

APPENDIX I

SYNOPSIS OF *THE OTHER BLACK GIRL*

The Other Black Girl is a novel written by Zakiya Dalila Harris, published in 2021, that combines elements of speculative fiction, social commentary, and suspense. The novel centres on Nella Rogers, a 26-year-old African-American woman who works as an editorial assistant at the prestigious Wagner Books publishing house and lives in contemporary New York City. It begins as a psychological study of race, power, and identity within the context of competitive corporate publishing.

Nella Rogers is the only Black employee in the editorial department at Wagner Books. She is passionate about diversity and inclusion in literature and is extremely ambitious. However, in a predominantly white workplace, she often feels isolated and uncomfortable. There, she is expected to be a voice for diversity but is not always heard or supported. Microaggressions, subtle dismissals, and the constant pressure to make a statement without alienating her colleagues are all hallmarks of her experience.

When another young Black woman, Hazel-May McCall, is hired as the new editorial assistant, the story begins to change. Hazel, confident and stylish, quickly becomes popular among the white staff at Wagner. At first, Nella is excited by Hazel's arrival, thinking she's finally found an ally who understands what she's going through. She hopes they can work together to solve the company's significant problems. However, Hazel's presence soon raises doubts. "Leave Wagner. Now," is the anonymous message sent to Nella. The messages make her even more anxious and suspicious.

Tensions escalate as Hazel is increasingly favoured by the higher-ups and begins to outshine Nella professionally. Nella begins to question Hazel's motives and notices a strange change in her behaviour. Hazel begins to subtly undermine Nella's credibility and adapts to the current state of affairs at the company, even if it means silencing conversations about racial equality. Nella feels marginalised the more Hazel praises her.

The novel weaves together multiple perspectives and timelines to follow the main storyline. One subplot follows Kendra Rae Phillips, a Black former editor at Wagner Books, who mysteriously disappeared years ago after co-authoring a bestseller with a white author named Diana Gordon. She recounts her past as a

fierce publisher activist for racial justice. Once a champion of diversity, Kendra becomes disillusioned after Diana's betrayal and faces the pressures of navigating a white-dominated industry. Ultimately, she fails to live up to the expectations set by a mysterious organisation working behind the scenes.

Diana Gordon, once close to and working as Kendra's writing partner, decides to go in a different direction. She secretly collaborates with a shadowy organisation that promises professional success to Black women in exchange for their compliance. Diana's choice demonstrates the sacrifices some are willing to make to maintain power and security in elite circles. Her character serves as leverage for Kendra, demonstrating the ideological divide between resistance and assimilation.

Another person connected to this secret organisation is Shani Edmonds, a young Black woman whose promising journalism career abruptly ended under mysterious circumstances. Fragmented flashbacks and investigations reveal that the same organisation once employed Shani. She lost the fight, and her voice was lost. Shani's fate serves as a dire warning to Nella as she uncovers more about the organisation's extent.

Nella discovers that many Black women in the industry have been targeted and distorted through a special hair oil that dulls their critical thinking and resistance. She discovers that numerous organisations and records are responsible for Hazel. This speculation highlights the metaphorical pressure Black women face to conform in order to survive and succeed in a white-dominated environment. Nella faces a moral dilemma: should she join the company and benefit from its professional advancement, or should she refuse and face danger, failure, and isolation?

As Nella uncovers disturbing truths about Hazel's involvement in the secret organisation, the story intensifies. She meets other women who have been affected by the organisation's actions, and she realises how pervasive and manipulative its influence is. These women, once ambitious and outspoken like Nella, have changed, both in the way they act and the way they think, to adapt to an environment that suppresses their cultural and personal identities. Nella feels uncertain, unsure of whom to trust and how to avoid a similar fate.

Nella's life, both personal and professional, begins to unravel as she struggles to resist the pressures surrounding her. Her self-esteem begins to

plummet, and her relationships with Owen, her boyfriend, and her best friend Malaika are tested. She is plagued by questions about loyalty, ambition, and authenticity as she works in an increasingly hostile workplace. The more she realises she's fighting not just against Hazel or Wagner Books, but against a system that demands silence and obedience from those who stand out.

Fearing that her identity will be replaced, controlled, or forgotten, the novel depicts Nella's psychological decline. Her experiences highlight the emotional difficulties faced by Black workers in workplaces where diversity is seen as more of a marketing tool than a genuine commitment. With suspenseful storytelling, shifting perspectives, and unexpected twists, the novel presents these themes while maintaining suspense and exploring complex social dynamics.

The Other Black Girl explores how race, gender, and aspiration intersect in the business world through a complex narrative and diverse characters. The novel reveals the subtle and obvious mechanisms that perpetuate inequality and how marginalised people are often forced to choose between survival and self-expression. It provides readers with a deeper understanding of the sacrifices that can accompany success and the resilience required to maintain identity amidst overwhelming pressure.

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APPENDIX II

BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

Zakiya Dalila Harris is an American author best known for her debut novel, *The Other Black Girl*, published in 2021. Born and raised in Connecticut, Harris earned her Bachelor's degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and later completed her Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Creative Writing at The New School in New York City. Before becoming a full-time writer, Harris worked in the publishing industry, including nearly three years as an editorial assistant at Knopf Doubleday, an imprint of Penguin Random House. Her firsthand experience as a Black woman in a predominantly white corporate publishing environment significantly informed the themes and narrative of *The Other Black Girl*.

Her debut novel quickly gained critical and commercial success for its sharp commentary on race, power dynamics, and workplace culture, blending elements of psychological suspense, satire, and social critique. The novel has been translated into multiple languages and was adapted into a Hulu television series in 2023, further amplifying Harris's voice in contemporary literature. Through her writing, Zakiya Dalila Harris continues to explore themes of Black identity, conformity, and resistance in modern society. She currently lives in Brooklyn, New York.

