CHAPTER ONE

Setting Sail

"To UNDERSTAND Black people, you've got to understand Liverpool." So argued my friend Scott, a sixty-year-old Black man born and raised in that city. I first met Scott in 1991, a few weeks after beginning fieldwork there, back when I still thought my research was just set in Liverpool rather than being about "Liverpool."

On the occasion of my first interview with Scott, he came over to where I lived bearing a folder labeled "Anti National Front," a reference to a political party on Britain's far right. The folder's voluminous contents forced its seams to burst. The newspaper clippings and other documents he pulled out over the course of the evening also overflowed the folder's topical boundary. One of his clippings, for example, concerned Colin Powell, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Powell's position implied to Scott that in America, Blacks have been given their due recognition, social status, and position, even in the military. He pulled out a copy of the original charter for Stanley House, a cherished but defunct community center established in 1946 for Blacks of south Liverpool. In the midst of describing the center's aims he stopped short, interrupting himself to say, "To understand Black people, you've got to understand Liverpool." He explained that Stanley House was established by charitable White people. But their charter referred to the children of African seamen and the White women to whom they were often married as "half-castes," a much despised term now. He went deeper into his folder, pulling out a series of newspaper articles about the various affronts to Black people—and their responses to these—that had occurred in the last ten to fifteen years. After discussing these materials, he suggested what we might do on the occasion of our second meeting: he wanted to give me a tour of Liverpool.

Scott's tour brought Liverpool's past as an international seaport to life. He took me to Pitt Street, where most Black families lived when he was a boy. Pitt Street was bombed in World War II, and what survived was later destroyed by slum clearance. The Pitt Street of old no longer exists—physically. But it does psychically. Cars whizzed by as Scott and I stood on a corner that approximated where Pitt Street would have been. He asked me to visualize Chinese, African, and Arab people, all wearing traditional garb. I was to imagine them walking around. The picture he painted was not in Black and White. Rather, he emphasized the racial, ethnic, and national heterogeneity of this dockside neighborhood. Liverpool's shipping industry died years ago, and Blacks like Scott mourn the internationalism that seemed to die with it. In its invisibility, Pitt Street symbolizes the disappearance of all things related to the shipping life, including, some say, young Black people's sense of imagination and adventure, their desire to experience the world beyond Liverpool. Scott told me that if I were a young Black person in Liverpool 8—which is, strictly speaking, a postal code that also

serves as a place name and as a synonym for "Black people"—I would have never ventured so far from home. I would have scarcely left my neighborhood, much less traveled abroad. Scott then told me what motivated him to participate in my research. He feared that if I let Blacks around Granby Street, the symbolic heart of Liverpool 8, tell the community's history, I would come to believe that it was born there, in Liverpool 8, and that it originated in the 1950s with Caribbean immigration. He said he wanted to show me the Black community's real history. Blacks descended from *this* place, Pitt Street, invisible though it may be. Just a few blocks from the once busy docks, Pitt Street was the site of settlement for nationals—mainly men—from around the globe. Their origins lay less in other places, by Scott's account, than in the shipping industry that brought them to Britain first as seamen and eventually as settlers.

The most striking aspect of Scott's tour was that it consisted largely of places that no longer exist. To make his points, he often had to narrate around the physical environment. This or that building didn't used to be there. Instead, there were houses where such and so people used to live, or places where they used to shop, or where some other events, integral to the daily life of a seaport, used to happen. When Scott took me to important places that did physically exist—a rice mill and an old police station, neither operative in the present day—he insisted that I take pictures of them, perhaps for fear that they, too, might sail away without notice. He would not move on until I took a shot.

The places that hold the dearest meaning for most Black people I knew are those that are no longer visible to the eye. For Scott and others of his generation, this would be Pitt Street. For Blacks a generation or two younger, it would be Granby Street. The latter place does exist, physically, but it bears no resemblance to the way Granby was "back when all the ships were coming in," as one Black woman in her thirties memorialized it. The constant arrival of ships is what made Granby glorious. Commodities from around the world could be found in the international shops that lined that street. Back then, Black people were confined to Liverpool 8 on threat of the violence or verbal abuse of Whites. But never mind—Black life was gloriously cosmopolitan in Granby's environs. Blacks' corner of Liverpool, by absolutely all accounts, was once vital and teeming. Filled to overflowing. Now, unimaginably, Granby Street is a ghetto. It is commonly described as "dead." So much did I hear about how exciting Granby used to be, and how great Pitt Street was, that I started asking people if they had pictures of them in their glory. No one did.

As we walked from one neighborhood in south Liverpool to the next, Scott told me about race in the city and in Britain more broadly. He showed me exactly where it was that a White person made some unsavory comment to him when he was a boy. A superlative informant, Scott was careful to elaborate the racial implications that made it a slight. He showed me the former location of his school—now gone—where he first learned that he was different. And so it went. We would stand in a little spot, Scott would tell me a vivid story that defied the actual surroundings, and then it was on to the next place that wasn't there.

As we passed the offices of a state-funded race relations organization, the Merseyside Community Relations Council, his geography of race opened up. He

observed that race relations had become an industry in Britain, and he asked me whether this was the case in the States. He took this opportunity to describe Granby Street again, not in terms of its physicality but its "mentality." I would get a hopelessly distorted picture of Black life in Liverpool, he reiterated, if I were to talk to Blacks around Granby Street. They would tell me that they cannot get jobs. Scott, himself a longtime and passionate antiracist activist, opined that this is not the case at all. If only they would just travel out of the Granby area and into town, then they *could* get jobs. They're "putting shackles on themselves," he explained. Granby Street was not part of his tour at all, despite how much it figured as a foil in his narrative.

Scott was born in 1932 to a Black woman, originally from another English city, and a seaman from Barbados who settled in Liverpool. After his parents divorced, he and his siblings had no further contact with their father. As Scott grew up, his mother expected him to help provide for the family. She wanted him to find a living in the city, and thus Scott never went away to sea—which he deeply regrets. Yet, as he went on to explain, men of his generation came of age as the shipping industry was in decline. Seafaring became less of an option. For much of his adult life, Scott was employed as a laborer doing repairs in houses owned by the Liverpool City Council. By the time I met him, he had risen within the council's ranks. In his spare time, he organized within and outside of his labor union on issues of workers' rights and race. And he nursed a healthy obsession with the history of Liverpool.

If Granby embodies stasis, other places are the picture of mobility. As we approached Park Lane, Scott said that any sailor in the world of his own age could tell me about that street. Two blocks away from the city's busiest piers, Park Lane was the first stop for many foreign sailors docked in Liverpool. It was lined with big pubs that occupied several floors and included accommodations. Women were also frequent visitors to Park Lane, Scott said. Shipping companies encouraged foreign—often colonial—men in their employ to mix with women in Liverpool, he continued, because the greater the ties between them, the less likely sailors would be to jump ship and settle elsewhere, reneging on their contracts.[1] Despite the vibrant picture Scott painted of its past, the street was absolutely desolate. Not a soul passed us as we toured the former life of Park Lane. The sight of a sign for Jamaica Street prompted an abrupt turn in Scott's narrative. In a previous life, Liverpool was also a slave port. All local shippers were involved in the trade in Africans, the profits of which built the city, he told me. Even small-time merchants of the eighteenth century would get in on the action, investing little bits of money in the voyages. I failed to ask Scott whether he had mapped out this route for dramatic effect—in order, that is, to exploit the strange and disturbing contradictions that could only be summoned up at the point where Jamaica Street greets Park Lane.

Scott's narrative testifies to the manifold politics of race, sexuality, nation, and gender forged at the intersection of the sea and this port. His tour of invisible places, and of others that were only nominally there, conveyed not only Blacks' "real" history but the poignancy of their fate. The gulf he placed between Pitt

Street and Granby reflects the city's own painful transformation from an interna-
tional seaport of global importance and world renown to an out-of-the-way
place. To understand Black people, you've got to understand Liverpool. In view
of that thesis, the racial knowledge that Scott imparted could only be situated in
and through place.

<div align="center">GEOGRAPHIES OF RACE</div>

This ethnography argues that British cultural notions of place and localness have
shaped all aspects of racial politics in Liverpool. In so arguing, this book affirms
Scott's straightforward but arresting thesis, although not in ways that he might
have predicted. At first blush, Scott's words seem to rely on the reasonable
premise that any phenomenon should be understood in its larger social context.
But here I inquire into the very question of "context" by showing the effects of
its conflation with the constructs of place and localness. In their seeming trans-
parency, these constructs mediate racial phenomena of all kinds: racial classifi-
cation, racial subjectivity, racial community and identity formation, as well as
understandings of racism and resistance to it. The naturalization of place through
ideas about its efficacy is beautifully captured in Scott's own thesis, which hands
ultimate explanatory power directly over to Liverpool—or *place*—which you've
got to understand. I would argue, though, that what one must really understand is
not Liverpool, per se, but "Liverpool," the signifier.

For its rich and tortured history, Liverpool is an endlessly fascinating site
for the study of race and place. Located in England's northwest, Liverpool was
once a seaport of incalculable national and global significance. Its merchants,
shippers, and financial elites were among Britain's most active and prosperous
colonial traders. As well, Liverpool held a monopoly on shipping in the North,
where most of England's manufacturing towns and cities—most famously,
Manchester—were located. Manchester's workers may have been spinning tons
of cotton into cloth during the Industrial Revolution, but without Liverpool's
ships and its perfectly located and highly developed port, that tonnage would
have had a formidable route out of England and into international markets.
Speaking of cotton, and as Scott suggested, Liverpool also played a prominent
role in the British slave trade. Liverpool shippers raked in untold millions in the
traffic in Africans.

By the time of my fieldwork in 1991 and 1992, though, shipping—for three
hundred years Liverpool's one cash crop—had long since died. Once Britain's
"second metropolis," Liverpool currently occupies very marginal status nation-
ally. The city has become one of the poorest not only in Britain but in Europe. In
1993 it received "Objective One" status from the European Union—a status that
likens the city, precisely through its abject class positioning, to a third world
country in need of development. As chapters 6 and 7 elaborate, Liverpool's
precipitous fall from grace perhaps encourages the narratives that circulate in
Britain about this place *as* disgrace. Its designation as "the capital of the slave

trade" is one of many powerful examples of the way race and place intersect in the production of "Liverpool."

Liverpool's Black community dates its history back at least as far as the mid-nineteenth century when British shippers hired African seamen who eventually settled in the city, marrying (mostly) White English and Irish women. This ethnography examines Blacks' uses of that origin story in the context of racism, nationalism, and localism in Britain and in relation to the myriad transnational dimensions of Liverpool's political economy, identity, and social life. As they narrate distinct moments in their emergence as a political collective and as a social group, self-described Liverpool-born Blacks construct geographies of race that render some histories, experiences, and subject positions visible, and others less so. Hence, the various and protracted episodes of local-cum-global racial history outlined above and further elaborated below do not serve as background material for this ethnography. Rather, I show their contemporary bearing on the production of hegemonic and oppositional racial identities in the city, as well as those projected *onto* the city.

