

White Anxiety in Postcolonial Narratives: A Study of Transformation, Power, and Fear

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Abstract

In postcolonial narratives, white anxiety describes the psychological and social discomfort-white groups experience when decolonization transforms political systems and race-toppling power dynamics. Colonial history provides the foundation for this fear which appears as people fear the elimination of racial purity and cultural erosion while struggling with existential threats that now affect contemporary discussions about race. Postcolonial literature examines white anxiety through qualitative textual analysis while displaying three main relationships with this phenomenon as it appears across literary and cultural texts. The study analyzes white anxiety by using postcolonial theory together with psychoanalytic analysis to interpret ontological insecurity alongside identity crisis and opposition to decolonization movements. The analysis shows white anxiety functions as more than just postcolonial reactions because it maintains racial inequities through phantasmagorical accounts of persecution together with marginalized attitudes toward the past and irrational fear. Wide Sargasso Sea together with Disgrace and Exit West demonstrate how the identity of whiteness presents itself as unstable while dealing with declining colonial power. In addition to its findings, this study examines postcolonial denial tactics which challenge white anxiety through satirical and ironic and inverted perspectives. The research results strengthen postcolonial scholarship by proving that white anxiety responds artificially to the process of decolonization instead of representing a natural existential threat. White resistance targeted at avoiding racial and cultural shifts exists primarily as postcolonial texts offer new frameworks for understanding whiteness which surpass domination along with vulnerability. Researchers need to study present-day versions of white anxiety influenced by digital media approaches alongside political communications and worldwide migration patterns. Knowledge of such dynamics helps create inclusive self-reflective racial identities for the postcolonial world.



Keywords: *White anxiety, postcolonial narratives, identity crisis, ontological insecurity, racial hierarchy, whiteness, decolonization, postcolonial critique*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The academic community devotes much attention to white anxiety within postcolonial narratives since the era of

decolonization and globalization and changing race relations. Anthony H. Philpot defines white anxiety as a socio-political and existential discomfort felt by whites due

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to postcolonial changes in power dynamics globally. This phenomenon exists because of historical privileges alongside colonial control and racial ranking systems and shows itself through multiple psychological and cultural and political systems (Feola 2021). The said theme of white anxiety appears throughout contemporary postcolonial literary works and academic research and film production (Kinnvall & Svensson, 2022). Postcolonial narratives show that white fear emerges from the end of colonial power along with cultural shift and the loss of dominance and race superiority (Parmar et al., 2023).

White anxiety receives theoretical analysis by using fundamental tenets of postcolonialism and theories of psychoanalysis along with critical race theory. According to scholars white anxiety expresses itself primarily through ontological insecurity because postcolonial control figures who used to maintain colonial rule experience a breakdown in their unrestricted authority (Bilgic & Pilcher, 2023). Political interests and reactionary policies along with nationalist rhetoric demonstrate white anxiety by trying to uphold racial and cultural ascendancy (Futak-Campbell & Küçük, 2023). Modern postcolonial states experience the continuing effects of white fragility which Hook (2020) has analyzed through studies about psychological and emotional responses to power shifts. White anxiety is not only a reaction to external social changes but also a manifestation of internalized fears concerning displacement, contamination, and the perceived "Other" (Jahnel, 2024).

Postcolonial narratives in all their forms exhibit white anxiety by utilizing elements from gothic fiction and dystopian settings and historical spectral manifestations. According to Joseph-Vilain (2021) and Ancuta (2021) South African and South Asian gothic literature shows how white identity suffers from past trauma which leads to present-day fragility and endless cycles of self-danger. Written by Giuliani (2020), the study examines postcolonial discourse with its apocalyptic visions which adds environmental collapse, racial replacement and cultural hybridity to the narrative of declining white identity. Scientists Roy and Deshbandhu (2022) study how racial fears within postcolonial masculinity reveal themselves through the analysis of online gaming communities during their examination of digital spaces.

History of colonization functions as a ghost which creates current panic. White (2023) reveals how fear-based narratives sustained colonial control in Africa through their

research on rumor and history and they continue influencing postcolonial racial communications. The British national identity signifies postcolonial discomfort for the country because it tries to reconcile its imperial historical record with current multicultural social practices according to Clarke (2021). In his work Gandhi (2021) investigates brown subjects' experience of internal colonization while showing their conflicting methods of projecting white fears onto racialized bodies. Research demonstrates that white anxiety produces multiple forms which differ according to postcolonial settings.

The research evaluates the postcolonial manifestations of white anxiety particularly addressing how power dynamics meet transformational processes while exploring fear dynamics. This research examines global race and identity discourses related to decolonization by using historical, sociopolitical and literary analytical methods to analyze white anxiety generation. The research employs interdisciplinary methods to make important contributions about postcolonial historical legacies that involve ongoing battles regarding how people remember and who speaks for others and belongs within contemporary society.

1.1 Research Objectives and Questions

This study explores white anxiety in postcolonial narratives, focusing on its manifestations in transformation, power, and fear. It examines how postcolonial texts portray white anxiety as a response to the erosion of colonial dominance and shifting racial hierarchies. Additionally, it investigates the role of fear and nostalgia in shaping white identity and how these anxieties influence contemporary racial discourse and sociopolitical structures.