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APPENDIX III

DATA TABULATION

Nella's Part

No.	Form	Page	Evidence	Analysis
1.	Otherness	7	<i>"There was another Black person on her floor. And given Maisy's spiel, this Black person was here for an interview. Which meant in the next few weeks, a Black person could quite possibly be sitting in the cube directly across from Nella. Breathing the same air. Helping her fend off all the Sophies of the Wagner office."</i>	The phrase <i>there was another Black person</i> indicates that Nella was previously the only Black person on the floor. This is a direct indication of her otherness she is not part of the dominant group. Nella's expectation that the new Black person indicates that she feels she has been struggling alone against forms of domination or microaggressions. This reinforces her awareness of being <i>different</i> .
2.		8	<i>"You don't hang out with black people much, do you?"</i>	The tensions among black women in this passage serve to strengthen emotions of otherness, demonstrating that being " <i>othered</i> " does not always equate to unity. This implies that otherness may exist in racially similar populations as well.
3.		12	<i>"If Vera didn't trust her opinion, then Nella would never</i>	From the quotation above, this reflects otherness with an

			<i>[be] more than just a 'assistant'; if she didn't become more than just an 'assistant,' she'd never become an editor."</i>	implied beginning of othering. The quote shows that Nella recognizing a limit placed on her role, being seen only as an "assistant" despite her capabilities. This "just an assistant" label reflects how Nella is perceived as less than or not fully belonging in the professional hierarchy. She is being positioned as different, likely due to her identity as a Black woman in a white-dominated environment.
4.		13	<i>"Maybe Vera also sees you as competition. Maybe she feels that fully accepting you will somehow validate the secret fear she has that every woman under the age of thirty is out to get her job. Maybe... she's jealous."</i>	From the quotation above, this reflects otherness. The quote describes how Vera perceives Nella as different and potentially threatening, not necessarily because of her race (though that may be present implicitly), but because of her age and gender. Vera's insecurity and jealousy cause her to withhold full acceptance, which positions Nella as an outsider. This aligns with (Staszak, 2020:25) idea that otherness occurs when someone is perceived

				not just as different, but as opposed to the in-group.
5.		22	<i>“Yes, we just published “that Black writer” last year; but that writer, along with the last six Black people we’ve published here at Wagner, was not a Black American, he was from an African country, and while that’s definitely an example of diversity, it’s also really not... It would only unleash a whole new slew of gradations that Nella didn’t even feel comfortable grappling with on her own yet, let alone with her white employers.”</i>	In this quotation, Nella experiences otherness as a Black American woman in a workplace dominated by elite norms and closed social networks. This position leaves her feeling alienated and unwelcome, especially when her Black American identity is compared to other Black writers of African descent who are considered a more <i>acceptable</i> form of diversity.
6.		44	<i>“I don’t think either of them would really get it. A Black girl telling one of Wagner’s bestselling authors that his Black character is written a tiny bit racist? C’mon, now. I could get fired.”</i>	Nella’s hesitation to confront Vera and Colin about racial bias in a manuscript reflects otherness. Her identity as a Black woman marks her as someone whose perspective is inherently precarious exemplifying otherness. At the same time, the fear of job loss for simply offering critique highlights the institutional and implicit othering

				embedded in Wagner’s professional culture. Nella is aware that her voice, particularly when addressing racial issues is not protected or encouraged, but instead regulated through unspoken expectations of silence and assimilation.
7.		145-146	<i>“There was one more thing I wanted to mention.”</i> <i>“Yes?” said Vera into her computer.</i> <i>I’ve been getting these notes from some stranger telling me to leave work.</i> <i>They’ve been freaking me out.</i> <i>But she couldn’t do it.</i> <i>“I just finished reading The Lie.”</i>	This quotation illustrate that Nella experiences otherness because she feels isolated and not safe or comfortable enough to express her fears. When Nella does not dare to express the threats she received to her superiors, this shows how feelings of alienation and discomfort (otherness) have been deeply rooted, as an impact of the work environment that has subtly or explicitly othered her. As (Zevallos, 2023) explains, otherness is not merely about being perceived as different; it also involves the internal experience of alienation and silence in response to exclusion.
8.		265	<i>“The way I see it, you have two. I think it’s obvious what you</i>	This quotation shows that Nella experienced otherness. Nella feels

			<i>should do. Or at least, what you should want to do. Weren't you thinking about quitting? Don't you hate this place? You should want to go to the meeting and fuck it all the way up. Tell Jesse about how you dropped his name to Vera centuries ago, but everyone there thought he was too Black to drop him a line. Tell him all about Shartricia and how Hazel's been stepping all over you to get everyone to like her. And then pull out your boom box, jump up on that conference table, and give everyone the finger to the reeling sounds of 'Fight the Power.' "</i>	alienated and pressured as the only black person in a workplace dominated by white culture. The urge to “disrupt” meetings and fight the system shows the frustration of feeling marginalized and treated differently. This indicates an experience of otherness, where Nella feels like the “other” who is not fully accepted in the environment. As (Zevallos, 2023) explains, otherness often results in emotional and psychological isolation in spaces that prioritize dominant norms and values.
9.	Racial Othering	92	<i>Malaika, cutting into Nella's thoughts, "let's talk facts. Fact one: You're Black. Fact two: You're Black. Fact three: How many white people do you think have gotten a note like this at Wagner? Or ever? ... "I forgot about that other Black girl. What's her name again?" "Right, Hazel."</i>	Malaika's blunt statement demonstrates how Nella's race serves as a distinguishing characteristic of exclusion at her place of employment. This illustrates what (Molla, 2023) refers to as racial othering, which is the practice of seeing someone as fundamentally inferior or different because of socially created racial

			<i>Nella herself still sometimes forgot that Wagner wasn't all white anymore, perhaps because she and Hazel felt like extensions of one another, two sides of the same coin.</i>	categories.
10.	Institutional Othering	13	<i>"Lemme ask you this. Do you see any other white assistants getting promoted that have been there for less time than you?"</i>	This reflects a clear example of institutional othering, in which Nella is excluded from advancement not based on performance, but on racial bias that privileges her white peers. This aligns with (Powell & Menendian, 2023) view that othering becomes institutional when inequality is embedded in everyday workplace outcomes, even in the absence of overt discrimination.
11.		115	<i>Nella flinched. ... Was the list of new hires for Vera? ... but sometime between seeing those names and being shut out of Vera's office, a feeling of deep uneasiness had planted itself in her gut. A feeling that her boss was going to kick her out and welcome someone</i>	Vera's icy conduct towards Nella and the secrecy surrounding the hiring process point to institutional othering, which is defined by (Powell & Menendian, 2023) where systems and decisions marginalize employees without transparent or fair justification. All of these othering

