Black Stars and White Power: Whiteness and Institutional Racism in Afrofuturistic, Dystopian Fiction.

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Introduction

The power of imagination expressed in the science fiction genre has brought us all kinds of interesting, wonderous and sometimes scary futuristic scenarios. When we zoom in on the more frightening and foreboding examples of science fiction, we enter the world of dystopias. This subgenre often shows us how contemporary power structures, technologies or ideologies could change our world in terrible ways. Some famous examples are the totalitarian superstate of *Nineteen Eighty-four* (Orwell 1949), the constructed eugenic society of *Brave New World* (Huxley 1932) or the aftermath of a climate catastrophe in Turner's *Drowning Towers* (1987).

The worlds imagined by both science fiction and dystopian fiction have often been imagined through a white cultural lens, which means that cultural and ideological views that adhere to whiteness form the fundament for imagining how these alternative realities are constructed. The representation and appreciation of people of color in these genres, whether by author or character, has been notably lacking throughout the history of these respective genres. This lack of representation and appreciation has placed a filter on the discussion of themes concerning race and racism. However, a relatively new subgenre within speculative fiction called Afrofuturism, coined by cultural critic Mark Dery in 1994, offers an improved representation and appreciation of people of color in this genre. Afrofuturism is a genre that seeks to empower and illuminate the history and future of people of color through speculative fiction from the African diaspora.

In this thesis I will analyze the three Afrofuturistic, dystopian novels *Parable of the Sower* (1993) written by Octavia Butler, *An Unkindness of Ghosts* (2017) by Rivers Solomon and *Noughts and Crosses* (2001) from Malorie Blackman, through the scope of critical race theory. All three novels connect race, racism and other Afrofuturistic themes to the subject of power within a dystopian setting. These Afrofuturistic themes are amongst others: the rethinking of the past through a black cultural lens, how our understanding of contemporary and historical race related issues will continuously influence the future, and how this changed perspective can humanize and normalize blackness.

The dystopian genre offers an alternative or futuristic setting where we can explore the consequences of neglecting or causing contemporary problems. The scholar Isiah Lavender III

describes in his book *Race in American Science Fiction* how science fiction can "help us think about the continually changing present through the dual lenses of defamiliarization and extrapolation" (27). By taking common ideas and assumptions from society, politics or other social constructs and extrapolating them to a futuristic setting, the reader sees the familiar in an unfamiliar setting. By using this technique, the reader gains a different perspective of an otherwise common idea.

Historically most speculative writers, including science fiction and dystopian writers, have been white (Freeman, Jackson 3-4). Octavia Butler, who was one of the first popular female black speculative fiction writers, stated in 1980 that science fiction "has always been nearly all white, just as until recently, it's been nearly all male" and argues that besides racism, aspects like ignorance, laziness and habit of white science fiction writers are also to blame for the whiteness in science fiction (Butler 17-18). A study in 2016 revealed that out of 2039 original stories published in 63 magazines in 2015, only 38 were written by black authors (Firesidefiction). Although these genres have progressed towards a more inclusive representation, black writers are still confronted with "structural, institutional, personal and universal racism" when confronted with science fiction (Firesidefiction). The confrontation with these forms of racism have deterred writers and readers of color to participate and create in the world of science fiction (Carrington 16-17*).*

In confronting the whiteness of science fiction, Octavia Butler uses a statement made by a science fiction writer as an example of the one-sided racial view in science fiction:

> Hear them I did, though, at a science fiction convention where a writer explained that he had decided against using a black character in one of his stories because the presence of the black would change his story somehow. Later, this same writer suggested that in stories that seem to require black characters to make some racial point, it might be possible to substitute extraterrestrials—so as not to dwell on matters of race. (Butler 17-18)

The singular use of black characters to make a racial point, devaluates the humanity of black people. Theorist W.E.B. Du Bois argues that when people can only see themselves through the eyes of the other, they start to turn into this idea of the other. Du Bois calls this the 'double consciousness', and it involves the internalization of structural or institutional constraints and negative values about the perceived racialized self in the general culture (2-6). In Afrofuturism this double consciousness is

countered by imagining alternative or futuristic societies through a black cultural lens instead of a white cultural lens (Womack 9).

Scholar Ytasha Womack defines Afrofuturism as "an artistic aesthetic and a framework for critical theory, Afrofuturism combines elements of science fiction, historical fiction, speculative fiction, fantasy, Afrocentricity, and magic realism with non-Western beliefs" (9). Some of these elements are shared with science fiction, but the main difference is that Afrofuturism always looks through a black cultural lens when constructing fiction, whereas science fiction does not (9). This means that in Afrofuturism, the past, present, and future are taken into consideration. Another unique element of Afrofuturism is that it aims to overcome barriers presented by socioeconomic inequality and systemic racism (Van Veen 153). To overcome these barriers, we need to understand how the concepts of institutional racism and whiteness operate in society. By defamiliarizing and extrapolating these concepts to the fictional novel, we gain a better understanding of these concepts which helps us to overcome barriers presented by socioeconomic inequality and systemic racism. The history of Afrofuturism is intertwined with the history of science fiction, utopias, and dystopias. So, by analyzing the Afrofuturistic, dystopian genre, we can explore through a black cultural lens how institutional racism and whiteness operate in an alternative or futuristic society.

Institutionalized racism is a form of racism that manifests itself in institutions such as employment, education, housing, healthcare, and political representation (Jones 1212). This form of racism is coined by Stokely Carmichael (later known as Kwame Ture) and Charles Hamilton as they illustrate how there are two different forms of racism: overt and covert racism. Overt racism is an act of racism where it is clear who the perpetrator is, while covert racism is much more subtle. In covert racism, established and respected forces of society are to blame for systematic acts of racism which is held in place by 'the total white community' (4). Based on the novelist Ambalavaner Sivanandan's article 'Race, class and the state', Jenny Bourne argues that the much more overt state racism provided the context for institutionalized racism to take root in society, as racist policing, discriminatory practices in employment and education and racist policing all started out as overt racism (9-10).

Whiteness is closely related to institutionalized racism as it is involved in power differences between white and non-white people (Guess 652). Sociologist Ruth Frankenberg describes whiteness

as 'the production of and reproduction of dominance rather than subordination, normativity rather than marginality, and privilege rather than disadvantage' (236). According to Joe Kincheloe, the dominant impulse of whiteness started around the Enlightenment's rationality where the construct of the white, male, rational subject stands at the head of power hierarchies (164). Further zooming in on the concept of whiteness, Carlin Borsheim-Black defines whiteness as "a Socially constructed racial category that has been used to justify and legally defend social inequality based on race." (410). Other theorists like Cheryl Harris argue that whiteness is a property one can gain. This property enables the claim to certain rights that ultimately lead to the end goal of (political) power. (1716). This idea of whiteness as a property matches Kincheloe's argument that whiteness "cannot be separated from hegemony and is profoundly influenced by demographic changes, political realignments, and economic cycles." (162), since whiteness is used as a property in order to gain power. Instead of a social construct whiteness can also be defined as a racial discourse or as an ideology, which is maintained by ways of thinking, language, institutional and political policies and other norms and values (Borsheim-Black 410).

The main question of this thesis is: "How do institutional racism and whiteness operate in the Afrofuturistic dystopian novels *Noughts and Crosses*, *Parable of the Sower* and *An Unkindness of Ghosts*?" To answer this question, I will use a mix of critical discourse analysis and narratology to explore the construction of meanings within human interaction, as concepts such as whiteness, institutional racism and dystopia have different meanings in diverse situations. Narratology, as theorized by Mieke Bal, can help us to understand what the relationship is between the focalizor and the focalized object (148-150), how the image and meaning of a character is constructed and compared to other characters (127-131) and how these characters observe the space around them (135-138). The critical discursive approach (CDA) as theorized by Van Dijk, focusses on the function of language and the construction of meaning on both the micro-level of language and the macro-level of social practices and processes (354). Central to CDA is how the social power of the dominant group/class is used for control through public discourse and the mind (355-358). By analyzing how language and power functions to construct, maintain and legitimize racial ideologies and social structures, we gain a better understanding of how these concepts operate and how they can be contested.

In the first chapter I will analyze the history of the utopia, dystopia, the (post)apocalyptic, science fiction and Afrofuturism. I will show how these genres are connected to each other and why this connection is important in understanding what the Afrofuturistic dystopia is. In the second chapter I will focus on the definitions and meanings of whiteness and institutional racism and how they operate on multiple societal levels. In chapter three, four and five I will respectively analyze the novels *Noughts and Crosses*, *Parable of the Sower*, and *An Unkindness of Ghosts*. For each of these three chapters I will answer a set of sub-questions which are necessary to answer the main question.

The first question each novel chapter aims to answer is: "Why does this novel belong to both the dystopian and the Afrofuturistic genre?". This question serves to legitimize the use of the genres and their implications and will not be covered in full detail as an in-depth analysis is not necessary for the question this thesis seeks to answer. The second question each novel chapter aims to answer is: "What aspects of whiteness and institutional racism does the novel defamiliarize and extrapolate to this dystopian setting?". How aspects of whiteness and institutional racism are used in each novel will help us to understand how these concepts operate in each novel. The last question each novel chapter aims to answer is: "How do institutional racism and whiteness affect the life of the protagonist and other characters?". By using a narratological approach we can further bridge the gap between the micro and macro levels of how institutional racism and whiteness operate in these novels

The third chapter will analyze the novel *Noughts and Crosses*. This chapter hypothesizes that *Noughts and Crosses* illustrates that whiteness is socially constructed and that the novel shows how whiteness and institutional racism cooperate on the micro and macro level. *Noughts and Crosses* is a young adult novel written by Malorie Blackman. The story takes place in a world where the role of colonizers and colonized are reversed. In this world, black people are the ruling class whereas white people are considered to be second class citizens. Even though *Noughts and Crosses* is a young adult novel, it illustrates perfectly how extrapolation and defamiliarization create doubt in the mind of the reader as the common is changed into the uncommon. While Young adult novels mostly focus on the experience and troubles of teens, two of the main themes of *Noughts and Crosses* are race and racism. Using Critical Race Theory (CRT) allows us to analyze and compare this novel with two adult novels as the format of the novel does not matter for my analysis on race-related issues. On a certain level one

can argue that Young Adult literature can be more challenging towards racialized issues than adult literature. Hughes-Hassell argues that multicultural young adult literature often challenges the stereotypes that are held by the dominant culture by means of counterstorytelling (212). Counterstorytelling is a term introduced by Delgado and Stefancic, who argue that counterstories aim "to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths, especially ones held by the majority" (1995, 144). This doubt helps the reader to understand what life is like for the other as we will see in chapter three.

The fourth chapter of this thesis will analyze the novel *Parable of the Sower* and will analyze and argue how and why race will continue to matter in society when institutions no longer operate on a macro level. In *Parable of the Sower,* climate change has disrupted the fundament of western civilization. Droughts have made water extremely valuable and gated communities and large corporate cities are one of the few remnants of a structured society that are left. In the post-apocalyptic dystopia, we follow a young black woman named Lauren as she sets out to create a new community based on her ideas called "Earthseed". *Parable of the Sower* shows us through the means of the extrapolation and defamiliarization of past and contemporary race related issues, how race continues to matter even after the fall of institutions that used to enforce the racialized distinctions. The "boomeranging of history", the idea that history will or can repeat itself, shows how whiteness and institutional racism still play an important role even after the fall of institutions that upheld racialized power differences (Allen 1356). The novel shows how after the fall of society, other institutions emerge with new and old ideas and practices of racialized distinctions.

In the fifth chapter this thesis will analyze the novel *An Unkindness of Ghosts.* The analysis of the chapter will show how the concept of the white ally is important for contesting institutional racism and whiteness. Rivers Solomon their novel *An Unkindness of Ghosts* is a story about slavery in the generational ship *Matilda*. After an unknown catastrophe made Earth unhospitable, a group of humans fled from Earth in search of a new planet. Centuries later, we follow the story of Aster Grey, a talented black woman who provides medical assistance in the lower decks of the ship, which is divided into upper, middle, and lower decks. The upper decks are a luxurious paradise only for the white elite, whereas the lower decks are inhabited by people of color and have barely enough recourses to survive.

The novel shows how slavery of the past operates in a futuristic scenario. Ideologies of whiteness form the basis for the institutional racism that lowdeckers experience. The dystopian society Aster lives in ultimately revolts against its suppressors and finds a way towards a utopian image of Earth. The novel shows how whiteness operates on multiple levels and forms the basis for institutional racism.

Afrofuturistic, dystopian fiction, could help us in understanding how contemporary issues concerning race and racism can evolve into much bigger issues if left untreated. Understanding how whiteness and institutional racism operate in the Afrofuturistic dystopia and contribute to racial inequality in a fictional world gives us the ability to understand and reflect on the race-related power inequalities of our own contemporary society.

Chapter 1. Utopias, Dystopias, science fiction and Afrofuturism

To understand how institutionalized racism and whiteness operate in the Afrofuturistic, dystopian novels *Noughts and Crosses*, *An Unkindness of Ghosts,* and *Parable of the Sower* we must first delve deeper into the meaning and history of utopia, dystopia, science fiction and Afrofuturism. This chapter will focus on the historical and theoretical development of these four genres and how they are connected to each other. We will also analyze how the dystopia and the utopia are dependable of each other and how Afrofuturism grew as a subgenre from science fiction.

1.1. Utopias and dystopias

Whether the world has fallen to natural disasters or to the greed of powerful corporations, a dystopia makes our worst fears a reality. The utopia on the other hand exemplifies a world where our contemporary problems are solved and no longer exist. Before we start to explore the history and meaning of dystopia it is important to note that the genre dystopia is part of the umbrella term 'speculative fiction', which also includes genres like science fiction, magical realism, utopia, and apocalyptic stories (Hoydis 71). However, genres in the umbrella of 'speculative fiction' can also be part of each other. Utopias and dystopias are, for example, commonly found in science fiction stories. This chapter will analyze the history and meanings of the utopia, the dystopia and to a lesser extent the (post)apocalyptic, how they differ from each other and how they are connected to each other.

