels of industry diversity beyond the

entry-level strata, that is, where recent graduates or student interns cut their teeth. The

managerial or upper-tier positions in firms with the most market share and thus market

control, the firms that are subsidiaries of transnational multimedia corporations and

which are most often located in London, are very lucrative. As many scholars have noted,

graduates who gain creative employment do so by being connected to elite networks of

contacts already inside these firms. On the one hand, these contacts are often forged in

unpaid internships, but these avenues into jobs are not accessible to all. More stiflingly,

Oakley argues that while a fine arts degree may get someone into work, "it is equally

likely to be the case that a general humanities or social science degree, coupled with interest in consumption or personal practice, is what leads to a career in the cultural sectors." These sectors remain to a large extent "the haunt of what one might call the 'educated, but not specifically trained' workforce" (31). Furthermore, as Oakley argues, in addition to undermining opportunities for students to learn how to embrace diversity, knowledge-transfer schemes also do not tend to teach about the precarious nature of creative work on the other side of graduation, and thus do little to prepare disadvantaged people for this reality (33).

Moreover, Kate Oakley and Dave O'Brien found the admissions departments of fine arts institutions like Goldsmiths to follow practices that marginalize people from less affluent backgrounds. In their words the ideal candidate is the "cultural omnivore" who grazes a wide range of both "high" art and pop culture, and is able to take a critical position on current debates about these fields (475). The basic logic of this subjective position, "flexibility and adaptability, the attributes allegedly needed to thrive in a globalised economy," translates into further expectations that are not part of less affluent people's lives (477). Ultimately, the best well-rounded applicants embody the right type of human capital accumulated by participating in extra-curricular activities and cultural events in the years leading up to post-secondary education, signalling a certain flexibility valued in the unpaid internship. In other words:

> [T]he discursive construction of the ideal work placement student and potential
> creative worker – with a currency on flexibility, enterprise and self-sufficiency –
> privileges whiteness, middle classness, masculinity and able-bodiedness. (Allen et
> al. 185)

In this light it is less surprising that recent statistics report 8-10 per cent BAME publishing employees within the industry overall (Flood, "90% white"). This suggests that the publishing industry's reliance on universities as suppliers of employees, especially through unpaid internships – itself one effect of publishers attempting to counteract mounting industry contraction in recent decades by catering to the demands of the retail market (more on this below) – has made the literary industry particularly susceptible to the tendency of New Labour and post-New Labour educational policies to hinder diversity among students and creative-industries employees. The Wilson Review of higher education (2012) stated universities' business aims in direct relation with cultural production (Oakley 29), while the myriad of diversity initiatives designed to bridge members of minoritized communities and cultural work have consistently "failed" (Saha, "Diversity initiatives don't work").

Yet while scholars have focused on the relationships between access to education and employment in the creative industries generally, and in specific trades such as film and television, this discussion needs to be steered toward an account of the racialized marginalization that the neoliberal university maintains in the literary field. We can now begin to identify what historical circumstances have made working in this field so exclusive.

1.3 The Postwar Book in Art School Context

As Mark Banks and Kate Oakley have recently noted, many of the expedient connections between cultural production and education at play in recent policy were established after

WWII, when changes supported by the ideology of meritocracy made a number of artistic design programs widely accessible to students from families hitherto left out of higher education. The 1944 Butler Act made secondary education compulsory to the age of sixteen, and many new streams for studying practical artistic production were made available to students wishing to gain these types of skills in secondary and post-secondary education (Banks and Oakley 41). Regional arts colleges subsequently "mobilise[d] working-class bohemia" by giving young artists time to develop their styles, and a knowledge of practical production skills and how to market themselves to potential patrons. In particular, art schools began offering the National Diploma in Design, and after 1960 the Diploma in Art and Design (DipAD), to students for free, as the costs for running these programs were absorbed by Local Educational Authorities. In this way, "the art school came widely to be known as an accessible alternative to university, offering the 'masses' the viable prospect of practically-oriented craft and aesthetic education" (41). DipAD-accredited institutions, teaching theory and practice, were given the "licence . . . to programme their own 'complementary' theoretical studies" like traditional universities; with this pedagogical autonomy they in effect became "laboratories for all manner of highly experimental and often radical and maverick teachings" in the 1960s (47). These schools offered a sanctuary-like atmosphere for kids "temperamentally allergic to conventional education" (Strand qtd. in Banks and Oakley 45), or what Simon Frith and Howard Horne celebrated in *Art into Pop* (1987) as the unique "art school dance": "a place where young people, whether students there or not, can hang out and learn [or] fantasise what it means to be an artist, a bohemian, a star" (qtd. in Banks and Oakley 45). Artistic types like Keith Richards, Joe Strummer, and

Penny Rimbaud, who according to Janey Ironside, the first Professor of Fashion at the Royal College of Art, "would have been maids in other people's houses, miners, or working in shops" before the war (qtd. in Bracewell 52), were given the time and tools necessary to develop their styles and personae. Such opportunities would disappear after the marketization of higher education began. In the meantime, the success of art school graduates at generating a scene to be consumed by others and themselves in a range of cultural industries was underpinned by a rapidly expanding and affluent consumer society, the supposed "golden age of capitalism."

The art school converged on literary production in the 1960s when publishers were forced to integrate more extensively with commercial interests to offset the novel's wane as a dominant form of representation in response to the popularity of film and television, industries to which many writers were turning for more reliable work than could be provided by publishers (Bingley 3-4). Lower than desirable retail sales as a result of public library purchasing, acting as somewhat of a patronage system for more popular authors, also created publishing woes (Blond 56). Art school graduates trained as graphic designers subsequently began to play important roles in the efficient promotion and marketing of books to counteract this industry contraction.

For example, Tony Godwin was one of the new generation of self-styled editors, art directors and professional design impresarios who helped introduce new printing technology and streamline the process of mass paperback production. He was known in countercultural circles for his Better Books store on Charing Cross Road, more or less London's version of San Francisco's City Lights. Better Books was notorious locally as a creative laboratory where beatniks, bohemians and hipsters, everyone from local art

students to Alan Ginsberg himself, were known to hang out. In 1960 Allen Lane, the founder of Penguin Books, hired Godwin as his new lead art director, and in the same year Godwin in turn hired Germano Facetti as creative director. Facetti was a trailblazing graduate of London's Central School for Art and Design who gained notoriety for his part in *This Is Tomorrow* (1956), a foundational pop art exhibition put on by the Independent Group, a coterie avant-garde of young artists. At Penguin, Facetti implemented significant production changes based on things that he, and that some of the people whom he hired, learned in art school. For instance, Facetti introduced offset lithography to Penguin's book-production method, which made printing large runs cheaper and faster than the mechanical hot-metal typesetting process that had been used since the company's inception in 1935 (Baines and Hare 35). It also made integrating images and copy much easier because it uses photosetting, a mode of producing printing proofs by photographing superimposed images and text, like a collage.

The urge for change that Godwin's and Facetti's hires met was being anticipated since the early 1950s, when Penguin's current creative directors, the famous typographers Hans Schmoller and Jan Tschichold, recognized that rival paperback firms, such as Pan and Sphere, were giving Penguin a run for their money because of the racy illustrations on the covers of their pulp and noir titles, areas of the paperback market to which Penguin had refused to cater (Baines 22). In response to the success of these niche genres, the first glimpses of a new face of Penguin came in 1958, when an in-house design consultant, Abram Games, created the publisher's first full-colour covers. His covers broke precedent by relegating the Penguin colophon to a small rectangle at the top of the front cover (22). However, these early attempts to change Penguin's cover design

were constrained by the limitations of hot-metal typesetting, which Schmoller and Tschischold insisted on continuing to use to make the firm's books' covers. Indeed, Schmoller and Tschichold were unaccustomed to some of the advances being made in printing technology after WWII, advances which would eventually displace typography, for a long time the core of book design, as just one part of the graphic design of books. Furthermore, the mechanical printing aspects necessitated by hot-metal typesetting made the process of manufacturing books painfully slow, at an average of nine months to a year for a run of any Penguin book, and manuscripts with photos presumably added more time to this process because of the extra work of manually inserting photo plates during printing (14).

With Godwin and Facetti at the helm, Penguin went through a revolution. Significantly, the changes they spearheaded laid the groundwork for Romek Marber, whose 1950s *Economist* covers enticed Facetti, to design over seventy crime paperbacks in his brief 1961-1962 stint at Penguin using his infamous "Marber Grid." Marber was a Polish immigrant who, studying in the UK under the auspices of the Polish Education Bill, attended the Royal College of Art, and the "Commercial Art" program at Saint Martin's School of Art, both in London, the latter being where he also taught in the late 1950s (Baines 49). Notably, Marber's template streamlined cover production, for as he explains:

> the freedom of where to place the title, the logotype and price and in what colour, is controlled by the grid, and routine readers of crime fiction will be able to pinpoint without difficulty the title and author's name. (Marber qtd. in Baines and Hare 54)

In other words, allowing the designer to focus on the image, the Marber Grid prioritizes what readers, "[w]hen faced with a large display of books," will more easily identify as conceptualizing a story which they have or have not already read (54).

Covers of Penguin books thus began to look a lot like the print, photographic and telegraphic media being produced by American commercial advertisers in the 1950s and 1960s. These people, many of whom were graduates of art school programs similar to those in the UK, designed magazines, record sleeves, paperback covers, as well as the print and television advertisements which these products replicated, following the principles of International Typographic Style (ITS), a form of graphic design that emerged in 1920s Switzerland. The essential task of ITS is to construct a sense of visual unity by asymmetrically organizing objective photography and sans serif typefaces, justified flush-left, ragged-right, on a grid, in order to "present visual and verbal information in a clear and factual manner, free from the exaggerated claims of much propaganda and commercial advertising" common in interwar Europe (Meggs 320). In the 1950s, members of the New York School innovated ITS after being introduced to it by European emigres. They dropped the strict structure, preferring an informal, pragmatic, yet still balanced approach, and more so embraced the idea of shapes, rather than strictly objective, realistic photography, communicating a concept. In the 1960s, this Americanized version of ITS undergirded the visual-identity movement, which "gained increased importance in the information age," as "international events, large governmental entities, and multinational corporations required complex design systems developed by graphic designers" (389). This proved successful for many companies to establish "highly systematic design programs" with the intention of unifying all corporate

products into a stylized whole. An example is this movement's prototype, developed at the Ulm Institute in Germany: the logos on the sides of Lufthansa airplanes, which were also reproduced on the menus inside of them (375).

Many publishers subsequently recognized like Facetti did that a standardized, manageable corporate identity was the best way to move product in the literary industry, which was struggling to reproduce itself on an increasingly outmoded infrastructure. It became less financially viable for example to continue to produce and market the dominant form of the literary novel – the leather-bound hardcover – in the traditional, costly way. This had been what publishers referred to as a "loss" venture that was willingly engaged in, if only to bear the "proud wound" of upholding the literary, knowing well that there would be no sizeable revenues from these low-value, limited life-span products (Sutherland 39).[6] As a Secker and Warburg executive states: "'at least half' of their books were counted on to make losses in their year of publication" (qtd. in Sutherland 30). This had not always been a problem for Britain's established publishers, backed for a long time by independent wealth. However, in response to sales declines resulting from the increasingly crowded multimedia market for cultural goods, services and experiences, publishers began to subsidize their losses in diverse ways more and more in the postwar years. One strategy was inventing bestsellers in the form of paperbacks about popular themes and trends. That 50,000 copies could be printed in ten hours on a Strachan and Henshaw book rotary, a standard early 1970s offset lithography press, catered to the kind of "bandwagonry" in which anything of note, from current

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[6] I cite Sutherland here, but "loss" publishing is touched on in many early 1970s publishing manuals. See Anthony Blond, *The Publishing Game* (1972), chapters 6 and 7; and Clive Bingley, *The Business of Book Publishing* (1972), pp. 34-35.

affairs to books on the Royal Family or far-off lands, could provide material for publishers' bread and butter (Blond 88). Other strategies were licensing novel content for reproduction by paperback firms, periodicals, and increasingly TV programming and film, which as Blond quips were very significant in editors' decisions when acquiring potential works that ideally were written by a trendy author.

For the British publisher Clive Bingley's *The Business of Book Publishing* (1972), the need to market literature like bestsellers is evident. He writes that "books, as products, have to be sold, not merely displayed to the customers' passing eye on the bookseller's shelves," because "far too few" people buy books "to make viable the extent of the book publishing now undertaken" (Bingley 47). In the words of Bingley's contemporary Anthony Blond: "The publishing trade . . . runs counter to the efficient atmosphere of a mass-marketing and mass-production world. . . . We are not using the printing machine to its best ability" (54). In essence there emerged among publishers a concerted effort to construct what Bingley calls "subject fields which cater to definable interests," in effect niche genres to be brought "aggressively to the notice of the potential customer" (Bingley 47). However, the crucial difference between Bingley's vision of the future of marketing – distributing promotional leaflets and catalogues to both readers and booksellers – and the one which J. A. Sutherland would describe toward the end of the decade, is that publishers, in Blond's words, "are too poor to buy time or space in the media of mass communication" (Blond 59). Indeed, Blond was more short-sighted than Bingley. Even though he counselled aspiring publishers to become versed in "conglomerate politics" (Blond 69), he imagined that marketing would progress in a merely improved pre-publication talk-up stage featuring publishers boasting about new

titles among themselves (70). He also goes on at length about the importance of hardback

jackets to travelling sales representatives. An attractive jacket "should be available at

least four months before publication" to circulate and gain attention during this stage in

the making of a (potential) book (52). Blond ironically calls this the modern form of

"subscription" to secure a certain number of copy sales before they are ever printed. As

he states: "A book's existence will be 'promised' by an advance jacket from an editor,

and if the subscription doesn't warrant publication the book will be abandoned" (52). He

does not mention marketing directly to customers. After all, he urges his readers:

> Remember the publisher does not sell to the public, but to the bookselling trade:
>
> indeed he is discouraged from doing anything else by the Booksellers'
>
> Association. If the trade cannot be persuaded that the publisher had a potential
>
> best-seller, they will not stock it and the public will not find it in the shops. (57)

In other words, this is a very unique moment on the cusp of what Claire Squires

describes as the shift in power from editorial to marketing wings in publishing houses

soon to be incorporated into transnational media conglomerates (1), when omens of the

risk of loss publishing were met with seismic shifts in the global economy. By the time of

Sutherland's *Fiction and the Fiction Industry* (1978), on the other side of this, the sales

effort looked much different: "The tendency was to encourage concentration on the

single, rapid-selling, bestseller, by a brand name author, with good rights, serialisation

and paperback sales prospects" (30). Indeed, an overarching theme in Sutherland's book

is that a critique of literary culture during the rise of multinational publishing requires a

shift in perspective from the Leavisite view that mass communication diminishes literary

quality. It came to be the prevailing view among publishers that mass-market fiction, as

well as the burgeoning higher education sector, were areas of concentrated sales that were necessary to invest in to sustain the lower-selling category of literary fiction. Capital "L" literature became more easily seen as an area of surplus value in the wider expanse of the book trades – something of a niche that it was necessary for publishers to gamble on to responsibly retain a field of high literary culture.

Sutherland argues that the oil crisis was a watershed moment, inaugurating what he calls the 1973 "literary-historical crisis" (xv). In line with this appraisal of postwar British publishing, Eric de Bellaigue's collection of *Bookseller* articles, *British Book Publishing as a Business Since the 1960s: Selected Essays* (2004), reflects that the outcomes of major structural adjustments in the literary industry in the years leading up to and following 1970s market deregulation created the conditions for the formation of what he refers to as "the bookish equivalent of the oil industry's seven sisters" (13), the firms formed by large-scale mergers of publishing houses into transnational media corporations. Where these and other book historians such as Squires agree is that until then sales had boomed. However the breakdown of Keynesian economics, the rise of printing and distribution costs, and cuts to public funding affecting library and educational purchasing, pressured the majority of suffering publishing firms and bookshops to privilege producing and stocking the titles that would lead to the highest turnovers (Sutherland xv-xvi). Sutherland suggests that this unprecedented period of adjustment, in which the conservatively controlled British book trade, which at his time of writing still propagated an air of "professional dignity" through such regulatory agreements and oversight bodies such as retail price maintenance, the Net Book Agreement (NBA), the Society of Authors and the Booksellers' Association, was one in

which some tantamount rules were broken, as the publishing establishment transitioned to embracing late-capitalist commodity culture.

The 1976 dissolution of the Traditional Markets Agreement (TMA) (whose 1945 formation "divided up world markets" for British and American publishers [Bellaigue 4]) was especially significant as the book industry's response to rapid industry contraction. The demise of this "pact" (Sutherland 28) guaranteeing British publishers rights over books in Anglophone markets outside of the US created a trade in which any publisher could enter new markets and set prices more freely, which had a number of specific effects on the balance of trans-Atlantic power in the book trade. Bellaigue argues furthermore that the main effect has been literary homogenization: firms tailor book size, length and material quality to popular trends, and works conforming to these trends have been more likely to be published. Books needed to be sold quickly and in large quantities, and prestigious hardbacks that were expensive for publishers to produce and for readers to purchase were "entirely against the imperative of rapid cash flow" (30) in the newly deregulated media economy.

For example, literary titles were often published in series form and knowingly destined for the backlist, whose depreciating copies were commonly liquidated to "remainder sellers" who would price them down in bargain shops. This practice went extinct when struggling firms introduced "anti-inflationary price codes" for this otherwise invaluable stock. It thus became harder to rationalize publishing a novel like Anthony Powell's *Hearing Secret Harmonies* (1975), the completion of his twelve-volume "A Dance to the Music of Time" series, because a new Powell reader was less likely to buy the previous eleven volumes that had recently been marked up (Sutherland 31-32).

1.4 Post-Art School Literary Production

The "disappearance of the solid hardback of durable leather binding" (Sutherland 33) signified far more than the breakdown in literary distinction once embodied in the physical form of the book. From a broader view of the structural components of capitalism around this time, we see how literary publishing was but one trade forced to adapt to the "buyer-driven" mode of commodity production and circulation. Benjamin D. Brewer has recently analyzed this form of capitalism in relation to the "cultural turn" of what Giovanni Arrighi called the "long twentieth century" – our contemporary systemic cycle of accumulation in the capitalist world-system, beginning with a period of material expansion in the late 1800s consumer commodity production boom and, as these lines of accumulation failed, a period of financialization. As Brewer writes, after WWII many more cultural and non-cultural commodities were packaged in newly accessible, cheap forms of print material. Over the course of this cycle, there has been an "increasingly important role of the commercialised production, distribution and consumption of images, brands, and popular culture in leading sectors of the core economies" (Brewer, "Cultural Turn" 39). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the initial "processes of materialisation became structurally central to historical capitalism only through the institutionalisation, and ultimate professionalization, of advertising" (48). Mass consumption of the commodities that were inevitably being overproduced needed to be embedded in the public imaginary for leading firms to establish dominance (48). "Market making," the "literal construction, reworking and expansion of consumer

demand" (Brewer, "Global Commodity Chains" 724), became a professionalized, in-house role in "vertically integrated" manufacturing firms, the dominant corporate form incorporating all activities in the development, production and circulation of products. In this "producer-driven" commodity chain, companies were involved in, among other activities like manufacturing, attaching recognizable brand identities to products with the intention of influencing wholesalers, distribution centres and retailers to stock their items (Brewer, "Cultural Turn" 49).

However, the producer-driven commodity chain fell apart in the early 1970s, most notably after the 1973 oil crisis, which as David Harvey has argued initiated the period of transition leading the world economic order toward neoliberalization. The series of crises in capitalist accumulation around this time led to the breakdown of Keynesian "embedded liberalism" – the "market processes and entrepreneurial and corporate activities" that had been "surrounded by a web of social and political constraints" during the period of postwar welfare-capitalism (Harvey 11). According to Harvey, elements of Keynesian economics, specifically low taxes and high social spending, resulted in Western "stagflation"; for example, Britain had to be bailed out by the International Monetary Fund in 1975-1976. In turn, neoliberal reforms – based on the Chicago Boys' theory – were justified by an ideology of individual freedom positioned as threatened by communism and fascism. In reality, as Harvey defines it, neoliberalism is "a *political* project to re-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites" (19, Harvey's emphasis), and a key tenet of sustaining economic stability in this mode of production has been "accumulation through dispossession" (19). This regime relies on class difference in the uneven distribution of goods and capital both

within Western states and on either side of the international division of labour. As Harvey

shows, as just one example of this, the privatization and minimal state-market

intervention innovated in Chile in 1973, replicated in the UK and the US under

Thatcher's and Reagan's respective administrations, and which has increasingly been

adopted by all Western nations, resulted in an escalation of wealth-hoarding by the top

0.1 per cent of Western populations (17). It is worth noting that the economies and

citizens of the Global South in the Structural Adjustment Program and post-Structural

Adjustment Program eras have also experienced widespread dispossession, as

neoliberalism has not improved material conditions in these eras like in the period of

embedded liberalism. Subsequently capitalism transitioned to a "lean" mode of

production, which involves Western companies outsourcing manual labour to cheap

offshore markets, and the facilitation of small-batch, "just in time" commodity

production processes.

In Brewer's analysis, in response to the global transition to a lean mode of

production, the commodity chain restructured into the buyer-driven form. This has

entailed changes the world over. In the Global North, where the majority of literary

products are circulated (but where, significantly, many are not physically manufactured

[see Brouillette, "South Asian Literature"; and chapter three below]), this has entailed an

intensification of the sales effort as the primary specialization of leading firms in the core

economies, who now competitively market images and brands *alone*:

> Many 'lead' firms have narrowed their focus to product development and
>
> marketing while outsourcing production and production-related functions to
>
> suppliers. . . . Much of this shift can be captured by noting the increased cost and

importance of activities that deal with intangibles, such as fashion trends, brand

identities, design and innovation, over activities that deal with tangibles, the

transformation, manipulation and movement of physical goods. (Gereffi et al. qtd.

in Brewer, "Cultural Turn" 39)

Buyer-driven commodity production has drastically impacted the main intentions

of publishing firms, resulting in a more acute focus on "explicitly financial" (Bellaigue

14) endeavours. That this type of production was adopted in order to stave off what in

large part brought down the 1950s and 1960s climax of material expansion,

overproduction and stock pileups (Arrighi 315), can be gleaned in the following call put

out by printers, publishers and sellers at a March, 1975, book trade symposium:

Can you modify or reduce the levels of stocks carried? Remove excessive stock

and slow moving lines . . . any means that can be found of shortening the

purchasing, manufacturing cycle should be utilised. (qtd. in Sutherland 31)

According to Sutherland, cuts to public funding of the institutions doling out

culture – for example, the decline in public library purchasing, which until the mid-1970s

had acted as a patronage system for authors – also resulted in a more acute focus among

publishers on marketing as a means of mitigating the financial risk of producing stocks of

books. It was also at this time that innovations in bookmaking, themselves the result of

attempts to cater to the increasingly unstable market, reinforced a perceived need for

creative marketing to have a more primary role in the book trade. Photographic printing

offered new opportunities for graphic, colour images to be used in the material packaging

of books, while the transition to cheaper forms of paper reflected the demise of the

conservative hardcover that had defined the prewar literary establishment.[7] Publishers

utilized the marketing potential more readily available in paperback genres – both pulp

and the Penguin classics – now recognized across the industry as the best way to move

product.

In turn, correlating with Gereffi et al. above, the concentration of formerly

vertically integrated publisher-manufacturers under conglomerate ownership has

maintained an aggressive drive to thin out all other "tangible" overhead expenditures

related to the actual handling of physical books – for example manufacturing,

warehousing, distribution, and any redundant labour that went along with all of that. As

one telling instance, in 1997 Pearson UK's headquarters combined warehousing and

distribution for all of its books, at that time those under the Penguin and Pearson

Education imprints, into Magna Park, Leicestershire, providing "also the occasion for

centralising customer services and credit control operations" (Bellaigue 192). John

Makinson, then chair of the Penguin Group, stated: "this will enable us to invest in

systems that improve the accuracy, speed, and efficiency of our supply chain" (qtd. in

Bellaigue 192). In Bellaigue's view, this "holds good as an objective that is being

pursued by all major trade houses. Underlying these improvements are usually significant

staff reductions" (192).