			<i>else in. A new and improved Black someone, so nobody could give them shit for getting rid of her.</i>	behaviours add to Nella's increasing feelings of emotional discomfort, disposability and insecurity at work.
12.		180	<i>Does he know anything about all the stuff that's been going on at work?" Malaika asked. "Well... I haven't exactly told him." "You haven't told him about the notes? Or how Hazel has undermined you in every possible way? How she took that front desk lady with the scarves away from you?</i> <i>... "I told you already. I feel like I'm still kind of on thin ice with the higher-ups. I should probably figure this one out on my own."</i>	This quotation shows how institutional othering affects Nella emotionally and professionally. As Nella's fear of consequences if she reports Hazel's behavior, or the anonymous threats, illustrates how Wagner's workplace culture subtly enforces compliance and silence among Black employees.
13.		223-224	<i>"No? Have you tweeted about it, or anything? Or told any of your friends who might have written about it?"</i> <i>"Sorry—what?" asked Nella, genuinely confused. "No, I haven't told anyone. What did</i>	This reflects what (Powell & Menendian, 2023) define as institutional othering: a subtle but powerful form of exclusion embedded in an organization's norms and responses, where marginalized individuals are made to feel unsupported and

			<i>Hazel tell you?"</i> ... <i>"Well, in any event, I want you to know that we have zero tolerance for that kind of behaviour here at Wagner. Do you understand?"</i>	distrusted.
14.		289-291	<i>"9/3/16. NR sent Jesse Watson link to external email. Apparently subscribed to his channel.</i> <i>1/4/17. Cop shooting. Temporary Diversity Town Halls put in place; NR seems complacent."</i> ... <i>"8/21/18. NR noticeably happy with Hazel. Seems like perfect match. Estimated time until cycle completion: ~4 months."</i> ... <i>"Because she's clearly helping him do... whatever it is that she's doing. Maybe that's why she's at Wagner—to convince me to be 'complacent.'"</i>	This reflects institutional othering as (Powell & Young, 2023) emphasize, institutional othering transforms difference into disadvantage by embedding inequality into the systems that shape daily life, making Nella's marginalization both subtle and structural. Nella's behavior is monitored and interpreted through a racialized lens to evaluate how well she fits into the workplace's performative diversity agenda.
15.		292	<i>Nella sat as still as stone. She inhaled</i>	This aligns with institutional

			<i>slowly, then exhaled even more slowly, trying to think of a way to put what she was feeling into words. ...How many people had known? Everyone—it had to be all of them. Vera, Maisy, Amy... they all had to be in on it. How else would Richard have such copious notes?</i>	othering as (Powell & Menendian, 2023) explain, institutional othering operates through systems and organizational cultures that consistently marginalize certain groups. Nella's feeling reflects how normalized and widespread the surveillance of her behavior has making her feel like an outsider in a place that should have supported her.
16.		295	<i>Fuck that. White people have been arriving late to the party for centuries, and they still get priority seats.</i>	This quote reflects Nella's frustration with institutional othering, where white privilege is deeply embedded in workplace and societal systems. According to (Powell & Menendian, 2023) othering becomes institutionalized when it is no longer just about personal attitudes but, it is built into the rules of a systems.
17.	Intra-Racial Othering	8	<i>"You don't hang out with black people much, do you?"</i>	The tensions among black women in this passage serve to strengthen emotions of otherness, demonstrating that being othered does not

				always equate to unity. This implies that otherness may exist in racially similar populations as well. Although only Nella was able to comprehend it, the underlying suggestion is an example of intra-racial othering. (Kwan, 2023 p.2-3) intra-racial othering reflects the internalisation of dominant norms, when a minority group member views another as different.
18.		152	<i>Everyone except Hazel knew that the reason Gina was promoted so quickly was because her boss died, not because of her abilities. When Hazel responds to Nella's concerns about promotions by saying "But really... it's sort of case by case, right?"</i>	According to (Kwan, 2023:3), intra-racial othering occurs when members of the same racial group distance themselves from one another by aligning with dominant norms or values. As a result, Nella is not othered by the white-dominated institution, but also by a fellow Black employee who inadvertently reproduces dominant narratives of meritocracy, leaving her further isolated.
19.		170-171	<i>"She knows there's only space for one Black girl, and she wants to be it. I think she wants you out,</i>	According to Tappan, (2006:2119) intra-racial othering is the process which individuals or groups

			girl,” <i>Malaika continued picking up a green tuft of hair next. “She’s playing you. How else would she have snuck those notes to you so smoothly, without you noticing? And the way she threw you under the bus today, in front of everybody?”</i>	within the same race discriminate against one another.
20.		264	<i>“I’m still not unconvinced his mistress isn’t a Black woman... but Hazel? Ugh, I’m feeling nauseous enough without even discussing that.” Nella sighed as visions from the Needles and Pins cover meeting shuffled across her brain. “Everybody at Wagner’s obsessed with her. Not just him.”</i>	This scene reflects intra-racial othering, in which two Black women are positioned differently within a white-dominated institution: one (Hazel) as the “ideal,” and the other (Nella) as difficult or expendable. As (Kwan, 2023:3) explains, intra-racial othering occurs when marginalized individuals are differentiated within their group, often based on perceived alignment with dominant values.
21.		266	<i>“Ms. Hazel-Shit-Don’t-Stink-May has built her reputation of being the ‘good Black girl’ at Wagner, right? How do you think your bosses would feel if she suddenly got</i>	The quotation above, it is clear that Nella experienced intra-racial othering. According to (Kwan, 2023:3), intra-racial othering, is the process through which members of the same