In analyzing the subgenre dystopia, one cannot ignore the subgenre of utopia as the dystopia originates from the utopia. The term utopia was first used in Thomas More's book *Utopia* (1516). The term is derived from the Greek prefix "ou-" (not) and "topos" (place) which translates to "nowhere". In the English language it is also pronounced the same as *Eutopia* meaning "Good place". The idea of Utopia is arguably much older than More's first usage of the term, as Plato's Atlantis is presumed to be a utopian society and even the idea of an afterlife, such as heaven, could be described as utopian (Alicino 27).

Ruth Levitas describes a utopia as a perfect society that is both unattainable and impossible. They are the blueprints of a good, even perfect, society that is either in the near-future or elsewhere to

be found (15). These ideas of utopia are intrinsically linked to modernity, as Levitas argues: "Social structures were understood as human constructs, and human beings as social constructs, it became possible to imagine alternative societies in which a happy life was possible – societies that were just, ordered, stable and secure" (15). So, to early modernists a utopia was a possibility through the order, stability, and security of the human construct. The philosopher Ernst Bloch theorized how the concept of utopia can be divided into two categories, concrete utopias, and abstract utopias. The concrete utopia is anticipatory and involves will-full thinking to strive for a better future. It is often compared with Marxism or any other political orientation depending on the time of the novel, that is committed to social transformation (Bloch 146). Adding to Bloch his concept of the concrete utopia, Maria Varsam adds that: "What concrete Utopia shares with concrete dystopia is an emphasis on the real, material conditions of society that manifest themselves as a result of humanity's desire for a better world" (208). The concrete dystopia and utopia thus both focus on either historical or contemporary material conditions that either reflect the desire of a better world through focusing on the best or the worst outcome of society.

The abstract utopia is described as wishful thinking, although the wish is not accompanied by the will to change anything. (Bloch 144, 157). Delving even deeper into the various sorts of utopia, scholar Gregory Claeys argues that the utopia and dystopia are not constraint to the literary tradition and that utopianism exists of three components, the literary utopia, utopian ideologies and communal movements (145). Furthermore, Claeys contends that based on his definition the utopia and dystopia are not opposites "because their proximity is much closer than their semantic juxtaposition indicates." (171). So, while the term 'utopia' has multiple definitions, the fundamental element of the utopia is the desire and hope for a better way of living and whether it is willful or wishful thinking, there is a process of either the mind or the body to achieve this desire. Although Claeys points out that the contemporary definitions of utopias and dystopias aren't necessarily polar opposites of each other, they still have similarities that link them together. Some similarities of utopias and dystopias include their historical development and their need for the representation and reflection of reality in a different, be it abstract or concrete, form.

Dystopian literature started to gain traction in the 19th century but only became widely popular in the 20th century, especially in the second half (Tymn 45-46). Early dystopian literature was usually a counter to utopian literature or as Keith Booker describes: "Literature which situates itself in direct opposition to utopian thought, warning against potential negative consequences of arrant utopianism" (5). Often mentioned examples of this are the famous books *Brave New World* (1932) by Aldous Huxley and *Nineteen Eighty-four* (1949) written by George Orwell. Both books are based upon ideas that would supposedly bring humanity towards a more utopian future. Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four* (1949) describes a totalitarian superstate that uses mass surveillance to control its subjects. It is modelled after Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia. Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) draws the foundation of its dystopian society upon eugenics and psychological manipulation. Both novels describe ideas that could potentially be positive for humanity, such as communism, surveillance, sleep-learning, and eugenics, and show how these ideas can easily become a dystopian nightmare instead of a utopian foundation.

As dystopian literature became more common it also became less of an antithesis to utopian literature. Riven Barton argues that there are three different 'waves' of dystopian literature. The first wave he calls 'The Modern Dystopia' and ranges from 1800 to 1950. According to Barton, the industrial industrialization and the rise of fascism were main influences for dystopian literature:

> Almost everything that had been previously done by hand was replaced by machine. Efficiency and productivity became undeniable virtues of the post-industrial world (…) While many of these notions initially had utopian projections, their actual implementation sometimes had horrific consequences. The rise of fascism in Europe along with the industrialization of warfare left a shadow on the human conscience that could not be erased. (7)

Barton describes how the dystopias that emerged in the 20th century were based on 'a witnessed reality' as the two world wars, environmental degradation and industrialization were very real problems (7-8). These early dystopias also focus on the loss of individual identity (8), which is also an important aspect in Afrofuturism as we will see in chapter 2.

The second wave of dystopian literature Barton calls the 'Post-Modern Dystopia', which ranges from 1965 to 1995 and generally deals with 'questions of reality, the loss of reference and even

definition' (10). Post-modern dystopias deal with worlds of replication and simulation but at the same time focus on the loss of identity and family (10-13). The loss of the natural world through technological advancements is one of the main problems post-modern dystopias deal with. This technological progress usually results in machine uprisings or AI takeover as happens in the film *The Matrix* (1999). Another example is progress that ultimately leads to climate change and other social and environmental problems. One of the main differences with the Modern dystopias is the change from the question "Who am I?" and "What is real?" towards the question "What can I do to change what has already begun?" (13).

Barton calls the third and present wave of dystopian literature "Contemporary Dystopia" that started in 2000 until the present. In these dystopian novels the protagonist, who is often female, knows who she is and understands the world around her: "She is not drawn into the story by existential anxieties, but is forced into confrontation with a world beyond her power and her will. The contemporary protagonist finds herself as "other" because it is her very being that makes her the antithesis of society itself." (13). While this categorization of the female protagonist might be more prominent in the contemporary dystopia, it is highly specific and does not encompass all different sorts of dystopian literature from 2000 to the present. Scholar Philip Stoner argues that contemporary dystopian literature has mostly shifted to the young adult genre and illustrates a struggle against the establishment and self-exploration (18). No matter in what age a dystopian novel was created, all dystopias are a warning of potential behaviors and a mirror of our collective fears (17). Although Barton gives us an extensive history of the evolution of dystopias, there are still different categories of dystopian fiction he does not include in his analysis such as the (post)apocalyptic genre.

The term apocalypse derives from the ancient Greek 'apokalupsis', which has been explained as: "a revelation or unveiling of the true order." (Heffernan 5). Teresa Heffernan argues in her paper how 'the true order' is interpreted by Kant as the unveiling of the ultimate truths that man learns in his pursuit of his perfect state. Working from this principle, Hegel sees history as a progressive narrative, were in the end the purpose of man becomes clear. Just like the biblical understanding of 'the end', the apocalypse can be interpreted bilaterally: both as something that is bad and as something that is good and should be worked towards (5-6).

An example of the dystopian/apocalyptic combination is the biblical judgement day that divides people to heaven and hell. Heffernan argues that the idea of a promise of revelation at the end of times was challenged in twentieth-century narratives: "The present world is portrayed as exhausted, but there is no better world that replaces it – these narratives refuse to offer up a new beginning or any hope of rebirth or renewal; the end is instead senseless and arbitrary." (5). While these narratives of (post)apocalypse often offer no hope of rebirth or renewal this is not always the case. Some (post)apocalyptic stories tend to focus on hope and survivability as we will see in chapter three when we discuss Butlers novel *Parable of the Sower*.

Political science scholar Patricia Stapleton describes how two science fiction narratives, apocalyptic and dystopian, have evolved into a critical social analysis where the form of criticism becomes a form of social analysis itself (20). She argues that apocalyptic narratives center on the "inability of humans to control knowledge they have turned into power" (20) and dystopian narratives "center on the question of who controls power through technology" (21). This definition of dystopian narratives is too specific, as dystopias do not necessarily rely on power or on the control of power through technology. Generally, the dystopia focusses on the helplessness of the individual against external forces (Czigányik 20-21). These narratives of helplessness are as Moylan elaborates, largely the consequence of the horrors of the twentieth century as "hundred years of exploitation, repression, state violence, war, genocide, disease, famine, ecocide, depression, debt, and the steady depletion of humanity through the buying and selling of everyday life provided more than enough fertile ground for this fictive underside of the utopian imagination" (Moylan 2000, xi). These narrative of helplessness which is based on real life events also forms the basis for the three Afrofuturistic dystopian novel we will discuss later.

In her book *The Post-Apocalyptic Novel in the Twenty-First Century*, Heather Hicks discusses the difference between the post-apocalyptic and dystopia and subsequently argues that the post-apocalyptic captures the elements of loss and transformation whereas the dystopia does not (8). Although Hicks makes a strong analysis, it is not foolproof. An example of a dystopian novel where elements of loss and transformation are prominent is Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-four* (1949). In this novel, history, language, and societal norms are transformed in such a way that they are

essentially lost. According to scholar Claire Curtis, the post-apocalyptic can also be seen as dystopian because there is no opportunity for starting over and "because the apocalyptic event is largely insoluble and the life that emerges from it illustrates a critical dystopia that warns us of where we might be heading" (7). Thus, a mix between the two science fiction narratives, the (post) apocalyptic and dystopian narrative, can be combined into a postapocalyptic, dystopian narrative. Both genres balance the inability of starting over with the hope that something new might emerge from the ashes. In both genres, survival plays a role. Both the suppressed civilians in the dystopia and the survivors in the (post) apocalyptic focus on survival and try to make the best of a bad situation.

Whether the utopia and dystopia are opposites of each other or not, their existence depends on the possibility of the other. Can you live in a utopia or dystopia if there is no knowledge of the possibility that things could be worse or better? Arguably, to reach a utopian or dystopian world, one must first live in a non-utopian or non-dystopian world. Author Margareth Atwood coined the term 'Ustopia' which embodies the dependence of utopia to dystopia and vice versa. Atwood argues that "The "dire" might at first glance appear to be connected only to the obverse or dystopian side of the coin, where unpleasantness prevails, though most utopias viewed slantwise—from the point of view of people who don't fit into their high standards of perfection—are equally dire" (66-67). She further expands on how within each utopia is a concealed dystopia and vice versa (85). Scholar Dennis Geef gives an example of how a utopian idea can be implemented but at the same time generates a dystopian reality: "Our belief in indefinite expansion of capitalism is utopian, while the reality of the world is dystopian" (146). While the capitalist society is arguably a closer-to-an-utopian-world for a number of people than it ever has been, it is arguably also a lot closer to fictious dystopias for a great amount of people. Mass surveillance (*Nineteen Eighty-four)*, drug abuse (*Brave New World*), woman rights suppression (*Handmaid's tale*), the return of fascism (*Man in the High Castle),* climate change (*Parable of the* Sower) and authoritarianism (*A Clockwork Orange*) are all examples of dystopias that in some form exist in the modern world. The idea of a ustopia is supported by researcher Christos Efstathiou. In his analysis of Claeys work about the utopia and dystopia, Efstathiou argues that the combination of the dystopia and utopia formed a new hybrid form of literature after 1945 where emotions such as hope, despair and nostalgia play an important role (286-287). This combination of

dystopia and utopia is interesting, because it allows the ideas of hope and change to thrive in an otherwise hopeless situation which is applicable to the Afrofuturistic dystopian novel as we will see in the next chapter.

1.2. Science fiction and Afrofuturism

In his book *The History of Science Fiction,* Adam Roberts argues that science fiction has existed since the ancient Greeks. Since then, science fiction has had several instances of revival, but became widely acclaimed as an independent literary form by Hugo Gernsback in 1920. In his analysis of the history of science fiction, Darko Suvin, argued that science fiction has had six main instances or revivals of the genre in the 'Euro-Mediterranean tradition': the Hellenic, the Hellenic-cum-Roman, the Renaissance-Baroque, the democratic revolution, the *fin-de-siècle* and the modern (Suvin 87, 205). He defines science fiction as: "a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment." (Suvin 7-9). The power of estrangement and cognition science fiction uses, is the same power that the utopian and the dystopian genre use to create new worlds build on certain ideas or ideologies.

The popularity of science fiction skyrocketed just like dystopian fiction at the end of the 19th and throughout the 20th century (Tymn 45-46). Science fiction novels create imaginative and futuristic concepts that are usually based on the contemporary technology, social, political, and scientific developments. In his book *Locating Science Fiction,* Andrew Milner argues that science fiction, utopia, dystopia, and fantasy are "analytically distinct but cognate genres, the relationship between which can be represented as a classical Venn diagram." (178). Science fiction in general requires an ideological resonance because of its narratives and should be seen as a bridge that stretches across a whole range of cultural forms (20-22). Ideological resonance refers to the effect and influence of an ideology in a story. According to Milner, an ideological background is an important aspect of science fiction as it is necessary for the stories to work narratological (21). This need for ideological resonance of science fiction will be important when we explore the origin and history of Afrofuturism as this genre is also build upon the importance of an ideological resonance.

As previously described in the introduction, the dominant group that is free to create and dictate the discourse of different worlds of fiction, has historically been almost exclusive to white males. Sean Redmond argues how the white dominance in authors has influenced the science fiction genre:

> And so the story of science, of science fiction, is also a story about the contradictions and contestations at the core of white identity formation. (…) But one also gets closer to what is actually a fiction of whiteness; the fiction that whiteness exists a priori, and is at the core of the story of creation; and the fiction that whiteness is enlightenment and progress and is a racially superior category (16)

This white identity that inhabits most science fiction literature is contested in Afrofuturism, where questions and statements of race and racism are more nuanced and expanded. In his analysis of race in science fiction, John Russel expands on the effect of whiteness in science fiction:

> despite Davin's assertion that the genre has not proven itself overtly hostile to blacks, it has shown itself, as Saunders and others maintain, generally indifferent to presenting the black experience, unless that experience is defined within the context of racism—not as part of a universal human experience. (259)

The 'black experience' Russel refers to, is the experience of black people who are living in a post-slavery society and continuously face the inequalities that originate from centuries of racial segregation, slavery, and other forms of racism (Young 210-211).

