

**“Governing Races, Feminising Freedom:  
A Genealogy of the Black Caribbean Woman from  
Postcolonial Britain to the Post – Emancipation  
Caribbean”**

**Denise Elizabeth Pottinger Noble**

**Department of Sociology**

**Goldsmiths College**

**University of London**

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## ABSTRACT

The politics of race and Black representation now centre on contestations over the meaning of Black identity, and of freedom, in a postcolonial world. Whilst the end of formal colonialism has not eradicated racism, postcoloniality has unsettled Black identity, producing new struggles around gender, sexuality, and class. These internal struggles increasingly contest the both the terms and conditions of contemporary Black freedom and the meaning of Blackness.

This study explores these themes using interviews with Black Caribbean women in London and analyses of Black women's cultural practices. It addresses these as practices of freedom through which women have sought to re-define themselves and govern their lives through the idea of freedom. Secondly it uses genealogy to historicise and critique these practices and to undertake a *critical ontology* of the figure of the Black Caribbean women within liberalism. This reveals the mutual constitutiveness of metropolitan and colonial liberal formations through three moments in the post-emancipation histories of Black Caribbean women and British liberal state reform. These are: - the post-war mass migration to the U.K. of Caribbean women between 1948 and 1962; the reformation of the British Caribbean from slave economies to free societies following the Abolition of slavery in 1834, and finally political decolonisation by Britain of its Caribbean territories between 1934 and 1962. These moments permit a critical history of our present, in which we encounter the traces of Britain's colonial past in contemporary social formations.

This study concludes that the traces of colonial liberalism remain in contemporary advanced liberalism. Secondly that the category Black Caribbean woman is a category of liberal government, but also available as an ethical identity from which Black Caribbean women have and continue to both resist the governmentalities of race and gender, and use their liberties to expand the limits of freedom.

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## INTRODUCTION

### **Governing Races, Feminising Freedom: A Genealogy of the Black-Caribbean Woman From Post-Colonial Britain To The Post- Emancipation Caribbean**

What a islan! What a people!  
Man an woman, old and young  
Jusa pack dem bag and baggage  
An tun history upside dung!

(Louise Bennett 1972 *Colonisation In Reverse.*)

For only a certain kind of liberty – a certain way of understanding and exercising freedom, of relating to ourselves individually and collectively as subjects of freedom – is compatible with the liberal arts of rule. And that kind of freedom has a history. We can historicise that which we have taken for freedom today, and in the name of which we are governed. We can trace the relations between the history of this ethic of freedom and the history of government. (Nikolas Rose 1999: 63)

Traditionally formal political power has been conceived as the privilege of men and masculinity. So that the yardstick by which a nation's political development and civility is often assessed is by the position of its women. With this in mind, what should we make of the current hypervisibility of Black women in both global popular culture and the world's only superpower the United States of America? What might we infer from the sub - cultural and geo-political cultural capital invested alternatively in these two iconic Black figures of our present times, namely Beyonce Knowles<sup>1</sup> and Condoleezza Rice<sup>2</sup>. What do these two figures suggest about the contemporary times we are in? Does their pre-eminence confirm *finally* the long delayed fulfilment of liberalism's promise? That is the full inclusion of non-European peoples and European women, into the human citizenship of equality and universal social justice, without regard to race or gender? What do the eroticised bodily terms of Beyonce's

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<sup>1</sup> Singer Beyonce Knowles is was one of the highest earning female entertainers in 2004.

<sup>2</sup> USA Secretary of State since September 2005.

freedom or the neo-liberal base of Condoleeza's political influence (that permits her to stride the world as a defender of Western civilisation in the name of liberty), tell us about the location of Black women in contemporary freedom and power? Or the identity of postcolonial freedom? This study sets out to address these questions, not from the perspective of these globally influential and powerful women, but through the lives and practices of 'ordinary' Black Caribbean women living in Britain. Yet these too are women with power and with the freedoms that come from being professional, mostly middle-class women living in a developed western democracy. How do they use their power and their freedoms to shape their lives and have influence over the shaping of other peoples' lives? This seems at this juncture to be an important question to ask, for I consider that freedom remains a constant and daily preoccupation within Black popular culture and in many aspects of Black everyday life in Britain and elsewhere in the African Diaspora. Increasingly these practices or strategies of freedom take place outside of the traditional locations and terms of party politics and social movements. Instead they are being traced out on the intimate contours of the body and the self; in strategies of self-development and self-modification and in the erotic hedonism of popular cultural practices that have produced elements of an uneasy coalition with the commercial drive of mass consumer culture in distinctive regions of the Black Diaspora (e.g. Britain, Caribbean, and the United States). This correspondence between the absorption and reinforcement of an erotic secularisation of the body and Black identity within Black popular culture, and a particular late modern mode of freedom invested in a privatised, commodified self, cannot be seen as a simple equivalence, or coincidence. Neither can the increasingly high visibility of Black male and Black female bodies and performances in consumer culture readily be taken as evidence of a diminution of the pervasiveness of racism or the fulfilment of decolonisation's promise of social equality and justice.

Although Black vernacular culture generally has been seen through the prism of male custodianship, its irrepressible, recurrent references to contested gender relations, suggests that any attempt to account for its often complex political significations needs to understand not only the role of Black female participation and spectatorship, but also the significance of gender in the politics of postcolonial racism and advanced liberalism's freedoms. At the same time these commercially acute and occasionally more or less socially conscious orientations of Black popular culture, (particularly around questions of identity, individualism, community and civic participation) are also a certain way of understanding and exercising freedom, of relating to oneself individually and collectively as Black subjects of freedom. The question is what kind of freedom and what is its history? This study locates this history of Black freedom in its relationship to liberalism and so sets out to map the formation of Black freedom within liberalism through the perspectives of Black Caribbean women. It asks how have Black

Caribbean women been governed by their freedom and how have they in resisting government sought to feminise freedom?

## **Overview of the Research**

### ***Chapter One: Literature Review***

This study commences with an examination of the literature on race and racism within British social and cultural theory as well as the literature within African Diaspora studies. It will argue that engaging the specificities of Black women's experiences confronts and resists the hegemony of both a Windrush narrative of Black Britishness that fixes the experience of Black people within the national politics of race and racism in Britain, and a revisionist radical history of the African Diaspora, both of which have tended to subsume or erase the experiences of Black women within a masculine discourse of the political.

### ***Chapter 2: Methodological Discussion: the Modern Genealogy of Black Womanhood***

This chapter outlines the genealogical methodology deployed in this study and its relevance to the key concepts deployed and the research questions. It will then move on to describe the research design and present background data on the women interviewed.

### ***Chapter 3: Black-Caribbean Women, Black Britishness and the Old and New Ethnicities of Postcolonial Blackness.***

This chapter analyses the data emerging from interviews. It addresses how the women interviewed responded to the invitation to define their cultural identities. It explores internal differences *within* Black British identities through the ways in which the respondents organise a variety of categories to name and describe themselves. What emerges is how their self-definitional practices are deployed in strategic and non-strategic negotiations over the meaning of being Black in Britain. Using data from interviews with women of Black-Caribbean descent I identify how their discussions of the everyday experiences of growing up in Britain has re-organised the categories Black and Caribbean around alternative and additional axes of power to do with gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity and location.

#### ***Chapter 4: Independent Women and the Paradoxes of Black Womanhood***

This chapter uses the narratives of the Black Caribbean women interviewed in London to explore the trope of the 'independent Black woman' that is widespread in African Diaspora cultures. What emerges is an idealised discourse of 'the strong Black woman'. Drawing on the findings from the interviews this chapter makes the case that the discourse of the independent Black woman is a feminising moral governmentality that combines discrepant racialised and gendered technologies for governing and liberating the conduct of Black women.

#### ***Chapter 5: Discrepant Women, Imperial Patriarchies, and De/Colonising Masculinities***

The previous two chapters revealed how Africa, the Caribbean, slavery, imperialism and post-war immigration figure in the personal as well as collective memories that produce Black British identities. The colonial traces that imbue these women's self-identities suggest that understanding the lives of Black women in Britain requires attending to the contemporaneousness of Britain's colonial past. In other words they impel a postcolonial history of the present, in which we are forced to encounter the traces of Britain's colonial past in contemporary social formations.

Therefore this chapter uses genealogy to map the mutual constitutiveness of metropolitan and colonial formations. This is done through examining three significant historical moments in the post-emancipation histories of Black Caribbean women. The first examines the immediate post-war period of mass migration to the U.K. of Caribbean women from 1948 to the Immigration Act of 1962. The second moment covers the Abolition of Slavery in the British Caribbean colonies between 1834 - 1838 and the reformation of Britain's Caribbean territories from plantation slave economies to free societies. It focuses on how colonial rule was paradoxically entangled in the liberal art of governing freedom. The third moment covers the period of 1934 to 1962 and focuses on the process of political decolonisation by Britain of its Caribbean territories and the mass migration of Caribbean people to Britain referred to in the first section. What becomes apparent is how the government of race in the empire, becomes intimately married to the government of gender at home.

#### ***Chapter 6: Rude Bwais, Ghetto Gyals and the Transnational Logics of Postcolonial Blackness***

The next chapter moves on to address the effects of postcoloniality and the late-modern phase of globalisation on the politics of Black representation. Late-modern rule has become

increasingly expressed through the hegemony of advanced-liberalism in which governance has become increasingly privatised and distant from formal state practices. This chapter begins a two-part investigation of these processes that culminates in the following chapter. The first part covered in this chapter asks how the market has become implicated, not only in the reproduction of race and racism, but perversely also in the practices through which racialised populations negotiate, subvert, resist or refine race and racism in the pursuit of new postcolonial imaginaries of freedom. This is accomplished through examining the transnational circulation and translation of Jamaican Dancehall music.

### ***Chapter 7: Remembering Bodies, Healing Histories: The Emotional Politics of Everyday Freedom.***

This chapter presents the second part of the argument begun in the previous chapter, regarding the effects of postcoloniality and the late-modern phase of globalisation on the politics of Black representation. This chapter examines how ideas of Africa and tradition are deployed in the Sacred Woman healing programme, which in contrast to the secular modernism of Dancehall, promotes itself as offering Black women a return to tradition as a way of opposing western modernity and racism. Through a textual analysis of the manual of the Sacred Woman programme and analysis of interviews with women who have participated in the programme I argue that despite its formal rhetoric of African tradition and opposition to Black and western modernity, the programme in fact remains resolutely within the terms of advanced liberalism's increasingly privatised forms of self-regulation.

### ***Chapter 8: Conclusion - Feminising Freedom and the Temporalities of Postcoloniality***

This chapter concludes this study by reflecting on the contemporary politics of Black representation in Britain by situating it within a wider set of debates about the relationship between popular culture and national identity, diaspora and transnationalism, liberalism and postcoloniality. I argue that what this study has revealed through the experiences and positioning of Black Caribbean women as subjects of liberal freedom, is a critical ontology of both liberalism and Black politics. I argue that Black Caribbean women's discontinuous and contested strategies of autonomy enunciate, a *feminised* ethic of freedom, which in disturbing the grammatology of liberal freedom, contest the racialised masculinity of power in both Western liberal government and Black representational politics.



## CHAPTER ONE

### Literature Review

#### *Re-Locating (the Sociology of) Black Britishness: Diaspora and Postcoloniality*

The changing approaches to the study of race and racism in British sociology since the nineteen sixties, reflect the changing historical situations in which questions of race, ethnicity and racism express the specific predicaments and questions arising within British social life associated with post-war mass immigration from Britain's former colonies and the making of multicultural Britain. In other words, they reflect the contested and deeply political imbeddedness of questions concerning the place and status of Britain's minority ethnic populations within the nation. These in turn are inseparable from the political and cultural adjustments attendant upon Britain's transformation from an empire nation to a multicultural postcolonial nation. The incorporation of Britain's erstwhile colonial subjects into British citizenship and national life, became urgent in the nineteen sixties and late nineteen seventies, as it became apparent that those who responded to Britain's post-war need for more labour, were failing to return 'home' but instead settling and making new homes for themselves and their families in Britain. The early sociology of race in Britain in the nineteen sixties and seventies was dominated by the twin themes of race prejudice and immigration. Theoretically this is reflected in the 'race-relations' paradigm that dominated the sociology of race in Britain from the 1950's through to the late 1970's. Arguably, its traces can still be found in contemporary 'commonsense' discourses of race as well as increasingly in the formal rhetoric of the current New Labour government. Yet, the study of race and racism in Britain since the large-scale post-war migration of people from the New Commonwealth has undergone many changes – both conceptually and politically. There are a number of key shifts that can be identified in this theorisation of race and ethnicity.

Firstly, there was the pre-eminence of the race relations paradigm of the Chicago School, which dominated early work from the 1960's to the 1970's (Banton 1977). The Chicago School approach was developed in the pioneering work of Robert E. Park (1925) and Gunnar Myrdal (1944) in the early decades of the twentieth century in the USA. Park was concerned to challenge the hegemonic naturalising of the concept of race within biological theories of race. The race relations paradigm conceived of race as the collectivity of individuals who share a

common social and cultural heritage of symbolic meanings. In the 1960's and 1970's this socio-psychological construction of race as cultural origins, came to be defined by the term 'ethnicity', as ecological approaches borrowed from anthropology became integrated into American race-relations sociology (Back and Solomos 1996). However, the term ethnicity was and still is often deployed as a code for race signifying skin colour<sup>3</sup>. Its capacity to incorporate notions of religion, culture and nationality and correlate them with common-sense notions of 'racial' appearances renders it a very malleable concept for a variety of uses. The key problematic articulated by the race-relations paradigm was not racism, but race prejudice and race consciousness, regarded as subjective problems of psychology, which impacted negatively on relations between different ethnic groups, i.e. – 'on race relations' (Ballis Lal 1990).

The rise to prominence of a Marxist-left framework in the late nineteen seventies and early nineteen eighties in the British sociology of race shifted theories of race and racism in two important ways. Banton (op cit.) made an important intervention with his introduction of the term *processes of racialisation*. Banton used a social interactionist approach to argue that the *idea of race* structures people's perceptions and he used the term *racialisation* to denote any circumstance where the *idea* of race is employed in discourse. The concept of racialisation was further developed by Robert Miles as "a representational process whereby social significance and therefore social relations are attached to biological (usually phenotypic) human features" and used to group people together into social groups (Miles 1993: 75). The concept of racialisation enabled consideration of the changing social constructions of race and racism (Miles op cit: 69). It was able to show how the demise of biological concepts of race, did not necessarily eradicate racism. Both Miles and Banton share a conception of race as a socially constructed and therefore a 'false' biological category. Consequently, they viewed all forms of racialisation as inherently *racist* and politically mystifying through the way they masked 'real' class conflict. Racism within this framework is an ideological effect of class inequalities. It is an ideology of the ruling and capitalist classes deployed to mask the economic effects of successive waves of globalisation and the resulting global restructuring of capitalist relations in the post-war era.

Barker developed this notion of processes of racialisation as encoding practices in his analysis of what he termed the 'new racism' (Barker 1981). New racism denoted the reformulation of

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<sup>3</sup> Cohen, P. 1988, 'The Perversions of Inheritance: Studies in the Making of Multi-racist Britain in eds.' in P. Cohen and H. S. Bains (eds) *Multi-racist Britain*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.

biological racist distinctions within cultural codes, thereby masking the biological exclusions, which they assume. For Kenan Malik 1996, this new racism could be detected in both racist and anti-racist discourses (Malik op cit: 182). Malik, has identified, for example, a relationship of equivalence between on the one hand, forms of Black and Asian cultural resistance which seek to contest racism and cultural assimilation on the grounds of preserving cultural rights or traditions, and on the other, the then Tory leader Margaret Thatcher's 1978 speech when she spoke of Britain fearing being swamped by people with an alien culture. The notion of Britishness that she was appealing to envisioned race-as-culture-as-nation, in which Britishness signified racial exclusivity (white) and cultural homogeneity (dominantly English), and in which non-white New Commonwealth citizens are perpetually positioned as aliens and thus self-evidently dangerous intruders. He argues that both racist and anti-racist expressions of liberal pluralism assert, "that it is natural for every culture to assert its own superiority" (ibid).

