“This collection offers, at long last, the foundation of a genuinely transnational as well as transdisciplinary conversation about whiteness. The editors have curated an extraordinary range of work from a new generation of writers who bring creative, intuitive and analytical insights to bear on a subject that has evaded sustained critique for too long. The book will infuriate those who are invested in maintaining the status quo; it will only encourage those who are determined to act together to change it.”

Vron Ware, co-author of Out of Whiteness: Color, Politics and Culture

“This handbook provides a compelling, multi-level and wide-ranging investigation of the many ways in which white supremacy has ineluctably always been central to the notion of ‘race’ and racism in its various dehumanising and ever-destructive guises. Drawing on the insights of authors from a wide range of countries, contexts, and disciplines, this insightfully curated collection of chapters makes for captivating reading and adds significantly to extant scholarship on racism. This scholarly tour de force will undoubtedly become an important reference for scholars with an interest in the field whiteness and racism and the ever-changing articulations of racism.”

Norman Duncan, Professor of Psychology; Critical Race Scholar; co-editor of Race, Memory, and the Apartheid Archive: Towards a Transformative Psychosocial Praxis

“What a wide-ranging and fiery examination of whiteness; its intersections, infusions and leaching logics across time, place and systems of colonial and racial domination. Apartheid, Hindu nationalism, indigenous genocide, oceanic colonialism and Goa, Meghan Markle, post-feminism, philosophical entrapment and Zionism are some of the topics through which authors complicate and decolonise critical whiteness studies. Drawing out theorising into activism, crucially the collection offers strategies towards a more equitable social world. A treasure trove for teachers, students and activists.”

Yasmin Gunaratnam, Reader at Goldsmiths College, author of Researching ‘Race’ and Ethnicity: Methods, Knowledge and Power and Death and the Migrant: Bodies, Borders and Care

“It is hard to think of a more necessary critical renewal of whiteness studies than that presented in this detailed, challenging and incredibly insightful book. Authoritative and innovative, the editors and authors have done a great service to the topic and our understanding of it.”

Professor Nasar Meer, University of Edinburgh, editor of Whiteness and Nationalism

“Our world is in turmoil. We live in the accumulated pain and emboldened geopolitical violence of 500 years of colonial history. This volume does not offer any balm for white wounds. Rather it is an insurgent call for racial justice. Bringing together a breadth of voices from across the Global North and South, the editors ask readers to critically reflect upon the connections and separations of the world through the varied formations of whiteness. This extraordinary volume is a provocation, a challenge, and a conversation, offering new constellations of possibilities to approach the field of critical whiteness studies; to interrogate whiteness within the calculated balances and sacrificial structures of the world; and to consider whiteness in relation, a method of working through the interpersonal. The chapters rumble with a thoughtful intensity that both activists and intellectuals require to carry forth visions of radical change, especially in these times when events in one part of the world cascades in another.”

Nalini Mohabir, Concordia University, co-editor of The Fire that Time: Transnational Black Radicalism and the Sir George Williams Occupation
This handbook offers a unique decolonial take on the field of Critical Whiteness Studies by re-historicising and re-spatialising the study of bodies and identities in the world system of coloniality.

Situating the critical study of whiteness as a core intellectual pillar in a broadly based project for racial and social justice, the volume understands whiteness as elaborated in global coloniality through epistemology, ideology and governmentality at the intersections with heteropatriarchy and capitalism. The diverse contributions present Black and other racially diverse scholarship as crucial to the field. The focus of inquiry is expanded beyond Northern Anglophone contexts to challenge centre/margin relations, examining whiteness in the Caribbean, South Africa and the African continent, Asia, the Middle East as well as in the United States and parts of Europe. Providing a transdisciplinary approach and addressing debates about knowledges, black and white subjectivities and newly defensive forms of whiteness, as seen in the rise of the Radical Right, the handbook deepens our understanding of power, place, and culture in coloniality.

This book will be an invaluable resource for researchers, advanced students, and scholars in the fields of Education, History, Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology, Political Sciences, Philosophy, Critical Race Theory, Feminist and Gender Studies, Postcolonial and Decolonial Studies, Security Studies, Migration Studies, Media Studies, Indigenous Studies, Cultural Studies, Critical Diversity Studies, and African, Latin American, Asian, American, British and European Studies.

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Routledge Handbook of Critical Studies in Whiteness

Edited by Shona Hunter and Christi van der Westhuizen
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Preface

The interrogation of whiteness has long been pursued through the incisive critique of black thinkers such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Ida B. Wells, Frantz Fanon, James Baldwin, Steve Biko, and others. Decades after this work, intellectual scrutiny of the slippery object of whiteness has burgeoned into Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS), a distinct if loosely constituted area of academic and research inquiry. What was different in this relatively new field, was to name, home in and dissect whiteness as a distinct power formation within the structures of race, racism, and white supremacy that rose with and sustained colonialism, and today forms an essential part of coloniality. The impetus for expanding the focus from the racialised margins to whiteness as the centre of power in racial structures sprung from the recognition that whiteness was ill-defined, operated invisibly frequently and managed to retain traction over four centuries. Hierarchies have been organised with devastating results around whiteness, despite it being a phantasm of the Western mind construed from false attributions of human value on the basis of phenotype.

Toni Morrison’s call to ‘avert the critical gaze from the racial object to the subject’ (1992: 90)\(^1\) has been heeded from the first explorations in Critical Legal Studies (Lopez 1996) and Labour Studies (Allen 1994; Roediger 1991), to Education (Fine et al. 2004, 1997; Helms 1992) and Media Studies (Dyer 1997; hooks 1992), to Sociology (Feagin and Vera 1994; 2nd ed. with Batur 2000; Wellman 1993) and Feminist Studies (Frankenberg 1993; Ware 1992; Hall 1992). Since then, there has been a steady stream of special editions of key journals such as *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (2008), *Ethnicities* (2010) and *Social Politics* (2010), and the first special edition on whiteness in the African context (Van Zyl-Hermann and Boersema 2017).\(^2\) Notable titles of books appearing since 2014 include Money and Van Zyl-Hermann (2020); Kindinger and Schmitt (2019), Eddo Lodge (2018), Van der Westhuizen (2017), Lundstrom and Teitelbaum (2017), Wekker (2016), Matias (2016), Weber (2016), Hunter (2015), Alcoff (2015), Willoughby-Herard (2015), and Sullivan (2014). These interdisciplinary contributions coalesce around critical interrogations of privilege; intersectionality; global and national racial regimes; the collusion of white respectability and good intentions in racist reproduction via institutionalised whiteness; white denial and ignorance; and the pervasiveness and codification of whiteness in everyday practices. The impetus behind this rapidly growing body of work is the recognition that whiteness forms the material, ideological, cultural, and affective centre of the unequal power structure of racism, which has proven to be not only remarkably adaptable to changing contexts but also resistant to dismantlement.

This preface outlines the structure of the volume, and also situates our approach as friendly critics in relation to the field that has contentiously come to be known as Critical Whiteness Studies. Disarticulating race implies the destabilisation of culture, embodiments and investments of white people. This is perhaps why so much of Critical Whiteness Studies addresses the issues
of culture, identity and embodiment. Important as such analyses are, focusing on this outside of
the machinery that produces whiteness risks merely repeating versions of the same racialising
processes. This volume builds on newer, more explicitly integrated critiques that analyse
whiteness as part of a broader racial formation, which is material, affective and discursive. Such
work includes the South African-based Apartheid Archives project (Hook et al. 2013; Hook
2012; Straker 2004) and, from Britain, Sara Ahmed’s *Queer Phenomenology* (2006) and *On Being
Included* (2012). After the genesis of the project in the second quarter of 2018, as editors we set
out with a critical and expansive approach to ‘the field’, seeking to extend the parameters of the
critical study of whiteness. While not dispensing of the body, culture or identity, we sought to
re-historicise and re-spatialise the understanding of bodies and identities as part of a global
colonial world system which presently has whiteness at its heart. This is in response to criticisms
about the ongoing parochialism of the field, which tends to be dominated by white scholars
from the Global North, particularly from the United States and, more recently, from Britain
and other Anglophile contexts. Asia, the Americas and the Caribbean, Africa, Australia, and
New Zealand, as well as parts of Europe, have been underrepresented in the literature.

