'[P]eople will wonder why this black woman': Double Consciousness, Controlling Images and Intradiegetic Recentering in Marlon James' (2014) *A Brief History of Seven Killings*

Naomi Adam, University of Liverpool
N.C.Adam@liverpool.ac.uk

0. Abstract

This paper takes as its case studies two short excerpts from Marlon James' (2014) Man Booker Prize-winning novel, *A Brief History of Seven Killings*. These passages are internally focalised through Kim Clarke, a homodiegetic narrator prone to supposition, speculation, and hypothetical perspective-taking. Meanwhile, as an ethnically black Jamaican and a woman, she is also subject to the intersecting oppressions which result in double colonisation (see e.g. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2013). [i] Here, I explore how her societal subordination translates to her narrative style, yoking together concepts from the fields of postcolonial studies (double consciousness), sociology (controlling images), narratology (possible worlds theory) and stylistics (Text World Theory). Centrally, I build upon Ryan's (1991) established notion of recentering to propose my own hyponym, *intradiegetic recentering*. This coinage is intended to capture the embedding of perspectives which occurs when Kim thinks about what others think of her. However, it also has the potential to be more widely applicable. After outlining the parameters of this term, I illustrate how it functions alongside the phenomena of double consciousness and controlling images within the free-direct workings of narrator-focaliser Kim's mind. The result is an idiosyncratic mind style within the Text-actual World that reflects race and gender relations in our Actual World.

Keywords: A Brief History of Seven Killings, *controlling images, double consciousness, intradiegetic recentering, [Man] Booker Prize, Marlon James, possible worlds theory, Text World Theory*.

1. Introduction

We are each of us apt to project the perspectives of people around us, especially as they relate to ourselves. It is part of the innately human tendency referred to by psychologists as 'Theory of Mind' (Apperly 2012). What is striking about the exercise of this faculty in Section 3, Chapter 1 of Marlon James' (2014) *A Brief History of Seven Killings* is the frequency with which it occurs. This tendency is particularly notable in the portion of the novel in which the enactor Kim Clarke acts as intradiegetic narrator (James 2014: 277-313). Indeed, it functions as integral to her *mind style*. Following Fowler (1986), this denotes 'any distinctive linguistic representation of an individual mental self' (103), as 'cumulativ[e], consistent structural options [...] cu[t] the presented world to one pattern or another.' (76).

James' sprawling tale is an account of the events spiralling from the near-mythologised assassination attempt upon reggae supremo Bob Marley, just prior to the 'Smile Jamaica' peace concert in December 1976. It is this which constitutes the novel's 'presented' (Fowler 1986: 76) or 'Text-actual' (Adam 2021; see Section 3, below) world. The polyphonic novel employs multiple, variable focalisation, assigning more than a dozen characters to homodiegetically narrate each chapter of the novel in a host of registers, from 'Seventies American journalese to basilectal Creole. (For more on the novel's linguistic texture, see Adam 2020). Throughout Section 3, Part 1 of *A Brief History*, the homodiegetic narrator is Kim Clarke. Kim also serves as focaliser and chief protagonist for this portion of the novel, which is set in the beachside resort of Montego Bay, Jamaica, in early 1979. She is living on the island with her white American boyfriend Chuck (Charles), a bauxite engineer. Kim herself is an ethnically black Jamaican and a woman, and is thus subject to the intersecting oppressions which result in double colonisation. Following Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2013), this notion refers to the doubly disadvantaged societal position of black women. They become simultaneously 'subjected to both the colonial domination of Empire and the male domination of patriarchy' (89); imperial and patriarchal power structures work in tandem to suppress the non-white and the non-male. Ultimately, black women are conceived as somehow 'lesser' due to their racial as well as their gender status. Kim likewise supposes that others in the novel view her as merely 'a Third World woman' (James 2014: 282). Indeed, throughout her chapter, she is constantly cueing up passages of supposition centred around the perspectives of others. In this regard, her imagination knows no bounds: she does not, for example, limit herself to speculating about the perspectives of humans. Not only her neighbours but also the neighbourhood seagulls become vehicles for the exercise of what I here term *intradiegetic recentering*. This coinage owes a debt to Ryan's (1991, 1995, 2015) notion of '[fictional] recentering'. However, it is here applied at a discoursal level of one further remove. Instead of relating to the reader of a fiction, it centres upon the character-character level of fictional discourse. Within *A Brief History*, this process proves both locally and globally pertinent. Alongside its role as a characterisation device, undeniably revealing of Kim Clarke's idiosyncratic 'mind-style' (see e.g., Bockting 1994; Semino 2007), intradiegetic recentering is intricately bound up with issues relating to both race and gender. Kim's recourse to the technique recalls the core post-colonial theories of *double consciousness* and *controlling images*. This paper thus constitutes an attempt to yoke together these three theoretical constructs: the established alongside the emergent; the post-colonial and sociological alongside the stylistic and narratological. This approach ultimately illuminates Kim's pronouncement: '[P]eople will wonder why this black woman' (James 2014: 277). As with all stylistic endeavours, at the centre of this resultant Venn diagram (see Figure 1) is the literary text: James' polyphonic Man Booker-winning *A Brief History of Seven Killings*. Section 4 below thus consists of 'steam stylistic' (see Stewart-Shaw 2017) analysis of two passages from the novel which show intradiegetic recentering, double consciousness, and controlling images in action. The paradigm adopted throughout is a novel amalgam of Text World Theory (Gavins 2007; Werth 1999) and possible-worlds theory (Ryan 1986, 1991), which provides a dual cognitive and ontological toolkit with which to analyse the literary text. Further details of this 'Best of Both Worlds Theories' approach can be found in Adam

(2021), though I explicate it briefly in Section 3, below. Before this, however, Section 2 explores in further detail the theoretical underpinnings of the three concepts referenced above. I turn first to that which is arguably the most well-known of the trio: *double consciousness*, as propounded by Harlem Renaissance figurehead W.E.B. du Bois in the 1900s.

