"Racist Elevator Inspectors, Consumer-Driven Zombies, and the Sardonicism That Mocks Them Both in Colson Whitehead’s *The Intuitionist* and *Zone One*

In *The Intuitionist* and *Zone One*, Colson Whitehead uses elements of genre fiction and literary fiction to communicate his sardonic tone. Whitehead uses sardonicism in order to critique and denounce systems of white supremacy and institutional racism. He separates himself from previous African American authors in the subtle mocking of white systems of oppression. While *The Intuitionist*’s setting is in a Jim Crow Era-esque major city reminiscent of New York City, Whitehead uses the elevator inspecting business as a way to call into question the systems currently in place. He exacerbates the horrors of a fictional past to illuminate the systemic discrimination plaguing the United States today. *Zone One*, taking place in an imaginative near-future eerily close to our own, works hard to defy the cultural understandings of zombies and capitalism. Even zombies are consumers anyway. Using concepts about post-raciality as a lens, I argue that Whitehead is fighting against many of the same institutions and issues his forebearers were. The main difference lies in the current racial moment, and how it has necessitated a different formula for shedding light on twenty-first century racial horrors.