To achieve these objectives, the study addresses the following questions:

- How is white anxiety represented in postcolonial narratives?
- What role does fear play in shaping white identity in postcolonial contexts?
- How do these narratives critique or reinforce whiteness in a postcolonial world?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The idea of white anxiety has been discussed extensively in the realm of literary, political and sociocultural studies in postcolonial narratives. According to scholars however, this anxiety is rooted in a historical legacy of colonial dominance that goes into crisis with



decolonization and shifting global power structures, derivatively triggering identity and power crisis associated with decolonisation (Bilgic & Pilcher, 2023). Power shows its face as metonymic of other issues when it comes to the analysis of this phenomenon through different lenses of postcolonial theory, psychoanalysis and critical race theory which all engage with the interaction between power, transformation and fear when it comes to the production of white subjectivity in the postcolonial world (Kinnvall & Svensson, 2022). In the breakdown of colonial hierarchies, the anxiety of white people manifests itself through a number of forms of resistance and nostalgia and fear of being displaced. They are expressed in various forms of sociopolitical rhetoric, literary narratives, or cultural production that try to regain lost power or create a new 'being there' (Futak Campbell and Küçük, 2023).

The role of ontological insecurity in causing white anxiety has been explored by scholars, and specifically how the destabilization of white identity has been perceived to fuel such anxiety. According to Bilgic and Pilcher (2023), historically, colonial subjects gained a sense of existential security from the racial hierarchies that was clearly legible in the colonizer/colonized binary. The dissolution of these hierarchies causes former colonizers to suffer an identity crisis replete with reactionary attitudes in hopes of reinstating racial borders. That is seen in contemporary nationalist movements and policies trying to maintain whiteness as a dominant socio-political force (Parmar et al., 2023). In addition, Clarke (2021) discusses how British national identity, still being confronted with postcolonial discomfort, struggles with an empire decreasing and shaking well-established cultural narratives of superiority and racial entitlement.

The most common portrayal of white anxiety in postcolonial literature is how the fragility of whiteness is incorporated into gothic and dystopian tropes. In his paper 'Gothic Horror in Post-Apartheid White South African Literature', Joseph-Vilain (2021) discusses how white South African authors employ gothic horror to symbolize their anxieties regarding land ownership, racial integration, and continuity of culture in a post-apartheid world. Also, in Ancuta's (2021) article on the representation of white anxiety in South Asian gothic literature, the examples centre around themes of haunting and historical reckoning. The narrative (Giuliani 2020) of these two reinforces the idea that whiteness is not an innate or steady identity but rather on which it is always constructed through the building of historical guilt and contemporary fears.

Apocalyptic and catastrophic imagery in postcolonial literature becomes more prevalent (Gergan, Smith, & Vasudevan, 2020) as the fear persists of all that white superiority is dissolving and new global orders are taking shape without the main player being white power.

White anxiety has also found digital spaces to be its arena to express and contest itself. In their study, Roy and Deshbandhu (2022) dissect the ways in which postcolonial masculinity and racial anxieties are manifested in online gaming communities which are still influenced by colonial ideologies as they have come to dictate the portrayal of race and power. Despite being at some distance from history of colonialism, these virtual spaces flagrantly recreate racialized power structures that invoke white dominion and foster fear of removing nonwhite racial constituents. The study of digital environments brings forth essential insights into the ways in which colonial legacies persist in contemporary cultural productions and how whiteness remaps its cartography in the age of new global realities.

Scholarly discourse has therefore also focused on the intersection that white anxiety makes with gender and postcolonial masculinity. According to Feola (2021), such a melancholic nationalism usually associated with a sense of loss for white people finds its reflection in conservative ideologies that attempt to recover traditional gender roles and racial purity. It is obvious in cases where political movements reject multiculturalism and seek policies that protect racial homogeneity. Therefore, white anxiety does not necessarily operate as a racial phenomenon but also inhabits other anxieties about masculinity, power, and control. Quinan (2020) on the one hand examines the queering of postcolonial anxieties in which queer identities destabilize whiteness and then continue to destabilize it by queering notions of (white) subjectivity and the colonial subjects of race and gender.

Whiteness is often whittled down, through the theme of contamination or othering, into the postcolonial imagination. Jahnel (2024) discusses how fear of contagion operates as a metaphor for racial anxieties in postcolonial development discourses, where the non-white "Other" is often framed as a threat to Western purity and stability. Issues of migration are particularly manifested with these anxieties discussed, as racialized fears of cultural dilution and economic insecurity lead to anti immigration sentiments and xenophobic policies (Fernández, 2020). In addition, White (2023) points out the colonial rumours and myths of racial purity were historically instrumental in



keeping a check on the colonized population, a practice which also has impact on modern racial discourse.

The construction of white anxiety also comes into play because of the role memory and haunting play in postcolonial literature. In his article entitled Colonial Amnesia and the Unsettling of the White Subject, Ho (2023) examines how Malaysian literature dealing with historical amnesia confronts the inconvenient 'presentation of the colonial', which disturbs the national narrative, and disrupts the very structure of the white subject. Likewise, Islam (2024) considers how Western systemic oppression is made accountable for in postcolonial novels such as *Things Fall Apart* and *Beloved* in which the hauntings of colonial violence permeate the contemporary racial anxieties. This particular socio political direction highlights the fact that white anxiety is not only a result of present day social shifts but rather that it is written into the bones of our historical trauma and unresolved tensions of colonialism.