More relevant to my intentions here is how buyer-driven capitalism has

increasingly intensified the relationship between book design and the retail market. In

mid-1980s and 1990s Britain, for example, the fiction market was monopolized by the

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[7] A comprehensive review of these and other relevant innovations in bookmaking is available in Anthony Rota's *Apart from the Text*.

W.H. Smith Group, Dillons, and Pentos, retail giants interested in decorating their salesroom floors and walls "face out" with large amounts of bestselling "B-format" paperbacks written by famous authors and packaged with attractive covers. In 1993 these companies together sold about 40 per cent of adult trade books in the UK (Bellaigue 24); they thus functioned as the major publishers' biggest customers precisely because they could offset warehousing costs. The retail competition escalated after the 1995 dissolution of the NBA; this abolished price maintenance and ushered in the "freedom to discount" (Bellaigue 189) for these stores, for example in 2-for-1 "bung" deals. As Anthony Rota has summarized, this event terminated nearly a century of price-fixing which had placed large and small shops on a more equal playing field. The end of the NBA has meant that more people buy books from chain stores at the expense of small shops, publishers, and lesser-known authors who cannot compete with such affluent players (Rota 34).

As literary materialists show, the strata of literary consumers significantly expanded building up to and alongside these developments so that publishers could profit from educational expansion. To be sure, this is where Huggan and Brouillette do pay heed to education's role as a driving force behind the production and marketing of exoticism, itself corporate publishing's attempt to expand profit margins by incorporating postcolonial literary niches in the retail environments sketched out above. For Huggan, a prototype was Heinemann's development of the African Writers Series (AWS) with the specific intention of marketing novels by African authors to African schools as tools for instruction in ethnographic documentary in the late 1950s. This allowed British publishers to continue to extract wealth from and establish neocolonial presence in

former colonies by developing their "catastrophically low levels of book production" (51). In turn, editions of these books, complete with "emblematic" imagery and black and white author photos printed on their covers, proved fit for export distribution back to Britain's "neocolonial knowledge industry" (51): "Literature emerged as a valuable tool for the student of African customs" (53). Huggan argues that AWS authors were essentialized as stand-ins for their cultures in eminent promotional paratexts, and that this helped embed a neocolonial fantasy in the Western imaginary that writers from regions of the world where print was not central to the construction of a national cultural tradition must mediate a certain brand of factual, authentic representation in creative expressions (50). For Brouillette, if it has been a goal of globalized publishers to keep disseminating literary fiction in the decades following these developments, this is because "a niche audience exists to make that tradition financially viable" (*Postcolonial Writers* 54), facilitated in large part by further generations of the readership that Huggan describes – comprised by members of an affluent middle-class representing to publishers what Long calls a "much more diverse and sophisticated set of reading publics" (qtd. in Brouillette, *Postcolonial Writers* 52) than existed before WWII. Niche marketing of course cannot be considered outside of the proficiency of producing small one-off runs of editions via digital printing (Bellaigue 210-12); nor of the improved distribution management offered by ISBNs, which enable the dissemination of point-of-sales tracking data to publishers and booksellers (Brouillette, *Postcolonial Writers* 52).

However, another significant effect of the rise of literary marketing has been maintaining whiteness within the industry itself. This is because retail's rising hold over the output of the literary field has not occurred in the art school context. While the

"working class artist rode the wave of the post-war welfare settlement" (Banks and Oakley 45), the marvel of the "disappearing art school" initiated by the late-1970s marketization of education progressively eroded the opportunity offered by Britain's once "[o]pen and diverse" institutes (48).

In hindsight, what Frith and Horne called in *Art into Pop* the artistic "type" – the postwar bohemian subject formed by the art school system – has become a model of the normative labourer in the creative industries. Nevertheless, art schools' absorption into the university system has made occupying this subject-position exclusive and racialized – this absorption has "helped produce a more calculating relationship between students, higher education and the labour market," the "costs" of which are "inequality, potentially frustrated social mobility and stymied innovation and creativity" (Banks and Oakley 50). In effect cultural workers are stratified along class and racial lines, as university degrees providing credentials are more accessible to middle-class people – predominantly white – who are able to afford tuition, take on debt, and relocate to metropolitan campuses.

The historical circumstances for this include how the relatively unchecked allotment of treasury funds to established institutions and new postwar "red brick" institutions, "green-field" sites and polytechnics was halted amid inflation after the oil crisis (Shattock 105). Shortly after her election as Prime Minister, Thatcher's 1980 Public Expenditure White Paper placed education at the heart of the crisis: spending had reportedly risen from 3.2 per cent of GDP in 1951 to 5.3 per cent in 1979, a faster growth rate than housing, health or social services (105); she subsequently tightened the Treasury's control over education spending, abolished tenure, initiated staff reductions, and escalated tuition costs (106-16). It is within this context that if they did not shut

down, art schools were "absorbed into universities . . . rendering them (arguably) more durable and effective, under tightened financial and managerial regimes" (Banks and Oakley 49). These measures occurred alongside ever-increasing tuition fees, now capped at £9,250 per year.

Clearly, if a less wealthy student is not able or willing to take out a loan, as just one example of how an individual may acquire the material means necessary to get a higher degree, they are less likely to enter university than someone with familial or other financial support. Vikki Boliver has demonstrated the significant impacts that this structural barrier has on the labour market. Her analysis of Universities and College Admissions Service data between 1996 and 2006 on the demographics of English university applicants to prestigious universities within the elite "Russell Group" (Cambridge, Oxford, and the London School of Economics for instance) found that "[w]hereas nearly a quarter of all the university entrants classified as White entered Russell Group universities, this was the case for just 6 percent of Black Caribbean/African entrants and only 12 and 18 per cent of Pakistani/Bangladeshi and Indian entrants respectively" (351). Boliver finds a similar stratification among the rates of application, and acceptance of offers of admission, within these groups (352). Obtaining a degree from Russell Group schools tends to secure graduates professional careers with higher salaries than graduates of other schools (345). Boliver's findings cast the increase in UK participation in higher education from 5 to 40 per cent of the population since the 1960s (345) in light of the socio-economic realities governing the nature of that participation. She showed that, by 2006, increasing enrollment numbers had not meant a decrease in class and racial stratification.

1.5 Concluding Remarks: Notes for the Sociology of Literature

We are now in a position to update and broaden the sociology of literature's focus on literature's function as a mechanism in the socially divisive process of distributing and preserving the bourgeois sociolect's unique cultural capital, what Guillory precisely calls "linguistic capital": the privilege of a select fraction of citizens to study at an advanced level in the lingua franca of capitalist development and (neo)colonial domination (61). Following Guillory, with the inculcation of Standard English among a wide base of Anglophone society relatively achieved in the lower-level school system by the 1930s, the university became the apparatus for regulating access to a newly elevated form of literary practice: critical analysis (171). Especially after the rise of politicized literary theory in the 1960s, the beneficiaries of *this* contradiction between different uses of the same language were the new literary professionals and their protégés occupying the new "social space of literary culture," the university (165). Another point of ambivalence was the fact that literary professionalization's subsequent curricular revision, and the development of counter-curricula, was the "imaginary" political practice of identifying literary works and authors as stand-ins for actual living society (10). It became and to a large extent remains the norm for university students and scholars in English departments to analyze literary texts subversively, and to represent literary analysis as political protest, even though admittance to this practice is very exclusive.

However, now we might place less emphasis on literature as an institutional mechanism for inculcating a select fraction of society strictly how to read, write, and

think critically. As Guillory himself notes, albeit of American universities, there has been a large-scale "cultural capital flight" among the postwar professional-managerial class; responding to the marketization of higher education over the past 25 years or so, this class "has made the correct assessment that, so far as its future profit is concerned, the reading of great works is not worth the investment of very much time or money" (46). One presumes, then, that "the means of literary production and consumption" can no longer be conceived in terms of Guillory's restricted definition of "literacy" as "*the systematic regulation of reading and writing*" (18; Guillory's emphasis).

More recently, Jodi Melamed has shed light on the social and economic functions of literary studies in the aftermath of Guillory's moment, that is, within the context of "neoliberal multiculturalism," what Melamed defines as a "market ideology turned social philosophy" which "portrays an ethic of multiculturalism to be the spirit of neoliberalism and, conversely, posits neoliberal restructuring across the globe to be the key to a postracist world of freedom and opportunity" (138). Melamed argues that an ostensibly humanistic ideal of the possibility for literature to function as an "antiracist technology" was validated in postwar US state-funded reading programs in schools and colleges in an attempt to smooth race relations (140). In turn, such uses of literature have "developed in a particularly neoliberal-multicultural direction" (140). In the types of post-industrial job training offered at elite universities, novels deemed particularly useful for representing multicultural cohesion (i.e., *Reading Lolita in Tehran*) are used to train future "global elites" how to care for and manage themselves when confronted with cultural difference; this group conceivably includes any English majors who go on to become members of the

professional-managerial class that is increasingly charged with incorporating

underdeveloped nations and regions into multinational companies' interests (141).

The example of the UK creative economy reflects that literary publishing is

particularly prone to being affected by the relationship between education and cultural

production in the latest phase of cultural capitalism. As the literary field's linked

responses to neoliberal economic downturn, publishers rely on universities to train and

supply employees, including not just writers but designers, marketers and high-ranking

decision-makers charged with the task of efficiently managing corporate identity and

market visibility. In order to construct a fuller picture of literary culture, materialist

scholars must also illuminate how these developments regulate access to participating in

the publishing fields.

Chapter Two:

Making Readers: BookTrust's Multicultural Programming in the Creative Economy Context

This dissertation focuses on how literary representation and literary publishers' branding and marketing convey the interplay of pressures between racialized literary commodification and a scandal over a lack of literary-industry diversity, informed by a general, broad sense of how uneven access to university works to prevent members of minoritized communities from working in the contemporary British literary industry. The present chapter enriches this account by demonstrating the foundational links between two related phenomena: the British school system's increasing emphasis on multicultural teaching, and the incorporation of niche multicultural literary genres in the corporatized book industry.

I study multicultural programming by BookTrust, a registered charity receiving operational funding from Arts Council England (ACE) "that encourages people of all ages and cultures to enjoy reading" (Solomon, "About Booktrust" 26). Founded in 1921 by the Society of Bookmen to serve "the advancement of literature by the cooperation of the various branches of the book trade" (qtd. in Solomon, "Booktrust update" 30), BookTrust today acts mainly as a conduit for the commercial publishing industry, distributing millions of free books every year to students in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland in the robust network which is the school system. Like any ACE-funded organization, BookTrust must demonstrate support for cultural diversity, a remit that has been notably codified in ACE's "Creative Case for Diversity" initiative, begun in 2012

and recently extended until 2022. In recent years the charity has promoted books written by or about people from minoritized racial, ethnic, and faith backgrounds so as to facilitate learning about multiculturalism for schoolchildren. In promotional materials produced by the charity, this programming is presented as a conduit to the overarching policy aims of fostering social cohesion by widening access to arts and cultural participation throughout the creative econosmy.

Below, I explore the ways that the capacities of BookTrust to meet the requirements of educational policies of cultural diversity intersect with recent innovations in the commodification of literature. I focus in particular on the marketing of race and ethnicity by commercial publishing firms which are, in an ongoing process, rationalizing the acquisition, production and circulation of books by minority authors in the UK (Saha, "Rationalizing/Racializing Logic" 5). My treatment of BookTrust provides a window onto how the products of these kinds of practices reach their intended markets. They are backed by educational policy reforms – first initiated by the New Labour government, and enduring today – as well as by established techniques for the dissemination of literature by minoritized authors in the corporatized book industry.

2.1 Recent Innovations in Literary Commodification

Hardly a contemporary phenomenon in and of itself, the nuances of literary commodification that I emphasize in this chapter are nonetheless ones which have markedly intensified due to transformations in commercial publishing since the 1980s. As Claire Squires has argued, the 1980s witnessed a shift in power from the editorial to

marketing wings within publishing companies. These companies were being incorporated into transnational media conglomerates, and marketing emerged as a key means of mitigating risk and securing lucrative returns on advances paid to writers (Squires 1). The importance of literary-industry marketing campaigns has been especially pronounced over the last decade. This is due to the onset of a period of industry contraction owing both to general economic recession and to steady losses of publishers' profit margins because of the ever-increasing strength of "high volume/high discount outlets, which demand expensive marketing support, as well as new book formats that challenge everything from copyright to distribution" (Kean, Introduction 2).

For minoritized authors in particular, as a result of what Anamik Saha calls the "rationalizing/racializing logic of capital in cultural production," one of the adverse effects of the dominance of marketing is the way in which a given author's inscription of local, potentially subversive "counter-narratives of difference" can become overshadowed by orientalist and exoticist tropes relied on in mass-market packaging and promotions (Saha, "Rationalizing/Racializing Logic" 4). These tropes of the commercial literary marketing establishment essentialize the identities of racialized authors and characters as token representatives of minoritized cultures and help to circulate the hegemonic discursive constructions of racial otherness incessantly produced by mainstream media. What needs further analysis are the links between literary commodification and recent educational policy and curriculum reforms in the UK which have consolidated a multicultural education system.

Despite its shortcomings, racialized branding is currently providing British publishers with a certain image of racial inclusiveness amidst a growing scandal over the

lack of diversity in the literary industry. The fact that this industry's workforce does not reflect the diverse racial demographics of London has led to a number of grassroots initiatives. As just one example, the Bare Lit Festival for writers of colour was created in February 2016 in response to the fact that only 4 per cent of the 2000-plus authors involved in UK literature festivals in 2015 were of BAME descent ("About us"). Publishing firms have begun to shape both their products and recruitment practices in response to the often embattled outcries accompanying these grassroots initiatives. In January 2016, Penguin Random House UK dropped the requirement for its employees to have a university degree (Weale). This foreshadowed the rolling out of its "Creative Responsibility" platform, intended to, in Penguin's words: "help close the creativity gap" which "exists because of inequality in the UK" ("Creative Responsibility"). One of its goals was to increase the diversity of the people that the firm employs, from the boardroom to author lists to marketing professionals in executive positions of decision-making power. We can interpret corporate diversity initiatives in the literary field such as this – which often rely on forms of promoting and highlighting the work of minoritized authors based on their perceived cultural and racial difference – as obscuring the reality of deeply anchored systemic racism in the industry overall.

2.2 Literature and Multicultural Education

A more fine-grained analysis of different regional contexts would surely reveal subtleties, gradations, and exceptions to general trends within the recent history of delivering British educational policy. Nevertheless, one of the notable mainstream currents is how ideals of

inclusiveness within the literary and creative industries have served a unique function in this history. Appeals to multicultural literature have worked to the benefit of government and its affiliated organizations interested in capitalizing on the ideal of British social cohesion across racial boundaries. These appeals stretch back to at least 1995 and the infamous mention in *English in the National Curriculum* of incorporating "texts from other cultures" on classroom reading lists (qtd. in Bush, "Final Version" 63). The notoriety of this terminology lies both in its unprecedentedness in British curriculum history, and also the polarization of English literature on the one side, and all "other" literatures on the other. More frequent occurrences in recent educational policies, and in documents published by state-funded charities like BookTrust, embrace more of the literary industry's liberal-cosmopolitan promotion of multicultural literatures. What is perhaps not surprising, however, is how these policies and documents fail to register anything like the "constraining experience" of minority authors who seek publication for literary works through imprints of commercial firms and who thereby become associated with the commodified genre "multicultural fiction" and the usual ways that it is placed in the market (Saha, "Rationalizing/Racializing Logic" 2). Instead suggesting that literary writing is essentially unfettered artistic expression, educational policies and documents prominently link the reading of multicultural literature with wider social aims of consolidating a "multicultural" and "diverse" society.

Literature has long had a unique position in debates about the educational attainment of people who belong to disenfranchised racial and ethnic communities in the UK. In recent years these debates have provided some of the central impetus for reading charities to exist, justified by the idea that literacy plays an important role in offsetting

social inequality. For instance, as outlined in a National Literacy Trust report entitled

Literacy Changes Lives (2014), dramatically low literacy levels of children and young

adults in the UK compared to their Organisation for Economic Co-operation and

Development (OECD) counterparts is linked to impoverishment, criminal activity, and

poor health (Morrisroe 6-7). Learning to read is presented as a corrective measure for this

inequality, especially in relation to wider economic volatility (Morrisroe 5). The recent

development of reading initiatives in the name of both multicultural education and

mitigating inequality reflects a longstanding association between elite access to education

and other forms of racialized socio-economic privilege in the UK. As Audrey Osler has

reviewed, a reference point for the beginning of heightened government interest in lack of

access to education for minoritized communities is the Swann Report of 1985, otherwise

known as *Education for All*, the Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Education of

Children from Ethnic Minority Groups. Osler writes:

> responding to Black community concerns about schools' failure to support
>
> Black students' academic performance … [*Education for All*] highlighted
>
> racism in schools and society, concluding that all schools, regardless of ethnic
>
> make-up, should develop political education which can "play a part in
>
> countering racism at both institutional and individual levels." (188)

Amid the melee of debates for and against multicultural education, the literary field

emerged as a pivotal terrain of struggle, which we see particularly well in the curricular

reform debates which played out in the early issues of *Wasafiri*. The journal originated as

a platform for the Association for the Teaching of Caribbean, African, Asian, and

Associated Literatures (ATCAL), which Susheila Nasta, *Wasafiri*'s founding editor,

describes as "a pressure group in the late 70's and early 80's to persuade examination boards to incorporate and to take seriously the writings of authors such as Sam Selvon, Jean Rhys, Ngugi wa Thiongo, Anita Desai and many other well-known figures" (3). Addressing in 1987 the impending introduction of General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations in schools in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland (a feature of the National Curriculum produced by the Education Reform Act 1988), Robert Bush echoed ATCAL's concerns while highlighting the National Criteria for examinations' provisions for English Literature, which state:

> Examining Groups may extend the scope of what is traditionally regarded as the canon of English Literature in recognition that awareness of the richness of cultural diversity is one of the rewards of the study of literature. The majority of works must be literary texts originally written in English which may, for example, include American and Caribbean writing, but works in translation may also be included. (qtd. in Bush, "GCSE Literature" 18-19)

But in the years following Thatcher's introduction of the National Curriculum, Bush and others noted that such nationally mandated provisions had not taken immediate widespread effect in terms of consolidating a multicultural education system. We read in a 1991 review of a report on the matter, for example:

> White males write most of the contemporary literature set by A level exam boards. In the majority of A level English syllabi there are no set texts by Black or Asian authors, according to a recently published report. *Black Authors and A Level Set Texts* analyses the 378 literary choices offered for 1990 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The most commonly set authors are

shown: Shakespeare, Chaucer, Hardy, Austen, Milton, Pope and Webster.

("For information" 21)

In 1993 Bush outlined an approach to incorporating a much more robust proportion of multicultural literature into classrooms than had yet been achieved. He based his argument around *English for Ages 5 to 16*, otherwise known as *The Cox Report*, which was released by the Department for Education and Science in 1989, a guide for English teachers on how to adapt their classrooms to the provisions of the National Curriculum. Conforming his ideas to the parameters of this report – which as Bush notes teachers were "statutorily obliged" to follow – Bush argues that one of the chief benefits of multicultural literature in particular is "exploring a topic" by "comparing texts and cultures"; he argues that this can allow pupils to "experience the 'broader awareness of a greater range of human "thought and feeling"' which Cox 5–16 encourages" ("Multicultural Literature" 35). Bush also argues that as a result of the introduction of Media Studies under English Department provisions, literary texts were now in unprecedented position to be analyzed for particular styles of representation in a way that was less available via the application of "traditional literary criticism" and its supposedly limited focus on character, plot, setting, and so on (35). This bears "particular pertinence" to multicultural literature – as it is written by holders of, in Bush's words, an "inside view" of colonial and postcolonial indigenous cultures, authors who rewrite the hegemonic archetypes of racialized individuals and societies which had become "embedded in the popular imagination" through television, film, and canonical novels of imperial conquest (35).

Adding insult to injury, in a 1995 article assessing the Department for Education's *English in the National Curriculum* of the same year, Bush notes with considerable lament that the document contains only "the ritual nod to multicultural literature" ("Final Version" 63). *English in the National Curriculum* mentions including on English syllabi "texts from other cultures and traditions that represent their distinctive voices and forms, and offer varied perspectives and subject matter" (qtd. in Bush, "Final Version" 63), but "there are no writers of multicultural literature on any of the lists" (Bush, "Final Version" 63).

In sum, the education system was hostage in a broader political battle over how government and policymakers might recognize the growing diversity of British society and cultural production. Despite arguments for reading lists to reflect and celebrate the presence of new diasporic voices and perspectives in British and Commonwealth literatures, English classrooms remained one of the central strongholds in the kind of "opposition to local diversity, and in particular to any strong response to ethnic or class-based sub-cultures" espoused by Thatcherite traditionalism (Buckingham and Jones 1). In other words, educational policy has only recently been revamped to include serious efforts to reflect multicultural awareness. Shortly after New Labour took office, Sir Ken Robinson was commissioned by the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education to produce the *All Our Futures* report. Building on New Labour-sponsored research, this report argued for the specific aim of "creative and cultural education" to be "to address the broader formation of students' subjectivities" such as their "self-confidence and self-esteem" and their "knowledge of the growing complexity and diversity of multi-cultural Britain" (Buckingham and Jones 9). David Buckingham

and Ken Jones have framed this initial iteration in New Labour's educational reform as a "re-emergence of interests that had spent two decades on the margins of policy-making" – in other words a branded response to years of "Conservative stringency" with respect to seriously recognizing matters of pressing concern for left-wing educationalists promoting expansion in arts and cultural subject areas as postwar immigration and the diversity of Britain's diasporic communities proliferated (9).

2.3 The New Black Writing

As these policy shifts were happening, dramatic structural changes were taking place within the entire book production process, which encouraged publishers to market literature in ways that were compatible with the educational establishment's increasing focus on multicultural inclusion. These changes initially arose as publishers – the vast majority now operating as newly incorporated imprints of transnational multimedia conglomerates – struggled to expand profit margins during the 1990-1993 UK recession. As the independent publisher Peter Owen noted in an edited collection, *Publishing Now* (1993), this only served to compound other persistent factors impinging on the book market: "Never, since I entered the book trade, has the sale of books been so small. Recession, television, videos and lack of library funding have combined to make it very difficult for publishers to survive, and for writers to publish their books and to make a living from writing" (42). In response, retail chain stores instead of publishers began determining what kinds of books were to be acquired and published, and how these books would subsequently be designed and promoted so that they may reach consumers

imagined to make up market fragments with certain tastes. According to Jacqueline Graham, one of the contributors to *Publishing Now*:

> Many publishers' campaigns now have the chains at their core. Not only have they established themselves in the public consciousness as *the* place to buy books, but they provide numerous special promotional opportunities for the publisher for their serious fiction and non-fiction. For example, a "Waterstone's Book of the Month" selection could double the sales of a title. (128)

Notably, chain stores began returning unprecedented numbers of books – sometimes thirty to forty per cent of a given title's print run – making "it difficult for publishers to support new or lesser-known writers, because sales of such books can be as low as 300-400 copies, when the returns are counted" (Owen 43). In turn, publishers vehemently began to acquire only the texts deemed to have so-called "publicity potential" – everything from an attractive cover, the potential for review, and a personable author available for in-store appearances and autograph signings (Graham 129). Stores often cut deals with publishers well in advance of these texts' production, guaranteeing visible floor space for certain titles. These publicity plans would often play a "crucial role in the acquisition of books" (129). For example, when an author and their agent would auction rights for a title, the publicity plan submitted in the fiscal offer would often equal – and sometimes surpass – the author's asked advance (129).