This goal requires careful ethnographic attention to the meanings of "the local." The drama that attended the reversal of the city's fortunes mirrored the larger crisis of the fall of the British Empire—although in Liverpool that fall is narrated, like almost everything else, in terms that distinguish the local from the national. If Britain's decline resulted in racialized contestations over nationhood and citizenship, Liverpool's own spectacular fall created a greater investment in all things local (Belchem 2000). Blacks share in this investment, and they do so in distinctly (though not exclusively) racial registers. They boast of being the oldest Black community in Britain; Blacks elsewhere, but especially London, are mere immigrants in Liverpool-born Blacks' view. Bristol and Cardiff, as British seaports with similarly old Black communities, are oft-noted exceptions. Nevertheless, the meanings they invest in "Liverpool" and its singularity serve as frames, at nearly every possible turn, for their understandings of what Blackness means and who gets to claim it. The subjectivities and concrete practices that enabled Scott's thesis thus forced the primacy I give to localness in this book. Scarcely could Blacks discuss a racial issue without appealing to Liverpool and its apparent distinctiveness. As assertively *Liverpool-born* Blacks, they have deployed the local to tremendous effect in their historic struggles against various forms of racism. The cultural and political dilemmas that arise from the mutual constitution of spatial and racial subjectivities form the substance of this ethnography.

In a historical milieu consumed with the theory and politics of globalization, Blacks in late twentieth-century Liverpool compelled attention to localization. Their unwitting intervention is fortuitous, for it allows us to ask how we might theorize the local in view of increased scholarly attention to transnational processes of racial formation. The still-reverberating effects of Liverpool's past as an imperial seaport, one that drew colonial seamen from all parts of the world as both transient visitors and eventual settlers, makes the city a novel vantage point from which to pursue such an inquiry. In terms equally broad, the Liverpool case

prompts the question: How might the local be theorized in a way that does not feminize it either by reducing it to an outpost of global penetrations of whatever form, or by fetishizing it as the site of resistance to globalizing agendas? In what ways, indeed, might "the local" and "the global" be understood as cultural categories implicated in the production of race and gender rather than simply analytical indices of scales, scopes, and scapes? What racial formations would result from the encounter between "global men," many of whom were African, and the "local women," most of whom were White, over there on Park Lane, the desolate street where Scott took us on his tour?[2] In the sexual tensions of empire unfolding in this once jointly local and global space, when and where does the nation enter? Scott specified that *Liverpool* explains Black people. Liverpool may very well be in Britain but the city's national citizenship, as it were, cannot be assumed.

Scott's tour presents in miniature the monumental racial histories that alternately combine and fragment in the construction of Black experience and identity. The importance of slavery and colonialism to understanding Liverpool and hence Black people raises the question of diaspora. As a complex formation of community, identity, and subjectivity, diaspora is generally studied in relation to international migration, nations and nationalism, ancestries and homelands, roots and routes, postcoloniality and globalization. Here I pursue diaspora through place and localness, which receive little attention in ethnographies about Black folk here and there.[3] The cultural studies literature on diaspora—caught up in the claustrophobic vortex of globalization—analyzes place and localness even less. My intention is not to celebrate place or to exalt the local, much less to reduce diaspora to "another Black community heard from." Rather, this book elaborates diaspora by analyzing the geopolitics of diverse Black histories, experiences and constructions of race and identity, as they have alternately and contentiously come to bear in the formation of Black Liverpool. Here diaspora attends to the production of affinities and the negotiation of antagonisms among differently racialized Black subjects—Liverpool-born Blacks, West Africans, Afro-Caribbeans, and Black Americans—not simply in Liverpool but in view of "Liverpool." The analysis also shows how the very histories that produced a "global" Black world—histories that implicate Liverpool directly—find themselves reverberating in a space ideologically defined as "local."

Arguably, no scholar traffics in the local like the anthropologist, who often conflates it with the ethnographic, the specific, and, ultimately, the cultural.[4] The terms *local specificity* and *ethnographic specificity* are interchangeable in anthropology. Because this book is so heavily invested in showing the racial effects of similar conflations in the context of everyday British life, it behooves me to situate this project in relation to two very important ethnographies that analyze race through place and localness in national contexts: John Hartigan's *Racial Situations: Class Predicaments of Whiteness in Detroit* (1999) and Steven Gregory's *Black Corona: Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community* (1998). A comparison of their spatial frameworks shows the implications of constituting the local as either a site of ethnographic and therefore cultural specificity within the nation, or as a location from which national processes of race can be seen in all *their* cultural specificity.

From the vantage point provided by his field site, Hartigan argues, essentially, that to understand White people one must understand Detroit. That argument is premised on Detroit's uniqueness, for not only is the city predominantly Black—perhaps "the blackest city in America" (1999: 4)—but it is also home to a larger percentage of poor Whites than any of the ten largest cities in the United States (9). A second-order differentiation follows: the racial situations he studies unfold in three predominantly White neighborhoods, each with a distinct class composition. Class is the basis of Americans' sense of place, Hartigan suggests, and hence each neighborhood can be considered a unique "zone." These distinctions provide the theoretical anchor for his project, which is elaborated in a section called "The Localness of Race." There he argues that "race functions as a local matter" (13) and announces his intention to show "the distinctive role of *places* in informing and molding the meaning of race" (14, original emphasis). As he explains, "This approach derives from a developing tendency among anthropologists to regard race as they do culture—as a relentlessly local matter" (14). For its bigness and heterogeneity, the United States can be neither the site of "local" (read: "specific" and "distinctive") processes nor a site of culture. For a matter to be cultural, it must be spatially contained in a small place and, presumably, have a fairly homogeneous expression. The more homogeneous, the more distinctive is the place being cordoned off. The racial makeup of Detroit, and the class composition of the three neighborhoods studied, render place stable. Race is the only moving target—albeit a crucial one, of course. Hartigan's work in Detroit leads him to conclude that "racial identities are produced and experienced distinctly in different locations" (14). These racial identities may very well be *experienced* as if they were distinct, but that does not mean that they are. As well, the social forces that *produce* experience do not necessarily originate in those neighborhoods. Rather, those forces may derive from a site that *Racial Situations* renders invisible: the cultureless nonplace lying seemingly beyond Detroit called the United States. These concerns notwithstanding, *Racial Situations* achieves its goal of complicating generalizations about when and how race matters in that country.[5] Yet that aim could have been accomplished just as well without reifying place and localness in the process.

Steven Gregory's objective in *Black Corona* is to challenge the racial construction of "the Black ghetto" as a social isolate, one explicitly marked "distinctive" and therein cordoned off from so-called mainstream American society. Social scientists (especially sociologists) and social policy makers are implicated here. Of his own project, Gregory writes: "This is not a book about a 'black ghetto' or an 'inner city' community. . . . These concepts have become (and perhaps always were) powerful tropes conflating race, class and place in a society that remains organized around inequalities in economic resources and political power that stretch beyond the imagined frontiers of the inner city" (1998: 10). Gregory does not refer to the neighborhood of Corona, in Queens, New York, as a unique place but rather as a vantage point from which to examine the formation of "place" as an object and symbol of Blacks' class-based desires and politics, as shaped by national histories of racial inequality. An ethnography and social history of impressive detail, *Black*

Corona never makes the local serve as a signifier of specificity. In what follows, for example, Gregory makes an implicit call for "specificity" without locating it "locally": "[T]idy sound bites for discussions and debates about the 'state of black America' in the mass media and the academy . . . fail to reveal not only the complexity of black identity but also the social processes through which that heterogeneity has been produced, negotiated, and contested in the everyday lives of African-Americans" (156). Indeed, Gregory does not localize the Black people of Corona. Rather, he specifies the ways that bureaucratic government structures and experiments localized *them*, "producing knowledge about neighborhood needs and problems that obscured the origins of urban deterioration and black poverty in practices of racial subordination" (86). This knowledge, Gregory suggests, shaped the ways that Black political activists in Corona framed their actions and interests. From there, he details actors' initial difficulty in seeing beyond naturalized spatial boundaries and shows their ultimate success in recognizing their artificiality. In sum, Gregory's critical intervention is to lend ethnographic "specificity" to the *normalization* of the local.

Corona, despite its "smallness," serves as a vehicle to expose the specificity of *American* racial politics. One could, of course, say that Corona is not Detroit. For that matter, it might not be like other neighborhoods in New York City. But what would be the point of arguing that any of these other places are, therefore, departures from the United States rather than—in equal measure—productions of the United States? Even if Corona is not like every other spot on the American map, its possible difference from other places need not imply an exceptional status. Similarly, to the degree that Corona does seem to function well as a mirror onto the United States, it need not be confused as an exemplar of it. Rather, what begs analysis is why and to what effect a particular group of historical actors might be moved to make place serve such functions. These are not Gregory's concerns, nor should they necessarily be. These are my obsessions, and they grow out of the conundrum presented by the racial politics of place and localness in Liverpool—or is it Britain?

With a bit of rearranging, then, Scott's thesis can stand as my argument. To understand race in Liverpool, you've got to understand place in Britain. The ambiguous and sometimes tense relationship between Liverpool and Britain is perhaps the most important instantiation of a national politic of place that shapes race in that city. I often use the phrase *Liverpool/Britain* in order to highlight the instabilities at work and to keep Britain in view at precisely those moments when one might be tempted to view Liverpool as "specific," "particular," and hence a place apart. Along similar lines, I use the term *localness* rather than *locality* because the latter is synonymous with *place*. One of this book's goals is to analyze the ways that place takes on meaning in relation to ideologies of localness, while also showing that neither place nor the local is limited to the terms set by the other.