Similarly, the lasting effects of colonial anxieties have been looked at by political and criminological studies into modern governance and racial policy. While Big Jo and Big Top are gone and now replaced by Big Ed and Big Steve, the policing of racial and ethnic identities by Connecticut street vendors remains an observable phenomenon. This perspective echoes with Gandhi's (2021) autoethnographic study of internalized colonialization in which he discusses racial anxieties as not exclusive to white populations that continue to internalize colonial hierarchies. The persistence of white anxiety in legal and political structure indicates the way in which it is more than an individual psychological experience.

White anxiety is increasingly being reframed as a catalyst for things not to be buried away, but to be addressed, in recent discussions of white anxiety in contemporary postcolonial discourse. Climate change narratives, according to Verlie (2022), cause white anxieties to be challenged through a reckoning with global interconnectivity and shared vulnerability. If we shift from anxiety to transformation, then postcolonial studies will not only deconstruct whiteness but also search for possibilities for the ways to subvert colonial power and construct new and inclusive identities. In the same vein, De Gennaro (2020) also recommends a comparative, non-territorial approach to postcolonial studies whose object of study is a theorization of whiteness as a dynamic and changing phenomenon, not as a static identity.

3. METHODOLOGY

The analysis is conducted by applying a qualitative research approach to understand the black configurations of white anxiety in postcolonial narratives. The research explores the selected literary and cultural texts that cover the themes related to transformation, power, and fear about whiteness with the use of textual analysis. Using a postcolonial theoretical framework, these narratives are interpreted as ways in which they construct and ratify white anxiety, or ambivalence about the emergence of indigenous collectivism, using motifs like the trope of a racial displacement, ontological insecurity and a resistance to decolonial change. Secondly, the nature of posing the deeper psychosomatic and socio-political meaning of white anxiety in the postcolonial context through elements of critical race theory and psychoanalysis.

Thematic coding of the selected literature reveals patterns of tensions in postcolonial and whiteness studies as they characterize various tensions between whiteness, postcolonial interventions, and historical legacy of trauma. This is a qualitative method through which to get into ideas of how different narratives engage with the idea of white anxiety and its broader implications in global racial discourse. No empirical data is used within the study, rather, it carries out a close reading of texts, and takes cues from previous scholarship, using theoretical perspectives. By adopting such an approach, the research offers a multifaceted perspective of how postcolonial representations are imbued with and at the same time contest white anxieties as an enduring phenomenon in the contemporary world.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of postcolonial narratives shows how white anxiety comes by means of complex intersections of transformation, power and fear. In literature, as well as art, this anxiety relates to anxiety of racial displacement, identity crisis and resistance to decolonial change rooted in historical declining of colonial dominance. However, findings show that whiteness is usually fragile, marked by haunting of its past and radical changes in power structures which it struggles to deal with. Narratives on the white anxiety about dispossession critically take up ontological insecurity, fear of contamination, and nostalgia for past privilege. In this light, this section aims to explore the major themes which are found in the study, namely, the ways in which postcolonial literature either critiques, reinforces or transforms representations of whiteness in response to decolonization and contemporary racial dynamics.



4.1 Representation of White Anxiety in Postcolonial Narratives

White anxiety is a persistent theme present in postcolonial narratives that mirrors the existential crisis affecting whiteness in an age of postcolonial decline. Historical structures anchoring racial and cultural hegemony namely the positioning of whiteness as the universal standard of power, knowledge and civilization as a result, led to the generational anxiety Baltimore citizens feel (Bilgic & Pilcher, 2023). When colonialism receded, the white identity that had previously been so provided with ontological security came to erode, and there emerged a crisis of white identity's belonging and legitimacy. This anxiety is not solely a response to decolonization but the symptom of a profound fear of being displaced and of losing hegemonic power from an ethnic standpoint (Kinnvall & Svensson, 2022). This section explores how postcolonial narratives construct and critique white anxiety through various literary and cultural representations, engaging with themes of racial fragility, historical guilt, nostalgia, and fear of the "Other."

In postcolonial literature, the white colonizer's haunted being, the colonized as a ghost or haunting entity returning upon this being to haunt it with its ghosts of a colonized victim of violence and its horror of a changing world, are usually sited to signify anxiety. Joseph-Vilain (2021) investigates the way post-apartheid South African literature makes use of gothic tropes to present white characters as agitated and fearful of their own displacement. These texts are haunted by the fear of losing their land and their status in the postcolonial settings, which signifies the wider phobia of racial inversion and retribution. Likewise, Ancient (2021) points out that gothic literature in South Asia works to bring the ghosts of colonial brutality to the former colonies to haunt their pasts and reconcile with them. The whiteness of this anxiety should not be mistaken as personal at all, but rather illustrate what white anxiety is and what its reality is—it is a historical, and collective condition, a legacy of whiteness in colonial history.