The tendency to cater to demands for marketable publicity emerged amid widespread cuts to state-level funding for cultural production. Granted, this funding itself had always been "biased towards performing arts," but 1990s UK literary publishing had

been nevertheless still heavily impacted by Thatcher's recent "erosion of arts subsidy,"

most notably the 1986 closure of the Greater London Council (or GLC) (Debbie Hicks

18). This specifically impacted the minority arts.[1] Public awareness about the lack of

diversity in the British cultural industries began to emerge in the early days of British

neoliberalism, the period of Thatcher's reign as Prime Minister, which Ashley Dawson

has described as one in which social policies reflected a resurgence of colonial-minded

biological theories of race (5). Naseem Khan's *The Arts that Britain Ignores* (1976),

jointly sponsored by the Arts Council of Great Britain (ACGB) and the Commission for

Racial Equality, was an early challenge to how these policies were affecting the arts

world. It led to the establishment of the Minority Arts Advisory Service and, following

this, the GLC under Ken Livingstone's Labour leadership in the 1980s began to devote

resources to developing the minority arts.[2] During this time ATCAL began its work with

the help of a GLC grant.

     The Struggle for Black Arts in Britain was published in 1986 by Comedia, a left-

leaning cultural studies press largely owing its existence to Livingstone's GLC. In it

Kwesi Owusu discusses the relatively positive influence that the GLC was having. The

1980s GLC established the Ethnic Arts sub-committee, under which the shortcomings of

previous arts funding frameworks in allocating moneys to members of ethnic minority

communities were largely overturned. This is not to say that the funding of "ethnic

minority" arts did not have its problems. *The Glory of the Garden*, a 1980s GLC

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[1] See also Paul Gilroy, *Small Acts: Thoughts on the Politics of Black Cultures*; Ashley
Dawson, *Mongrel Nation: Diasporic Culture and the Making of Postcolonial Britain*; and
James Procter, *Dwelling Places: Postwar black British writing*.
[2] See Paul Gilroy, "Cruciality and the Frog's Perspective"; and Rasheed Araeen and Eddi
Chambers, "Black Art: A Discussion."

pamphlet about its arts-funding approaches, is prefaced with an excerpt from Kipling's "The White Man's Burden." In Owusu's view, this literary ornament signifies the continued presence of a segregationist discourse which implicitly privileges traditionally Western artistic practices, evident throughout official arts policies of postwar British governments. No matter if they were conceived by members of the Labour or Conservative party, Owusu contends that postwar arts funding policies project ignorance about the nature of cultural production by African, Caribbean, and South Asian migrants to Britain. An example of this is the fact that the ACGB espoused the infamous "arm's length principle" when it came to supporting the arts. Owusu sheds light on how the underlying Eurocentric assumptions of this principle impacted allocations to black cultural producers and organizations. Its implied separation of art and state contradicts the melding of artistic practices in all areas of social life predominant in black expressive cultures. The nature of the "Allied Arts," a term for the product of this melding, runs up against the Romanticist notion of discretely separate "spheres" of artistic and other activities.

Nevertheless, according to Owusu, the GLC made significant headway in supporting racialized cultural production in the 1980s, especially in the theatre, visual arts, and film. The GLC's closure was also lamented by many in the literary industry. While some gains were made afterwards (notably in ACGB's shift to promoting reading in libraries), literature continued to receive a "slim slice" of state-level cultural funding (Debbie Hicks 18). In the 1994-1995 Arts Council of England budget, for instance, only 1.2 per cent of grant-in-aid went to literature (Arts Council of England 11). Hence Owen's claim that if there was not going to be considerable state funding to benefit the

publishing trade, particularly by supporting libraries and Arts Council England, "books, as we know them, will phase out" (43).

Within this tumultuous fiscal context, publishers rebounded in a specific sector of the young adult fiction market – what came to be known as the "New Black Writing." Mobilizing a desire to make books seem as trendy as other new media, and to exploit "the good value for money presented by books . . . when money is scant" (de la Mare 17), a method was developed for integrating within the display layouts of commercial retail stores novels about the contemporary immigrant experience. Nick Hornby interpreted this as part of a "craze for literary partitioning that is sweeping the nation's bookstores," in part entailing the creation of new "room for a Black Literature section" alongside traditional genres like "Crime/Thriller and SF/Fantasy" (8). The development of marketing techniques for works by a new generation of "Black British" authors in other words reflects how chain stores were themselves interested in the uncanny standardization of the branding of cultural difference. It also bears striking similarity to how books written by or about members of minoritized communities are being branded and subsequently circulated by BookTrust today.

Critics have considered how aspects of the literary production process unique to the early 1990s contributed to the public conception of the New Black Writing. These studies are especially significant for their demonstration of how this genre reached mass appeal vis-à-vis a shift in market demand leading publishers away from acquiring rights for historical fiction written by black authors to embracing novels depicting "the here-

and-now" of black British working-class youth (Jaggi 31).[3] For example, Andy Wood

argues that black British literature rose to popularity largely because of the unorthodox

practices of one of the genre's original publishers, the independent X Press founded by

Dotun Adebayo and Steve Pope (18). Its first publication, Victor Headley's novel *Yardie*

(1992), was a surprising success with a particular segment of the young reading public:

"*Yardie* was the book that got a lot of black people into bookshops who thought the

books out there had nothing to do with their lives. It also started people thinking of

themselves as writers" (Pope qtd. in Jaggi 31). With this publication selling over ten

thousand copies produced in multiple pressings, in order to fund further X Press ventures

the rights to *Yardie* were quickly sold to the paperback publisher Pan Macmillan "and the

book went on to sell 80,000 copies worldwide" (Wood 20). Its success thus ran up

against a view that the new wave of black British writing was just "downmarket fiction

that revels in depicting stereotypical images of black people" (18). It proved the potential

for the genre's viability in the general trade market. Reflecting also "the market drive for

novelty" (Jaggi 31), imprints within large corporate publishing houses in the UK began

acquiring novels written by a coterie of young racialized writers – Bidisha, Andrea Levy,

Courttia Newland, and Fred D'Aguiar, among others.

Critics have reflected favourably on these novels for many qualities, like formal

experimentation, representation of universal human empathy, and use of a rhythmic voice

characteristic of black expressive cultures. Despite this wealth of assets, they were

marketed as "urban," "street" and "ghetto" tales in the vein of how the commodification

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[3] See also Mark Stein, *Black British Literature*; and Gail Ching-Liang Low and Marion
Wynne-Davies, editors, *A Black British Canon?*

of early hip hop sensationalized inner-city black life. Diran Adebayo is the author of an early critical success, *Some Kind of Black*, which was first published by Virago Press in 1995. Adebayo describes particularly well how promotional materials for black British writers often reproduced insights of anthropological criticism: "we have mainly been remarked upon and desired for our content … black writing has been prized chiefly for its ability to bring information about lives beyond the experience of your average book buyer. . . . [It is seen as] 'news to others' – information for those who don't know" (171). Interestingly, elsewhere Adebayo implies that the nature of this perspective also organized (or racialized) the spatial politics of the retail environment, wherein he found himself "confined to the 'black books' ghetto in bookshops, whilst every other race, Jew, Wasp, Indian, gets to be in the A to Z of fiction, with the big boys and girls, in the mainstream canon" (Modiano 39). One thing that we see here is how the marketing and retailing prerogative to label books as "black" and to design their covers with stereotypical images of black British culture and blurbs presenting authors as the ostensibly authentic voice of black British millennials uniquely replicates one of the core tenets of anthropological criticism. Exacerbating the view that the literary expression of minoritized writers only ever constitutes pure content, the superficiality of display layouts in retail stores further reduced texts' significance to mere face value, where the pre-formed aesthetic judgment of "your average book buyer" (Adebayo 171) was literally invoked by a book's cover.

Returning to BookTrust, we see a similar discourse at work in their promotional materials for multicultural literature, but now cloaked in a certain liberal celebration of the pedagogical and social benefits that derive from the reading of, and identification

with, texts grouped under this market niche. A search on BookTrust's website reveals a number of booklists available for teachers, parents, and any interested readers to browse in hopes of finding reading material with educational content. Topics range from more traditional children's and young adult genres like fantasy, to ones about multicultural issues listed under topics such as "Refugees/asylum," "Immigration," and "Diversity (BAME)." These lists are accompanied by promotional blurbs which suggest how works' core themes can help inculcate in children a particular disposition toward the issues related to the general topic. For example, a blurb heading a list of "Books about refugees and asylum seekers" states: "Since asylum can be a confusing issue for children (and even adults), here are some books that explore what it really means to flee your home and have to start your life over" (BookTrust, "refugees-asylum"). Another blurb on this list accompanying a translated edition of Fabio Geda's *In the Sea there are Crocodiles* reads: "This story charts the same story thousands of people undertake every day, [the protagonist] Enaiatollah is one of the lucky ones. This important book will make you realise the ridiculous nature of nation states and boundaries and how lucky we are to be born in Europe" (BookTrust, "In The Sea"). And a blurb for Elizabeth Laird's *Welcome to Nowhere* reads:

> Laird, as always, takes on a complex international issue and deftly translates it
> for younger readers. While clearly about the Syrian civil war and refugee
> crisis, this book is perfect for developing understanding amongst children and
> teenagers regarding conflict and the resulting exodus of people anywhere.
> (BookTrust, "Welcome to Nowhere")

What is striking in these examples is an ideological perspective which presents literary texts as learning tools meant to offer young readers knowledge about experiences of people from racialized foreign communities. These promotional materials in effect present the purpose of reading as the readers' empathetic identification with characters – to "put oneself in someone else's shoes" as it were, and to thereby understand interpersonal scenarios and relationships that British schoolchildren are otherwise unlikely to encounter. In effect this is an ideological disposition which reproduces the underlying logic of New Labour's branded reprise of the 1980s and 1990s leftist stance on the value of folding multicultural awareness into arts and cultural teaching. Granted, the books about multicultural issues on BookTrust's reading lists are not marketed in the same pejorative fashion as black British writing was in the 1990s – far from it. And the effect of a more commending discourse of the value that stories written by or about members of minoritized racial, ethnic and faith communities on young readers may be to give them some of the tools to think critically about social inequality within Britain or abroad. For example, young readers may learn about the socio-political nature of heavy realities like war and asylum, which, following the promotional materials for these texts play large parts in giving rise to the writing of them in the first place. But at the same time, a core underlying tenet of anthropological criticism drives this presentation – that creative expression by or about members of minoritized communities delivers "news" of such heavy issues, and seemingly nothing else. That these strands of ideology persist largely via the increasingly "rationalizing/racializing" book production process is not a reality that we should ignore.

One notable thing that this chapter's analysis sheds light on is the consistency of anthropological criticism in appraisals of multicultural literature coming from rather disparate camps in the literary field. On the one hand, as we see in descriptions of 1990s literary promotions by Adebayo above, a certain discourse in the marketing of black British literature relies on this viewpoint. On the other hand, multicultural education pundits such as Robert Bush tend also to reduce the value of multicultural literature to its apparent utility as a realistic, purely content-laden document. In this latter view, multicultural literature is conceived as something written by authors privy to a certain authenticity, and has a purpose of teaching British children about cultural difference as delineated in the English literature guidelines for the National Curriculum (Bush, "Multicultural Literature" 35). We have reason to question what might seem like an intuitive distinction between the effort to secure commercial literary profits and the effort to build a more inclusive education system, a more just and accessible intellectual marketplace. Perhaps with knowledge of the workings behind BookTrust's role in helping to consolidate a form of multicultural education like that for which Bush advocates, we learn something novel about the extent to which New Labour and post-New Labour educational policies have widened access to arts and cultural education and participation as promised. While these policies replicate a leftist ideological celebration of multicultural literature that emerged in defiance of Conservative educational and cultural policies, current initiatives have not yet generated this wider access.

2.4 Conclusion

Entrée to British education continues to be exclusive, especially to the elite arts and

design programs which function as pathways to positions of decision-making power in

the literary industry (Kean, "Could do better" 22-23). The reliance on literary products

published by imprints of commercial publishing corporations has been one way for

literacy organizations to integrate their programming within the provisions for funding

provided by ACE – itself statutorily obligated to demonstrate measures to foster diversity

as codified by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Granted, the diversity

initiatives developed by UK arts organizations to satisfy this obligation have been

castigated by many for failing (see Saha, "Diversity initiatives don't work"; Dyer). What

is apparent is that policy pressures to demonstrate something like Penguin Random

House UK's "Creative Responsibility" can force both not-for-profit cultural

organizations and corporate cultural production firms to meet the diversity remits of their

parent corporations and state-run funding bodies in ways that produce less than desirable

results for individual authors and creative workers, for example by developing and

disseminating racialized literary products in ways that serve to solidify a "constraining

experience" for minority authors (Saha, "Rationalizing/Racializing Logic" 2).

One of the emphases of my research is the fact that the nature of the marketing of

minoritized writers changed in the 2000s after policies of cultural diversity introduced by

New Labour began to affect literary production. The rise of the New Black Writing in the

1990s anticipated this new era of marketing. The market circulation of this genre

exemplifies how writers categorized as "BAME" have been ghettoized in an industry

predominantly interested in ornamentalizing the racial difference of authors to entice

Britain's supposed white upper-middle-class reading strata. Moreover, the New Black

Writing's success should be understood as a specific result of the ability of corporate publishers to monopolize a gap in the retail market left by the decline in public subsidy for minoritized arts and literature. Little, Brown (originally Little, Brown & Company, founded in 1838 as one of America's first independent publishing houses) published Adebayo's *Some Kind of Black* on its Abacus imprint in 1996. This was shortly after Little, Brown's parent corporation, the Time Warner Book Group, expanded into the UK in 1992 with its first branch in London, and subsequently marketed black writers as "urban" in the Anglophone literary market. A similar attempt to capitalize on "urban" fiction is seen in Pan Macmillan's purchase of the publishing rights to Headley's *Yardie*. This gap would continue to be capitalized on as a result of New Labour cultural policies in years to come.

Regarding BookTrust, in the immediate context its multicultural programming serves to reproduce what Mike Phillips has called the "cosmetic multi-culturalism" of New Labour-developed diversity policies and initiatives, in which the economic interests of institutions and companies have "benefited hugely from the commodification of identity" (22). A misleading surface image of "equal opportunity recruitment" (21) has satisfied the provisions of Blairite multicultural ideology, trumpeting the creative industries as the economic base of a tolerant nation of harmonious partnership, and commercial exchange, between people from all walks of life, heritages, and backgrounds. This allows creative firms to brand themselves with an image of the diverse and cohesive society whose foundations they do not in fact support.

To conclude from a broader perspective, as the very issue of creative-industries diversity has become of increasing concern throughout the creative-economy context, and

as proposed remedies are linked to widening access to elite forms of arts and design education programs in both compulsory schools and higher education institutions, we need to frame the development of multicultural reading initiatives as yet another response to the scandal of industry whiteness. While on the surface the highlighting of books by and about people from racialized communities makes it seem like concrete steps have been made toward achieving a more inclusive creative economy, whiteness prevails in the boardrooms and upper-tier marketing and management wings of publishing firms. Thus, above all in the current context, what multicultural reading programs constitute is a symptom of – and not redress to – social disparity arising from broader economic and political transformations. This is a rising tide of disparity which Thomas Piketty argues has been mounting throughout the neoliberal era. Despite being presented as *the* solution to global economic stagnation, the result of neoliberal cuts to social spending has been startlingly expanding – and racializimg – income inequality. Multicultural reading programs are one site of the literary field's manifestation and perpetuation of this disparity.

Chapter Three:

Corporate Social Responsibility, anti-meritocratic egalitarianism, and the case of Hari Kunzru's *Transmission*

> *When our founder Allen Lane broke the mould and published the first Penguin sixpenny paperbacks in 1935, he made books available to everyone. Whether it's building relationships with schools local to our sites, or finding talented new writers from under-represented communities through WriteNow, in 2016 we carried on this legacy. The creativity gap is rooted in the UK's unequal society, and means not everyone has an equal opportunity to meet their creative potential. To achieve this mission we've set ourselves a number of ambitious goals to 2020.* (PRH UK 3)

So said Tom Weldon, CEO of Penguin Random House UK (PRH UK), in the epigraph for the 2016 "Creative Responsibility Report" which outlines Penguin's plans for inclusivity and sustainability over the next few years.[1] Weldon's statement suggests how "creative responsibility" returns to and revises what Alistair McCleery has called the

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[1] While the focus of this chapter is the publisher's branding strategies for diversity, we should note that there is considerable discussion of PRH UK's relationship to environmental sustainability in the Creative Responsibility Report. For example, we read of how in 2016, 93 per cent of the paper that the publisher used in the production of its books came from "sustainable Forest Stewardship Council sources" (PRH UK 41), earning "top marks" from the World Wildlife Foundation (42). Accounting for everything from the energy used in its offices and warehouses, to "indirect impacts, including the paper mills who supply us with our paper, and the printers who print our books," the company calculates the annual carbon footprint per book that it makes to be 0.187 kilograms of CO_2 (43).

"integrated commercial and cultural mission" at the foundation of Penguin since its inception in 1935 (133). Originally "expressed as the concern to publish good books at low prices" (133), the publisher has sought to harness the power of mass commercial book production to facilitate democratizing British access to knowledge. Describing the new series of "Pelican" books about history, sociology, science and accessible art criticism which Penguin introduced to complement its fiction paperbacks, Allen Lane wrote in a 1938 issue of *Left Review*:

> For what is essential, especially to-day, and what more and more men and women are demanding, is access to contemporary thought and to a reasonable body of scientific knowledge. . . . [I]n publishing these sixpenny books we provide access to some of that knowledge on which a reasonable life must be based. (968)

Penguin's continuation of this longstanding cultural mission relies on a strategy of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Subharata Bobby Banerjee and others have demonstrated how discourses of CSR which have swept contemporary corporate branding serve a mainly ideological function. While projecting a "corporate personality" of being preoccupied with engaging in an ostensibly more ethical mode of capitalism, "these discourses always represent and construct the relationship between business and society on corporate interests, not social interests" (Banerjee 52). "'Progressive' discourses of corporate social responsibility, corporate citizenship, and sustainability," Banerjee writes, "create a particular form of corporate rationality that despite its emancipatory intent serves to marginalize large groups of people" (59).

Still with education on its mind, Penguin has departed from its original mission of widening access to book consumption and shifted focus to tackling the disparities which

make it difficult for individuals to access the literary field – the "creativity gap." The publisher has gotten rid of the requirement for its employees to have a university degree. It was the first British publisher "to pay work experience participants the National Living Wage in a bid to make the publishing industry more accessible" ("PRH to pay" 8). Banning personal referrals, the company has pledged to offer 450 randomly selected people two-week placements every year, and it "is also providing access to subsidised accommodation through a trial partnership with The Book Trade Charity in an attempt to help make it easier for people based outside London to participate" (8). "As the result of the changes," reads the promotional write-up in *The Bookseller*, "PRH says its applicant pool now reflects the ethnic diversity of London, reaching and appealing to more young people from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities, with two-thirds of its applicants coming from outside London and the South East" (8).

In the Creative Responsibility Report, PRH UK maps out diversification plans for the next few years, with a focus on redressing uneven access to British education. The publisher has pledged to help deliver the *Read on. Get on.* initiative, jointly developed by the National Literacy Trust and Save the Children, to combine their emphases on youth social work and reading and literacy as means to achieve a more inclusive society. PRH UK's role is to provide the necessary books to encourage reading among schoolchildren. Reflecting the company's original conviction that widening access to book consumption can have a socially progressive ripple effect, PRH UK helped fund World Book Day, an event which saw one million children redeem tokens for Penguin books (PRH UK 8). The company also produced two £1 book specials; and 130,000 students from 2,000 schools were said to have read e-books produced by various PRH UK imprints in a

campaign called Read for My School. Furthermore, PRH UK has pledged that by 2020 it will "support 500 local children struggling with reading" and to "donate 500,000 books to charity" (9). PRH UK employees are also volunteering in Ministry of Stories, a children's writing workshop located behind a secret door in Hoxton Street Monster Supplies, a popular children's shop in central London (23).

The Creative Responsibility Report explains the broadening of Penguin's foundational cultural mission. It promises strategies for recruiting diverse employees and acquiring publication rights for books in a manner which "will reflect UK society by 2025" (PRH UK 31). In the 2016 report the company claimed that it was on track to meets its goals with increased hiring of women, and BAME, LGBT and differently abled people. PRH UK seems to have intuited that "closing the creativity gap" must involve tackling social inequality. This requires dismantling the barriers between marginalized social groups and access to formal education. It also requires prospecting for talent in what Rebecca O'Rourke describes as the informal sites of apprenticeship in the social development of writing practice – sites outside of formal education, but which instruct writers nonetheless in the ways of developing and publishing their work (39).

The writing-workshop campaign *WriteNow* is the latest initiative in this spirit. It works in partnership with three of Arts Council England's (ACE) newly designated National Portfolio Organisations: Spread the Word (based in London), Commonword (based in Manchester), and Writing West Midlands, writing charities long dedicated to supporting the work of marginalized writers, and which now as National Portfolio Organisations all receive the largest sums of ACE funding for their activities. *WriteNow* is designed to "find, mentor and publish new writers from communities underrepresented

on the UK's bookshelves" ("PRH UK launches WriteNow" 8). The scheme will include

for the participating writers "time with editors and access to literary agents, booksellers

and published authors . . . includ[ing] Kit de Waal, author of My Name is Leon, Bali Rai

and Sathnam Sanghera, who is also the chair for Creative Access, a charity that offers

paid internships in creative industries for BAME interns" (8). The media release for the

scheme states that it is designed to "target" writers "who are LGBTQ (lesbian, gay,

bisexual, transgender, queer) or BAME (black, Asian, minority ethnic) and writers with a

disability" (8). The members of these groups have been marginalized in creative-

economy arts and cultural education programming and initiatives (see Banks, *Creative

Justice*, chapter 5).

   With such initiatives in view, this chapter suggests that Hari Kunzru's second

novel, *Transmission*, and the promotional events surrounding the publication of its

English-language editions, can be read in relation to uneven access to British arts and

cultural higher education. British cultural production firms have relied on diversity

initiatives as strategies for incorporating and managing an increasingly diverse population

of cultural producers and consumers. The massive rise in formal arts and cultural higher

education programs instantiated by New Labour is often cited by creative-economy

pundits as proof alone that inclusion in cultural participation, production and

representation has been achieved. Codified in the policy of "widening participation"

introduced by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and continuing now under

the Department for Education (DfE), a gradual erosion of barriers in accessing higher

education, and an increase in the number of student places in universities, have been

some of the discursive stilts in British creative-economy ideology. What is notable about

the branding strategy for Penguin's recent diversity initiatives, distinguished in Weldon's expression of Penguin's corporate personality, is how the firm has managed increasing public awareness of DfES's and DfE's failure to deliver on the widening participation promise.

Transmission is canny about how Penguin's diversification attempts appeal to a "business case for diversity" increasingly embraced across British cultural development. Commercial literary publishers' attempts to incorporate and manage increasingly diverse workforces are responses to the intersecting pressures of general industry contraction and a public scandal over industry whiteness.[2] *Transmission*'s treatment of the uneven racialized access to markets for globalized labour offers commentary on the same politicized and racialized working conditions and production processes from which the book emerged. Penguin's CSR strategy has sought to brand the publisher as a rogue antidote to racialized disparities in British education by deploying what I call *a discourse of anti-meritocratic egalitarianism*. *Transmission* allegorizes the experiences of BAME publishing workers, implicitly querying Penguin's CSR rhetoric. Its critique of the diversity initiatives pursued as business opportunities is, in turn, precisely what has proven worthy of acclaim within the literary milieu, making Kunzru an ideal *decibel* "Writer of the Year" at that cultural moment.

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[2] Surprisingly little cultural industries research has focused on how the "business case for diversity" ethos has played a major role in determining British creative-economy development. It is undoubtedly referenced in ACE's 2012-2022 "Creative Case for Diversity" initiative. This involves a greater emphasis on encouraging ACE's National Portfolio Organisations to implement strategies for workforce and audience diversification. The ethos is also of course referenced in PRH UK's Creative Responsibility platform. For an account of the tangled "moral" and "commercial" reasons behind appeals for diversity that were arising in the literary field around the time of the publication of *In Full Colour*, see Brouillette, *Postcolonial Writers*, p. 57.