In response to this Malik attempts to advance a universal emancipatory humanism through recuperating Enlightenment philosophy from its charges of racism. He does this by arguing three things. Firstly, that Enlightenment, which marks the emergence of modernity, was emancipatory at heart. This is because for the first time it offered a secular unified theory of mankind, which in turn enabled the possibility of thinking in terms of universal human rights. Secondly, that racism was not inherent to Enlightenment philosophy but a distortion or abstraction caused by the social forces associated with the rise of capitalism and nationalism. Finally that this ambivalence was caused not by racism but by the contradiction between the emancipatory ideals of universalism and liberty in Enlightenment discourse and the property interests of capitalist social relations (Malik op cit: 69). Whilst these contradictions between capitalism and nineteenth century liberalism exist, they cannot be quite so easily used to absolve Enlightenment values, as chapter five *Discrepant Women, Imperial Patriarchies, and De/Colonising Masculinities* will show when we look at the reformation of racial rule (Goldberg 2002) in the Caribbean following the abolition of slavery in 1834. Another problem lies in the way that Malik conflates equality with sameness, a conflation that has beset liberalism ever since its inception and which has been challenged by Wendy Brown (1995) in relation to gender, but less successfully in relation to race. This study is a contribution to rectifying this.

The body of sociological studies of race in Britain in the second half of the twentieth century is characterised by two things: firstly, a preoccupation with the role of the state and state institutions in the reproduction or management of racial discrimination, or conversely the position of minority ethnic labour inside late capitalism's re-configurations of production and

labour<sup>4</sup>. This has reproduce in many regards a very localised national gaze which focuses on ‘minority ethnic’ identities and cultures in ways that adhere the very mobile transnational identifications of Black Britons to very territorialized and racialised urban spaces of Britain’ s inner cities. Again the primary concerns seem to be, to address what this tells us about British national identity and the domestic politics of race. Thus there is a sense in which the British sociology of race and ethnicity has been mainly concerned with the equation of migrant with worker (Cohen 1998: 6), and ethnicity with its impact on nationhood (Cohen 1997: 7). An important shift came in the 1980’s through the work of the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies, led by Stuart Hall.

Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy have been influential to the British sociology of race on many levels. Firstly in arguing that the political can no longer be simply equated with class struggle, but may be articulated through an “ensemble of social relations structured in dominance” (Gilroy 1987: 32). Both revealed that struggles around race may operate relatively at a distance from the sphere of production. Stuart Hall extended the challenge to traditional Marxist approaches to culture, and sought to rethink the relationship between ideology, culture and human agency. Subjectivity was no longer the simple ‘effect’ of ideology, but was produced in a dualistic play of interpolations between the individual and their structural positioning in ideology (Hall 1987).

Secondly whilst Cultural Studies disrupted the economism of British sociology, early Cultural Studies work on subcultures failed to break from its national parochialism around race. Hall and Gilroy’s writings are important because they achieved this shift. Thus the re-absorption of Cultural Studies paradigms into Sociology reveals the extent to which Cultural Studies has been an important site through which a decentred critically reflexive sociology could start to be imaginable. How far this has gone in breaking the normatively Eurocentric monopoly over the theorising the lives of Black people in Britain is an interest that drives this study. Through interviewing Black Caribbean women in London this study seeks to give voice to how Black women interpret not merely their own lives but also wider public concerns regarding such themes as nation, identity and the meaning of freedom in late modernity. This is not a naive ‘recovery’ of silenced voices as though these have any inherent innocence, but a strategic intervention in order to both critically evaluate these subjugated knowledges within their own

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<sup>4</sup> See Gilroy 1987 ‘*Race, Class and Agency*’ in *Ain't No Black in The Union Jack*, for a discussion of this.

terms and furthermore to deploy them to interrogate a range of dominant ways of understanding these themes. This genealogical study is thus an epistemological project through which a transnational sociology might become possible, which links it closely with the postcolonial migration of Black and Asian people from Britain's passing colonies into Britain. The latter being the conditions of possibility in which the former is inscribed, for immigration both precipitated and highlighted the crisis in British post-imperial national identity that the work of the Birmingham School theorists came to address (Strafford and Ang 1996: 382).

What is significant for me is how this moment marks the symbolic postcolonial entry point of both colonised people into British identity and colonised knowledges into the study of race and racism in Britain. The interiorisation of colonial difference into the new postcolonial nation opened up the very space for diaspora experience and knowledges to enter into the discussions about Black people's lives, race and racism in Britain. Seen within the institutional and epistemological terrain of British academic theorisations of race and racism, the presence of former colonial subjects within the nation is an central enabling and driving force that along with the New Left critiques of classical Marxism and the growth of post-structuralism, contributed to the emergence of Cultural Studies and profoundly influenced the sociology of race in Britain. The challenge to further decolonise this knowledge by incorporating the subjugated knowledges of Britain's ethnic minoritised populations, is in part what this study seeks to progress.

Through a diasporic transnationalism, Hall and Gilroy expressed in their work at this time, the subaltern immigrant sensibility of being located in more than one place, possessing a colonial memory of empire together and contending with the experience of marginalisation in Britain. This sensibility also finds its expression in the work of another Black British writer Barnor Hesse who has described this sensibility as *the postcolonial poetics of Black Britishness* (Hesse 2000a:109).

### ***Diaspora and the Post-Colonial Poetics of Black Britishness***

Black British identity is unified by common minority-ethnicised citizenship, differential experiences of racialisation and racism and interrupted by diverse identifications with other places, family histories and historical relationships to Britain - Nigeria, Somalia, Jamaica, Pakistan, India, Black London, and a myriad of other combinations and positions. As the interviews discussed in chapter three *Black Caribbean Women and Black British Identity* and chapter four *Independent Women and the Paradoxes of Black Womanhood* demonstrate, these traces mark different personal as well as community genealogies and experiences of engagement with Black Britishness. This *discontinuous historicity* (Hesse 2000a: 114) of

Black Britishness at the level of the individual, is one that emerges out of familial ethnicities, which produce diverse locutions of Black British identity (Hesse 2000a: 115). This means that the relationship of Black Britishness to the idea of diaspora is itself *creolised*, routed through a variety of diasporic identifications. Stuart Hall invokes the concept of creolisation to supplement that of diaspora in order to describe the hybridising experience of the Caribbean (Hall 1996) The movements of people and cultures from Africa, Asia, Europe to the Americas produce Caribbean identity as a distinctly diaspora formation in which 'home' cannot be reduced to a singular moment of dispersal from Africa. These are the overlapping yet discontinuous identifications of the African diaspora as well as transnational Caribbean sensibilities and histories that clearly emerge from how the women interviewed understood themselves as Black women in relation to Britain and in relation to other diaspora identifications (*see chapter four Independent Women And The Paradoxes of Black Womanhood*). This necessitates an approach to the sociology of Black settlements in Britain that can acknowledge and engage with Black Britain's relationship to these diverse diasporas and the special status of the African Diaspora within these for many people of African-Caribbean descent. Though this is often more strategic than systematic according to Hesse, it is also necessary if we are to take seriously the diasporic meaning of Black Britain's historical discontinuities (Hesse 2000: 113). The singling out in this study of Black Caribbean identity defined through the poetics of postcolonial political Pan-Africanism seeks to take seriously the multiple articulations of Black Britishness by examining its expression within a particular historical experience of racialisation and gender. This seeks to avoid universalising both Blackness and Black Britishness and begin to trace the differential histories of subjection and freedom, which continue to mark contemporary politics of culture and the politics of Blackness in Britain.

Over the past thirty years the term the African Diaspora has emerged as a descriptive term to denote the forced dispersion of people of African descent under the dominating force of European imperialism and colonialism. This emergence occurs on the tide of a number of social changes, in the nineteen seventies. These include, the development of African Diaspora Studies within American universities on the back of affirmative action legislation following the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements and the challenge to anthropology as the discipline for the study of African cultures and peoples from historians such as Basil Davidson (Davidson 1961) and George Shepperson (1966). Shepperson was the first to apply the term African Diaspora in a scholarly work. Thus the concept of the African Diaspora is tied to a dual epistemological agenda. Firstly, to legitimise African history and reveal its role in world history; and secondly, to open up a field of enquiry whereby African Diaspora Studies could

contribute to other disciplines and contemporary questions within the social sciences and the humanities in general (Wilson 1997: 119).

Yet, the *experience* of the African Diaspora pre-dates its theorisation within History by George Shepperson. The consciousness of shared historical experiences and political objectives, linked to Africa and to an alternative historicising of modernity can be found in the works of nineteenth century Black scholars such as DuBois (Du Bois 1962; 1996) and Martin Delaney (Gilroy 1993) and in the a variety of international Black social movements since the eighteenth century. The distinction of being the first international mass Black movement is given to Ethiopianism<sup>5</sup>, which emerged in the independent underground Black slave churches of North America in the eighteenth century and which had by the late–nineteenth century spread to the Caribbean and to Africa – through the independent Black Baptist churches of post emancipation USA (Roux 1964). It is also to be found in the global networks of political, religious and cultural movements found in various parts of Africa and the Americas since that time. For example the Garvey Movement of the 1920s and 1930s, Negritude of the 1940s and 1950s, Black Power of the 1970s and the Rastafari movement, which began in the 1930s and continues to today (Lemelle 1992). So the epistemological and political project of African Diaspora criticism (rather than studies) involves not merely, claiming a field of study, but also seeking to give authority and visibility to particular political experiences and subjectivities.

In the Caribbean experience of diaspora Stuart Hall sees the archetypal late modern condition of identity as fluid, radically creolised and fragmented. In ‘Cultural Identity and Diaspora’ (Hall 1990) Hall draws on his own Caribbean experience of diaspora, to theorise cultural identity. Hall specifies two views of cultural identity that emerge out of a Black subject position. Cultural identity he says is split between two views; one grounded in the imaginary community of shared experiences and history, the other based on the experiences, despite this commonality, of difference and discontinuity. These two distinctions mark the difference or ‘*difference*’ (as in a Derridian deferral of meaning) between identity and identification, where cultural identity is the unstable point; the arbitrary stop in the play of significations within particular discourses of history and culture (Hall 1990: 226). Identity is thus the “suturing” together of broken fragments of history to create an “imaginary coherence” (Hall op cit: 224).

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<sup>5</sup> The core tenets of Ethiopianism were: resistance to white superiority and domination; African self-determination and an emergent African nationalism. An important factor in the development of Ethiopianism was the contacts that took place between these African Ethiopian Christians and Black–led churches in the USA. See (Roux 1964).

This is where Africa is invoked in African Diaspora perspectives to ground this imaginary coherence out of the painful dismemberment of enslavement, racism and colonial oppression. Yet there is also running alongside this notion of identity the Caribbean experience of discontinuity and rupture, which disrupts simplistic binary models of identity as simple split between differences of Self/Other; past/present, Africa/Europe. This emerges from the reality of Caribbean experience as a creolised one in which, the enslaved came from many parts of Africa, and indentured and free labour came from many parts of Asia and Europe to different parts of the Americas into plantation and slave societies governed by different European powers and cultures, and forging new identities and cultures. Furthermore, within Britain Caribbean British cultural identities are fractured across the various islands and cultures from which those populations came (and increasingly return to and from). Thus Hall invokes the Caribbean diaspora as a distinct and defining experience of modern identity, symbolised by movement, hybridity and globalisation. Thus diaspora is most significant for Hall as a template of modern identity, movement and translation, and as a conceptual tool for thinking the cultural as a heterogeneous site of political contestation and negotiation.

Gilroy highlights the persistent desire in Black narratives to return to the experience and symbolism of slavery. He recognises too that this return to the past of slavery has three important functions. Firstly, as a desire for 'home', it is a way of problematising the present. Secondly it mines the experience of slavery as a resource to sustain contemporary political aspirations; and finally it opens up a means of rethinking the position of Blacks in modernity in order to produce a counter narrative of modernity in which Blacks become visible not as pre-modern primitive *arrivants*, but as resolutely modern subjects and internal to its emergence (Gilroy 1993). In the *Black Atlantic* (Gilroy 1993) Gilroy uses the Caribbean modern experience of identity as a series of movements and social constructions, to challenge essentialist forms of Black identity, which become embroiled in the problematic fixed categories of modernity such as race, racism and nation. Drawing on DuBois, Gilroy writes of Black identity as being structured in the 'double-consciousness' of being both inside modern categories of nation and positioned elsewhere outside of both nationhood and modernity. This inscribes a counter-Black modernity within western-modernity that is always dislocated by movement and by being positioned in more than one place, 'between camps'. Gilroy introduces the concept of the Black Atlantic to decouple the Black modern diasporic experience from Africa and to foreground Black identities and cultures as again hybridising cultures of movement which destabilise unifying modernist concepts of nation, identity and politics. By identifying the oppositional internality of Blacks to modernity as the "creolised" double-consciousnesses" (Gilroy 1993: 223) of a Black Atlantic counter-modernity, Afrocentric and Eurocentric racial traditions and the indulgent excesses of post-modern theory



are challenged by the hybrid notions of culture and modernity, which for Gilroy are better able to analyse the politics of race and Black cultural identities and formations. For Gilroy diaspora invokes radical indeterminacy and the possibility of a post-nationalism that advocates mixture and inter-human planetary identification, rather than difference, separation and brutalism (Gilroy 2000).

Barnor Hesse conceives of the African Diaspora as both cartography and disposition (Hesse 2000b: 20). Cartographically it describes the migratory scattering of a people to geographically dispersed locations over generations. Dispositionally, it refers to the elective affinities, which are sustained across space and time and which contest hegemonic political formations and representations (Hesse *ibid*). In this way diaspora in Hesse's work functions as an empirical, ethical and political concept, inscribing a postcolonial logic of interactions "between cultural differences that shape the transnational configurations of dispersed histories and identities within and against the cultural legislation of the western nation" (*ibid*). Hesse deploys diaspora in an epistemological and political project to deconstruct contemporary western representations (Black Britishness, multiculturalism, liberal democracy, institutionalised racism) and reveal the continuity of imperial globalisation, colonialism, racial governmentality and racism in them and thus in the postcolonial present. Where Gilroy locates Africa on the edge of the Black Atlantic or at least just one of many contingent cultural staging posts before cultures set off in motion again, Hesse agrees with the unfixed nature of cultures but sees Africa as *politically interior* rather than *culturally exterior* to the diaspora. Its political ontology is revealed through the way in which diaspora was resourced within Pan-African anti-colonial politics to draw an analogy between the continuum of colonial dislocation and racialised displacement (Hesse 2000: 107) and the continuation of these cross-cultural poetics today.

Hesse re-historicizes Black Britishness within a wider temporality than that set out by the Windrush narrative that posits 1948 as a defining moment in the making of Black Britishness and multicultural Britain. By focusing on the Pan-African Congress held in Manchester in 1945, Hesse relocates the history of Black Britons within a wider diasporic context of anti-colonial movements and an emergent Black transnational political culture in Britain (Hesse 2000: 105). He then traces the genealogy of this Black transnational politics through nineteenth century Ethiopianism in which Africa was represented as the symbolic land of freedom, through twentieth century anti-colonialism in which a discourse of Pan-Africanism revises and re-locates the image of Africa within diaspora imaginaries.

Once the twentieth century impetus of anti-colonialism came to the fore, a discourse of Pan-Africanism emerged outside of

and subsequently within Africa that increasingly emphasised Africa as *politically interior* rather than *culturally exterior* to the diaspora. This symbolic move from Africa and the diaspora (i.e. a historically dynamic cultural relationship between a homeland and enforced dispersal) to the African diaspora (i.e. a contemporaneous political analogy between continuums of colonial dislocation and racialised displacement) signalled its appearance at the beginning of the twentieth century....” (Hesse 2000a: 107)

Hesse argues it is not possible to explain the diasporicity of contemporary Black British identities without reference to the *postcolonial poetics* of Pan-Africanism (ibid). Hesse identifies four postcolonial poetics of Black British identity. The first is a contestatory subjectivity of “oppositonality to imperialising/colonizing....discourses and practices” (Klor De Alva quoted in Hesse 2000: 108). The second is defined by a contra-modernity that through interrogation exposes the exclusions and partialities that undermine modernity’s self-delusions about the extent of its civilising and progressive identity. The third poetic draws on Stuart Hall’s concept of colonialism as *double-inscription*. This refers to how the culture of colonialism worked in at least two apparently polarised spaces at the same time – the metropolis and the colony – thereby collapsing an apparent relationship of exteriority between the two, inscribing them both in the unstable, mutually constitutive meanings of imperialism. The fourth postcolonial poetic is the interrogation of *postcolonial racism* (Hesse 2000a: 109). Postcolonial criticism sees continuity between contemporary racism and colonial racism, but not just as a continuation but also as the reform of racialised governmentality in new liberal-democratic terms. (ibid).

Hall, Gilroy, and Hesse share similar themes in their work, but deploy many of them very differently. Gilroy and Hesse in particular share a hermeneutics of suspicion and a hermeneutics of memory (Gilroy 1993: 71) that characterises postcolonial criticism. Where Gilroy suspects all forms of what he calls raciology, for re-inscribing racist knowledge and power, Hesse suspects attempts to erase the political significance of race and racism prior to the epistemological decolonisation of those categories from the hegemony of western Eurocentric power/knowledge relation. Yet all three share a critical memory that holds modernity and the West still accountable to the history of colonialism and its effects. In so doing all three argue for the “political internality” (2000a: 107) of slavery within modernity and postcoloniality within contemporary Britain.