The indifference of science fiction towards the black experience brings us to Afrofuturism. The term Afrofuturism was coined by cultural critic Mark Dery in his 1994 essay 'Black to the Future'. In this paper Dery asks: "Can a community whose past has been deliberately rubbed out, and whose energies have subsequently been consumed by the search for legible traces of its history, imagine possible futures?" (180). While this question does not form the basis of Afrofuturistic stories anymore, it does so for older Afrofuturistic novels. The first stories that can be considered Afrofuturist are much older than the formulation of the term itself. These stories create and imagine other futures and possibilities through a black cultural lens. Writers such as Martin Delany, Charles Chesnutt and Edward Johnson wrote novels in the 19th century that can be seen as Afrofuturistic novels. These stories usually revolved around slave revolts and the founding of new black countries. Delany describes in his novel *Blake, or the Huts of America* (1859) a panoramic view of the life of Henry

Blake, an escaped slave that plans to start a slave insurrection in Cuba. Notably, Chesnutt's short story collection called *The Conjure Woman* (1899) is known as the first speculative fiction collection that was written by a person of color. According to Lisa Yaszek, early Afrofuturist were concerned "primarily with the question of whether or not there will be any future whatsoever for people of color." (2). Contemporary Afrofuturist however, assume that in the far and near future, race will continue to matter to society and individuals alike. Just as institutional racism is a result of the inhumane slave trade of the past, institutional racism will be fundamental for race related issues of the future.

Now that we have analyzed the history of Afrofuturism and its first definitions, we can analyze how contemporary Afrofuturism is defined and why some scholars criticize Afrofuturism for being too focused on a western point of view. In defining Afrofuturism, Womack refers to a quote from curator Ingrid Lafleur: "As a way of imagining possible futures through a black cultural lens" (Womack 9). Womack adds to Lafleur's interpretation by explaining that Afrofuturism: "stretches the imagination far beyond the conventions of our time and the horizons of expectation and kicks the box of normalcy and preconceived ideas of blackness out of the solar system. Whether it's sci-fi story lines or radical eccentricity, Afrofuturism inverts reality." (16). This inverted reality that Afrofuturism creates is, as Womack argues, "a great tool for wielding the imagination for personal change and societal growth" (191). This aspect of Afrofuturism strongly resembles the earlier mentioned description of dystopian fiction where the inverted reality and defamiliarization also offer new room for societal growth.

Although Afrofuturism and science fiction are closely related to each other, Womack argues that Afrofuturism is more diverse in its critical ability than science fiction because "Afrofuturism combines elements of science fiction, historical fiction, speculative fiction, fantasy, Afrocentricity and magical realism with non-Western beliefs" (9). While Womack's definition of Afrofuturism leans more towards imagining blackness, Van Veen argues that Afrofuturism is "a positive means to overcome barriers presented by systematic racism and socioeconomic inequality" (153). Both Womack's and Van Veen's definition build upon the idea of imagination and positivity. However, Van Veen's analysis of Afrofuturism differs from Womack as it is presented through the scope of

systemic racism. Van Veen argues that "Afrofuturism's mission is to invade the present with futures revisioned from the past" (154). While Afrofuturism is certainly capable of overcoming barriers and revisioning futures from the past, this is not necessarily the goal of Afrofuturism. Afrofuturism is also an entertaining and creative way of imagining and exploring ideas and futures that are not necessarily revisioned from the past. The future in Afrofuturistic novels is not per definition a future where problems concerning race are solved or extrapolated towards an alien threat, as is the case in a lot of science fiction novels. Race-related issues of the past can still influence futuristic societies, but they are a lot more nuanced as they do not necessarily dominate the story of the novel. Andrea Baldwin, et all, argue that Afrofuturism also engages the privileged white reader to view reality from a different perspective as it "encourages us to see the world from the perspective of the marginalized, disadvantaged, and oppressed." (183-184). They further argue that through this engagement with Afrofuturistic literature, white people can learn how to help their black communities in the dismantling of hierarchies without appropriating black voices and taking control of the situation (184). This help can be theorized as white allyship and will be futher discussed in chapter two.

There is also criticism towards the term Afrofuturism. Author Hope Wabuke argues that Dery's question about how the black community can imagine possible futures, dismisses the "resilience, creativity, and imagination of the Black American diasporic imagination" (Wabuke). She also argues that Afrofuturism lacks the ability to imagine Blackness outside of the Black American diaspora and/or be independent of whiteness. Writer and academic Tony Okungbowa debates that Afrofuturism "is still married to the western gaze" because of its tendency to centralize the West (Okungbowa). In contrast to Afrofuturism, the term Africanfuturism, which was first used by writer Nnedi Okorafor, is another subcategory of science fiction and fantasy. Africanfuturism is different to Afrofuturism as it is specifically rooted in African culture, history, and mythology. Okorafor argues that Africanfuturism is "Less concerned with 'what could have been' and more concerned with 'What is and can/will be'. It acknowledges, grapples and carries 'what has been'" (Okorafor). An example of the difference between the two futurisms could be explained by how in the Afrofuturist movie *Black Panther* the fictional country Wakanda builds its first outreach center in the USA, while in a

Africanfuturistic version, Wakanda would build its first outreach center in a neighboring African country.

While Afrofuturism is strongly tied to the black diaspora and the Western gaze, it is not necessarily fixed to it. Wabuke's criticism mostly applies to the definition of early Afrofuturists who questions whether there is a future for the black diaspora while contemporary Afrofuturist mix elements of science fiction, historical fiction and other genres with "non-Western beliefs" (Womack 9). Though there is a clear difference between Afrofuturism and Africanfuturism, Afrofuturism is certainly more influenced by the western black diaspora. However, it is not necessarily defined by the western gaze as Womack has argued. Moreover, while Okungbowa is unsure about the exact meaning of Afrofuturism, he argues that the book *Literary Afrofuturistm in the Twenty-First Century* from Isiah Lavender III and Lisa Yaszek, provides a platform where discussion about speculative black fiction is possible. Baldwin, et all, further argue that Yaszek shows how looking back on black literature through an Afrofuturist lens offers new messages and ideas just as black feminist scholarship has been used to comment on the experiences of black women outside of fiction (184).

Now that the history and boundaries of Afrofuturism are established, we can analyze what the connection is between the Afrofuturistic and the dystopian genre. In defining and combining Afrofuturism and dystopia we must understand how some dystopias are more realistic to groups of people that have endured hardships in the real world "The most dystopic visions of science fiction can do no more than replicate the actual historical catastrophes of the twentieth century" (James Berger xiii). Historical catastrophes like segregation, apartheid and slavery are examples of real dystopias. Afrofuturism reflects on these real dystopias and imagines how the consequences of slavery during the Antebellum South still resonates in the future.

In her article *African Americans and Utopia: Visions of a Better Life* Lyman Tower Sargent argues that it is unsurprisingly that African American authors have primarily been dystopian, as they reflect on contemporary dystopian aspect such as institutional racism set in the near future or in a future that is much worse (40). An example of Sargent her point can be found in Mary Hodge her paper about Octavia Butler. Hodge argues that in the novel-series *Parables,* Butler tries to show how the modern view on slavery is stuck in the past:

> This is what Butler attempts to show readers: that for the modern population, slavery can only exist in dystopia, thus blinding people from the reality of its existence in contemporary reality (…) slavery cannot evolve into new forms at all because it cannot be separated from its established historical context (2-3)

This connection between slavery and its historical context also resonates with Berger's claim about the replication of reality in dystopian science fiction.

According to theorist Kodwo Eshun, the idea of what real dystopias in the contemporary world can be are warped. He argues that the representation of contemporary African social reality are more or less places of absolute dystopia. Sources like big science, big business, and the global media, that Eshun calls "the futures industry", conflate blackness with catastrophes: "African social reality is overdetermined by intimidating global scenarios, doomsday economic projections, weather predictions, medical reports on AIDS, and life-expectancy forecast, all of which predict decades of immiserization" (291f). According to Robinson, current-day dystopian writers use imaginative spatial and temporal projections based on Africa's poorer cities as a starting point for futuristic dystopias. This would mean that according to prominent urbanists, millions of people are already living in a spatial dystopia (218), further emphasizing the connection between fictional and real dystopia.

Similarly, places like the Caribbean islands and inner cities of North America receive, according to Lisa Yaszek, a similar treatment in futurist scenarios. They become "imaginary spaces where the persistence of black identity signifies a disastrous failure in the ongoing" (48). Yaszek further argues that Afrofuturists fight these dystopian futures of the black diaspora in two ways:

> First, they use the vocabulary of science fiction to demonstrate how black alienation – what W.E.B. Du Bois called "double consciousness" – is exacerbated rather than alleviated by those visions of tomorrow that are disseminated by the futures industry. Second, they disrupt, challenge, and otherwise transform those futures with fantastic stories that, as Ruth Mayer puts it, "move seamlessly back and forth through time and space, between cultural traditions and geographic time zones" – and thus between blackness as a dystopic relic of the past and as a harbinger of a new and more promising alien future (qtd. in Yaszek). (48)

By countering contemporary and futuristic dystopian views of the black diaspora, the condition of structural and psychological alienation is countered. Dubois has termed this alienation as 'double consciousness' (2-6), which summarizes the sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of the

other. It is the struggle of being African and American, but at the same time being neither. According to Eshun this double consciousness is a "psychological inevitability that all Afrodiasporic art uses to its own advantage by creating contexts that encourage a process of disalienation" (298). By reflecting on and confronting this 'double consciousness', one can start a process of disalienation.

Where science fiction uses our imaginative capacities to create new worlds and futures that are built upon ideas or fears of the contemporary, Afrofuturism combines Afro-diasporic history and the black experience with science fiction themes to imagine possible futures through a black cultural lens. Whether Afrofuturists combine the past with the future or imagine other worlds with different pasts, the genre is as scholar Bennett Capers argues, reclaiming its identities and perspectives that were lost as a result of the slave trade and colonialism: "In this sense, Afrofuturism is both future looking and backward looking, committed to reclaiming approaches, methodologies, and ways of thinking that predate slavery and colonization." (116). The alienation of the black diaspora is still hurt by the consequences of colonialism as institutional racism and whiteness still play important roles in our contemporary society which we will analyze in chapter 2.

In this chapter we have seen that utopia can be categorized into the abstract, wishful thinking, utopia and the concrete, will-full thinking, utopia. The fundamentals of the utopia remain the desire and hope for a better life that can be achieved through the process of either the mind or the body. The dystopia emerged as an anti-utopian sentiment, but throughout the 19th and 20th century it developed into multiple waves of dystopian literature. From authoritarian to post-apocalyptic, the dystopia has many forms of expressing itself. Contrary to belief, the utopia and dystopia are not polar opposites of each other but are intertwined in their existence which Atwood has described as the ustopia. Science fiction often uses the subgenres of utopia and dystopia, because like these subgenres, science fiction also needs an ideological background to make its narratives work. These ideological backgrounds have often been indifferent towards the black experience, which led to structural and psychological alienation of the black diaspora. To counter contemporary and dystopian views of the black diaspora, Afrofuturism imagines history and the black experience through science fiction to encourage the process of disalienation. In reclaiming what was lost, Afrofuturistic dystopias create a dystopian world where the history and future of the black diaspora is either included or non-existent, and adjusted

accordingly to the changes of the dystopian future. These dystopian worlds inherently hold utopian views as they show through a black cultural lens how the fight against dystopian aspects like institutional racism and whiteness, strive towards a post-racial utopia. By creating these dystopian worlds, Afrofuturist still reclaim the lost identity of the black diaspora through defamiliarization and extrapolation as we will see in chapter three, four and five where this thesis will examine several Afrofuturistic dystopias.

Chapter 2. Institutional racism and whiteness

This chapter will analyze the history and development of institutional racism and whiteness. What do these concepts mean and where did they originate from? This chapter will show how both whiteness and institutional racism operate through a multilevel framework where they continually reinforce the existence of another. The concept of whiteness originates from racial distinction and formed the ideological background of institutional racism. In return, institutional racism operates both in overt and covert forms and reinforces the ideological background of whiteness which in turn indirectly resists changes in institutional racism. This interplay between whiteness and institutional racism is important as the Afrofuturistic dystopia defamiliarizes and extrapolates whiteness and institutional racism and explores how these concepts operate in a dystopian, futuristic setting. Since both institutional racism and whiteness are very broad concepts, I will try to analyze the most important aspects of these concepts that this thesis will use for the novel analysis.

2.1. Institutional racism

In their book *Black power: The politics of liberation in America* Kwame Ture and Charles Hamilton introduced the term institutional racism which they describe as racism that: "keeps black people locked in dilapidated slum tenements, subject to the daily prey of exploitative slumlords, merchants, loan sharks and discriminatory real estate agents." (4). They further explain how society either pretends to know nothing of the discriminatory and exploitive institutions or pretends to be unable to fix these problems (4). Scholars James Scheurich and Michelle Young have defined institutional racism as instances "when institutions or organizations, including educational ones, have standard operating procedures (intended or unintended) that hurt members of one or more races in relation to members of the dominant race" (5). Whether an act of racism is intended or unintended is an important distinction when discussing institutional racism, because as Ture and Hamilton argue, people who ignore the existence of these problems, are still part of the racialized institutions and system. Individuals and groups that participate in unintended institutional racism, can still support the institutions and political officials that use discrimination and exploitation to their advantage (5). Thus, even when individuals do not actively support problems of institutional racism, they are still able to support it indirectly.