Place is an axis of power in its own right. As a basis for the construction of difference, hierarchy, and identity, and as the basis of ideologies that rationalize economic inequalities and structure people's material well-being and life chances, place is a vehicle of power. While I follow a host of other scholars in treating it as

such, my contribution is to show the mediating effects of place on race, emphasizing in the process that race is not autonomous.[6] Race takes its changing and contradictory shape in dynamic interaction with other forms of power—an argument most commonly made in relation to class and gender. Place, I further argue, must be understood first and foremost as an abstraction, not a set of physical properties just there for the eye to see.[7] Like race and gender, place operates powerfully, though not exclusively, through the invocation and naturalization of matter. Yet one cannot see, touch, or in any other perceptual way "sense" or physically occupy, all that gave rise to Scott's tour, which advanced the thesis that (a largely invisible) Liverpool explains. The very urge to make meaning out of the materiality of places—what they look like, feel like, and where they are, for example, and who occupies them, what social relations define them, and what processes unfold within them—is produced through an axis of power and subjectivity that we might call *place*. Understood thus, *place* is not photographable (hence the absence of pictures in this book), although places are. Moreover, the materiality of a place lies not merely in its physical, visible form (and visibility itself is a moving target) but in its identity as, for example, a seaport, or as the original site of Black settlement, or as a site hospitable or hostile to capital investment, or as one of Britain's problem cities. In similarly discursive terms, place's materiality is produced through enactments of the very premise—implicit though it might be—that place matters. "You've got to understand Liverpool." Power further manifests in the naturalization of place *as* matter—that is, in the ways that a place's physicality is "read" and rendered significant. For example, in 1981, in the aftermath of three days of very violent, very racialized riots in Liverpool 8, where most Blacks lived, state officials deemed that the roots of Black people's "problem" lay in their uncheery environment. So the government arranged for trees to be planted on Princes Avenue, Liverpool 8's main thoroughfare. I shall have more to say about those trees, but for now they introduce this book's critical concern for the attribution of agency to place's *apparent* materiality or, put otherwise, the use of place-as-matter to explain the social.

Toward those ends, I find phenomenology quite useful—not as a theoretical tool but as an interpretive frame. Philosophers, urban planners, and anthropologists draw from that school in suggesting that place is significant, primarily, as physical matter—particularly as an object of people's everyday perceptual activities. But not only that. Place is defined by its physical *particularity,* which exerts an intense effect on human experience. The cultural logics of place through which England and Englishness are constructed, I would suggest, can be productively considered a folk version of phenomenology.

So what is phenomenology? In short, it is the study of experience and perception. Philosopher Robert Sokolowski defines it as "the science that studies truth" and the method through which that truth can be accessed (2000: 185).[8] Through phenomenology, one hopes to achieve a "transcendental attitude," which enables the apprehension of things—objects—as they are rather than how they are preconceived to be ("the natural attitude"). In reflecting on the object in question, one comes to understand how human consciousness and being are constituted through

the experience of that object; as part of that same process of reflection, the nature of that object's being also comes to be fully (transcendentally) apprehended.

> When we shift from the natural attitude to the phenomenological, we raise the question of being, because we begin to look at things precisely as they are given to us, precisely as they are manifested. . . . We begin to look at things in their truth and evidencing. This is to look at them in their being. We also begin to look at the self as the dative to whom beings are disclosed: we look at the self as the dative of manifestation. This is to look at it in *its* being, because the core of its being is to inquire into the being of things. (Sokolowski 2000: 64–65)[9]

The poststructuralist might worry about the appeal to truth and the search for meaning in things as they are, not as they are preconceived to be. All of this implies that things have a prediscursive, pure, unmediated form, an essence unaffected by human activity and social process.

The phenomenologist strives for an identity with the world of objects, a world that is always already acting on him or her anyway. The self, in this view, is at once paramount—for it is the self that we ultimately desire to understand—and sublimated to something else, whose own being must be apprehended transcendentally. The key question thus becomes, as Martin Heidegger puts it, "In *which* entities is the meaning of Being to be discerned? From which entities is the disclosure of Being to take its departure? Is the starting-point optional, or does some particular entity have priority when we come to work out the question of Being? Which entity shall we take for our example, and in what sense does it have priority?" (1996b: 28).[10] That entity, for some phenomenologists (including Heidegger), is place, which is determining on at least two levels. First, as the locus of the self, the perceiving human body is itself a place. And second, the body inhabits place (Casey 1996: 34). A hallmark of the phenomenological view of place is that *its* being dynamically affects *human* being and experience. As Edward Casey explains,

> place . . . functions like a general feature, even a condition of possibility, of all human . . . experience—however expansive the term "experience" is taken to be. On the other hand, place is also a quite distinctive feature of such experience. Place is not a purely formal operator empty of content but is always contentful, always specifiable as this particular place or that one. . . . The deconstruction of this distinction will already be effected by the character of place itself, *by its inherent generative force.* (1996: 29, emphasis added)

Place is matter that acts—and acts *first*. Through its particularity, place generates effects on human consciousness and experience, even if the affected humans remain oblivious. In their introduction to *Senses of Place*, Steven Feld and Keith Basso suggest that "no one lives in the world in general. . . . What could be truer of placed experience . . . than the taken-for-granted quality of its intense particularity?" (1996: 11). Motivated by the desire to identify what human beings most fundamentally require for the spiritual nourishment of their souls, Heidegger famously examined place in terms of dwelling (1977).[11] As Casey suggests, "Heidegger . . . insist[s] that it is in dwellings that we are most acutely sensitive to the effects of places upon our lives" (1996: 39).

Again, my point is not to endorse such perspectives but to lay the groundwork for one of the arguments that follows, which is that a folk phenomenology undergirds constructions of England, English places (and un-English ones), and Englishness. I study how people make sense of place-as-matter, a practice that includes reading landscapes and acting on the view that place acts, that it shapes human consciousness. To return to the example above, the British government of the early 1980s seemed to believe that the physical environment of Liverpool 8 affected its residents in some terribly adverse ways, making it impossible for them to dwell in ways that nourish the soul, to use Heidegger's terms. That is, for the government, "trees" made sense as an answer to the questions posed by the most destructive riots of twentieth-century Britain (chapter 3). Undeniably, the state could have devised the tree solution as part of a political maneuver in which it feigns interest in the residents with this *visible* display of largess while discounting their explanations of the riots and ignoring their grievances. Perhaps there were additional impulses at work. For centuries, English folklore and literature have invested trees with spiritual powers over humans. According to Peter Ackroyd's gushing study of the English imagination, trees appear again and again as the guardian spirits of English people and places (2002: 3–7). Moreover, greenery of all kinds, especially gardens, have been central to both English senses of place and English senses of self—again, for centuries (Ackroyd 2002: 411–18).[12] For the elevation of spirit that it alone makes possible, the "green and pleasant land" of the Lake District has been, arguably, an unrivaled symbol of Englishness. Being bleak, Liverpool 8 was completely out-of-place, fundamentally inconsistent with the (imagined) English pastoral and hopelessly incapable of nourishing the soul. Could the trees have been planted as an effort to spawn a more "pleasant" disposition among the people of Liverpool 8?

In addition to addressing the effects of places on selves, phenomenology also treats place-as-self. In his ethnography of the Western Apache, Keith Basso makes the connection by observing that both places and selves are reckoned to be individuals; both go by names (1988, 1996). This ethnography takes that formulation in a critical direction, analyzing the ways that historical subjects are encouraged to perceive—in the sense of "to conceptualize"—a place as "individual." More to the point, I draw attention to how a place is "individuated," to invoke Foucault's term for the production of "specific" kinds of bodies and selves (1977). I show how racial subjects come into being—in all their "specificity"—through the *idea* that places are essentially selves.

THE PLACE OF BRITISHNESS AND ENGLISHNESS

Not much distance lay between Scott's thesis, "To understand Black people, you've got to understand Liverpool," and Doreen Massey's argument that "Places are spaces of social relations" (2000: 458). A tour-like, autobiographical passage follows that statement:

> Take this corner of a council estate; on the southern outskirts of Manchester. . . . My parents lived here for nearly fifty years and have known this spot for even longer.

> Their lives have taken it in, and made it, for over half a century. Both they and it, and their relationship to one another ("place" and "people") have changed, adjusted, readjusted, over time. (458)

Currently a growth area in American anthropology, place has long been the object of rich and prolific theorizing in Britain. In the United States, the most well-known and commonly cited geographers, including Doreen Massey, David Harvey, Neil Smith, and Michael Watts, all hail from Britain. Geography is institutionalized in Britain to a far greater degree than in the United States, a difference attributable, at the very least, to the field's importance to imperialism.[13] It might also owe to the fact that British conceptions of the social—and the hierarchies supported by them—have long been routed through place. Let's begin with place's changing relationship to race, as manifested in the historical constitution of the categories *English* and *British*.

In his brilliant book, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity*, Ian Baucom makes an argument to which I shall refer on numerous occasions. He argues that "Englishness has consistently been defined through appeals to the *identity-endowing* properties of place" (1999: 4, emphasis added). Baucom traces this reification to the early nineteenth century, when English historians sought to pinpoint the definitive basis of English identity. Their concerns about their bloodlines made that project both difficult and necessary. In 1700, for example, Daniel Defoe made a mockery of Anglo-Saxons' pretensions to racial purity in his satirical poem, *The True-born Englishman.* Their blood had been contaminated by all manner of foreign invaders. The writing of nineteenth-century English historians reflects their anxious efforts to explain authentic Englishness without relying on race. In the end, Baucom argues, they proposed that distinctly English places produced Englishness. Deploying what I am calling a folk phenomenology, these historians suggested that traditions emerged from uniquely English places such as cricket fields. An essential English spirit arises mystically from the very soil of England and accounts for historical processes. Just *beholding* an English place could put one under its irreversible spell. Even Indians, it was suggested, could become English thus. Their "blood" did not render them immune from the power of English places. As for Anglo-Saxons, their bloodlines may have been murky, but, these writers suggested, place was stable and continuous.[14] The unitary, racially uncompromised Englishness these historians sought was eventually found in the intrinsic place/self isomorphism.[15] Place supplanted race. While the phenomenological underpinnings of English cultural logics of place recur—as the tree solution suggests—the racialness of Englishness has been reinscribed, most notably through a discourse on Whiteness.[16]

Historically, place has also been fundamental to Britishness, forming the customary basis for reckoning subjecthood in the kingdom encompassing Wales, Scotland, England, and, until 1922, Ireland. (Presently, of course, Northern Ireland remains part of the United Kingdom.) An important digression is necessary here. It bears emphasis for some American readers that *British* and *English* are not synonymous terms.[17] More often than not, the difference matters profoundly.

It is through Britishness that Wales, England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland (the United Kingdom) are linked into collective (though often contested) state-legitimated nationality. The fact that *British* and *English* are often taken for synonyms is both symptom and effect of English hegemony.

From medieval times through 1981, and through prescriptive custom, British subjecthood was reckoned through the principle of *ius soli,* or "law of the soil" (Baucom 1999). If one was born on British soil, one was a British subject—beholden to the Crown. By the late nineteenth century, British soil consisted of one-quarter of the world's land mass. Law of the soil presented a special complication when, at various points, colonial and postcolonial subjects laid claim to British nationality within mainland Britain itself. As will be discussed fully later, British nationalists of the 1960s and through to the present day have been arguing that Blacks could never properly belong to the nation and, even more pointedly, that they could never share culture with Irish, Welsh, Scottish, and English people. In 1981, the government of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher codified these racist exclusions with the passage of the British Nationality Act. To be a British citizen, one now had to have a parent born in Britain. The government obviously intended to exclude Blacks from British nationality, as most of them would not have had a parent who qualified. Baucom sums up the radical transformation thus: "Discarding nine hundred years of legal precedent that recognized a *territorial* principle as the sole absolute determinant of British identity, the [British Nationality Act] determined that Britain was, henceforth, a *genealogical* community" (1999: 8, emphasis added).[18] Race supplanted place.