To upset the epistemological centre/margin relations of coloniality, Global North
dominance is here challenged by including differently placed scholarship and a range of
black authors. The volume features contributors reflecting on, and/or writing from, under-
studied regions and countries: Africa (Matolino), Zimbabwe (Pilossof), South Africa (Vice,
Sonnekus, Majavu), and other non-US settler states (Matthes and Marston), India (Thobani,
Chandra, Saldanha, and Pande), Israel (Pappé), Sweden (Hübinette), and Japan (Takezawa).
Some make explicit South–South linkages and flows (Pande), or North–South connections
(Thobani, Wemyss, Deliysky, Hübinette and Heinz). While some contributors engage on
Southern contexts whilst still located in the North (Chandra, Thobani, and Saldanha), others
critique the Global North while located outside of it (Gray), alongside those located within
(Razack, Begum, Mondon, Winter, Halísz, Schmitt, Kherbaoui, Aronson, Boucher, and
Matías). The terms of the debate in the volume extend to a broader set of questions around
decolonial and Black politics (Shah, Ahluwalia, Matolino and Majavu); and spheres of human
thinking and doing such as the Arts (Halísz), Philosophy (Matolino); History (Majavu); Media
(Heinz and Marston); and Religion (Razack). Therefore, the collection draws together, in one
place, literatures from different national and disciplinary contexts, to create a conversation
between established and emerging scholars towards producing an original take on the field’s key
questions.

As editors moving from transdisciplinary backgrounds, and being differently situated in the
Global North and Global South, we believe the pursuit of anti-racism must be simultaneously
intellectual and activist. Whiteness works as a knowledge formation imbricated with patriarchy,
heteronormativity and capitalist relations. Racial justice remains out of reach if power is not
brought in explicitly, with attention to white supremacy and the contributions of white people
to its historical and current structures of domination. As we consider in more detail in our own
chapter, grasping the nettle of whiteness becomes all the more urgent given the politics of the
moment, as racial populisms of all hues rise with renewed impetus in the wake of the COVID-
19 pandemic, both at global and national levels. Therefore, we aim to situate critical studies in
whiteness as a core intellectual pillar in a broadly-based project towards racial and social justice,
and the end of heteropatriarchy and coloniality.

Section I on ‘Onto-eipistemologies’ troubles and extends the methodological basis for critical
studies of whiteness. Arun Saldanha shifts the methodological parameters significantly, situating
the onto-epistemic relation and expanding our methodological imaginary. He makes a
historically and spatially expansive intervention at the beginnings of our contemporary global
coloniality in Goa at the point mercantile capitalism was being established. But he shifts our sensibilities towards this by bringing us right into contact with the lived practices of the people making ‘early whiteness’ via a materialist ontology. Key themes of our contemporary global coloniality are there - religion, purity, sexuality - but in reworked form. The centrality of Northern European imperialism is disrupted through a beginning with the Portuguese. Sherene Razack takes us into the area of affect and its power to produce whiteness, and ensures the Islamophobic dimensions of culture, politics, and practice is understood and challenged. Katalin Halász focuses our attention on rethinking the body and affect together through gender and sexuality, and Mark Schmitt extends the notion of culture to better engage the body with attention to class by way of the idea of figuration.

Section II is on ‘Conspiracies’, and stands in dynamic tension with the first section. ‘Onto-epistemologies’ provides ways of thinking and doing in and out of race, while the ‘Conspiracies’ section interrogates those ways of thinking that aid and abet race, in the form of ideologies that reinforce or counteract whiteness. Problematising these conjunctions assist in explaining the longevity of race and racism across time and place. In the first chapter, Sitara Thobani finds unexpected transnational synergies between contemporary nationalist projects of India and the United States. Tracing the US’s religio-racial taxonomy in its immigration laws and Supreme Court decisions, she shows how the Indian American diaspora’s Hindu nationalist mobilisation enhances the politics of Trumpist whiteness. Ashley A. Mattheis takes up the transnational reactivation of white supremacism in the form of #Trad cultural narratives that mobilise traditional constructions of femininity and masculinity in service of utopic whiteness. This counter-position against feminism bridges liberal democratic and neo-fascist ideologies in contexts varying from Britain to its former colonies. Kendra Marston in her chapter also draws on online cultures to drill further into resurgent British white nationalism, using as lens the figure of Megan Markle as latest (unwanted) addition to the royal family. The #Megxit campaign against Markle is both a counter-reaction against postfeminism and a reassertion of Britishness as necessarily white. Mandisi Majavu then turns the dissection knife onto liberalism and socialism. Using the South African context as exemplar, he argues that these ideologies present themselves as colour-blind while being underpinned by whiteness as a normative value. The section ends with Ilan Pappé’s chapter, which addresses a lacuna in scholarship on Zionism. While Post-Zionist and anti-Zionist scholarship probed Zionism as a Eurocentric settler colonial movement, it underestimated the racial and colour dimension in the formation of Israeli nationalist identity.

In Section III on ‘Colonialities’, we expand the range of colonialities usually considered in critical analysis of whiteness. Part of our concern is to consider the interrelationships and overlaps between Empires and the interdependent dynamics of nation building within this. Yasuko Takezawa’s contribution brings a relational analysis to bear on the Japanese self-construction over time, breaking with the racialising dichotomies of coloniality to consider the complex power dynamics of the trilateral relationship between Japan, the West and Asia. Shefali Chandra’s contribution moves us onto the symbolic relational constructions of American and Indian empires and the role of whiteness and caste within this. Rory Pilosof considers the shifting constructions of whiteness in Zimbabwe’s postcolonising processes. Through this he raises questions around the particularities of colonisation on the African continent and the relationships and differences between African nations. In his chapter, Tobias Hübinette brings in an analysis of coloniality in a Nordic context. He challenges the notion of ‘good’ Sweden and makes a strong critique of the multiple and related colonialities still at play in Swedish adoption practices facilitating a colonially consumptive dynamic between North and South.
Section IV on ‘Intersectionalities’ brings the reader to the workings of whiteness at the level of identity: that is, the lived ways in which differences are intersectionally mobilised with or against other social categories to advance or rebut whiteness. In his discussion of contending settler masculinities in South Africa, Theo Sonnekus shows how whiteness and heteronormativity are co-constitutively bolstered through ethno-gender divisions in national identities. Staying with white heterosexual masculinity but shifting the focus to femininities, Katerina Deliovsky casts a critical eye over sex/romance tourism literature. She finds that white heterosexual women reassert colonial tropes and reinforce racial hierarchies in the enactment of their newfound sexual ‘autonomy’ in Caribbean sex tourism locales. The theme of travelling tropes continues in Lwando Scott’s analysis of media representations of ‘the global gay’ and white homonormativity, showing white gay men’s reproduction of dominant power formations through the invisibilisation of black male sexuality. Turning to class, the section ends with a chapter by Neema Begum, Aurelien Mondon, and Aaron Winter on how #Brexit elite discourses seek to re-legitimise whiteness by interpellating the working class as white people ‘left behind’, detrimentally affecting immigrants and racialised minorities while undermining politics of solidarity across race and class lines.

Section V on ‘Governmentalities’ prompts a set of expanded questions on the spatial and temporal global orders which govern the intimacies of whiteness via ideas of the home, the body and in the broader public sphere through labour and institutional interactions. Amrita Pande looks at the way reproductive choice constitutes a desire for cosmopolitan and mixed whiteness. Georgie Wemyss develops a geographically and temporally expansive cross-empire analysis of the racialisation of British Indian seafarers. She shows powerfully and poignantly the ways in which these seafarers, the ‘lascars’ are always, wherever and whenever ‘not quite white enough’, to use Nayak’s (2007) phraseology. Sarah Heinz’s contribution explores the global constructions of the ideal home and related home making practices as white. In an interesting and powerful shift in the more usual global analysis of the White Saviour Industrial Complex, Jamie Kherbaoui and Brittany Aronson particularise the internal politics of the United States in a devastating critique of the contemporary and historical production of whiteness in this context. In the final contribution to this section, Javeria Shah returns us to one of the more studied contexts of British governmentality of whiteness, presenting us with a means to developing a multi-layered analysis of the global colonial using a ‘whiteness ecology’.