Another relevant distinction in defining institutional racism is the difference between covert and overt racism. Covert racism is defined as a subtle form of racism that hides in the established and respected forces of society. The opposite, overt racism, is a direct act of racism where it is clear who the perpetrator is (4). Like Ture and Hamilton, Scholars Jim Sidanius and Felicia Pratto also distinguish between overt and covert forms of racism, but they focus on institutional discrimination instead of institutional racism and focus on other social dynamic factors beyond race, although race still seems to be predominant in their analysis (127-129). In defining overt and covert forms of institutional discrimination, they use similar, but more encompassing examples that Ture and Hamilton used in explaining institutional racism

> Overt discrimination consists of institutional rules and procedures that explicitly and openly target dominants and subordinates for differential treatment. (…) Covert institutional discrimination is the discriminatory method of choice within societies with democratic and egalitarian pretensions (…) this technique generates differential allocations to dominants and subordinates while still maintaining the fiction of evenhandedness and fairness. Second, because the discriminatory nature of these covert processes is often very subtle and difficult to prove, both dominants and subordinates are often not even aware that discrimination has actually taken place (128)

In analyzing how hierarchy and oppression operate, Sidanius and Pratto describe covert racism as *"*The *circle of oppression"* as it affects all major areas of individual life. In this way an overt discriminatory society could be used as a scapegoat by the dominant group living in a covert discriminatory society by claiming that the overt society is the bad society as their society does not have the same aspects. An example could be someone who denies having racist or unconscious racialized ideas by arguing that they do not agree with the views of the overtly racist person.

If covert discriminatory societies are unaware of their own racism, it becomes difficult to become aware of this racism if one is never confronted with it. Ture and Hamilton argue that institutional racism is attributed to 'the total white community' and that "American pluralism quickly becomes monolithic on issues of race" (7). They further point out that white people often see themselves as a monolithic group when confronted with racial issues (9). While analyzing Ture and Hamilton their standpoints, writer and sociologist Tim Berard argues that, while this claim makes sense as an expression of radical black social criticism, it pushes all white people into a single

monolithic group, which is also a form of stereotyping and overgeneralizing (737). Berard further argues that the social-psychological basis of institutional racism "cannot be understood by investigating the psychological traits of social institutions" but that it can be understood at the level of the individual (750). He distinguishes between two types of individuals, those within the institutions whose work results into racist systems, and the minorities who are negatively impacted by these systems. He further notes that the understanding of contemporary racism at a macro-level has been largely separated from understanding racism at a micro-level, which is fundamental in trying to understand institutionalized racism (748).

However, Sidanius and Pratto suggest that to understand how group-based hierarchies such as institutional racism can be formed, multiple factors must be weighed: "We suggest that group-based hierarchy is not only the product of psychological, contextual and institutional forces, but also the product of mutually reinforcing interactions among these forces" (304). Thus, the interaction on different levels of discrimination forms the hierarchical basis of a society. Scholar Coretta Phillips also analyses how different kinds of racism can operate on a multilevel framework. She argues that institutional racism can be understood through the cooperation of racism on the micro, meso and macro level. She argues that: "institutional racism needs to be situated within a conceptual framework which acknowledged the role of *racialization* at the micro, meso and macro levels, and cannot serve as the sole explanation for the ethnically disparate welfare outcomes that have long been observed" (174). This approach differs from Berard, as Phillips provides a multilevel analysis whereas Berard primarily focusses on the individual level to understand and explain institutional racism.

At the micro level, Phillips shows how social-psychological research contributes to understanding racialization at the micro level:

> The significance of the social and cultural normative climate in which dominant ingroups (the white majority) express prejudiced attitudes, which in turn contribute to a positive self-identity (qtd. in Phillips). Studies of racist violence indicate that individual perpetrators operate within families and communities that implicitly endorse racialized prejudice and ethnic hatred (see, for example, Sibbitt, 1997). (176)

She then argues that micro-level racialization is: "framed by the influence of familial socialization and shared cultural values that manifest in individuals positioned within various ethic, classed and

gendered groups" (176). These groups are dynamic and continually change with interactions of other identity groups and the local environmental conditions (176).

Phillips describes the meso level as factors that are spatially and temporally specific and observes several examples: "(i) socio-economic disadvantage; (ii) neighborhood composition and effects; (iii) political, media and popular discourses; (iv) political incorporation and empowerment; and (v) institutional processes and practices" (177). Factors like political and media discourses that address race, inequality and racism contribute to the information that is processed at the micro-level racialization. An example of this would be how migration is stigmatized and demonized in speeches, political statements and other policies that view asylum-seekers as opportunists. Another term for these examples is 'othering', a term which was coined by theorist Gayatri Spivak in 1985. Othering is defined in contemporary uses of the concept as "defining into existence of a group of people who are identifiable, from the standpoint of a group with the capacity to dominate, as inferior" (Schwalbe 777). It also holds aspects such as the "process of differentiation and demarcation, by which the line is drawn between 'us' and 'them' – between the more and the less powerful – and through which social distance is established and maintained" (Lister 101). These processes affect racism on both the micro and meso level as 'individual othering' and 'communal othering' are dependent on each other.

On the macro level Phillips argues that "Structural determinants of material conditions provide the frame through which institutional processes and practices at the meso level are enacted" (177). These institutional processes include transnational politics, international trade and social relations, and the unequal distribution of resources (177). Drawing upon the insights of Goldberg's 2001 article *The Racial State*, Phillips further illustrates how the modern state has shaped articulations of race and racist exclusion: "through definition, regulation, management, economic controls and the mediation of social relations." (178). Practices like ethnic monitoring, criminalization of racially identified groups and the limited access to economic recourses and power serve the modern racial state. She concludes that in order to work towards eliminating racial inequality, all levels of racialization (micro, meso and macro) levels must be confronted and changed (187).

Like Phillips, scholar Camara Jones also presents a multilevel framework on different forms of racism. Jones writes how three forms of racism cooperate to keep the status-quo of white dominance

intact, namely: institutionalized, personally mediated and internalized racism. She argues that institutional racism manifests itself in material conditions and in access to power. Examples of the material conditions are among other things: housing, employment, medical, educational, and environmental conditions. Examples of the access of power include access to information, resources, and representation. She defines personally mediated racism as a mix of prejudice and discrimination: "prejudice means differential assumptions about the abilities, motives, and intentions of other according to their race, and discrimination means differential actions towards others according to their race" (1212-1213). In addition, she defines internalized racism as a form of self-devaluation, hopelessness, and embracement of the "whiteness" of the dominant group. (1212-1213).

To explain the relation of institutional racism to internalized and personally mediated racism, Jones uses an allegory of the gardener that has two different flowers: red and pink. Institutionalized racism is represented by the quality of soil that the flowers get. The red flowers are planted in new potting soil while the pink flowers get old soil. The personal mediated racism occurs when the gardener purposely cuts and removes some of the pink flowers. The internalized racism occurs when the pink flowers start to believe that the red flowers are better by nature. The gardener represents the government and other institutions, as it has the power to decide and controls the resources that the flowers get. In this allegory the most fundamental racism is the institutionalized racism because it is the root and nourishment for the internalized racism and the personal mediated racism, as Jones explains: "Finally, it provides the insight that once institutionalized racism is addressed, the other levels of racism may cure themselves over time" (1214). This differs from Phillips her analysis as Jones builds on the idea that institutional racism is the root of other forms of racism and that by removing these roots the other problems might heal over time, whereas Phillips argues for a multilevel approach to institutional racism. However, both analysis should be taken in consideration for analyzing how institutional racism and whiteness operate in the Afrofuturistic dystopia as they explain how institutional racism affects other forms of racism such as internalized racism.

Like Ture and Hamilton, Jones also argues that while institutional racism has no clear perpetrator, it is also held together by the inaction of the other: "It is structural, having been codified in our institutions of custom, practice and law, so there need not be an identifiable perpetrator. Indeed,

institutional racism is often evident as inaction in the face of need." (1212). This inaction can at least partially be explained by the theory of 'colorblindness' which is an aspect of whiteness and is rooted in the belief that "racial group membership and race-based differences should not be taken into accounts when decision are made, impressions are formed, and behaviors are enacted" (Apfelbaum, et all 205). The underlying logic is that one cannot act in a racially biased way if they do not see a difference in skin color. In the next subchapter the concept of whiteness and its relation to institutional racism will be discussed more in-depth and will conclude both subchapters of institutional racism and whiteness.

2.2. Whiteness

In his attempt to pinpoint the origin of modern-day racism, sociologist Oliver Cox argues that racial superiority, exploitation, and prejudice towards non-whites, started with the rise of capitalism and nationalism about 600 years ago (322). Building on Cox's hypothesis, Bush further argues that racial notion began to take hold during the colonial exploration, the emergence of capitalism and the start of the slave trade and were used to justify the subordination and exploitation of people for labor and recourses (8). The boundaries that were set between Africans, Europeans and Native peoples made sure that even before the idea of racism was firmly ingrained, poor European workers would not cooperate with black slaves (Zinn 37). These boundaries were created by the white elite by giving poor white workers a sort of public and psychological 'wage' while the black worker received none (Du Bois 700).

This public and psychological wage existed of free access to public spaces, public functions, good schools, and other institutional benefits (700). Du Bois argues that the result of this othering made sure that wages for all laborers could be kept, because white people feared to be supplanted by black people and black people were constantly threatened by the substitution of white labor (701). This policy and ideology created enormous amounts of economic welfare for the elite, dominant white group (700). Du Bois's theory is also supported by scholar Lee Allen who argued that both white poor and rich draw from a "white hegemonic alliance" and that rich whites use poor whites to question theories about white privilege as whites could also be poor and miserable as people of color (211-212). After the abolition of slavery, the meaning of whiteness changed from being free or being a slave to the distinction between "free wage labor and unfree, semi-feudal labor, and between those who had access to political power and those who did not" (Ignatiev 173). So, by uses of othering, economically poor white people were higher in hierarchical status than black people. This distinction enforced ideas of whiteness, which in turn reinforced institutional racism, as someone who was white could generally expect a better societal treatment than someone who is black.

In defining whiteness, it is important to acknowledge the difference between 'white people' and whiteness, as 'white people' represents a socially constructed identity, which is usually based on skin color whilst whiteness is a racial discourse (Leonardo 2002) and a social construct (Rogers 466).

Within racial discourse, whiteness is defined by Borsheim-Black as “an ideology, that is continually constructed and maintained in ways of speaking, thinking and interacting, as well as in institutional policies, societal norms, and epistemological values” (410). It is benefitted by the racialized policies or customs from institutions like the healthcare system, the criminal justice system, housing programs and the education system (Phillips 178-187). Whiteness can also be described as the norm that sets the standards for other groups that are referred to as non-whites: “That is, they are defined in terms of or in opposition to whiteness-that which they are not” (Delgado and Stefanic 411). This definition of whiteness and non-whites is a good example of how othering is used to create and justify power differences and a racialized hierarchy.

Another definition of whiteness is given by Kenneth Tyler, et all, who argue that central to the concept of whiteness are:

> cultural worldviews, self-beliefs, and emotions, attitudes, and behavioral reactions to issues of race that white persons have. These worldviews are individually endorsed and institutionally maintained for the purpose of producing a hierarchically, structured, social existence where white skin, features, cultural values, philosophical leanings, and behavioral practices are disproportionately valued over those associated with Black people. (5-6)

In this definition, whiteness is described as a tool used on both the individual and institutional level to create and maintain a racial hierarchy. Whiteness as a tool also remains unseen to the people that benefit from whiteness, as the benefits of white identity are more naturalized and normalized than other racial identities (Croll, et all 407). The perception that being white is being normal can give white people the idea that they have a right to exist within all spaces while other races do not have this right (Tyler, et all 10). This definition of whiteness describes how institutionalized racism keeps its racialized hierarchy intact by remaining ignorant of power imbalances and normalizing worldviews of whiteness.

In their analysis about racism and superiority, Ture and Hamilton have argued that institutional racism relies on: “the active and pervasive operation of anti-black attitudes and practices. A sense of superior group position prevails: ‘whites are ‘better’ than blacks; therefore blacks should be subordinated to whites.” (5). The concept of white superiority is part of the concept of whiteness exists in both the institutional as the individual level of racism. Scheurich and Youngs definition of

institutional racism creates a difference between members of the dominant races and members of "the other" races (5). The dominant race, in this case white people, is again formed by the institutional and individual idea of whiteness being the norm (Tyler, et all 25-27).

When whiteness is seen as the normative on both the institutional and individual level, white privilege emerges because of this normative. White privilege thus holds all the institutional and individual beneftits or lack of negative traits that whiteness holds. This privilege can result in being blind for the structural disadvantages that people of color have, while at the same time not seeing how their advantages are linked to other people their disadvantages (Croll, et all 407). Nolan Cabrera argues that 'white immunity' would be a better term instead of white privilege as both poor and rich whites are expected to be treated as 'normal' where other people are treated as the racial other (79-81).

A related term of white privilege or white immunity is the colorblind Ideology. This ideology is as Paul Croll, et all argue, the idea that white people benefit from different neutral social arrangements and institutional operations which obscure the source of difference and advantages that white people have compared to black people. This ideology assumes that individual success is fair, and that race is a neutral factor in the pursuit of success. Everyone that works hard enough and really beliefs in themselves can overcome every obstacle (408). This neutrality of colorblindness forms a paradox, if there is an absolute, or at least institutional, neutrality, then why would people of color complain against racism? Early research from Sidanius and Pratto on social dominance concluded that a significant number of white Americans do perceive racial equality as threatening to their dominant position (228-230), while researchers Richard Eibach and Thomas Keegan argue that the dominant group is likely to conclude that the welfare of minority groups comes at the expanse of the dominant group (453-455). Partially based on this paper, scholars Michael Norton and Samuel Sommers researched how racism is seen as a zero-sum game in 'post-racial' America and concluded that white people see an anti-white bias as rising while claiming that the anti-black bias is declining "not only do Whites think more progress has been made toward equality than do Blacks, but Whites also now believe that this progress is linked to a new inequality – at their expense" (216-217). So, following the colorblind ideology and white immunity, we see how claiming neutrality and not understanding that there are racialized institutional forces can lead to self-victimization and more forms of overt racism as

"they" are taking from "us" creating a new fundament for othering and denying the underlying institutional racism.