2. The Theory

2.1. Double Consciousness

Double consciousness is a conceptual phenomenon experienced by black people in white hegemonic societies. In *The Souls of Black Folk* (du Bois 1903), double consciousness is used to refer to the process whereby black people are societally primed to see themselves as 'other' through adopting the white person's viewpoint. At one and the same time, they maintain their own subjectivity, thus leading to a doubling of perspectives. Founding father du Bois originally defined the concept as follows: 'It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, *this sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others*' (du Bois, qtd. in Byerman 1994: 14; my italics). Furthermore, he notes that 'measuring one's soul by the tape of *a world that looks on* in amused contempt and pity' (du Bois, qtd. in Gentles-Peart 2019: 54; my italics) proves a correlate of the process. As will become clear in Section 4, the italicised text above is key in the context of Kim Clarke from *A Brief History of Seven Killings*. Indeed, this postcolonial concept proves remarkably revealing in a literary arena.

Nonetheless, some caveats do exist: the concept was originally founded upon an African-American context. However, more recent scholarship from Gilroy (2002 [1993]) argues for its relevancy to 'post-slave populations in general'; clearly the novel's backdrop of 1970s Jamaica fits this paradigm. Meanwhile, the racial dynamics at play in Excerpts 1 and 2 prove less explicit than in du Bois' paradigm. Kim's onlooking, hypothetical neighbours are never identified as either white or black. (Clearly, the seagulls belong to neither racial category!) Yet in 'Seventies Jamaica, a rigorously stratified racial hierarchy existed, and shadism was rife (James and Bailey 2016; cf. James 2014: 289). No matter the ethnicity of Kim's supposititious onlookers, they are likely to have internalised this social hierarchy, just as she has.

Overall, then, double consciousness may be summarised as a concept premised upon internalised societal stereotypes, one reliant upon the process of presuming the perspective of another. Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins explores similar theoretical terrain with her adjacent notion of 'controlling images'. However, these social stereotypes pertain specifically to black women.

2.2. Controlling Images

The sociological concept of 'controlling images' derives from Collins (2009 [1991]), and is central to black feminist epistemology. Essentially, it denotes a catalogue of stereotyped images, or 'tropes' (Commodore *et al*. 2019: 4), which govern public perceptions of black women. These images are socially pervasive, having endured over the centuries. Additionally, they are predominantly negative. In defining the concept, Commodore *et al*. (2019: 1) acknowledge that: 'Once embedded into public discourse, these *narratives* become,

in some ways, accepted truths about Black women, without Black women's input, validation, or consent.' (my italics). Collins' (2009) research led her to posit four distinct iterations of these controlling images. These images and their interrelations are briefly reviewed below.

1. Mammy
   A woman employed as home help, humble and ever loyal to her (generally white) employer.
2. Matriarch
   Almost an inverse of 1), a woman exuding an oftentimes overbearing motherly presence. She is considered 'unfeminine' (Collins 2009: 83), 'controlling and emasculating' (Woodard and Mastin 2005: 271).
3. Welfare Mother/queen
   A woman reliant upon state financial handouts to support herself (and possibly also her family), while being unwilling to work. The Welfare Mother is an elaboration of the Antebellum-era 'Breeder Woman' figure (Collins 2009; Woodard and Mastin 2005); many of the tropes listed here have an established historical trajectory. (Note, however, that the oblique signals the optionality of children in this scenario). A white-collar counterpart to this controlling image is known as the 'Black lady' (Collins 2009; Commodore 2019): a woman of professional power who abuses her station by behaving in an entitled and conceited manner.
4. Jezebel
   A woman who is sexually promiscuous, and also willing to offer herself for money. In modern-day parlance, the Jezebel becomes a 'Hoochie' (Collins 2009).

Meanwhile, in recent years a fifth controlling image has been appended to Collins' original (2009) line-up (see Gentles-Peart 2019; Benz 2020).

5. Sapphire
   A woman who is perpetually angry, confrontational, and verbally aggressive.

Each of these controlling images is reliant upon binary thinking, as white is juxtaposed with black, rich with poor, male with female. (See further Collins 2009: 76-106). Similarly binary thinking occurs in Excerpt 1, below: Kim classes herself as 'this black woman'; her partner Chuck becomes 'the white man'.

The controlling images most relevant to the character of Kim Clarke in *A Brief History* are 1) and 4), as shall be explored in Section 4, below. Meanwhile, as with the theory of double consciousness, there is the caveat that the initial research was conducted in an American context. However, Collins herself acknowledges that 'Intersecting oppressions do not stop at national borders'; instead 'a transnational matrix of domination' (Collins 2009: 250) exists. Furthermore, Collins' case studies are clearly grounded in a real-world (or 'Actual World'; see Section 3, below) context. In contrast, here they are applied to a work of fiction. Nevertheless, her 'controlling image' concepts prove illuminating when applied to fictional characters and states of affairs (Section 4). Indeed, recall that Commodore *et al*. refer to

controlling images as 'narratives' (1) due to their storied nature and lack of basis in empirical reality.