Dystopian postcolonial fictions also do this in their portrayal of white anxiety: in black and white, racial decline and loss of cultural identity are played up to apocalyptic proportions. According to Giuliani (2020), postcolonial dystopias in many cases portray the end of Western civilization due to racial 'impurity' and decolonial resistance. In such narratives, white characters attempt to manage their rapidly escalating lack of control over a deteriorating globe who cares about foreigners,

immigrants, multiculturalism and power balance calendars. Additionally, Gergan, Smith, and Vasudevan (2020) maintain that, paralleling reality, these dystopian visions are not detached from what they regard as actual discourse on environmental collapse, racial replacement, civilizational decline, that is intimately tangled with white anxiety. Postcolonial literature feature(s) in these texts offer(s) how it gives a critical exposure of whiteness as an unstable and anxious identity.

Another such key theme is white people's anxiety and corresponding nostalgia. In his analysis of how British literature and media have continued to romanticize the colonial past, presenting it as an idealized vision of empire where the colonial past was a time of order and cultural superiority, Clarke (2021) explores the many ways in which the Empire How Txt is reinforcing North American ideas of manifest destiny and empire building they present as a positive thing. Such nostalgia-producing discourse escalates white anxiety by representing the present both as a lost and a declined space where whiteness is being gradually historicized and probed. Parmar, Earle, and Phillips (2023) further explore how colonial nostalgia is weaponized in contemporary political rhetoric, where anxieties over immigration and national identity are framed as a struggle to "reclaim" a lost heritage. This idealized nostalgia of whiteness, however, is problematized and proven to rest upon the violence and exploitation of colonial expansion by postcolonial writers.

The theme of contamination in the postcolonial narratives is also a representation of white anxiety in which racial and cultural hybridity is seen to represent existential threats to such white identity. Jahnel (2024) provides a discussion of how non white bodies have long been shaped by colonial and then postcolonial discourses as sites of contagion; objects of fear of racial mixing and/or degeneration. This fear is definitely present in postcolonial fictions that deal with issues of the migration category, when white characters consider the presence of the other non-white beings as an invasion into their racial and cultural purity. Using colonial myths around the racial contamination that formed the basis for making 'segregation and exclusion' in the past, the discourse of white anxiety finds its resonance in the framing of contemporary representations of white anxiety, as argued by White (2023).

Another dimension of white anxiety in postcolonial narratives is the theme of white fragility, which Feola



(2021) conceptualizes. Generally, white characters in postcolonial fiction are hypersensitive to racial critique and respond defensively, in denial, or as victims. We see that this fragility is more than psychological; it is a strategic mechanism that strengthens white dominance by repurposing what could be historical accountability as emotional intimidation of white people. Quinan (2020) examines how postcolonial texts employ satire and irony in order to unmask the contradictions that enable white fragility to travel from declining privilege.

White anxiety intersects with masculinity is another area in which postcolonial studies should be explored. In their work, Deshbandhu and Roy (2022) explore how white masculinity in the digital, specifically in terms of online gaming communities, reproduce anxieties of being dispossessed of racial and gendered power. Generally, these short virtual environments maintain colonial dynamics that put white males in a position as saviors or enforcers of order against a racialized enemy. It shows how the digital functions as a rejuvenation of sorts of 'whiteness' as a site for both a battleground for its anxious reinforcement and a battleground for confrontations to disrupt this anxious reinforcement.

In this way, postcolonial narratives are also involved in the melancholic whiteness: the idea of the white characters being tormented by unresolved guilt and remorse in connection with the past colonial history. Fernández (2020) discusses how this melancholia manifests in literary and cinematic representations of white protagonists who attempt to "redeem" themselves through acts of charity, allyship, or self-exile. Nevertheless, these narratives normally only further reinforce white centrality rather than actually questioning racial relationships of power. Where Islam (2024) criticizes Western literature for making white guilt an individual, moral burden instead of a structural issue, which allows whiteness to continue its privilege even in self-reflecting narratives.

While postcolonial narratives criticize white anxiety, this criticism is not only to deconstruct white but to provide alternative forms of race history and identity engagement. According to Verlie (2022), the transition from anxiety to transformation entails the readiness to awaken to colonial legacies without trapping into defensive mechanisms. De Gennaro (2020) also argues that whiteness should be reimagine as a fluid relational identity as opposed to a fixed dominant one. For this reason, postcolonial literature becomes an important critical site where (de)anxieties of

whiteness are to be explored, and, at the same time, where the possibilities to rework whiteness ethically and politically can occur.

4.2 Transformation of White Identity in Response to Shifting Power Structures

Postcolonial narratives also offer narratives of white identity that reflect these other changes in racial hierarchies and power structures following a decline in colonial rule. Historically, whiteness functioned as the universal standard of civilization and authority; hence its supremacy challenges with the process of decolonization, and increases in the multicultural society entailed an identity crisis expressed in cultural, literary, and political discourses (Bilgic & Pilcher, 2023). This anxiety about this transformation is, however, based in ontological insecurity as the unquestionable dominance of whiteness has been undermined and a reconfiguring of racial identity and belonging is required (Kinnvall & Svensson, 2022). The frameworks of postcolonial and psychoanalytic perspectives are useful in understanding the process by which whiteness reformulates in response to these changes in respect to identity negations, hybridization, and cultural adaptation.