3.1 The *decibel*-Penguin Prize

Kunzru won the inaugural *decibel*-Penguin Prize for *Transmission*, part of a 2003-2008

ACE initiative to make the arts more inclusive. The *decibel* program embodied a renewed

focus at ACE on diversifying the demographics of cultural producers and consumers in

the UK. As a conduit for seeing this wider project come to fruition, the British Book

Awards and the Penguin Group[3] created the *decibel*-Penguin Prize. This prize embodied

literary publishers' commercialized response to the scandal of industry whiteness, which

became impossible for publishers to ignore when *The Bookseller*, in conjunction with

decibel, released its report *In Full Colour: Cultural Diversity in Book Publishing Today*

in March 2004, around the same time that the Penguin Group published the initial

hardback editions of *Transmission*, about a year before the inaugural *decibel*-Penguin

Prize ceremony. It is tempting to read Kunzru's win as a way of rewarding him for

embodying what the industry wanted minority authors to signify at the time – an image of

the racialized author-figure who challenges the dominant view of the marginalized and

voiceless writer of colour.

The rationale behind Kunzru's acceptance of the *decibel*-Penguin Prize might

seem unclear given the author's refusal a year earlier of the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize.

He was awarded this prize for his debut novel, *The Impressionist,* which was published

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[3] Until 2013 when it merged with Random House, "The Penguin Group" was the official
name for the trade publisher commonly known as Penguin, which was then owned solely
by Pearson Longman. After the merger, "Penguin Random House" became the new name
for the international umbrella corporation, with "Penguin Random House UK"
designating the branch whose headquarters are in London, and "Penguin Random House
USA" the branch in New York. Throughout this chapter I at times use the shorthand
"Penguin" to refer to the publisher in whatever incarnation it was at the time.

by Hamish Hamilton in 2002, and is set in India, Britain and Africa in the 1920s. Administered then by *The Mail on Sunday*, Kunzru turned down this prize because of the newspaper's xenophobic reporting. With regard to the scandal which erupted upon Kunzru's refusal, he wrote in *The Guardian*:

> By accepting, I would have been giving legitimacy to a publication that has, over many years, shown itself to be extremely xenophobic – an absurdity for a novelist of mixed race who is supposedly being honoured for a book about the stupidity of racial classifications and the seedy underside of empire. (Kunzru, "I am one of Them")

In a feature in *The Independent* prior to the *decibel* ceremony, the members of the shortlist – Benjamin Zephaniah, Andrea Levy, Malorie Blackman and Kunzru – were asked about the potential for the prize to constrain the writing of African, Caribbean and Asian authors by perpetuating the industry perspective that literature by or about members of minoritized racial, ethnic and faith communities should be treated differently than literature by or about members of Britain's imagined white hegemony. Each of the nominated authors spoke highly of the prize, however. Even Zephaniah did, though he has been critical on other occasions of the way that diversity activity in publishing has instrumentally commercially highlighted "otherness" in the literary field – including via prizing. Graham Huggan argues that the irony of the Booker Prize being founded on a stock of old-world capital raised by the Booker company's colonial sugar plantations in Guyana provides a window onto a more general ambivalence in postcolonial literary production. This is that the books that authors from minoritized communities write as part of a project in decolonisation are sold and celebrated for their perceived exotic difference

within a mainly white commercial literary culture. Yet regarding the *decibel*-Penguin

Prize, Zephaniah stated: "Any award that raised the profile of black arts is a good thing"

(Shannon).

The reporter's interview with Kunzru frames his nomination in relation to his

earlier refusal of the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize on grounds of racial politics, and

mentions the splash caused by *In Full Colour*. We read:

> The *Decibel* nomination (for his second novel, *Transmission*) is more palatable to
>
> the writer, but he believes it fails to address the real problem in publishing – the
>
> fact that it remains a white middle-class enclave. In particular he cites literary
>
> agencies as "the whitest working environment in British arts and media". Even
>
> the people working in publishing agree. A survey commissioned by the Arts
>
> Council discovered that nearly half the people in publishing think they work in a
>
> "white, middle-class ghetto". Some publishers decided to take steps to right this
>
> imbalance. Time Warner and Penguin both adopted schemes to foster minority
>
> entrants, while Faber and Random House advertise "positive action" traineeships.
>
> (Shannon)

One might have expected Kunzru to refuse the *decibel*-Penguin Prize on the same

grounds of racial politics that he refused the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize. Diversity

initiatives in the British creative economy are often based on quantifying low levels of

workforce diversity and implementing different measures for increasing them.

Critics have interpreted this as typical neoliberal spin, with cultural difference reified as a

surface fetish, and an increase of BAME workers alone supplementing a more

comprehensive project for dismantling deeply entrenched institutional, systemic, and

socio-economic factors which have functioned to preserve racial and cultural homogeneity in creating or identifying with mainstream culture. One of the forces to counter would be corporate multiculturalism itself, which Sarah Brouillette argues the *decibel*-Penguin Prize emblematized:

> The high-profile awards are also a marketing strategy designed to help the book industry attract more BME employees and to secure more diverse audiences and greater revenues. These two motives are related: an increasingly diverse workforce is thought to be indispensable if publishers want to continue to access niche markets through street-level knowledge of the consumer preferences of specific communities. (*Creative Economy* 118)

Anamik Saha has argued that diversity initiatives are fundamentally ideological because of how they measure positive steps toward racial and ethnic variedness in terms of increases of employees and texts acquired and marketed by minority producers ("Diversity initiatives don't work"). While diversity initiatives increase the employment of people hitherto less likely to work in a creative field, they are also said to do little to tackle firmly engrained institutionalized racism. This is a common critique of the film and television industries, for example, where a mere increase in the number of BAME actors is supposed to indicate progress, but a culture of typecasting these people to play stereotypical characters persists. Another common misperception emerging from diversity-speak is that advancements in the realm of aesthetic representation alone, for example in the diversification of the cultural identities of literary characters in novels, is evidence of everything from change in the industry to, as is also often implied, real progress in politics and society. Indeed, over and over we hear that an integral step

toward consolidating a more progressive, egalitarian cultural sphere – and implicitly a more egalitarian society – is to be able to "see ourselves in our stories," to more accurately reflect the ethnography of the cities and nations where commercial cultural products are set and produced.

The *decibel*-Penguin Prize was itself criticized by those who maintained that highlighting and celebrating a selection of minoritized authors and literary texts would not fix deeply rooted institutionalized racism in publishing. Originally specifically for British fiction writers from Asian, African or Caribbean backgrounds, the prize came under fire for consecrating literary writers largely for being from particular racial backgrounds. Critics argued that the emphasis on an author's identity could further pigeonhole writers conforming to the usual exoticist mode of self-representation expected from minority writers. Responding to backlash from commentators such as Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal, who referred to the prize as a "special pat on the head for Britain's ethnic minorities," as well as criticism from the Commission for Racial Equality, Penguin opened entries for the second round of the *decibel*-Penguin Prize in 2006 to writers from any ethnic background of non-fictional stories about immigration, and published an anthology of nominees, *Personal Tales of Immigration to the UK* (Tanner). In 2008 however, after awarding only three authors, the *decibel*-Penguin Prize and anthologies were scrapped.

As the Penguin Group marketed *Transmission* in association with the *decibel* program, Kunzru's disposition on racial politics was fodder for proponents of how, in *Bookseller* editor Nicholas Clee's words, "diversity makes business sense" (S3). Even the material design of *Transmission*'s English-language editions draws attention to the

racialized imbalances of publishing in Britain. When the Penguin Group published

Transmission in 2004, it did so in two separate editions. One was published by Dutton, a

hardcover imprint of Penguin Group USA. The other was published by the Penguin

Group's British literary hardcover imprint, Hamish Hamilton. Two English-language

paperback editions followed in 2005. One was from Penguin Books, the British imprint

stemming from the original paperback publisher. Dutton's imprint, Plume, which mainly

specializes in the American paperback market, published its edition of *Transmission* in

February 2005. The novel has since been translated into eighteen different languages.

The cover image on the dustjacket of the Dutton edition (see fig. 1), picturing

what one reviewer called an "abstract image of freeways and circuit boards" (Zeitchik

39), captures the novel's Silicon Valley setting and main theme of techwork. This cover

image is quite unlike those of the other editions mentioned above however. The front

cover of the Hamish Hamilton edition depicts a woman wearing a pink sari (see fig. 2);

this is presumably Leela Zahir, a fictionalized "Bollywood" film star in the book. The

cover of the Penguin Books edition is designed in the style of traditional Indian art (see

fig. 3). On the front cover of the Plume edition, a sketch of *Transmission*'s protagonist,

Arjun Mehta, is in the foreground (see fig. 4), and the back cover's blurb highlights his

"Indian" identity.

The Dutton edition aside, the material on the covers of these editions of

Transmission evoke the Indian identity of the novel's characters and, arguably, Kunzru

himself. It is plausible that the prerogative for Penguin's imprints to design these editions

of the book in such a way was an attempt on the part of each imprint to maximize sales of

the book. As I discussed in chapter one, Saha has described the manner in which novels

that are written by authors of South Asian descent, which are published within the postcolonial literary niche by commercial firms, are often designed in the same exoticizing fashion based on the sales of similarly designed titles. This is a way that commercial publishers' attempts to streamline book production have helped to create a particular form of literary culture in which the market-circulation of texts by South Asian and other minoritized authors is based on stereotypes of racialized identity. This practice is rarely followed in the design of books by white authors, or at least in the design of books by white authors which are not concerned in their content with representing the experiences of members of minoritized racial, ethnic and faith communities.
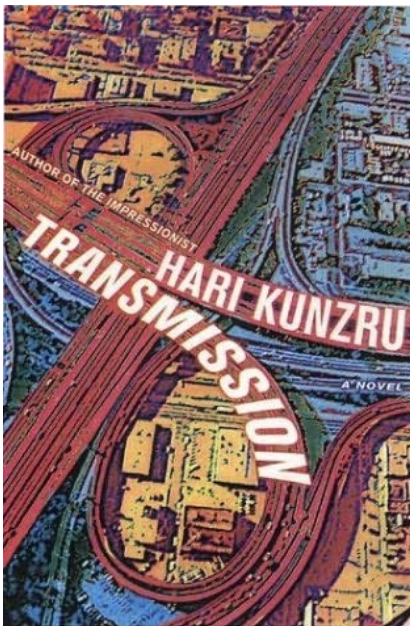

Fig 1. Cover of the 2004 Dutton edition of Hari Kunzru's *Transmission*; "Transmission by Hari Kunzru," *GoodReads*, 2019, www.goodreads.com/book/show/701949.Transmission.
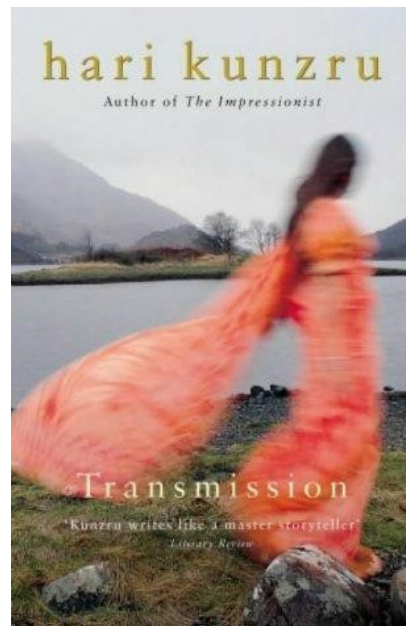

Fig. 2. Cover of the 2004 Hamish Hamilton edition of *Transmission*; "Transmission by Hari Kunzru," *AbeBooks*, 2019, www.abebooks.co.uk/book-search/title/transmission/author/hari-kunzru/sortby/3/.

Fig. 3. Cover of the 2005 Penguin Books edition of *Transmission*; "Transmission," *Penguin Books Ltd.*, 2019, www.penguin.co.uk/books/54224/transmission/9780141008295.html.

Fig. 4. Cover of the 2005 Plume edition of *Transmission*; "Transmission by Hari Kunzru"; *Penguin Random House Canada*, 2019, www.penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/288080/transmission-by-hari-kunzru/9780452286511.

3.2 A Reading of Hari Kunzru's *Transmission*

Transmission itself works to understand how a "rationalizing/racializing logic" has helped to reconfigure the manner in which creative labour is acquired and managed in contemporary literary production. The main storyline follows Arjun, a twenty-three year old Bachelor of Science graduate and aspiring IT worker who emigrates from his hometown of New Delhi to the US after being recruited to work in the tech industry by an international staffing agency called Databodies. Arjun is first stationed in Los Angeles, where it takes over a year for him to gain his first, short-lived contract. He is eventually relocated to Redmond, Washington to work for Virugenix, a company which specializes in eradicating computer viruses for corporate clients. After only a short stint at

Virugenix, Arjun is laid off, and in response designs and releases a computer virus, which he names after his favourite actress, Leela Zahir. Her dancing image appears when the virus takes over a computer. The virus multiplies and variants of it become encrypted in computer systems all over the world, including that of a London-based branding agency called Tomorrow*, owned by *Transmission*'s secondary protagonist, Guy Swift. For the brunt of the second half of the novel, Arjun, labelled an "e-terrorist" by international news coverage, runs from the FBI, while Guy attempts to rebuild his company.

Reviewers were quick to point out how the novel can be used in effect as a learning tool for better understanding "globalisation, immigration, the strange and ravenous power of new technology" (Cooke), and the impact on workers of racialized access to markets for labour in the globalized knowledge economy. This is a reading which Kunzru has endorsed, by explaining that he meant *Transmission* to engage the contemporary interconnectedness of our increasingly networked, technologically surveyed lives (see Kunzru and Hodgkinson).

As Brouillette has argued, the aesthetic of technological interconnectedness in *Transmission* is reason to reflect on the rapidly progressing ways in which "the whole book production process is being globalised" ("South Asian Literature" 34). The becoming-hegemonic of "just-in-time" production processes in contemporary publishing has resulted in an unprecedented recruitment of cultural workers in the global South. Brouillette suggests that *Transmission* is self-consciously concerned with representing how Kunzru's own "career is enmeshed with a number of the trends" emerging from the relatively recent incorporation of niche South Asian literatures in both English and vernacular languages within the globalized publishing infrastructure (37). Publishing

firms anchored in Western metropolises are increasingly relying on outsourcing tasks in

this infrastructure to export process zones, many of which exist in South Asia "because it

has an educated, English-speaking, diligent workforce that will accept lower pay" (37).

Owner of Penguin when it published *Transmission*, Pearson has been a client of the US-

based design firm TechBooks, which has internationalized its operations by placing

"development centres" in cities such as Delhi. Its CEO projected for 2007 a $4.6 billion

"market for the outsourcing of publishing industry services" (37). In Brouillette's view

Arjun's emigration to the American tech field is reminiscent of how "value is

expropriated by a firm that subcontracts short-term positions with US companies" (37).

We are thus invited to reflect on the impact that globalization in book production has had

on the relative inability for authors from minoritized communities to find success in the

literary sphere in comparison to their white counterparts. Satirizing the remarkable

success of his own first novel, *The Impressionist*, Kunzru embedded within *Transmission*

acknowledgement of his infiltration of the "mediascape in a way not unlike the invasive

spread of the virus that Arjun circulates." Around the time of the publication of

Transmission the entry page for Kunzru's personal website, www.harikunzru.com,

"feature[d] the dancing Bollywood image forced on victims of Arjun's virus, signalling

Kunzru's ironic recognition of his own brand identity as an unchecked viral menace

circulating beyond the author's control" (37).

  At the same time, *Transmission* challenges how British creative labour is

normatively recognized as marketable talent through meritocratic selection. In *Creative

Justice*, Mark Banks studies how meritocratic ideals have justified the selection processes

for cultural education and work as a way to uphold the fiction of a fundamentally open

and free labour market. Meritocratic theory posits the abolition of social barriers which work to prevent anyone from attaining the educational credentials necessary for skilled work, and subsequently from being hired for jobs which require these credentials. In this line of thought, as long as someone applies themself through hard work and dedication, they will be able to reach their full potential. As I show in chapter one, meritocratic selection played an important role in pulling members from hitherto uneducated class fractions into Britain's postwar art schools, itself one component of a wider reformative period designed to generate greater inclusivity in British culture and society.

Discourses of meritocratic selection have continued to saturate creative-economy educational programming. The manner in which they have been relied on to posit an image of a socially cohesive creative economy has not been received without reservation. With regard to the social patterns governing access to, and social validation of, recent British arts and cultural higher education, Banks critiques the ideology that every individual can seemingly "find their talent" – as DCMS has also put it – through meritocratic selection (qtd. in Banks, *Creative Justice* 69). Recent highlighting of ethnically diverse practitioners involved in work-placement, funding and programming initiatives designed to widen interest and participation in the creative industries, while certainly providing significant career opportunities for many people, reify the racial and cultural homogeneity of British cultural workforces. Some of the emerging data which Banks cite shows that among all creative media workers in the UK, 14 per cent attended private school (which is double the national average); only 36 per cent were women; and less than 10 per cent were of BAME descent (110-13). Banks thus counters the misconception that creative-economy education continues to train unprecedentedly

mobile bohemian types, those resembling the artists who graduated from Britain's postwar local and independent art schools (78). The paramount importance which academic achievement is given in other university programs is still downplayed in art school selection procedures. This is a measure which was originally designed to attract applications from the less scholastically inclined "social type of the 'art school student'" (Banks and Oakley 46). However, the validation of individual demeanour in selection processes, and prestige in the labour market, have created a class-ceiling scenario resulting in the inversion of this measure's intended outcome, with more opportunities garnered to the Tom Hiddlestons and Eddie Redmaynes of the art world, not the Judi Denches and Poly Styrenes.

Banks's fundamental contribution to the growing field of research on the unfairness of accessing cultural production is in suggesting that a certain theory of equality underlying meritocracy misleadingly presents access to creative-economy oriented college and university programmes as universally attainable. In particular, application to higher education is presented as entirely open and free, since anyone can apply regardless of personal ability shaped by race and class. This alone is understood as the mechanism making access to education equal and therefore fair. However, Banks suggests that the reality of cultural capital being distributed unevenly among groups of individual applicants makes accessing education unfair, because cultural capital comes into play during admissions testing, with deleterious effects on people from minoritized communities. The expectations for applicants to have a portfolio of published material, and a record of extracurricular, often unpaid activities, work to prevent people without the financial support and "refined" upbringing necessary to be recognized as a

legitimately acculturated student – and "in all possibility, [to get] the best kinds of future arts employment such qualifications might ideally provide" (Banks, *Creative Justice* 74). Moreover, prestigious educational credentials obtained early in life most often lead to more opportunities in higher education and work. These patterns of unfairness in education and formal training affect access to the labour market. Gaining accreditations from a prestigious university like Goldsmiths, for example, places one in a better position to gain employment. In Banks's terms, meritocracy is *equal* but not *fair*, or, the particular form of an inclusive system for distributing access to formative social programming and services which lead to gaining marketable human capital, *egalitarian*.

Returning to *Transmission*, Kunzru represents how many of the same racialized meritocratic processes governing access to working in a cultural field also hamper Arjun's working life. Early in the novel, on his plane ride from New Delhi to Los Angeles, Arjun watches his favourite film for the umpteenth time, an extremely popular Bollywood film entitled *Naughty Naughty, Lovely Lovely*. N2L2, as it is known amongst Indian moviegoers, is a love story about a young man named Dilip and a young woman named Aparna, played by Leela Zahir. A recent college graduate who lazes his days away in his parents' basement, Dilip changes his ways after falling in love with Aparna. A "rising investment banker" (Kunzru 34), Aparna does not conform to the traditional patriarchal gender roles.[4] At one point in the film, in search of a liberal-minded partner, she sings that her man should also significantly "command the respect of his fellow citizens and hold down a high-paying job in commerce or industry" (34). In response to both his desire for a woman like Aparna and desire to satisfy his parents' requirement for

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[4] This and all subsequent references to *Transmission* will refer to the Plume edition.

him to have a successful career, Dilip decides to "seek his destiny in the international capital markets" (34).

Kunzru recounts the film's plot in detail because it reflects how Arjun wants to work in American IT in large part because doing so fits into a narrative of self-actualization that he constructs for himself. This narrative is based on an idealized notion of attainable career success beamed at him through Americanized commercial culture. In the dreamer Dilip, Arjun sees himself, and in this film a "parable" (Kunzru, *Transmission* 36) for how his own life will unfold in the form of a romanticized capitalist success story. Arjun sees the film as "nothing less than a call to change his life" and it is in fact "the reason he came to be on the plane [from New Delhi to Los Angeles] in the first place" (33). Arjun concocts an idealized notion of working in America from dominant cultural-industry-produced tropes, and empty promises of easily obtained remunerative employment. This is in much the same way that aspiring creative workers are convinced to enrol in arts and cultural higher education programs or to seek employment credentials through internships and job-placement schemes. One of the chief ways that the idea that these are open and accessible pathways to cultural work has circulated and gained prominence in the British creative economy is through the "seductive promise of instant fame offered by reality television and the like" (Banks, *Creative Justice* 71).

Pulling him further into the dream, Arjun's belief that "Dilip was him" (Kunzru, *Transmission* 33) is confirmed in his interview with Sunny Srinivasan, the dapper Databodies recruiter in New Delhi who initially hires Arjun for the job in America. Sunny profiles Arjun as a legitimate tech-worker on the sole basis that he has actually earned a real college diploma, something which is uncommon among the hordes of

applicants with counterfeit credentials whom Sunny meets. This is the conversation that Sunny and Arjun have:

> "So what I'm going to do is this," [Sunny] announced, as if the thought were the product of long rumination. "I'm going to take your application, get you checked out by my people, and if you're telling the truth, I'm going to send you to America and start making you rich."
>
> Arjun could not believe it. "Just like that?"
>
> "Just like that, Arjun. When you're a Databodies IT consultant, things happen. Your life starts moving forward. You start to become who you always dreamed of becoming. That's our mission, Arjun. To help people become their dreams. That's what we stand for." (9-10)

A great deal of the symbolism in the personal narrative which Arjun constructs for himself pivots on an unrealistic view of male sexual privilege which he absorbs from Indian popular culture, where "Love is a glittery madness, an obsession, broadcast like the words of a dictator from every *paan* stall and rickshaw stand, every transistor radio and billboard and TV tower" (103; emphasis in original). Significantly, Arjun's sexual desire is both facilitated and troubled by technology. While he has a budding interest in the pornography which he gets in the form of homemade CD-ROM discs from his friend who owns an internet café, this interest is constructed as a distraction from his true passion for using computers as an intellectual stimulant (103-4). Since he was a young boy Arjun has been interested in exploring how they operate, how their systems function "ex nihilo, each stage of activity generating the grounds for the next" (100), and how they can be manipulated to perform amusing operations.

It is significant therefore that what adds to his anxiety after being fired from Virugenix is how he is treated by his first-ever sexual partner, a woman named Chris who works at the Microsoft campus near Virugenix. Arjun seeks help from Chris to get his job back, because he seems to think that she holds a higher, managerial position in Silicon Valley. She doesn't offer the help his looking for, and she doesn't reciprocate his romantic advance, essentially expressing that their friendship is platonic, and that the drunken one-night stand that they had was "a bad idea" (Kunzru, *Transmission* 97). The narrative thus suggests that being treated as disposable, both as a temp-worker and as a sexual partner, is what forces Arjun to finally attempt to acquire a sense of control in his spiralling life.

Significantly, Arjun finds this sense of control through a form of creative practice, the act of writing the Leela virus, which he does in a dire attempt to regain his job at Virugenix as someone who will dismantle the virus. Writing malware code is very important to Arjun. It is something which he taught himself to do when he was a teenager, and which he perfected his skills at when he was a college student at North Okhla Institute of Technology. It was during this period, in the dark corners of the Internet, on message boards going by the pseudonym *badmAsh*, where Arjun's merit as a computer programmer was first rewarded with the kind of fame and popularity which he feels it deserves. He occupies the elevated status of a creative genius in the world of virus-writing; unlike "most other traders [who] were not that talented," Arjun was one of the "originators, the architects" and eventually "became something of a star" on message boards for sharing destructive computer codes (Kunzru, *Transmission* 103). When Arjun

immigrates to the US to perform the same work in a mainly white corporation, Kunzru reflects the racialized dynamics of contemporary knowledge work.