To summarise, then, controlling images as a concept focuses upon (predominantly negative) social stereotypes of black women. There is hence a clear overlap here with du Bois' notion of double consciousness. Namely, both concern the perpetuation of socially proscribed roles for black people which embed themselves in the public psyche. The subsection below concludes this theoretical overview by outlining my own original concept, that of intradiegetic recentering. It too proves integrally linked to the theory of du Bois, though it owes its largest debt to the possible-worlds scholar, Marie-Laure Ryan.

2.3. **Intradiegetic Recentering**

My proposed concept of 'intradiegetic recentering' is a hyponym based upon Ryan's notion of 'recentering'. Originally propounded in her 1991 monograph, *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory*, it has since been refined and extended in, among other works, Ryan (1995, 2015), Ryan and Bell (2019) and Van Looy (2005). Ryan's superordinate term refers to the process by which readers of (or listeners to) a text momentarily forgo their literal, 'real world' surroundings to project themselves into the world evoked by the text. In a specifically literary context, this phenomenon becomes 'fictional recentering' (cf. Van Looy 2005), resulting in 'an imaginative relocation of author and reader into an alternative possible world [i.e. the 'world' of the text; see Section 3, below].' (Ryan n.d.). By this process, for instance, the word 'today' encountered in Section 3, Chapter 1 of James' novel (2014: 279) will be taken to refer to 'February 15, 1979' (275), not the date upon which the novel is read by the reader. Ultimately, the world to which we have recentered gains, if only temporarily, 'privileged ontological status' (Ryan 1991: 18). All temporal and spatial coordinates pertain to this world. Clearly, the concept of '[fictional] recentering' is reliant upon the pervasive READING IS TRANSPORTATION metaphor (on this metaphor, see Stockwell 2009, esp. 80-1, 87). Moreover, following deictic shift theory (Duchan, Bruder and Hewitt 1995; hereafter DST), the process of recentering is premised upon a realignment of the reader's deictic centre. Indeed, the two terms echo one another morphologically.

Complementarily, I suggest the term 'intradiegetic recentering' as a subordinate variant- or hyponym- of Ryan's 'recentering'. It is intended to refer to all those instances within a novel in which one character explicitly presumes to adopt and project the perspective of another. Indeed, although explored in this paper solely in relation to James' novel, this tendency proves just as pervasive throughout fiction as it does in our day-to-day lives. Several studies by Zunshine (e.g. 2006, 2015, 2021) attest to its prevalence within the fictional realm. For the remit of intradiegetic recentering is solely the realm of the fiction, hence the prefix 'intra' in the attributive adjective. It thus proves a recursive variant of fictional recentering. Analogously, Van Looy (2005) has proposed that the phrase 'virtual recentering' be used as a hyponym within the context of video gameplay. My terminological contribution thus follows in the tradition of further fine-tuning Ryan's original framework.

Characters engage in intradiegetic recentering as they muse, conjecture, or otherwise hypothesise about the perspectives of others. Linguistically, this manifests in two

particularly salient ways: a) a shifted deictic system; b) a change in register. Both markers of intradiegetic recentering are amply evidenced in Excerpts 1 and 2, below. Here, it shall be seen that these two criteria are not discrete, but interrelated. Overall, then, with intradiegetic recentering as with double consciousness, we have one individual presuming the perspective of another. Throughout *A Brief History*, both these phenomena prove integral to Kim's idiosyncratic mind style.

Finally, it should be noted that the concept of 'recentering' forms just a single facet of Ryan's wider framework. In the following section, I expand further on the scholar's seminal application of the philosophical possible worlds theory to literature. Additionally, I outline the approach adopted here, which melds possible worlds theory with another theory founded upon the TEXT AS WORLD metaphor, namely Text World Theory.

3. **The Framework**

This paper, like Adam (2021), adopts a combined Text World Theory (Gavins 2001, 2005, 2007; Werth 1999) and possible-worlds theory (Ryan 1986, 1991) approach: a 'Best of Both Worlds Theories' approach. Thus the analysis in Section 4 below hinges upon the Text World Theory notion of 'text-drivenness', whereby readerly interpretations of a text are constrained by the text's specific linguistic make-up. In this context, the micro-level analysis of language involved in a 'steam stylistic' approach proves both fruitful and revealing. Meanwhile, following Text World Theory, below I refer to 'enactors', a term which denotes specific iterations of a novel's characters. This terminology proves especially helpful here, as the case study character is one known by a host of pseudonyms within the novel. Further Text World Theory-derived terminology appears in discussions of function-advancing (FA) and world-building (WB) elements which structure James' text. In short, these denote, respectively, actions which occur in and objects which populate the fictional world (though see Lahey 2006). Moreover, following Text World Theory, the reading process is here conceived of as one generating three distinct ontological layers. These comprise a) the 'real' world in which the reader/speaker of a text is based; b) the world of the text; c) additional worlds generated by and parasitic upon said text. However, regarding these three interlocking layers, my combined approach departs from the cognitive-poetic Text World Theory to borrow terminology from the ontologically-based possible-worlds theory. Thus we have layer a) referred to as the Actual World, in contradistinction to layer b), the Text-actual World. Meanwhile, from this Text-actual World springs layer c), the level of various text-possible alternatives. Layer c) would simply be known as a 'sub-world' in Werth's original (1999) Text World terminology (though see Gavins 2005). Possible-worlds theory, in contrast, provides a bevy of labels for these doubly-embedded world-types. More specifically, a text-actual matrix world may generate any of eight text-possible world-types: 1) an Epistemic World; 2) a Speculative Extension to the Epistemic World; 3) an Obligation World; 4) an Intention World; 5) a Wish World; 6) a Fantasy World; 7) a Prediction World; 8) a Hypothesis World.