In the sixth and last section, titled ‘Provocations’, the focus moves to points of friction within theorisations and lived experiences, as discussed in previous sections, to unpack dilemmas and debates that have made the critical study of whiteness especially lively in its short existence. Bernard Matolino opens the section with a confrontation of the discipline of African philosophy. He argues that a contemporary insistence that seeks to assert African philosophy by setting it up against whiteness as a vacuous ideology and epistemology traps African philosophy in circuitous protest thought. Can whiteness be suspended to free African thought? Continuing the exploration of epistemology but from the vantage point of lived experience, Amanpreet Ahluwalia problematises normative Critical Whiteness Studies and challenges scholars in the field to enable conversations that reflect the intricacies of both working and living towards racial justice. The next chapter serves as one answer to Ahluwalia’s challenge: Samantha Vice resumes her scholarly inquiry into ‘being white’. Vice argues that the subject racialised as white amid social conditions of injustice is presented with a paradox: her ethical confrontation with her white privilege runs up against the need to protect the self and personal projects and commitments. The section then segues to white reaction in the form of the relatively novel positionality of the Alt-Right and their practice of appropriation aimed at subverting recent social justice gains. Phillip W Gray analyses how the Alt-Right redeploy the Black Feminist concept of intersectionality to mobilise whiteness as resistance, bolstered with
patriarchal masculinity and anti-neoliberal localism. The interrogation of new forms of aggressive whiteness continues in the section’s concluding chapter. Colleen E. Boucher and Cheryl E. Matias argue that liberal colour-blindness has been superseded by whiteness as a form of ‘evolutionary terror’. In reaction to the critical exposure of whiteness as centerpiece of the global architecture of racism, whiteness has emboldened itself to intensify its supremacist attack.

As can be seen from the discussion above, the volume brings materiality, signification, affect, and the body together. The intention is not to construct a new field. Neither does the volume seek to present a single perspective, theoretically, or methodologically. Very quickly into the project, as also for contributors Colleen E. Boucher and Cheryl E. Matias (see Chapter 28) the centrifugal nature of the notion of a ‘field’ of whiteness studies became too much of a re-racialising pull in terms of the representation of the scholarly endeavours collected in the Handbook and in our understanding as editors. Therefore, we have opted for the title *The Routledge International Handbook of Critical Studies in Whiteness* as it better captures the aim of understanding whiteness, rather than any intention to reflect, consider or constitute a field of scholarship. Mindful of Robin Wiegman’s (2012) criticism of academic fields as fundamentally conservative, culturally exclusionary mechanisms – at least as they work in the context of the contemporary hyper-neoliberalising academic space – the Handbook is aimed at maintaining and emphasising the transdisciplinary nature of work on whiteness. We hope to start different conversations which cut into the race essentialisms that still haunt the predominantly social constructionist study of whiteness. Doubtless, the volume succeeds with some of the original intentions, but not with others. In emphasising the worldliness of whiteness, the volume may have sacrificed some of the livedness of the fine-grained empirical work that both editors have previously conducted. However, we regard this Handbook as an invitation to others to extend the decolonial analysis borne on whiteness here, especially around further empirical work on people in their bodies.

Notes

1 Kovel’s (1970) early work in Psychology should also be noted.

References


xxv
Viral whiteness: Twenty-first century global colonialities

Shona Hunter and Christi van der Westhuizen

While the Coronavirus pandemic prompted some to stress its levelling effect as it felled even denialist presidents, cumulative mortality figures, and unequal vaccine access laid bare the cold and crude facts of the global order of coloniality. It works as a division of life in which race, class, gender, and geographical location still largely determine who is to live, and who is to die. African-Americans and racialised minorities elsewhere in the Global North suffered the most deaths, while poor communities in the Global South were especially hard hit. In most African states, infection numbers could give no indication of the actual extent of the virus’ spread, due to low testing, and tracking capacity. Figures for excess mortality would be the only way to measure the real impact. Vaccine nationalism, bolstered by deadly capitalism, reared its head as states raced to be the first to scoop up millions of doses from pharmaceutical companies. Soon states in the Global North started with the process of vaccinating populations, the only sustainable way to save lives, while the majority of states in the Global South looked on. Global health care inequalities were proffered as a boon in a morbid echo of colonial medical abuses, as French doctors suggested that vaccine trials be conducted in Africa ‘where there are no masks, no treatments, no resuscitation’ (BBC 2020). Meanwhile, health protocols aimed at containing the virus provoked the drawing of political lines, with White Right supporters shunning the wearing of masks and social distancing, despite these being the only measures that could slow down the virus. The Yellow Peril was reconjured as Sinophobic politicians sought to capitalise on the virus’s apparent origin in China. Spikes in racist hate crime followed.

Taking these observations together in the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic, liveability was afforded to some and not others, based on race, class, and gender hierarchies of humanisation and dehumanisation. The global crisis of health was exposed as borne from systemic, multilevel convergences of white supremacy, necro-capitalism and heteropatriarchy. Within this, whiteness on a global scale again designated an ordering of life, which redirected the crisis to its Others to bear the brunt: Those racialised and gendered, the poor, the older, the disabled, the medically sick, and others who are rendered vulnerable and disposable within a broader biopolitics of global colonial debility (Puar 2017).

In this opening essay, we situate the critical study of whiteness at this current global colonial juncture. We offer a decolonial analysis true to the praxis as well as the title by way of first showing how the deconstructionist impulse must translate into an onto-epistemic struggle.
which recognises and refuses race as the way of organising and defining the human. This refusal is in concurrence with Mbembe’s opposition to the mythologisation of whiteness that all racialised subjects can get lured into:

Whiteness is at its best when it turns into a myth. It is the most corrosive and the most lethal when it makes us believe that it is everywhere; that everything originates from it and it has no outside.  

(Mbembe 2015: 3)

We proceed by developing a layered argument to show how whiteness works as a formation, a logic, and an assemblage through which global coloniality is enacted relationally in the interconnection between material, symbolic, and affective (Hunter 2015a, 2015b; Hunter et al. 2010). From this point of view, there is no such thing as white people, but there are people racialised as white, humans caught up in the racialising logics of global colonial forms of subjectification and who are constantly called to the many material, cultural and affective lures of whiteness. Whiteness falsely promises self-understanding and certainty in existence. But this self-understanding can only ever be achieved through the perpetuation of violence on the self and the other because of the mastery which is demanded through a commitment to the idea of race.

The Global North has maintained race thinking through the institutionalisation of whiteness as a (neo)liberal ideal to naturalise distinctions of life, creating disposable victims outside of whiteness and powerful oppressors inside. We reference the pandemic context to show how these distinctions work along the long-established colonial lines of innocence and guilt, and the way these lines are sustained in the contemporary moment through neoliberal processes of individualisation. These processes in turn work to frame diversity as a public good and whiteness as its guardian and arbiter. We then consider how this inside/outside whiteness dynamic translates into the study of whiteness itself, as well as into anti-racist politics and the contemporary public debate on whiteness. This binary dynamic is what this volume speaks back to. Critical studies in whiteness need to do better in pushing understanding beyond liberalism's terms because these terms are what create whiteness as a bureaucratic formation of coloniality. Neoliberalism's mix of necro-biopolitics depends on whiteness.

In this chapter, we trace key epistemologies from critical whiteness studies, shorthanded here as the ‘invisibility–ignorance–innocence triad’. As the global war against racism gains momentum in the twenty-first century, these (neo)liberal mainstays of whiteness are augmented with explicit white supremacist re-instantiations, with Radical Right populisms rising to defend coloniality. South Africa serves here as an exemplar of global settler coloniality to consider how differentiations within whiteness work globally, connecting the Global South and Global North in complex ways (see also the chapter by Thobani in this volume). Rather than the oft-stated aim to visibilise and ‘know’ whiteness, we show how whiteness shifts between visibility and invisibility. Its self-proclamation to innocence is always under threat. The hyper-visibilisation of whiteness is key to how contemporary global colonial whiteness works through commodification: Through ‘knowing’ itself, declaring itself to be problematic and then ‘cleaning up’ itself to re-achieve innocence. But this relies on the same possessive, narcissistic mastery logic of coloniality, whereby the white subject knows and controls, mind over matter. We trace how hyper-visibilisation fits with the contemporary anti-racist focus on ‘white fragility’ as a form of white denial. Identifying ‘white fragility’ is purported to lead out of whiteness. For this to happen, it is suggested that the claim to white fragility be dislodged through deconstructive knowledge of the privilege and power that the white self asserts over the point of view and
experience of the other. The counterargument made here, is that there is no way out of whiteness without deconstructing the binary terms of liberalism’s lived dynamic.