“Contestatory memory” (Triulzi cited in Hesse 2002: 163) is a key strategy of postcolonial criticism, which exposes the incomplete forms of decolonisation (ibid). This has two

implications for an interrogation of Black Britishness and of Eurocentrism. Hesse argues that the discontinuous continuum of the African Diaspora can be traced through Pan-Africanism, anti-colonial nationalisms, Black feminism and other Black social movements of the twentieth century. Hesse argues this traces an alternative historicity of Black Britishness and Black African Diaspora political mobilisations to the post-war 'Windrush' narrative that has characterised sociological and popular narratives of Black Britain and the emergence of multiculturalism. Secondly, this alternative historicisation of Black Britain connects the contemporary experiences of institutional racism to its earlier colonial manifestations in 'the Colour Bar'. The Colour Bar was institutionalised within colonial government legislation throughout the British Empire as a mode of racial segregation and governance overseas. 'At home' in Britain its informal imbeddedness in the everyday practices of racial discrimination, was part of the fabric of normal British life throughout the twentieth century prior even to the arrival of the S.S. Windrush<sup>6</sup>. All of which says Hesse serve to expose the postcolonial reconstructions of old colonial racism, resulting from the changing modes of racial governmentality after decolonisation. This involves the demise of what Hesse calls 'colonial racism', and their colonial structures of governance, only to see them replaced by the resolutely liberal and democratic forms of late modern racial governmentality (Hesse 2000b: 2). Hesse explains racial governmentality as the

the political, regulatory and representational dimensions of European/white racism in the West.... Racial governmentalities structure and underwrite the social technologies of racialised inclusions (hierarchical forms) and racialised exclusions (segregationary forms). This is the political meaning of racism" (Hesse 2000: 29)

It is this idea of democratic and liberal modes of racial governance that interest me here and which this study will pursue. To do this requires connecting the work on racial governmentality (Hesse 2000b; Goldberg 2000) more closely to the themes of self-crafting practices of freedom, which are the focus of this study. Staking out the theoretical path to that point involves further intellectual journeying.

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<sup>6</sup> Hesse cites by way of example the various riots, which have taken, place across the U.K. since the early 1900's either by whites defending the Colour Bar or Black and Asian settlers challenging it.

### *Liberal Rule and Modern Racial States*

The postcolonial reflections on liberalism and modernity suggest that neither can be understood detached from race and racism. If bio-politics as the rationalisation of life and death marks the “threshold of modernity” (Foucault 1990: 143) postcolonial critical theorists increasingly are coming to theorise the links between race, bio-power and governmentality. From this perspective racism should not be conceptualised as an irrational fear of the Other; merely a pre-modern residuum of a “variety of intergroup resentment or prejudice” (Baumann 2000: 213). Neither is it an aberrant isolated moment - marked by Nazism and the Jewish Holocaust - in the otherwise still recuperable Enlightenment project. An understanding of modernity as an experientially (Noble 2005) and philosophically (Hesse 2005) racialised ontology means that Nazi Germany of the 1940’s and South Africa cannot be seen as ‘rogue states’, outside of the norms of modern government but rather as the extreme expressions of modern *racial rule*.

David Goldberg defines racial rule as one of the rationalities of modern states in which “bodies were racially produced, constituted as bearers of political, economic legal and cultural power and meanings” (Goldberg 2002: 132). Racial rule has two traditions: *naturalism* and *historicism*, which while being conceptually distinct they are not mutually exclusive (Goldberg 2002: 74). Additionally, whilst each has had moments in history when it has been more dominant, they can exist alongside each other and still do. Each tradition is linked to broader practices of state formation: naturalism to coercive state formations and historicism to states organised around capital accumulation or market based economies. The naturalist tradition of racial rule Goldberg explains, dominated from seventeenth well into the nineteenth. It is based on the claim of inherent natural racial difference and inequality. It delineates clear boundaries and separate spheres for the racially differentiated – most notably for Goldberg, in denying those considered racially inferior access to government positions. The historicist tradition of racial rule, which has dominated since the late nineteenth century to the present, is based on the idea of progress in which white people represent the pinnacle of human development and western civilisation the peak of social and cultural development. It is strongly associated with ideas of developmentalism. This is the view of colonialism as a civilising mission to bring ‘natives’ out of their under-developed condition into the civilised condition (which is of course normatively synonymous with western culture and values). Historicism is no more benign than naturalism, although it can appear so, for its effects can be just or even more devastating because they are so subtle and opaque (Goldberg 2002: 79). Consequently, Nazi Germany and Apartheid South Africa, rather than representing idiosyncratic aberrant or rogue states, affirm Goldberg’s assertion that racial reasoning is central to modernity’s common moral, socio-

political and jurisprudential sense (Goldberg 2002: 5). What the ubiquity of racial states of modernity confirms is the deeply racialised ontology of modernity.

The term *racial state* describes two aspects of *racial rule*. Racial states combine disciplinary regimes, bio-politics and liberal governmentality. Governmentality, defined by Foucault as the nodal point between domination, discipline and freedom (Foucault 1994a: 292) when understood in its relationship to the racialised bio-political rationalities of modernity, produces racial states as technologies of racial rule. Racial rule as racialised governmentality refers not only to state practices but also subjective states of being. The first meaning of racial states then refers to the formal systems of governance by which a population is defined, regulated, administered, ordered, and managed (Goldberg 2002: 110). The second refers to states of being. In this sense racial governmentality produces particular (racialised) conditions of existence or racial states of *being*. In short, racial governmentality in permeating the field of the everyday hegemonises reality, and the social horizons of the conceivable (Goldberg 2002: 115).

The racial state ... is as much a state or condition of being as it is a state of governance. Actually, we should speak more accurately here of racial states, for [...] the forms and manifest expressions are multiple and multiplicitous, diverse and diffuse. Racial states one might say are places among others where states of being and states of governance meet. (Goldberg 2002: 98)

Goldberg's distinction between historical and naturalist modes of racial rule is more helpful than the distinction between biological and cultural racism, outlined earlier. It enables us to evade the dominant tendency of contemporary historical racial states to disavow racism (as biology) in the name of raceless liberal equality whilst "burying the threads of their own racial articulation beneath the more or less vocal dismissals of naturalism" (Goldberg 2002: 207). This study begins with the premise that the category *Black Caribbean woman* is a racial state of being; an effect of the disciplinary technologies of racial states of government. This study is interested in the material, historical and economic conditions in which the lives and subjectivities of Black women, as subjects of modern liberal racial states have been targeted, managed, liberated or oppressed within specific technologies of racial rule. However, more than this I am also interested how Black Caribbean women have sought to define themselves beyond the representations of powerful authorities; how they have appropriated or resisted racial rule and racial states of being; re-defined and re-shaped themselves as particular kinds of subjects of freedoms and what visions of freedoms these inscribe. Thus I am interested in the

subjective, intimate register of governmentality as a practice of the self on the self, which is often overlooked in statist discussions of modern power and rule. That is the capacity of the individual to constitute themselves – not outside of discourse but within the strategic manipulation of dispersed power relations as they seek to govern themselves and others and in so doing redefine the meanings and govern the conduct of freedom. Such self-constituting practices are only possible in conditions of relative freedom, since in states of domination acquiescence is only the possibility. Critical resistance as ethical conduct is only possible when individuals have the freedom, no matter how limited, to mobilise, *in their own interests*, the very mechanisms of power that seek to control them or which are considered too intrusive (Hoy 1999: 9). This is what Foucault referred to as the “ethics of freedom.” Modern liberal rule generates liberties even as it delimits, regulates and normalises. This enables a hermeneutics of the self (Foucault 1997) in which these very categories can become the sites of resistance to *racist* subjection (Goldberg 1990: 298). This resistance is not generated from some essential self, or outside of discourse but within the force-field of power relations (Foucault 1994: 285); within the governing mentalities of racial states.

Much of the contemporary debates over governmentality (Burchell, et al 1991) are concerned with the privatisation and commodification of governmentality within neo-liberal rule. This study is also interested in these themes and therefore begins with the premise that understanding the lives of Black women in Britain and how they have been both governed and sought to resist being governed, can be analysed by unravelling the interconnected racialised and gendered governmentalities of liberalism and their racialised constructions of freedom. It seeks an analysis of how the Black Caribbean women I interviewed understood themselves within, alongside or in opposition to the category Black Caribbean woman and changing conceptions of freedom. In this regard it sets out to explore the limits of Black and Caribbean identities and womanhood through a genealogy of Black Caribbean women’s relationship to freedom since emancipation from slavery in 1834.

### ***Transnationality and the Limit(ation)s of Black British Feminism***

The more recent work of British writers engaged with theorising Black identity and its diasporic formations, has increasingly acknowledged the important contribution that Black feminism has made to the theorisation of difference and identity. Yet, it often seems to me to seldom go beyond appreciative acknowledgement and borrowing of concepts, to offer a serious attention to gender or the lives of Black women in Britain. Thus Black feminist perspectives and the work of Black feminists are deployed in discussions of Black identity or diaspora formations, but seldom to analyse either in their gendered or sexualised formations. It

is interesting that this mirrors a similar tendency in many white feminist texts. Within critical theories of race and racism in Britain, Black women or their concerns have been scarcely audible. If they have been visible at all beyond the general ungendered category 'immigrant' or 'Black'; they have been visible primarily within social policy categories (primarily as mothers and workers) as recipients of state administration or services such as housing, law, education and health care, employment rights, social work (Bowker 1970; Bryan, Dadzie, et al 1985; Cheetham 1972; Mama 1989; Townsend 1971). Even within early subcultural studies, Black Caribbean women, like virtually all girls and women were largely invisible behind a focus on the spectacular cultures of men and boys. Studies of early Black British youth culture in the 1970's and into the 1990's were effectively studies of Black young men's culture (Cashmore 1979; Gilroy 1987; Gilroy 1994; Hebdige 1987). Even feminist cultural theorists have either ignored the racial dynamics of youth cultures (Thornton 1995) or struggled to sustain a meaningful engagement with the cultural practices of Black and other ethnically-minoritised girls and young women (McRobbie 1981). With a few exceptions (Skeggs 1994) it has largely been left to the few Black British women academics to do this work (Bhavnani and Phoenix 1995; Lewis 2000; Sudbury 1998; Weekes 2002). A trawl of the bibliographies of articles contained in *Black British Feminism* reveals a heavy dependency on the work of African-American feminists. Whilst Black British women writers have drawn successfully on this body of work to theorise Black women's location within Britain, little or no consideration is given to the differences between the USA and the UK, both in terms of the history and experience of women and the politics of race and racism. This is important if the voices of some Black women are not to be muffled by the voices of others (Sudbury 1998: 41). Black women generally in the UK, seem caught between on the one hand, empowered performativity within local state professions (see chapter 4) and popular culture (see chapter 6) and their institutional, discursive and ethical invisibility within a variety of prevailing discourses for the study of race, racism and gender.

Critical Black and postcolonial feminist theories – despite the growing presence of a variety of women of colour within British academia - still remains theoretically and structurally marginal, often playing the role of theoretical hand-maiden to a still unevenly reflexive academy. Black women academics efforts to 'give voice' to the perspectives and knowledges of Black women is constrained and muffled by their own location in British universities, which remain largely indifferent (Sudbury 1998: 46) to the presence of Black men and women, or the *politics* of their presence. So despite genuine interventions which engage with and through the challenges of Black and postcolonial theory, when seen in the context of the continued whiteness of the academy can sometimes end up looking like "strategies of interested representation" in which, "[f]or a spectrum of liberal and leftist critics the subject of the

peoples of the Third World has begun to form a conceptual vanguard, assuming the function of a cutting edge by taking on the value as capital in the fund for agendas of [...] reconceptualization” (Carr, 1994: 153). In other words theoretical engagement does not necessarily produce equivalent epistemological or structural adjustments. The academic labour undertaken by women of colour to theorise the specificities of the experiences of Asian and African and Caribbean women within the racial structures of the British nation, highlights the ‘double-burden’ of gender and race (Carby 1982; Parmar and Mirza 1981; Mama 1989). Heidi Mirza suggests in her introduction to the edited collection *Black British Feminism* (Mirza 1997) that by the 1990’s Black British Feminism was all but burnt out with the effort of resisting on the one hand incorporation as the victim/invisible ‘Other’ within white socialist feminism, and on the other incorporation into what she calls “the diversionary discourse of anti-racism” (Mirza op cit: 11). Drawing on Gilroy’s critique of anti-racist movements of the 1980’s (Gilroy 1990), she agrees that anti-racism’s emphasis upon the manifestations of racism inhibited analysis of the deeper structures of racism and produced reductionist conceptions of Black identity, race and racism. Black feminist theorists she claims consequently turned their attention to producing more critical considerations of how race and gender inflected class positioning requiring new modes of analysing central feminist themes such as family, work and gender identities. That this genealogy of Black British feminism seems to break down at this point is not surprising and as Mirza notes, the theoretical inclusion of difference that this body of literature seeks to elaborate “appears elusive” (Mirza op cit: 12).

There are two observations to be made here. Firstly, attempting to cut Black British feminism off from the politics of anti-racism is in my view a grave error. Local politics and anti-racist movements constituted important locations for working class and middle class Black and Asian women to work together against racism and also in pursuit of self and community empowerment. Furthermore, the welfare state was been for at least thirty years a central focus of Black feminist activism (Lewis 2000). That this work was at times more pragmatic than theoretical or overtly politicised does not absolve feminist scholars from analysing and theorising those practices, to uncover nascent sites of oppositional modes of feminist organising, at the level of the everyday and the cultural. Mirza’s own work *Young Female and Black* (1992) and more recently Gail Lewis study of Black women social workers *Race Gender and Social Welfare*, (2000) point to the possibility of Black women’s participation in local state anti-racism as more complex than sociological accounts have so far revealed. Additionally recognising such practices as instances of womanist practice, would locate them in a long history of Black women’s cultural and political activism; a history that has its roots in women’s struggles against slavery, colonialism, racism and specific local colonial responses towards women (Bannerji 2001; Beckles 1988; 1989; 1991; Moghissi 1999; Reddock 1994)



and racism. Mirza's genealogy reveals a desire to find a location and voice for Black British feminism within mainstream feminism, but misses the opportunity of engaging both experientially and politically with the history of Black resistance and criticism. Although the concept womanism as theorised by Toni Morrison emerged in the USA, as a philosophy and practice, it can be discerned in the dispersed struggles of colonised women against the race-sex-gender nexus of colonial rule and local cultures of patriarchy and male privilege (Sudbury 1998: 46)

Rather than speaking to a history of [white] women's struggles against patriarchy to which the fight against racism and imperialism was later included, womanism reminds us that black women and women of colour did not wait for feminist consciousness raising to initiate struggles for social justice in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and in the West. (Sudbury 1998: 46).

Returning to Mirza, my second observation concerns the way that difference has been approached in Black British feminism. The project of Black British feminism, as Mirza describes it, locates Black feminism as a phantasmal imaginary rather than either a social movement grounded in activism or politics or a theoretical discourse unified by anything more than opposition to racism within Britain. Mirza defines Black British feminism as a strategic unified identity across differences of religious, ethnic, class and colour, that deploys a political and critical Blackness as a contingent strategy within a political project that "has a single purpose: to excavate the silences and pathological appearances of a collectivity of women assigned as the 'other' and produced in gendered, sexualised, wholly racialised discourse (Mirza 1997: 20 –21). Whilst this draws on the tradition of Black feminist political constructions of Black identity as oppositional to white institutional exclusion and racism, (Hull et al 1982), it fails to critically attend to the politics of the *differences between Black women*, that early Black feminism had placed so much emphasis upon (Lorde 1982; 1982; 1985). This smoothes over, without addressing, the class differences between Black women; the different ways in which a variety of ethnically - minoritised women are similarly and *differently* located within British economy and society, or how they are positioned in relation to a range of diasporas with their own histories and struggles. Whilst this may be a strategic move politically and institutionally in terms of building enough power under the banner of Black British feminism to batter down the doors of the academy, it threatens to lead it to both dissolve into itself and become too detached from the realities of a range of women whose daily lives do not transcend a range of culturally implicated gender discourses both within hegemonically white society and within their own cultural circuits. By this account, Black British feminism appears to be a retrospectively gathered together series of interventions, that

interrogate common targets – white feminism, racism, sexism, the state, but which have insufficient experiential or conceptual common ground for the multiple tasks at hand.