The representation of white identity transformation in postcolonial literature is expressed clearly through the theme of ontological insecurity, how white characters, trying to accept their past advantages in the current changing sociopolitical reality, feel singular (one) and deadly (dead) at the same time. According to Joseph Vilain (2021), South African post-apartheid literature often features white characters whose significance in a society that does not revolve around their reality counts as drastically different from what they used to have. J.M. Coetzee explores identity and power loss through the experiences of David Lurie, a white professor who is reduced from a position of power to one where he has no power and no respect in his book *Disgrace* (1999). His fall from grace represents the larger, more sweeping collapse of white authority in postcolonial South Africa and the fact that so being white in South Africa means that one either accommodates oneself to new realities or one lapses into a nostalgic yearning for things that were.

In British postcolonial narratives a similar theme of the identity crisis is found in the decline of empire that has led to a crisis of Britishness. Very interesting, according to Clarke (2021), contemporary British literature and media reflect an anxious wonder concerning national identity



which arises from, and coincides with, immigration and globalization. Through novels such as Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000), and Andrea Levy's *Small Island* (2004) both white British characters and British characters that are of mixed race are shown to struggle in a multicultural environment to define who they really are and how they fit as regards to a British identity. These stories insist that whiteness is not, and by this point, cannot be invisible and default: it must be actively taken up in relation to other racial and cultural groups.

Within the realm of postcolonial psychoanalysis, Lacanian lack comes in explaining the transformation of white identity in that previously believed to have wholeness and self-sufficiency, the whiteness now has a void in itself (Feola, 2021). An example of this is in how postcolonial narratives portray white characters as haunted by their history and the unyielding difficulties of repenting their privilege as privileged peoples. In an attempt to develop this theme in Malaysian literature, Ho (2023) outlines how white colonial figures are mostly depicted as spectral presences and therefore unable to assimilate into the postcolonial nation-state. Thus, the notion of haunting in these tales reveals that colonial history remains unresolved, with whiteness remaining vaguely present, neither completely dominant, nor entirely missing.

In connection with postcolonial societies, white identity transformation is a critical aspect that concerns hybridization—whiteness strained to adapt and merge with nonwhite cultural elements. In line with Bhabha's (1994) concept of hybridity, we find that, as it is always subject to movements and exchanges, cultural identities are never stabilized in hierarchical orders. Postcolonial narratives are an example of this hybridity since they involve a white character practicing local tradition, speak local languages and find themselves interacting with a new social order. Amitav Ghosh, in *The Glass Palace* (2000), illustrates how European characters had to learn how to understand and function in a world where the colonial rule was falling apart, where cultures were entangled into one another, where 'whiteness' itself was in a constant state of dilution.

In addition, digital and media spaces provide the theme of cultural adaptation by mediating whiteness in response to global racial discourses. In (Roy and Deshbandhu 2022) Study of how online gaming communities as extension of colonial narrative constructs and deconstructs white identity in virtual world. In these digital arenas white characters are put in the central, marginalizing the non-

white figures. While they offer spaces for restaging white selves, they also provide spaces for contesting and reimaging whiteness in the midst of a postcolonial world.

The expression of reactionary politics and resistance to multiculturalism is often the occasion of white anxiety about identity transformation. According to Futak Campbell and Küçük (2023), conservative political movements in Europe and North America are the result of deep fear about racial and cultural change. The rhetoric of "taking back our country" and resisting "cultural invasion" demonstrates how whiteness attempts to assert itself in the face of perceived decline. The study of Parmar et al. (2023) further explores this anxiety of a Britain that promotes diversity while at the same privileging white legacies of the legal and political system in colonial racialization.

Resistance is critiqued in postcolonial literature through the apprehension of the contradictions of whiteness, specifically its lack of existence without being in relation to the oppositionally defined Other. According to Fernández (2020), the white characters in postcolonial novels are for the most part present between nostalgia and adaptation, unable to discard their historical privilege but unwilling to embrace genuine equality. This is a tension that is there for anyone who has gone through narratives where white protagonists claim redemption or allyship while continuing to perpetuate the racial hierarchies. While the character of Amy Denver in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) provides an example of a figure that sympathizes with the black suffering as a white one while she is removed from the full implications of it.

Other topics concerning the transformation of white identity in postcolonial narratives are white guilt and moral reckoning. In Islam (2024), the author investigates the tendency of the Western literature to see white guilt as an individual burden exempting whiteness from the moral authority in tales of self-reflection. This theme is particularly evident in films and literature where white protagonists "discover" the injustices of colonialism and seek personal redemption, a trope that reinforces white centrality rather than truly deconstructing racial hierarchies.

Ultimately, it is through this process of transformation of white identity in postcolonial narratives where contradictions, resistance, adaptation occur. These texts show that while few without any African heritage will be able to live without confronting whiteness, and they can do so either through gothic hauntings, dystopian anxieties or



hybrid cultural engagements, whiteness is not the embodiment of a static identity, but a fluid one formed in the midst of a variety of historical and social circumstances. This moves from anxiety towards transformation, as Verlie (2022) suggests, requires no less than receptivity to the white racial history without defensiveness and in doing so embrace new forms of identity, that leave the colonial binaries behind. According to de Gennaro (2020), whiteness should be regarded as a relational construct, a construction in relation to other whiteness, and not by its superiority over it.