This volume, as a whole, is curated to move beyond the deconstruction of colonial mastery internal to critical whiteness studies by bringing to bear a different way of thinking about whiteness as an onto-epistemic phenomenon. The goal is not to ‘cleanse’ white people and restore innocence to them, but to disestablish whiteness. Adapting Puar’s concept of ‘queer assemblage’ to ‘race-resistant assemblage’ assists in this work, as it

… moves away from excavation work, deprivileges a binary opposition … underscores contingency and complicity with dominant formations. This foregrounding of assemblage enables attention to ontology in tandem with epistemology, affect in conjunction with representational economies, within which bodies interpenetrate, swirl together, and transmit affects and effects to each other. (Puar 2007: 205)

The focus shifts therefore to understanding the materialisation of race. How does whiteness come to be as a process of historical violence which is repeated when race is lived in contemporary, supposedly non-violent neoliberal forms? The bodies of race manifest practices of history; the present-day relationships between bodies convey history. Materialised through their connections to other things, ideas and affects, white bodies come to be through intersecting relations of domination and possession. This analysis throws into relief the complicated matter of denial and accountability, which is so contested in critical whiteness studies. Whiteness traumatise and retraumatises. In the present moment, this gains a new form in neoliberal demands to show the trauma. Whiteness now comes to rely on the dualism of white saviour/traumatised victim, because what white subjects can ‘save’, they can contain and control. Pluralism and incompleteness are the basic threats to whiteness. Therefore, with this non-binary, or binary-resistant, analysis we propose rethinking whiteness in two related senses. First, as a deeply material matter which must be worked through. Second, as a matter of human practices which produce the deathly effects of whiteness.

The politics of (white) crisis

Writing together apart in Britain and South Africa, as editors, due to a global pandemic and lockdowns, with a crisis of health curtailing our differently experienced everyday in both mundane and far-reaching ways, this unpredictable situation makes obvious again the nature of whiteness. Whiteness is a dynamic, shifting, but durable system of domination through, under, against and within which people live, work, and relate (Hunter 2015b; Van der Westhuizen 2007). Whiteness is fundamental to the reproduction of global coloniality, systematised through the intersection of racial capitalism and what is left of liberal humanism after its neoliberalisation. It is a whiteness which feeds off and into the crisis discourse. Capitalism needs crisis. This current one must be read as another one of the many, ongoing ‘flashpoints where capitalist crisis becomes racialised and where that racialisation seems to become a fix or an amplification in response’ (Bhattacharyya 2018: 9). Grasping the nettle of whiteness becomes all the more urgent given the politics of the moment, as racial populisms of different hues surge at global and also national levels, seeking to augment or even supplant the neoliberal order. Therefore, unpredictable as it may be, this situation has a precedent in the context of the global racial order's reproduction and reinstatement of whiteness, with echoes a century ago from the Spanish Flu pandemic followed by the rise of fascism. Interrogating the global racial order as magnified by whiteness is at the heart of the endeavour in this Handbook. This pursuit has an activist
dimension, as part of an overall intellectual project of anti-racism, shared with Critical Race
Theory and Black Feminist Theory. It builds on the work of black thinkers, concurring that
there can be no racial justice without attention to white supremacy and the contributions of
white people to its historical and current structures of domination.

Whilst this situation of a global pandemic was not what we imagined as editors setting out on
this project in 2018, it brutally confirms the starting point for this volume which recognises that
a ‘racial attack on black people sits at the heart of global affairs and the emergence of social
science; this attack has used analytics that disavow racial suffering and allegedly provide analytics
for understanding its costs’ (Willoughby-Herard 2015: 167). Like Willoughby-Herard, we are
concerned with processes of knowledge production as constituted by the ‘axis of difference’
central to the Western imaginary (Grosfoguel 2002): As first asserted by Edward Said (1978),
the Western subject is contingent upon defining itself against an other, for example, its Oriental
other or its African other (Badaroo 2014: 33). With the neo–conservative notion of the ‘axis of
evil’, George W Bush’s USA shifted the colonial global colour line further east with the figure
of ‘the Muslim terrorist’: Abjected and therefore suitable for murder by drone attack, with
civilian deaths mere ‘collateral’; being under suspicion in any case, except when performing
‘good Muslim’ as per Western white requirements (Mamdani 2004). Inspired by historically and
spatially expansionist approaches from black studies, decolonial, feminist, queer, post-
structuralist, and postcolonial scholarship (Gilroy 2000; Hall 1996; Lewis 2017; Mbembe 2000,
2019; Moten and Harney 2013; Weheliye 2014; West 1993), we critically interrogate global
whiteness (Willoughby-Herard 2015) produced through intersecting colonialities, transnational
linkages, practices, philosophies whereby western subjectivity is produced through a hierarchy
of human liveability. The valuation and hence validation of some lives over others, through a
hierarchisation of grievability and precarisation (Butler 2004, 2009), is a global enactment of
whiteness. This is most starkly demonstrated by the global inequality in the procurement of
vaccines against the Coronavirus, with resources obtained as a result of colonialities of power
determining who are to live, and who to die. Elaborated through modernity and Western
European colonial ‘worlding’ (Wynter 1994) race is the defining idea through which categories
of human value and levels of disposability are measured for the purposes of resource extraction
and profit exploitation, and for justifying the subjugation and control of racialised people. As
Morning (2011) has powerfully shown in the US context, this raciology continues to be
naturalised through the transmission of essentialist notions of race across disciplines and at all
levels of education. While, as Goldberg (2009) argues, the idea of race is not naturally violating,
we regard the meanings and practices attached to whiteness in the context of coloniality as
never innocent. These are always at work in the service of domination, and this domination
materialises through their institutionalisation. Thus, whiteness from our point of view is a way
into understanding the current global intersecting systems of precarisation, marginalisation,
exclusion and abjection. Whiteness gives analytic purchase on this hydra-headed animal of
power – on power formations that interlink and reinforce reciprocal dominations, margin-
alisations and oppressions. Analysing whiteness provides a way to speak back to these
formations.

It is the relationship between contemporary racial ordering and the violent institutionalised
racism at its heart which is exposed by pandemic conditions, through global interconnections,
interdependencies and also marked discontinuities across the power geometries of
South–North, East–West. True to form, in the Global North ‘crisis tends to be declared and
action called for when white middle-class people are affected’ (El-Enany 2019: 51). The dif-
ferential ramifications of the pandemic situation are not unique in their genocidal effects. There
is longstanding and increasing evidence as to the contemporary institutionalised expression of

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colonially enacted genocide through the unequal ordering and distribution of health, social care and other forms of welfare (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019a, 2019b). This is built into colonisation and contemporary coloniality. Medicine – its development and institutionalisation – has been fundamental to the production and maintenance of colonisation and to the production of whiteness as an aspirational ideal (Anderson 2002; Bashford 2000; Doyal and Pennell, 1994; Hunter 2010; Stoler 2002; Doyal 1994). The destruction of indigenous health care, the creation of cordon sanitaire, quarantines and related internal forced migrations, the extractive movement of medical expertise from the Global South to North – these are some of the most evident examples. Epidemiologically and anthropologically derived evidence for the continuing uneven distribution of health between Global North and South is incontrovertible, with recent World Health Organisation (2020) data recording nearly 10,000 children dying daily from preventable causes in the Global South. There is growing mainstream recognition that this situation is an expression of institutionalised violence related to ‘pathologies of power’ (Farmer 2005). Indeed, the concentration on infectious disease prevention at the expense of public health activity in the Global South can be understood as part of this pathology, reproducing biomedical amelioration rather than addressing the systemic production of ill health.

Whilst the direct death tolls from COVID-19 appear to have bucked the usual uneven North-South patterning with the Global North thus far experiencing the highest death rates, the overall uneven distribution of global death due to the multiple and systemic impacts of COVID-19 looks likely to reflect the predictable pattern of inequality (Makau 2021; Schellekens and Sourrouille 2020). This is hardly surprising in the context of a Global Public Health System working ‘as an apparatus of coloniality’ whereby ‘Public Health manages (as a profession) and maintains (as an academic discipline) global health inequity’ (Richardson 2020a: 1). Also, unsurprising are the disproportionate racialised impacts of COVID-19 in the areas hardest hit in the Global North. In the context of the United States ‘if they had died of COVID-19 at the same rate as White Americans, about 18,000 Black, 6,000 Latino, 600 Indigenous, and 70 Pacific Islander Americans would still be alive’ (APM Research Lab 2020 cited in Richardson et al. 2021). Kherbaoui and Aronson in this volume link this to a ‘White Saviour Industrial Complex’: They argue, alongside community organisers and activists of colour, that it is ‘disaster white supremacy that has built the foundation for the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States to be so much worse than in other countries’ (Chapter 22 of this volume). This suggests an additional dimension to the ‘pandemicity’ identified by Eugene Richardson, whereby the ‘linking of humanity through contagion’ extends to the contagion of racism’s impacts. The structural conditions of racialised minorities living across the Global North mean that these communities have born significantly the disproportionate impact of morbidity and mortality of COVID-19, as well as much of the burden of care. That caring burden itself is the result of extractive coloniality internal to nations, which has increased their risk and exposure. Evidence from across England and Scotland is reflected across Europe as well as the United States (Qureshi et al. 2020): Structural inequalities in housing, employment and income, pre-existing chronic health conditions, greater concentration in health professions and frontline care as well as the provision of other essential services, increased difficulty of social distancing, unequal access to health care, mistrust of state institutions (Laurencin and Walker 2020; Nazroo 2003; Nazroo and Bécares 2020). Then, there are the additional impacts of racism itself on the body and on health: Both in terms of premature violent death and increased incidence of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and broader mental health effects (Nazroo et al. 2020; Richardson 2020b; Wallace et al. 2016). This is a pandemic on a pandemic, racism being the other pandemic (Godlee 2020; Laurencin and Walker 2020).
The neoliberal politics of white innocence