Epistemologically, this produces a related problem at least in the prevailing academic theorisations of Black British feminism as owing much to postmodernism for having “opened up the possibility of a new ‘feminism of difference’” and “legitimizing” Black women’s agency (Mirza cited in Young 2000: 55). This strikes me as a very strange genealogy that both disrupts a dominant Black Feminist history and contributes to the erasure of the longer anti-colonial histories of Black women in Britain. Lola Young in stressing this need to maintain Black as an inclusive political category expresses difficulty with seeing any usefulness in locating Black feminism within postcolonial theory. Her reasons for this rehearse well-known criticisms about what is signified by the ‘post’ in postcolonial (McClintock 1992). She also expresses a discomfort with postcolonial methodology which she associates with postmodern and poststructuralist constructionist approaches, without indicating why this is a problem. Thirdly she is sceptical about the kinds of work that are subsumed under its label – particularly Post-Colonial Studies. Yet Young goes on to recommend that Black Feminism in addition to addressing Black women as workers and cultural producers within Britain, needs to maintain awareness of their diasporic connections and to trace the genealogies of Black women’s heterogeneous histories and voices (Young op cit: 59). This sounds like a postcolonial or even transnational methodology to me, and in the end Young does not sufficiently make clear what her objections to postmodernism, or postcolonialism are, or what alternative she is putting in their place. I find in both Young and Mirza a repetition of the same old mantra about the importance of difference without really theorising what this might mean. This under-theorised and under investigated construction of Black identity does not just gloss over the different experiences of racism of British Asians and British Black populations (Madood 1997), but if left unquestioned it can fail to acknowledge the changing codes within which racism is constructed or the inequalities *between different constituencies of Black women* and how the state and a variety of institutions seek to manage the differential racialisations and racisms in Britain.

In arguing this, I am not attempting to particularise or isolate Black Caribbean identities, in the way that Patricia Hill Collins does in theorising the place of African-American women within Black feminism. In *Theorizing Black Feminism* (Hill Collins 1990), Hill Collins narrows Black Feminism down to an African-American particularity. Hill Collins seeks to simultaneously address the “complex nexus of relationships among biological classification, the social construction of race and gender as categories of analysis, the material conditions accompanying these changing social constructions, and Black women’s consciousness about

these themes” (Hill Collins 1990: 22), whilst also holding on to a strangely contradictory and exceptionalist definition of Black Feminism as “specialized knowledge created by African-American women which clarifies a standpoint of and for Black women” In subsequent work (Hill-Collins 2004) Hill Collins has retreated from the assumption that African-American women can speak for all Black women and she has shown awareness of the diasporicity of the category Black woman and therefore the diversity of standpoints within Black feminism. For example, in *Black Sexual Politics* (op cit) she makes a good case, for the importance of analysing the representation of African-American women within global popular culture in terms of what it implies about the domestic politics of race in America. However, Hill Collins again fails to sufficiently engage with African-American women’s location within wider networks of global power and culture. So for Hill-Collins Black Feminism continues to express the standpoint of African-American women.

This contrasts very strongly for example with the work of other Black feminist writers whose focus is much more on the transnational locations of and relations *between Black women*. For example, Jacqueline Brown’s article *Black Liverpool, Black America and the Gendering of Diaspora Space* (Brown 1998) criticises Gilroy’s theorisation of diaspora for leaving “unexamined the asymmetries of power that exist across and between different Black communities and the very different relationships to diaspora that arise as a result” (in Campt 2004: 179). Tina Campt draws on these insights from Brown and her own studies of Black Germans of African descent in Germany to challenge the unreflexive Africa-American particularism that accepts uncritically the hegemonic status of African America in Black Diaspora discourses.

Here, the role of Black America must also be incorporated into any assessment of diasporic relation, less as a concrete history of struggle than as a way in which this history and the increasingly influential cultural capital of Black America travels to and often structures modes of articulation within other communities” (Campt 2004: 179)

These very overdue observations are very timely, because they speak to a new *politics of representation* (Hall 1996) within global Black identities, where the old binary oppositions between Black/white, West/non-West colonialism/freedom have been disaggregated and dispersed across a range of differences and scattered hegemonies (Grewal and Kaplan 1994) to do with gender, class, sexuality, location, race etc. Within the unequally distributed liberties of postcoloniality and neo-liberalism, analysis of Black diaspora formations, must also consider the ways in which the discontinuous continuity (what Gilroy has referred to as “the changing same” (Gilroy 1993) of the African diaspora (or the Black Atlantic) is both no longer simply about the dis/locations of Blackness produced through diasporic movement, but may include

the internal re-spatialisation of difference within sometimes very fixed locutions and locations of Blackness. These are the internal and external *spatialisations* of power and contestation, which may be opaque or invisible to the hegemonic gaze of an unreflexively *western-Black* critical gaze. This means that whilst this study focuses on a specific genealogy of Black-Caribbean women, it recognises this as a contested representation, and will inevitably address how Black Caribbean women are located within a chain of overlapping, discontinuous and *unequal* diasporas, locations and creolising processes. Finding a way to experientially attend to the specificities of Black Caribbean women in Britain without reducing that to a hermetically sealed particularism, or unreflexive innocent identity will be an important tension to both manage and examine in this study.

Whilst this study focuses on a genealogy of Black-Caribbean women, it will inevitably address how other women enter into both Caribbean and Black identities through the overlapping diasporas and creolising processes through which the modern Caribbean has been formed. A key set of arguments that provide the theoretical means to maintain a critical tension between these two positions can be found in Avtar Brah's work on diaspora. Avtar Brah (1990) deploys Black as a political category to encompass the common experience of women in Asia, Europe, Africa, USA, and Caribbean. Brah is more clearly located in postcolonial politics and cultural theory, in which the subject is not essentialised biologically onto certain bodies and identities, but is continually reconstituted within an open field of contestation and becoming.

“Black feminism’s figuration of ‘Black’ – as was the case generally with the politics of ‘Black’ – dislodged this signifier from possible essentialist connotations and subverted the very logic of its racial codings. At the same time, it undermined gender-neutral discourses of ‘Black’ by asserting the specificities Black women’s experiences. In so far as Black women comprised a highly differentiated category in terms of class, ethnicity and religion, and included women who migrated from Africa, the Asian subcontinent and the Caribbean as well as those born in Britain, the Black in Black feminism inscribed a multiplicity of experience even as it articulated a particular feminist subject position. (Brah quoted in Bhavnani 2001 Diversity 2001: 463)

Brah’s work, shares albeit in a more theoretically nuanced way, Heidi Mirza’s (1997) conceptualisation of Black as the political collectivity of women of colour coming from a legacy of colonial domination. Brah’s work is important in that it brings together the theoretical work on diaspora, feminism and postcolonial criticism in order to re-think questions

of race and gender in Britain in ways that that can more rigorously address interconnections between race, class gender and location.

However, the genealogy of Black identity that Brah writes does not address the Pan-Africanist elaboration of the term Black as simultaneously a cultural, historically racialised and political concept (Gbadegesin 1996) that speaks both to a common cultural heritage derived from Africa and shared political imaginaries forged in the white heat of specific European imperial projects for governing African and African Diaspora labour (Robinson 1983; Lemelle 1992). It is more in line with the political re-definition of Black that emerged within the Black Power movement in the USA (Carmichael and Hamilton 1969) and Black Consciousness movement in South Africa (Biko 1987). However, Tariq Madood (1997) argues that the political construction of Black identity as a way of linking the experiences of non-European people under the domination of European imperialism and white racism glosses over the different cultural experiences of racism of British Asians and British Black people. This results, he claims, in a tension between cultural and political constructions of both Black identity and anti-racist formations, and poses two explicit difficulties for anti-racist mobilisations. Firstly, how to challenge the culturally specific forms of racism which affect African Diaspora and Asian populations differently whilst not locking one's own identity into the same kinds of essentialist pseudo-biological constructions of ethnicity that you are trying to resist? Secondly, how to resist the new cultural racism (Barker 81) of the right, which deploys the language of culture and ethnicity in a rhetoric of nationalism in which Britishness becomes synonymous with an exclusive white representation and in which Black and Asian people and cultures are regarded as permanent newcomers, locked inside their cultural particularities. This is a hard dilemma to overcome, but easier if we recognise Black as an historical and political category and therefore a site of struggle, contradiction and contestation. It emerges not simply out of bodies but out of the specific political and discursive contexts in which racial governmentality codifies regulates and penetrates bodies to produce racialised subjectivities within historically accountable contexts and uses. "What is at issue here is the recognition that 'black' is essentially a politically and culturally *constructed* category, which cannot be grounded in a set of fixed trans-cultural or transcendental racial categories and which therefore has no guarantees in nature" (Hall 1996c: 443). Black is a floating signifier, yet its freedom to float is constrained by the conditions of possibility produced within specific material realities, and its limits are themselves contested within relations of power. Thus Black identity is itself within conditions of racial governance a site of contestation and of ethical practice within which racialised subjects seek to liberate or fashion modes of living within and beyond the limits of racial governmentality and bio-power.

An attention to the formation of Black modern and postcolonial subjectivities through the experience of slavery and the making of an African Diaspora, historicises and politicises the “strategic essentialism” (Hall 1997) that stakes a claim on Black identity by those who never stand outside of Black subjectification. In order to explain this study’s insistence on adopting a form of strategic essentialism around the category Black woman and tying it at least initially for heuristic purposes to an African-Caribbean historical trajectory I need to go back to the work of Avtar Brah and her theorisation of diaspora. Brah’s work helps us to reconnect Black British feminism with postcolonial criticism, rather than locating it within postmodernism (Mirza, 1997: 19). To see postmodernism as having “opened up the possibility of a new *feminism of difference* and as legitimating (Mirza *ibid*) Black women’s agency seems risible and astonishingly disconnected from the kinds of postcolonial critiques of racism and Eurocentrism occurring elsewhere.

Avtar Brah’s book *Cartographies of Diaspora* (1996) marks an important intervention in the debates around Black British identity, and diaspora formations and the gendered politics of identity and difference in Britain that addresses questions of difference through a postcolonial prism that locates the present of minority ethnicised women in a postcolonial and global context – experientially, politically and theoretically. She uses the term Black as a political category of difference from hegemonic whiteness, but also pays attention to the specificities of British Asian women’s discursive and material locations within Britain and within an Asian diaspora historicity.

Brah introduces a distinction between diaspora as concept and diaspora as historical experience. (Brah 1996: 179). Brah acknowledges the importance of journeying in the creation of diasporas, and states that the analyses of different historical experiences of diaspora must pay attention to the different kinds of journeying that have propelled their emergence. “The question is not simply about *who travels*, but *when, how and under what circumstances?* What socio-economic, political conditions mark the trajectory of these journeys? What regimes of power inscribe the formation of a specific diaspora?” (Brah 1996: 182). The other side of journeying she goes on, is settlement and the places, terms and conditions of settling down. Critical to analysing the settling of diasporas, says Brah is an attention to how diasporas become inserted into new national contexts at different historical moments, and consequently how they become positioned or situated in a given context (*ibid*). It seems to me that these ideas, lead to a demand to very carefully think through the commonalities and differences between the different colonial and postcolonial diaspora settlements in Britain. How do these differential historical experiences of journeying and settlement transform the ideas of race, racism and Black identities that were formed in the socio-historical context of British imperial

and colonial rule? Where Brah wishes to politically to retain the category Black to emphasise those factors that unite the experiences of South Asian and African and Caribbean women in relation to white women, she still needs to retain the category Asian woman, in order to analyse the particularities of Asian women's positionality in post-war Britain. Yet Brah emphasises the importance of not naturalising or essentialising the category Asian. Instead she insists upon "exposing it as a heterogeneous and contested category even as I analyse the practices of 'Asian women' as historically produced and embodied subjects" (op cit: 13)

This study approaches the category 'Black woman' in a similar way by studying a particular trajectory of Black Britishness and the Black Diaspora, from the position of Black-Caribbean women living in London. The category Black Caribbean is a particularly salient one for my purposes because it is one of the ethnicity categories used by the British government in the National Census and on the ethnic monitoring forms used by government and other public and private agencies. In this study I will be referring to a range of issues raised in government surveys that are used to produce information and knowledge about Black Caribbean people in Britain. I will also be using themes that emerge from interviews conducted with women who responded to leaflets calling for volunteers who were Black women of Caribbean descent. Thus as a state instrument for administering and regulating a given population and an elective affinity actively inhabited and deployed by Black people in their self-definitional and self-constituting practices, the identity Black Caribbean woman is a particularly useful category in which to explore how Black Caribbean women in Britain have been both governed and liberated or sought to liberate themselves.

In conclusion, when the term Black or Black Caribbean is used, they will normally be referring to people who define themselves or have been defined by governing authorities as Black people of African descent from the Caribbean. At times Black and Caribbean will be used to include a wider range of ethnicities and subject positions, and on those occasions this will be made clear. Although this study starts out as a history of the present conditions of being Black Caribbean and living in Britain at the start of the twenty-first century, it may not be where we end up. For genealogy, as the next chapter will outline in more detail, involves a "critical ontology of ourselves" (Foucault 1984a), in which I hope to be able to evaluate the limitations and possibilities of Black Caribbean identity as a site of political and ethical practice. So whilst I am seeking to make visible a certain history that has a logic and a coherence to it, I am not assuming that its coherence lies in the bodies of Black people, but rather that the conditions in which particular embodied subjectivities and experiences have been produced both "within historically contingent genealogies" (Brah 1996: 180) and real conditions of unfreedom,

oppression and liberty, matter. In other words, genealogy permits a critical study of the ethics of Black identity.



## CHAPTER 2

### Methodology

#### The Modern Genealogy of Black Womanhood

Government concerns the shaping of human conduct and acts on the governed as a locus of action and freedom .... Liberal modes of government are distinguished by trying to work through the freedoms or capacity of the governed” (Dean 1999: 15)

#### *Introduction*

This chapter outlines the overall methodological framework through which this study has been conducted showing how these methods relate to the research questions and the overall conceptual framework inaugurated through discourse analysis and a Black feminist orientation. The overall methodological framework of this study is Foucauldian discourse analysis and this is reflected in the key methodological and conceptual tools to be employed, namely genealogy and governmentality. I will briefly outline the concepts of discourse, governmentality and genealogy and why they are been useful in analysing the contemporary practices of the self through which Black Caribbean women inhabit and contest the limits of identity and freedom. I will then explain my why I chose to use the term ‘feminisation’, as an object of enquiry and a tool of analysis. Finally I describe the research design.

#### *Discourse Analysis, Genealogy And The Analytics of Government*

Thinking in terms of discourse enables us to consider how contemporary and historical constructions of Black female and feminine subjectivities are the truth effects (Foucault 1980) of forms of knowledge legitimised through systems and relations of power. What is accepted as truth in any socio-historical conjuncture is the effect of the fusing of power and knowledge. Together they establish and naturalise the contingent and contemporary limits to ways of speaking and seeing within any socio-historic context (Foucault 1980:112). Foucault’s theory of discourse, does not regard discourse as a system of signs that point to an a priori essence to which it gives a name, or a hidden truth overlain by culture or ideology. Rather, a discourse is made up of “practices that systematically formulate the object of which they speak.” (Foucault 1972a: 49). The specific term for these practices is *statements* or *enunciative modalities* (Foucault 1972a: 28). A discursive field can be identified where “Statements different in form

and dispersed in time form a group if they refer to one and the same object” (Foucault 1972:32), and in that targeting produce it as the subject of their discourse. That object then becomes their field of discourse (Foucault 1972a: 29). It is manifest in the appearance of natural and taken for granted identities that are in fact the *truth effects* produced by the discourse that has produced that subjectivity in a “circularity of interdependence” (Kendall and Wickham 1999: 54).

In his earlier work on discourse, Foucault explained that a *discursive formation* (Foucault 1972a) indicates a network of power relations, structures, representations and disciplinary regimes in which bodies are constituted within particular subject positions as both the effect and the target of discourse. (Goldberg 1990: 298). Therefore, the disciplinary aspect to any socio-discursive field is evidenced through the circulation of power, which is not only manifested and invested - but also productive of bodies, concepts, and relations of domination, exclusion and inclusion (Goldberg 1990: 301). The final move in the discursive construction of subject is the internalisation of discourse by its subjects (Goldberg 1990: 298). However, this model of discourse and subjectification has been criticised as producing a repressive model of subjectification, in which the subject is rendered docile and without agency. This leaves the problem of how to conceptualise agency and social transformation. (Moss 1998; Sawicki 1996)

Foucault introduced the concept of the ethics of the self, as a way of addressing the question of political agency and how resistance and emancipatory knowledge is possible. In so doing he turned his attention to the possibilities of freedom, or perhaps more accurately the *possible freedoms* at any socio-historic conjuncture. This speaks to “the temporality of freedom” (Bell 1996: 84), which therefore suggests the *plurality* of freedoms, rather than the assumption of an unfolding of a singular universal utopia or moment of liberation. Ethics of the self is the term Foucault uses to describe the range of operations that individuals utilise to produce effects on their own bodies. These technologies of the self stand in a relation of embattlement to disciplinary power in which individuals are produced as the objects of discourse as outlined above. The techniques of power and the techniques of the self are two relational dimensions of the hermeneutics of the self, understood as the mechanisms through which humans understand or have knowledge of themselves (Foucault 1982: 224). Ethics of the self or practices of freedom as they are also called, are hermeneutic devices in which individuals seek to understand and interpret their lives, beyond and against the disciplinary limits of normative individuation within social prescribed subjectivities and identities. Within a dispersed force field of power relation, these practices, Foucault argues should be understood as strategies

directed against the various blockages of power in the system of relations (Foucault 1984a: 295).