In interactions with his American colleagues, Arjun's racial difference is often perceived as a barrier or problem in these interactions, and one of the reasons for this is his not being accustomed to American social protocol. This gives others reason to highlight his perceived cultural difference. One of the more significant awkward interactions occurs one evening prior to his firing when, after several drinks, Arjun innocently questions Chris about her sexuality. Arjun learns from Chris that she is bisexual, and that she is in an open relationship with the man with whom she lives. Chris expects Arjun to digest this information in the culturally sanctioned way of American tolerance. We read that "[i]n confusing semantic situations, he had often found it helpful to define terms before proceeding" (Kunzru, *Transmission* 76), which is a perfectly logical step for a non-Native English speaker. But in trying to gather linguistic information, Arjun unknowingly commits a faux-pas. He asks Chris if "there [is] a word for someone like [her]." She is "a bisexual," she retorts: "is this Nazi Germany or something?" There are many ways to interpret this conversation, one being that, her choice of language aside, Chris is right to object to Arjun's naivety about sexual identity. Arjun's chauvinistic perspective on what is permissible for women is clearly wrong. At the same time, Kunzru contrasts the privileged perspective of American mid-career professionals with Arjun's developing-world mindset. A liberal American disposition always misinterprets Arjun's naivety for American openness, and lack of modesty and tradition, as stepping over a personal boundary. The only thing that his American colleagues perceive is how he marginalizes them – in Chris' words, Arjun is being a

"bigoted asshole" (77). These interactions reflect how Arjun is always expected to assimilate to American mores, to have come to the country not only with the knowledge and skills necessary for working in the IT industry – which is apparently all that is required of a worker in meritocratic theory – but to also have considerable knowledge of local cultural practices, and to be ready to abide by and embrace them.

A similar interaction occurs upon Arjun attempting to explain to Clay and Darryl, his managers at Virugenix, how to dismantle the Leela virus. The whole interaction has colonial undertones, or perhaps social cues which are reminiscent of the racialized expropriation of labour power in the globalized knowledge economy. Clay and Darryl view Arjun as someone who should not be there. The reason that they view him this way is because he is a temp-worker, who has just been fired, which we know is a product of racialized dynamics of tech-industry work. The irony however is that Arjun, the apparently disposable and less valuable labourer, is the only person who knows how to solve the pressing task of fixing the Leela virus. Kunzru writes:

> "I think I spotted something, sir."
>
> "You're right, man," said Clay. "Hey Arjun, this Layla Zoo-hair is like an actress, isn't she? You ever see any of her films?"
>
> "What do you mean, spotted something?"
>
> "About the virus."
>
> "She's hot. To me a lot of Indian chicks are hot." (*Transmission* 136-37).

Clay reduces Arjun's identity to being a representative of his foreign culture – as if he has no other role at Virugenix.

3.3 Institutionalized Racism in British Publishing

Here and in the previous conversation with Chris, Kunzru clearly emphasizes a xenophobic perspective of foreign workers which was also prevalent in the literary industry when he was writing *Transmission*. Arjun's experiences parallel for instance how in British publishing writers marked "other" are expected to be different, but only to the degree with which the apparent white reading public would be comfortable. What we also glean here is a version of how racialized writers are expected to fit into the literary field's usual liberal scripts. Here I do not only mean in terms of the manner in which narratives reflect favourably on foreigners' ability to assimilate into and become comfortable with the norms of Western society. What I also wish to stress is the tendency within commercial literary culture for writers of colour to be highlighted and rewarded for their difference – through increased hiring of BAME creative workers and increased acquisition and promotion of BAME writers – as a way for the people in positions of decision-making power in the literary field to attempt to curb the increasingly loud backlash over a lack of cultural diversity in literary culture.

In "A year in diversity," Danuta Kean's one-year follow-up to *In Full Colour*, Kean reminds us how similar currents have delimited access to and experiences within British literary culture:

> One of *In Full Colour*'s most shocking revelations was the sense of isolation felt by many black and Asian people in the industry. Full-blown racism was rare, but common among minority ethnic workers were experiences of institutionalised racism, tokenism and insensitivity. More than one recalled being hauled into

meetings with minority ethnic authors about books they would not be working on

because the publisher wanted the author to know that it had black or Asian

employees. Minority ethnic publishers also spoke of the lack of role models and

the sense that they were carrying the flag for their entire race. (36)

What Kean flags here is one instance of how in British literary publishing, authors and

other workers who hail from or identify with marginalized racial, ethnic and faith

communities often face barriers. Despite intentions for their works to be conceived as

part of a larger counter-cultural or revolutionary decolonization project, minoritized

authors have these experiences when attempting to see their works through the pre-

publication editorial phase of production. This is when marketers attempt to emphasize

exotic aspects of works in hopes of attracting consumers from both white and BAME

market fragments, as data which is collected on the buying habits of members of these

groups has shown increasing interest in reading minority literature (Kean, "A year" 36).

Likewise, non-authorial publishing workers have constraining experiences when

attempting to design and prepare texts for the market in ways that can preserve a given

author's counter-cultural or revolutionary intentions. Moreover, a general prohibition

against marginalized and racialized groups, stemming from uneven admittance to British

arts and cultural higher education and, through this, entrée to the networks leading to

employment in the literary field, works to prevent some people from even pursuing

becoming authors or publishing workers. Indeed, access to education and work in the

literary industry is highly classed and racialized, and ongoing exclusions have

galvanizing impacts on the kinds of representation in and identification with literary

culture that are afforded to people from minoritized communities. Access is rutted to the

social, cultural and educational capital, themselves heavily mediated by race, which underlie the hegemonic practices of aesthetic appraisal that are adhered to in mainstream culture. Fluent in the most current debates about the significance of these practices, the ideal publishing worker is comfortable with increasingly flexible, contract-based labour. That this worker is usually an able-bodied, white, educated male is something which literary practitioners and activists have increasingly highlighted in the past fifteen years or so. It is also something that is highlighted in Kunzru's depiction of Arjun's experiences in the globalized market for knowledge labour.

Mounting for some time, hostility over the racial homogeneity of British publishing workforces was officially addressed in December 2003 and January 2004, when in its print copies and on its website *The Bookseller* circulated a survey in the form of questionnaires for publishing professionals designed to "reveal the extent to which staffing in publishing reflects cultural diversity in society" ("Spotlight on publishing diversity" 7). In March 2004 the results of this survey, along with articles interpreting these results and with qualitative interviews with BAME authors and literary-industry practitioners, were published in *In Full Colour*.

The report showed something "already widely suspected about publishing . . . the industry remains an overwhelmingly white profession" (Holman, "Room for improvement" S4). Of the 523 respondents to the *Bookseller* survey, 87 per cent, or 456 people, identified as white, while people identifying as members of "Asian, Black, Chinese and other ethnic groups" made up the remaining 13 per cent (S4). What appeared to be a low measure of non-white publishing workers was presented as even more alarming, "given that the majority of respondents – 77% – are based in London, where

minority ethnic communities make up almost 30% of the total population" (S4). One of

the writers of the report, the seasoned book industry reporter Tom Holman, suggested

that the percentage of BAME publishing workers might actually be lower than 13 per

cent, because they would be more likely to participate in a survey about cultural diversity

than white-identifying publishing workers, therefore misrepresenting how many BAME

people work in publishing. Holman suggests further to question the survey's findings that

"minority ethnic" respondents are under-represented in workforces where precarity is

most rife – contract-based editorial and design work and, specifically, *literary* authorship.

Four per cent of BAME respondents stated that they worked in self-employed or

freelance positions, while 27 per cent of this demographic stated that they worked "in

companies with more than 500 employees" (S5). This suggests that an abundance of

BAME people do not work in precarious jobs. Yet as Holman writes: "The circulation of

the survey by human resources departments in conglomerate publishers may have

weighted these results in favour of large organisations" (S5). The fact that the survey was

completed by more people working in large organizations than in smaller firms might

have resulted in data which do not reflect the reality of a larger number of BAME people

working in precarious jobs.

The months following the publication of the *In Full Colour* report were also the

months following the Penguin Group's initial publication of *Transmission*. The Penguin

Group's later prizing and subsequent editions of *Transmission* in 2005 were part of a

distinct shift in its branding strategy within this period, toward highlighting how its

development of work-placement and authorial acquisition would tackle and counter

racialized access to British education, as this was increasingly evidently responsible for

the lack of diversity in British publishing. Respondents to the initial *Bookseller* survey for instance pointed out socio-economic factors perpetuating how publishing is a "closed shop" of "networks . . . dominated by white, middle-class, Oxbridge graduates and their friends" (Holman, "Room for improvement" S6). One respondent wrote: "It's who you know; it's a clique . . . cultural diversity happens at the fringes of the industry, not at its heart" (S6). Another stated: "Like other relatively small industries many jobs are filled by word of mouth, so by default limiting the range of people who apply" (S6). As is intimated in these first-hand observations, the meritocratic system's removal of the initial barriers to applying for jobs or work-placement schemes does not result in a truly fair competition for publishing industry employment. One of the more invisible factors contributing to this unfairness is seemingly rooted in how meritocracy itself is governed by a wider adherence to perpetuating the systems of exclusion based on sanctioned cultural capital.

In Full Colour's many data-numeric charts visually demonstrated the results of *The Bookseller*'s survey of ethnic diversity in the publishing field. This visual representation connected the driving force of cultural capital in publishing industry labour recruitment and employment with how racialized access to British higher education functions as a gatekeeper for entering the field. One chart entitled "Which Qualifications Do You Hold?" shows that nearly 60 per cent of respondents had a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree, and that about 30 per cent had higher Master of Arts or doctoral degrees. The number of respondents with lower levels of education – from having two or more A levels to no qualifications at all – are dramatically lower, all below 5 per cent. This chart is located directly above another

entitled "Broad Ethnic Group Categories," whose column showing the 87 per cent of

"White" publishing-worker respondents pillars over the remaining columns designated

for people who identify as "Mixed ethnicity," "Asian or British Asian," "British or

British Black," and "Chinese or other" (see Holman, "Room for Improvement" S5). This

clearly implies a functional connection between the low levels of diversity in British

publishing and racialized access to British higher education.

The Penguin Group's London offices became ground zero for changes being

implemented in commercial literary publishing in an attempt to attract a more diverse

workforce. One of the more notable ways in which the Penguin Group attempted to

manage diversity in an ostensibly progressive way was by leading mainstream publishers

in joining ACE-funded diversity initiatives that were developed as part of the wider

decibel program. Penguin, for instance, hosted the first Literary Leanings event, "a series

of workshops in which unpublished black and Asian writers could meet leading

publishers" (Kean, "A year" 37). This included Simon Prosser, the publishing director of

Hamish Hamilton, and Helen Fraser, the Penguin Group's managing director at the time.

According to Danuta Kean, the author and journalist Esther Armah started Literary

Leanings in response to a predominant view of the publishing world shared by black

British literary writers:

> There is a very narrow band of what is acceptable from black writers. The
>
> spectrum of black writing is as wide as crime writing, but when it comes to
>
> writers who happen to be black there is an obsession in white middle class
>
> publishing circles around race. (37)

Penguin also teamed up with ACE to back initiatives for recruiting publishing workers from more diverse backgrounds, and for supplying in-house "diversity awareness" training for people whom it already employed (Kean, "A year" 37). ACE's senior literature officer, John Hampson, oversaw these initiatives, which were designed "to tackle staff retention and institutional racism head on" (37).

The sense of isolation and institutionalized racism in the publishing work environment motivated Alison Morrison, head of marketing at the independent publisher Walker Books, and Elise Dillsworth, an editor at Virago, to approach ACE for funding to start the Diversity in Publishing Network (DipNet). Focused on helping racialized publishing professionals develop business relations, DipNet's mandate was "to support minority ethnic people already in the industry; and to attract a more diverse group of people into publishing than the white middle classes who currently dominate employment and recruitment" (Kean, "A year" 37). On March 8, 2005, the Penguin Group's London offices hosted DipNet's first event – "on the power of large publishing houses" – with contributors including Joanna Prior, as well as Verna Wilkins from the independent multicultural children's publisher Tamarind, and Joy Francis of Creative Collective ("Diversity Network Talks Power" 6).

In sum, in its London headquarters the Penguin Group's response to *In Full Colour* clearly reflected a commercial approach to "the problem of marketing and promoting black and Asian work" (Saha, "Rationalizing/Racializing Logic" 2). As Brouillette has shown, this approach reflected publishers' concerted attempt to efficiently exploit their own industry's inevitable direction toward acquiring and marketing more BAME-authored literary products (*Postcolonial Writers* 57). This was an attempt which

was often difficult to disentangle from what many publishing professionals referred to at the time as the "moral" prerogative to diversify their author and employee rosters. This approach entailed acknowledging the problem of, and trumpeting the development of in-house programming for, countering the dominant social processes that prevent individuals from marginalized and racialized communities from becoming publishing industry employees – namely, lack of access to education, which itself reflects a general maldistribution of wealth. With Penguin at the forefront, commercial literary publishers attempted to capitalize on cultural diversity largely through implementing initiatives mainly based on refashioning procedures for recruiting authors and creative workers from more diverse cultural backgrounds.

These changes to the British publishing field were based on the creative-economy philosophy of deriving profits from the unprecedented commercial value of managing diversity. In *The Rise of the Creative Class,* Richard Florida, the guru-figure of this philosophy, maps out how diversity indexes, gentrification, and so on, can help rebuild post-industrial towns and cities. The commercial value of diversity was for example the reason behind the so-called "Creativity Index" or "Gay Index" developed by Florida and his co-researchers, "designed to quantify the relationship between an urban location's level of lifestyle diversity and its success in attracting creative professionals" (Brouillette, *Creative Economy* 22). Brouillette also writes:

> Florida's research accords with, and has influenced, government policy and
> mainstream social science and management literature, in which individuals appear
> as born innovators, the origins of enterprise, naturally predisposed to be against
> what exists and to try to perfect it through invention, while the economy discovers

this pre-existing tendency and then nurtures it into an engine for ceaseless renewal

of capitalism. (35)

This research was conducted and circulated in the early 2000s while Kunzru wrote

Transmission – indeed the practice of quantifying diversity was part of the Penguin

Group's involvement with *decibel*.

Kunzru queries Florida's philosophy in *Transmission* through the personality of

Guy Swift, a British branding guru and owner of Tomorrow*, "a truly globalized

branding agency, concentrating on the local needs of transnational clients" (168). A

manifesto comparable to Florida's is featured in *Transmission* in the form of Guy Swift's

autobiography, *Guy Swift: The Mission* (or *GS:TM* for short), in which the fictionalized

British branding mogul outlines "a philosophy (or as Guy preferred to put it, a 'way') he

had synthesized from a study of the great marketing masters. He called it 'TBM,' which

stood for Total Brand Mutability" (19). Guy's commitment to harnessing creativity for

optimum capital gains in his career resembles Florida's depiction of his own rise to

success. Amidst serious fiscal crisis as a result of Arjun's virus infecting Tomorrow*'s

network, Guy peers out at his company and reflects on how "[t]here were people from

several ethnic minorities. There was, if you counted Carrie's leg, a disabled person. It

was a microcosm of society. His society" (212). Much like in a creative field, Guy's

approach to employee management manifests the neoliberal mentality that diversity in its

many variegated forms – in the cultural, ethnic, and sexual identities, and in the physical

ability, of employees – can play a significant role within an overall plan for brand

revitalization. We also read that Guy "[i]nvented CAR for branding to under-thirties,"

and then realized "his future lay in the science of 'deep branding,' the great quest to

harness what in *GS:TM* he termed the 'emotional magma that wells from the core of planet brand'" (19). Tomorrow* is located in a factory which has been converted into loft-style offices located in Shoreditch, a borough which borders with the City of London and has been the site of considerable gentrification by the lights of New Labour-led creative-economy initiatives. In Guy's eyes Tomorrow* "was not so much an agency as an experiment in life-work balance . . . an environment that made work fun and fun work" (118). The act of "balancing life and work" is something that "Guy liked to group under the general heading *getting one's hands dirty at the brandface*, by which he meant convincing people to channel their emotions, relationships and sense of self through the purchase of products and services" (118; emphasis in original).

In this light, it makes sense that Kunzru was awarded the *decibel*-Penguin Prize for *Transmission*. His allegory of minoritized access to creative labour appealed to the judges at the time because this access was precisely what the prize was designed to redress. In Kunzru's oeuvre and persona prior to this event, he embeds a certain kind of position-taking which stems from his own reservations over the fact that his writing and identity have both been commodified as part of the business case for diversity in the British creative economy. In his literary writing and public statements he has expressed anxiety about the literary niche as a constraining area of the wider field of book publishing. This is where aspiring BAME writers' interest in the politics of identity runs up against the tendency for publishers to pigeonhole these same writers into providing minoritized communities with a voice in mainstream culture. *Writing the Future* underlines just how little has changed for BAME publishing workers in the decade since the release of *In Full Colour*. One of the trends that Kean notes over this decade is how

BAME writers are much more highly represented within the relatively low-selling literary niche. A large part of the reason for commercial literary marketers to continue to confine BAME writers in the literary niche – one could narrow this down even further to the particular postcolonial literary niche, the "Black Literature" niche, or in Penguin marketer Joanna Prior's terms some other such "ghetto in-store" (Kean, "A year in diversity" 37) – is because these writers have trouble being accepted by the British reading public in other genres like fantasy or print poetry. This is because of a general industry perspective that black and Asian British writers should not dabble too far beyond the kind of pseudo-touristic literary representation with which an imagined dominant white readership can entertain itself.

Kunzru clearly embedded a critical position on the dominance of this trend in his first novel, *The Impressionist*. In interview he has stated that this book is "very much a highly self-conscious response to the canon of literary writing about India. On the surface it's a very picturesque novel, full of elephants and the spice market and all the furniture of the Raj novel" (Haiven 19). Kunzru has also explained that writing this novel served as a way for him to unpack contemporary constructs of racial identity (Haiven 19), and that he based his approach to doing this in part on his own lifetime of experiences of racism in Britain ("Hari Kunzru author interview").

The Impressionist earned Kunzru an unprecedented amount of media attention. Even before it was published, he became known in his words as "the bloke who got the big advance" because his agent, Jonny Geller, negotiated a sizeable £1.25 million payment from the Penguin Group in exchange for the book's international publication rights (Cooke). After it was published, *The Impressionist* was awarded the prestigious

Betty Trask Prize and Somerset Maugham Award. In light of Kunzru's cash advance and winning of these awards, journalistic commentary often emphasized how *The Impressionist* gave reason to reflect on racial politics. Granted, some of this commentary focused on how *The Impressionist* shed light specifically on how literary-industry-produced constructs of racial identity have worked to prevent BAME authors from penetrating mass markets for non-literary books.

However, *The Impressionist* also attracted attention for many of the same reasons that literary fiction written by members of minoritized communities, and reflecting in its content the disenfranchised experiences of people from these communities, usually does. Commentary gravitated toward pigeonholing Kunzru as a spokesperson for racial politics in wider British society. The author has lamented how this reportage typecast him in what has become a standard role for the minority writer. In a feature published amidst *The Impressionist*'s rising popularity, one interviewer defined him as a "young British novelist writing about a very new, multi-racial, multi-ethnic Britain" (Mudge). In another interview around this time, in which Kunzru admonishes the media's construction of him as a voice for wider British racial politics, the reporter homes in on Kunzru's opinions about recent racial clashes in the UK (Cooke); and elsewhere Kunzru was asked to "comment" on such things as "identity and the cultural legacy of the British empire" ("Hari Kunzru author interview").

Indeed, Kunzru's writing and identity have been reason for journalistic reflection on an ostensible "multicultural Britain" in an overall effort to circulate commercial literary paratexts such as book review pages in newspapers and author interviews in literary magazines and so forth. Kunzru's experience of this within the post-publication

buzz over *The Impressionist*, together with navigating the post-9/11 world as a visible

minority, informed how he wrote *Transmission* (Cooke). He has also explained that his

work after *The Impressionist* as an editor and writer for *Wired* magazine, a culture and

technology publication "at the forefront of unpacking precarity in a non-fiction mode"

(Haiven 21), informed his subsequent literary writing. That a personal concern with both

race and precarity in the cultural industries came to be part of his literary practice is quite

significant here. The constrained experiences of racialized authors and creative workers

in the literary industry also manifest in the form of precariousness.

Kunzru definitely represents this in *Transmission*, which he has in fact described

as "a comic novel about the emergence of a global class system based on freedom of

movement" (Haiven 21). This system privileges upper-class people like Guy Swift, who

are free to move about the globe, and this system is responsible for the immiseration of

the members of an underclass "for whom movement is either impossible or involuntary

and for whom crossing borders is hugely troubling and traumatic." And in the middle,

Kunzru states,

> are people like Arjun, who is a precarious worker in the sense that he's
>
> outsourced, without the benefits and security that a generation or two ago it was
>
> considered normal to have. He's highly mobile and has enough skills to get
>
> himself from one place to another and be welcomed as a migrant, but he's not
>
> high enough up the food chain to be in control of his destiny. It brings us back to
>
> the logic of the market and especially the financialisation of almost everything.
>
> As capital looks at new sources of value, it has to bust open things that were
>
> previously unavailable to it. It requires a workforce that is highly mobile, highly

motivated (ie highly insecure) and that will flow towards whatever site and

configure itself in whatever way is useful to the controllers of capital. (21)

The social processes which delimit Arjun's work freedom are reminiscent of the

constraining manner in which commercial publishing firms such as the Penguin Group

acquire, categorize and market books that are written by or about people who hail from or

identify with minoritized racial communities. The white freedom of movement which

Kunzru ascribes to Guy Swift's working life, versus Arjun's non-white constraint,

metaphorically reflects the tier of white and non-white writers. Through the surrogate of

Arjun, Kunzru allegorizes his own experiences in publishing.

3.4 Concluding Remarks

We need not end the analysis here. Kunzru's experiences in British publishing at the time

of writing *Transmission* did not mirror Arjun's in the tech industry; nor did he see

himself as a precarious contract-employee of the global middle class that he imagines. On

the one hand, both Arjun and Kunzru have been marginalized and pigeonholed because

of institutionalized racism in the processes which govern labour recruitment and

subsequent employment in their respective fields. Arjun initially believes that he has

conquered the unfairness of racialized meritocratic selection in IT recruitment by

becoming a Databodies employee, only to have this stripped away when he becomes a

precariously employed IT consultant. This instability drives Arjun to question the

increment of self-validation that he derives from becoming a Databodies employee, and

he ultimately confronts the validity of his narrative of self-actualization as an ideological

construction. But Arjun's subsequent writing and release of the Leela virus is not a malicious act of "e-terrorism," some form of civil disobedience launched at the system which exploits him. Writing the virus in a dire attempt to save his own job, and realizing that the act was a lapse in judgment after the fact, Arjun always intended to fix the system so that he may have a permanent, remunerative role within it.

Something similar can be said of Kunzru in relation to *Transmission*, which by being published by the Penguin Group, despite any subversive narrative within, serves to support the commercial literary industry. In this sense the parallels between Arjun's working life and Kunzru's life in book publishing enjoin us to glean embedded in this novel a self-conscious negotiation with his own anxiety over dominating the commercial hierarchy of the postcolonial literary field. The novel allegorizes Kunzru's embrace of the commercial mechanisms of the literary field as a platform for airing grievances about the wider politics of race and migration in the UK. But it also advances his career. In this sense the text reflects how Kunzru's activity in commercial publishing in fact reinforces the racialized rules of art. Kunzru made precisely the same decisions that Arjun does after having gained his own first and second short-lived contracts – a type of serious job instability which Kunzru lived through in the 1990s while he worked as a travel journalist. Of this period he has said: "My dominant experience is of floating through the world as a freelancer, which is a sort of upscale precarity that was very fetishized in the '90s – one of the comedic terms floating around was the 'flexecutive'" (Haiven 20-21). As a form of self-fashioning, *Transmission* works to explain and justify Kunzru's own choices within literary publishing.