Human relationality – the truth of human interdependence, denied by some yet so continually obvious for others – is what is at stake. In this crisis situation, the material politics of perpetual neoliberal capitalist crisis intersects with the cultural politics of innocence. This politics of innocence is fundamental to the dialectical production of global whiteness and the human material and symbolic hierarchisation on which it depends. The disproportionate impact of the pandemic on black people is enabled by a neoliberal politics of white innocence, which shifts blame onto the hyper-individualised subject. According to Jackie Wang:

The politics of innocence and the politics of safety and comfort are related in that both strategies reinforce passivity. Comfort and innocence produce each other when people base their demand for comfort on the innocence of their location or subject position. Perhaps it goes without saying there is no innately ethical subject position. … When considering safety, we sometimes fail to ask critical questions about the co-constitutive relationship between safety and violence. We need to consider the extent to which racial violence is the unspoken and necessary underside of security, particularly white security. Safety requires the removal and containment of people deemed to be threats. White civil society has a psychic investment in the erasure and abjection of bodies onto which they project hostile feelings, allowing them peace of mind amidst the state of perpetual violence.

(Wang 2018: 286–287)

Racialised patterns of imprisonment and other forms of social containment and expulsion, along with the assault on welfare and the urban poor so visible in the current moment, are not regarded as racist state violence because those on the receiving end are understood to be ‘guilty’, unworthy of support and therefore ‘deserving’ of their fate. Liberal discourses of fairness, deservedness and merit fuel racism and Islamophobia and justify the disposability of racialised others. The institutionalisation of this politics is elided through the discourse of white innocence.

Those figured through the projection of guilt are understood to be individually failing, responsible for and deserving of their own predicaments. Thus, blameworthiness is one aspect of the construction of racial others needed for systemic racial reproduction. Another aspect is the repetition of the figuration of certain racialised bodies and subjects as disproportionately failing and therefore as guilty. Intersections of gender, gender representation, sexuality, able-bodiedness, and politicised religious identity render some subjects more at risk in the white-dominated states of the Global North. Increased vulnerability is interpreted as increased threat. Failure, whether supposedly due to vulnerability or malevolence or a toxic mix of both, is located in the individual. Under pandemic conditions, in a new twist on Social Darwinist biopolitics, neoliberalism’s failing racialised subject bears the brunt of the historical individualisation of illness as due to inherent weakness or malevolence (Sontag 1978) and the related metaphoric conflation of blackness with contagion (Swanson 1977). In the geopolitics of the twenty-first century, with the United States under pressure because of its dependence on Chinese capital, the supposed origin of SARS-CoV-2 in China is used opportunistically to expand these historical constructions in a xenophobic discourse. Neoliberal blameworthiness meets historical racialisation of disease.

While neoliberalism re-legitimises hyper-visibilisation of racialised subjects with a strategic ‘celebratory’ discourse of diversity, it invisibilises racism through the individualisation process. This individualising process divorces matters of race from the public domain and politics. Matters of race then become matters of ethics or morals, of personal offence or interpersonal expressions
of race hate, or overt expressions of randomly targeted racism. Where these matters are legislated for, the framing is in terms of the state as the guardian of, and protector against moral aberration. South Africa's much debated Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill currently before parliament could be read as an example of the function of hyper-individualisation to paper over the continuation of a highly extractive racial capitalism in the democratic era.

When individual acts, driven by hateful ‘sentiments’ and ‘beliefs’, are presented as the primary motivators of violence, the social and historical conditions by which particular individuals and groups are rendered more, or less, vulnerable to violence, can be easily eclipsed. It is thus necessary to problematise the socially disconnecting hate crime discourse, in particular how it reduces prejudice to discrete and disconnected identity-based acts …

(Judge 2018: 111)

The constitutive violence necessary for the capital accumulation of colonality and therefore fundamental to the development of nation states is denied through this individualising process. The advent of hyper or ‘neo-neoliberalism’ only extends this denial through individualisation:

If neoliberalism concerns the intensification of privatised preference and experience, neo-neoliberalism is the hyper-extenuation of the neoliberal, its decoupling from any conscious modesty or humility, from any finitude. … Neo-neoliberalism is the reach for the perfect replica and the perfectionism of the momentary, of making the everywhere and anywhere, any and every moment open to financialised investment, immediate and instantly mediated experience. It commits, where it commits to anything at all, to remaking and replication as the locally Same, as the particular instantiation of the unchanging Universal and therefore recognisable. Its trick it to be anywhere by going nowhere. A culture of pure replicability via a culture of cloning.

(Goldberg 2009: 363–364)

This hyper-individualisation has the effect of bolstering the politics of whiteness as an epistemic-ontological process which enacts the forms of ‘cultural cloning’ (Essed 2005; Puwar 2004) able to contain the contradictions of race within a ‘constrained mixture’ (Goldberg 2009) of racialising articulations. Thus,

(neoliberal whiteness comes to be [biopolitically] through its micromanagement of information, bodies; objects in general, via ever more complicated techniques for rendering the world of difference knowable in order to manage the threat to life (material, social and affective) that it presents. It works by the careful management and containment of difference, bringing difference into sameness, gathering allies as it does so. Therefore, an important consequence of the ability to define the world is the ability to bring difference inside to create inclusion. Normative (neo)liberal whiteness is extended through its silent benevolent outreach; through the very power to reach out and to offer inclusion to its excluded Others (women, older or queer subjects, for example); and thus through the power to make decisions about which groups come into its purview on the basis of which form of inclusionary/exclusionary bargains. Whiteness becomes civilisational and un-touchable in its promotion of the general ‘good’. Invitations to come into the human race operate as invitations into neoliberal whiteness.

(Hunter 2015a: 12)
In this formulation, neoliberalism has the effect of flipping responsibility for violence and exclusion onto its victimised other, enabling whiteness to own the means by which morality and goodness are defined and responsibility and blame apportioned, located elsewhere with the guilty.

**Disturbed whiteness: Invisible/unknowing/innocent no more**

Epistemology is central to white supremacy, as it is with the systemic forms of domination of heteropatriarchy and capitalism. The legitimation of some knowledges, experiences and voices at the expense of others serves to validate some subjects while disqualifying others from the status of ‘fully human’. Critical whiteness studies’ conceptual mainstays of invisibility, ignorance, and innocence, which speak to epistemologies of whiteness, need to be rethought in relation to the unique conditions of this historical moment. Peggy McIntosh’s 1989 essay titled ‘White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack’ was one of the impactful early works that provided impetus to the fledgling field at that time, and framed subsequent thinking. While the idea of the invisibility of whiteness as a structural phenomenon has been productive, it becomes problematic when one brings in history, location, and politics. In short, whiteness has not been invisibilised everywhere, either today or in the past, and in those places where it was previously invisibilised, this is arguably no longer the case. At the intersections with gender, class, and ethnicity, ‘degraded’ or ‘inferior’ forms of whiteness have been very much visibilised – in co-constructive opposition to global ‘whiteness incognito’ or the ‘Invisible Empire’ – to justify violence, war, colonialism and apartheid, or to render internally othered or tainted whites available for disciplining and domestication into respectability and race purity regimes (Van der Westhuizen 2017; Wemyss 2009; Willoughby-Herard 2010; Wray 2006). Feminist studies of national colonial, and class formations expose particularly the investment in gender, sexual, and class corolling of female bodies as boundary of whiteness (McCintock 1995; Skeggs 1997; Stoler 1989). We regard a reassessment of what could be called ‘the invisibility consensus’ also as necessary in light of the work of black thinkers such as Fanon and Du Bois on hyper-visibility and invisibilisation, respectively. When invisibilised, whiteness seems to find its co-constitution in the hypervisibilisation of racial others, especially at the intersections with gender and ethnicity. Concurrently, the invisibilisation of whiteness stands in tension with the social invisibilisation of the understandings and experiences of people racialised as black. Indeed, it is vital to assert the vantage point from which whiteness is deemed to be operating invisibly: the white gaze is ‘a racialised way of seeing that proceeds through the carefully cultivated refusal to see and acknowledge certain things and the suppression of other ways of seeing and experiencing the world’ (Medina 2018: 248; see also Ahmed 2004). Whiteness involves a mind trick universalising itself as a pre-given norm to the extent that the foundational Western binarism of white/black is obscured. But subjects racialised by the operations of whiteness have no option but to see whiteness, its modes and effects, as in the work of Ralph Ellison (1952), Frantz Fanon (1963, 2006), and Steve Biko (1978). This necessary conspicuousness of whiteness is also true for subjects racialised as ‘lesser’ whites within intra-white hierarchies. Similar to masculinities, whiteness works in the plural to establish an order of whitenesses, arranged within boundaries that are continuously adapted in accordance with the vagaries of power, as seen historically with the shifting positions of Jewish, Irish, Italian, and Afrikaner whites (Brodkin 2002; Ignatiev 2009 [1995]; Painter 2010; Van der Westhuizen 2021).