The 1981 Nationality Act may have made state-legitimated forms of Britishness dependent on genealogy for the first time ever, but this racially motivated move did nothing more than capitalize on the already existing link between place and ancestry in the British Isles.[19] In rural and urban British communities alike, genealogy often establishes place-based belonging. A few ethnographic examples may illustrate the point. In her study of a rural community in Essex, Marilyn Strathern deconstructs the notion of the "real" Elmdon, which villagers define through "old families" among other kinship idioms (1982). Anthony Cohen argues that in the fishing community of Whalsay, in the Shetland Islands, "'Belonging' implies very much more than merely having been born in a place" (1982b: 21). Rather, it is conferred through a rhetoric of continuity dependent on genealogies, which are further mapped onto neighborhood and occupation (membership in a fishing crew). Kinship, neighborhood, and occupation combine to situate all individuals vis-à-vis the community. This use of a jointly genealogical and occupational idiom has broader significance. Like Whalsay, many towns and cities developed through one or two industries (Waller 1983). People often use these industries, even in their obsolescence, to define a place and to produce ideologies of belonging. The nickname for people from the Newcastle area, "Geordie," was traditionally synonymous with the term *pit worker*, a reference to the prominence of the coal-mining industry there (Colls and Lancaster 1992). With the decline of that industry, young, White, unemployed, men now constitute themselves as "real Geordies" by invoking the "labouring heritage" they trace

through their fathers and grandfathers (Nayak 2003: 14). My friend Scott traced Black Liverpool's authentic history through seafaring. As we see in the next chapter, Blacks trace their genealogies as locals through their male ancestors' participation in that place-based tradition. Chapter 4 shows Blacks tracing still other kinds of genealogies in reference to place.

Genealogy establishes local belonging and authenticity in Elmdon, Whalsay, Newcastle, and Liverpool. Interestingly, Doreen Massey advanced her argument that "Places are spaces of social relations" very nearly by tracing her genealogy in reference to Wythenshawe, on the outskirts of Manchester. Although she certainly does not appeal to ideologies of local authenticity and belonging, much less to nationalism, her use of that method is further evidence of the Britishness of that cultural practice.[20] Strathern draws out the larger, again *cultural* significance of the "real Elmdon" by linking it to forms of hierarchy and differentiation that define the society at large: "[T]he idiom of village identity is precisely attuned to an outside world which is highly 'class' conscious, and provides a model for the same articulation of open and closed factors in status structures which preoccupy most English" (1982: 274). Elmdoners may use kinship to define the real villager but, Strathern stresses, these practices are relevant to the world outside of the village because that is where their impetus lay. Though these case studies straddle the historical event in question, the passage of the 1981 British Nationality Act, they collectively suggest that the Act's elevation of genealogy as a determinant of national citizenship was not out of step with British (not just English) ways of reckoning belonging.[21] This point is not offered as a "cultural defense" of racist exclusions but as evidence of place's centrality to the politics of difference in Britain.[22]

Just as traditional occupations imbue place and people with identity, so too does social class give places their meaning. The *Geordie* of Newcastle has counterparts in the *Cockney* of East London and the *Scouser* of Liverpool. These nicknames, for want of a better word, express inextricably place-based and working-class identities. Moreover, on an individual level, one's class background, among other attributes, is reckoned through one's birthplace; the politics of accent shows this clearly. As is commonly known, accents are indelible markers of social class in Britain. Generally, to speak the English standard, known as "Received Pronunciation" (RP), is to speak "posh," a word with obviously elite class associations. Yet the key criterion of the standard is that it defies geographical placement—notwithstanding, of course, its historical origins in London and its continuing association with middle- and upper-class Londoners.[23] At its inception in the late nineteenth century, RP encouraged the view of speakers of "provincial" (a term used for localities distant from the metropole) variants of English as cultural inferiors (Rawnsley 2000). That inscription has relevance to anthropologist Charles Frake's observation that in present-day England it is considered rude to inquire into another person's provenance.

> [T]he impression that one does not casually ask the provenance of someone one does not know well is certainly widespread. It is mentioned in humourous treatises on

English-American differences: "Curiously, for people who identify so closely with
region of origin, Brits refuse to tell outsiders where they're from. . . . [If you ask one]
he freezes, tongue-tied. You have intruded somehow on private matters, and
embarrassed him." (1996: 233)

One has to wonder about the middle-class and other privileged positionings from
which these generalized cultural rules are articulated. Certainly, they are not as
hard and fast as they are represented to be. Not all English people want to
be seen as posh and to escape an association with place. Indeed, local identities
are often oppositional and proudly anti-English, as the case of Liverpool's
"Scousers" will certainly show.

With these caveats in mind, I offer an anecdote illustrating place-of-origin as a
private matter. In 1999 I visited the exceedingly posh town of Bath, whereupon I
made brief acquaintance with a White woman, perhaps in her mid-twenties. She
was a sales clerk in a charming little crafts shop. A few minutes into our warm and
amiable exchange, I noticed the faintest trace of a Liverpudlian accent. And so I
popped the question: "Are you from Liverpool?" With that, our friendly encounter
came to an abrupt close. Positively glaring at me, she replied, "Yes." She uttered
not a single word to me thereafter. She handled my eventual purchase in icy si-
lence. If a lowly American can hear Liverpool in her voice—after all, we are not
known for our ability to discern different British accents—maybe the people of the
incurably precious town of Bath hear it too? And maybe they, unlike crass Ameri-
cans, are too "polite" to inquire into or otherwise invoke her provenance? To the
degree that Britons see origins as a private matter, there must be something about
place that defines one's personhood on some terribly deep level. This woman's ori-
gins, if discovered, would immediately associate her with everything that marks
Liverpool's difference; an abject class positioning would only be the beginning
(chapter 6). Indeed, the trenchant emphasis on *origins,* which connotes fixity and
nature, implies that one can no more reverse the effects of *birth*place by, for exam-
ple, migrating, than one can change one's "race."[24] But one can try to "pass."[25]

Interestingly enough, the rules prohibiting inquiries into provenance are sus-
pended when it comes to Black people. To the degree that some White Britons
refuse to reveal their own birthplace to outsiders, this does not stop, again, *some*
of them from popping the question to their would-be Black counterparts: "Where
are you from?" Blacks' phenotype cancels out the identity that their particular
British accents would otherwise secure. A Black Londoner tells me that her re-
sponse of "north London" never satisfies. So the question gets revised: "No, I
mean, where are you *really* from?" Blacks interpret Whites' insistent questions
on provenance as an effort to establish their "real" identities and hence the place
where they really belong, which cannot be, for example, north London (much
less England).

The centrality of place to constructions of personhood, especially class-based
ones, manifests on another, even broader scale. While individual places are iden-
tified with one or two industries, the North of England has, historically, symbol-
ized industry itself. Northern otherness is important to the present work not only

because Liverpool is—at least technically—in the North, but because it indicates the confluence of representations and economic factors in the production of place-based inequalities.[26] While northern difference and consciousness are as old as England itself (Jewell 1994), their basis in industrialization and then deindustrialization is most salient in the present day. The North's inescapable association with the environmental and social ills of industrialization was etched in Charles Dickens's depiction of Coketown (based on Preston, Lancashire) in *Hard Times*:

> It was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but as matters stood it was a town of unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage. It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever, and never got uncoiled. It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye, and vast piles of buildings full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long, and where the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness. It contained several large streets all very like one another, and many small streets still more like one another, inhabited by people like one another. (1980 [1854]: 30–31)

This passage is notable as *the* classic description of an English industrial town—the basis of many stereotypes of the North that would follow (Shields 1991). The place's harsh physicality bears down on its inhabitants.[27] Generally, the cultural attributes of "gritty England" are working class in nature; they include plain-talking and good humor, tough masculinity and raw manners.

The obsolescence of some northern industries and the migration of others southward forced attention, in the 1980s, to the national geography of economic inequality. Recognizing great disparities from one end of the country to the other in terms of wages, unemployment rates, housing prices, and the cost of living, the press launched a nationwide debate about what it termed the "North/South divide" (Shields 1991). The North and the South were increasingly recognized as two nations, separate and unequal (Massey 1984). Yet comments on postindustrial decline sometimes reinscribed a centuries-old discourse on northern otherness, projecting a disabling social malaise onto entire regions. One method drew on a folk phenomenology in which the physicality of place was assumed to betray an important truth about its inhabitants' selfhood, explaining their actions in turn. In the late 1970s, a serial killer stalked women in the northern cities of Leeds and Bradford. For an academic who studied the murders, the "particular" physical signs of postindustrial decline were informative: "You couldn't help wondering what connections there were between the socio-economic dereliction which much of the geography expressed and the type of violence which was at work in the nooks and crannies of those landscapes" (Noele Ward Jouve, quoted in Walkowitz 1992: 240). The givenness of a place's sorry state explains the pathological actions of the persons who inhabit them.

The same logic suffuses an article that appeared in *The New Yorker* as a "Letter from Liverpool," written in 1994, on the tragic occasion of a little boy's murder at the hands of two older boys.[28] Addressing an American audience assumed to be unfamiliar with the North of England and Liverpool in particular, the author draws the following picture:

> In a northern working-class environment, where to be thought "dead 'ard" is a tribute, boys were left to be boys. . . . The roads near that part of the route [where the boys walked their victim] have the names of Oxbridge colleges. . . . But nothing could be less like Brideshead than this part of Liverpool. To imagine it, you have to set aside images of college quads—and of chamomile lawns, bluebell woods, country lanes, mazy rivers, dappled meadows, rolling downs, and all the other pastoral myths of southern England—and think instead of a vast tract of brick and concrete. Between Breeze Hill and the railway track where James Bulger died, the only grass to be seen grows between the graves in Walton churchyard. . . . [T]he view from the reservoir on top of Breeze Hill is as mean and dispiriting a panorama as you will ever see. The roofs of houses stretch to the horizon: pebble-dash semis, low prefabs, dirt-encrusted red brick row houses, mock-Tudors, a handful of high-rises, boarded-up shops. A large, squat pub called the Mons—"short for the Monstrosity," say the locals—stands, in its bleak anonymity, as the inverse of whatever cozy virtue English pubs once had. This is a landscape emptied of energy and innovation—a city that no longer knows what to do with itself.

This passage evokes the North's abject working classness to perfection. It stereotypes the North with its shorthand reference to unreconstructed masculinity and its relentless description of the landscape's utilitarianism. The harshness of the North is thrown into relief by what the author admits is the mythical "sweetness and light" of the pastoral South.