These practices of the self then disclose the capacity of the subject to constitute themselves – not outside of discourse but within power relations as the ground of liberal freedom. In *Politics and the Study of Discourse*, which first appeared in French in 1968, Foucault referred to “discursing subjects” who form part of the discursive field (Burchell 1996: 58). In *The Ethics of the Care of the Self as a Practice of Freedom* (Foucault 1984a), we see how Foucault does not abandon this earlier model of the subject as produced in and reproductive of discourse, but rather seeks to analyse the practices or capacities of the discursing subject to deploy the micro – powers which exist at different levels of the social and which are mobile and malleable (Foucault 1984a: 292). In other words if power relations are extant throughout the social field, in a liberal society, the free citizen also has power at his or her disposal.

I would say that if I am now interested in how the subject constitutes itself in an active fashion through practices of the self, these practices are nevertheless not something invented by the individual himself. They are models that he finds in his culture and his society and his social group” (Foucault 1984a: 291)

In this later phase of his work on discourse, power and knowledge, Foucault moves to a more positive model of power as a strategic game of forces. Yet these relations are only possible where subjects are free. No power relations exist where one person is totally subjected to the will of another (Foucault 1984a: 292). So we must be clear that Foucault is referring to modern liberal systems of government. In a liberal society power relations are the very possibility of resistance. To understand this more fully we need to clarify the distinction between *states of domination* and *strategic relations*, which define the three levels in Foucault’s analytic of power. In *states of domination* (Foucault 1984a: 299), domination is characterised by the absence of power relations defined as a multi-directional flow of powers between the governing and the governed. This is the most overtly coercive form of power, in which the subject is defined and in the moment of that definition is brought within the juridical power of a sovereign power.

The second level of power is *government, or governmentality*. It consists of two dimensions. Firstly, the disciplinary regimes through which principles, rules and procedures of governing the population are achieved. It is a particular mode of modern governance, linked to the rise of the nation state in Europe alongside the hegemony of rationalism and liberalism as the principle discourses and values of the Enlightenment. Therefore governmentality has to do with freedom and its limits. Foucault argues that liberalism is itself a form of governmentality,

which addresses the problem of how to govern, or more precisely how to secure compliance with governance with as little coercion and expenditure of force as possible. It has to do with the rational and most efficient governance of a society on behalf of the state. Governmentality in its statist dimensions refers to the ensemble formed by the practices, calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of forms of state power over population groups. It is a bureaucratisation of human life in which populations are catalogued ordered and regulated within institutional practices. Thus it is a form of governance at the level of the body, which produces normalisation and individuation (Mc Nay 1994: 133).

The second dimension of governmentality constitutes the third level in Foucault's model of power. This is governmentality as *strategic relations*. This framing of power does not amount to an abandonment of the repressive thesis of power, but does seek to offer some criteria for judging different types of power (Sawicki 1996:171; Patton 1998: 70), and for thinking about how social change can occur. Foucault locates the possibility of resistance to power in strategic relations, which refers to "a broad array of different relations: the relation between the state and its subject, between 'men and things', between free individuals and the relations with the self" (McNay 1994: 133). Therefore, the concept of governmentality also encompasses the rights and liberties which the free person deploys in order to advance their own autonomous self-making and in so doing transform and resist the state's normalizing governmentality. The term governmentality then, denotes the nodal point between disciplinary regimes and practices of the self. It establishes a continuum between the government of populations and the government of the self (Dean 1994: 177). Strategic relations refer to the self-constitution of the subject, or the micro-practices of freedom through which subjects seek to construct their own identities, shape their lives and transform themselves (Foucault 1984a: 299). By this account governmentality is simultaneously a resource of governance and freedom. We need to recall that what we are referring to here is an analytics not simply of power but of *modern power* as it developed in the West between the seventeenth and nineteenth century. That is liberalism, which has come, with its central ideal of freedom, to form the foundations of modern politics and thus of our present (Rose 1999: 61). It is this freedom, that defined for nineteenth century liberals the "white man's burden" (Jordan 1974) to advance western civilisation through the civilising mission of colonialism. This brings us to a consideration of the relationship between freedom and bio politics as a key technology of colonial rule.

Bio-power in the first instance refers to the rationalisation and mechanisation of life and the body within modern state practices. It is inseparable from technologies for disciplining the body and securing its docility and integration into the efficient social and economic running of

society (Foucault 1978: 261). Yet bio-power is different from discipline in that where discipline targets individuals, bio-power works to categorise, administer to and govern populations. Bio-power describes the governmental technologies used by the state in the management of the life, well-being and security of a given population. “Their supervision [is] effected through an entire series of interventions and *regulatory controls: a bio-politics of the population*” (Foucault 1978: 262). The question to which this study is partly addressed is: ‘since bio-politics is within the domain of governmentality, can it also be available as a strategy of freedom – or are all strategies which appeal to embodied bio-political categories always to be viewed with suspicion?’ How are race and gender deployed in Black women’s self-constituting practices and how should we evaluate their emancipatory or coercive potentials? How effective are their attempts to re-organise power, and to re-fashion freedom *otherwise*, in producing new ways of thinking about freedom.

Foucault’s approach to discourse is useful methodologically because it enables the description of the field of mechanisms and objects that unite knowledge, power and the subject. Similarly his concept of practices of the self as practices of liberty that need to be ceaselessly reworked in the enactment of being free (Foucault 1984b: 3) is helpful in directing attention to the ways in which individuals seek to expand their autonomy and re-define their freedoms performatively. However, in shifting his attention from the subjectification of the individual in discourse to a theory of critical resistance, some problems have been identified and Lois McNay outlines these particularly clearly. Firstly she charges Foucault’s model of discourse and power as producing circularity between knowledge and practice, which makes it difficult to see how, practices of the self, can ever articulate an autonomous identity beyond the limits imposed by discourse (McNay 1992: 148). Secondly, that Foucault offers no normative criteria by which to judge practices of the self – as complicit or transgressive. This failure, argues McNay leaves the concept of the aesthetics of existence open to “a libertarianism that does not distinguish between acts that are predatory and oppressive in relation to others and actions that are genuinely progressive (McNay op cit: 147). In short, McNay’s argument is that Foucault collapses knowledge and practice and leaves no space for a critical self-reflexivity outside of knowledge as the effect of power (McNay 1992: 153).

I agree that there is a tendency in Foucault’s work that leads in these directions, and in so far as it does, it explains how resistance often becomes ensnared in that, which it seeks to oppose. However, I think that Foucault does, if rather obliquely offer an explanation of how critical responses (that may fall short of total revolution) as well as resistance are possible. To grasp this one needs to fully engage with his assertion that power relations are just that – a relation of multiplicities, a multiplicity of force relations. Power is not a monolithic block but an array of

different orders and flows of power. The allure ‘in the final analysis’ to return to monolithic conceptions of power, is ever present, and the politics of representation in being organised around an appeal to solidarity based on identity’s opposition to its primarily experienced mode of discipline and government intensifies this attraction. This is why it is important to speak of powers in the plural, as Nikolas Rose does (Rose 1999), for this helps to remind us of the slippery terrain we are in. Therefore Foucault invites us to think of freedom not as something existing outside of power, or different to power, but just one of the many identities that powers may take. Freedom as I understand Foucault does not exist in a dialectical relationship to domination or government. Freedom can lie in the “moment of emergence” or uprising out of the battlefield of conditions considered too unfavourable to bear, powers too intolerable to endure. Freedom can be the form that realises itself as a specific identity by its difference and on-going differentiation from outside, or from inside “the uprisings of those it oppresses from within” (Foucault 1984a: 84). Freedom can be that which emerges not necessarily in *opposition to*, but in its *difference from* or within coercive or governmental forms of power. However, as freedom gains strength and solidifies it too can find itself once more embattled from within and without, contending against itself, both in the abundance of its strength and in the reaction against its weaknesses (Foucault *ibid*). In these new embattlements freedom seeks to govern the freedoms it has won and new freedoms emerge to resist that government. This is the “double-edged character of freedom” (Rose 1999: 67) that this study investigates. So the moment of emergence can be a form of problematisation or reform, in which existing arrangements of power are questioned, or reorganised in the face of intolerable conditions. Yet in being a moment in which the relations of power are re-configured, the moment of emergence can also be when government reforms itself in the name of freedom in order to hold on better to its ground in the face of new conditions that might threaten its hegemony. This means that a genealogy of Black Caribbean women as subjects of freedom needs to attend to moments of crisis, or reform in which the limits of government and the limits of freedom contend against each other – and to be able to name the specific powers or governmentalities that are thus being reformed and the altered conceptions of freedom that emerge. This approach has led this study to focus on key moments in liberal reform from the nineteenth century to the present, in which the question of the government of racialised populations has been at stake.

### ***Feminisation***

This study examines how Black Caribbean women have been governed by their freedom within liberal rule; how they have worked on themselves in the name of freedom, and finally if and how they have redefined freedom. In thinking about the feminisation of freedom, it also sets out to explore the political and ethical limits of the identity Black woman as the basis of

critical agency and politics. This therefore brings us into the thorny debates concerning the question of woman as the subject of political emancipatory knowledge and agency - whether defined as feminist, womanist or post-feminist. I have addressed this partially in the literature review, in terms of Black feminists' confrontations with white feminism. However, there is a larger debate over the ontological status of the terms gender and sex. So I need to briefly clarify how I am thinking about the term feminisation and its methodological implications here.

Initially the term feminisation has some similarity to Robert Miles's term 'racialisation', which in its broadest terms meaning refers to "any process or situation wherein the idea of race is introduced to define and give meaning to some particular population, its characteristics and actions" (Miles quoted in Bhatt, Carr-Hill et al 1988: 10). So there is a link here between feminisation and 'the feminine'. The term feminisation is routinely used currently to describe any activity that has either become particularly taken up by women, or become ascribed the qualities normatively associated with women or with femininity. For example 'the feminisation of the workforce' can refer to the process wherein women become numerically significant or dominant in a particular occupation or in the workforce generally. It can also refer to the process wherein increased social capital becomes invested in certain skills stereotypically associated with women or femininity, where this was not previously the case (*see chapter four on Black women's culture of independence*). Consequently, feminisation can also connote de-masculinisation, since masculinity and femininity are typically regarded as opposed; but it may not necessarily do so. For example the feminisation of Jamaican Dancehall culture in the nineteen nineties did not replace the dominance of its masculine culture, but expanded it and expressed the greater power of women within it to re-fashion some of its aesthetic and ethical practices and transform its meanings (*See chapter six 'Rude Boys, Ghetto Girls and the Transnational Logics of Postcolonial Cultural Politics'*).

This still leaves us with the problem of the terms feminine and femininity. First of all the terms feminine and femininity are understood as constitutive elements in the discursive formation of the subject woman within gender discourse. Thus they are a second layer of social construction on top of the social construction of woman. Leaving aside for a moment the controversy of the relationship of gender and sex, which I will come to shortly, this is what Bartky means when she says "We are born male or female, but not masculine or feminine" (Bartky 1997: 64). Consequently the term feminine can be attached to men or withheld from women perceived as unfeminine. So even when attributed to male bodies, it always connotes the gender 'woman' which in turn hegemonically denotes a particular feminine-sexed body. Thus a feminine man is always within the hegemonic representational system of the

heterosexual matrix (Butler 1999: 9) still a man, and a butch woman is still a woman. So within this hegemonic representational schema the feminine, femininity, and woman are therefore, asymmetrically linked bio-political elements within the heterosexual discourse of sex/gender. Within modern liberal states they are therefore bio-political techniques of government in which bodies are disciplined into sexed and gendered identities by the state and constituted as the bearers of specific rights on that basis (Foucault 1979). However as technologies through which individuals can exercise power over themselves and others, they are also available for the arts of freedom (Foucault 1979: *ibid*). It is this dimension of the struggle between these two registers of governmentality that are the focus of my interest in feminisation. This study is interested in if and how Black Caribbean women have played the game of truth in relation to the specific systems of power that they have found too intolerable to bear and how in their self and other care practices, they have produced their own feminised takes on such themes as gender, sex, race and freedom. The arts of freedom as ways of knowing, caring for and mastering the self make the feminine, however juridically defined also the basis of agency.

Thinking of feminisation as a discursive formation offers a way of thinking about Black Caribbean women's experiences of subjectification and subjecthood without fixing that identity to an embodied essence that is always the same, or to a set of cultural characteristics that constitute the timeless 'truth' of what it means to be a Black woman. Instead, this study of the feminisation of freedom, seeks to identify how a specific construction of Black womanhood is produced as a certain way of performing freedom. In other words, if gendered identities are accomplished *in discourse*, through a variety of interpretative practices in speech and social action concerned with notions of 'womanly' or 'manly' behaviour (West, Lazar, Kramarae 1997: 119) how is Black womanhood accomplished simultaneously in racialised and gendered mentalities and performances (Butler 1990)

I need to clarify a little more a distinction between feminisation and femininity. Femininity is not understood here, as the inevitable effect of patriarchy, as though both were universal constants. Despite feminism's cautiousness about all forms of universalism, it seems to me that discussions of femininity retain a strong attachment to a notion of femininity which even where its historical contingency is acknowledged seems to still regard its characteristic contents within the terms of a western narrative. An example of this slippage can be found in Susan Bordo's interesting and helpful article *The Body and The Reproduction of Femininity* (Bordo 1997). This article is concerned with how the body figures both symbolically and materially in the discourse of femininity. Bordo's argument proceeds through a globalising history of femininity only subliminally marked as white and western. It is historicized in



relation to changing notions of femininity in the West and the kinds of symbolic revolts or investments in the body that it produces; but simultaneously too prematurely draws all women into this western trajectory of femininity, when she writes that constructions of femininity are “deeply inscribed with an ideological construction of femininity emblematic of the period in question. The construction, of course, is always homogenising and normalizing, erasing racial, class and other differences and insisting that all women aspire to a coercive, *standardized ideal*.” (My Italics, Bordo, 1997: 94)

As Bordo recognises and challenges this standard is white and western. However the extent to which western femininity may be just one mode of feminisation is occluded. We need a re-problematisation of femininity and patriarchy which asks firstly, what is the genealogy of western femininity’s relationship to nineteenth century European patriarchy as a technology of colonial rule; secondly what are the mechanisms by which racially constituted men and women have been constituted or have constituted themselves as masculine and feminine in relation to colonial patriarchy? Furthermore, in opposition to Bordo’s claim, how do constructions of liberal femininity proliferate differences of race, class and gender rather than erase them? To not raise these questions can produce attempts to incorporate differences, which simultaneously obscures and marginalizes them. It also leaves no space to consider the possibility of other feminising discourses (inside or outside the West) not reducible to western femininity or their possible relation to other systems of masculine power that are not reducible to western patriarchy. In short, thinking in terms of femininity as ideology can easily produce a slippage between theory as the generalisable and theory as the universal normative framework, which can so easily - wittingly or unwittingly privilege a white western standpoint. It seems to me that we need to find another language to describe what is being referred to here, to avoid collapsing and evaluating all expressions of femininity or womanliness into a universalising and essentialised version of femininity and its relation to womanhood, i.e. that which emerged in European medical discourses of gender and sex in the nineteenth century (Gilman 1992).

In the same article Bordo suggests that feminist theorists have helpfully explored the symbolic reproduction of femininity through the analysis of cultural representation. However, she is concerned that this has become distanced from the pragmatism of the feminism of the nineteen seventies and eighties, which was concerned with the “practical lives of bodies” (Bordo op cit: 104). Bordo argues here for the importance of attending to how the body is experienced and deployed – not just represented. This is important she suggests if we are to study how bodies can be the site of struggle and resistance to gender oppression – not just rendered docile or complicit to it.