			<i>super... Black?"</i> ... <i>"I think you've worked too hard not to go to this thing. But go ready. Hold on until you get what you want. Black it up and get Jesse to love you. Or, at least, like you more than Hazel."</i>	race discriminate against one another. Here, we see how Hazel presents a version of black identity that is acceptable to white audiences by avoiding statements about black identity that are thought to be <i>too over the top</i> or <i>too real</i>.
22.		303	<i>"How can we truly fix any of those stereotypes—those problems—if we're not truly feeling all of the real things the world is throwing at us? Who are we as a people if we're not... if we're not..."</i> <i>Hazel was giving Nella another once-over, but this time it was clear she didn't like what she was hearing. "If we're not what, Nella? Suffering? Is that what you want? To feel overextended? To feel worn down by every microaggression you experience in the office, and every injustice you see on the news? Are those the kinds of things that make you feel</i>	This quote shows the difference in views between Nella and Hazel on identity, stereotypes, and how to deal with the pressures of being a black woman in a white-dominated environment. From this quotation, Nella clearly experiences a form of intra-racial othering. As highlighted by scholars such as (Kwan, 2023:3), intra-racial divisions often mirror the values imposed by systemic racism, creating internal hierarchies that replicate the oppression experienced from outside. Hazel's dismissal of Nella's feelings reflects this process of intra-racial othering, in which dominant norms are

			<i>like you?"</i>	internalized and used to judge others within the same community.
23.		304	<i>"You think you're above what I do. But I see that drive you have," Hazel continued adamant. "Everything I did, I did because I have that drive, too. I always have. Look at yourself, Nella. You know it's true." Nella refused to regard herself in the mirror. "We're not the same," she said, glaring at Hazel. "I have convictions. I speak out. I don't ostracize other Black people. You're just an—" Nella stopped herself, not because she wasn't comfortable saying it to the girl's face.</i>	Nella also accuses Hazel of ostracizing other Black people, implying that Hazel has participated in intra-racial exclusion. According to (Kwan, 2023:3), intra-racial othering is the process by which individuals or groups within the same race discriminate one another. This part shows how the clash of values between the two women results in both distancing (otherness) and subtle attacks or rejection (othering).
24.		305	<i>"You can. Stop fighting the tide, Nella. Once you stop fighting—once you let this wave wash over you—you'll see. It'll wash over you so quickly, you won't even feel it. You won't feel the pain, the white supremacy. You'll read those articles, watch the police footage, then</i>	This quote illustrates Hazel's attempt to persuade Nella to give in to the systems of oppression and injustice, in order to survive and succeed in a world dominated by white supremacy. This aligns with intra-racial othering, as (Kwan, 2023:3) highlights that this othering often mirror the values

			<i>go to work the next morning without feeling like another part of you has died. That heavy anvil of genetic trauma that's been strapped to your ankle for all these years... gone. You'll swim to the top and be free. You'll be you. This is Black Girl Magic in its purest form."</i>	imposed by systemic, creating internal hierarchies that replicate the oppression experienced from outside.
25.		306	<i>"Wait. You haven't been using it, have you?" She laughed. "Whoo-hoo-hoo! The fight is in Nella Rogers, after all. How thrilling."</i> <i>"I... no. I'm still"</i> <i>"Face it, Nell. You gave up on your convictions a long time ago," Hazel whispered. She pointed at Nella's reflection in the mirror. "Look at yourself, and think about it. Have you really been yourself over the last couple of months?"</i>	Hazel is confronting Nella, not just with her actions, but with her <i>identity</i>—implying that Nella has lost her convictions, her authenticity, her sense of self. This quotation shows that Nella experienced intra-racial othering. According to (Kwan, 2023:3), Intra-racial othering is the process by which individuals or groups within the same race discriminate against one another. Hazel places Nella in a marginalized moral category—as someone who abandoned her truth.
26.		307	<i>What was she going to do? Who was she going to be? But instead, she was thinking about the</i>	The quote captures a moment where Nella reflects on Hazel's transformation into someone who

			years Hazel had spent doing what she'd been doing. Had Hazel chosen to convert herself, or had she been manipulated the way that she'd manipulated Nella?	conforms to oppressive structures. Hazel's shift into this role and her attempt to convert Nella as well; this suggests a cycle where those who have been othered begin to do the othering themselves. This is a clear instance of intra-racial othering, where Hazel, a Black woman, manipulates another Black woman to align with dominant (white supremacist) norms. Kwan, (2023:3) describes intra-racial divisions that reflect internalized dominant standards. On the other hand, Nella is experiencing a deep internal crisis. She wonders who she is going to be, what choices she'll make, and whether she'll lose herself like Hazel did. This represents otherness, a feeling of estrangement from her identity, her values, and her community Zevallos, (2023).
27.		307	<i>"I was an Involuntary, too. Why do you think they pulled me out of Boston and assigned</i>	Hazel's attempt to rationalize her complicity with a system of racial control by projecting that same

			<i>me to you, Nell? We're alike, I said. I know you. You wanted to get along to get along, just like I did. Even when I publicly annihilated you, you didn't crack. They told me you were tough and smart, and I saw that. I see it now, too. You understand where I'm coming from. You hear me. I can tell."</i>	path onto Nella. The scene reflects intra-racial othering, as Hazel positions herself as both similar to and superior to Nella, pressuring her to abandon resistance and adopt assimilation as a survival tactic. As Kwan, (2023:3) explains, intra-racial othering often occurs when individuals within the same racial group reinforce dominant norms by marginalizing those who do not conform.
28.	Tokenistic Othering	115	<i>Nella is feeling anxious and suspicious after seeing a list of new names that are likely new employees. She is afraid that the list is related to Vera's plan, her boss, to replace her. Nella flinched. ... Was the list of new hires for Vera? ... but sometime between seeing those names and being shut out of Vera's office, a feeling of deep uneasiness had planted itself in her gut. A feeling that her boss was going to kick her out and</i>	Tokenistic othering is evident in Nella's internal response when she saw a list of possible new hires. She is viewed as a symbol, not a person as evidenced by her worry that she will be replaced to preserve the impression of diversity rather than because of her performance. This aligns with (Childress et al., 2024), who define tokenism as the inclusion of marginalized individuals to project inclusivity, without real empowerment.