Moving to innocence, the denial of violence implied in human disposability – upon which the notion of race rests – enables a politics of white virtue. This politics sustains white passivity in a range of ways, through its association with civility, nobility, goodness, forbearance, and/or feminine immaturity (Hunter 2010; McCintock 1995; Stoler, 2002; Van der Westhuizen
All these articulations are linked to what has long been posited as one of the fundamentals of whiteness: its wilful ignorance as a not-knowing accompanied by absolution of responsibility for racism and its effects (Dyer 1997; Ware 1992, 2015; Wekker 2016). The politics of white innocence is infused with an ‘epistemology of ignorance’ (Mills 1997), functioning as part of an active white defence of passivity in the face of implication in systemic racism. These machinations are oiled by (neo)liberal individualism, which obscures the systemic nature of racism by fixing racism onto individual white subjects as agentic racists. Thus, the politics of innocence and guilt fixes a global racialised hierarchy whereby white innocence feeds off black guilt justified through the supposed equation of blackness with violence, sexual permissiveness, criminality, indolence and a range of other (white defined) vices. This politics of innocence produces institutional stasis, a stuck-ness within a racialised human hierarchy, which is in reality actively produced. This stasis is dependent on ignorance about the unspoken marker in racialising practices, which is whiteness.

The mythology of perpetual crisis plays into the active reproduction of racial ignorance. In the Global North, a narrative is created around the extraordinary spectacle of abhorrent individually perpetrated racism whilst hiding the intersecting everyday relational cumulations, which enact a racially hierarchical order defined through whiteness. Visibilising certain racist enactments works to hide this systematic nature, associating them with certain forms of whiteness or certain expressions of white violence whilst maintaining the general definitional power of whiteness. This is part of the particularising power of whiteness identified by Robin Wiegman (1999) in her classic Boundary2 essay whereby white liberalism obfuscates its violence through the positioning of racism ‘out there’. Therefore, it has been important in anti-racist analysis to keep the everyday and the extraordinarily violent life-snuffing analytically connected. This creates a chance at disarticulating the ‘fixed and material truth’ of the racist white imaginary which is an imaginary in which all bodies are folded into the hierarchy of race in their everyday (Yancy 2017). In recent times, with the rise of Trumpism in the United States and Radical Right movements elsewhere, the spectacle of racist enactment has spawned a whiteness that is obvious, but we need to keep in mind the contextual conditions of systemic and institutionalised racism that have been invisibilised by such performance. What is the purpose of the performance and what are its effects?

The recent emergence of an obvious whiteness is here read as a reaction against the anti-racist and anti-colonial activisms of the past 400 years: These political, intellectual and artistic impetuses have forced whiteness into a political clearing. Most recently, this activism has been in the form of global #BlackLivesMatter civil society movements. Whiteness is left with no choice but to declare itself. At this historical juncture, where whiteness and its violence are being made apparent, the claim to innocence paradoxically requires the visibilisation of whiteness. It requires the active construction of whiteness within the racial imaginary – we might say, in the current moment, a hypervisibilisation. This hypervisibilisation appears to go against the grain of the earlier-described insights on whiteness, of invisibility, ignorance, and innocence. However, this apparent contradiction between hypervisibilisation in the context of invisibilisation/not-knowing serves as a reminder that whiteness works as a differentiated power geometry, with divergences and convergences across different contexts.

Currently, a political tide is on the rise in nation states in the Global North that seeks to violently reassert the national body politic as white. This is whiteness as an ‘evolutionary terror’, as Boucher and Mattias describe this phenomenon in their chapter in this volume. Intensified by the pandemic, this politics is buoyed by a discourse not unlike tropes of illness (Sontag 1978) in its aim to purify the nation of all foreign objects, whether external or internal others. The past four centuries’ rationalisations of race – with religion, biology, nationalism, culture – have all
been mobilised in a cacophonous throng. Racialised others are deemed invaders infecting the white nation biologically and diverting it from its culturally ordained or scientifically verified course of natural superiority and domination. Others internal to whiteness (anti-racists, feminists, and queers) are deemed to be weakening the resplendent white nation from the inside: Biologically if they are women committing ‘race suicide’ by not keeping their bodies for white men only, and politically if they commit ‘white treason’ by siding with racial others. The politics of violent expulsion is also a politics of gathering those subjects true to whiteness, hence the rise of fascism with its object of the unity of a pure people, to be achieved by any and all means but especially violence. In Alt-Right versions of this politics, the racist colour-blind subterfuge of liberalism and the diversity-toting selective inclusivity of neoliberalism are overlaid with a politics cribbed from the struggles of the excluded, marginalised, and dehumanised. White people and particularly white men are centred as the new victims, in an opportunism claiming pain and victimhood in an attempt to displace the actually wronged. Intersectionality as the powerful theoretical and political tool that shifted feminist and anti-racist politics into a multi-pronged attack on interlinking dominations has been appropriated (see the chapters by Gray and Mattheis in this volume).

In the diversion from systemic racism to so-called 'identity politics', whiteness must reveal itself and state who its subject is, as constructed against its abjectified other. Peering closely at this whiteness, it is exposed in a form that repels even the suggestion of otherness, in contrast to both liberalism and neoliberalism's incorporation of selected others. This politics of abjection should be named for what it is: White supremacism, which must be brought back front and centre analytically as a vital section of the scaffolding of modern power that also comprises patriarchy, heteronormativity, and capitalism. After invading, dominating and extracting from indigenous peoples, legitimised by racialising, gendering and classing ‘them’ as inferior, and then opening Northern borders to augment demographically faltering local populations, whiteness in a volte face movement has increasingly in recent times sought to withdraw into its own otherless universe. To be exact, whiteness now seeks to withdraw into apartheid. As seen in the Nazi appropriation of colonial concentration camps, or in the contemporary relationship between the United States and Israel, the metropole learns from the colony, or at least, reproduces or emulates modes of expulsion and extermination first practised in colonial settings (see also Pappé in this volume). Apartheid returns as imaginary and practice, in Israel and elsewhere. To start with, apartheid was a colonial reboot of nineteenth-century forms of British colonial segregation. Further inspired by Jim Crow laws in the United States, it was cobbled together in South Africa in the mid-twentieth century at the very moment when the metropolises were withdrawing from their African colonies to shift into indirect colonialism, or coloniality. Here it comes again, global racism as Apartheid 2.0 for the twenty-first century. Reflecting on whiteness as a global power formation that is differentially operationalised according to contextual contingencies, it is useful to pay attention to its apartheid or colonial form to trace its current convolutions and possible futures (see also Money and Van Zyl-Herrmann 2020).