But there is something more insidious at work in this rendering. In a passage intended to provide some basic context for understanding James Bulger's murder, Liverpool itself is depicted as death. There is a bit of grass, but it grows in a graveyard. The panorama is dispiriting. Emptied of life forces, the landscape sucks the same from its inhabitants. Place's mean and unforgiving physicality explains a despicable, deadly act. With condescension, the author asserts that the city no longer knows what to do with itself—an allusion to the death of shipping, perhaps. Once so vital, Liverpool has become lifelessness incarnate.

The Birth of Liverpool

> "The discoverer of America was the maker of Liverpool." In the Middle Ages Liverpool lay near the fringes of the known world; she could not compete with ports like Venice which lay near its centre. After the rediscovery of America, Liverpool lay mid-way between the Old and New Worlds. No longer was she almost the last station on the line, but an intermediary station with later stops at New York, Chicago and ultimately, San Francisco.

> The geographical advantage of being situated on the western coastline of Europe was shared by other ports, such as Bristol, Bordeaux, Bilbao, Lisbon, and Cadiz, which have long been eclipsed by Liverpool, for they had not our industrial North and the Midlands behind them.
> —Chandler 1973: 9

This quotation is drawn from one of many popular histories of Liverpool. This sweeping panorama all but sets Liverpool apart from Britain. Another British port, Bristol, appears on a list with a set of foreign ones. Other British places are important as aids in Liverpool's rise to greatness. Indeed the city is conjured here as a quasi-imperial power unto itself: the industrial North and the Midlands seem to be Liverpool's own little colonies.

Chandler's opening statement, "The discoverer of America was the maker of Liverpool," quotes the inscription on the city's infamous statue of Columbus. Liverpool's debt to the explorer is commonly acknowledged but extremely contentious—so much so that the statue is kept from public view out of fear that it might be vandalized. Such was the fate of a statue of William Huskisson, a political figure of the late eighteenth century who, two hundred years later, was thought to be a slave trader. Prior to the 1981 riots, Huskisson's statue stood at the entrance to Liverpool 8, right at the top of Princes Avenue, where some trees have since been planted.

In contrast to Chandler's triumphant account of the seaport's beginnings, Peter Fryer indicates that "without the slave trade, Liverpool would have remained much as it had been towards the end of the seventeenth century: 'an insignificant seaport,' 'a small port of little consequence . . . a few streets some little distance from the creek—or pool—which served as a harbour'" (1984: 33). A couple of young Black men I knew could quote this passage from Fryer's *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* almost verbatim. Meanwhile, some of their fellow citizens, members of the mysterious Luso-American Society, have the huge Columbus statue hauled out once a year on his birthday. After a quick, clandestine, nighttime ceremony at the Pier Head (the focal point of the docks), Columbus is returned to his resting place, the Palm House in Sefton Park. With a weird mix of pride and embarrassment, the daily tabloid, the *Liverpool Echo,* reports on the ceremony—but safely after the fact and in a little blip of a story buried deep inside the paper. Liverpudlians make sense of race through the contested histories of place.

Notwithstanding its enormous debt to the Atlantic slave trade, the port of Liverpool, it should be noted, was first developed in the seventeenth century as part of a strategic, military maneuver to control Ireland. This and other aspects of the port's imperial function bespeak what is arguably the defining paradox of Liverpool. Until the death of shipping, Liverpool had always advanced British political interests. But in doing so, Liverpool fashioned an identity for itself that disavowed Britain. Facing the Atlantic Ocean and the world beyond, Liverpool's orientation was always international. Chandler's vainglorious account is one of many locally published histories that imbue the city with a mammoth and quite individual agency of world-historical significance. In another version, Liverpool

is a "gateway of Empire" (Lane 1987). "Liverpool's story is the world's glory." Less popular histories show the interdependence between the city and the nation-state, while also staging the encounter between Liverpool and the world in decidedly racial terms rather than in happily cosmopolitan ones.

Over the course of Liverpool's life as an international seaport, many kinds of ships depended on African workers. Slavers were the first (Frost 1999). Owners of those ships employed the Kru of Liberia as wage laborers, inaugurating a racial organization of labor that would become the basic mechanism of imperial exploitation henceforth. In African ports of call, labor was recruited first to extract local resources and then to assist in their global transportation. With the abolition of the slave trade in 1807, British shippers swiftly developed other kinds of ventures with West Africa, intensifying its economic and political ties as well with India and China. Accordingly, the employment of foreign labor picked up much more steam and drew from more sources.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Britain's merchant fleet was the most dominant force in the circulation of the world's goods. Beginning in the 1870s, and for roughly a hundred years thereafter, Liverpool shipping firms hired thousands of West Africans (particularly from the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, the Gambia, and Nigeria). A watershed moment occurred in 1879 with the formation of Liverpool's Elder Dempster and Company, which brought together firms already trading with West Africa, as well as some of shipping's most powerful moguls. By the early twentieth century, and through the exploits of Elder Dempster, Liverpool came to monopolize the British trade with that region (Frost 1995b: 24–25). Shippers based in Liverpool and other ports also hired Afro-Caribbeans, Lascars,[29] Chinese, Liberian, Arab, and Somali seamen in large numbers. It is impossible to specify the size of any of these groups, either in the shipping workforce or in their presence or eventual settlement in various British ports.[30] Historian Laura Tabili offers a general picture, however. Between 1901 and the 1950s, one-third of the labor force working British ships, or 66,000 men, were from East and West Africa, the Caribbean, and the Arabian peninsula (1994: 42). Within that period, however, the numbers of "colored" seamen working British ships waxed and waned, according to both the availability of White British seamen and the degree of patriotic loyalty shown by shipping companies. For example, during World War I, White British seamen were less available due to their wartime service, and thus the use of colonial labor picked up. At the war's close, the latter fell into disfavor (Rich 1986: 121). The pattern repeated in World War II (Tabili 1994: 12).

In addition to the useful purposes they served in their home ports, colored seamen offered other advantages. Shippers could easily justify paying them less than White British seamen, despite sometimes considering Africans in particular to be better-skilled than Europeans (Frost 1995b: 25; Sherwood 1995). On a less positive note, Africans were thought to be well-suited for the more backbreaking work onboard ship and were, along with Lascars, considered naturally amenable to the punishing tropical climes to which British ships sailed. And with the advent of steamships in the mid-nineteenth century, Africans were, for the same

reason, put to work in the exceedingly hot spaces below deck, in the engine room and stokehold. For their part, the Kru and some Arab men considered employment on British ships to be a relief from the poverty of agricultural work (Frost 1995a: 3). Moreover, colonial seamen, especially West Africans, were attracted to the shipping life because it offered the possibility of jumping ship in a British port, where they sought relief from what they saw as their total subordination under British rule in Africa (Tabili 1994; Rich 1986: 122).

However, colonialism also structured the economic and political terrain of early twentieth-century Liverpool and other British ports, even if in contradictory ways. As we will see below, the ideologies of racial inferiority that justified colonialism were in full force in Britain, both shaping colored people's subordination and providing them a set of idioms with which to condemn racism. In turn, Britain's determination to maintain its empire at all costs sometimes put local and state officials at odds with each other on matters of race, nationality, rights of abode, and repatriation. The imperial imperative served, albeit to a small degree, as a check against racism.

Prior to 1925, colonial seamen had free entry into British ports because they were British subjects. Oftentimes the shipping companies hired these men in West African ports for voyages ending in British ones, where they would have to find accommodations until they got another ship—which could take months. Seamen's unions strongly opposed the use of colonial labor because their constituents were White British sailors whose labor was being undersold. With the exception of the two postwar periods, shipping firms showed no strong preference toward hiring White seamen. Rather, they capitalized on the poverty of the African sailors languishing, often starving, in British ports. African seamen could rarely find other work while waiting around, so to speak, for their ship to come in. Shipping agents would visit various hostels and missions to recruit the labor of these men, who had little choice but to accept the exploitative wages offered. But these men did not passively accept this situation. They drew on the resources of British imperial rhetoric and invoked their own wartime service to assert their status as loyal British subjects and, with that, their rights to fair terms of employment. Mr. D. T. Aleifasakure Toummanah made the case thus in June 1919 at the Ethiopian Hall in Liverpool:

> The coloured men have mostly served in the Forces, Navy and transport. They are largely British subjects, and are proud to have been able to have done what they have done for the Empire . . . the majority of negroes at present are discharged soldiers and sailors without employment; in fact, some of them are practically starving, work having been refused them on account of their colour . . . some of us have been wounded and lost limbs and eyes fighting for the Empire to which we have the honour to belong. . . . We ask for British justice, to be treated as true and loyal sons of Great Britain. (Quoted in Tabili, 1994: 15)

The presence of Africans and other colored seamen in the ports of Cardiff, South Shields, London, Bristol, and Liverpool was, generally speaking, anathema to unemployed White seamen. Although there is evidence that White and colored

seamen, at times, joined forces in seamen's organizations and unions and that Africans were savvy to the role of the press in creating tensions between themselves and White seamen (Tabili 1994), the relationship between foreign and British seafarers was generally antagonistic. No more dramatic example exists than the 1919 riots that occurred across Britain, in most of its major ports (except Bristol). In late May and again in June of that year, Blacks in Liverpool were mobbed and randomly attacked by roving gangs of White men. In the June riots, these men numbered in the thousands. Historian Paul Rich described the June riots thus: "With covert support from the local police, who perceived the blacks, in the words of one police officer, as 'only big children who when they get money like to make a show', the crowds had all the trappings of lynch mobs and were often goaded on by demobbed servicemen" (1986: 121). One seaman, Charles Wootton (also known as Wootten), originally from Barbados and a resident of Upper Pitt Street, died in these attacks. Fleeing the mob, he perished after jumping into the River Mersey to the chants of "Let him drown!" Charles Wootton is a name known by every member of Liverpool's contemporary Black community.[31]

The official response to these riots was to render the colored peoples in Britain the source of the problem. Liverpool's Lord Mayor, for example, referred to these men as an irritation that should be removed (Tabili 1994: 137). Such removal required an explicit racial policy on the part of the state, a responsibility that fell ultimately, if reluctantly, to the Aliens Department of the Home Office (Tabili 1994: 116). The Home Office agreed in principle that non-British subjects should be deported. But, of course, the colored seamen whose expulsion was sought *were* British subjects. In the years immediately following the 1919 riots, the Home Office hemmed and hawed and otherwise resisted the pleas for deportation being made by officials in various British ports. The double bind of the irritants' color and their British subject status posed a major constraint on British state officials, who were acutely aware of the possible repercussions in the colonies if knowledge were to spread of colored men's ill-treatment in Britain, much less if they were to deport these men.