Taking such narratives as focus for this study stresses the complexity of white identity in the postcolonial world by showing that if whiteness is not the same as it used to be (no longer unquestionable, unchallenged hegemonic power), it is far from having ended and it is in a state of flux. Still existing in literature, film and new media, the postcolonial story tell a story of shifting whiteness responding to some critiques of whiteness as well as possibilities for reconfiguration of whiteness in a postcolonial world.

4.3 Role of Fear in Constructing White Anxiety in Postcolonial Contexts

White anxiety in postcolonial narratives is constructed with a fear that is simultaneously a psychological mechanism as well as a sociopolitical tool to maintain racial hierarchies. White anxiety, mainly spawned from colonial legacies, stems from white fears of losing this power, white fears of losing culture, and white fears of losing white blood (Bilgic & Pilcher, 2023). Fear is often represented in postcolonial texts as a narratological device that reveals the weakness of whiteness with the decolonization and the change in the power structures. In addition, racialized fears are still reinforced in contemporary political discourses and media representations and thus continue to organize the way whiteness positions itself in the postcolonial world (Futak Campbell & Küçük 2023). Fear within postcolonial writing is looked at in this section in the sense of how fear is a functioning component in postcolonial literature and real-life racial anxieties of contamination, racial replacement, and existential insecurity.

The fear that contamination of whiteness would occur by way of racial mixing and cultural hybridity is one of the most pervasive fears in postcolonial narratives. Jahnel (2024) looks at the ways in which non-white bodies are represented as sources of disease and corruption in colonial and postcolonial discourses to perpetuate fears about racial

purity. Fear of contamination is easily found in novels such as *Heart of Darkness* (Conrad, 1899), where Africa is pictured as an uncivilized jungle characterized by deadly diseases that erode the sanity and moral purity of white characters. Marlow's description of the Congo as a space of "unspeakable rites" and "the horror, the horror" encapsulates the colonial fear of the racialized Other (Conrad, 1899, p. 68). In E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924), the Marabar Caves have similar symbolic significance as a space of racial and psychological contamination in which the boundaries between self and Other collapse and thorough white identity found in crisis.

Postcolonial narratives and contemporary racial discourses are also centered on another frightening idea known as the fear of racial replacement. Feola (2021) argues that white anxiety often manifests through the paranoid belief that non-white populations will "replace" white people, leading to the loss of racial dominance. This fear is reflected in the rhetoric of far-right movements, where slogans such as "You will not replace us" (Feola, 2021, p. 533) encapsulate white anxieties about demographic shifts. This fear has been dramatized in postcolonial fiction by setting postapocalyptic tales whose collapse of white civilization is attributed to the pressure of racialized others. In Jean Raspail's sensational anti-immigration novel *The Camp of the Saints* (1973), the title refers to an apocalyptic invasion of non-white refugees into Europe which signals the end of Western culture. Raspail's depiction of migrants as "swarming masses" who bring chaos and disease (Raspail, 1973, p. 205) mirrors contemporary anti-immigration narratives, highlighting how postcolonial fears continue to shape white identity.

There is, of course, existential insecurity upping the wattage of the white anxiety, too—whiteness as deficit, something that can be disturbed through social fragmentation and moral decline. In Clarke (2021), the author looks at the way in which British postcolonial literature deals with the fear of national disintegration in the context of immigration and multiculturalism. In John Lanchester's *The Wall* (2019), Britain is effused with the image of a fortress beset with guards whose job it is to keep out migrants that are perceived as existential threats, a fortress that resembles a wall, a reduta, an impenetrable boundary built on layers of invisible barriers, a metaphorical fortress wall. Alternatively, the novel speaks to real life fears of border security, national sovereignty and how postcolonial fear is weaponised in justification of such exclusionary policies. Likewise in Mohsin Hamid's *The*



Reluctant Fundamentalist (2007), the Pakistani student protagonist's transformation from a Vietnamese sojourner to an American and British academic and finally to an anti-American critic all against the backdrop of Western hegemony represents a threat, and the white American narrator, represents the fear of ideological control escaping the West. The novel's final ambiguous encounter, where the white narrator perceives a "threat" in Changez's calm demeanor, exposes the irrational yet deeply ingrained fear that whiteness harbors toward postcolonial subjects (Hamid, 2007, p. 184).

Postcolonial narratives also deconstruct the fear that is deliberately created and managed to sustain the white dominance. In *White* (2023) the author explains how the colonial myths have perpetuated racial fears which have included native savagery and white victimhood. Antoinette's descent into the madness, pictured in *Wide Sargasso Sea* (Rhys, 1966) is set around her fear of debilitating her Black house servants, illustrating that white anxiety is founded on the loss of the colonial power. Like the broader colonial fear of retribution, her paranoia involves whiteness, cast always in peril from racialized Other. Also Ancuta (2021) brings up how the white characters from the South Asian gothic literature are haunted by the ghosts of colonial violence and are not able to rid of their own racial fears that they once imposed on their subjects.

Contemporary nationalist movements, moreover, (are) a further reinforcement on the fear of contamination, of racial replacement and existential insecurity. According to Parmar, Earle, and Phillips (2023), white anxiety has played a role in creating Britain's racialized policies for Brexit and anti-immigration policies. Numerous politicians tapped into the fears of losing national and racial integrity while describing multiculturalism as a threat to Britain's historical and racial integrity. This is similar to the fears expressed in postcolonial literature as whiteness always finds a way to affirm itself in this changing world.