**Apartheid 2.0**

In understanding white people's variable wielding of invisibility, ignorance, and innocence, it is worth pausing at the country of apartheid, South Africa, as an unusual settler state. This volume contains several contributions that attend to South Africa as an exemplar illuminating structural, institutionalised, and identitarian dimensions of whiteness. While we note the caution against exceptionalising South Africa (Alexander 2003), it does serve as a microcosm of longevities in
racial colonialities and also of anti-racist resistances and solidarities. Indeed, South Africa can be read as a harbinger of the many modes of deployment of race and racism, of the ways and means of whiteness and, crucially, of how to challenge racism and whiteness. As coloniality adjusted its grip globally to indirect or neo-colonialism from the mid-twentieth century onwards, South Africa at that very time deepened white domination and racial extraction with its brutal system of apartheid, a modernised and more minutely designed and enforced set of colonial technologies. Almost half a century later, amid the historical upheavals of the end of Communism, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the global hegemonisation of neoliberalism, South Africa again offered the unusual, as its white minority relinquished power in a transition to a constitutional democracy (Hyslop 2000):

\[\text{Many thought that South Africa's overthrow of institutionalised racism and its attempt to build a truly non-racial, modern and cosmopolitan society was the best gift Africa had ever given to the world. [It held the promise of] generating an alternative meaning of what our world might be, or to become a major centre in the global south.} \]

\text{(Mbembe 2006: np)}

Today, it is the only postcolonial African state that retains a sizeable white population. However, it is also unique among former British settler states in that white people form a demographic, political and, increasingly, cultural \textit{minority}.

The varying functionality of invisibility to whiteness becomes apparent in the internal hierarchical differentiation of multiple whitenesses. The power contestations between two settler classes, which included the South African War of 1899–1902, partly explains the perennial re-entrenchment of whiteness through the intersectional wielding of other categories of differences – in this case, ethnicity and class. After the settling of a refreshment trading post at the Cape of Good Hope by the Dutch East India Company in 1652, increasing racialisation by the predominantly Dutch colonists was further exacerbated when the Cape colony shifted into the hands of Britain in 1806. British colonial authorities’ violent geographical enforcement of racial segregation and movement control against the indigenous Khoi and Xhosa laid the groundwork for twentieth century colonial segregation and, between 1948 and 1994, apartheid. British imperialism sparked the counter-politics of African and Afrikaner nationalism at the fin-de-siècle before and after the war. Apartheid can be read as a culmination of the Afrikaner nationalist project to achieve an apparently contradictory move, by rising to unmarked whiteness while asserting ethnic particularity. However, when reading Britishness as an ethnicity transparent to itself but seeking to position all other ethnicities (Hall 1997), this emerges as a co-constitutive dynamic: British imperialists positioned Dutch or Boer whiteness as a degraded whiteness from especially the nineteenth century onwards. ‘The Afrikaner’ was a political counter-invention seeking to amplify European descent and, hence, the claim to whiteness for colonists to counter their sizeable slave ancestry due to significant miscegenation during the years of Dutch control. In a signature act of whiteness, both the moniker ‘Afrikaner’ and the language Afrikaans were appropriated from those designated to the newly constructed ‘coloured’ (mixed-race) identity on the basis of skin colour and phenotype. Contriving ‘The Afrikaner’ during the first half of the twentieth century was specifically to purge from the identity those racialised as ‘coloured’. The racial expulsion was also a class project: Shifting from a large class of ‘poor whites’ to the embourgeoisement of the Afrikaner, in an aspirational relationship with white English-speaking South Africans (WESSAs). Here, gender and sexuality became crucial instruments of control. Installing female subjects to delimit this whiteness by reproducing the white nation or \textit{volk} in body and morals is an essential plank in the scaffolding.
Internal sexual and gender others had to be subsumed or ejected. At first, the idea of apartheid in 1948 was ill-defined but eventually the Afrikaner nationalists sought to remake South Africa into the Afrikaner's own image, by projecting claimed racial and ethnic particularism onto others. While the intra-white ethnic division was reaffirmed at first, racial and ethnic divisions in the ‘coloured’ and the native/Bantu/black brackets, respectively, were multiplied many times over.

Apartheid's instatement of Afrikaners to whiteness was done, counter-intuitively, through the hyper-visibilisation of whiteness with apartheid geographies and spatialisation. Unmissably noticeable were ubiquitous sign boards directing the movement of bodies racialised as, at first, ‘Europeans’ and ‘Non-Europeans’ and, later, ‘Whites’ and ‘Non-Whites’, to demarcated sites. Spaces were hence racially reserved down to the microlevel, determining which doors could be entered, which seats sat on. Apartheid spatialisation was derived from Jim Crow laws and shared the mode of hyper-visibilisation, also in the form of white supremacist violence and spectacle. Jim Crow was part of white supremacist strategy against post-slavery Restoration in the United States (1865–1877), while apartheid was similarly (and partially) a reaction against the colonial liberalism of Jan Smuts’ United Party government, which in the 1940s was considering some relaxation of segregation to allow for the creation of a category of colonial black insiders.

The spatial differentiations were class differentiations, to render whiteness equivalent to affluence and blackness to poverty, both ostensibly deserved. Apartheid was a biopolitics that intruded into minute bodily intimacies, with laws forbidding inter-racial and gay sex, and a necropolitics determining which bodies were disposable, especially in a racial capitalism dependent on black male bodies to perform deep-level mining. The creation of Blank Suid-Afrika was an everywhere representation of whiteness, to use Dyer's term (1997). But, different to Dyer's analysis of whiteness in the North, in this ‘everywhere’ whiteness, white subjects were not transparent to themselves – they understood themselves as white. Hence South African philosopher Samantha Vice's (2010: 326) contention: ‘that one is white rather than black is always present to oneself and others’. The obvious macro and micro racialisations of apartheid created the presentness of whiteness to white and black people that Vice speaks of. In this sense, apartheid's hallowed object of Blank Suid-Afrika was aspirational, as is also revealed by the Afrikaans word ‘blank’, usually translated as ‘white’. Similar to the English word ‘blank’, however, it suggests colourlessness, unmarkedness or transparency, rather than simply white. Afrikaners could not just assume whiteness. With bourgeois whiteness finally mostly achieved by the 1960s, the Afrikaner objective shifted in the 1970s to active rapprochement with WESSAs. As intra-white class interests dovetailed, the Afrikaner nationalist focus moved to ridding ‘The Afrikaner’ of its particularity and disappearing into globally hegemonic Anglo whiteness (Van der Westhuizen 2021). The transition to democracy and concomitant globalisation of Afrikaner capital in the 1990s, after years of anti-apartheid isolation and sanctions, accelerated this disappearing trick.

In further unpacking the white triad of invisibility–ignorance–innocence as wilful manoeuvres, South Africa shows how highly visibilised production of racial spatialities went hand-in-hand with a knowing that racial inequality had to be enforced, with concomitant violence, as it was not a ‘natural’ state of affairs (see also Steyn 2001; Willoughby–Herard 2015). To state it simply, the makers of apartheid knew that white people were not naturally superior. J.G. Strijdom, who became the second apartheid prime minister, acknowledged in a letter in 1946 to D.F. Malan, the first apartheid prime minister, that urbanisation and education would allow black people to become ‘civilised’, which would make racist discrimination impossible and lead to equality. In 1954, the same Strijdom admitted that ‘merit alone’ was not enough to secure white domination and that racially exclusive franchise for white people was essential, whereafter
the last people of colour who could vote were deprived of the right (Van der Westhuizen 2007: 57). Casting the timeline back to a century before, Boer and British settlers in the Cape Colony recognised the extreme injustice perpetrated against the Khoi and Xhosa peoples, with some admitting that colonial actions amounted to pillage and genocide (Mostert 1992). Whiteness in its settler mode was visibilised and intensely aware of its precariously constituted domination, partly because of its manifest injustice. But these facts have been subject to ‘unremembering’, Pumla Gqola’s (2010: 8) phrase for ‘a calculated act of exclusion and erasure’. Past racist violations of black people and people of colour’s humanity are suppressed to normalise current white privilege and preclude corrective action – what Mills (2007: 31) calls ‘the mystification of the past [that] underwrites a mystification of the present’. What can be called ‘white unknowing’ is an active turning away so as not to know the injustice on which white privilege is founded (Van der Westhuizen, forthcoming). But Afrikaner whiteness only shifted into the invisibility–ignorance–innocence triad as its subjects’ affluence increased. In postapartheid South Africa, the lack of meaningful redistribution of wealth opened the door to ‘a white opportunism of denial’, which reactivates discourses of dehumanisation (Van der Westhuizen 2016). This mode fits with racial liberalism (Mills 2008), which refuses the past through ‘cultivated amnesia, a set of constructed deafnesses and blindnesses’ (p. 1391; also see Majavu in this volume) to proclaim innocence and hence invisibility, whether of whiteness or of the lived experiences of black people.