Their fears were well-founded. A riot that erupted in Freetown, Sierra Leone—also in 1919—was initially sparked by the local politics of colonial rule, but developed into a condemnation of the racism suffered by Africans in England.[32] In a petition to the government, the Creoles reported, "There was considerable indignation in some parts of the city at the report of racial disturbances in Liverpool, Cardiff and a few other places in England and Wales which gave rise to considerable apprehension that the 'sea-boys' repatriated from those places with a deep sense of injury would instigate reprisals in Sierra Leone against the white residents" (quoted in May and Cohen 1974: 121). Conscious of the potential effects of unrest in England on political mobilization in the colonies, the Liverpool press called for calm. As one editorial put it: "Careful and commonsense handling of the colour disturbances is necessary if what at present is little more than local hooliganism is not to develop into an Imperial problem. There would be unfortunate possibilities of mischief if any idea gained ground in India and Africa that the attitude of the [rioters] reflected British attitudes" (quoted in May and Cohen

1974: 121). The 1919 riots in England did spark a desire for repatriation among some African men. In Sierra Leone, a collection was taken up to facilitate it (May and Cohen 1974: 123).

African men in Britain were an "irritation" not only because their presence incited riots but also because they were in the business of making political statements about their rights as British subjects. They were also organizing, both within and outside their seamen's unions and organizations, and sometimes with Whites (Tabili 1994; Sherwood 1995). May and Cohen (1974) unearthed intelligence reports suggesting that British state officials in the early twentieth century were extremely concerned about the increasingly transnational political mobilization among colored peoples.[33] Only a decade later, the Pan-Africanist and the Garveyite movements would be a source of even greater concern (Rich 1986: 122). In what follows, a West Indian seaman echoes the sentiments of above-quoted Mr. Toummanah in precise detail, here with the desire to influence Colonial Office policy:

> We have never regarded our selves as aliens to Britain in peace or in war. . . . So long as the Union Jack flies . . . so long will we regard the word alien as a totally unsuitable word. . . . [A]ll these years all the British Black people have such love for the Mother Country England but since the great war things is turn look what happens to us in England in 1919 dont it ashame on Britain part. (West Indian seaman in Barry Dock, Wales, to the Colonial Office, May 5, 1925, quoted in Tabili 1994: 30)

The quoted seaman was part of a group of twenty-six West Indians and Africans who mobilized to contest the mutual and effective diminution of their British subject status in the form of the Coloured Alien Seaman Order of 1925 (Tabili 1994: 125). Its racist intent would presage many other twentieth-century efforts to codify the relationship between race and nationality, especially the 1981 British Nationality Act.

Colonial subjects, it bears repeating, had rights of abode anywhere in the empire, including Britain. The Order respected those rights, if minimally; its ostensible target was colored seamen without British subject status. Yet, the burden of proof of British nationality fell upon colored seamen, who generally lacked the paperwork proving such. The Order hence rendered all colored seamen de facto aliens and, indeed, criminals. They were required to carry a "document of identity," which was to be produced at their British ports of call and registered with the local police. The documents specified a seaman's origins, providing as well a minute description of his physical features (including distinguishing marks like tattoos) and a perfectly clear photograph—the latter deemed necessary by officials who complained of the difficulty of telling these men apart. The document bore a conspicuous red stamp that read "seaman." Moreover, the Order required that their voyages be round trip and that they not be paid while in Britain, hence ensuring that they did not stay (Rich 1986: 122–26).

In practice, the Order did not produce the desired effect. Colored seamen, whether "alien" or not, managed to work around it. Further, the law was differently understood and applied in the various British ports. It also depended on the

still murky distinction between race and nationality. Racial categories were themselves uncertain (were the Maltese "colored"?) and were left for local bureaucrats to figure out (Lane 1995). Rich argues that the passage of this order was a direct, long-term effect of the 1919 riots and that it "exemplified that the ideas on race and empire generated at the heart of British imperial culture could penetrate down into the administrative petty bourgeoisie within the metropolis" (1986: 121). Ultimately, the Order sparked protest and collective action among the seamen targeted, as exemplified in the action above.

In the longer term, such incidents in the history of race and empire have penetrated into, and helped form, the present-day political subjectivities of Liverpool-born Blacks. One of the artifacts that Scott pulled out of his "Anti National Front" folder was a photocopy of a letter addressed to the late father of one of Scott's friends. The letter thanked him for his courageous service during World War I and issued him a check for seven pounds sterling. Scott described the significance of the letter thus:

> In the first world war he was a seaman. He was away at sea and his ship was attacked by a U-boat. They fight the U-boat off and they take the ship back safely to port and they're given the sum of seven pounds, which is a lot of money in those days. But he worked for the Elder Dempster shipping company. When the ship docked, he was hauled off as an alien! [Scott laughs heartily.] Would you believe it? And this proves my point about the way Black people fought in two world wars—and he's just a merchant seaman! Some actually went out on bombing missions in the Air Force. Never mentioned! Very rarely is it shown on television. They don't tell you the history that Black people played in this country in two world wars.

Far from being relegated to the past, the histories of slavery and colonialism resound in contemporary Liverpool: Blacks destroying a statue of a reputed slave trader in their neighborhood; the Luso-American society hauling out its Columbus statue in homage but under cover of night; popular historians thanking the explorer for making Liverpool, while claiming other parts of England as the city's own colonial possessions; Blacks keeping the memory of Charles Wootton alive, rehearsing verses from Peter Fryer's *Staying Power*, and pulling out tattered documents to prove the indignities suffered by Britain's Black war heroes. Along similar lines, the living history traced above reveals the intense politic of empire that unfolded in the interactions among Liverpool shippers, seamen's unions, their rank-and-file members, colonial workers-cum-activists resident in the city and across the country, the Liverpool press, the British state, and the colonizers and colonized in various British possessions. Where would one place the local in any of these pointed encounters? Where would Liverpool and/or Britain leave off and the global begin?[34] The local/global dichotomy on which that question is premised must be left behind. In much theorizing on the local and the global, the latter stands in for the universal, and the former is reduced to a site of ethnographic specificity. Liverpool presents the case of a decidedly local site— which is to say, a place that is relentlessly constructed through a discourse on the local—that is global by definition. This section has already shown that the local

is defined—critically by Blacks and ceremoniously by White Liverpudlian elites—through its complete exploitation of a host of worlds beyond Britain. And not only that: the local's exploits dominated the region in which it was situated, and often outpaced the rest of Britain in pursuing national-imperial goals (chapter 6). The Liverpool case inverts the premises of dominant models, in which the global acts (and acts *first*), leaving the local only to *re*act.

It remains to outline the sexual tensions of empire that gave birth to "Liverpool." Like London and other important British ports, Liverpool was the ground where the metropole first met the colonies, both in their colorful variety and their albeit contested masculinity. The front-page news of the 1919 riots afforded White Britons their first realization that there were so many colored people resident among them (Rich 1986: 120–22). Certainly, those who lived near the docks of these port cities would have known, but even in London the dock areas represented an underclass netherworld. In Liverpool, the presence of colored men was harder to avoid, for the docks were very much a part of the general downtown bustle. "Unlike London," Belchem writes,

> Liverpool docks were not distant and separate from the city: goods moved freely (if not always securely) between the unenclosed waterfront and warehouses dispersed throughout the city centre. The open-access economy of perks, ploys and pilfering was put at risk in 1846 by the opening of the Albert Dock, "constructed upon the model of those in London—surrounded by its own warehouses, worked by its own porters, and denying access within its gate to ragged children, beggars, thieves, and all who can give no account of their business." (1998: 2)

Even if the 1919 riots occasioned the first widespread dissemination of the racial composition of port cities like Liverpool, an earlier reading public, lapping up the series of travel accounts written by Charles Dickens, would have certainly been aware. Writing anonymously, Dickens produced a set of essays about his travels across the British Isles and abroad. Originally published in a journal called *All the Year Round* in 1860 and again in 1865, his essays were eventually collected in a monograph titled *The Uncommercial Traveller*. As we join him below, he is being treated to a tour of Liverpool. He has stopped at a public house, perhaps on Park Lane. Using the term *jack* (a nickname for a sailor) as a trope, Dickens defines each seaman by his nationality: British Jack, Scandinavian Jack, and so on. Until he gets to "Dark Jack" who has only race:

> [I]n the little first floor of a little public-house . . . in a stiflingly close atmosphere, were Dark Jack, and Dark Jack's delight, his *white* unlovely Nan, sitting against the wall all round the room. More than that: Dark Jack's delight was the least unlovely Nan, both morally and physically, that I saw that night.
>
> As a fiddle and tambourine band were sitting among the company, Quickear suggested why not strike up? "Ah, la'ads!" said a negro sitting by the door. "Gib the jebblem a darnse. Tak'yah parlers, jebblem, for 'um quad-rill. . . .
>
> The male dancers were all blacks, and one was an unusually powerful man of six feet three or four. The sound of their flat feet on the floor was as unlike the sound of

white feet as their faces were unlike white faces. They toed and heeled, shuffled, double-shuffled, double-double shuffled, covered the buckle, and beat the time out, rarely, dancing with a great show of teeth, and with a childish good-humoured enjoyment that was very prepossessing. They generally kept together, these poor fellows, said Mr. Superintendent, because they were at a disadvantage singly, and liable to slights in the neighbouring streets. But if I were Light Jack, I should be very slow to interfere oppressively with Dark Jack, for whenever I have had to do with him I have found him a simple and a gentle fellow. (1958: 45–46, original emphasis)

It might be best to leave aside the references to all that shuffling and grinning and proceed to more important matters. Let it be known from the outset that Dickens's account is not uncommonly quoted in popular texts on the Black presence in Liverpool, owing less to its racial overtones than to the time depth it establishes for that presence (for example, Law and Henfrey 1981). It was written in 1860. To wit, Dickens does not imply that there is just one isolated Dark Jack; there seem to be lots of them on the scene. And Dark Jack, Dickens emphasizes, has a *white* unlovely Nan. In contemporary British usage, a nan is a grandmother. But this meaning might have been different in Dickens's time. And she is the "least unlovely Nan, both morally and physically" that he met that night. The qualified loveliness he ascribes to her derives from his assessment of Nans he encountered elsewhere, in the back alleys and cellars of the slums—specifically, in "a nauseous room with an earth floor, into which the refuse scum of an alley trickled" and where "the stench was . . . abominable." And the place constructs the people: Dickens describes the Nans there as "three old women of transcendent ghastliness" (1958: 50) and proceeds to name them Witches One, Two, and Three. In this light, the White women keeping company with Dark Jack, in the gay environment of the public house, become lovelier, morally and physically—but still unlovely, after all. Although my emphasis here is on the social intercourse between White women and Black men—intercourse that can clearly become sexual at any moment—Dickens actually describes Liverpool's milieu through the presence of all sorts of global men: Spanish, Finnish, Maltese, and Swedish, for example.