			<i>welcome someone else in. A new and improved Black someone, so nobody could give them shit for getting rid of her.</i>	
29.		302	<i>“Yep. The contents within these jars are clutch,” Hazel was saying. “They’ll make you more amenable when it comes to working for and with white folks.”</i>	The system at Wagner, which Hazel appears to have worked with, employs specific tactics (the material in the jar) to force black women to fit into a white-dominated workplace without protest, criticism, or resistance, as she illustrates in the aforementioned quotation. As mentioned by (Childress et al., 2024), this is consistent with tokenistic othering. By selectively and minimally including marginalised people, tokenistic othering reinforces the divisions between “us” (the dominant group) and “them” (the marginalised group) while concealing persistent exclusion and inequity.
30.		307	<i>“But, why do I have to leave?” Nella heard herself whimper. Hazel shrugged.</i>	This conversation takes place between Nella and Hazel, and discusses why Nella should leave her office. Hazel tells Nella to

			<i>“Because there can only be one of us per office. One per office guarantees maximum results, obviously.”</i>	leave because her role as the Black girl in the office has been replaced by Hazel herself. This shows that the presence of black women in the workplace is not for genuine diversity, but as a symbol of tokenism. As Childress et al., (2024:32) explain, tokenistic othering reduces marginalized individuals to symbolic roles, often limiting their presence to a single representative in order to preserve institutional control.
31.		81	<i>“LEAVE WAGNER NOW”</i>	The letter with the message is not only a form of personal threat, but also creates an atmosphere that confirms that Nella's presence is not wanted in the workspace. According to (Kennedy & Bermio, 2022), this is an example of oppressive othering, which occurs when a member of a marginalised group is intentionally forced or marginalised psychologically and socially to feel uncomfortable and undeserving of being in

				the dominant space, in addition to being constructed as other.
32.		133	<i>“LEAVE. THE LONGER YOU STAY, THE HARDER IT’LL BE. WANT PROOF? CALL 518-772-2234. NO TEXTS. CALL”</i>	The second anonymous letter received by Nella illustrates a clear instance of oppressive othering, when intimidation is used to maintain exclusion. According to (Kennedy & Bermio, 2022), oppressive othering is the process of removing marginalised people from disrupted locations and asserting dominance via the employment of forceful measures. This act of hidden aggression reinforces Nella’s outsider status not only within Wagner but also in broader public spaces.
33.		300	<i>“You shouldn’t have come to work today, Nella. You should’ve quit. We don’t need to keep you around anymore”</i> <i>...“Richard doesn’t really value you. That was bullshit. He’s only been keeping you here to keep an eye on you.”</i>	This quotation reveals a clear example of oppressive othering. Hazel’s statement exposes how Nella was never truly respected as an unequal employee, but rather seen as a threat to be monitored. This aligns with (Kennedy & Bermio, 2022) in Schwalbe et al., (2000) that oppressive othering happens when dominant groups

				define others as lacking morally, intellectually, or culturally in order to justify exclusion and control. Hazel reinforces this dynamic by suggesting Nella is no longer needed, not because of poor performance, but because she resists assimilation.
34.		301	“And before you even think about telling anyone,” Hazel snarled, her smooth, buttery-nougat voice shape-shifting into something completely unrecognizable, “nobody would believe you. Everyone would think you’re insane.”	This statement reflects how power can control narratives, and how black women like Nella can easily be dismissed or deemed “ <i>problematic</i> ” if they refuse to participate. According to (Kennedy & Bermio, 2022) in Schwalbe et al., (2000), oppressive othering happens when dominant actors define others as deficient or less credible to justify unequal treatment. In this case, Hazel uses fear and gaslighting as tools of oppression, reinforcing Nella’s social isolation and making it harder for her to resist or expose the truth.
35.	Implicit Othering	29	“ <i>How do they feel about Black people in these parts?</i> ” and Nella responds with	The phrase <i>They don’t ‘see’ color here at Wagner</i> reflects implicit othering, as

			wide eyes, <i>“They don’t ‘see’ color here at Wagner,”</i>	stated by (Kennedy & Bermio, 2022) this form of exclusion masked by supposedly inclusive language that denies the realities of racial difference.
36.			<i>“I don’t think either of them would really get it. A Black girl telling one of Wagner’s bestselling authors that his Black character is written a tiny bit racist? C’mon, now. I could get fired.”</i>	Nella’s hesitation to confront Vera and Colin about racial bias in a manuscript reflects both otherness and othering. Her identity as a Black woman marks her as someone whose perspective is inherently precarious exemplifying otherness. At the same time, the fear of job loss for simply offering critique highlights the institutional and implicit othering embedded in Wagner’s professional culture. Nella is aware that her voice, particularly when addressing racial issues is not protected or encouraged, but instead regulated through unspoken expectations of silence and assimilation.
37.		170	<i>“How about for the office? Because it sounds like your place needs some good vibes. Those coworkers of yours might need some,</i>	This quotation shows how implicit othering occurs in Nella’s workplace. This aligns with (Kennedy & Bermio, 2022) definition of

			<i>too</i> ”	implicit othering, where dominant workplace norms often shaped by whiteness position those who don’t fit as outsiders without formal exclusion. Malaika’s comment reveals that Nella’s office is emotionally unwelcoming and culturally exclusive, especially for a Black woman.
38.		233	<i>“WAGNER’S DANGEROUS YOU’RE RUNNING OUT OF TIME”</i>	The anonymous message Nella receives are one of the example of implicit othering. As (Kennedy & Bermio, 2022) explain, implicit othering occurs when dominant norms are maintained through subtle signals that those who do not conform are not fully accepted. In this case, the threat positions Nella as someone who does not belong in Wagner’s environment not because of performance or behavior, but because of her racial identity.
39.	Defensive Othering	29	<i>“How do they feel about Black people in these parts?”</i> and Nella responds with wide eyes, <i>“They don’t ‘see’ color here</i>	At the same time, Nella’s careful tone, lowered voice, and self-censorship demonstrate defensive othering, in which she

			at Wagner,”	distances herself from open critique in an effort to align with dominant expectations. This also aligns with (Kennedy & Bermio, 2022), defensive othering occurs when member of a marginalised group criticise or devalues other members to align themselves with dominant beliefs.
40.		223-224	“No? Have you tweeted about it, or anything? Or told any of your friends who might have written about it?” “Sorry—what?” asked Nella, genuinely confused. “No, I haven’t told anyone. What did Hazel tell you?” ... “Well, in any event, I want you to know that we have zero tolerance for that kind of behaviour here at Wagner. Do you understand?”	At the same time, Richard’s defensive stance aligns with defensive othering, which (Kennedy & Bermio, 2022) describe as an institutional reaction that shifts suspicion onto the marginalized party in order to maintain power and public image. The formal tone “zero tolerance” serves less as protection for Nella and more as a performative gesture to preserve Wagner’s integrity.