Adam (2021) recognises that world-types 2), 5), 6), 7), and 8) are all premised, to a greater or lesser degree, upon an element of conjecture. Indeed, as the premodifiers above make clear,

world-types 2) and 7) are designated by precisely these qualities. These five world-types 'might profitably be grouped together under the heading of 'suppositious' text-possible worlds.' (175). Likewise, text-possible worlds centred around supposition will form the core of my analysis in Excerpts 1 and 2. Given this paper's focus upon the imaginative act of intradiegetic recentering, this is unsurprising.

Finally, before turning to the stylistic analysis of a couple of excerpts from *A Brief History*, and deploying the combined 'Best of Both Worlds Theories' framework, it should be noted that the application of Text World Theory in conjunction with possible-worlds theory is not entirely unprecedented. Lugea (2013) effectively employs the two in a multimodal exploration of the film *Inception*. Nonetheless, in Lugea's article the two worlds-based theories are not applied symbiotically. Possible-worlds theory instead plays something of a supporting role: it is used to 'supplement the text-world analysis' (134). In Section 4 below, through 'steam stylistic' analysis of two excerpts from *A Brief History*, I endeavour to apply the two in concert.

4. **The Text**

4.1. Excerpt 1: Nosey Neighbours.

In the first of these passages, Kim projects the perspectives of a group of gossiping neighbours, thus engaging in what I have proposed be called 'intradiegetic recentering'. The excerpt below, as with the majority of the chapter, consists of 'talk [...] in my own head': otherwise known stylistically as free direct thought (FDT). Returning to the beach-side villa she shares with Chuck, Kim notes: 'I like people seeing me walk to that home, but I don't like them watching me.' (James 2014: 277). Her increasingly paranoiac state of mind is evident as she continues:

Excerpt 1

> They don't see me as me, but me as <u>a woman</u> walking to <u>that house near the beach</u> that looks like somebody up and plucked it out of *Hawaii Five-O*. A house that looks like it **have** no business <u>there</u> and people will wonder why <u>this black woman</u> think <u>she</u> **have** reason to go **deh** so with her head held high like <u>she</u> **own** it. First they will see me as *<u>a woman</u>* who go there once and **have** to leave in the morning with whatever was my rate. Then they'll see as *that woman* who **go** <u>there</u> plenty, and **must be sweeting** <u>that white boy</u> **good**, or at least being discreet about it. Then they'll see me as maybe <u>**him**</u> woman who **leave** at any hour. Then they will see me leaving and coming and carrying paper shopping **bag** and think, maybe <u>she</u> **have** something to do with the house, like the maid. Then they will see that I leave in not good clothes and return [...] and only then start to think maybe <u>she</u> **live there for true**. <u>She</u> and <u>the white man</u>. No, <u>the white man</u> and <u>she</u>.

(James 2014: 277-8; italics author's own)

This excerpt constitutes a Prediction World, based as it is (as in the queenly example of Semino, Short and Wynne 1999: 325-6) upon previous, schematic knowledge regarding individual predilections and societal perceptions. Necessarily framed by a character and/or narrator, in this text-possible world-type 'the prediction concerns the thoughts or internal

states of others' (326). Here, the 'others' delineated by the amorphous, third-person plural pronoun 'they' are Kim's neighbours. Every one of her neighbours is predicted to behave in like manner; no 'break-away' groups are allowed by dint of determiners like 'many' or 'some'. Their castigation and application of controlling images is presented as universal. Nevertheless, the reader must remember that these are not the legitimated, bona fide thoughts of Kim's neighbours. What is presented above is purely conjecture; it is text-*possible*, not text-*actual*.

It is clear, then, that the principles of double consciousness are in play here. This is what Kim believes the 'world which looks on in amused contempt and pity' (du Bois, qtd. in Gentles-Peart 2019: 54) will think of her. Indeed, the entire conceit of Kim viewing herself in the third-person ('a woman.', 'she') evidently dovetails with W.E.B. du Bois' 'peculiar sensation [...] of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others.' (qtd. in Byerman 1994: 14). The repeated references to race as an individual's defining feature ('this black woman', 'that white boy', 'the white man') only compound this. A racialised self-consciousness on the part of Kim (whose free direct thought processes these are) is undeniable. However, here a point noted above should be reiterated. Despite illustrating well du Bois' notion of double consciousness, Excerpt 1 by no means constitutes a prototypical instance of the phenomenon. The national dynamics differ, with the Text-actual World in Jamaica, not America; moreover, the racial and interpersonal dynamics also diverge from du Bois' original case study. Whilst the subject (Kim) is black, the racial characteristics of the neighbours-as-onlookers remains unremarked upon. One may posit that as the majority of Actual World Jamaicans are black (roughly 9 in 10; see CIA World Factbook 2021), Kim's neighbours are likely also black, yet this is not a given. Kim does later remark that the house she stays in is located 'near the beach in an area where only people like Chuck would think to live' (James 2014: 277), which could be interpreted as a veiled reference to race. The clause 'people like Chuck' is particularly pragmatically opaque. The overall implication may be that the area is one accommodating only foreign workers, ex-pats and their families. Via this interpretation, then, Kim's neighbours would be predominantly white, as opposed to predominantly black. Clearly, either scenario is feasible, as is a combination of racial identities among Kim's neighbours. However, no scenario completely precludes the applicability of the notion of double consciousness. Whatever the racial melange Kim lives among, the ideology of double consciousness, piggybacking upon Jamaica's racially stratified social hierarchy, remains pervasive and instilled in all.