The contemporary racial identity of Liverpool, the place, depends greatly on the fact that it played host to men from around the globe. The local was global by definition. Of course, London was also an international seaport. It, too, was a revolving door for the world's men. But London was also other things. It defied singular inscription. Besides, its docks were in the East End, off the city's beaten track. Liverpool, by contrast, was full of portness. It was portness personified. It was nothing if not seven miles of very busy dock, as many English (and American) travel writers from the eighteenth century onward confirmed (Defoe 1971 [1714]; Priestly (1984 [1934]). Hence has Liverpool long been singularly available for one wishing to make a swift point that depends on racialized forms of international movement. We see this most clearly in Emily Brontë's 1850 novel *Wuthering Heights*.

The story takes place on the Yorkshire moors and centers on the relationship between Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff. The circumstances of Heathcliff's

arrival in the Earnshaw household are most relevant here. Emily Brontë sends Catherine's father, Mr. Earnshaw, off to Liverpool. Amazingly, she gives absolutely not a single reason for him to need or want to go there, although she does make a point of sending him there on foot. And it is a sixty-mile walk each way! Although it seems to lack reason, his journey is actually critical to the novel's nature-versus-nurture concerns. In Liverpool, Mr. Earnshaw finds Heathcliff and brings him home. Here is how Heathcliff enters the Earnshaw household. Mr. Earnshaw, bringing out a bundle from beneath his coat, says "See here wife! . . . [Y]ou must take it as a gift of God; though it's as dark almost as if it came from the devil.'' The story's narrator, a housekeeper, then says this:

> We crowded round, and over Miss Cathy's head I had a peep at a dirty, ragged, black-haired child; big enough both to walk and talk; yet when it was set on its feet, it only stared round, and repeated over and over again some gibberish that nobody could understand. I was frightened, and Mrs. Earnshaw was ready to fling it out of doors: she did fly up, asking how he could fashion to bring that gipsy brat into the house . . . . The master tried to explain the matter . . . and all I could make out . . . was a tale of his seeing it starving and houseless, and as good as dumb in the streets of Liverpool; where he picked it up and inquired for its owner. (31)

The narrator continues in the same vein, consistently referring to the young Heathcliff as "it." It was clearly human but, strangely, it had black hair and spoke in gibberish. (Dickens's use of gibberish for Dark Jack's speech might be remembered here.) Earnshaw said it was dark, as if it had come from the devil. In a thoroughly unscientific investigation, I surveyed my British friends: did they remember anything about the circumstances in which Heathcliff arrived in the Earnshaw household? Not a single person failed to remember that he was brought from Liverpool, even though the city is only named twice, early on in the novel. The significance of "Liverpool," of course, went over the heads of the American readers I asked, but they did remember something vaguely carnivalesque about the environs from which Heathcliff was rescued.

Why would Brontë send Mr. Earnshaw to Liverpool, then, to get such a thing? To establish with extreme economy that the child was racially ambiguous. Where else but the busy international port of Liverpool could one find a child of unknown racial background wandering around homeless, dirty, and begging? Sexuality and race are co-implicated by the kind of space that Liverpool was and by the age of the child; clearly, since he was born in the city, he must be the product of a local woman and a global man. As the story proceeds, the characters variously imagine Heathcliff as a gypsy, or perhaps American or Spanish. One character hypothesizes that Heathcliff's grandfather may have been a Chinese emperor. Cultural critic Terry Eagleton suggests that Heathcliff can productively be considered Irish (1995). But to try to pinpoint Heathcliff's exact racial positioning is to miss the point, for Brontë is intent on denying him such exactitude. In 1850, racial *in*determinacy would have induced far more interesting anxieties than certain knowledge, as I pursue below. This method also allows the characters to constitute Heathcliff as whatever they like. He could be wild, savage,

tough, and satanic (all of these descriptors appear), or he could be of noble birth, a descendant of a Chinese emperor. Heathcliff, in short, is a "half-caste." As such he is perfectly set up for his role as the object of an experiment: given the unruly nature that his phenotype suggests and that his behavior confirms, can he be reformed in the civilized environs of the Earnshaw household?

Variations of that question were being posed in seaports all over Britain and in the overlapping arenas of social work, philanthropy, and academia, which would, in the mid to late nineteenth century, include physical anthropology and ethnology.[35] In contrast to eighteenth-century British ideas about human variation, which considered religion and clothing as key indices of civilization and posited climate as an explanation of different human potentials, the 1840s saw the emergence of a more biological argument (Wheeler 2000; Hamer 1996). Physical types, which were correlated with areas of geographic origin, became the basis of racial distinctions and served to explain differential human capacities. Classificatory schema abounded. In this respect, Brontë's mysterious, somewhat monstrous representation of the racially ambiguous Heathcliff is intriguing; it accords with the fearful image of the half-caste conjured up in Gothic literature and other discursive contexts. As H. L. Malchow provocatively explains, "[O]ne may define [the Gothic] genre by characteristics that resonate strongly with racial prejudice, imperial exploration and sensational anthropology—themes and images that are meant to shock and terrify, that emphasize chaos and excess, sexual taboo and barbarism, and a style grounded in techniques of suspense and threat" (1996: 102). Just as the unpredictable and brooding Heathcliff posed an ever-present danger, so too were the "hundreds of half-caste children" in 1920s Cardiff said to have "vicious tendencies." These children also confused the categories of science, exhibiting, according to the press, a "disharmony of physical traits and mental characteristics" (Rich 1986: 131). In an era when science had attained unprecedented legitimacy (Lorimer 1996), the racially ambiguous or mixed person was a threat to the social order. Again, Malchow writes, "The terms 'half-breed' and 'half-caste' are double, hyphenated constructions resonating with other linguistic inadequacies and incompletes—with 'half-wit' or 'half-dead', with 'half-naked' or 'half-truth', and of course with 'half-civilized'" (1996: 104). The person of mixed race was a pathology to be studied from both literary and "scientific" points of view. Their sexuality was of particular concern. It was one thing to be born of immoral unions in immoral circumstances; but as freaks of nature themselves, what moral predilections would *they* reproduce? *Could* they reproduce? (Malchow 1996; Young 1995).

Sexuality was the lightning rod of power relations of all kinds. As is commonly known, in nineteenth-century Britain social traits were commonly thought to be inherited, "race" was conflated with culture, and social classes were veritable racial groups (Young 1995). "Diseases" that bred unchecked among the working classes—laziness, slowness of wit, physical predisposition for backbreaking labor—posed a threat to the middle classes and elites of higher class status. For a society struggling to maintain social hierarchies based on innate differences, sexuality would have to be of absolutely primary concern. In the burgeoning but poor

and overcrowded Victorian cities of London and Liverpool, working-class women, the most likely candidates to take up prostitution, became the targets of moralizing discourses. Fears of degeneration caused their sexuality to be policed most aggressively, even though it was middle-class boys and men who were so often their clients (McClintock 1995; Walkowitz 1992, 1980).

Into a milieu defined, at the very least, by the above-described dynamics of colonialism, race, nationality, place, sexuality, class, and gender entered one Muriel Fletcher, infamous in present-day Liverpool for a study she conducted in 1928 under the auspices of the Liverpool Association for the Welfare of Half-Caste Children. Fletcher was trained in social research at the Liverpool University School of Social Science, where her circle included eugenicist anthropologists (Rich 1986). The subjects of Fletcher's research were White women who were formerly involved with African men and their "half-caste" children. She published her conclusions in *Report on an Investigation into the Colour Problem in Liverpool and Other Ports*. Ultimately, the *Fletcher Report*, as it is commonly called, concludes that "the colour problem" in that city owed not to the racist structuring of British society, the ideologies promulgated by the British state and its institutions, nor those circulating within Liverpool's social welfare establishment, nor to the everyday racism of White Liverpudlians who routinely subjected colored seamen to violence. Rather, Fletcher attributed the colour problem in Liverpool to African seamen. It would be hard to state emphatically enough how thoroughly racial politics in Liverpool/Britain reflect the legacy of the *Fletcher Report*.

Fletcher argues that the Coloured Alien Seamen's Order (which really should have been named more appropriately the Coloured Alien Semen Order) was of little use in curbing West African men's presence in Liverpool. They formed a large part of the "color problem," as Fletcher suggests in her reference to these men's unknown numbers in Liverpool: "There was . . . no information to hand as to the exact size of the problem" (1930: 9). Fletcher goes on to explain these men's desires for life in England thus: "In their own country they are not allowed to mix freely with white people nor to have relations with white women. Once having formed unions with white women in this country, they are perhaps loath to leave England and later, should they not obtain employment, it is comparatively easy for them to obtain out-relief or unemployment pay" (14). The *Fletcher Report* is, quite simply, colonialist to the core: "In his own country the West African's relations with women are definitely restricted by a stern and rigid tribal discipline. In this country he is cut adrift from these restrictions before he has developed the restraint and control of Western civilization. In Liverpool there is evidence to show that the negro tends to be promiscuous in his relations with white women" (19).

The supposed moral vacuity of the African seaman contributes to that of the White woman (who is never specified as either English or Irish): "In the other ports 90 percent. of the white women who consort with coloured men are said to be prostitutes; in Liverpool, however, although a number of the women live on immoral earnings, they appear to do so because of the fact that they are living with a coloured man rather than because they were originally prostitutes" (21). Fletcher dismisses White women's own explanations for their choice to partner

colored men: "To the ordinary casual visitor these women will say that they married a coloured man because he makes a better husband than a white. Such a statement, however, appears to be merely an excuse on the part of the women for conduct which she feels has set her apart from other women. They almost invariably regret their alliance with a coloured man, and realising that they have chosen a life which is repugnant, become extraordinarily sensitive about their position" (21). From there we learn that these men's "sexual demands impose a continual strain on white women" (21). Below Fletcher delineates, with authority, the roots of these women's pathology:

The white women in Liverpool who consort with coloured men appear to fall into four classes—

(1) Those who took the step because they had an illegitimate child by a white man who refused to marry them, or because they had an illegitimate colored child.

(2) Those who are mentally weak.

(3) Prostitutes.

(4) Younger women who make contacts in a spirit of adventure and find themselves unable to break away.

Those in the second and third classes are often interchangeable, while (3) can be subdivided into:

(a) Those women of a somewhat lazy nature, who choose such a life more or less deliberately and who take care to have no children; (b) Those who have children dependent on them and are willing to earn money in this way for their support (22).