It also demands an awareness of the often contradictory relations between image and practice, between rhetoric and reality” (Bordo, 1997: 105)

This means that feminist research needs to pay close attention to the different material and non-discursive conditions in which bodies live and how these real conditions shape and delimit the potentialities of bodies. In other words to understand femininity and the mechanisms of feminisation through which it emerges we must recognise the particularities of bodies, and the material conditions of their existence, without being paralysed by the fear of being accused of essentialism. At the same time this requires a constant vigilance against the dangers of biological or cultural reductionism. Studying the feminisation of any aspect of the social involves describing and mapping the dispersed technologies of power by which particular bodies, in specific times and spaces become defined or come to define themselves in terms of woman and the feminine. It is from this position that this study sets out to analyse the relationships, interdependencies and similarities between different discourses of feminisation and rationalities of rule – not all of which may be patriarchal but rather linked to other structures and regimes of masculinity and male rule.

### ***Genealogy As A Postcolonial Methodology***

Finally before discussing the design and process of this research, I shall explain why I have chosen to use genealogy in this study. Genealogy permits a critical history of the present and a critical ontology of ourselves, and so lends it self to the interrogative poetics that characterise postcolonial criticism<sup>7</sup>. I shall briefly summarise these connections.

Firstly postcolonial criticism has drawn heavily on Foucauldian discourse analysis in order to analyse the different modalities of colonial power and rule. The work of Edward Said (Said 1978) deployed discourse analysis to trace how colonial power was reproduced not only through economic and political processes and structures, but also culturally. Said showed how colonial rule was also an epistemological enterprise for the representation and production of the non-West and its peoples as the objects of Western rule.

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<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of the distinction between post-colonial criticism and Post-Colonial Studies see Parry, B. 2002, 'Directions and Dead Ends In Post-Colonial Studies', in D. Goldberg and A. Quayson (eds) *Relocating Postcolonialism*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Consequently, postcolonial criticism, involves an anti-foundationalist critique of a Western discourse of modernity at the same time as claiming for itself “an ethical standpoint” within modernity based upon its critique of power (Goldberg and Quayson 2002: 115). This produces the now infamous paradox familiar to feminists, of using the master’s tools to dismantle the master’s house. Genealogy’s historical and discursive methodology facilitates the mapping of power that is able to reveal the persistence into the present of colonial discourse and practices (Scott 1999: 71) and so show where and how the present continues to be hegemonised by the traces of colonial relations of inequality. It also allows for a critique of government that does not assume the guilt of the West, but rather adopts a critical attitude to the West’s foundational claims on freedom.

Firstly, genealogy as an analytics of government is particularly useful as a means to unsettle the taken-for grantedness of the reality that power has constructed. In *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History* Foucault explains that genealogy is a kind of history, but it is not the kind of history that seeks out origins, or the roots of truth (Foucault 1984a). Rather it is a history that maps the routes that power has taken and the moments of emergence (see below) in which power meets resistance, is usurped or otherwise reorganised (Foucault 1984a). This is useful because it enables me look back at the history of Black Caribbean women and unravel certain taken for granted aspects of what have come to represent the truths of Black womanhood and Caribbean identity through examining particular dispositions and ways of living. This strikes me as a much more useful practice of history, than the search for lost origins that often waylays attempts by Africans in the Diasporas to-recover a sense of themselves as both people *with* a history and actors *in* history. (See chapter seven *Remembering Bodies Healing Histories*).

This methodology has facilitated the writing of a history of Black Caribbean women in Britain from Emancipation in 1834 to the present, whilst simultaneously undertaking a “critical ontology” (Foucault quoted in Kendal and Wickham 1999: 30) of that identity and its discursive and governmental constitution within liberalism as the benchmark of modern freedom. In denaturalising the terms of liberal freedom this has opened up the possibility to track the “strategic reversibility of power relations, or the ways in which the terms of governmental practice can be turned around into focuses of resistance” (Burchell 1991: 5). Accordingly, the history of government in being interwoven with the history of “dissenting counter-conducts” (Burchill: *ibid*) is ideally disposed to investigating how the Black Caribbean woman has been shaped, governed and freed within the rationalities of modern liberalism.

## *The Research Methods*

This study seeks to describe the powerful systems of representation and everyday practices in which Black women are currently typically visible both within popular culture, and official discourses. This study will investigate how Black women speak about their experiences, their bodies, their relationships, and the variety of ways in which Black women are represented in the media, in the home, in the workplace. The aim is to get participants to talk about a range of everyday practices and how they see these as related to how they come to a sense of themselves as particular kinds of women in relation to others. It also seeks to analyse the contemporary relations of power and the technologies of government through which powerful discourses of Black women seek to shape their conduct and define them and secondly how the women interviewed think and feel about these; how they deploy them creatively strategically in their own self-making self-defining practices and how they contest or reject them.

In order to achieve this a multi-method approach will be used drawing on a number of research methods and dispositions. The primary method will be semi structured individual interviews. Qualitative interviews are widely accepted as a useful method in feminist research aimed at addressing the invisibility of women's experiences and the silencing of women's knowledge (Maynard 1994: 13). Conducting interviews aims to understand both the everyday experiences of Black women that fall outside of the dominant categories in which Black women are typically visible, and also how women perceive, understand and feel about those dominant forms of visibility. Qualitative interviews are a valuable way of gaining access to the experiences and perspectives of respondents. Feminist theorists have emphasised the importance in feminist research of disclosing the standpoint of women but qualitative interviews cannot lay claim to being able to access the truth of their experiences, nor to transcend power differentials. Dorothy Smith states that the discourse of sociology with its concepts and modes of regulation of the social, can itself render aspects of women's everyday lives invisible to its own categorical imperatives or what she terms its "ruling apparatus"(Smith 1987: 153). Smith is concerned with how one conducts sociological research with women that does not simply approach interviews with a pre-existing set of sociological concepts into which one inserts women but views a particular standpoint as a point of departure in the construction of knowledge. Therefore I have designed an interview schedule consisting of themes rather than specific questions. Inevitably these themes reflect my research interests, but they are broad enough to allow women a lot of scope to decide how to respond. Also they are informed by my identity as a Black Caribbean women researcher, entering into the research process, already in some senses familiar with my subjects and the kinds of issues that might be relevant. The themes were designed to promote an informal

conversational style of interview, not so much to gather information as to discuss these themes in order to discover what topics mattered to them. In this regard the interviews were not understood as producing data but as discovering perspectives, interests and problematisations.

### *Recruiting Interviewees*

I used three main recruiting strategies. The first and in the end the most successful, was distributing leaflets outside a venue where the African-American life-management 'guru' Iyanla Vanzant was giving a series of talks. Iyanla Vanzant's self-help books are particularly marketed at Black women across the Diaspora, and are extremely popular in Britain. I decided to distribute leaflets here for two main reasons. Firstly, one of my target groups was women who use life-coaching self-development groups and books. I was interested in the growth of these resources, why they had become so popular in the past eight years or so and what kinds of problems or concerns did they seek to address, and how? Secondly I guessed that women who were motivated enough to attend such an event might be particularly interested in being involved in a research project exploring what it means to be a Black woman. Six of my respondents were recruited from this source.

I also gave out leaflets in a local market, in hairdressers and a Black bookshop and at a Jamaican independence celebration fair. I found that approaching people on the street was very unsuccessful. I was particularly interested in recruiting Jamaican women who had come to the UK from Jamaica or via the USA within the past ten years and who were Dancehall fans. This is because this group of women are viewed ambivalently by British born Blacks, and I considered that interviewing them would have enabled me to investigate whether there really was the degree of difference and change in their ideas about Black women and femininity as the Black British stereotype of the "Yardie Gyal" assumes. The Yardie Gyal stereotype assumes that a certain kind of Jamaican woman, identifiable on the street by her loud and often 'slack' (i.e. sexually provocative or 'tasteless') clothing and hair styles, 'course' style of Jamaican patois, and general deportment, is: - firstly, recently arrived, say less than five years; probably coming from the inner city Kingston ghetto in Jamaica; a Dancehall fan and possessing a kind of Dancehall authenticity not achieved by most Black British Dancehall fans. These styles of speech, dress and conduct often mark them out as 'different' from both an older generation of Jamaicans who came in the 1950's and 1960's and from younger British born Caribbean women. These marks of distinction are organised around criteria of femininity gender and racial respectability (see chapter six). The Yardie Gyal's association within the Black British community with a hard-core down-town Kingston ghetto culture, has produced a distance and distrust between many of them and the more settled Black Caribbean

communities. Another researcher who also had difficulty accessing this group of women, has since suggested that insecure immigration status often made this group of women very hostile to making contact with any one who might be perceived as linked to any kind of officialdom. Since my leaflets all referred to Goldsmith College this would have been enough to prevent most from responding. This together with the degree to which home-grown Jamaican class and shade distinctions are still acutely in place with women in this group, further complicated my attempts to break into this group because my speech, style of dress, hair and skin shade would all have marked me as an 'outsider'. I was however, able to recruit one British-born Dancehall fan. Other respondents were recruited from amongst and through friends and colleagues.

One unintended effect of this was that all bar one of the women who I finally interviewed turned out to university educated professional women. This only became apparent over time. One woman had no further education beyond GCSE but was the sister of another graduate interviewee and from what in the Caribbean would be considered a middle-class family. The respondents were also very similar in age, which again was unexpected. They ranged from between 34 and 48 years of age, with an average age of 40. Initially this concerned me, but I came to see it as an opportunity to speak to a very particular slice of the Black British Caribbean population. For these women represent a segment of the first significant population of Black Caribbean children born, schooled and entering British society as adults in the 1970's and 1980's. Thus I saw them as potentially having a unique take on Britain and Black Britishness that was different from their parents who came here as adults raised in the Caribbean and different from a younger generation who increasingly are the children of this first generation of post war Black Britons.

As might be expected, the majority of women traced their ethnic background to the English-speaking Caribbean. Seven of the eleven were born and raised in the U.K. Of these four described their Caribbean ethnicity as Grenadan, and four were Jamaican. One person had her family roots in the French-speaking island of Haiti, but she had been born in France and raised in Haiti until the age of nine when she then moved to New York. One person was born in Barbados and come to Britain at the age of eight and one woman had been born in Trinidad, had then lived in the U.S.A. as a teenager until her early twenties when she came to the UK as an exchange student. Finally, one was born in Jamaica, arriving in the UK as a teenager with her parents.

### ***Marital and Parental Status***

Four of the eleven women were currently unpartnered. One of these was a divorcee. One person was in a non-resident lesbian relationship. Four of the women were currently married

with two children each. Two women were cohabiting, one with two children from a former cohabiting partnership and one with foster children.

### ***Occupation***

The range of occupations represented in the group were five social workers (one retired on health grounds and one also a business owner), two education management officers (one also a published author), one academic, one nurse and foster mother; one senior local government officer and one Public Relations Manager.

### ***Education***

Nine of the eleven had a Bachelors degree or professional equivalent and three had Masters qualifications. One woman had a nursing qualification. One woman had no post school qualifications.

### **The Interviewees**

At the time of the interviews all the interviewees lived and/or worked within the Greater London area.

**Angela** 34. Born in France of Haitian parents. Immigrated to the USA aged nine. Living in Britain for seven years. Educated to Masters Level. Public Relations Officer in the arts sector. Married to white English man. No children.

**Annabelle** 39. UK born of Grenadian parents. No post-16 qualifications. Local authority clerical officer. Separated from former cohabiting partner (of St Lucian descent). Three children: - two boys - one teenager in school and the other at university and one primary school aged girl.

**Carole** 49. UK born of Jamaican parents. Former nurse, now a full time foster mother. Cohabiting with fiancé of Jamaican descent. Three teenage foster children – two boys and one girl.

**Elizabeth** 35. UK born of Grenadian parents. Graduate. Education Manager/Novelist (published since interview). Married to white English man. No children

**Evelyn** 48. Jamaican born. Came to Britain aged twelve. Graduate. Social Worker (retired on health grounds). Single. No children

**Janet** 47. Born in Barbados. Came to Britain aged nine. Graduate. Social Work Consultant, Owner/Manager of two children's homes. Divorced. One teenage son.

**Linette** 38. UK born of Grenadian parents. Educated to Masters Level. Social Work Training Manager and Freelance Social Work consultant. Cohabiting with man of Caribbean descent. Two primary school aged girls from a previous cohabiting relationship.

**Mandisa** 38. UK born of Jamaican parents. Educated to Master's Level. Further and Higher Education lecturer. Single mother. Two children – one boy of primary school age and one girl of secondary school age.

**Melissa** 37. UK born of Jamaican parents. Educated to Master's Level. Executive Manager Local Government. Single. Bi-sexual. No children

**Njeri** 39. UK born of Grenadian parents. MA in Social Work. Senior Probation Officer. Married to man of Grenadian origin. Three school aged girls.

**Sonia** 48. Born in Trinidad immigrated with her family to the USA at twelve years old. Came to UK aged twenty-two. Educated to Masters Level. Social Services Training Manager. Married to African man. Two teenage sons.

### ***Individual Interviews***

Unstructured and semi-structured interviews were conducted usually in women's homes, but also at places of work and one in a coffee bar. I undertook twelve interviews with eleven women as one woman was interviewed twice. It was not possible in the end to exercise any real selection process that might have been able to pay attention to ensuring a cross section of women. Volunteers were recruited on the basis of leaflets informing women that I was interested in finding out what were the things that different Black women thought defined them as Black women, about self-care practices, women's involvement in Dancehall or use of life-coaching and other personal development guides or programmes specifically aimed at Black women. The reasons for focusing on Black women of Caribbean descent are many, but two reasons seek to acknowledge firstly, the powerful role of the Caribbean people in the formation of Black British identity especially in the nineteen seventies and eighties and secondly, the powerful position of Caribbean culture in global popular music and currently hegemonic transnational Black identities.



## *Interview Themes*

### **Identity**

This theme addresses how women define their social identities particularly in terms of ethnic, national and racial identity. It is also interested in whether and how women live their lives in ways consistent with diaspora is a lived experience.

### **Gender/Sexuality/Femininity**

This line of questioning was interested in how women have come to know themselves as women and as sexual beings and what codes of moral conduct shape their sense of themselves as particular kinds of women. It directly asked if they thought of themselves as Black women, and how this linked to their self-defined cultural identities. It sought to investigate the extent to which women see race and sex as significant and overlapping effects on their sexual conduct or identities. It was also be interested in accessing their views regarding dominant representations of Black women's sexuality

### **Context**

This theme addresses the indexicality of practices of the self and representations. It pursues an interest in how different locations and contexts are negotiated. This would include presentation of self in terms of dress, comportment, speech, attitude etc all of which may overlap with the other themes. Etter-Lewis has identified how Black women deploy strategies of disclosure or concealment to negotiate the tyrannies of racism and sexism (Etter-Lewis 1993: 155). Thus this theme is interested not only in what women chose to do and say in particular contexts but what and why they may fail or choose not to do or say in particular contexts. This will be important in understanding how invisibility and silence (or their counterparts), are deployed strategically in relation to structures and experiences of power and powerlessness. I asked women about strategies of self-presentation in different contexts (particularly in the workplace) and also what they thought about media representations of Black women.

### **Media**

Following on from the previous section, this line of question asked women specifically about representations of Black women in Black popular music, notably Hip-Hop and Dancehall. This pursued an interest in assessing the degree to which women experienced media images as

‘truthful’, to their experiences of Black social life, culture and identity. It seeks their views on Black music as a form of vernacular Black expression and on media power.

### **Independence**

Currently the theme of independence, particularly in terms of independence from being financially or practically controlled by men is one that is repeated across a variety of public discourses of Black womanhood. It is found in the lyrics of numerous songs in a variety of genres of Hip-Hop, Reggae and UK Garage, for example and also in the everyday talk of and about Black women within black communities. This theme is interested in how the ideas and practices of independence are deployed and in pursuit of what agendas?

### **Memory/History**

This theme sought to investigate the status, forms and structure of personal and public memory within the group interviewed. What family stories were considered significant in shaping their personal knowledge of themselves and of their cultural background? I was particularly interested in the extent of their knowledge about family history, island history and Black history; how it had been acquired and how they evaluated the significance of this knowledge or lack of it. I was also interested in analysing *how* the past or history was invoked. In other words were there common patterns to what and how personal and family memories and collective ‘community’ memories or histories were raised, spoken about and deployed?

### **Change**

This line of investigation encouraged women to reflect on how any of the above has changed in the course of their lives. This asked women to reflect on critical moments in their own lives, the lives of the Black communities in Britain, racism and British society generally.