South Africa, as an exemplar of newly visibilised whiteness within global coloniality, shows how whiteness has historically alternated between strategies of hyper-visibilisation and invisibilisation of both white subjects and those positioned as racial others. As co-constituted power formation, the recent visibilisation of whiteness has been forced by newly impactful struggles against racism, in a sweeping confrontation especially in the Global North and in places such as South Africa. The invisibility–ignorance–innocence triad being historically contingent, it has been wielded by and large by what can be broadly called a liberalism-inflected whiteness. It is currently augmented with, if not supplanted by, rising global white supremacy, mirroring the replacement in government of ‘softer’ colonial liberalism in 1948 by apartheid’s hardline racists. With the tearing away of Du Bois’s veil through concerted anti-racist struggles, whiteness is confronted with its subsumed black other and knee-jerks into an attacking posture and mode. Racial liberalism’s quietening violences are inadequate to the anti-racist groundswell, as can be seen in South Africa and in the Trumpist, neo-Nazi, and fascist reactionary upsurge in the Global North. White defiance has exploded in racist verbal and physical attacks ranging from social and mainstream media outbursts to killing sprees. The reversion is to the open and hostile drawing of a frontier with the assertion of white superiority.

White reaction emanates from whiteness’ internally stratified others, another resonance traceable from the South African exemplar. Whiteness preys as much on internal differentiation as on external differentiation for its reproduction, underlining the importance of bringing in ethno-nationalism, class, gender, and sexuality. Differential class positions can provoke intensified efforts at reinforcing whiteness, especially when ethnically inflected. The intra-Afrikaner cross-class pact crumbled in the 1970s and was replaced by a cross-ethnic middleclass and elite pact with WESSAs, leading to the reform and official end of apartheid. This pushed a minority of ‘losing whites’, who were unable to achieve middleclass status, to reassert apartheid in original form. In the contemporary context of globalised neoliberal capitalism’s necropolitical abjection of vast groups of people as disposable, including rendering ‘the worker’ increasingly superfluous, ethno-nationalism and class are again mobilised to buttress whiteness, as is discussed in the chapters by Thobani, Marston, Pappé and Begum, Mondon and Winter. Gender and sexuality are, similar to the orchestration of apartheid, again essential plains of control. More
pressure is placed on female subjects to remain within the white fold, whether by reactivating biological destiny and the trope of woman/wife-as-mother, as seen in the chapter by Mattheis, or by unleashing negative affect against black women, as in Marston's chapter. Meanwhile, the (neo)liberal text continues running, as postfeminist white femininity and neoliberal ‘global gayness’ still accord some women sexual ‘freedoms’ and some queers respectability, as in the chapters by Deliovsky and Scott, respectively.

To conclude this section, whiteness has convulsed into a new permutation due to effective global anti-racist activisms. Alongside (neo)liberal whiteness with its invisibility–ignorance–innocence triad, a reactionary, more explicitly violent whiteness rears its head in the form of a globalised Apartheid 2.0: A self-emboldening that amounts to terror (see Boucher and Matias in this volume), drawing on histories of white racist extermination politics that underpins persistent global coloniality.

Commodifying whiteness: Declaring denying and dematerialising whiteness

In the midst of the Global Pandemic came the global outpouring of grief and rage, the mass of protests and uprisings, thousands of newspaper column inches devoted to the need for anti-racist change and justice over the globe in response to the mass witnessing on social media of the death of George Floyd, a 46-year-old Black American man from Fayetteville North Carolina killed by a white police officer, suffocated in a choke hold for 9 minutes recorded and witnessed globally on social media. In the aftermath of Floyd's killing, the British writer and cultural commentator Otegha Uwagba finally felt moved to write her long planned personal essay on racism, ‘Whites: On Race and Other Falsehoods’, which despite her best intentions became an essay about white privilege (Uwagba 2020). The main thrust of her analysis of white privilege comes out of her lived experiences as a Black woman of the ‘colossal burden’ co-existing with white people, and how the outpouring of white emotion as part of the aftermath of this killing worked oppressively as part of the broader declarative mode of liberal and anti-racist whitenesses (Ahmed 2004). This burden is one that extends to the control exerted over her writing of the essay itself.

Although I didn’t want to write an essay where white people took centre stage … that's exactly what I’ve done. It became clear to me that to write about navigating racism and not place white people at the centre of that narrative would be to elide the very thing I was trying to write about, because navigating racism really is a matter of navigating white people. Perhaps that conclusion seems obvious, but it took me a little while to get there, and to work through my competing desires about how to approach this essay. On reflection, that push and pull – between what I wanted to do, and what racism necessarily requires of me – seems strangely apt, a facsimile of whiteness itself and the way it compels, overrides, distorts, and ultimately controls. (Uwagba 2020: 4–5)

What is implied by Uwagba, is the difficulty of resisting the serviceability of her work to whiteness and her black body to the anti-racist development of white people. The problem she articulates, demonstrates precisely the constitutive nature of whiteness as a consumptive, possessive colonial dynamic (Moreton-Robinson 2015) achieved through racism and its requirements. And which puts white and black people within a certain sort of relation, framed by whiteness. Much writing is resistant to but implicated in the fantasy of race whereby whiteness is operating as the ‘master signifier’ (Sashedri-Crooks, 2000) to establish the structure of meaning and chain of significiation which organises human difference. And as Zimitri Erasmus
(2017) reminds us, none of us can be outside, above, or beyond race. Nevertheless, as she also notes together with Toni Morrison (1997), this does not mean that we should stop figuring out ways to struggle for race-specificity without the race prerogative. Living this tension is what it means to be a ‘race critical anti-racist’ (Lentin 2020): Neither repressed, nor beguiled by race.

Critical writing and communication about whiteness can never be understood from outside of the global coloniality which inaugurates this position of whiteness as mastery. From the point of view of attempting to write ‘out’ of the global coloniality of whiteness an important shift is to be made in understanding the epistemic and ontological power of whiteness as co-constitutive. This co-constitutive onto-epistemic power of whiteness has been underplayed in much of the earlier studies of whiteness. The focus tended to fall on privileging epistemic power over ontological power. This was done in an attempt to reject the biological and social essentialism so necessary in producing race and its master signifier white supremacy. Much of the work leading the significant recent developments in the empirically oriented critical analysis of whiteness situates itself from within a frame of critical race theorising. This includes the work of Sara Ahmed (2006, 2007, 2012), Yasmin Gunaratnam and Gail Lewis (Gunaratnam and Lewis 2001), Lewis 2000, Cheryl Matias (2016), Jasbir Puar (2007, 2017), Shirley Anne Tate (2014) and Arun Saldanha (2007) – to name a few of those influencing our approach. Given the challenges in communicating the experience of being racialised from outside of the terms set by whiteness, it is no accident that these works are developing a broader range of theoretical and methodological tools than is offered through critical whiteness studies’ mainstay social constructionism. They are rooted instead in new understandings of affect and the body. One of the most notable contributions to the empirical corpus of the past 20 years is Nirmal Puwar's (2004) *Space Invaders* in which she elaborates the multiple impacts of racialised/gendered bodies out of place in the white somatic institutional norm which produces ‘an encounter that causes disruption, necessitates negotiation and invites complicity’ (p.1). Similar to Uwagba's intervention above, this varied body of work starts from the point of resisting the definitional power of whiteness. It asserts and reinforces Black agencies in a such a way that the micro-aggressive nature of race and racialising practice cannot be ignored. This is in contrast to the way that this can sometimes be when the starting point for an analysis is whiteness. It is a point demonstrated in different ways in chapters by Ahluwalia and Shah in this volume. The point is that Black bodies refuse and destabilise whiteness by their very presence. They produce an ontological disturbance which refuses the possessive dynamic of coloniality. They have to be engaged with or suppressed. Whilst it is arguably the work by Black people which has had at least as much if not the much bigger present and historical impact on the broader conversations on whiteness in the public sphere, the return is always to whiteness. This is precisely the dynamic so important to Reni Eddo-Lodge's *Why I'm no longer talking to White People about Race* (2017), which is one of the more important British-located texts inaugurating the recent rise in conversation on whiteness globally.

This brings us back to the point raised by Robin Wiegman (1999, 2012) about the problematic of particularity in any field, volume, collection or activity announcing itself through a debt to whiteness studies. This particularisation serves in the end to return itself to whiteness. This dynamic is exacerbated in the case of antiracist whiteness which is never an antithesis to white racial formation but only ever legible through it (Wiegman 2012: 196). The most commonly engaged social constructionist approach to highlighting, excavating and outlining white specificity shows that whiteness is not universal; it is contextual and produced relationally, interpersonally. It is something that white people do as a relational achievement, an enactment of power and across all spheres of life. However, the social constructionist approach does not necessarily show that whiteness, or indeed blackness as its foil, are not natural, nor are