Borsheim-Black further discusses how whiteness is constructed and maintained through common everyday interactions: "For example, individuals perpetuate Discourses of Whiteness in discussions about racism through over resistance, as well as through the covert avoidance exhibited in White talk" (410). Borsheim-Black refers here to Alice McIntyre's definition of white talk as: "talk that serves to insulate white people from examining their/our own individual and collective role(s) in the perpetuation of racism" (31). Several aspects of white talk include claiming ignorance and uncertainty, tolerating racism, silence, racialized jokes and changing the topic. These aspects, Victoria Haviland argues, enable whiteness to shift the focus away from the unearned power and dominance that whiteness has claimed (44).

Other relevant facets of whiteness are white fragility and the white savior syndrome. Author Robin DiAngelo defines white fragility as:

> a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation. These behaviors in turn, function to reinstate white racial equilibrium (57)

This white fragility can also be compensated by white savior syndrome, which is defined by Cammarota as the white person who helps or guides people of color which has the tendency to render people of color as helpless and infantile and any success they achieve is a result of the help of the white individual (243-244). This definition is the direct opposite of the concept of the white ally which is an act that holds true solidarity with people of color: "Solidarity involves sublimating one's ego and status so that people of color can provide empowered leadership in movements of liberation. A reduction of status requires challenging the very institutions and practices that proffer white privilege and power." (244). Cammarota argues that white saviorism can sometimes help people of color but will not result in any long-term systematic change as a white ally could help to achieve (245).

However, the concept of whiteness does not only operate within the realm of skin color. Scholar Matthew Jacobson argues that during the period of mass European immigration, whiteness

was fractured into a “hierarchy of plural and scientifically determined white races” with a difference between desirable and undesirable white people (7). For example, Jews, Irish, Roma, Sinti and nomadic Europeans were seen as lesser white races while other European descendants, like the English, were seen as superior white races (6-8). Scholars such as Noel Ignatiev argue that while the white skin of the Irish that travelled to America made them eligible for membership of the white race, it did not guarantee their admission to the benefits of this race. The power of whiteness seemed to be reserved only for specific groups of white people. To join the dominant white group, one had to distance their humanity and principles from non-whites and aligning those principles with the status-quo of the white, dominant institutions (59-64). On the other hand, Brodkin argues that Jews in the United States, who historically were often excluded from the dominant groups, became ‘white’ because they became middle class and that an expended definition of whiteness opened the economic doors for them (278). Brodkin further expands that especially after World War II, social institutions discriminated against African Americans, while treating northwest and southeastern Europeans (including Jewish people) equally in theory and, with regards to benefits they received, in practice. It seemed that the distinction between different kinds of white people was fading, while the distinction of the white/non-white was held intact (281).

In these two sub-chapters about institutional racism and whiteness we have analyzed how the concept of whiteness first took firm roots during the colonization period and was used to dehumanize colored people and other white groups that were deemed as ‘lesser whites’ from the dominant white group. Partly because of the fear that poor whites would cooperate with people of color against the dominant white group, the distinction between whites and non-whites became bigger as ‘lesser whites’ would still receive institutional benefits compared to black people. Before and after the abolition of slavery, whiteness continued to be a racialized ideology that fueled and justified institutional racism. While overt racism became less accepted, covert racism still flourished in the form of institutional racism. Whiteness changed from the overt ideology of white people being inherently better than people of color, towards a covert ideology that is supported by and supporting of institutionalized racism. As institutionalized racism adheres to ideas of white superiority, it is also supported by the ignorance, privilege and colorblindness that are part of the concept of whiteness.

Chapter 3. Noughts and Crosses

This chapter will focus on the novel *Noughts and Crosses* and hypothesizes that *Noughts and Crosses* illustrates how whiteness is socially constructed and how whiteness and institutional racism cooperate between the micro and macro level. Furthermore, this chapter will analyze how whiteness operates within the racist, institutionalized system. To avoid confusion between the meaning of the terms 'whiteness' and 'blackness', the term 'whiteness' will apply to black people in this novel, as they hold a similar level of privilege that most white people have in reality. However, by classifying this novel as dystopian, one also has to classify the real world, or at least its recent history, as dystopian, because the novel practically duplicates real historical events into this alternative universe.

Blackman her novel *Noughts and Crosses* takes place in an alternative reality where Africa has colonized Europe instead of the other way around. The story takes place in England around the 1960's. While slavery has been abolished, racism on the institutionalized and individualized level still continues to exist. The black skinned 'Crosses' oppress the white skinned 'Noughts' and control every form of institutional spaces while trying to maintain segregation laws. These laws are like the Jim Crow laws, laws that forced racial segregation throughout the United States and the South African apartheid system.

In *Noughts and Crosses*, the dominant black group benefits from all the institutional privileges that white people do not get, such as proper healthcare, political power, positive media coverage and other privileges that are discussed in chapter 2 concerning whiteness and institutional racism. There are lots of similarities about racism with our history, for instance: the history of slavery and segregation, the abolition and the follow up of covert racism expressed in the lack of political and other institutional powers for the subordinate race (*Nought and Crosses* 87), the rewriting of history in favor of the dominant race (131), racial profiling by police forces (103) and smaller similarities such as bandages only being available in the skin color of the dominant race (68). Varsam argues how the concrete dystopia, as explained by Ernst Bloch, connects past and contemporary experiences such as slavery and oppression to create a dystopian alternative (210-212). She explains how the relationship of dystopian fiction with reality is key for the critical dystopia as the writer extrapolates and defamiliarizes historical dystopian phenomena and extrapolates them into an alternate or futuristic

society. As such, contemporary and historical forms of racism and oppression are used and altered in *Noughts and Crosses* to create a new concrete dystopia that either warns or reflects on catastrophic developments (209). Historical catastrophes like slavery and segregation are examples of real dystopias, thus by using similar elements in an alternative reality, the novel becomes a critical dystopia (Berger, xiii)

By reversing the colonization of Africa into the colonization of Europe, Blackman creates an alternative reality which is envisioned through a black cultural lens. One could argue that *Noughts and Crosses* is closer to Africanfuturism than Afrofuturism, since Afrofuturism mainly envisions different or alternative futures for the African diaspora, whereas Africanfuturism reflects on changes within the African continent (Okorafor). However, in *Noughts and Crosses*, the story does not take place in an African country and is defined by the western gaze as the story adapts and extrapolates racialized practices that the African diaspora faced. The novel is also about "what could have been" instead of "what is and can/will be" which is a question that focusses on African history instead of the African diaspora (Okorafor). By transforming the African diaspora into a colonizing power, Blackman reverses the contemporary racial power structures, which makes her novel dystopian for white people and a closer to utopian society for people of color. A negative side effect of the role-reversal concept of *Noughts and Crosses* is that blackness is converted into whiteness instead of something else. This oversimplifies the cultural differences between African and European countries, as most cultural changes in the novel are simply swapped, for example: segregation laws are similar to Apartheid and Jim crow laws and racism is reversed as modern-day white names and foods are deemed exotic and/or weird by the dominant group (*Noughts and Crosses* 77). On the other hand, Christine Wilkie-Stibbs argues that the role reversal of race exposes and interrogates contemporary mechanisms of power

> The fictions show how these young people negotiate their identities across the newly mapped hyperborders of the contemporary political maelstrom that is the generationally exclusive frame through which macro- and micro-politics translate into their everyday lives (…) they defamiliarize the meanings and motivations that lie behind the political rhetoric and interrogate its effects and consequences (238)

She further argues that by role reversing, Blackman creates a clear binary which shows how racism operates in a different framework. The story shows how it is necessarily for the dominant power to

generate derogated and self-assertive minorities and drives them to terrorism (255). This way, Victoria Flanagan argues, the arbitrary acts of power that aim to marginalize, discriminate and exclude racial minorities are exposed and create a discussion about modern-day radical fundamentalist groups (245).

So, by turning historical and contemporary racial issues into an alternative but similar society, Blackman is able to imagine an Afrofuturistic world where dystopian aspects of the black diaspora are reversed and experienced by white Europeans. She defamiliarizes concepts such as institutional racism and whiteness and extrapolates them into a new story where the reader is confronted with how these concepts operate within a racialized hierarchical society. According to Wilkie-Stibbs, by displacing white and black characters in their novel, Blackman is able to make familiar norms and values uncanny (241). In the following paragraphs I will show what aspects of whiteness and institutional racism Blackman defamiliarizes and extrapolates, by analyzing how the characters interact with each other, how language constructs meaning for these characters and how power is used to control and influence the discourse and mind of these characters.

The novel follows the story of Sephy, who is a Cross girl, and Callum, who is a nought boy. The main focalization is alternated after each chapter, switching from Sephy to Callum and so on. This alternating focalization balances the power of each focalizer as both Callum and Sephy have a different background and perspective on racism. Their stories are told from an internal focalizing perspective who see each other and the society around themselves as the focalized object. This gives the reader a two-sided perspective on both the characters and the society that they live in. By showing how whiteness and institutional racism operate for those who benefit from these concepts and for those who are damaged by these concepts, Blackman creates a nuanced perspective on these concepts.

Callum's mother works as a housemaid under Sephy's mother, Jasmine Adeyebe-Hadley, who is married to the wealthy politician Kamal Hadley. When Callum gets the chance to be one of the first Noughts to enter a Cross school, he is hesitant at first, as his father pressures him that he will be representing all noughts when he goes to school (31). Sephy on the other hand, does not see how or why Callum would be treated differently and tries to convince Callum that everything will be okay if they just stick together (19). While Sephy loves Callum, she does not perceive racism the same way he does and secretly wishes that Callum was not a nought (25). Here we see how the focalizer Sephy,

observes how Callum his skin color already determines his place in society and with that the option for a romantic relationship. Callum is seen as someone outside the norm in terms of being a non-cross which is similar to how whiteness refers to non-whites (Delgado and Stefanic 411).

As the story continues Callum and Sephy's love grows stronger, but due to their racial differences they are being pulled apart by societal norms. Sephy studies abroad and pledges to fight against nought discrimination, while Callum joins an organization that uses violence against crosses to achieve equal rights for the noughts. In the end Callum is sentenced to death for his terrorist activities (434) while Sephy is shunned away by her family as she refuses to abort her hybrid nought/cross baby she made with Callum (405).

On the individual level we see how Sephy does not understand how racism affects the life of Callum and all other noughts. When Callum complains about going to a cross school, she finds him "cynical" and tries to comfort Callum by saying that he has nothing to worry about because the school already accepted him (16). Sephy's defensive attitude reflects aspects of white talk and white fragility as she insulates herself from examining the collective role of institutional racism (McIntyre 31)

> 'But the school explained why. You're all at least a year behind and…' 'And whose fault is that?' Callum said with erupting bitterness. 'Until a few years ago we were only allowed to be educated up to the age of fourteen – and in noughts only schools at that, which don't have a quarter of the money or resources that your schools have' I had no answer (17)

Sephy's silence on this confronting fact can be seen as an aspect of white fragility as her absence from the discussion reinstates the racial equilibrium between Callum and Sephy (DiAngelo 57) This absence also shows how language can influence power as the absence of language can keep the racial equilibrium in place.

Sephy's father, Kamal, explains the logic of letting noughts into cross schools: "'Our decision to allow the crème-de-la-crème of noughts youth to join our educational institutions makes sound social and economic sense. In a civilized society, equality of education for those noughts with sufficient aptitude…'" (59). The admittance of noughts into the school is used to show how the system is not overtly racist which hides the covert racism lying underneath. It also operates as a medium where crosses become the savior of the nought. These acts can be categorized to the white savior

syndrome (Cammarota 243-244). This is because the institutions, in this case the school, does not offer real equality, but only a mere illusion of it which functions to keep both noughts and crosses alike satisfied.

When Callum arrives at his new former cross only school, he and the other noughts are confronted with a crowd protesting the admittance of noughts in their school. When the crowd grows restless, Sephy stands up, and in trying to defend the noughts, she yells that the protesters are behaving worse than animals but "LIKE BLANKERS!" (50). The word blanker is considered a racial slur against noughts and its usage signifies the power disbalance of crosses seeing noughts as an inferior race. Here language is used to create a sense of othering, which dehumanizes noughts and normalizes crosses (Schwalbe 777).

Sephy's interference with the crowd is focalized from both her and Callum's view. This way, no character will have an advantage over the other character in terms of control over power of focalization (Bal 150). When Callum hears Sephy using the word "blanker", he is devastated: "I'm not a blanker. I may be a nought but I'm worth more than nothing. I'm not a blanker. A waste of time and space. A zero." (51). At the micro-level of institutionalized racism, we see how the prejudiced attitude of the white majority contributes to a positive self-identity, as the protesters think that their actions are righteous (Phillips 176). At the same time Callum internalizes the racial prejudices he experiences and sees himself as lesser than a cross. Callum sees himself through the hateful eyes of the other and he internalizes their negative values about the perceived racialized self, which Du Bois has termed as 'double consciousness' (2-6). So, this double consciousness is a consequence of the expression of control by the dominant social power, in this case crosses, who affect the mind and self-worth, of the noughts.