## CHAPTER 3

### Black - Caribbean Women, Black Britishness And

### The Old And New Ethnicities Of Post-Colonial Blackness

I think more and more that the most interesting concepts in our field have fallen under erasure [.....]. One after another they tumble from the paradigms where they seem to be settled and come loose in your hands. And then you say, "Shall I stop talking about identity?", but how can you stop talking about identity? (Stuart Hall, 1999)

I thus draw a distinction between *post*-nationalist and transnational scholarship. Transnationalism is devoted to studying aspects of human experience and society that cannot be contained within the boundaries of a nation-state. As a lens of analysis, it includes in its purview transnational nationalisms, transnational anti-nationalisms, and strategic internationalisms. (Shalini Puri 2004: 6)

The politics of Black identity are shaped by the on-going twin struggles between Black identity as a mode of resistance to colonialism and racism and - increasingly under the conditions of postcolonialism - struggles and confrontations between the *new ethnicities* (Hall 1996) of Blackness and the political and ethical meanings and limits of new Black Diaspora identities. Some of the new ethnicities of Blackness are not so much new, as newly emergent from the invisibility of the pre-discursive everyday. They erupt from the micro-struggles of the everyday to re-organise the category Black around alternative and additional axes of power to do with gender, sexuality, class, and location. Being emergent through the conditions of possibility created by postcolonial liberties, this study suggests that these ethnicities enunciate new meanings around the idea of freedom. In so doing they also therefore tell us something about the changing modalities of unfreedom, oppression and racism extant at any moment in time and place. This chapter sets out to begin the process of describing and analysing the old and new forms of identity used by a group of Black women of Caribbean descent living in London. Through analysing their responses to a range of questions to do with how they define their personal, social and cultural identities this chapter explores the variety of categories deployed by these women to name their social identities and the ways in which their deployment of these categories construct a hermeneutics of Black womanhood.

### *Diaspora Lives - Not In Between, But Here And There*

The interviewees were a self-selected group of eleven women who responded to my request for Black women of Caribbean descent. Nobody in the research group identified themselves as Caribbean of a non-African heritage (e.g. Indo-Caribbean or Chinese Caribbean). On hindsight and with the emergence of a clear dominance of Caribbean ethnicity as central to their composite identifications, it would have been useful to interview women of other Caribbean ethnicities to see if there were significant differences. Coming from a Jamaican family that includes Chinese, Indian and white Jamaican born family members, I am aware that whilst being Caribbean remains a strong unifying principle, *looking* Chinese, *looking* white or *looking* Indian has produced effects on the self-identities of many Caribbean people whose *appearance* does not conform to British society's dominant perception of Caribbean people. These changing conceptions of what it means to identify oneself as Caribbean in the U.K. (rather than when one is in the Caribbean), may be subject to changes brought about by the different racial politics and politics of racialisation in Britain compared to Caribbean societies. The different state imposed racial categories in the UK interact with the bio-political nuances of institutionalised racism, Equal Opportunities legislation and personal prejudices to produce finely tuned distinctions in the minds of diverse groups about different ethnic minority populations in Britain. The ways in which racism and discrimination can manifest themselves in terms of uneven combinations of phenotypically, culturally or religiously perceived differences has been highlighted by writers such as David Parker (1995) in relation to the Chinese and Tariq Madood (1997) in relation to Asian Muslims.

The women interviewed in responding to my call for volunteers allowed themselves to be interpellated as Black and as Caribbean. As the presentation of the interviews will show this does not necessarily imply that they also saw themselves as part of an African Diaspora, though most did. In the context of the Caribbean the term Black is currently associated with being of African-descent in contrast to other Caribbean ethnicities (e.g. Indian, Chinese, Syrian, Portuguese, Amer-Indian etc). It also denotes being a dark skinned African descendant in contrast to being a light-skinned African-descendant or other mixture of non-white identity. In Britain there are no institutionalised categories organised around shade. So formally in Britain there is no official concept of 'brown' identity. However, informally, culturally and in everyday speech the term 'brown' is often used to describe people of Asian appearance or identity as well as people who appear to be "mixed." In addition 'shadism' based on an aesthetic hierarchy of non-whiteness and exoticism is commonplace (Ali 2005: 58) across all minority and majority-ethnicised groups in the UK.

Britain does not have a complex lexicon of degrees of types of mixing as one finds across both Caribbean and Latin American former colonial societies. ‘Brown’ identity in Britain is much more fluid and ambiguous than in the Anglo-phone Caribbean where a plethora of colloquial terms<sup>8</sup> are used to define a variety of forms of mixing and which attest to the continuing social significance of such differences. However, ‘racially’ mixed identities have been included in the British National Census categories since 1991<sup>9</sup>, suggesting that the state-led discourse of hybridity as it pertains to Britishness is changing as various ethnic minority populations intermarry and have children. So whilst mixedness has relatively recently emerged as an institutionalised category in Britain, in the terminology of the Caribbean “Brown” identity has a high degree of quasi-formal acceptance due the length of its usage which go back to the formal legal social categories of both slavery and post-emancipation Caribbean societies. Also Brown identity has cultural power and significance because of the postcolonial politics of creole nationalism and state-led policies which promoted hybridity as key aspects of national identity after independence (Puri 2004: 3). This history argues Shalini Puri, demands that postcolonial criticism must guard against a tendency in both metropolitan and Caribbean discourses of hybridity (and in relation to Britain she specifically mentions Bhaba and Gilroy) to celebrate syncretism and hybridity as if they offer an innocent the way out of the problems of nationalism, racism and cultural essentialisms. Puri argues that the history of the Caribbean and the ways in which hybridity has been mobilised in many state-building projects, undoes the “generalised claim that hybridity and the nation-state are opposed to one another” (Puri op cit: 6). In Britain different conceptions of multiculturalism (Hall 2000; Kincheloe and Steinberg 1997) have been actively pursued within British post-war social policy. These state projects have at times overlapped or been at odds with multicultural manifestations emanating from the diverse cultural practices and movements being generated by the multicultural lives lived at a distance from state policies. Therefore, in this chapter I seek to complement the intensely cerebral versions of diaspora presented by Cultural Studies theorists” (Cohen 1998: 27), by assessing the extent to which Black women of Caribbean descent in London “in their attitudes, migration patterns and social conduct – behave in ways consistent with the idea of

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<sup>8</sup> For example *dundoos* to denote a light skinned person with any degree of mixing in their heritage in Jamaica, *dougl*a to denote the mixture of African and Indian in Guyana, mulatto for a mixture of European and African.

<sup>9</sup> What is clear is that British state discourses of mixing as represented in the National Census categories, appear to place special significance on the mixture of white with non-white, rather than mixing *within* different ethnic minorities. The General category ‘Mixed’ is divided in the census form between White and Black Caribbean, White and African, White and Asian, with one open category to be completed by the respondent “Any other mixed background please write in” (CRE 2005)

cultural diaspora” (Cohen *ibid*). I started by asking, “How would you define your identity? What emerges below is how Black Britishness is lived transnationally.

### ***Black and British***

Seven out of the eleven women interviewed were British born. When asked to define their identities only three explicitly described themselves as Black British although a third defined herself as Londoner and a fourth said she was “African Caribbean, with a Black British flavouring.” Confusingly Carole described her cultural identity as Black British and her racial identity as Jamaican. By this Jamaican identity seems to denote for this woman an almost genetically fixed and permanent inheritance, like the indelible imprint at the centre of a candy stick or seaside rock, whilst Black Britishness is merely the external cultural environment – literally just flavouring. Elizabeth who defined herself in terms of a very localised London identity, transformed it into a transnational identity by saying

I see myself as strongly, really as a Londoner with roots in the Caribbean and roots particularly in Grenada and Africa.

None of these women defined themselves solely as British. British on its own was clearly insufficient to convey enough of a sense of self and all three expressed a degree of reflexive awareness of the processes by which they had come to regard themselves as Black British. Two of these respondents saw their sense of themselves as being Black Britons as something that had emerged over time rather than being something they were socialised into merely through being born Black and growing up in Britain.

If you had asked me ten years ago I would have more strongly identifying myself as Caribbean and African. But as the years have gone on, I’ve thought, “well hang on a minute! I’ve let other people define who I am because I think that the society was quite... it can be quite racist. It can be institutionally quite racist. [ ] I didn’t see myself as being British or English because when I was younger, the definition of what English and British was that I was told didn’t include Black people (Melissa)

Distinctions between Black Britons and white Britons were organised around the family and the value of respect. Black-Caribbean families, in common with African families and for one respondent also Asian families were perceived as placing a higher value on family responsibility and respect between children and parents and elders. It was in relation to values to do with respect for the family that those who did have a strong identification with Africa felt that the similarities between Caribbean and African cultures were most apparent. Respect for the family together with similarities to do with food cultures and the rituals of birth and death

were seen as the core connections between Africans and Caribbeans that attested to the survival of Africanisms within Caribbean cultures and marked a point of common distinction between Black British culture and white British culture.

Black British identity was clearly felt to be a structuring reality for all of the women, but it was not regarded as an unchanging or unified phenomena, but something that changed over time, deconstructing yet constantly reconstructing identity and having persistence over time yet unpredictable. One of the key aspects to Black identity's flexibility emerges through how the women talked about generational<sup>10</sup> distinctions between their own generation and younger Black Britons. The theme of generational differences was recurrent and persistent; such that what emerges is a clear sense of different temporalities of Black Britishness.

Certainly from my generation, I am not so sure now - with the generations that follow – but I feel that I have a stronger sense of values and tradition around the Black family than some of my friends do, than some of the white British people do.

Generational differences within Caribbean/ Black identities were most starkly perceived in terms of the extent to which differences between white British and Black British cultures were diminishing over time. These differences were primarily seen to be associated with what most saw as the weakening of core values to do with the family and respect between adults and children. The loss of these core defining Caribbean and African Diaspora values were often associated with the breakdown of the extended family as a key location for the transmission of cultural memory and Caribbean cultural practices together with an absence of historical knowledge about slavery, imperialism and colonialism. For example, Jamaican-born Evelyn who defined herself unequivocally as Jamaican felt that Black Caribbean people were becoming too assimilated into white British ways of life unlike Asians and Africans who she perceived as better at holding onto their own traditions and values. Evelyn thought that Black people were being more generally accepted by the wider white society as they became more British in lifestyle and values. For her this was a negative development, for she regarded this as assimilation into British culture and therefore an act of submission by those who feel themselves inferior to white people and ashamed of their own histories and cultures. Evelyn rejected white acceptance saying,

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<sup>10</sup> This generational distinction within Black British identities was a core theme across the interviews and will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6.

“How embarrassing and how patronising! I don’t want to be like you! No! No! No! No, I resent this. I don’t like this. I don’t *want* to be like you. I want to be *me*! And I want to follow *my* way and *my* tradition and I am not ashamed of where I come from!”

### *A Different Kind of Black .... A Safe Black?*

The significance of Britain as a western multicultural nation and how it figures in the formation of identity becomes more complex when we consider Angela who was born in Bordeaux France to Haitian parents with whom she emigrated to New York at the age of nine. Throughout the interview Angela variously defined herself as French, French-Haitian, Haitian, Black, mixed mulatto and Black and American. Although now settled in the U.K. for seven years and married to a white Englishman, Angela did not define herself as British. “Culturally, I’m a mish-mash of French influences, Haitian influences – which is where my family are from ... American.”

The fluidity of terms used by Angela to define her identity reflected partly an awareness of her identity changing over time, but more particularly her uneasiness and resistance to identity labels especially to racial categories.

I don’t like labels, because every time somebody uses a label, ... you’re still putting yourself in a box, and it’s still a tick box, and people define you as that, and still see you as whatever their idea of that is. And I like to challenge people and say, “Look, you can’t put me in a box, because I’m not ... I’m not like that... And maybe it’s my way of being resistant to dominant ideas about race and ethnicity. I just don’t like ... I don’t like even ticking a box saying “Black” on, you know, an equality form or something.

Yet despite this resistance to identity labels, Angela was able to talk about herself both as a Black woman and as someone who grew up within a Haitian household in the USA and as a Haitian-French-American living in Britain. What emerges throughout her narrative of identity is a critical distance towards *all* identity positions even as she inhabits them. This is reflected in a strategy she consciously adopts to subvert peoples stereotypes or expectations of race and ethnicity and which will be discussed in more depth shortly.

Angela considered that in Britain she is afforded a higher level of social acceptance by white people on the basis of being a “different kind of Black” person as a consequence of having an American accent, being married to a white man and being a professional. Furthermore coming from what she described as a “French vineyard owning family” (her father is now again settled in France) also linked her to an English bourgeois romanticism about Frenchness, signifying



culture and refinement. All of these things she viewed as giving her a class and racial distinction based upon her difference from stereotypical assumptions of home-grown or *local* Black people. Her ethnic and class status she said placed her in the category of the ‘safe Black’. Angela regarded the ‘safe Black’ as a racist representation and defined in opposition to the other Black identities viewed as threatening in some way. As she put it, “the ones who’ll rob, steal”

I think there’s a class of us, yes, in every different Black community .... That’s exceptional. That’s ‘okay’. They’re the ones who are accepted.”

This form of racial exceptionalism is not the one that is usually spoken of, i.e. based upon a special victim status for Blacks at the hands of white racism and imperialism. Instead it is inverted and constructs a privileged exceptionalism based upon a special status linked to ones Blackness (therefore difference from whiteness) but at the same time difference from perceived ignoble forms of Blackness. Its mechanisms are the familiar ones through which stereotypes work to managing a chaotic world perceived as risky. Positive attributes become attached to self and negative to others. However, stereotypes do not rely solely in simple dualisms such as ‘self – good; Other – bad. The complex interaction and intersectionality between different axes of difference, race, class, gender, ethnicity etc, means that differences do not merely operate closed oppositional dualistic systems of difference. Paradoxical attitudes of fear and desire towards the Other are split off, producing stereotypes of the Good Other and the Bad Other. Stereotypes also work through metaphors and similarities, partial truths and absolute lies, which interweave differential levels of equivalences and differences connecting race and gender or race and sexuality and class. Stereotypes as ordering systems function “to maintain sharp boundary definitions between who belongs and who does not, legitimate and illegitimate forms of behaviour, and they exist most acutely at exactly those points where the maintenance of boundaries is an important aspect of the exercise of power (Dyer 1993: 14 – 16). An example of this comes through an account Angela gives of an occurrence in the local pub in the Kent village of her white English in-laws when she was confronted for the first time with another Black person in the village.

And I turned to everyone; I went, “What’s this?” And went up to him, like, “Out, mate, we don’t like your kind, bloody asylum seeker!” But it was a ... you know a joke, between him and I. We could see. And I remember everyone in the pub just went, fell silent! And they were just shocked! They couldn’t believe it. And he just laughed, and we just laughed, because people, obviously, were, “Oh, my God, there are two of them!” you know, “Oh, what are they going to do?” And I just took on the role of anyone who would be ... who would

be the kind of racist bigot, whatever colour ... and it challenged them.

This episode presents a tableau of an everyday racialised dynamic of life in Britain. I want to suggest that we can understand what took place in this exchange as an anti-racist performance of Black identification. By mockingly calling the Black newcomer by the racially loaded epithet of 'asylum seeker' she was also problematising a notion of Englishness or Britishness that metaphorically ties Blackness to alien-ness to an unwelcome presence. In this moment Angela refused identification with the hegemonically white-British racialised drama of the pub in which she was positioned as *a different kind of Black*, in her terms a *safe Black*, accepted into the community of whiteness by virtue of in her perceived difference and distance from the troublesome menacing stereotypes of unsafe Blacks and unwelcome racialised Others in Britain.

Finally, by identify with this familiar yet estranged Black man Angela made visible not so much his Otherness which was already apparent, but her own identification with all those ignoble forms of racialised Others upon which her exceptionalism and the invisible whiteness of the village depended. The mutual capacity of Angela and the Black man in the pub to 'get the joke' demarcated a shared symbolic world (however contingent), a common 'reality' constituted through particular racialised experiences and hermeneutic practices. His laughter returned the recognition and in that moment a shared racialised reality as the source of a collective identification was enunciated.

In the construction of a 'we' that excluded the white pub goers we could argue that a number of things were happening. Angela draws the newcomer into a racialised psychodrama that is reminiscence of the scene in the train described by Franz Fanon in *Black Skins White Masks*, when a white child notices him and calls out in fear, "Mama, see the Negro! I am frightened." (Fanon 2000: 258). This was the moment when Fanon experienced his bodily integrity crumble under the objectifying power of the European gaze and is reduced to "an epidermal schema" (ibid); a black body known in advance reduced to Europeans knowledge of him based upon his black body. In this encounter, Angela rejects her exceptionalism as 'the only Black in the village' (to borrow a currently popular catchphrase) and instead chooses to very publicly identify herself with the Black stranger.