Similarly socially pervasive are the controlling image stereotypes which are continually applied to black women (see Section 2.2, above). The excerpt above showcases two of the five: both the Mammy and the Jezebel controlling image are in evidence. The former trope is captured in the clauses 'maybe she have something to do with the house, like the maid', towards the end of the excerpt. This stance reflects the stereotypical 'Mammy' figure recounted in the research: 'the faithful, obedient domestic servant' (Collins 2009: 80); 'a loyal domestic servant to White people' (Woodard and Mastin 2005: 271); 'restrict[ed] [...] to domestic service' (Gentles-Peart 2019: 53). Kim's behaviour ('leaving and coming and carrying paper shopping bag') is presented as merely compounding this image of her as a

'workhors[e]' (Commodore *et al*. 2019: 1) in the eyes of her (hypothetical) neighbours. Likewise, the 'Jezebel' controlling image Kim presumes her neighbours will apply to her aligns completely with the literature on the subject. Her suppositious designation as 'a woman who [...] have to leave in the morning with whatever was my rate', and 'must be sweeting that white boy good', echoes Collins' original definition of the trope. Outlining predominant societal perceptions, Collins explains:

> These women aim to attract men with money for a one-night stand. [Alternatively, their goal is] establishing a long-term relationship with a man with money. [Their] main purpose is to prove them [with] sexual favours.

(Collins 2009: 91)

Further derogatory epithets include 'materialistic' (92), 'available' (Gentles-Peart 2019: 53), and 'hypersexual and promiscuous' (Commodore *et al*. 2019: 1). More bluntly, Woodard and Mastin (2005) describe this figure as a 'whore' (272). This is clearly the pragmatic implicature generated by the italicisation of the noun phrase '*a woman*'. However, this judicious use of italics in the above passage has further significance, especially in regard to the process of intradiegetic recentering.

For the passage clearly exhibits both signposts of intradiegetic recentering. Firstly, we encounter a shifted deictic system. Notably, multiple deictic sub-types (spatial, referential, emotional) are implicated. This combination only serves to reinforce the sense of a temporarily shifted narrative centre, or *origo*, resulting from the process of intradiegetic recentering. Specific linguistic examples include the distal and proximal deixis of 'this' and 'that', denoting, respectively, physical closeness and emotional distancing, or detachment. There are also third-person references to the erstwhile first-person focaliser, Kim. Particularly salient is the euphemistic and prototypically generic '*a woman*'. It was noted above that the pragmatic implicature generated here potentially snidely casts Kim as a prostitute, aligning her with the 'Jezebel' controlling image. Additionally, it is possible that the italics are used in place of quotation marks (a form of punctuation eschewed throughout the novel as a whole), a means of capturing the direct speech remarks of Kim's suppositious neighbours. Likewise, Iser (1978) acknowledges that typography is key in signalling perspectival alternation:

> [S]ignals [including italicisation] are most frequently to be found where different depths of consciousness are to be plumbed. This enables the various layers of consciousness to be offset from one another without recourse to extraneous codes.

(Iser 1978: 113)

Above, the 'various layers of consciousness' may be enumerated as Kim's own, alongside the speech and thought she hypothetically attributes to her nosey neighbours. Indeed, another interpretation of the italicisation above could view it as indicative of the prosodic stress Kim imagines these nosey neighbours will place upon the phrase to underscore their derision. Ultimately, the presence of these negative societal stereotypes within the free direct

confines of Kim's mind highlights their ingrained nature. Kim has internalised these tropes, reapplying them to herself via the medium of her hypothetical nosey neighbours.

In Excerpt 1, there is also criteria number 2 of intradiegetic recentering: a change in register. However, this should not be thought of as an occurrence distinct from criteria 1, a shifted deictic centre: Kim style shifts between lects on the Creole continuum (Adam 2020; Sebba 2009a, b) in order to effect a change in deictic centre. Indeed, as Kim harnesses a more highly creolised register, the lexeme 'deh' combines both criteria: it incorporates basilectal Creole th-stopping into a spatially distal deictic adverb. Further salient indices of creolised language use are evident in the colloquialism 'sweeting' (cf. *Jamaican Patwah* 2021), and verb levelling in the phrase 'she have'. None of these features are typical of Kim's idiolect elsewhere in the novel, which remains broadly mesolectal and lightly marked for non-standard features. Ordinarily, for example, morphological inflections are added to verb forms. '[S]he live there' is unavoidably foregrounded when placed alongside the standard subject-verb concord of the phrase 'that looks like'. Meanwhile, in the final sentence of the excerpt quoted above, the zero plural marker ('carrying paper shopping bag') occurs in a clause placed before the inquit 'think', and is therefore attributable to Kim herself, as opposed to the hypothetical nosey neighbours.