Another character that internalizes the racial prejudices is the teacher, Mr. Jason, who is secretly half nought and half cross, but his skin is black enough to be considered a cross. Contrary to Callum, Jason has convinced himself and others around him that he has no genetical relation to noughts in any way. He actively tries to bully Callum and is glad he is not a nought "Every time I look at you, I thank god I'm not one of you. D'you hear me? I thank god" (151). Mr Jason has internalized the hate against noughts so much that he denies his parental roots in order to assimilate in the

dominant black society. Such a rejection is as Jones would argue, a consequence of the institutional racism and adoration of whiteness (1211-1213).

Callum's internalized racism is a consequence of the institutional racism, which in turn is linked to whiteness and its superiority complex (Jones 1214). These feelings of self-hatred are, as Fanon argues, images that stem from the lack of recognition that black people are considered human as well (139). He further elaborates how their self-image is connected to the institutional level: "one always finds that his self-image is respected. In other words, there is a structural harmony, a sum of the individual and of the constructions through which he goes, at every stage of the psychotic behavior" (Fanon 161). When the self-image is deformed by the othering of whiteness, self-hatred can start to change the concept of the self. Callum's sister, Lynette, hated her white skin so much that after a traumatizing racial experience, she starts to think that her skin is black: "Look at my skin Lynette spoke as if mum hadn't such a beautiful colour. So dark and rich and wonderful. I'm so lucky. I'm a cross – closer to god" (*Noughts and Crosses* 45). The combination of institutional racism, the normalization of whiteness and the dehumanization of the noughts, creates a feeling of self-hatred that noughts experience. In more extreme cases, this self-hatred can turn into a yearning to belong to whiteness such as Lynette and Mr. Jason experience or to become destructive towards whiteness.

After Lynette's tragic death, Callum's father and brother secretly join the Liberation Militia (LM) which sees itself as a freedom fighting group. One of the reasons that Callum has doubts about the LM and tries to assimilate in the predominantly cross school is because of his friendship and love for Sephy. However, even when Sephy tries to understand Callum and be supportive to him she often makes the situation worse. When she tries to apologize to Callum for saying "blanker", she tries to defend herself by saying that "It's just a word Callum." (51), a defense which can be categorized as white talk as Sephy tries to defend herself from being categorized as a racist (Borsheim-Black 410). She promises Callum to never say that word again and reluctantly agrees to avoid him at school, as Callum explains that it would complicate her friendship with her other cross friends (*Noughts and Crosses* 52). Sephy convinces herself that Callum is wrong and that she needs to show him that she does not care if people know that they are friends, in fact she is "proud of it" (65-66). Sephy ignores Callum's advice, as she still does not understand his perspective and the institutional racism he is

subjected to while also not understanding her own privileges for being a cross. She feels tense when she sits at the nought table during lunch time (66) but acts as if nothing is out of the ordinary. She gets sent off by a teacher and blames Callum for not supporting her while also stating that he, like everyone else, believes that noughts and crosses are too different to be friends (75).

Sephy continually tries to treat Callum like an equal in every way, but by doing so she remains ignorant of the forms of racism Callum has to go through every day. In this sense, Sephy tries to be supportive by claiming she is colorblind, which is an aspect of whiteness as Croll, et all have argued (408). Her white privilege makes her unaware of the structural benefits and advantages that whiteness gives her, while also ignoring the institutional racism that Callum has to face. She gets punished and beaten up by other crosses who tell her to stick to her own kind, that noughts "smell funny and eat peculiar foods" and that the news shows them how all they do is "cause trouble and commit crimes" (77-78). According to Peffley et all, stereotyping behavior like this enforces racist ideas of the self and the other, making distancing and judging the other easier (30-32). In this sense, stereotyping affirms the crosses on their own racial superiority. When Sephy mixes with the noughts in public, the concept of racial superiority from the witnessing crosses is under attack. To protect their ideas about whiteness and race from being compromised, they punish Sephy by beating her up and deterring her from ever hanging out with noughts again (*Noughts and Crosses* 78). Sephy shows up uninvited to Lynette's funeral and is confronted by Jude and her old chauffeur who was fired because Sephy insisted he had to drop her off a block before school. Sephy leaves confused as she does not understand how her seemingly innocent actions had such dire and hurtful consequences (169-171). The general disdain of crosses against noughts is returned by the noughts, as both sides find it hard to trust one another. This wedge between races originates from whiteness and white superiority and is further strengthened by institutional racism which in turn holds whiteness intact (Jones 1212-1213).

Sephy goes to college and joins a dissident group of crosses fighting for change in the system (*Noughts and Crosses* 328). She starts to form new ideas about institutional racism and her own privileges as she confronts her old ideas: "I used to comfort myself with the belief that it was only certain individuals and their peculiar notions that spoilt things for the rest of us. But how many individuals does it take before it's not the individuals who are prejudiced but society itself?" (328).

She further explains that she wants to raise her head above the parapet and try to do something in the background against institutional racism (328-329). Sephy's narrative shifted from being a white savior to being a white ally (Cammarota 245), as she understands that institutional racism exists and that she is privileged because of her whiteness.

Callum on the other hand, felt forced to join the LM, where he joins his brother in their violent quest towards equality. Callum proves his loyalty by tricking Sephy, whose father is now prime minister, and kidnapping her for ransom. Their love is tempered by Callums hate against Sephy for being a cross. Sephy tries to argue that violence will result in more injustice and is not the answer. Callum replies that fighting the system from within did not work for him and that crosses like Sephy think noughts are helpless without them (*Noughts and Crosses* 355). Callum's anger against Sephy and other crosses is partly because of their white savior syndrome. Even when Callum was supported, he felt treated as a child and now distrusts any cross, even those that claim to help him.

Eventually, Callum and Sephy make up and make love. He helps her escape but is arrested when he returns to Sephy's home. Sephy finds out she is pregnant with Callum's child. Her father wants her to have an abortion, and Callum is sentenced to death. Sephy's father gives her an ultimatum: if Sephy aborts the child Callum will live, but if she keeps it Callum will die. Sephy decides to keep the baby and her father disowns her for doing so. His fear of the hybridization of race is grounded on the loss of whiteness and the benefits and privileges that come with it. Maria Nikolajeva argues how the existence of hybridity, in this case Callum and Sephy's baby, disturbs the established authority and allows for "a liminal counter-power to be set up in linguistic, political social, and cultural terms" (67). The embracement of the hybridity of the baby is the opposite of how Mr Jason denies his hybridity. This way *Noughts and Crosses* argues how the acceptance of hybridity is an act of resistance against whiteness.

This chapter has analyzed how *Noughts and Crosses* belongs to both the Afrofuturistic and the dystopian genre, as it explores an alternative reality for the black diaspora in a realistic, dystopian setting. The novel defamiliarizes aspects of whiteness and institutional racism by reversing the stereotypical roles of white and black. Theorized concepts such as white talk, the white savior syndrome, white fragility, othering, and the normalization of whiteness, are normally acts of power

that discriminate racial minorities. Aspects and consequences of institutional racism such as segregation, lack of diversity in positions of power, racial profiling, and exclusion of non-whites, are all defamiliarized as well and extrapolated to an alternative world where being black is normalized instead of being white. By reversing the role of white and black and defamiliarizing a set of naturalized assumptions about race, Blackman confronts the reader with their own assumptions about racialized stereotypes. She shows how institutional racism and whiteness operate on both sides of the spectrum by focalizing the observations and interactions of both Callum and Sephy. Both their lives are heavily affected by whiteness and institutional racism as Callum is robbed of a normal life and is pushed to think that violence is the only way to change the system while Sephy compromises the relationship with her family because of their conflicting world views. By analyzing their dialogue and their surroundings, we see how whiteness defends racialized institutional differences which in turn reinforces ideologies of whiteness such as white superiority. The stories of Callum and Sephy show how social power based on racial differences, can push the mind of the racialized minority to extremism It also shows how the thought of racializing the other can change from white saviorism to white allyship.

Chapter 4. Parable of the Sower

This chapter hypothesizes that *Parable of the Sower* shows how race and whiteness will continue to matter in society when institutions no longer operate on a macro level. I will briefly analyze why this novel can be considered both Afrofuturistic and dystopian and demonstrate how the concept of the ustopia plays an important role in how whiteness operates in the Afrofuturistic dystopia. Primarily, this chapter will show which aspects of whiteness and institutional racism Butler defamiliarizes and extrapolates to the near-future dystopian setting. These aspects are constructed by institutions that no longer control the discourse of race and its meanings. However, the lives of the protagonist and other characters in the novel are still affected by racial discourse of the past. By analyzing how the focalizing subject interacts with this racial discourse, we can learn how race and whiteness still continue to matter without institutions operating on the macro level.

The novel takes place in a post-apocalyptic United States in the gated community called Robledo, which is situated near Los Angeles. Climate change has brought droughts to the continent and the wealth inequality has reached new heights due to the increased prices of basic needs such as water and food, and corporate greed. Corporate controlled cities promise safety in return for work, but for this tradeoff they create a new system of debt-slavery as the laws of labor are changed by the government. We follow the story of a woman called Lauren Olamina, who has an uncontrollable hyper empathy which makes her feel other people's pains and pleasures. Lauren is the main focalizer of the novel, which is told in the form of a diary. We see the world of *Parable of the Sower* through the point of view of Lauren who processes the world around her through observations, its events and Lauren's engagement with the characters around her.

While living in the gated community Lauren writes a collection of live lessons and other texts called *Earthseed: The Books of the Living.* After the gated community is raided by bandits, looters and drug users, Lauren flees and joins up with two other members of the community, Harry Balter and Zahra Moss. Together they travel north and are joined by various other people who are trying to survive. During their journey Earthseed becomes the group's main new religion, which focusses on the idea that God is change, diversity must be embraced and that it is humanities goal to take root among the stars. Ultimately, Lauren and her group start the first Earthseed community called Acorn.

The gated community Robledo is led and protected by Lauren's father Reverend Olamina. The community is one of the last remnants of the old institutions as the consequences of climate change have crumbled civilization to a more chaotic and independent based society. The old institutions such as the police force or a strong government are fading away or are corrupted. Institutionalized racism on the macro and, to a certain degree, the meso level as defined by Phillips (177-179), are not as present as they used to be. This is because the central government is not able to fully support the old institutions like hospitals, police offices and schools due to the shortage of basic resources. Therefore, the government no longer has the power to adequately control how institutions influence the lives of citizens. This loss of control has changed the way institutional racism operates. Covert racism as defined by Sidanius and Pratto (128), has no macro level operating institutions left to protect. Instead, the institutions that are left have become locally or at most regionally focused and are no longer controlled or guided by a central government. The meso level of institutional racism as described by Phillips (177), still influence how society is racially divided as black people that held socio-economic disadvantages due to a racialized system, still have a disadvantage compared to white people that were benefitted by this system. An example of the lingering effects of a racialized system is how the upper middle class, white, community of Olivar still lives in relative luxury but was forced to become part of the private company called Kagimoto, Stamm, Frampton and Company (KSF) because of the rising sea levels and mass refugees (*Parable of the Sower* 127). Olivar used to be a heavyweight in terms of political power, but their white privileges have started to crack under the lack of governmental power, climate change and refugees from Southern America (126-128). Furthermore, the town is only looking for white workers (131), indicating that institutional benefits like employment have changed to a more overt form of racism instead of covert racism.

The rise of the privatized company KSF signifies a new form of debt-slavery where the privileged still continue to have advantages in contrast to the underprivileged (129-132). Reverend notes that "This business sounds half antebellum revival and half science fiction" (109), by which he means that old slavery has changed into a new capitalized form of debt-slavery. Later in the novel, a more historical form of slavery emerges as hyper-empaths and poor people are kidnapped or pushed by debt into slavery on plantations. While this form of slavery is also not necessarily a racialized

binary, white people are preferred to function as slave drivers, revealing that slavery of the Antebellum South also remerges in a new form (327). When slave runaway Grayson asks Lauren "Where'd that white man come from?" (307), it seems that white men still hold relatively more power over people of color in smaller institutions such as plantations. Butler shows here how whiteness still remains a beneficial factor for survival as it continues to maintain a hierarchical worldview where white skin is disproportionally valued over those with black skin (Tyler, et all 5-6).

Both forms of slavery are according to Marlene Allen, a consequence due to the combined forces of capitalism and technological advancements occurring in the dystopia. This combination will lead to a "boomeranging" of history:

> anyone who is vulnerable to exploitation, despite their racial background. Will be subject of slavery. Butler thereby critiques the social science of economics by highlighting twentieth century capitalism's dehumanization of the vulnerable just as antebellum slavery exploited African Americans (1356)

The "boomeranging of history" is the idea that history will or can repeat itself. We see this boomeranging of history as Lauren observes societal similarities about slavery with the present and the past. She observes how slaves are being sold, beaten and killed at the leisure of the white slave driver (*Parable of the Sower* 226) and how even slaves used to sneak around and educate themselves in order to survive, just as the runaway slaves in her group have done (225, 295).

With the fall of old institutions and the rise of new ones, covert racisms such as institutionalized racism, and other racialized advantages for white people start to fade and scatter. Aspects of whiteness such as colorblindness are not as dominant as they used to be since the lack of a macro level controlling government has made covert racism obsolete. Instead, race has become an overt factor that is used to create racialized survival groups. The action of these groups, namely the white groups, become the reproduction of racism as social acts of individual actors such as the Garfields leaving towards the white enclave of Olivar (145-146) as they benefit from their white privilege and are able to leave the community.