The African man creates the White woman's problems, while they both create the myriad crises said to befall their "half-caste" children. Fletcher uses the term *half-caste* in various ways. At times she distinguishes between "Anglo-Negroid" and "Anglo-Chinese" children; yet both of these groups belong to the *half-caste* category. Fletcher remarks at the outset, however, that "Anglo-Chinese" children are quite well-adjusted. Since they pose no problem, we need not hear anything more about them. As well, in the early pages, Fletcher uses the term *Anglo-Negroid* for children of African men and White women. In detailing the minute phenotypical features of "half-caste" children, the *Fletcher Report* marks some of them "English," as in "30 per cent. had English eyes. . . . A little over 50 per cent. had hair negroid in type and colour. 25 per cent. had English, while the remaining 25 per cent. exhibited some curious mixtures. . . .About 12 per cent. had lips like the average English child" (27).[36] She refers to these children's social characteristics in similar terms. While she does not suggest that biological inheritance is at work, the children nevertheless manifest a troubling duality, exhibiting the worst trait of each parent. Here speaking about "half-caste" girls, Fletcher argues, "From her mother the half-caste girl is liable to inherit a certain slackness, and from her father a happy-go-lucky attitude towards life" (34). The problems of

half-caste children are not of their own making, then. They are victims. They attend earnestly to their schoolwork and seem amiable enough. But the immorality that characterizes their home life, given the low character of both parents, cannot help but be reproduced in these hapless children.

The only aspect of the *Fletcher Report* that even slightly redeems it is the genuine care that she expresses for these children. She seems quite moved, for example, by the certainty of the girls' future unemployment. The boys will surely become seamen—a precarious occupation, Fletcher admits, given that they will compete with Whites. But the girls will face complete discrimination in the workforce. A survey Fletcher conducted among businesses in Liverpool confirmed that none would be disposed to hiring a "half-caste" girl. Fletcher and her colleagues also found that these girls do not frequent the neighborhood clubs for juveniles. So, they set one up in the African and West Indian Mission for their exclusive use. The club was a success except that the girls would occasionally become distracted: "Much as they appreciated the club it is a significant fact that whenever there was a ship in port with coloured men on it practically none of the girls would come to the club but they returned the following week displaying scarves, necklaces, wrist watches, etc., while two invariably brought money to be saved up for them." Here is how Fletcher explains this behavior: "All the circumstances of their lives tend to give undue prominence to sex; owing to the nature of the houses in which they live their moral standards are extraordinarily low, and owing to the persistence of the men it is practically impossible for the coloured girls to remain pure." She concludes this section soberly: "[T]hose mothers of a better type regretted the fact that they had brought these children into the world handicapped by their colour" (32–33).

In all, Fletcher only once implies that racism might just be part of "the colour problem" in Liverpool and other ports. She says the "half-caste" girls will face sure discrimination, but she stops short of criticizing the racist hiring practices of local businesses. Instead, she suggests that the color problem can only be eliminated through the repatriation of African seamen. While she admits that mass deportation could result in "political reactions"—probably a reference to the response in African colonies—Fletcher is certain that it remains "the only real solution" (39).

Through the *Fletcher Report* all the moral panics that defined the Victorian era were recirculated. The studied attention the report gives to White women's virtues, or supposed lack thereof, reflects the tremendous threat that these women's sexual practice posed to the British imperial order (Tabili 1996). In the 1930s, the only colonial men immune from the threat of deportation, lacking as they often did the paperwork to prove their British subject status, were those who had fathered children there (Tabili 1994: 155). Colored men lacking "family ties" or passports were to be deported immediately (and British subjects in West Africa were actually denied passports). White women's sexuality was also at issue because their colored male children would be entitled to the same wages that White British seamen earned. Fletcher's concerns were further shaped by her sympathies with eugenicism (Rich 1986). The fate of the race was in the hands of some incorrigible women with little if any commitment to the boundaries of colonial rule. Although Fletcher does not say so, these women were more likely

to be working-class Irish Catholics than middle-class English Protestants. The report itself was distributed to government departments, social work and philanthropic organizations, ministers of parliament, the media, and, crucially, the police. For the National Union of Seamen, the report justified the use of White sailors over colored ones. The union and the local police used the report's findings to bolster their objections to African men's rights of abode in Britain. For their part, Fletcher's informants, and the nascent Black community at large, were hurt and angered by the report. People trusted her enough to answer some very sensitive questions in what was a highly charged political milieu. In the end, she was driven out of Liverpool.

The *Fletcher Report* is not a text that I just managed to unearth in a library or archive. Black people in Liverpool referred to it, denounced it, made me photocopies of it. Black people I knew were alive to the politics of ethnographic and similar forms of representation, whether these emanated from the academy, the media, the government, or from within the institutions of their own community.

Situating Black Liverpool

Scott's insistence that his version of the Black community's history is the real one instantiates the power/knowledge relationship with which this book is critically concerned. James Clifford (1988) has rightly warned of the dangers of regarding ethnography as the scholarly discourse that tells a people's complete, unmediated, and ultimate truth. While I respect Black Liverpudlians' ability to tell their version of their story, I in no way deny my role as interlocutor here. Similarly, I realize that the memories that have produced their narratives are highly selective. I try indeed to highlight the ways these memories speak to informants' own positions within community debates.

While this ethnography supports Scott's thesis that "to understand Black people, you've got to understand Liverpool," it really presents the genealogies of that truth claim, as well as an often interventionist analysis of its political effects. In the foregoing sections, for example, I presented two main vehicles through which Britons make place matter: first, through phenomenological premises that explain the social through ostensibly unmediated visual perceptions of place; and second, through the use of "specific" or "particular" social characteristics and relations to define a place, which we saw, for example, in the discussion of Britons' uses of traditional industries to imbue place with meaning. Filling a place with people and, likewise, defining a place through characteristic social relations are no less innocent as cultural practices than the phenomenological operations whose productive, powerful effects I discussed above. Insofar as social actors like Scott define place through, for example, seafaring, they are participating in the individuating process that, in no small measure, also constructs them as particular kinds of racial subjects. Thus, to understand Black people in Liverpool one must understand the ideological labors that place is made to perform.

I argue here that cultural logics of localness and place have profoundly shaped racial identity and community formation—so much so that the local could be

profitably understood as a racial category. I show localization as racialization. With this argument as my singular concern, let me offer an important disclaimer before suggesting how this ethnography is structured and how it might be read. Liverpool's diversity is not truly captured in this ethnography, although it is that very diversity that is so much at issue here. One Liverpool-born Black informant stated the case perfectly, saying that "this is a multiracial, multicultural, whatever community." This book centers on the multiply fraught politics of place, localness, and Blackness. It will not help one understand much about, for example, the Chinese, Yemenis, Pakistanis, Rastas, and Somalis of Liverpool. There are many potent references to Africans and Afro-Caribbeans here, but very few members of those groups do any speaking. There is formidable diversity within these two latter groups, too. Africans themselves belong to ethnic collectives such as Igbo and Yoruba, categories that carried great salience in Nigeria and that have been reconstituted in Liverpool. Africans are also Nigerians, Ghanaians, Gambians, Sierra Leoneans, and Somalis. Some immigrated to England before the postwar era and some afterward—which makes a big difference to Liverpool-born Blacks (chapter 5). Afro-Caribbeans (often called West Indians) also straddle the post–World War II era. White Liverpudlians are also critical to this story—as Black people's neighbors, friends, mothers, and partners, and, crucially, as local subjects, also known as "Scousers" (again, a common nonderogatory nickname for Liverpudlians). They, too, are deeply involved in the discursive production of "Liverpool." Members of the above-listed groups come into view to different degrees, and only as they enlarge on the politics of place, localness, and race. The ways that these groups come to feature, then, are shaped by the dictates of an ethnography that is fundamentally about Liverpool-born Blacks. For example, the chapter that follows is about the Black America that lives in Black Liverpool's positioned experience and imagination. Despite how present Black America is in that chapter, it is not about Black America. It is about Black Liverpool.

The exact size of Liverpool's Black population confounds scholars and policy makers alike. Census data have always been particularly unreliable. Figures on Blacks resident in Liverpool in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are compromised by the very transient nature of seamen's lives.[37] Add to this the great variability and flux in the construction of racial categories over time, and Black people's unwillingness to answer census questions on race for fear that the data might be used in all manner of unsavory ways, and the problems mount. In 1989, a government inquiry into racial discrimination complained about the lack of definitive figures on the size of the Black community, noting that the most commonly quoted figures are "based on informed speculation rather than science" (Lord Gifford, Brown, and Bundey 1989: 37). Following the hegemonic usage of the term *Black* in Liverpool—which should only be provisionally indicated here, since that point will be pursued at length in what follows—the estimated size of the combined population of Africans, Afro-Caribbeans, and Black Britons was between 12,000 and 18,000 (37). In 1992, the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys announced that "science" had determined there to be 6,786 Blacks in the city, which would amount to 1.5 percent of the total population of 452,000 (OPCS 1992).

In lieu of a chapter-by-chapter outline of the entire book, let me offer the following guide. Thematically, this ethnography follows an arc. It proceeds, in the next chapter, with the liberating yet contentious emergence of Black identity in Liverpool and goes on, in subsequent chapters, to show the rise of the local as a frame for particularizing the racial positioning named *Black*. Generally, Liverpool-born Blacks narrate these times in triumphant tones. Black identity and then Liverpool-born Blackness came into being against some formidable odds, and people detail these processes—for the most part—with no small bit of satisfaction. These were the glory days of Black Liverpool in formation. The ethnography goes on to study the ambivalences and instabilities that surround both Blackness and localness.

This book does not pretend to represent "the history of Black Liverpool." Rather, it is an ethnography about people's deployment of a historically attuned and alternately expanding and contracting geography of race. While I do struggle to convey a sense of a process unfolding, my analytical objectives ultimately determined the placement of particular events. For example, I detail the decline of Liverpool's shipping industry fairly late in the book, when it can be most usefully—that is, ethnographically—exploited. As well, events belonging to the formative period of the late 1970s/early 1980s are spread out over a few chapters, and are presented somewhat out of order, so that particular dimensions of the intersection of place and race—rather than strict chronologies—can be brought out. And even though the category *Liverpool-born Black* was hegemonic by 1991 and 1992, I nevertheless reserve use of that term until we arrive at the point in the ethnographic arc when it comes into existence. Early chapters, hence, refer to Blacks from Liverpool as *Black Liverpudlians*—a term that, indeed, no one uses. On this point I should note that throughout the book, I reserve the latter term for moments when it bears remembering that not all Blacks born in Liverpool are considered or consider themselves Liverpool-born Black. Or, I use it to signal that the specific positioning named *Liverpool-born Black* is not necessarily being engaged in the matters under discussion.

Of course, all the narratives about times past were spoken through subjectivities of race and place that belong to the ethnographic present. The closer we come to the nether end of the arc, the more the ethnography reveals the dilemmas and disappointments that motivate the glorious evocations of past times and places, as exemplified by Scott's tour of an invisible Liverpool. To get to the beloved Pitt Street of the 1930s, the subject of the final chapter, we have to travel the ethnographic route traced by the arc.