White anxiety is amplified by fear based narratives on digital spaces, as well. In first person shooter games such as online gaming, Roy and Deshbandhu (2022)'s study reflects on how racialized fears are reflected in online gaming communities where white characters are viewed as defenders of civilization against racialized enemies. These colonial tropes about perpetual white heroism and non white barbarism are perpetuated in these virtual spaces that the whiteness is always being besieged. The study reveals

that white anxiety is not just a literary or political matter, but it spreads to the contemporary digital cultures in which race and power are constructed in the virtual settings.

Postcolonial psychoanalytic theory is moreover used to further analyze the psychological part of fear in white anxiety. According to Kinnvall and Svensson (2022), white anxiety is a defense mechanism against the threat to the racial identity. This rearing of white fear often takes the shape of projection, where white subjects give light their fears onto racialized others. In *Beloved* (1987), Toni Morrison's haunting story of trauma and slavery, Sethe is haunted by the trauma of slavery and is seen by the white characters surrounding her as a source of danger rather than victim. Such an inversion of fear reveals the deep racism that resides in whiteness, where whiteness projections of guilt and accountability fall upon those who have long been oppressed (Morrison, 1987, p. 215).

4.4 Postcolonial Critique of White Anxiety

The analysis of postcolonial literature demonstrates white anxiety through modern-day exposure of foundational racial structures together with their ideological inconsistencies which sustain racial discrimination. Postcolonial writers demonstrate their texts use compositional methods to analyze and deconstruct white fear while showing how it emerged due to shifting social power dynamics during decolonization (Bilgic & Pilcher, 2023). Postcolonial writers use scholarly techniques as well as inversion methods to dismantle classic expressions of whitened identity because these authors display critical understanding that whiteness exists as more than just a universal standard but operates as a racially constructed force that supported colonial crimes and continues modern racial uncertainties.

Among the primary approaches that postcolonial texts employ to evaluate white anxiety they show its cultural and historical background. *White* (2023) demonstrates through his study that colonial myths established white supremacy views which continue influencing modern racial tensions. *Through Things Fall Apart* (1958) Chinua Achebe opposes colonial arguments favoring European power by demonstrating how white missionaries together with colonial officials inflict their cultural beliefs upon Igbo communities. Mr. White missionary Smith becomes characterized in the story as an unflexible and narrow-minded individual who defends himself from Igbo cultural independence. The white supremacy foundation faces



danger from indigenous resistance because of this anxiety which persists in colonial mentality.

The dominant part of his nature displayed an absolute black-white viewing perspective. The missionary demonstrated his belief that anything black equaled evil (Achebe, 1958, p. 184). Through his writing Achebe reveals how colonial discourse created non-white cultures as threats for domination purposes since white anxiety was embedded within colonial ideology from its inception.

Postcolonial literature combats white supremacy through inversion by flipping existing racial order to show its ridiculous nature. In *Wide Sargasso Sea* (Rhys, 1966) the author expands on Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* by using Bertha Mason's perspective as a Creole woman whose love interests Rochester dehumanizes. Through the character of Rochester in *Wide Sargasso Sea* Rhys showcases white male fear of racial and cultural fusion by illustrating how he transfers his own doubts onto Bertha.

People may deceive others for a while, yet reality will eventually unveil the truth which leaves them isolated. The phrase concludes with, "And you are alone" from the written work (Rhys, 1966, p. 107).

In this moment the author demonstrates postcolonial writing techniques that challenge societal assumptions about non-white alienation since Rochester realizes marginalization similar to how non-white characters feel. Satire along with irony functions as strong methods to expose and dismantle defensive and fragile behavior from white people. According to Quinan (2020) humor functions as the fundamental method postcolonial writers use to invalidate white anxiety. According to Thomas King in *The Inconvenient Indian* (King, 2012) he uses irony to expose white colonial attempts to control indigenous identity because their anxiety stems from their desire to dominate rather than any genuine existential fears.

"Whites love dead Indians. Living ones not so much" (King, 2012, p. 53).

Through satire King reveals how white fear pretends to protect its status as dominant race even though it keeps non-whites excluded from power. White people use anxiety as an effective rhetorical strategy instead of genuine oppression because their experiences contradict reality.

Through their analysis Postcolonial texts demonstrate that white anxiety functions to continue maintaining racial inequality between white and non-white populations. According to Clarke (2021) postcolonial British authors

analyze how nostalgia for colonial power systems boosts white emotional distress especially during depictions of national downfall. The post-war British society displays hostility toward Caribbean immigrants according to Levy's (2004) *Small Island* because racial and cultural transformations generate anxiety from white citizens. Queenie mentions her observations regarding that circumstance in which whites feel they do not belong in their own country but brought black immigrants there.

The white population claims Caribbean immigrants should not be there yet they originally brought them to the British islands. Levy (2004) notes that British people refuse to acknowledge Caribbean immigrants (p. 292). By examining white anxiety Levy demonstrates that white people simultaneously hate their racial dependence on Other subjects while this dependence remains essential to their white identity thus revealing the inherently troubled way whiteness relates to racial others.