However, on both the micro and macro level, whiteness and racialization still exist within and outside the multiracial community. In Robledo, there are several examples of whiteness on the micro level. Interracial relationships are still looked down upon (95) and biases against certain ethnicities

also still exist (32). These biases also show how different races distrust each other as Zahra Moss is told by her husband Richard Moss that she and the other wives of Richard should not interact with the white neighbors as he does not trust them (174). Outside the community race is a much bigger issue and continues to play a role on the macro level, as race becomes a bigger sign of trust or mistrust. When travelling outside the community Lauren states that it can be dangerous to walk as a mixed group together on the streets and that "people are expected to fear and hate everyone but their own kind" (45). When the group enters a town called Salinas, Lauren notices the guards are watching them in particular "but they didn't stop us. We were quiet. We were with women and a baby, as well as men, and three of us were white. I don't think any of that harmed us in their eyes" (246). Being white, female, or young is signified here as something that is, relatively, safer than people of color. This difference is important as it affects the way Lauren and her group of Earthseed followers compose and interact with the people around them.

When Lauren, Harry and Zahra start to travel as a group, Lauren decides to pose as a man so that she and Zahra can look like a couple and Harry as their nephew (177-179). This decision can be understood by following Sidanius and Pratto's theory that white Americans perceive racial equality as threatening to their dominant position (228-230). Being an interracial couple is an act of equality as it accepts the hybridity of human races which threatens the ideology of white superiority. Zahra also says that being a mixed couple would "piss off all the blacks" (177). This demarcation between two groups could be explained through othering as defined by Schwalbe (777) and Lister (101) since white people feel that their position of dominance is being threatened and black people who have been othered as non-whites have internalized a distrust against white people. As Lauren her multiracial group grows bigger, racial tensions are unavoidable. The runaway slave Grayson Mora has a distrust against Harry as he for instance asks Lauren where that white man came from (307). Lauren says that they all help each other even when someone is hyperempathetic. This confuses Mora but also relaxes him. Although racial tension is widespread in society, Lauren tries to create a group that strives towards a utopian post-racial society as we will see later in this chapter.

Another example of how whiteness is defamiliarized and extrapolated is when Lauren meets with her friend Joanna. Joanna tries to stay ignorant when Lauren confronts her that the old ways of

living are gone and that the gated community will fall as well. Joanna is convinced that things will be alright (*Parable of the Sower* 65-68). Joanna's perspective on the dangers the community faces resemble how white privileged people still try to hold on to the old institutions that upheld whiteness as superior. Lauren tries to help Joanna understand that there are dangers and problems that Joanna does not dare to face, while Joanna feels intimidated by the possibility that these problems exist. Her decision to ignore Lauren and tell on her can be seen as an aspect of white talk, because Joanna tries to protect her values and ideas of the safety of Robledo. Lauren also notes that a racist challenge might force their group apart in the future (184) and that being white might help to win over people faster than being non-white (324). These observations that Lauren makes while interacting with the world and characters around her, show how aspects of whiteness such as white immunity (Cabrera 79-81), and white talk (McIntyre 31) still serve as a defense mechanism to protect the illusion of control that the institutions used to have.

Thus far we have seen how Butler has defamiliarized institutional racism and whiteness by creating a dystopian world were the influence of institutional racism and ideologies of whiteness still exist and influence institutional benefits and benefits of whiteness. The aspects of institutional racism that Butler extrapolates into her novel become less controlling but remain significantly powerful to support ideologies of white superiority. These ideologies become more overtly racist as Lauren and her group constantly have to take into account the meaning of their skin color to improve their chances of survival. The world in *Parable of the Sower* seems to be divided into the remaining institutions that still enforce institutional racism and hold onto ideologies of whiteness, and into a more chaotic world where race divides people into groups and where whiteness still is more beneficial than blackness. In the next paragraphs I will show that because of the lack of control on a macro level Lauren and her group are able to distance themselves from both options as they form a new community that is based on post-racial ideas.

Laurens group of Earthseed followers is a multicultural group that leaves racialized ideologies behind. However, they do not underestimate the practicality and meaning of race when confronted with the outside world as being white or black still hold different meanings. One of the Earthseed lessons focusses on diversity:

> Embrace diversity.
> Unite-
> Or be divided,
> robbed,
> ruled,
> killed
> By those who see you as prey.
> Embrace diversity
> Or be destroyed (*Parable of the Sower* 203)

This embracement of diversity is shown through the diversity of the group, as skin color does not influence the acceptance of a person. The other runaway slave that joins Lauren's group, Emery Tanaka Solis, is also hyperempathetic. Lauren describes her as "the most racially mixed" person Lauren has ever met (258). Her acceptance to the group is symbolic for how the religion Earthseed functions as a medicine against racialization. Lauren further compares their group to the old Underground Railroad which was a network of routes and safe houses that enslaved African Americans utilized to escape to free states (297). Earthseed's acceptance of diversity and strive towards a post-racial community, exemplifies how a small group strives towards the utopian in an otherwise dystopian world.

According to Elham Achachelooei, the embracement of diversity and construction of a non-hierarchical world represents the utopian aspect of *Parable of the Sower* (20). The idea of a utopia inside the dystopia and vice versa is discussed by Atwood and shows how *Parable of the Sower* becomes a story of both tragedy but also of hope (85). This idea of the utopia in a dystopia is visible in the teachings of Earthseed and the start of the relative utopian town of Acorn. Both signify hope for a utopian future. A future where past hierarchies are non-existent, and humanity will take its place among the stars or as Allen argues:

> as an innovative, futuristic "rememory", to use Toni Morrison's term, of the African American experience. At the same time, Butler uses African American history in the two texts as a synecdoche for the cycling of racism and sexism throughout all of human history. Butler offers the story of Lauren Olamina and Earthseed as a parable for how we might avoid the "boomeranging" of history (1354)

By striving for a utopian community, Butler shows how even in the midst of a dystopian world, there is the possibility for something good to reappear from this terror. *Parable of the Sower* offers a utopian

image where a community of resilience and hope can survive in the dystopian, post-apocalyptic world that resembles the late twentieth century America (Zamalin 9). As previously stated, this hope is reflected in the teachings of Earthsead. For example, one of Earthseed's lessons is that in order to rise from its ashes, the phoenix must first burn (*Parable of the Sower* 137). This lesson exemplifies that to reach the utopian, which is symbolized by the rise of the phoenix, the phoenix must first burn, which symbolizes the dystopian. Another example of Earthseed's lesson is that any change may bear seeds of benefit which should be sought out while other seeds bear harm and that god is malleable, and that god is change (103). Again, Butler shows how change can both be beneficial and harmful, but above all, that the direction of the change is malleable. So even in a society where institutional racism and whiteness still hold significant power and create a gap between white and non-white people, it is still possible to change and embrace diversity.

This chapter has shown how Butler defamiliarizes and extrapolates institutional racism and whiteness into the Afrofuturistic dystopia. She does this by showing how othering operates in society and white privilege still exists because of institutional racism. Butler also defamiliarizes and extrapolates the slavery of the Antebellum South as Lauren and her Earthseed followers make a similar journey towards freedom. Although institutions are less controlling and active on the macro level, they still influence how employment, safety and other structural benefits primarily benefit whiteness above blackness through an overt form of racialization instead of covert institutional racism. This means that social power is unable to control discourse on a macro level and therefore, the power to control is placed into the hands of smaller groups such as the privatized company KSF. As their group becomes more bigger and more diverse racial tension within the group shows the underlying distrust towards other races. This distrust also affects every member of the group as they constantly need to be aware of the impact of their race to their surroundings. We learn this through the observations and focalization of Lauren, who learns to understand and interact with the meaning of race in society as she faces along her journey to build a new community. The concept of the ustopia plays an important role because it shows how through hybridization and diversity, even dystopian realities hold the possibility for utopian ideals.

Chapter 5. An Unkindness of ghosts

In this chapter I will argue why the novel *An Unkindness of Ghosts* shows how the concept of the white ally is important for contesting whiteness and institutional racism. First, this chapter will briefly focus on why this novel can be considered an Afrofuturistic dystopia. Secondly, we will see how the novel defamiliarizes and extrapolates aspects of institutional racism and whiteness to the futuristic setting and how these aspects affect the lives of the main characters. The story is shown through different focalizing agents, which gives us the perspective of three characters. Language plays an important role as it signifies the class and racial difference between upper-class and lower-class citizens. Power is established through ideologies of whiteness and held intact by an overt institutional racist system.

The setting in *An Unkindness of Ghosts*, written by Rivers Solomon, takes place centuries into the future. For unknown reasons, earth became uninhabitable for human life. The only humans left, as far as we know, are the ones on the generation starship called *Matilda*. The destination of the ship has been long forgotten by its residents and the political situation resembles that of the Antebellum American South, as whiteness is a deciding factor in determining someone's social status. On the lower decks of the ship, black slaves work in terrible conditions on the fields, while on the upper decks the white elites enjoy life in luxury. The middledeckers are mostly white, sometimes light brown, people that function as the middle class. Most of the story is focalized from the perspective of Aster Grey, who lives in the lower deck and is one of the smartest residents on the ship. Her skills in medicine and herbology proved to be an asset for the people around her and for the Surgeon General Theo Smith. Another important part of the story is focalized through Theo, as his perspective on the world exemplifies the struggles that the white ally must overcome to help in contesting racialized hierarchies. During the story Aster tries to figure out why her mother died shortly after she was born and for what purpose. During her journey she unravels the secrets of her mother's legacy and sparks a lower deck revolution against the tyranny of the Sovereign and higher deck classes.

The novel can be considered post-apocalyptic because earth is devastated by an unknown apocalyptic event. However, because the story takes place on the ship *Matilda*, long after and away from the apocalyptic event, it does not reflect general post-apocalyptic stories. Instead, the story shows

both utopian and dystopian elements, which are formed between the friction of the upperdeckers and the lowdeckers. In this sense the story can be considered ustopic, as defined by Atwood (66-67). The dystopian lower deck could not exist without the oppression of the utopian upper deck and vice versa. However, the story also holds a true utopian tale, as the goal of the ship *Matilda* is to seek out a new planet where utopian life would be able to exist. Aster finds out that her mother changed the course of the ship towards 'The great Lifehouse' (Earth) which as Aster finds out, is hospitable again (*An Unkindness of Ghosts* 279). The arrival of Aster at a hospitable earth and the revolution aboard *Matilda* signifies the hope for a new beginning where the utopia is freedom for everyone in a post-racial society.

Like *Noughts and Crosses* and *Parable of the Sower*, the historic racism of the Antebellum South is extrapolated and defamiliarized to be used in a different, futuristic setting. Slavery forms the basis of the economic and political stability of the starship *Matilda*, as its labor supports the entire population and its hierarchical structure functions to keep absolute power to the white elite. The multilevel framework of institutional racism, as theorized by Phillips (177), only operates on a meso and micro level because the ship is a closed of system. On the meso level, black people have significant socio-economic disadvantages and have to life in the lower part of the ship where institutional benefits like healthcare are almost non-existent. On the micro level, we see how generational wealth and ideologies accumulate and keep the current hierarchical order intact as the leader of the ship, the sovereign, is chosen through a nepotistic, religious system called the holy order (19, 123).

Although slavery on *Matilda* is presented in a different surrounding, slavery cannot evolve into a new form because it cannot be separated from its established historical context (Mary Hodge 2-3). In *Parable of the Sower*, we saw how the boomeranging of history Slavery as theorized by Allen (1356), shows how history can and will repeat itself as the slavery of the past returns in a new context. This boomeranging of history also shows how slavery cannot be separated from its historical context as the concept of slavery remains the same but operates in a new world. The novel holds both utopian and dystopian elements. The dystopian elements are evident since the novel uses historic elements of slavery in an alternative reality, making the novel a concrete dystopia (Varsam 210-212). Following

Barton's theory on the different waves of dystopian literature, *An Unkindness of Ghosts* has a protagonist who is female and is forced to confront a world beyond her power which are aspects of the contemporary dystopian novel (Barton 13). In some way, the protagonist Aster forms an antithesis to her society, as her intellectual skills are greater than those of the white hegemony who claims that Aster is no more significant than wild vermin (*An Unkindness of Ghosts* 192). The story illustrates the struggle against the establishment and gives room for the self-exploration, coming of age story of Aster, which are aspects of the contemporary dystopia (Stoner 18). By showing through a black cultural lens, how slavery and racialization operate in a futuristic setting, Solomon reclaims the lost identity of the black diaspora through defamiliarization and extrapolation, which is according to Lavender III inherent to Afrofuturism (27).

The hierarchy on the ship *Matilda* forms a dystopian society for people of color but it is a utopian place for the white upper class as they convince themselves that the hierarchy of their society is part of the natural order of things. Using tales and promises of revelation about the destination of the generational ship *Matilda*, the holy order, a group of religious white elitists, spreads racialized ideas and ideologies which maintains the luxury and power of the white upper class (*An Unkindness of Ghosts* 14-16). Here we see how language is used to reinforce the ruling power structures by brainwashing the mind of both white and black citizens. A feeling of holy superiority is embedded into the mind of the white citizens, while a feeling of inferiority is forced to the black citizens. The holy order and white upper class use judgement day-like tales where every person must work towards a true perfect state of themselves, because this is how the natural order of things function.

Throughout the novel we learn that everybody in the lower deck of the ship, especially the lowdeckers, live separate from each other and work on their own fields. Aster describes how a Y deck woman has her own customs, manners, notions of life and death, talking and even sense of humor, implying that all lowdeckers have their own different quirks (27-29). By following the story, ideas, and emotions of the lowdeckers and their customs, the story is perceived through a black cultural lens. The novel is arguably subject to the western gaze as the story is dependent on power structures created by whiteness, which as Wabuke argues is one of the distinctions between Afrofuturism and Africanfuturism (Wabuke). However, being dependent on the power structures of whiteness is a

necessity to reclaim what was lost as a result of the slave trade and colonialism (Capers 116). The story also claims its utopian freedom as Aster ultimately finds her way back to earth and the racialized power structures of *Matilda* are overthrown.