The two signals of intradiegetic recentering (to wit: a shifted deictic system; a change in register) are marked in the excerpts quoted here via underlining and emboldened text, respectively. This explicit marking helps to make visually clear the clustering of sections of hypothesis facilitated by the process of intradiegetic recentering into the perspective of another. It clearly demonstrates that Kim does not continually project the perspectives of her nosey neighbours, but instead lapses into these sections of hypothesis time and again throughout the excerpt (and, indeed, throughout the chapter as a whole). Their supposed thoughts become intimately interwoven with her own.

Meanwhile, these conjectured viewpoints are presented with a high degree of certainty. The negative modal shading that may be expected (cf. Simpson 1993) is not apparent. The speculation is remarkably methodical: consider the fronted adverbials 'First' and 'Then'. There is strong epistemic modality in evidence in both the full modal verb form 'will', and its contracted variant, in sentences 2 and 3, respectively. Evidently, this level of certainty is unwarranted, for Kim cannot definitively know the thoughts and feelings of (multiple) others. Nonetheless, her ability to intradiegetically recenter is spurred by a sense of double consciousness, and bolstered by her evident familiarity with 'controlling image' stereotypes.

4.2. **Excerpt 2: Gawking Gulls**

The extension of Kim's self-conscious awareness to the modelling of non-human enactors' thoughts suggests it may be just as much a feature of her idiosyncratic mind style as a socially instilled tendency, however. In the extract below, she intradiegetically recenters into the collective viewpoint of gulls outside her window. While the two major signals of intradiegetic recentering (a shifted deictic centre; a change in register) are once again in evidence, these anthropomorphised gulls also perpetuate one of Collins' (1991) controlling image stereotypes in their denunciation of Kim.

Unlike Excerpt 1's Prediction World, Excerpt 2 aligns better with a Fantasy World, a world of 'fictions that [characters] compose themselves' (Stockwell 2002: 95), largely as a consequence of its fantastical talking animal enactors. Notably, this text-possible world classification clashes with the intuitive positioning of the passage as belonging to an Epistemic World, due to the *verba sentiendi* ('know') that frames it.

Excerpt 2

> Taking over my own damn terrace saying move **<u>bitch</u> is fi we terrace now**. [...] They couldn't care **a r'asscloth** about me. I know what they're thinking. They're thinking we **was** here first, long before <u>you</u> **start shack up with <u>man</u>** and we **was** here before him too.

(James 2014: 278-9)

This arguably humorous interlude shares many features with the instance of intradiegetic recentering explored above. Crucially, the two signposts of the phenomenon recur. The deictic system shifts, as does the predominant register in use. Kim affects an outsider's perspective on her own situation via generic noun use ('man'). Alongside this, a more basilectal register is harnessed, evidenced in the verb levelling ('we was'), ubiquitous creolised particles (e.g. 'fi') and Creole pronominal system ('we terrace now'). Once again, too, conjecture about the perspective of another is presented with certainty. Employing a factive verb, Kim asserts: 'I *know* what they're thinking.' (my italics). Nonetheless, the use of this verb invariably triggers an Epistemic World; readers are therefore primed as to its text-possible status, and the fact that its content may clash with text-actual reality. Here, Kim's certainty is a mere facade: she cannot 'know' what the gawking gulls are thinking, any more than she can know the thoughts of her nosey neighbours. All is conjecture, imbued with certainty due to her familiarity with double consciousness and controlling images.

For, once more, the reader encounters the 'Jezebel' controlling image, albeit more implicitly, in the expletive 'bitch'. Indeed, the recurrence of this particular 'controlling image' stereotype is not surprising: Collins dubs it 'central in this nexus of controlling images about black womanhood' (Collins 2009: 89) due to its highly pervasive nature. Of all five tropes (see Section 2.2), it is perhaps the most common. Tangentially, the animalistic connotations of this particular epithet also prove apposite, given that Excerpt 2 involves Kim intradiegetically recentering into the avian viewpoint. While Kim humanises the gulls, she supposes they will objectify her. (For more on the commonplace drawing of parallels between black women and fauna, see Collins 2009, esp. Ch. 6; cf. James 2014: 298).

Despite the anthropomorphism of Excerpt 2, it is probable that the seagulls function as counterparts of the prying humans Kim fears lurk outside. Indeed, Turner (1996) notes that talking animals have been a common motif in literature through the ages, frequently figuring in allegorical depictions of society. Additionally, it should be noted that though these particular animals have likely been chosen as vehicles for anthropomorphism as prototypical WB elements in a beach scene, the collective noun for gulls- *colony*- is serendipitous. The homonymy helpfully serves to reinforce Jamaica's racially stratified society, with the island's shadist hierarchy propping up the phenomenon of double

consciousness. Likewise, it is pertinent that the prototypical seagull is white. Somewhat echoing their presumed perspective upon her, Kim indeed explicitly refers to them as 'those white feather bitches' (282). Despite the anthropomorphism, it is evidently not too much of a distortion of du Bois' original theory to apply it in this instance.

5. **Conclusion**

Adopting a 'Best of Both Worlds Theories' approach, this paper has explored hypothetical perspective-taking in *A Brief History of Seven Killings*. This has proved to be a process undergirded by *intradiegetic recentering*, a term newly-coined, based upon Ryan's '[fictional] recentering', but occurring at a different level of the novel's discourse architecture. Its application has allowed for a more fine-grained stylistic analysis of James' novel. Two salient and intermeshed indices of intradiegetic recentering have been identified as a shifted deictic system, and a change in register.