White anxiety manifests strongly in dystopian postcolonial fiction because writers exploit it to reveal its unreasonableness and destructive effects. According to Giuliani (2020) postcolonial dystopias use exaggerated fear of racial decline in order to show their self-contradictory nature. Mohsin Hamid presents the extensive refugee migration into Western nations using magical realism in his 2017 work by showing doors that enable instantaneous worldwide travel. Modern xenophobic fears appear through white reactions toward these events.

People began to feel that all around them strangers had become the dominant presence. The book establishes that these unfamiliar faces spread throughout the world (Hamid, 2017, p. 161). In his work Hamid challenges racial stereotypes about invasions by showing how baseless prejudices disregard logical reasoning.

Postcolonial narratives highlight another vital drawback of white anxiety when it functions as a basis for excluding and violent behaviors. Feola (2021) shows how far-right political groups currently use white victimhood rhetoric which repeats colonial narratives about white settlers being threatened by native resistance during colonization. J.M. Coetzee portrays white South African societal anxiety through his protagonist David Lurie in *Disgrace* (1999). White South Africans construct their lost dominance as an existential crisis with this statement whereby Black South Africans produce his fear.



"He speaks Italian, he speaks French, but on this soil, he is mute" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 115).

Lurie's unsuccessful attempts to adapt to postcolonial South Africa demonstrate the sense of disorientation white people experience when their historical authority fades away whereas the story reveals the egocentric characteristics of white distress.

Postcolonial assessments demonstrate that while white identity shows vulnerability without control over others it has the capability to transform into different structures that acknowledge equality. Verlie (2022) studies the process by which climate change stories compel white individuals to face global interconnectedness as they confront their anxieties. Inside Amitav Ghosh's *The Great Derangement* (2016) the author examines how European climate disaster narratives depict global threats as independent forces which challenges the Eurocentric perspective (2016, p. 128).

"The uncanny truth is that the monsters are not beyond the horizon; they are within" (Ghosh, 2016, p. 128).

The critique presented by Ghosh shows white anxiety exists deeper than external developments since true change demands direct examination of this psychological state. Postcolonial literature establishes structured criticism of white anxiety through investigative analysis of its foundation and reverse story presentation and mocking and sarcasm that undermines its validity. The texts question how whiteness generates its threatened state while upholding its governing power. Postcolonial authors work beyond documentation of white anxiety toward actively demolishing its power which demonstrates that acceptance of fair and self-aware racial history represents the solution for white anxiety resolution.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

White anxiety presents in postcolonial narratives because it connects strongly with both past power relationships and current racial debates. White anxiety appears as both a psychological and systemic reaction because shifting racial hierarchies produce three main manifestations: contamination fears and concerns about racial replacements and existential insecurities. The study evaluated postcolonial texts qualitatively to show how white anxiety survives under its defensive mechanisms within writing that dismantles white supremacy foundations. The employment of literary devices including inversion and satire alongside counter-narratives reveals

writers in the postcolonial era how basic white identity consists of paradoxes together with weak foundations which challenge universal white supremacy.

Postcolonial texts present strong critical platforms which separate white anxiety into two operational roles between control mechanisms and indications of ontological insecurity. The conception of whiteness revolves around racial purity and contamination as viewed in both *Heart of Darkness* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* by constructing its identity through opposition to racialized Others. Through studying racial replacement fears in *The Camp of the Saints* and *Exit West* contemporary political concerns pertaining to migration and multiculturalism become shown to inherit postcolonial paranoid elements. White victimhood exists in a contradictory condition in *Disgrace* and *Small Island* because while white characters believe they wield power they simultaneously maintain that power through narratives of their endangered position.

Future research together with sociopolitical discussions should incorporate these verified findings as basis for their work.

- Additional research requires interdisciplinary collaboration between psychoanalysis and political science with media studies to study white anxiety in various social and cultural environments. Further analysis of modern digital media next to historical postcolonial literature will expose better how white anxiety continues to persist through current social media practices and online gaming cultures.
- Educational institutions and academic programs must include postcolonial counter-narratives in their curricula because this practice promotes critical racial history analysis. School institutions can develop an enhanced white racial understanding by introducing educational content which confronts racial fear.
- White anxiety exists as both cultural and political forces that influence policy decisions about immigration restrictions alongside nationalist and racial integration circumstances. Policies need to address white fear to stop it from distorting security discourses and exclusionary deportation measures while maintaining policies that do not establish racial divisions in the name of national protection.
- Media producers, including filmmakers and journalists should remain responsible in their



storytelling when showing racial anxieties. White victimhood and paranoia in news media and entertainment require critical study to prevent the creation of discriminatory narratives.

- Future scholarly research about postcolonial studies should transform the understanding of whiteness by examining new ways to redefine and redefine whiteness independently of dominance and exclusion. Ghosh (2016) together with Verlie (2022) argue that transforming from fear to interdependence will allow whiteness to develop past its defensive stance thus enabling effective postcolonial engagement.

White anxiety continues to demonstrate intricate changes within postcolonial discourse yet its analysis creates opportunities to support racial fairness between groups. Postcolonial literature absorbs white anxiety then uses this absorption to challenge traditional whiteness before redefining it by incorporating historical responsibility into a new postcolonial definition. Future scholarly work should study the merging of literature with policy and media to develop racial anxieties so the discourse about whiteness shifts away from weakness toward meaningful collaboration with postcolonial circumstances.

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