Shani’s Part

No.	Form	Page	Evidence	Analysis
41.	Institutional Othering	202	<i>“She just knew there was a deeper explanation for why</i>	This quote shows that Shani is aware of how the system has shaped a

			<i>these young women were suddenly no longer beholden to anyone but themselves and the white people they worked for. why they were so obsessed with success and with taking down any black women who got in their way.”</i>	new generation of black women who move away from collective solidarity and choose to cooperate with dominant power—often at the expense of other black women. This reflects a form of institutional othering, where black women like Shani are considered incompatible with structures that prioritize conformity to dominant values (Powell & Young, 2023). Shani experienced this because she could not be controlled and was unwilling to be the false face of institutional diversity.
42.		236	<i>“Now, Kendra Rae—that woman knew about sins. She’d committed one of the real ultimate sins by trying to be herself: Black. Unapologetic. Someone who told it like it was. Someone who rejected what was expected of her as a Black woman in a predominantly white industry.”</i>	In this quote, Shani is talking about Kendra Rae, a black woman who dared to be herself in a white-dominated industry. Kendra Rae has been deemed to have committed a by the industry’s social standards, namely being authentically herself: black, unapologetic about her identity, honest, and unwilling to give in to the expectations or

				pressures of the white people in her professional environment. This aligns with (Powell & Menendian, 2023) notion of institutional othering, which becomes entrenched not through explicit rules but through expectations that silence difference.
43.	Internalized Othering	202	<i>“The only thing worse than that was knowing that dozens, maybe even hundreds, of other young Black women were experiencing this same kind of humiliation, too... and young Black women were the cause of it. Hundreds of young Black women, probably more, were undergoing severe personality changes all over the world. The degree to which they were changing varied from person to person. Some spoke differently, others dressed differently. But the most important thing was that the change wasn’t superficial. It went down to each</i>	This quotation indicates a form of internalized othering, in which the effects of structural exclusion are no longer imposed solely by white institutions, but are reproduced within the Black community itself. According to (Tappan, 2006:2120), internalized othering occurs when those who are positioned as different begin to absorb and act upon the negative perceptions associated with their identity.

			<i>and every one of their souls.”</i>	
44.		235	<i>“How could I sit back and let Nella make the same mistake so many other Black girls had made, especially now that I’d met Kendra Rae?”</i>	Shani is feeling worried and responsible for what will happen to Nella. She doesn’t want Nella to repeat the same mistakes that so many other black women have made before her. The mistakes that seem to involve accepting or following something that seems promising but turns out to be dangerous or detrimental to their identity as black women. This aligns with internalized othering as stated by (Tappan, 2006:2120) that this othering occurs when individuals unconsciously adopt dominant perspectives that devalue their own group, leading to the reinforcement of social exclusion.
45.	Tokenistic Othering	237	<i>“Wait. Diana Gordon is involved in this, too?” I couldn’t imagine the beautiful, enigmatic author from the billboards advertising her latest best seller-turned-feature film</i>	Shani realizes that even iconic, successful Black women can be complicit in the systems that marginalize others. Diana Gordon, a best-selling author and a public figure of empowerment, is

			<i>being involved in such a nefarious operation.</i>	revealed to be part of an operation that enforces assimilation and behavioural control among other Black women. This represents a form of tokenistic othering, in which Diana's visibility is used to project inclusivity, even as she reinforces exclusion. As Childress et al., (2024:32) explain, tokenistic othering allows marginalized individuals to occupy symbolic roles—often in exchange for their silence or complicity with dominant norms. Diana's participation in the system reflects not empowerment, but co-optation. Her success becomes a tool for institutional control, as she helps maintain the very mechanisms that prevent other Black women from achieving authentic inclusion.
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Kendra's Part

No.	Form	Page	Evidence	Analysis
46.	Otherness	237	<i>Kendra Rae had pursed her lips and shaken her head. "That change you've all been seeing</i>	From the quotation above, the phrase <i>that change you've all been seeing</i> points to a pattern

			<i>happen to our kind? I think someone changed her, too.” She’d taken a quick sip of her coffee. “I think it was Richard—he’s the man Diana was talking to on the phone. That’s the only explanation I can think of for why she would try to do that to me. And why she wouldn’t be seen with me in public after what I said.”</i>	of forced assimilation, where Black women are quietly altered mentally or ideologically to better fit into white-dominated professional spaces. Diana refusing to be seen in public with Kendra Rae after she spoke out is reflect a signals that Diana has internalized the institution’s fear of resistance. She distances herself from Kendra to preserve her own power, prioritizing acceptance over solidarity.
47.	Institutional Othering	247	<i>“What Kendra Rae needs to do is just suck it up. Apologize for what she said and be grateful for what we’ve all been able to achieve here so that we can get back to business as usual.”</i> <i>“She’d literally do anything else on this earth instead of say sorry, even if it means being blackballed from the entire industry.”</i> <i>“We both know where she’s coming from, right? You’ve said it yourself how</i>	In this excerpt, Diana and Richard are talking about Kendra Rae, a Black woman who refuses to apologize for something she said—most likely a statement or attitude that criticizes injustice or racism in the publishing industry where they work. This quotation illustrate that Kendra Rae experiences othering, which is the pressure and negative judgment from her environment that forces her to conform to the norms of the dominant group and sacrifice herself for

			<i>suffocating this place can be.”</i>	the sake of business. She is seen as an obstacle and criticized for not being willing to apologize or conform, reflecting how she is marginalized and targeted in the power dynamics of the industry. This attitude also shows the institutional pressures that force minority individuals to conform in order to be accepted, while also breaking down solidarity among minority group members.
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Factor Generating Otherness