Chapter Four:

"Editing from another perspective"[1]: The Complete Works as Alternative Culture of Writing

This chapter demonstrates that knowledge of the historical development of the exclusion of minoritized writers from the mainstream literary field provides reason to be wary about the extent to which radical critique of racialized British politics of identity can wage a political intervention once it has been incorporated and spectacularized in the mainstream. I use the Complete Works scheme, a mentoring program for black and Asian British poets developed by the London writing development organization Spread the Word, to explore the dynamic relationship between two phenomena in contemporary British poetry production. One is the apparent "enabling possibilities" of cultural commodification which, as Anamik Saha has argued, are afforded to minoritized cultural producers who choose to take advantage of mainstream Western cultural markets as a means for mass-circulating "cultural production from marginalized positions [that] has the capacity to produce counter-narratives that challenge the racialist discourses of nationalism" ("Locating MIA" 749-750). The other phenomenon is what Rebecca O'Rourke calls a "local culture of writing," which emphasizes how the teaching and learning of creative writing is a socially embedded process whose potential to "develop socially transformative qualities that . . . become a resource for local cultures and

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[1] Nii Ayikwei Parkes quoted in Kamenou.

communities" (43) rests on an infrastructure of educational and cultural policies which have underpinned writing development in postwar Britain.

I argue that the Complete Works constitutes a culture of writing which exists as an alternative to the exclusivity of creative writing programs in British universities, which have become a "pipeline" for authors into the literary industry (Larsen 32). Creative writing programmes favour mainly white students who are more likely to embody the kinds of social and cultural comportment valued in academia (32). Through study of the Complete Works, I demonstrate how the mainstream poetry field, in struggling to remain relevant and profitable in the current period of contraction in literary industries, has begun to incorporate racialized poetry produced outside of the traditional university system. This allows publishers to capitalize on the creativity fostered in networks of counter-discourse on the periphery of the literary field, where poets of colour are apprenticed in how to establish aesthetic autonomy from the usual constraints which mainstream poetry publishers have traditionally placed upon minoritized writers.

4.1 Race and Ethnicity in British Poetry Publishing

When in 2006, at the behest of Bernardine Evaristo and Ruth Borthwick, Arts Council England (ACE) released the *Free Verse* report in partnership with the writer development agency Spread the Word, British poetry publishers came under fire for publishing too few poets from black and Asian backgrounds – 0.64 per cent at the larger presses like Faber & Faber and Cape, and 1.8 per cent at independent presses (Teitler, "The Complete Works" 76). The report revealed how a number of principles in poetry editing were

contributing to this situation. Interviews with editors at mainstream presses revealed a general consensus that the quality of writing that they wished to publish simply was not being written by many non-white poets – or, at least editors were not being made aware of such writing via the common avenues to publication, namely through an agent or, in rare instances, through unsolicited submissions by writers themselves. The writers of the *Free Verse* report interpreted the mainstream publishers' consensus as part of a "more subtle" form of racial bias embedded in poetry publishing; "manifest[ing] itself when poets are asked to represent 'The Black Voice' at events" (Evaristo 13), this bias treats poets of colour less as good poets according to industry standards and more as stand-in representatives of the foreign cultures from which they happen to hail.

In chapter two, I demonstrated how a similar perspective is apparent in the anthropological tendency in the marketing of multicultural fiction, which in its more extreme form encourages minoritized writers to conform to token caricatures of commonly held stereotypes about immigrant and diasporic communities. The *Free Verse* report helps to explain this anthropologizing mode, by revealing the extent of the general exclusion of non-white poets from the ranks of both mainstream and avant-garde print poetry. Non-white poets have been relegated to spaces which have traditionally failed to be recognized by these dominant traditions in the official poetry establishment, for example slam and performance styles, as well as poetry used for community activism by way of exploring socio-cultural – often industry-produced – constructs of racial and ethnic identity.

Recent scholars of race and poetry in Britain have noted that the mainstream poetry establishment is hardly free of the racism rampant in society more generally.[2] Where critics of race and representation in contemporary American and British poetry broadly meet is in recognition of the non-white poet's exclusion from the history of modernist and postmodernist experimentation with avant-garde and innovative forms. Published non-white poets tend to write about race, identity, and racial politics in a way that runs up against the apparently "post-race" preserve of postmodern poetics. Dorothy Wang, whose *Thinking Its Presence: Form, Race, and Subjectivity in Contemporary Asian American Poetry* (2013) is credited with helping to draw attention to race and poetry on either side of the Atlantic, states in a *Boston Review* forum on race and the avant-garde:

> in the world of "innovative" poetry and poetics, where the "absence" of obvious racial identity is to be applauded—for not exhibiting the hallmarks of "bad" poetry" (read: "identity poetry" [read: "minority poetry"]) . . . [a] poem without any overt ethnic or racial markers is assumed to be racially "unmarked." Little or no attention is paid to how poetic subjectivity, which overlaps with but is not limited to racial subjectivity, might inhere in a poem's language and formal structures—in what is unsaid or unspoken at the level of "content" but manifested through aesthetic (poetic) means.

We should also note that what has been hailed as the avant-garde's supposedly radical eschewal of the universal "I" of traditional lyric verse has been challenged as a strategy

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[2] See Romana Huk, "In AnOther's Pocket: The Address of the 'Pocket Epic' in Postmodern Black British Poetry."

mainly accessible to white avant-garde poets in print. While British avant-garde and the similar American "L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E" scenes deconstructed poetic subjectivity, racialized poet-critics have noted the contradiction that in order for the non-white poet to explode and move beyond the supposed confines of linguistic subjectivity, they must first be considered an active subject in official registers of poetry valuation. In other words the "radical" avant-garde's voice is more a sign of privilege; hence Romana Huk's argument that contemporary black British poets turn to traditional lyric form as an innovative subversion of the exclusivity of the avant-garde (225).

It is in response to the dynamics charted by the *Free Verse* report and by scholars such as Wang and Huk that Spread the Word developed the Complete Works. Boasting an advisory committee that included the veteran poets Daljit Nagra, Fiona Sampson, Matthew Hollis and Patience Agbabi, the Complete Works' inaugural round in 2008-2009 included ten poets,[3] and through connections with writer development programming at the Southbank Centre and the Arvon Foundation offered them mentoring through writing seminars, creative retreats, and opportunities for their writing to be printed in anthologies published by Bloodaxe Books. The program has since gone through two more rounds, each with ten new poets and a new anthology,[4] and for round three

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[3] They were: Mir Mahfuz Ali, Rowyda Amin, Malika Booker, Karen McCarthy Woolf, Nick Makoha, Roger Robinson, Denise Saul, Seni Seneviratne, Shazea Quraishi and Janet Kofi Tsekpo.

[4] The poets in round two were Mona Arshi, Jay Bernard, Kayo Chingonyi, Rishi Dastidar, Edward Doegar, Inua Ellams, Sarah Howe, Adam Lowe, Eileen Pun and Warsan Shire; and in round three Raymond Antrobus, Omikemi Natacha Bryan, Leonardo Boix, Victoria Adukwei Bulley, Will Harris, Ian Humphreys, Jennifer Lee Tsai, Momtaza Mehri, Yomi Sode and Degna Stone. The anthologies for these rounds are entitled, respectively, *Ten: The New Wave* and *Ten: Poets of the New Generation*, and

invitations were extended to short-listed applicants to take part in some of the writing

workshops, and a conference on diversity in British poetry was hosted at Goldsmith's

University in autumn of 2017.

Many poets have reached wide acclaim as a result of their involvement with the

Complete Works. Sarah Howe won the T.S. Eliot Prize for Poetry in 2015 for *Loop of*

Jade, making her the first person to win this prize for a debut collection; and Mona Arshi

won the Forward First Collection Prize in 2015 for *Small Hands*. Warsan Shire, who

served as Spread the Word's Young Poet Laureate for London while participating in

round two, "became a household name after her poetry was used by Beyoncé throughout

the million-selling album *Lemonade*" (Teitler, Preface 11). These and other success

stories are trumpeted at the Complete Works as proof that the programme has begun to

transform British poetry publishing. The scheme is said to have widened the spotlight on

the manner in which non-white writers are normally treated at mainstream presses. This

in turn is thought to have expanded the poetry canon, so that "BAME poets now make up

between 12-14% of those published by major presses" (11). For these reasons the

Complete Works vaunts itself as one of the most successful diversity initiatives in the

British creative economy.

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each are edited by Karen McCarthy Woolf and published by the Complete Works in
association with Bloodaxe Books.

4.2 Warsan Shire and the Politics of Production

In the introduction above, I note the influence of Anamik Saha's "politics of production" theory on this dissertation. I will briefly review this theory now, before discussing how it can be queried through a reading of contemporary British poetic production. Saha has explicated his theory through reviewing how the London "Asian Underground" dance music scene of the 1990s was especially significant to cultural studies scholars. On the representation-focused side of the debate, critics affirmed a "counter-hegemonic potential" residing in this music's "distinctly hybrid form" (Saha, "Locating MIA" 738). The music blended or "camouflaged" samples of traditional South Asian music within a mainstream dance style, thus in effect counter-posing a mainstream generic form as a vehicle for mass-circulating content embedded with culturally different images, symbols and examples of self-styling and expression, interpreted as bearing the potential to be understood as countercultural political messages which served to challenge the white status quo. This challenge would most likely be immediately visible and ironic to consumers from minoritized racial groups, yet remain camouflaged as "mainstream" all the same in the senses and gaze of consumers belonging to the hegemonic ideological grouping (738). On the production-focused side of the debate, critics argued that the very fact that this music had been commodified and mainstreamed blunted any radical edge contained within its aesthetic. Following John Hutnyk, one of the leaders of this view, in the Western music industry distinction is always sought after by marketers, and thus "'hybridity and difference sell; the market remains intact'" (qtd. in Saha, "Locating MIA"

738). Nevertheless, Saha emphasizes the value of certain insights deriving from both strains of cultural studies:

> I believe that a discussion of music's cultural-political potential also needs to focus on the politics of production, and to recognize the production process as a critical site in the struggle over cultural meaning. Therefore, while we can see how the constraining dimension of commodification has a reductive effect upon British Asian cultural production, I am interested in how its enabling features can be harnessed to help facilitate the cultural politics of difference. (740)

Through study of the recently broadened hunger of prestigious mainstream literary institutions for racialized poetry, we can challenge Saha's embrace of the ostensible locus of social power contained within cultural commodification. It is worth noting Saha's view that it is primarily via exposure to images and information disseminated through the increasingly commercialized cultural and media industries that members of the general public form both stereotypical and more progressive notions about minoritized racial, ethnic and faith communities (*Race* 57). Minoritized poets drifting toward the mainstream are in a position to capitalize on the availability of commercialized circuits for distribution and promotion to circulate politically interventionist messages and narratives. The "assertion of an ethnic identity as a political location from which to speak" (Saha, "Locating MIA" 737) is being mediated in more and more visible spaces of literary value, for example in review sections of mainstream newspapers and periodicals, in the academy, and in the mainstream publishing sector. The limitation of Saha's theory is that he is sanguine or ambivalent about the extent to

which the radical angle of a given work is being embraced by the mainstream precisely in times of market prospecting in order to serve the need for increased sales.

It is precisely the kinds of "representational strategies, including mimicry, repetition and hybridity" (*Race* 76), which Saha argues a producer can employ to constitute the firmest of transruptions, that are deployed by Warsan Shire, one of the Complete Works II poets, in her section of *Ten: The New Wave*, the anthology for the program's second round. Through mimicking the figure and parroting the voice of the stereotypical minoritized poet – a figure and voice which when presented as authentic have been central in targeting segments of the reading market for racialized poetry – it would seem that she has lubricated her foray into mainstream expanses that have only recently been conquered by more than a handful of radical poets of colour.

In "The Ugly Daughter," a poem which was originally printed in a slightly different version under the title "Ugly" in Shire's first published collection, *Teaching My Mother How To Give Birth* (2011), we encounter one of the poet's leitmotifs, of inscribing the female immigrant body with telling imagery:

> You're her mother.
>
> Why did you not warn her?
>
> Hold her, tell her that men will not love her
>
> if she is covered in continents,
>
> if her stomach is an island,
>
> if her thighs are borders?
>
>
>
> What man wants to lie down

and watch the world burn

in his bedroom?

Your daughter's face is a small riot,

her hands are a civil war,

a refugee camp behind each ear,

a body littered with ugly things

but God,

doesn't she wear

the world well. (Shire, "The Ugly Daughter" 13-29)

Shire's writing here can be interpreted to conform to the industry perspective for a poet

of colour to be an appropriator, not a progenitor of the meaningful and valued aesthetics

associated with esteemed published British poets. The writing is straightforward, prosaic

free-verse, staying away from linguistic experimentation; and it uses relatively simple

layouts on the page. It isn't surprising that critics have interpreted Shire's imagery as

allegory of the trope of the female immigrant body physically bearing the burdens of

neocolonial occupation, war and upheaval (see Okeowo). Shire's poetry is often read as

social commentary, as being "about" something which is solely subjective and not also

immediately significant for its "formal or aesthetic structures, properties, modes—in

other words, what makes poetry poetry and not a memoir or treatise" (Wang). Granted,

Shire describes herself as "an activist and writer who uses her work to document

narratives of journey and trauma" (*Teaching My Mother How To Give Birth* np). And

some of her mentors and editors, themselves non-white poets and thus not likely interested in reproducing the discourses of racialized literary marketing, have similarly pointed out realistic, sociological aspects of Shire's material. In the words of Pascale Petit, Shire's mentor at the Complete Works:

> She draws on her rich heritage, and a wealth of stories told to her by her family, to write extraordinary poems of broad appeal and intimate address. But these documents from the hybrid zone of London-Mogadishu are far from prose. There's a musicality to her cadences . . . She brings intense reports of diaspora experience to her writing, especially about women's concerns, but her themes are universal: love, sex, war, trauma, loneliness and identity. (23)

This suggests a tendency for Shire's poetry to line up with certain industry biases and desires for minoritized literature, in particular the recent vogue for politically "woke" poets like Dean Atta and Claudia Rankine who brand their work as leftist responses to the rising tide of racialized inequality and injustice. There is also a notable degree of self-ironizing at work in Shire's writing – a formal mimicry of the stereotypical non-white poet/ethnographic documenter. While Shire's imagery appropriates this industry-produced figure of the contemporary female immigrant writer, it clearly critiques the historically white stagnancy of British poetics. For instance, we can interpret the "relatives" in "The Ugly Daughter" – who "wouldn't hold" the ugly daughter because "she reminded them of the war" (3-5) – to be a metaphor for the standard poetry editor's allergic reaction to racially marked poetry. The same interpretation can be used to conceive of the "men" who "will not love" the ugly daughter (15), and who are also not willing to "watch the world burn" (20).

Shire's section in *Ten*, consisting of seven entries, is bookended with poems

which contain domestic imagery and make explicit references to violence against women.

In "Backwards," which opens the section, the speaker imagines reliving experiences of

nonconsensual sexual advances, and her father's violence against her mother:

> I can make us loved, just say the word.
>
> Give them stumps for hands if even once they touched us without
>
> > consent,
>
> I can write the poem and make it disappear.
>
> Step Dad spits liquor back into glass,
>
> Mum's body rolls back up the stairs, the bone pops back into place
>
> maybe she keeps the baby.
>
> Maybe we're okay kid? (Shire, "Backwards" 7-14)

Here, the speaker claims a certain "I" which is cast as a poet – as the subject who "can

write the poem and make it disappear" (9), who will "rewrite this whole life and this time

there'll be so much love, / you won't be able to see beyond it" (14-15). This speaker

would never be the subject of British avant-garde poetics, concerned as they are with

eluding matters of race under the guise of being the medium of post-identity liberal

multiculturalism, where "[t]o utter the 'r' word would make one's criticism or poetry

'about outsiderness too outside the outlining norms,' in Prageeta Sharma's words"

(Wang).

"The House," the final poem in Shire's section of *Ten*, parallels "Backwards" in

its confrontation of sexual abuse. The speaker tellingly refers to a popular cultural

producer who, like some of Shire's characters and like Shire as an individual, has been reduced to the trope of the racialized battered woman:

> Perhaps Rihanna has a plan, perhaps she takes Chris back to hers
>
> only for him to wake up hours later in a bathtub full of ice,
>
> with a dry mouth, looking down at his new, neat procedure. (Shire, "The House" 7-9)

While the focus of Shire's poems can be interpreted as political activism in the public sense, and thus confirm the usual reading of Shire's poetry as social commentary, the attention to the practice of poetry writing, and also to gendered and racialized pop culture figures, clearly attempt to "rewrite" ("Backwards" 15) traditional poetic subjectivity. Who else would "wear / the world" ("The Ugly Daughter" 28-29) other than the exoticized postcolonial writer, whose "physical and literary bodies" have historically been superimposed with "meaningless racial clichés" by literary marketers and editors (Parmar)?

From Saha's politics of production perspective, Shire's writing emphasizes how within the neoliberal context of the seemingly endless commodification of culture, representations of the racialized Other are fraught with the ambivalence and contradictions of commodification that have become increasingly noticeable in capitalism's advanced state. Corporate multiculturalism encompasses "the contradiction between how, on the one hand, racial minorities are oppressed and brutalized in real life, and how, on the other, as Herman Gray states [sic], 'racial neoliberalism willingly concedes, even celebrates difference'" (Saha, *Race* 65). In this context, poetry that negotiates the politics of identity can be a strategy for waging a "cultural political

intervention" in the notion of stable national identity and the stereotypical English subject. Shire's self-reflexive allusions to the industry perspective of the minoritized writer, voice, and formal style, challenge the historically elite institution of British poetry. Saha's theory invites us to read Shire's poetry as a symbolic disruption to the microcosm of an apparently, formerly, stable British nation which is printed poetry, and an apparently stable identity which is this poetry's speaking "I." Shire seems in other words to have read her Homi Bhabha. Her characters personify his theory of how the colonial process of signifying the racialized Other constitutes a site of "resistance through representation" by rupturing an otherwise apparently stable white identity. Aspects of colonialism's racist mode continue today, impinging on how immigrants and newcomers have settled in diasporas in the so-called centre. A figure like Shire chucks something of a semiotic wrench into the gears of the white British gaze. In Saha's terms:

> Fast forward to the postcolonial nation, and we see that legacies of empire and neocolonial ideologies remain inscribed on the bodies of the racialized Other, but so too, as [Paul] Gilroy highlights, are its ambivalences, which these "unwanted settlers project "into the unhappy consciousness of their fearful and anxious hosts and neighbours." (*Race* 76)

We cannot however take Shire's meta-poetic reflections on industry-produced identity to have been written without awareness of literary publishers' desire for minoritized writers to visibly eschew the tropes forced onto them. It is now also industry standard for minoritized writers to weave into the aesthetic surface of their works and the marketable features of their personae self-consciousness about employing "strategic exoticism," the "means by which postcolonial writers/thinkers, working from within

exoticist codes of representation, either manage to subvert those codes . . . or succeed in redeploying them for the purposes of uncovering differential relations of power" (Huggan 32). In terms of avant-garde poetics especially, critics such as Erica Hunt have suspicions about radical counter-discourse within the context of its own commercial viability:

> Our saturated fluency in consumer culture, whether we actively resist or not, predisposes us to commodified forms of resistance – easily digested presentations of identity, 'oppositionality,' and avant-garde practice. Certain radicalisms are 'brands' that don't even begin to address the layers of difficulty, contradiction, tension, undertow and residue.

The background to Shire's foray into publishing is significant here. It reflects how her writing, which has perhaps become marketable because it conforms to a kind of "ready-made" radicalism (Hunt), has been incubated in a network of racialized and marginalized British writers. Before her stint at the Complete Works, Shire published her first collection, *Teaching My Mother How To Give Birth*, with flipped eye press. This press is incorporated as a not-for-profit organization in England and has received ACE funding throughout its tenure in London since 2001 ("Writing for the boy I was"). Jacob Sam-La Rose, flipped eye's poetry editor, worked with Shire on *Teaching My Mother How To Give Birth* during the editorial process – yet their connexion had begun some time earlier. Sam-La Rose met Shire when as a teenager she participated in one of his poetry workshops at a northwest London community centre. A couple of years later, they began an editorial relationship while Shire was studying for a Bachelor of Arts in Creative Writing at London Metropolitan University (Hess). Since then Sam-La Rose has

been Shire's primary editor; in interviews she refers to him as her mentor and attributes her style in part to his scrutiny (see Wassenberg).

According to the co-founder and senior editor of flipped eye, Nii Ayikwei Parkes, being a publisher of primarily non-white writers means that his editors are privy to noticing culturally specific aspects of a given writer's work which would most likely be overlooked by an intermediary at a mainstream press. He relates this specifically to his own role in being Shire's first publisher:

> I often ask, if I had not been there, would Warsan have been published in the same way? Would a European writer ask her to make certain changes? It's in things like clichéd images and concepts which other people would just let slide. When Warsan writes about Miriam Makeba, as an African I understand how important Makeba is to Africa in a way a European editor might not, all the undertones of the symbol of Miriam Makeba would be lost on them. Those may be little things but it is the little things that influence how we see the world. (Kamenou)

In another interview, Parkes explains how the independent status of flipped eye allows it to avoid the pressures placed on minoritized writers in mainstream poetry publishing. Acknowledging the reality of "market forces" leading mainstream presses "to go with trends" which often manifest these pressures, Parkes has stated:

> It is not just that our editors aren't subject to those kind of pressures, but that our kind of goal is to bring out good work that is different. We are not trying to duplicate what others have done. But we are talking big publishers here, when you look at small presses, small presses do interesting work across the board,

regardless of who the editors are, because sometimes they don't have the same pressures. It is just that when they get to a certain size and they have shareholders, then they change. ("Writing for the boy I was")

On why he wrote his own novel, *Tail of the Bluebird* (2011), in the detective story genre associated with the commercial end of the trade fiction market, Parkes expresses an interesting perspective on why being from a marginalized background guided him toward writing in a mainstream form:

I am aware that the largest part of the English reading audience is used to a level of tension in a story, so I made a conscious decision to stay within a detective story structure in order that the ideas I wanted to deal with (notions of power and truth) could be shared. Because people would get into the story quite easily. So I was less concerned about how my work would be perceived and more concerned with whether or not that message would get through. ("Writing for the boy I was")

This statement parallels the view of representation-focused cultural studies scholars outlined above. A good analogy perhaps is that for Parkes, a mainstream genre functioned as a needle able to easily inject into a large audience content containing a politically interventionist perspective.

Shire has also reflected on how confronting the traditions of racist gatekeeping in British poetry is something that has provided her with material to write about, and generic form to mimic. In an interview following the publication of *Teaching My Mother How To Give Birth*, she outlined her hostility toward iambic pentameter. Her comments are especially relevant to her technique, reflecting how the very same decision as

Parkes's to write in a popular generic form – the easily understood "narrative" style of poetry, the poetry which the industry perspective perceives as the appropriate fashion for a non-white poet – was made in acute relation to asserting a subversive cultural disposition. In Shire's words her writing is not only "transparent," which we might align with the straightforwardness and realism of her imagery, but it also eschews what she refers to as an "English way of looking at poetry," which she imagines to include in part "making poems all symmetrical," a standard practice of hers before she began formal education in creative writing and started to pay attention to matters of form (Mistry). Shire links her choice to write outside of traditional "English" form to her own disposition toward being a racialized writer in the English language: "The reason I have beef with iambic pentameter is because if you don't speak in that accent, or that's not your actual language, the meter doesn't fit your work and so therefore they tell you you're wrong" (Mistry).

These anecdotal references to Shire's career suggest the influence of her peers in an informal network of apprenticeship that she came up through before her time at the Complete Works. We see how the dynamics of "editing from another perspective" (Parkes's term) incubated Shire's counter-discursive style. This style is akin to the postcolonial mimicry and hybridity which Saha interprets as semiotic strategies of political subversion lying in wait within mainstream practices for commodifying minoritized cultural products.