More specifically, the focus has been upon case study character Kim Clarke, narrator and internal focaliser of Section 3, Chapter 1 of James' novel. In the Text-actual World, as an ethnically black Jamaican and a woman, Kim is subject to intersecting oppressions, a result of 'double colonisation' (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2013). It has been demonstrated that this societally subordinate position has resulted in Kim's idiosyncratic mind style; she is afflicted by *double consciousness*, ever aware of how others may view her and the *controlling images* which she may have applied to her.

Central to black feminist epistemology is the belief that 'self-definition' (Woodard and Mastin 2005: 277) is the key to enabling black women to overcome these oppressive controlling images. Commodore *et al*. (2019) suggest that society must 'provide [black women] with the power to tell their own stories.' (8) instead of limiting the public perception of these women to pre-conceived, stereotyped 'narratives' (1). The semantic field of literature here is certainly intriguing; used as a metaphor in an Actual World context, it reflects the storied nature of these controlling images, and their consequent lack of grounding in empirical reality. Meanwhile, in the Text-actual World, the enactor Kim does not behave as the above scholars advocate. In fact, she does the opposite. Ultimately, she allows others to define her, and accepts herself as 'this black woman'. This uncharacteristic passivity is a result of the pervasive nature of the social prejudices she must contend with. If even this stalwart enactor, who survives an almost seven hundred-page, not-so-brief narrative account of far more than seven killings, struggles to achieve self-definition in the way suggested by sociologists, the task is clearly far from simple.

Bibliography

Adam, Naomi. (2020) '[P]laying ghetto': Style Shifting to Jamaican Creole in Marlon James' *A Brief History of Seven Killings*', *The English Language: History, Diaspora, and Culture* 6. 26-42.

- (2021) '[Y]our duplicitous point of view': Delayed revelations of hypothetical focalisation in Ian McEwan's *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*', *Language and Literature* 30(2). 174-99.

Apperly, Ian. (2012) 'What is 'theory of mind'? Concepts, cognitive processes and individual differences', *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology* 65(5). 825-39.

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (eds.). (2013) *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. 3rd edn. London: Routledge.

Benz, Terressa A. (2020) 'Black Femininity and Stand Your Ground: The Elusive Defense of Self-Defense', *Critical Sociology* 46(7-8). 1093-1107.

Bockting, Ineke. (1994) 'Mind Style as an Interdisciplinary Approach to Characterisation in Faulkner', *Language and Literature* 3(3). 157-74.

Byerman, Keith E. (1994) *Seizing the Word: History, Art, and Self in the Work of W.E.B. Du Bois*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

CIA World Factbook. (2021) *Jamaica- The World Factbook*. Available at: http://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/jamaica. [Accessed 22 October 2021.]

Collins, Patricia Hill. (2009 [1991]) *Black Feminist Thought*. London: Routledge.

Commodore, Felicia, Amanda Washington Lockett, A. C. Johnson, Cheleah Googe, and Megan Covington. (2019) 'Controlling images, comments, and online communities: A critical discourse analysis of conversation about Black Women HBCU presidents', *Women's Studies International Forum* 78. 1-8.

du Bois, W.E.B. (1903) *The Souls of Black Folk*. Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co.

Duchan, Judith F., Gail A. Bruder and Lynne E. Hewitt (eds.). (1995) *Deixis in Narrative: A Cognitive Science Perspective*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc.

Fowler, Roger. (1986) *Linguistic Criticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gavins, Joanna. (2001) *Text world theory: a critical exposition and development in relation to absurd prose fiction*. [Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation.] Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University.

- (2005) '(Re)thinking modality: A text-world perspective', *Journal of Literary Semantics* 34(2). 79-93.

- (2007) *Text World Theory: An Introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Gentles-Peart, Kamille. (2019) 'Women of 'Paradise': Tourism Discourses and the Lived Realities of Jamaican Women in the United States', in *Brand Jamaica. Reimagining a National Image and Identity*, ed. by Hume Johnson and Kamille Gentles-Peart. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. pp. 51-73.

Gilroy, Paul. (2002 [1993]) *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. 3rd edn. London: Verso.

Iser, Wolfgang. (1978) *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*. London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Jamaican Patwah. (2021) *Jamaican Patwah: Patois and Slang Dictionary*. Available at: http://www.jamaicanpatwah.com/. [Accessed 18 June 2021.]

James, Marlon. (2014) *A Brief History of Seven Killings*. London: Oneworld.

James, Marlon, and Cameron Bailey. (2016) 'Marlon James | Feb 18, 2016 | Appel Salon', *YouTube*. Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=otZyjVxKx0. [Accessed 20 January 2021.]

Lahey, Ernestine. (2006) '(Re)thinking world-building: Locating the text-worlds of Canadian lyric poetry', *Journal of Literary Semantics* 35(2). 145-64.

Lugea, Jane. (2013) 'Embedded dialogue and dreams: the worlds and accessibility relations of Inception', *Language and Literature* 22(2). 133-53.

Ryan, Marie-Laure. (1986) 'Embedded Narratives and Tellability', *Style* 20(3). 319-40.

- (1991) *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

- (1995) 'Allegories of immersion: virtual narration in postmodern fiction', *Style* 29(2). 262-86.

- (2015) *Narrative as Virtual Reality 2: Revisiting Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

- (n.d.) 'Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory.' Available at: http://www.marilaur.info/pwtext.htm. [Accessed 11 October 2021.]

Ryan, Marie-Laure, and Alice Bell. (2019) 'Introduction: Possible Worlds Theory Revisited', in *Possible Worlds Theory and Contemporary Narratology*, ed. by Alice Bell and Marie-Laure Ryan. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. pp. 1-44.