No.	Causation	Page	Evidence	Analysis
1.	Hazel & Diana - as Establishing Otherness	235	<i>“How could I sit back and let Nella make the same mistake so many other Black girls had made, especially now that I’d met Kendra Rae?”</i>	This quote indirectly points to larger systemic forces and patterns of racial conformity and oppression that cause Black women to be erased, silenced, or assimilated in white-dominated professional environments. Hazel and Diana serve as representations of Black women as enforcers of this system, who have aligned themselves with institutional

				power, even at the expense of other members of their community. They perpetuate a dangerous cycle where maintaining a job means hiding your racial identity and excluding those who challenge it.
2.		236	<i>“That change you’ve all been seeing happen to our kind? I think someone changed her, too... That’s the only explanation I can think of for why she would try to do that to me.”</i>	This quote reflects the way institutions reproduce the white race through reward systems that privilege those who comply and silence those who resist (Ahmed, 2012:1). Diana’s transformation into someone who follows the rules, even against her closest ally Kendra, reflects how organizations maintain control by recruiting and employing <i>the other</i> and hiring individuals who disagree with them.
3.		237	<i>“Wait. Diana Gordon is involved in this, too?” I couldn’t imagine the beautiful, enigmatic author from the billboards advertising her latest best seller-turned-feature film being involved in such a nefarious operation.</i>	This moment marks Shani’s realization that even admired figures like Diana can be part of the system that marginalizes others. Diana represents someone who, while appearing to break a racial barrier, is actually used by the system to uphold

				white-dominant structures. Her complicity in a harmful operation shows how representation can be performative, not transformative. In this case, Diana's success is not evidence of inclusivity but rather part of a system that uses her image to disguise mechanisms of assimilation and control.
4.		302	<i>"Yep. The contents within these jars are clutch," Hazel was saying. "They'll make you more amenable when it comes to working for and with white folks."</i>	This quote reflects what Hazel implies: that success in the workplace requires changing oneself, not only behaviourally, but chemically to fit white norms. Hazel, a Black woman, enforces the idea that being one's authentic Black self is a professional disadvantage, thus reproducing dominant white expectations from within the marginalized group. This aligns with Tappan, (2006:2120) who explains that internalized othering occurs when members of marginalized groups absorb dominant ideologies and begin to view themselves or others in their group as

				inferior.
5.	Job Demands & Workplace Culture	7	<i>“There was another Black person on her floor. And given Maisy's spiel, this Black person was here for an interview. Which meant in the next few weeks, a Black person could quite possibly be sitting in the cube directly across from Nella.”</i>	In this quote, it is illustrated how racial visibility plays a role in causing disparities in a predominantly white institution. Visible identity markers that deviate from dominant cultural standards often cause disparities (Zevallos, 2023). Nella now begins to understand how her workplace assigns symbolic value to the presence of Black people through processes of symbolic differentiation and surveillance, rather than explicit exclusion.
6.		12	<i>“If Vera didn't trust her opinion, then Nella would never [be] more than just a ‘assistant’; if she didn't become more than just an ‘assistant’, she'd never become an editor.”</i>	The quote reflects otherness. Her ideas and ambitions are not dismissed outright, but subtly devalued through Vera's lack of trust, which mirrors the broader system's hesitation to empower Black professionals. According to (Ahmed, 2012:1), institutional structures often claim neutrality while embedding exclusion through affective and relational cues such as trust, confidence and familiarity that are less accessible to racialized

				individuals.
7.		44	<i>“A Black girl telling one of Wagner’s bestselling authors that his Black character is written a tiny bit racist? C’mon, now. I could get fired.”</i>	Nella’s fear of speaking up reveals a structural imbalance where Black critique is treated as dangerous rather than valuable. This quote exemplifies how racial identity intersects with power dynamics to produce otherness in professional spaces. As (Powell & Menendian, 2023) explain, institutions often mask exclusion behind professionalism. In such environments, Black employees are othered not only by being under-represented but also by being discouraged from asserting their perspectives. This quote reflects how the workplace environment itself contributes to otherness by promoting silence, discouraging authenticity, and forcing Black employees to choose between self-expression and survival.
8.		116	<i>“Hardly anything at Wagner was seriously required. Technically, you could wear a</i>	This quote illustrates that while there are no written rules about what constitutes

			<i>shirt with the words "I'm Rooting for Everybody Black" on it if you wanted to, ... Wagner held itself to a silently agreed upon "professional" standard, and when the occasional foolish intern broke this rule, employees showed them what time it was with the raise of an eyebrow or a chilly, withering stare"</i>	professional dress or other things in Wagner's office. But if someone breaks them, such as wearing clothing with an overly political or overt message, they won't be reprimanded directly; instead they will get a subtle but telling response like a sneer or a look of disapproval from a coworker.
9.		154	<i>"It just... it sucks how white it is here... Black people just really need to be given the chance. Period. Just because we don't see them in these spaces doesn't mean they can't thrive here."</i>	Nella's statement directly criticizes the lack of inclusion in institutions like Wagner that are predominantly white. This quote highlights how lack of racial representation and opportunity in the workplace are not only symptoms but active generators of otherness, reinforcing the notion that Black professionals do not belong or cannot succeed in that environment unless granted exceptional <i>permission</i> to be there.
10.		180	<i>"You haven't told him about the notes? Or how Hazel has undermined you in every possible way?... I feel like I'm</i>	This quote reveals that Nella does not feel safe in her workplace and needs support. Despite being threatened, she keeps the truth hidden

			<i>still kind of on thin ice with the higher-ups.”</i>	for fear of jeopardizing her career. This quote shows how institutional fear and lack of protection play a large role in creating inequality. Nella stays silent because she recognizes that the workplace environment is unsafe for marginalized people.
11.		223-224	<i>“No? Have you tweeted about it, or anything? Or told any of your friends who might have written about it?”</i> <i>“Sorry—what?”</i> <i>asked Nella, genuinely confused.</i> <i>“No, I haven’t told anyone. What did Hazel tell you?”</i> <i>... “Well, in any event, I want you to know that we have zero tolerance for that kind of behaviour here at Wagner. Do you understand?”</i>	This quote exemplifies how the workplace environment contributes to otherness not only through exclusion or underrepresentation, but also by failing to provide emotional safety and institutional trust when Black employees voice concerns. It further emphasizes that token inclusion does not equate to institutional support.