The main difference between the upperdeckers and lowdeckers is their skin color, as the upperdeckers are white and lowdeckers are black. Beside skin color, there is also a distinction of power between genders as males hold absolute power and queers and women are looked down upon (83, 141). We observe these differences through the focalization of Aster who has a very analytical worldview and is focalized through a third person narrator. This third person narration contributes to the analytic view Aster has; it also influences the way how the reader interprets the horrible society on the ship. Aster is slightly indifferent towards her society and is rather obsessed with science and botany. When her friend Giselle confronts her about possibly sabotaging the upper decks:

> 'If I could switch our fates with their, I would' said Aster. She happily imagined two updeck men navigating the A deck hedge maze one fine Matildan afternoon. They'd feel suddenly undressed, then downright chill. (…) Giselle stilled her swinging legs from her seat atop the counter 'Would you? Would you really do it? Sometimes I don't think you're any different from one of them… how you talk' (22)

Language signifies a power difference, as Aster her upperdeck speech is seen as a bad thing by Giselle. Although both Giselle and Aster would like to see their world change, Giselle is the one that really pushes this change while Aster acts indifferently. We see this in a flashback where Aster and Giselle play with dolls and Aster likes to play doctor while Giselle makes the doctor blow up the *Matilda* (23-24). Giselle functions as a helping agent who pushes Aster into using her little privileges to fight against the power. In the end Giselle burns down Aster's botanica, almost killing herself in the process. This burning signifies the end of Aster her indifference and pushes Aster to use her power against the system.

Another helping agent is Theo, the Surgeon General. He is an illegitimate child of a previous Sovereign and a lowdeck woman. Although he is queer, and his mother was black, he can hold his position as Surgeon General because of his medical skill and by being white (29). Aster on the other hand is a black woman who, according to Theo, is his intellectual superior (107). Because of her skin color she is unable to rise in the ship's hierarchy. Unlike Giselle, Theo does not push Aster to fight

against the hierarchy of the ship. He is, like Aster, somewhat indifferent towards the system as he focusses on his work as doctor. Theo embodies the ignorance and indifference of whiteness, as he does not need to confront institutional racism or his own privilege to make his life better. Through his love for Aster, he feels pushed to act. He overcomes his indifferences and confronts his uncle who has become the new Sovereign of the ship. Theo thus embodies the role of a white ally as he never takes control of the rebellion and endangers his own privileges while helping Aster. He defends her when a white girl calls lowdeckers smelly (39) and helps her with resources and access to places she otherwise could never go to due to her blackness. Even though he has the power, he never takes over agency of Aster, thus countering the white savior narrative and exemplifying the white ally narrative (Baldwin, et al 176).

Aster observes how the only way of a black lowdecker to get in the upperdecks is on a chain around their ankles (173). Middledeckers are predominantly white and sometimes a mixed skin color. Cassidy is a mixed middledeckers who attends the Surgeon's prestigious class. However, he is belittled by his white upperdeck classmates because of his background (209-213).

Later in the story we find out that Cassidy has only been able to gain access to the middle deck class because he took over the identity of someone else (215). Even though he is of mixed skin color, he has an irrational hate against lowdeckers, as he calls Aster a twit, a dog and finds himself superior to her (212-214), again showing how language is used to dehumanize the other and establish the superiority of the self (Lister 101-102). Aster confronts him with his past and calls him a "Truth betrayer" in the language only spoken by Lowdeckers (215). Cassidy's urge to distance himself from lowdeckers is an example of the double consciousness which Du Bois has theorized (2-5). Cassidy only sees himself through the eye of the white institutions and internalizes the racism he experiences which, as Jones argues, leads to the embracement of whiteness and the rejection of blackness (1211-1213). Much like the teacher Mr. Jason in *Noughts and Crosses*, Cassidy wants to assimilate in the dominant white group and reject the subordinate black group. He succeeds in achieving some form of acceptance, but he is never able to fully integrate into the white society.

At one point Aster also expresses her internalized hate as she hits a bunkmate of her: "Aster hated them all. She wiped of the blood from her forehead" (*An Unkindness of Ghosts* 204). Aster's

hate is different from Cassidy as her hate for other lowdeckers only comes in a burst of emotion and exists because of her desperate and unchangeable surroundings. Cassidy's disdain against lowdeckers originates from self-hate but is expressed through a feeling of superiority which is the same as how all white upperdeckers feel against low- and middledeckers. Aster's friend Giselle, envies Aster because of the relative freedom she has because of her relationship with the Surgeon. She thinks Aster is not so different from upperdeckers, because Aster talks like them and has certain privileges. Giselle envies these privileges of relative freedom and confronts Aster that being black will always define her social status as lower compared to someone who is white (23-24).

Most white upperdeckers that appear in the novel only do so because they demand or ask something from lowdeckers (88) or beat and humiliate them such as the guards and overseers do (56, 66). When the upperdecker Samantha asks Aster to guide her, Aster rejects her. Samantha reports her to the guard and explains that social order depends on their ethical order and that Aster should apologize (90). This construct of the social order Samantha and the society of *Matilda* follows is a combination between a rationale sentiment of enlightenment, religion, and white superiority, as the Holy Order and the Sovereign make and decide the rules and the construction of labor and race classes is based on the rationale that blackness is lesser than whiteness. This rationale is based on ideas of othering (Schwalbe 777) and creates a double consciousness in the minds of the lowdeckers (Du Bois 2-6). When Aster changes her mind Samantha takes the position of being a savior as she tries to shield Aster from the guard and asks him to let the rules slide this once (91). The guard reformulates Samantha her earlier remark about social order. Samantha agrees and leaves Aster in the hands of the guard. Samantha establishes and justifies her privileges because of the current social order but also wants to play the white savior role of protecting and teaching Aster. However, she does not pretend to be colorblind as she is overtly racist and supports an overtly racist social order. Samantha tends to take the white savior role to help Aster, but when the guard forces her to choose between her privileges or Aster, she abandons Aster. By exploring the white savior syndrome and white allyship, Solomon is able to address struggles of the present in a Afrofuturistic setting (de Bruin-Molé 3).

An Unkindness of Ghosts uses Afrofuturistic and dystopian elements to create a story that reflects on and makes use of the past and the present. By extrapolating elements of institutional racism

and whiteness to a new futuristic setting, Solomon defamiliarizes these elements and brings a new perspective on issues about race and racism. She shows how whiteness keeps institutional racism intact through the ideology of white superiority and how this whiteness is protected by white ignorance, white talk and white privilege. She uses two helping agents that help Aster to fight the system. Giselle acts as a pushing and confronting factor that forces Aster to confront her problems whilst Theo is an enabling helper that uses his proximity to power to help Aster. Solomon shows how the boomeranging of history can take place in the future and how the concepts and powers structures of whiteness and institutional racism can change for better or worse. The only way to escape from racialized power structures in *An Unkindness of Ghosts* is to confront and fight the system. All lowdeckers need to cooperate and need the support of white allies to overthrow the institutional powers. Solomon shows how the white ally is not a defining factor in confronting institutional racism but can be a very helpful factor as the white ally uses their proximity to power to empower those without this proximity. Again, love and diversity play an important role in the story as the love from Giselle and Theo for Aster are crucial in fighting the system. The ending shows that no matter how many setbacks humanity will face considering race related issues, there is always hope for a new and brighter future. No matter how dystopian a world can be, there is always the option to strive towards the utopian.

Conclusion

This chapter will conclude this thesis by briefly summarizing how institutional racism and whiteness operate in Afrofuturistic dystopian novels *Noughts and Crosses*, *Parable of the Sower* and *An Unkindness of Ghosts*, and compare what similarities these novels show about the defamiliarization and extrapolation of institutional racism and whiteness in the Afrofuturistic, dystopian novel. It will also review the values and shortcomings of this thesis and propose several possibilities for further research.

This thesis has argued that the Afrofuturistic dystopian novel uses defamiliarization and extrapolation to show how whiteness and institutional racism operate on a multilevel framework. Whiteness forms the ideological background of which institutional racism is dependable of, while institutional racism in turn fuels ideologies of whiteness. In *Noughts and Crosses*, Blackman uses aspects of whiteness such as white fragility, the white savior syndrome, white talk, and othering to show how whiteness defends covert forms of institutional racism. She defamiliarizes these aspects by reversing the meaning and relation to power of whiteness and blackness and extrapolates them into a narrative which is focalized from the perspective of both noughts and crosses. In this racialized hierarchy where crosses are seen as superior to noughts, institutional racism fuels this racist ideology, because crosses inhered structural societal benefits and privileges such as chances of employment, positive representation, welfare, and wealth. These structural benefits and privileges exemplify how power is used to control racial discourse and influence the meaning of whiteness and blackness.

In *Parable of the Sower,* we see how these structural benefits for whiteness continue to impact the meaning of whiteness and blackness even after the institutional power to control racial discourse on a macro level is gone. In this post-apocalyptic dystopian world, white privilege still exists and benefits whiteness which contributes to the increase of distrust against other races. Interracial relationships and friendships that are looked down upon by society, which is dangerous for Lauren and her Earthseed followers as they form a multi-racial group. By defamiliarizing the power of institutional racism and whiteness to the post-apocalyptic dystopia, Butler illustrates how these concepts continue to influence race-related issues that benefit whiteness above blackness. By defamiliarizing the struggle of slaves during the Antebellum South and extrapolating this struggle into

the post-apocalyptic dystopia, Butler shows how institutional racism and whiteness will continue to influence power differences based on racialization.

The novel *An Unkindness of Ghosts* uses the same concept of the boomeranging of history that *Parable of the Sower* uses, by defamiliarizing and extrapolating the struggle of slaves during the Antebellum South. Contrary to Butler, Solomon extrapolates this struggle to a dystopian world where slavery is a fundamental factor of society. Solomon defamiliarizes aspects of whiteness such as white ignorance, talk and privilege and shows how they influence the lives of the citizens on the generational ship Matilda. The institutional racism on Matilda is based on the principles of white superiority and observed through the eyes of the main focalizer Aster. The novel further shows how the concept of the white ally empowers the struggle against white superiority while the concept of the white savior protects this white superiority.

All three novels defamiliarize and extrapolate institutional racism and whiteness to an Afrofuturistic dystopian world, where the racial power differences created by these concepts are illustrated through a black cultural lens. The novel *Noughts and Crosses* illustrates that whiteness is socially constructed and established and maintained through social power structures. The novel shows how the acceptance of hybridization contests the socially constructed ideological background of whiteness. Similarly, the religion of Earthseed in *Parable of the Sower* operates as a post-racial community that contests the distrust and othering of other races because of whiteness. This idea of diversity and hybridity is further explored in the novel *An Unkindness of Ghosts* as the concept of the white ally and the socially condemned love between Theo and Aster, which similarly happens in *Noughts and Crosses*, contests the hierarchical dominance of whiteness.

The positive effects of how hybridization and diversity contest racialized ideologies of whiteness, show how each novel illustrates a struggle against its dystopian environment. This struggle ultimately aims towards a utopian post-racial society where the power imbalances created by whiteness and institutional racism no longer exist. The strive towards the post-racial illustrates how the Afrofuturistic dystopian novel bases its story on utopian ideologies. This contrast between a utopian hope in a dystopian society shows how each novel can be seen as a ustopian novel. The concept of the ustopia is similar to the struggle against institutional racism and whiteness, because the

struggle against institutional racism and whiteness inherently holds two opposing ideologies of white superiority and racial equality.

All three Afrofuturistic dystopias show how diversity, hybridity, change and love can contest institutional racism and whiteness by striving for a utopian world where racial equality and diversity are normalized instead of whiteness. In defamiliarizing the concepts of whiteness and institutional racism and extrapolating them into an Afrofuturistic dystopia, these novels show how these concepts operate under different circumstances where power is still distributed under an ideology of whiteness. The concept and ideology of whiteness forms the basis for institutional racism which in turn fuels ideas of whiteness. Both concepts need each other to keep the distribution of power racialized, as whiteness loses its practical power without institutional racism and institutional racism cannot exist indefinitely without the ideological background that whiteness provides. The Afrofuturistic dystopia illustrates how whiteness and institutional racism are dependent of each other and will adapt according to societal changes. It also asks the question 'what if?' and imagines our contemporary and past struggles with race and racism in an alternative or futuristic scenario.

In analyzing how whiteness and institutional racism operate in the Afrofuturistic dystopian novel, this thesis has shown that through defamiliarization and extrapolation, and focalizing through a black cultural lens, how diverse aspects of whiteness and institutional racism cooperate on a multi-level framework. Each novel shows how hybridization and diversity contest whiteness and institutional racism in the dystopian novel and how the post-racial utopia can exist within these novels.

However, because I have analyzed so many different and broad subjects in this thesis, this research cannot conclusively show how the concept of the dystopia is tied to the concept of the utopia in the Afrofuturistic dystopian novel. The big scope and limited length of this thesis also limits the approach to fully analyze and elaborate on all the different theories of whiteness and institutional racism which restricts this thesis in creating a fully flushed out understanding of how whiteness and institutional racism operates in the Afrofuturistic dystopian novel. The goal of this thesis was to conceptualize the meaning and influence of whiteness and institutional racism and suggest that hybridization and diversity contests racialized power structures and ideologies in the Afrofuturistic dystopian novel. Further research about how different theories of whiteness and institutional racism

operate in other dystopian or Afrofuturistic novels is needed to compare how these genres differentiate from the Afrofuturistic dystopian novel. Further research is also needed to strengthen the theory that hybridization and diversity can contest racialized power structures and ideologies in the Afrofuturistic dystopian novel.

By analyzing how institutional racism and whiteness operate in the Afrofuturistic dystopian novel, this thesis has reflecting on the impact of institutional racism and whiteness on society on multiple levels. By further analyzing how institutional racism and whiteness function in different literary genres and how they impact society on a multi-level framework, we can gain a deeper understanding of how Afrofuturistic dystopian literature contributes to the struggle against the racialized power hierarchies and strives towards a society where race no longer signifies anything else than the color of our skin.

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