Since her time with flipped eye and the Complete Works, Shire's poetry has received wide acclaim beyond the usual limited audiences for small press poetry. On the one hand, she has been consecrated by prestigious institutions. Shire won the inaugural

Brunel University African Poetry Prize in 2013, started by Bernardine Evaristo to develop, celebrate and promote African poetry. Shire was also the Queensland Poet Laureate in Australia, and the Young Poet Laureate for London. On the other hand, Shire has earned a place in popular culture, and she has used her writing for community activism – activity shunned by the poetry canon. Lines from Shire's spoken word album *warsan vs. melancholy* were interspersed on Beyoncé's *Lemonade*. This not only runs up against the canon's favouring of print poetry. The fact is that Shire independently released *melancholy* on the social media site bandcamp, invented for independent musicians to share and sell their work, a contemporary node in the post-punk challenge to the traditional ways for producing and circulating intellectual property. Another example of Shire's writing being registered in mainstream culture is her poem "Girls," which she published in *The Guardian* in support of a campaign to end female genital mutilation begun by a British secondary-school student, Fahma Mohamed. This poem apparently played a leading role in convincing education minister Michael Gove to openly acknowledge the campaign in the House of Commons and also promote that all secondary teachers in the UK discuss genital mutilation with their students (see Brown). Similarly, in Shire's poem "Home," the prosaic imagery of "home" being "the mouth of a shark," capturing the flight of immigrants in times of war, has been hailed as a "rallying cry" for people worldwide impacted by refugee crises. Social media users have tweeted and shared lines from the poem widely. At the Race and Poetry and Poetics in the UK (RAPAPUK) Conference in February 2016, the director of the Complete Works, Nathalie Teitler, reflected approvingly on Shire's ability to straddle elite and popular fields (see RAPAPUK). In Teitler's view this allows Shire to uniquely capitalize on her mainstream

following to use her writing for community activism. Teitler's view parallels the reading

I have provided thus far through Saha's theory, as the commodification of racialized

creative expression, despite its many downsides, can be shown to offer Shire a

Benjaminian opportunity to transport politically subversive messages to the masses.

4.3 London's Alternative Culture of Writing

We cannot end the analysis here. Shire's wide appeal can also be interpreted as a result of

the mainstream's gravitational pull toward hitherto marginalized poetic expression as a

means to renew markets. The recent prevalence in mainstream publishing of prospecting

for talent in racialized and marginalized networks of writers reflects the intuition of

publishers that market renewal can be achieved by looking outside of the traditional

spaces of production from where British poets have usually been drawn. Unique

historical circumstances underpin the constitution of this alternative network of poetic

production.

We get a sense of the importance of a certain counter-traditional atmosphere

surrounding and upholding the Complete Works from Teitler in her preface to *Ten: The*

New Wave:

Two of the poets on this TCW II round applied for the programme because of

their desire to become part of a truly diverse community, having found little space

for discussion of race/identity/different cultural approaches within mainstream

British poetry. It is these initiatives, and the tireless efforts of poets working with

young people (including Dorothea Smartt and Kadija George) that allows The

Complete Works to flourish. The programme can in fact be seen as a way of

making their hard work visible on a national and international platform. (13)

Not the first mentorship program of its kind, the Complete Works has thrived within a

closely knit support system of diasporic writers. The origins of this support system are

traceable at least to when Bernardine Evaristo, while serving as director of Spread the

Word in 1995, created the Afro-Style School, the UK's "first intensive poetry technique

course run by and for poets of colour" (Teitler, Preface 13). Two Complete Works poets,

Malika Booker and Roger Robinson, participated in the Afro-Style School, and in 1997

founded Malika's Poetry Kitchen, a workshop series known for "offering poets a

supportive space in which to develop their craft and poetics" and which still exists (13).

These and other writers associated with the Complete Works serve as writing

development workers in other educational organizations – as tutors, teachers, role

models, mentors, editors and funding officers, sometimes wearing several of these hats.

Roger Robinson for instance is part of the Poetry School, instantiated in 1997 by Mimi

Khalvati and Pascale Petit – themselves two of the more elite figures in recent black and

Asian British poetry, having won several prestigious awards and honours, and who in

each round of the Complete Works have served as mentors. In fact the list of

organizations which have over the past two decades offered educational interaction

between authors and poets and members of the wider community goes on and on: among

these are Apples and Snakes, the UK's forerunning performance and slam poetry

organization; the British Council's Writers in Schools and Writers in Prisons campaigns;

and a number of lower-profile initiatives offering author visits in community centres,

elementary and secondary schools, and institutions of higher education. That the

Complete Works is one of the recently established organizations in this tradition of apprenticeship suggests that filling a gap in the talent development and acquisition rings of poetry publishing has meant tapping into this firmly established intergenerational and fundamentally didactic community.

The unique influence of these support networks is often unaccounted for in criticism of contemporary writing. Nevertheless, nearly every writer has taken part in them in one way or another. Where racialized writers are concerned, their history of being marginalized and excluded from institutional measures of literary value has resulted in the establishment of networks of apprenticeship outside of formal education, but which educate writers nonetheless, as Teitler's remarks above suggest. In turn, what writers learn from their mentors and role models in these environments, themselves well-versed in the forms of racialization and marginalization which non-white writers encounter in the publishing world, inevitably comes to have a shaping influence on the choices that they make once they turn their attention to writing and performing.

The accepted narrative that creative writing education in Britain has most often been housed in universities, beginning with Malcolm Bradbury's pilot Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing (MFA-CW) at the University of East Anglia in 1970, overshadows the fact that universities have historically been "simply one of many sites where creative writing is taught and learnt" (O'Rourke 42). According to Rebecca O'Rourke: "As a profession, writing is sustained by a web of public and private patronage and writers are trained in 'invisible colleges' – largely informal networks of affinity, example and opportunity that are nevertheless also sites of significant social power" (39). A socially grounded history of creative writing would highlight the "other

contexts of formal and informal educational sites, and sites outside education" where the teaching and learning of creative writing take place (41). It is more accurate for instance to conceive of literary writing on what O'Rourke calls a "composition continuum," wherein innumerable ordinary practices – writing for work, writing for private reflection – exist alongside what are commonly conceived of as official published forms of writing. Because writing is based in language, it is O'Rourke's view that the teaching and learning of it happens in many spaces, and thus she argues that a more comprehensive "alternative story of origins for the teaching of creative writing" involves looking at the inculcation of writing skills "not as a discrete activity but as a material and socially located practice within a culture, or cultures, of writing" (42).

While a record of more isolated instances of creative writing initiatives in Britain reaches back to the immediate postwar years, a more comprehensively focused chapter in the development and delivering of this discipline is rooted in 1960s educational expansion. This is when creative writing was incorporated within the "traditional extension role of university extra-mural departments and of adult and community education provision" (O'Rourke 38). This created a considerable need for writing teachers. In *The Author Is Not Dead, Merely Somewhere Else*, Michelene Wandor refers to a 1981 report by Alan Brownjohn commissioned by the Arts Council of Great Britain entitled "Writers in Education, 1951-1979." This report "described a new kind of patronage which developed after the Second World War, enabling writers to become a presence in, and boost their income from, higher education" (Wandor 10-11). Wandor writes:

It was the Regional Arts Association in the mid 1960s which formalised the presence of writers in educational institutions. In 1967, Northern Arts set up a Writer's Fellowship at the Universities of Durham and Newcastle, followed in 1968 by a Fellowship at the University of Hull. In 1967-8 a Writers-in-Schools initiative was launched by the Arts Council, supported by the Department for Education and Science. Money came from a mix of arts and educational organisations. In 1971, a Poets-in-Schools scheme was set up by the Poetry Society (founded in 1909), and financed by the W. H. Smith chain of newsagents and bookshops. Under this last scheme, during 1979, 593 visits were made to schools by 167 different writers. (11)

Since then writers have increasingly sought personal support from an escalating number of institutions and organizations directly involved in the writing development market, whose *raison d'être* and main source of revenue is offering services in the provision of learning and sharing writing skills. Wandor goes on to note the considerable ramping up of other fellowships and schemes for writers to work in schools by the end of the 1970s: "These residencies were designed to subsidise writers – in a useful shorthand, to 'buy time to write' – a modern form of patronage, academically" (11-12).

With this groundwork laid, in the 1970s and 1980s creative writing pedagogy started to clearly bear the influence of collectivist ideologies imported from the broadening adult and community education movements. O'Rourke notes how teachers' manuals during this time, which had formerly privileged a figure of the reader and writer in isolation, encouraged becoming "engaged in socialised writing activities" (46). She adds that this "reflects the collective forms of organisation ushered in by feminism and

community writing which was taken up by creative writing in adult education" (46). Part of this development was influenced by leftist policies to distribute literacy partly in the name of democratizing access to the knowledge and skills deemed necessary for post-industrial labour. In addition to schooling in composition and literacy, the acumen for writing imaginatively was validated in policy not only as a further way to inculcate basic writing skills, but as an instrument to also spark social cohesion and stability. For example, creative writing was interpreted as a way to encourage community building amongst increasingly splintering and diverse ethnic and socio-economic sub-groups and sub-cultures in metropolitan, urban, and rural areas of Britain. Understood as a space of productive interaction, accessible community and higher learning education initiatives were constructed as a building block toward brightening Britain's horizons. This ethos was evident across the range of cultural and educational policies specifically designed to develop writing.

Keeping in mind these general trends throughout creative writing's developmental decades from the 1960s to the 1990s, we can note forces in the literary field which also contributed to the rise of the educational institution as a source of patronage. The postwar period has witnessed steady retraction in the possibilities for authors to be acquired by a publishing house. While there is more desire among the increasingly educated British population to work in writing-based fields, or to be an author of imaginative writing, concomitantly the possibility for earning even a modest living from publishing has decreased. This is not to say that there has ever been a period in history when being a full-time literary writer was a realistic career choice. But opportunities per capita for earning a living from the publishing sector as a copyrighted author have dissipated in

recent decades. Many literary texts are bought and sold every day, but the increasing favouring of books that have been forecast to be bestsellers diminishes the pool of writers earning any sort of living from intellectual property exchange. Truer still for poetry. Poetry has always been a marginal sector of the publishing industry compared to full-length books of prose fiction and the wider areas of the general non-fiction trade market. In the current context poetry publishing accounts for only just over 1 per cent of the overall book trade (Parmar). Writers within this field especially have increasingly turned to teaching as a means of earning financial support.

It is thus no coincidence that during the 1990s university programmes in creative writing were able to move into a lucrative position in the offering of knowledge acquisition and exchange for this form of artistic practice. Part of the reason for this is that alongside the rise of writing development within community and adult education, government-led writing development began to change its focus in the 1980s as a result of the increasing marketization of higher education. O'Rourke notes a shift in policy focus after the 1973 Russell Report on Adult Education, which separated the perceived social role of arts education from the emphasis on building bridges between disadvantaged community groups and the wider populace, so that "adult education throughout the 1980s showed an increasingly sociological bias" (47). There were exceptions to this general drift, of course. "In general, though," O'Rourke writes, "arts activities were marginal to social regeneration until well into the 1990s" (48). So, whereas before the watershed revival of the university system in 1992 creative writing options in undergraduate and graduate programs were rare, O'Rourke identifies a dramatic increase in the number of these course options in undergraduate degrees between 1995 and 2005, and a steady rise

in the availability of full degrees in the discipline (40). Since then the number of creative

writing program offerings has also exploded. One of the core reasons for this is because

in the wake of recent fee introductions universities have capitalized on the popularity of

creative writing programs. Significantly, creative writing programs do not only offer

skills in how to write, but they also provide access to money-spinning networks within

the publishing world. This not only offers aspiring writers patronage and time to write,

but it also provides authors support, who rely on residencies, professorships and contract

instructor gigs for income supplement while they work on their next books.

The exclusions along racial and class lines from creative writing programs in

academic institutions of higher learning are thus highly consequential. What O'Rourke

identifies as a general restriction to having the means or sensing the welcoming

atmosphere for joining a writing workshop – "[p]articipation is determined by real or

perceived educational disadvantage . . . cultural and symbolic capital" (42) – is amplified

in the university. Compared to the findings of a recent Runnymede Trust report, general

enrolment patterns of BAME students in universities reflects "'lower admissions rates at

top universities despite equivalent A-level results, higher rates of unemployment and

depressingly few Black academics, particularly at a senior level'" (qtd. in Larsen 32). As

part of the research for *Writing the Future*, Mel Larsen assessed enrolment data from the

2013-2014 academic year for eight British universities offering creative writing courses,

four located in London and four outside of the city. She found that BAME students were

a remarkably small part of the cohort compared to their white counterparts (32). A

number of factors contributed to this exclusivity. The majority of the most prestigious

programs are offered by schools in London or other metropolitan cities, where tuition and

living expenses are high. Scholarships for these programs are also not as easy to obtain in the UK as they are in the US (Flood, "Junot Diaz"). According to one tutor whom Larsen interviewed, the result is an extremely well-off demographic of students eager to have their works published or otherwise join the ranks of literary industry employees in the more usual entry-level ways:

> The thing I have to deal with the most is cultural capital . . . our BAME students don't have families and friends who work at the BBC or in the business, so it's much more difficult. They have to write a hundred letters and hope that two reply. You can't do a six month unpaid internship unless you've got a family that will support you and see it as normal. So it's economics and class. (33)

What is more, in the words of Bambo Soyinka, the head of Creative Writing at Bath Spa University, aspiring BAME writers are said to be deterred by the dominance in academic literary theory – which makes up a considerable component of coursework in British creative writing programs – of a "narrow view of literary quality [which] can have a negative impact on any writer who draws from different cultural influences or who strives to produce original text and new ways of seeing" (qtd. in Kean, "Plus ça change" 15). These views have been echoed by Aminatta Forna, who is also a Creative Writing professor at Bath Spa. Responding to Junot Díaz's famous attack on the "unbearable too-whiteness" of American MFA-CW programs, Forna frames the recent "backlash" against cultural and racial homogeneity and colour-blindness in British creative writing programs as a reaction to a certain "protectionism" emanating from the mainly white and privileged upper crest of literary publishers and academics (Flood, "Junot Diaz"). Given that creative writing programs are interpreted as "pipelines" for writers into the publishing

industry, there is cause for alarm among writers who belong to and identify with the cultural practices of groups on the periphery of Anglo-centric Britain. Elsewhere in *Writing the Future* Kean notes that 40 per cent of publishing house executives responding to questionnaires on where they find authorial talent stated that creative writing courses provide a significant source of clients, while only 19 per cent replied that writing workshops outside of the university like the Faber Academy, which are often avowedly committed to diversity – and of course we can include the Complete Works within this section – provide significant sources of clients ("Could do better" 22).

It is not surprising then that the 1990s also witnessed the establishment of new black and Asian writing groups outside of the university, founded by younger black and Asian writerslike Evaristo and others. While undergraduate and graduate courses and degrees in creative writing were beginning to be convincingly marketed as *the* places for aspiring writers to forge the personal relationships and connections necessary for entering the literary trade, the general lack of access to this area of higher education among writers from marginalized racial, ethnic and faith communities in Britain resulted in the constitution of a culture of writing apprenticeship alternative to these perils.

It is precisely the *local* character of a culture of writing in general terms – being anchored in a community or neighbourhood – which fosters the potential for members to engage in counter-discursive writing practices. For example, one phenomenon that O'Rourke identifies in her qualitative study of community writing workshops in Cleveland, England is that their "marginal" status to formal higher education enlivens a sense of autonomy from the dominant currents in mainstream writing production (43). Elsewhere with Lynette Hunter, O'Rourke has elaborated that community writing

originated with disaffected schoolchildren, adult literacy learners and the socially

and educationally disadvantaged urban poor who became involved in forms of

community education. It was organised by two distinct purposes. First, to

represent to and for themselves, as well as to the mainstream, areas of experience

and knowledge which were marginalised, silenced or profoundly misrepresented.

Second, to argue with the mainstream – in the form of the Arts Council,

compulsory education system and the media – about definitions of literature and

literary value. (Hunter and O'Rourke 145)

They also write:

Community Writing has been in common usage since the early 1980s to describe

forms of writing and publishing, and forms of reading and writing, which exist

outside the dominant literary and educational institutions and the relationships of

reading and writing which they maintain and promote. . . . Taking a broad cut

through history, we see that whenever literary relations have been institutionalised

in a dominant form there have emerged (or continued) traditions of opposition and

subversion. Their non-literariness has often been foregrounded and such traditions

come down to us as folk, working-class or socialist traditions, or are reformulated

as lost canons of women's, lesbian and gay or black writing and writers. (145)

While the socio-historical conditions differ somewhat, the correlation between how

O'Rourke and Hunter define community writing and the architecture of London's BAME

writing community suggests the presence of what O'Rourke calls a "ruling passion," in

effect a localized writerly habitus which reflects the specific atmosphere of the

community and which engenders counter-institutional practices (119).

We can conceive of the new mainstream interest in politically interventionist racialized poetry like that produced by Warsan Shire as the result of elite literary, academic and publishing institutions coming to realize that money can be made from sub-cultural and otherwise marginalized and racialized forms of community writing – writing which we can now characterize as *formerly* prohibited from participating in the esteemed poetry field. In the British creative economy, the ideology that cultural production can be an instrument to bridge the gap between the relatively homogenous traditional elite and racialized, gendered and classed sub-cultural community sectors is evident in particular government policies and corporate initiatives. These have aimed at widening participation in arts, cultural and media production, consumption and education, and have underpinned the centre's embrace of what were until recently peripheral forms of cultural expression. With respect to the field of poetry publishing in particular, the fact that racialized counter-discursive poetry has developed on the periphery of the field, outside of the formal university and publishing networks, is largely what makes it appealing to publishers today.

4.4 Conclusion

There has been in short an unprecedented drift toward incorporating niche racialized enclaves of literary labour and productivity, which have traditionally been denied mainstream commodification. This reflects the way that the traditional practices employed by media and cultural firms, tailored toward nurturing more prestigious cultural forms by drawing producers and consumers from a relatively homogenous

educated strata of the public, is losing its clout. Mainstream poetry publishers' recent interest in capturing marginalized and racialized consumer attention and creative talent has been uncommon in the context of the general media corporatization process over recent decades, a process which has led poetry publishing to be "dominated by the 'big five' and a proliferation of smaller presses edited almost entirely by white men" (Parmar). Particularly during the 1990s, the corporatization of media production, which resulted in largescale concentration of ownership of cultural production firms, further entrenched cultural homogeneity. As just one example, this persisted through a certain narrowness in the targeting of consumption markets associated with the dominant white culture (see Saha, *Race*, chapter 2). This proved unsustainable into the 2000s. Publishers realize that they need new strategies in order to stay afloat. Two processes are particularly relevant to this need:

1) An intensification in general industry contraction. More people read and write than ever before, but the habits of reading and writing fiction and poetry encouraged in the baby-boom generation have been displaced by the rising popularity of digital media. The increased production and consumption of these media have resulted in a waning of the creation and enjoyment of capital-L literature (see Griswold et al.).

2) The crisis in literary-industry accumulation has been compounded by the scandal over the lack of industry diversity. Significantly, this scandal represents a backlash to the generations of racialized lack of access to the forms of socialization and support engendering in individuals the social and

cultural capital valued in traditional sites of literary production and valuation,

namely academia and mainstream publishing.

Therefore, the poetry of Shire and others in the black and Asian British writing

community that was an hitherto unprofitable area of the field is now ripe for the corporate

encroachment because it is marketable to sizeable poetry audiences, both new and

already established. The mainstream capture of counter-discursive minority writing

serves as a way of targeting consumers for poetry within this community, who often

reflect on this process as a positive transformation; and potential consumers outside of

this community, who nonetheless typically identify with its concerns, that is, traditional

British book buyers who are inclined to empathize with appeals to the liberal notion that

allowing people on the periphery to access and participate in the "centre" or

"mainstream" of cultural representation is an example of social progress or cultural

democracy.

Hence the recent surge of literary-industry practitioners and critics who urge

publishers to diversify their author lists and narrative perspectives of the works which

they acquire. They are convinced that they will otherwise be rendered obsolete, but also

that there is a "business case for diversity." If companies are not going to "diversify" in

terms of the people they employ for ethical, liberal-democratic reasons, then they will for

capitalist ones, and often these motivations are impossible to disentangle.

A 2017 Royal Society of Literature report based on the findings of a survey of

two thousand people found that, despite an overriding intention of British citizens to read

literature as a way of empathizing with cultural perspectives that are different from their

own, only 7 per cent of the four hundred literary writers cited as significant were of

BAME descent (Kean, "Literature report"). Practitioners who promote supporting

multicultural literary production often frame this sort of thing as proof of "a hunger for

more books by more diverse writers" (Kean, "Literature report"). According to the chair

of the Royal Society of Literature, Lisa Appignanesi: "Given what readers are saying

about literature and the value they place on reading a different point of view to their own,

there seems to be an open door for publishers to push against with books that are written

by more diverse writers" (qtd. in Kean, "Literature report").

     Recent discussions of race and poetry in Britain are wary about poetry publishers

sensing the opportunity to capture and mainstream precisely the kinds of racialized and

marginalized counter-discursive writing formerly on the periphery. Sandeep Parmar and

Andrea Brady are among those who have discussed how writers might actively obtain

authority over their writing. One of the notable things that they also identify is the fact

that the rise in attempts from mainstream publishers and institutions to make the poetry

field appear more equitable is implicitly couched in a certain liberal redistributionist

ideology of cultural democracy. In line with my analysis, they argue that responding to

the general backlash over the historical closure of the canon to racialized and

marginalized poets, institutions at the centre of British poetry have in effect begun

staging their own identity crisis. An unprecedented move toward acknowledging and

promoting poetic writing which directly treats racial politics reflects a concerted attempt

of an overwhelmingly privileged expanse of creative practice to reclaim relevance. When

the African American poet Claudia Rankine won the 2015 Forward Prize for her

collection *Citizen*, Brady remarked on the way that Rankine "broke through to a wider

audience" because "with its searing anecdotes of everyday aggression and the murder of

black people by white cops, delivered in clear and remarkably restrained prose poems –
[the text] reflects more directly on racism than her previous books, which were arguably
more avant-garde in form and language." As Brady notes here, that such a prestigious
prize was awarded to this work of Rankine's is decidedly out of character for the
industry. Editions of other texts published after the win of prestigious prizes have been
adorned with reductive blurbs, like that on Sarah Howe's *Loop of Jade* describing it as a
"journey" into the author's own personal "dual heritage" of Chinese and British ethnicity.
In Parmar's words this is another instance of the usual way of "publishers who only stage
a poet's racial identity when that poet is not white." In response to the shallowness of the
mainstream embrace of writing which only a decade ago was unpublishable, Parmar and
Brady argue for something of an abolitionist response. They urge racialized poets
actively to carve out their own identity, language and form which address the politics of
race and ethnicity, and can also be considered linguistically and technically innovative,
but do not cater to the usual demands of existing traditions. The mainstream, the avant-
garde, postmodernist and even lyric traditions have been overwhelmingly favoured by
mainstream prizes, publishing houses, and review space in esteemed periodicals and
newspapers. At the RAPAUK conference, a year after Wang's highlighting in the *Boston
Review* of the lack of response from white critics and poets to the resurgence of attention
to racialized poetics and poetry production, Brady argued that a challenge to the
"conditions of white supremacy" which "impoverish" contemporary poetics must involve
"us white poets and readers [sic] to put our bodies in spaces where they can listen to the
voices of people of colour" (RAPAPUK). What Brady and Parmar have revealed about
British poetry publishing is that when consecration continues to be controlled by the

usual sites, and not by peripheral writers themselves, they will continue to be the racialized "ornaments" for an otherwise dominantly white establishment.

Even amidst this establishment's attempts to apologize for its traditions, the work of racialized writers is in Brady's words "segregated" by genre, audience, or mode of delivery – "racialized boundaries between kinds of labour and kinds of bodies" (RAPAPUK). While the attention toward racialized writers is commendable for various reasons, it seems that ultimately radical poetry cannot exist within the corporate cultural production system. My study of the Complete Works lends to an understanding of how the mainstream embrace of racialized writing is not part of a fix to systemic racism in the cultural industries, because it means the further entrenchment of the usual ways of promoting and circulating minoritized writers' works.