Impact of Otherness

No.	Character	Page	Evidence	Analysis
1.	Nella	87	<i>“Throughout her entire train ride ... she’d been convinced everyone was looking at her. Was</i>	Her intense feelings of mistrust and anxiety included feelings of being watched and

			<i>she being watched? followed? Was that man who was standing by the doors looking at her because he wanted to knock her down and take her wallet, or because he didn't like the idea of Black people working at Wagner?"</i>	followed and even fear of being attacked. This aligns with (Zevallos, 2023) concept of otherness, where individuals are marked as different and consequently marginalized based on race even without any confrontation.
2.		115	<i>"Nella is feeling anxious and suspicious after seeing a list of new names that are likely new employees. She is afraid that the list is related to Vera's plan, her boss, to replace her. ... but sometime between seeing those names and being shut out of Vera's office, a feeling of deep uneasiness had planted itself in her gut. A feeling that her boss was going to kick her out and welcome someone else in. A new and improved Black someone, so nobody could give them shit for getting rid of her."</i>	Nella's internal reaction reflects her anxiety, as shown in the quote above. She realizes that Wagner's strength lies in his ability to "safely" represent Blackness rather than his editorial expertise or skill. This internal pressure shows how one loses one's sense of safety, truth, and dignity in order to gain the attention of others.
3.		133-134	<i>"LEAVE. THE LONGER YOU STAY, THE HARDER IT'LL BE..."</i>	This quote triggers her anxiety and reinforces Nella's status as someone unwelcome. More than just workplace exclusion, this moment demonstrates that

				the sense of being the <i>other</i> extends into public space, transforming everyday environments into sites of fear and surveillance.
4.		170-171	<i>"She knows there's only space for one Black girl, and she wants to be it. I think she wants you out, girl," Malaika continued picking up a green tuft of hair next. "She's playing you. How else would she have snuck those notes to you so smoothly, without you noticing? And the way she threw you under the bus today, in front of everybody?"</i>	This interaction shows the emotional effects of othering, where an imposed competitive environment is created by institutional structures. Nella feels anxious, afraid, and increasingly isolated because she is considered the <i>only one</i> in the system.
6.		256	<i>When Malaika expresses concern, Nella bursts out, "How do you think I feel?! I'm being fucking followed!"</i>	This quote shows that Nella is not only isolated; she now feels hunted, watched, and manipulated. This increases her fear and leads to an emotional inability to trust her surroundings.
7.		257	<i>The weirdness that had arisen between her and Vera since Hazel's arrival was really taking a hit on Nella's personal life, and the worst part of it all was that she'd barely noticed how much of</i>	This moment shows the effects of emotional and relational exclusion. Nella's hyper-focus on surviving a toxic work environment causes her to neglect her closest support systems,

			<i>an impact it had had on Malaika ...</i>	leading to burnout and isolation. These are common psychological effects of ongoing marginalization.
8.		260	<i>... "And maybe it is Hazel that's driving me a little crazy," she'd continued. "I don't know. I just... it's hard."</i>	Nella also experiences the impact of othering through mounting emotional pressure and self-doubt. Her comment reflects how the competitive and racialized environment at Wagner has created an emotional burden that affects both her mental well-being and personal relationships.
9.		276	<i>"Even still, she relaxed her shoulders as she felt the poking of a comb, and when she felt a few bobby pins here and there, she let every hint of apprehension go. She forgot about being mistaken for the other Black girl in the office. ... In fact, she leaned into it, welcomed it, as though the substance had been a part of her body all along."</i>	This quote marks a chilling emotional shift in Nella's journey. After enduring microaggressions, institutional exclusion, and isolation, she begins to emotionally submit to the very system that has othered her. The cream, a recurring symbol of behavioural control and forced assimilation, represents the pressure to conform in order to survive. Nella's release of apprehension and her forgetting of past injustices show the deep impact of othering, which can

				lead to internalized suppression and the erasure of resistance.
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Strategies to Overcome Otherness

No.	Character	Page	Evidence	Analysis
1.	Nella	303	<i>“What I’m offering you here is an opportunity to be a part of something that will allow you to let go, and go further.” Nella’s reply—“Well—I don’t want it”</i>	This quote marks a clear moment of rejection, showing her refusal to be absorbed by the system she has come to distrust.
2.		304	<i>“We’re not the same,” she said, glaring at Hazel. “I have convictions. I speak out. I don’t ostracize other Black people.”</i>	Most significant is Nella’s struggle, both external and internal; she consciously refuses to accept the institutionally imposed neglect and remains true to her true identity. This moment reflects not only moral clarity but also Nella’s active resistance to being complicit in intra-racial othering.
3.	Shani	235	<i>“How could I sit back and let Nella make the same mistake so many other Black girls had made, especially now that I’d met Kendra Rae?”</i>	Shani demonstrates her moral standing by trying to stop the cycle of institutional manipulation and racial betrayal that others like Hazel and Diana have practiced. While Shani does not commit open rebellion, her decision to share her knowledge and reveal the

				organization's secrets is a quiet and powerful form of defiance.
4.	Kendra	247	<i>“What Kendra Rae needs to do is just suck it up. Apologize for what she said and be grateful for what we’ve all been able to achieve here...”</i> and Richard follows with, <i>“She’d literally do anything else on this earth instead of say sorry...”</i>	Her strategy focuses on defying the organization’s manipulative strategies and remaining authentic, even though this attitude costs her position and reputation as a professional. Kendra’s resistance becomes especially evident in the way she is discussed by ‘others’ in the novel.
5.		237	<i>“She wouldn’t be seen with me in public after what I said”</i>	It shows how Kendra distances herself from Diana in public with such candor and then disappears to avoid greater danger—perhaps not out of weakness, but out of controlled absence and protection.
6.		306	<i>“But perhaps the most telling thing she saw... was a girl who hadn’t sent Kendra Rae Phillips one iota of proof... even though she had all of the evidence at her fingertips.”</i>	This sentence suggests that Kendra is waiting and watching, perhaps relying on others to continue what she started, rather than letting the resistance finish itself.