Sebba, Mark. (2009a) 'Pidgins and Creole Englishes', in *English Language*. *Description, Variation and Context*, ed. by Jonathan Culpeper, Francis Katamba, Paul Kerswill, Ruth Wodak and Tony McEnery. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 388-403.

- (2009b.) 'World Englishes', in *English Language*. *Description, Variation and Context*, ed. by Jonathan Culpeper, Francis Katamba, Paul Kerswill, Ruth Wodak and Tony McEnery. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 404-21.

Semino, Elena. (2007) 'Mind Style Twenty-five Years On', *Style* 41(2). 153-72.

Seminar, Elena, Mick Short and Martin Wynne. (1999) 'Hypothetical Words and Thoughts in Contemporary British Narratives', *Narrative* 7(3). 307-34.

Simpson, Paul. (1993) *Language, Ideology and Point of View*. London: Routledge.

Stewart-Shaw, Lizzie. (2017) *The Cognitive Poetics of Horror Fiction*. [Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation.] Nottingham: University of Nottingham.

Stockwell, Peter. (2002) *Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction*. London: Routledge.

- (2009) *Texture: A Cognitive Aesthetics of Reading*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Turner, Mark. (1996) *The Literary Mind*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Van Looy, Jan. (2005) 'Virtual Recentering: Computer Games and Possible Worlds Theory', *Image and Narrative* 12. 231-46.

Werth, Paul. (1999) *Text worlds: Representing conceptual space in discourse*. Harlow: Longman.

Woodard, Jennifer Bailey and Teresa Mastin. (2005) 'Black Womanhood: ''Essence'' and its Treatment of Stereotypical Images of Black Women', *Journal of Black Studies* 36(2). 264-81.

Zunshine, Lisa. (2006) *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

- (2015) 'From the Social to the Literary: Approaching Cao Xuepin's *Hong Lou Meng* from a Cognitive Perspective', *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Literary Studies*, ed. by Lisa Zunshine. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 176-95.

- (2021) 'The Secret Life of Literature.' Paper presented at PALA Nottingham, 7 July, Online.
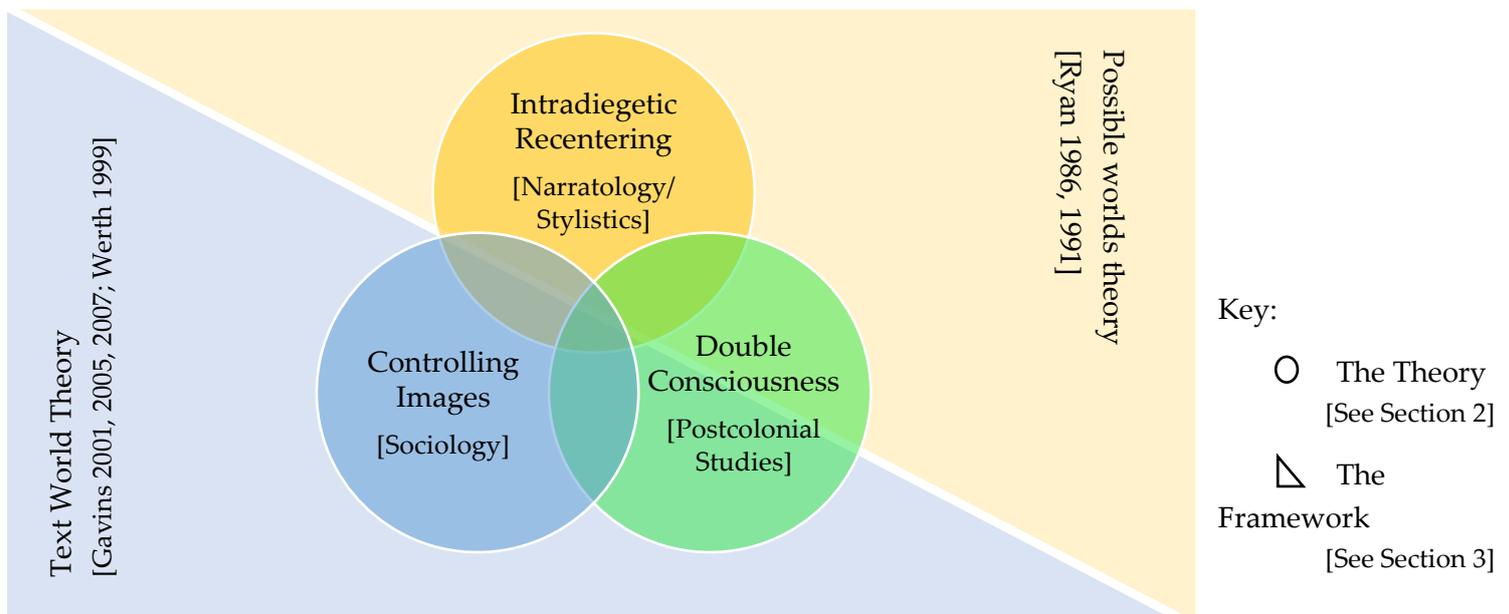
Appendix

Figure 1. The Paper: A Simple Schematic

Acknowledgements

---

[i] Throughout, I make the conscious typographical decision not to capitalise the adjective 'black', in keeping with the lowercase form employed by James in his (2014) novel. Any capitalised instances of the modifiers 'Black' or 'White' reflect the typography of the original citation.