Conclusion:

Synopsis and Notes Toward Future Research

This dissertation has analyzed instances of representation in certain contemporary British literary works and the way certain publishers and organizations within the contemporary British literary field represent and market themselves as results of a much wider process in which racialized and classed disparities in neoliberal British higher education function as a barrier to becoming a copyrighted author or publishing worker in the contemporary British literary industry. An increasingly unavoidable scandal over a lack of industry diversity has influenced literary culture, affecting the manner in which publishers acquire, design and market authors and books, as well as how writers from marginalized communities approach their craft. My study outlines the historical circumstances linking exclusivity in education and publishing, and analyzes how the production, promotion, distribution and consumption of racialized authors and their works are key sites where the literary field manifests this exclusivity. I have argued, following Anamik Saha, that postcolonial and multicultural literary commodification can be interpreted as containing the possibility to both exacerbate and circulate the means for counterhegemonic disruptions of racial capitalism. In Saha's view, there is a central ambivalence to contemporary commercial cultural production: the messages in cultural products can simultaneously be used to strengthen corporate brand identities and raise consciousness, through mass-market circulation and consumption, about any decolonial or counterhegemonic politics contained within the narratives of those products. This ambivalence is best understood as evidence of the literary field's wider response to

contemporary market pressures. The increasingly corporatized mainstream publishing establishment's various forms of promoting and circulating niche postcolonial and multicultural literary products ostensibly offer redress to the demonstrated lack of publishing workers who hail from minoritized racial, ethnic and faith communities in the UK. This lack of workforce cultural diversity is, I have argued, a product of wider racialized access to British higher education. University programs in increasingly costly and elite institutions serve as the scaffolding for the insular networks which are the most common pathway to gaining a job in the publishing field. Access to, identification with, and participation within these programs and networks are themselves highly classed, racialized, and guarded by uneven access to cultural and educational capital. Moreover, I have argued, industry efforts to address these problems are especially necessary as publishers attempt to develop new areas of the book market because of the current period of general industry contraction. Marketing new multicultural literary products allows publishers to appear more relevant to an increasingly diverse milieu of readers. The tactic of marking their distaste for inequality in access to British cultural education allows publishers to beam their brand identities toward new market segments of diverse middle-class knowledge and creative-industries workers.

In future writing I hope to build on and enrich my analysis of contemporary British literature, race, and neoliberal education policy. I perceive foundational links between several phenomena: the incorporation of niche postcolonial, multicultural and racialized literary genres in mainstream publishing; a lack of cultural and racial diversity in all levels of British education, primary, secondary and post-secondary; and the British school system's increasing emphasis on multicultural teaching. Education policies

implemented by New Labour revamped the national curriculum to reflect standards set by the emerging paradigm of Global Citizenship Education (GCE), an international effort to foster education in human rights and intercultural literacy intended to prepare students for the increasingly global workplace. The historical circumstances underpinning the emergence of this standard reveal an increasing market logic in British educational policy development and curriculum planning, which has since the mid-1970s used the English classroom as a means of inculcating in British students specific policy-imposed dispositions on multiculturalism and diversity. Commercial innovations in the literary industry have played a role in determining how these dispositions can be fostered through English literary instruction, with particular impacts on writers and readers of postcolonial, multicultural and racialized literatures.

Literature and the Rise of British Multicultural Education

In addition to in higher education, members of black, Asian and other diasporic communities in the UK continue to experience foundational challenges to success in compulsory primary and secondary schooling, as well as in identifying with the subject matter of British arts, cultural and literary education in particular. A number of initiatives started by reading charities, literary diversity initiatives, and educational organizations attempt to use literary reading and teaching as means to correct this disparity. Research on this activity has approached the intersection of diversity initiatives and literacy campaigns in Britain from a variety of angles, from sociological work on how promoting literacy among children of immigrants reflects an overall intention of fostering national

integration (Lacroix 154-70), to analysis of an ostensible humanistic dimension that multicultural literature offers in the teaching of empathy about the contemporary migrant experience to foreign learners in English Language Teaching (ELT) programs in Britain and abroad (Xerri 57). Furthermore, in the promotional materials produced by social interest research groups and reading charities alike, literacy and reading from an early age, prior to comprehensive literary and creative arts education in compulsory schooling, are presented as some of the cardinal means of closing the gap between minoritized and disprivileged communities and the socio-economic mobility of the UK's hegemonic advantaged groups (see Reading Agency; Kean, "Literature report"; Morrisroe). We know that reading and literacy charities are open to using the book industries' commodification of the diversity of the racialized author as a business opportunity. These charities function as conduits for product distribution between corporate publishers and specific areas in the multicultural school system which are open to incorporating certain kinds of books into their practice.

The major publishing corporations have been active in racialized children's and young adult (YA) literary marketing. As just one example, in the wake of *In Full Colour*, many work-placement and other kinds of diversity initiatives developed by Arts Council England (ACE) and British publishers focused on both the potential consumer and labour markets represented by school-aged children in BAME communities. Penguin's activity with the Diversity in Publishing Network (DipNet) for instance – detailed in chapter four above – was just one node of its strategy for developing the "business case for diversity" in the book trades. In July 2005, broadening the scope of its paid summer internship and work experience programming that it had already been offering, Penguin offered a one-

day "summer school" for "'bright' sixth formers from ethnic minority communities" ("Summer school at Penguin" 7). The publisher's diversity manager at the time, Raphael Mokades, said that the company was planning to have the children "come up with an idea for a book, and talk about how to market and publish it. We want to give them some idea of the reality of bookselling" (7). Mokades connected this program to the business case for diversity: "This [program] is absolutely morally driven but it would be disingenuous not to admit the business benefits. We want a multicultural company that can market different types of books and understand different communities" (7). What Mokades reveals here is how multicultural marketing tactics are often deployed in children's and YA student markets. These tactics are now being applied to areas of the book market where there is the potential for substantial revenues.[1]

In other words, as discussions of the lack of industry diversity proliferate, and persistent links between the corporate establishment and elite universities continue to come to light in the media (not least due to Spread the Word's own report, *Writing the Future*), government funding for literary initiatives which spring from the New Labour and post-New Labour surge in public arts and education subsidy are awarded to organizations which favour BAME-authored works which can be marketed to children's, YA, student and school markets. The intention here is to support writing whose content and whose authors' personae match certain iterations of multicultural education policy.

These organizations are responding to a tradition of multicultural curriculum

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[1] On the promotion and circulation of children's books in BAME communities via the mid-2000s *Books for All* reading campaign, see: Tom Holman, "Kids' corner"; Victoria Arnstein et al., "Out on the town with Books for All"; and Liz Bury, "Books for All uncover." On more recent developments see Caroline Carpenter, "Children's authors promote tolerance and diversity following Brexit vote."

development in Britain. Since the mid-1970s policymakers have been interested in

revamping the curriculum so that the English classroom could be used to better prepare

graduates for the increasingly postindustrial job market. Classrooms could help to create

an ideal British student-subject, one whose dispositions on transnationalism,

multiculturalism, diversity and citizenship are governed by state-wide educational

policies. In the 1970s, regional and state-level education planning committees and policy

development organizations arose from the need to reform British education in response to

the changing global economy. As Nick Foskett writes:

> The 1970s and 1980s brought the domesticated environment for universities to an
>
> end. The key driver in this stepwise change was the global economic challenge
>
> brought about . . . by rising oil prices and the decline of traditional industries in
>
> 'the North' in competition from emerging economies in 'the South.' (28)

Most notably in response to the Bullock Report of 1975, the English Literature

curriculum began to be overhauled so that British graduates would acquire job skills that

were seen as being able to more directly benefit them in the labour market; these skills

privileged grammatical English usage and literacy, and downplayed scholarly literary

analysis. The Bullock Report, which is specific to English teaching, served as an omen

for the Labour-Party Prime Minister James Callaghan's broader 1976 Ruskin College

speech. The presentation of Callaghan's speech is widely understood as a watershed

moment in postwar British educational planning, ushering in the foundations for

neoliberal higher education to function primarily as a facilitator and distributor of

workplace skills. In Foskett's view the Ruskin College Speech

> started a national debate about the nature, purpose and success of the education

system in Britain. . . . The economic malaise was blamed squarely on the failure

of the education system to generate an educated society in which young people

had the skills and knowledge to enable them to contribute positively to economic

success. (28)

The Bullock Report and Ruskin College Speech each suggest that employers were in

need of graduates with better proficiency in English, and that secondary schools and

higher education institutions would have to better prepare students for work.

Meanwhile, there was the related government interest in revamping the

curriculum so that it could better inculcate in British primary and secondary students a

certain policy-imposed disposition toward, among other issues, the growing diasporic

communities in Britain. When in 1981, for instance, the Department for Education and

Science (DES) published its report, *The School Curriculum*, it suggested that schools

"help pupils to understand the world in which they live, and the interdependence of

individuals, groups and nations" and "instil respect for religious and moral values, and

tolerance of other races, religions and ways of life" (qtd. in Fisher and Hicks 11). It was

in anticipation of an emerging emphasis on multicultural education that with funds from

DES, the Leverhulme Trust, and the Ministry of Overseas Development, a British

educational charity called the One World Trust started the World Studies Project (1973-

1980), "a curriculum project to look at issues of world order and, in so doing, [giving]

birth to the UK variant of global education" (David Hicks 266). Under the directorship of

the progressive educationalist Robin Richardson, the World Studies Project became the

premier lab for developing and promoting World Studies, defined in one early manual as

"studies which promote the knowledge, attitudes and skills that are relevant to living

responsibly in a multicultural and interdependent world" (Fisher and Hicks 8). Informed

by the radical educational theories of Johan Galtung and Paulo Freire, Richardson came

up with the influential "framework for exploring global issues," which posited the study

of the interconnectedness of values, problems, background, and action. And he made

important early strides with his thesis that the study of global issues broadly fell under

four categories: poverty, oppression, conflict, and environment (David Hicks 266). It was

in light of writing like Richardson's that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and

Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) *Recommendation concerning Education for*

International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human

Rights and Fundamental Freedom (1974) was conceived, and indeed worded. Richardson

attended conferences in the years leading up to this document's conception, and wrote for

UNESCO's education journal, *Prospects*, in the 1970s (see Richardson, "World of

Change"). UNESCO's document in turn gave birth to an international doctrine for how

the governments of the core capitalist nations could, and indeed would shape their

domestic curricula to inculcate in schoolchildren awareness of the growing

interconnectedness and globalism of the contemporary world.

    The *Recommendation* had a number of specific effects on the always budding

relationship between education and cultural production. It stipulates:

    Member states should promote, at various stages and in various types of

    education, study of different cultures, their reciprocal influences, their

    perspectives and ways of life, in order to encourage mutual appreciation of the

    differences between them. Such study should, among other things, give due

    importance to the teaching of foreign languages, civilizations and cultural heritage

as a means of promoting international and inter-cultural understanding.

(UNESCO)

In its early days, the British progenitors of world studies catered to this pedagogy by shaping it as a fundamentally interdisciplinary field, the main themes of which could be applied in all existing areas of the standard curriculum. The social studies, geography, history, literature, physical education, religion, and all the other curricula were each meant to play a pivotal role in instilling in pupils a knowledge of contemporary global affairs and social, cultural and economic processes. Indeed, in *World Studies 8-13: A Teacher's Handbook* (1985), written primarily for an audience of British teachers and educational practitioners by Richardson's protégés, Simon Fisher and David Hicks, the areas of study in British schools are presented as being already suited for instilling in children knowledge about human interconnectedness. Even mathematics teaching is shaped by an ostensible worldly perspective; suggestions for teachers include instructing in different kinds of counting and numeracy that are indigenous to non-Western cultures and societies, and embedding the teaching of basic math skills in broader lessons about the state economies of countries around the world.

This pedagogy was influenced by the educational psychology of Carl Rogers, who argued that the therapeutic interview was a key means for developing empathetic identification with others. Teachers are offered methods, most often in the realm of leading intellectual games and classroom discussion and roleplay scenarios, to teach everything from commodity chains to variations in religious belief across the globe. In Derek Heater's *World Studies: Education for International Understanding in Britain* (1980), the first in-depth academic study of the work which had been done toward world

studies, and a polemic treatise on its viability as the basis for the British curriculum, the need to teach schoolchildren about these issues is justified as a means for creating a more peaceful planet. Such a need is established via an extensive review of academic studies in the social sciences and educational psychology which demonstrate children's shortcomings in knowledge of the social, economic and cultural planes of countries outside of their own. Within Heater's six core reasons for providing this knowledge are Britain's wavering position on the global stage, and the increasingly transnational economy (see Heater, chapter 2).

On the one hand, there are plenty of leftist overtones in the original world studies outlines, perhaps informed by emerging radical theories of globalization like Immanuel Wallerstein's influential world-systems theory or the theories of Walter Rodney on uneven development and planned underdevelopment. The very concept, "world society," is first introduced by Richardson as a way to conceive of globalization, while Richardson's *Learning for Change in World Society* (1976) and *World Studies 8-13* reference the uneven flows of capital back to the colonial centre as a result of recently globalized commodity production chains. Richardson's key concept for children to adopt – "systems thinking" – anticipates what Frederic Jameson would describe as "cognitive mapping," or the ability to conceive of oneself as a repository of classed labour-power within a wider socio-economic structure. Richardson posits that children should be taught systems thinking so that they may grow up with the knowledge needed for living in and managing a globally connected, harmonious and egalitarian world.

On the other hand, it is quite clear that in the minds of world studies curriculum developers and writers of key position papers in Britain that key to raising children's

levels of competence in global affairs and interdependence is making them more competitive for the increasingly transnational world of work. It served as a conduit for reforming the British education system by furthering the ways "of growing the education system to produce larger numbers of better educated graduates to ensure the UK economy would be highly competitive in global markets" (Foskett 29). From its beginnings the World Studies curriculum was conceived as a support for Britain's attempts to hold on to its former global stature. Likewise, the strength of the nation rests on the gradual generational embrace of these insights.

In delivering the world studies pedagogy, the English Literature classroom was presented as an arena for studying world literature, which in the early teaching manuals came in the form of published texts by authors like Doris Lessing and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, as well as in fables and folktales penned by Richardson as the basis for literary teaching. Richardson himself was known for being a talented fable writer, and for promoting the use of short, moral-laden stories. One of his own fables, which uses the metaphor of how an elephant is understood by different regional groups to explicate the multifaceted disciplinary approach in the world studies curriculum, was printed as the prologue for *World Studies 8-13* and thus made readily available for teachers to integrate into their daily practice. The manual also has a unit on how to use story-writing and story-telling as a means for exploring the variegated perspectives of people from around the globe.

The English classroom has always been a primary site for teaching British schoolchildren a particular disposition about multiculturalism. As Heater writes:

Through personal writing and the study of literature, young people may be

brought to an imaginative, vicarious understanding of alien cultures and

standards, motives and relationships which otherwise might escape their

experience. . . . Unshackled from the social scientist's necessarily prim regard for

'fact', the novelist (to cite the most prolifically useful genre in this field) can

heighten understanding by skilful handling of plot, characterisation and

descriptive power. . . . Anthony Burgess's *The Wanting Seed* may carry the

message of the population explosion with incomparably greater vividness than

sheaves of statistics. Similar impact may be achieved for race relations by *Cry,*

the Beloved Country or the novels of Baldwin or MacInnes . . . Insights into other

lands and differences in and clashes between cultures may be acquired by reading

such works as *A Passage to India* for India, *Gillian Lo* for China, *Things Fall*

Apart for West Africa and *A House for Mr. Biswas* for the Caribbean. These last

two examples are important for our purpose, not only as fine works of literature in

their own right, but because they are written by natives of the areas and cultures

described (Achebe and Naipaul respectively). (54)

I quote Heater at length here because his outline for literary teaching demonstrates the

uncanny combination of insights from several rather disparate, competing discursive

strands in literary and cultural studies – and *marketing*. This combination is still evident

in English curriculum policy and manuals, as I demonstrate below.

One of the main discourses underpinning Heater's pedagogy is the basic idea that

literary representation can serve as accurate reflection of life in the real world. In

particular, the best texts for usage in Heater's prescribed mode of instruction are ones

whose aesthetic merit derives from the author's ability to describe reality in a better way than the non-creative writer's presentation of facts could ever do. It is not just that art superiorly imitates life, but that this imitation shows how reality functions more clearly than actual facts. In Heater's view the best kind of literary representation is that which is so aesthetically skilled that it provides a better understanding of life in the real world than actual living experience can provide. It is the world in distilled form, void of white noise or otherwise equally distracting abstractedness of statistical representation; with the various aspects making up life – "standards, motives and relationships which otherwise might escape their experience" – projected plain and simple for the student to see (Heater 54). Most importantly, the purpose of instruction based on reading these kinds of literary texts is for making a more harmonious and peaceful, less dangerous and miserable globe.

The second main discourse underlying Heater's view of the pedagogical utility of literary texts is that these texts must have a certain level of authenticity to them, especially with regard to the ability for the author to authoritatively write about a particular geographical and cultural context. This is especially significant for teaching about foreign cultures, where underpinning Heater's construction of literature is a certain double standard regarding the literary expression of writers from racialized foreign communities. One thing he assumes of novels cut out for teaching about race relations is that their authors have the rare ability to share insights "into other lands and differences" precisely because they are "natives of the areas and cultures described" (Heater 54). In other words, Heater's perspective on "world literature" is informed by the same anthropological criticism which I have highlighted elsewhere in postwar literary publishing.

Multicultural Literary Teaching in the Creative-Economy Context

With this genealogy in view, we glean how contemporary British GCE incorporates and supports dominant ideas about the value of literary reading as a means for fostering in pupils a liberal-multicultural mentality toward members of minoritized racial, ethnic and faith communities (see Choo; DfES, *Developing the Global Dimension*; Giles et al.). From the original emphasis on teaching about transnational and intercultural exchange, to the trendy "multicultural" era of the late-1980s and 1990s, to one more suited to the neoliberal language of global citizenry, a mainstay has been using the literary classroom as a means of instilling hegemonic policy-imposed versions of multiculturalism. These changes to education policy and planning have had a number of specific effects on the nation's domestic literary field. In keeping with policy suggestions and curricular obligations, British publishers, many of which already had established traditions in educational publishing, increased production of a variety of texts which could be mobilized to meet the requirements of multicultural education – texts on their backlists by or about members of groups impacted by colonial and imperial conquest, as well as texts by famous or up-and-coming British authors of black and Asian heritage. They published new novels, poetry pamphlets, literature anthologies and short story collections, and it became common for these books to include supplemental material ready to be used for classroom interpretation and discussion.

This underlying history of curricular reform and industry transformation is ideal grounds for specific case studies of related aspects of contemporary British literary culture. Reading charities and state-funded cultural organizations continue to serve as the intermediaries between the book industries and formal schooling. For instance, while it does receive a small amount of annual government subsidy, the British Council is a cultural relations charity which garners some 85 per cent of its operational funding from the sales of educational resources which it develops and distributes for use by teachers in Britain and around the world. This programming is designed to meet the requirements of the Royal Charter assigned to the British Council in 1940, which stipulates that it function primarily as an international organization, "promoting a wider knowledge of [the UK] and the English language abroad and developing closer cultural relations between [the UK] and other countries" (British Council, "Our history"). The majority of its fiscal revenues come from delivering English language examinations in the UK and in many countries across the world. The council also develops culturally oriented content for use in classrooms.

In the wake of Brexit talks, to fulfil the ostensibly liberal parameters of performing "cultural relations," the council's activities have clearly been directed toward promoting a pro-European Union (EU) disposition. The British Council has developed the "EU-UK Culture and Education Series," with an "Education and Culture after Brexit" initiative. One branch of this initiative, "Our Shared European Future," solicits endorsement for recommendations that the council has written on how to sidestep any significant impacts that Britain's separation from the EU may have on the work done by the many pan-European educational and cultural organizations which have flourished

throughout postwar European cultural exchange. Directly aimed at policy makers on each side of the divide as they initiate formal procedures for the UK to leave the EU, these recommendations have been endorsed by over 450 educational, cultural and scientific organizations and representatives from 30 European countries (see British Council, "European Future").

Coeval to the aims of "Education and Culture after Brexit" is an ostensible "global dimension" informing the British Council's recent educational content, which it develops and posts for free download on the "International Education" section of its website for both British and international teachers to use in their classrooms. Given the British Council's charter to promote knowledge of English language and culture, a good deal of this material is designed for use in the English Literature classroom. For example, "Refugee Week" is an annual UK-wide cultural and educational initiative celebrating the positive contributions of refugees to the UK. The British Council has promoted fictional books written by or about members of minoritized racial, ethnic and faith communities as part of this initiative, as a means to teach schoolchildren "about experiences very different to your own[,] . . . experiences of refugees, or about people suffering persecution at home" (British Council, "Celebrating Refugees"). The manner in which these books are promoted is not unlike the reliance on insights echoing anthropological criticism that I have explicated with regard to BookTrust's recent multicultural programming. The "global dimension" is in fact the name given to the pedagogical philosophy delimited in *Developing the Global Dimension in the School Curriculum*, a teaching manual that the British Council helped write alongside organizations such as the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, published by the Department for Education and

Skills (DfES), to inform New Labour revisions to the national curriculum. In *Developing the Global Dimension in the School Curriculum*, literary products said to represent a diverse range of human perspectives are trumpeted for their pedagogical value as realistic documents of stereotypically disenfranchised life in a foreign community.

We must note how educational and reading charities in Britain have relied on a discourse that reading literature is a key way for children to increase the cognitive capacity for feeling empathy as a way of providing the rationale for their continued necessity. While teaching empathy surely is not a bad thing in and of itself, this discourse is justified on economic and cultural policy grounds which are not immediately visible in these organizations' promotional materials. The promotion of reading for empathy, itself the most recent offshoot of the broader teaching for diversity movement palpable for several decades in the UK, is best understood as embedded within a creative-economy landscape in which cultural and educational policies have an interest in organizations that actively promote a liberal-cosmopolitan disposition.

A telling instance is EmpathyLab, a London reading charity started by Miranda McKearney OBE. Prior to her work here, in 2001 McKearney co-founded the Reading Agency, which has since risen to be the most notable reading charity in England. In recent years the Reading Agency has conducted research and developed programming which reflects the mandate of New Labour policies for generating cultural inclusion through education and the cultural industries. The Reading Agency has recently created the "Reading Outcomes Framework" for promoting reading as a means for diminishing social inequality. At the heart of this framework is research from the fields of cognitive science and liberal social studies, amounting to a theory of how reading fiction from an

early age improves the building of empathy, and how this empathy is a cornerstone for a more cohesive diverse society (Reading Agency). There is in fact a plethora of recent cognitive science research underpinning the rationale for fiction books' heightened publication and promotion by children's literature organizations.[2] This research shows the novel manner through which the reading of literature can help build empathy in young adults, a fact which reading charities use to justify their work as a form of socio-political activism. This research is cited on the EmpathyLab website as influential in its impetus and activities (see "EmpathyLab Research Bank"). The charity has teamed up with authors and publishers to market to schools books which reflect – not surprisingly – empathetically on the personal stories of people from marginalized communities. For example, many of the books marketed narrate stories emerging from contemporary migrant and refugee crises.

What we see here is how hegemonic ideas about literary reading are being mobilized in support of a clearly demarcated political agenda. This is an agenda which was inaugurated by the Tony Blair government's focus on the creative economy's potential to create social cohesion across the barriers of race, class, and other identity

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[2] See for instance the following articles referenced in the Reading Agency's "Reading Outcomes Framework" and by EmpathyLab as ones which have influenced their thinking about the power of literature and cognitive empathetic development: Keith Oatley, "Fiction and its study as gateways to the mind"; Maja Djikic et al., "Reading other minds: Effects of literature on empathy"; Enrique Riquelme and Ignacio Montero, "Improving Emotional Competence Through Mediated Reading: Short Term Effects of a Children's Literature Program"; and David Corner Kidd and Emanuele Castano, "Reading Literary Fiction Improves Theory of Mind." It is also worth noting that many of the articles pioneering this area of research have been published in *The Scientific Study of Literature*, started by Keith Oatley at the University of Toronto in 2011. Oatley has helped to spearhead the serious study of how reading literary fiction in particular can allow the reader to develop areas of brain cognition associated with empathetic identification.

categories. It is now being seriously challenged. In response to these challenges, a reason behind the curricular incorporation of postcolonial, multicultural and racialized literary genres is the policy-imposed version of multiculturalism. The manner in which the book industries continue to streamline the production and sale of these genres through exoticizing and racializing modes of marketing responds to the demand for books to meet the requirements of global teaching. Yet this production process inhibits the kind of free expression which, we are so often told, exists in the field of contemporary British literary production.

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