The subversiveness of this encounter is achieved through the performative strategies she enacts. She starts by turning to the pub regulars and asking them "*What's this?*" In this moment she feigns confusion about what she is seeing and instead of asking the stranger who he is she looks to the authority of the white gaze to define him. With her next sentence "*Out, mate, we don't like your kind, bloody asylum seeker!*" she assumes a racist (and in that

context) hegemonically white subject position and so usurps a dominant white racist gaze in order to take control of it and deny it its source of power – its invisibility. In that moment of its dissolution and confusion both she and the Black stranger were afforded a space to recognise each other. "*Between him and I. We could see.*" Where Fanon's ontological erasure left him silenced not even able to raise an ironic laugh - "I made up my mind to laugh myself to tears, but laughter had become impossible" (Fanon *ibid*) - the two Black strangers in the bar (for Angela had for a moment de-familiarised herself to the white villagers in order to make herself 'known' to the newcomer) were able to return mutual recognition based upon the public acknowledgment of their shared experiences of racialisation *in that place* and a *collective* Black experience of racism in Britain.

Despite her abhorrence of racial categories, Angela demonstrates an identification with a set of racialised experiences that she knows are attached to the appearance of bodies and to racism yet she refuses to essentialise racism as something only white people do or Black people experience. Here something we might call Black experience emerges not as a transcendental condition emanating naturally from bodies, but structured in real social and political conditions and historical relations, that though not uniform do draw on shared public memories to construct "collective trajectories" (Brah: 1994: 11) through which particular ethnicised and racialised experiences emerge and create identifications and identities. In identifying with the newcomer in such a confrontational and arguably offensive way, Angela distanced herself from her privileged status within the racialised dynamics of that Kent village and wider British everyday racism and by her identification with him as another Black person exposed the racial exclusivity of the village and the continuing significance of race in Britain.

This scene in the pub was also a very *English* drama for Angela was also unsettling accepted expectations and norms around race, class and location. Ethno-racial categories in Britain are linked to class through relations of equivalence that equate Blackness with being working class. Yet race and class also inscribe a metaphorical chain of signification linking race, class and place in which 'Black' signifies working class signifies the city and the urban.

This man's a professional, his family, his kids on the honour role, straight A's, and probably will go to Cambridge or Oxford, and why not? Why can't he have the same aspirations, and why can't he move into an area when he wants to? And why can't he give his children what he didn't have? And why can't I challenge that? Why can't I make them go, "Oh, shit!"

The romantic ideal of the English countryside as refuge from urban decay signified by the foreigner and difference residing in the city has a long history, going back to the beginning of

industrialisation in the nineteenth century (Jacobs 1996, McLaughlin 2000). It finds its contemporary manifestation in notions of English heritage advanced by the tourism industry, the Countryside Alliance's resistance to the banning of fox hunting.

The spatial logic of multiculturalism was something that Angela saw as a distinct difference between the U.K. and the USA where in Angela's view there is less informal segregation than in Britain. Here vast tracts of the countryside in particular have no Black people at all. Another difference she noted was the state of development of race politics in the U.K. Firstly she describes the immaturity of race politics in Britain wherein state institutions such as the Home Office were able to make pronouncements about Black and minority ethnic Britons that in the USA, she believed would not be tolerated and would be challenged by powerful Black and minority ethnic lobbying and campaigning organisations such as the NAACP.<sup>11</sup> Thirdly Angela considered that Blackness was defined more narrowly in the USA than in the U.K. In the USA, she considered that African-Americans, dominated racial politics and consequently issues of racism often insisted on an African-American exceptionalism or particularism that reduced Black identity to African-American identity. "In America, 'they're all Black people! They're African-Americans descended from slaves!' (Angela). On the other hand whilst in her view, Britain is underdeveloped in terms of the politics of race and ethnicity she considered it much more developed in term of recognising ethnic difference and of the diversity of Blackness.

I think people realise that there is a difference between Black people here, especially in the ... or in the Asian community – Bangladeshi, Gujurati, Punjabi, blah, blah, you know. They're different criteria that you have to investigate and notice and realise and accept, whereas in America, 'they're all Black people! They're African-Americans descended from slaves!' And although there's a big Jamaican community, there's other communities, but when it comes down to it, they're *Black people*. Over here, "I am from Nigeria", "I'm from South Africa", "I'm from Ghana", "I'm from Morocco", "I'm from Egypt."

She also compared Britain to France. Angela complained that in Britain she encountered resistance from white British people to accepting that she was French

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<sup>11</sup> NAACP National Association for the Advance of Coloured People a very powerful and successful national organisation formed in the early twentieth century to fight discrimination and secure Civil Rights and social justice for African-Americans and other minority groups.

You know, every time I say, “I’m French”, “I have a French passport”, they go, “Oh, how’s that?” you know, “How did that happen?” Almost in a resistant [way]. You cannot be French *and* Black. You cannot be this *and* ... another. Almost, you know, [as if] the French system of assimilation never accounted for anything. You have to be Black and [then] British. You can’t be just British, you know. Why can’t you accept me as I am?

What Angela’s narrative reflects is the different forms of colonial governance exercised by France and Britain. Her belief in the success of French assimilation further reflects the racial politics of post Revolutionary Haiti where as she herself noted shade became an important marker of both Frenchness and power.

Well, from the culture my family are from in Haiti, which took on after they kicked out the French, the same social structure, class structure, racial politics, as the whites had. It was just the mulattos who were on top of the pile, who could pass, who were different, who married their own kind ... same thing like the aristocracy, it was just the same thing. The same thing.

In Haiti Angela was part of a privileged *mulatto aristocracy* that she actively dis-identified with on the basis of deploring their ill treatment of poor and dark skinned Haitians. Angela suggested that it is only in France that she is accepted as French. This rather idyllic picture of French race relations seems to ignore the contemporary issues of racism in France as well as the history of France’s colonial policy of assimilation and of cultural movements such as Negritude, which sought to resist it. An awareness of the different colonial histories of the various European empires is important in understanding the contemporary shape of race politics in the metropolitan centres of those former empires. The transformation of once colonial empires into postcolonial multicultural nations bears the traces of those colonial histories in the kinds of state responses to immigration, racism, and the racialisation of social relations.

Edward Said has shown how a western imperial imagination came to construct orientalist discourses for both knowing and governing a variety of Asian and Arab Others (Said 1978). Stoler has shown how Orientalism also produced a way of shaping and governing the kinds of colonial selves appropriate to the tasks of ruling the Orient (Stoler 2002). Similarly in relation to Africa, Primitivism demarcated the forms of knowledge about and modes of conduct appropriate to ruling Africa and Africans (Togovnick 1990). In addition to common core elements within European colonial cultural discourses of the Other, such as the innate inequality between races and the superiority of white civilisation and the right of European rule over non-Europe (Boehmer 1995), the specifics of how racial superiority and racial rule

would be operationalised often reflected different metropolitan philosophical conceptions of race and culture.

This meant that different colonising nations had different discourses of Africanism and Primitivism, which influenced how they saw their role in relationship to Africa and to Africans in and outside of the African continent. The different cultural forms that European colonialism took reflected the cultural differences of the various European powers as well as the specific confrontations between those powers and indigenous populations. In turn this produced different qualities and intensities of racism (Stoler op cit: 24) and racial governmentality across and within different spaces and moments of colonialism. Knowing these histories I suggest remains relevant to understanding how colonial empires were transformed into multicultural liberal nations and how colonised nations became postcolonial nation-states. One of the key differences between British and French colonial projects was that whereas the British viewed Africans as having an underdeveloped culture; the French saw Africans as having no culture and no history (Boahen 1987). Therefore, France saw its civilising mission in Africa in terms of taking superior French culture to people who had none; assisting Africans to evolve into full human subjects by assimilating them into France and French civilisation. In other words making them into Black - Frenchmen and women.

During slavery, the French Code Noir of 1685 banned Africans from learning to read or write. After abolition the colonised could learn to read and write – but only in French and only French culture and knowledge. This meant that social advancement for the colonised African could only be attained through assimilation. As Angela acknowledged this produced a predominantly brown Creole elite in the Caribbean characterised by a Francophile attachment to all things French as a sign of their education and acculturation. This was particularly so in the case of the French Caribbean where people had been separated from an ancestral homeland or to their own indigenous languages and cultures. So the French construction of an inclusive Frenchness assumes the superiority of French culture and has a long history of assimilating the African as a kind of exotic child or desirable primitive (Archer Straw 2000: 38).

British colonial governance on the other hand was heavily influenced by Social Darwinism. British cultural assumptions about their African colonised populations were that they were culturally distinct but inferior and this was matched by their intellectual and physical inferiority as well. Africans in Africa and the Diaspora were regarded as culturally, intellectually and sexually as a child-like race in need of evolution under European guidance and control in order to progress up the evolutionary ladder of culture and civilisation (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992). Social Darwinism in adapting Charles Darwin's theories of evolution and natural selection (Darwin 1859, 1871) advanced the idea that Europeans and

European culture and civilisation were at a superior stage of human development than non-European. The notion that non-Europeans represented a less developed form of human life and culture became an influential discourse in the transition from British imperial domination to colonial governance. It came to justify and shape modes of British colonial rule based on cultural pluralism in which cultures were different and unequal. In the USA, race was understood as biological otherness and inferiority and in post-emancipation southern states maintained through Jim Crow segregation (Weisbrot 1991).

The greater recognition and arguably greater 'respect' given to diversity as a political ideal in Britain can be understood in part as a legacy of the form of British colonialism, where difference was both acknowledged, encouraged and preserved as a key technology of racial knowledge inseparable from systems of racial rule. For the French the colonised needed to learn how to be French, for the British they needed to be tutored in how to be civilised natives. This is the difference between assimilation and pluralism. In the USA where biological racism was sedimented into Southern slave society and later reproduced through Jim Crow segregation (Weisbrot op cit), the transition from racial segregation to cultural pluralism marks the development of race relations in the U.S.A. in the twentieth century. It is my contention that the contemporary racial formations and racial politics within different locations of the African Diaspora – particularly inside of developed multicultural western nations are constituted in historically and politically contextualised colonial racial *governmentalities*. In not yet being fully *decolonised* these colonial traces persist in contemporary society and historicise contemporary struggles over the meaning of freedom and the politics of race.

### ***Caribbean Identities***

All of the women interviewed expressed a very powerful and active awareness of the Caribbean as a central element in their identities and lived cultures. This was the case even for women born in Britain. What emerges here is a picture of Caribbean cultures as actively lived by women through a sense of values, practices and ways of defining and interpreting the meaning of ones experiences as a Black person living in Britain. From the responses it was clear that Caribbean island identities were experienced not primarily as national/citizenship categories but as Caribbean ethnicities linked to similar but distinct practices, languages, and mores. All of the women's narratives of identity displayed a transnationalism that was immediate and almost taken for granted. This is seen most vividly where very local identities such as coming from Moss Side in Manchester or Plaistow in London, were attached with ease to other national, transnational regional and diasporic locations. Linette described herself as African, of Grenadan parents, who was born in Moss Side and grew up in Birmingham.

Elizabeth also born in Britain who described herself as a Londoner with roots in Grenada and Africa, later went on to further qualify her Londoner status by saying that as a child she had resented being called Caribbean because she was born in Plaistow, in east London.

This transnationalism did not flatten out differences between the different locations of their identities. For example, Linette who described herself as African of Grenadan parents, recognised there were similarities and differences between her experiences in Moss Side in contrast to London, and in the UK in contrast to women in other locations of the African Diaspora. When Linette first arrived in London in her early twenties, Black Londoners regarded her as a “country-bumpkin”, despite Manchester being a major city. Yet Linette accepted this positioning because she too recognised Black London as more ‘advanced’ than the regions. The signs of this greater development included the higher number of Black pirate radio stations in the mid-nineteen eighties, specialist Reggae music programmes on the legal local radio stations, the greater availability of Black beauty products and hairdressers and Black nightclubs. The density of the Black population, being located in the national capital and the development of a Black public sphere of economic and cultural activity helped to establish Black London culture as the hegemonic Black-Britishness in the 1980’s.

At the same time, all of the women made comparisons between different locations of the African or Caribbean Diasporas. Being Black or Caribbean *in* Britain was regarded by all of the women as being different from being Black in the Caribbean, Africa or the U.S.A. So for example our émigré from Moss Side went on to qualify her sense of being Grenadan through differences she found between Grenadan women in Grenada and Grenadan women in Britain and between Black women in Britain and Black women in Africa,

So culturally I would say I was Caribbean more so than African – although I know about my African heritage. But when I went back to Grenada there is a difference between things that I do and expect and almost take for granted and some Grenadan women. Also when I went to Africa there’s differences.

This distinction between Caribbean women in different locations was expressed primarily through perceived differences between the Caribbean and the UK or between different Caribbean societies in the Caribbean. Take for example Jamaican-born Evelyn who at forty-eight had never married or had children. Despite a very powerful attachment to Jamaican traditions, Evelyn was aware of how living in Britain had changed the choices available to her and her own expectations as a woman than those she had been brought up with by her parents. Evelyn stressed with pride her competence from a very young age in ‘motherly’ skills,



demonstrated by her ability to keep the house and care for her younger siblings so well, that by the age of nine she was called ‘the little mother’.

I have been trained to be the wife and mother. If I would have stayed there I would have [married and had children] and maybe would be looking after them [her elderly parents] as well, but coming here your views are just sort of different.

Very few women felt that gender was significant in shaping their sense of being from a particular Caribbean island culture. In so far as they did perceive any differences to do with gender roles and femininity, these were largely based upon class and rural/urban distinctions. So several women contrasted ‘respectable’ British-Caribbean femininities with disreputable lower-class Jamaican Dancehall femininity and the styles of fashion associated with it. Or they distinguished between Caribbean femininities *in the Caribbean* through a distinction between being ‘country’ or ‘sophisticated’. The overwhelming majority of women similarly considered that until adolescence there were few gender differences made in the role expectations of Caribbean boys and girls *in the home*. However, women reported that after adolescence, as girls they had been allowed much less freedom to socialise than boys in the family and their conduct in public was much more heavily policed by parents. Apart from these distinctions, all of the women stressed the commonalities of Black womanhood rather than the differences of Caribbean femininities. This will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Individuals came to a sense of being from a particular island in the Caribbean through stories their parents told of their own childhood: - the food that was eaten, words used, family photographs and ornaments around the home. Some also described learning to understand themselves as being from a particular island through the ways in which their parents would talk about people from other islands. For example Njeri from a Grenadan family spoke about her mother’s disapproval when she began to use Jamaican patois picked up from school. So Njeri learned to make sure she did not use these words at home. The different Creole languages and accents of the Caribbean could be a powerful mark of distinction between Caribbean islands. This was most frequently demonstrated by reference to the different food cultures and names of dishes of the islands. For example as one person cited, Grenadans would use the word Bakes where Jamaicans would use the word Johnny Cakes to denote a type of fried dumpling.

Angela the only person whose family was from a Franco-phone Caribbean island, said that in her upper-middle class mixed mulatto and Black Haitian family it was the French language, French culture, Haitian food and being Roman Catholic that demarcated their class and ethnic difference from African-Americans who were viewed by her parents as less cultured.

My mother used to say things, you know, “You’re not ghetto Black, You’re not like those African-Americans (Angela)

The other dimension of ‘home’ for many women was the idea passed on through the talk of family and family friends of ‘back home’. The phrase ‘back home’ is used consistently by Caribbean people to refer to their island of origin and for this generation of women born in Britain it was a phrase that they learned to use even before they had ever visited their parents’ islands. The idea that the Caribbean was home helped to transmit a strong sense of island identification and emotional attachment, which means that the first journey back to the Caribbean was often remembered as significant in terms of the personal identity journeys of several women. All of the women interviewed who had been born in Britain had visited their parents’ birth islands. The impact of going ‘back home’ was different for each person. For some it could be an emotionally demanding experience that led to radical changes in their sense of identity and identifications. This is perhaps best illustrated by Melissa and worth quoting at length.

I have been to Jamaica. It was a culture shock at first. I remember a feeling of disappointment that I hadn’t come home, because my parents had always talked of going ‘back home’ and that’s how I thought as well; “I’m going home.” And then suddenly being in this place where actually you weren’t at home where you were an outsider *yet again*. I think that caused some feelings of displacement because you started to wonder ‘well where I fit in? Where do I fit’ I was about eighteen or nineteen. I remember coming back and feeling [said in a whisper] “Oh! I’m coming home” And that was the first time I can recollect having those thoughts. The first time I’d thought ‘going back to England – *home*’; because it was almost you’re searching for somewhere else. (Melissa)

Going back to the Caribbean then could effect not only how women experienced Britain or England as ‘home’, but also their very understanding of ‘home’. The idea of home is infused with the emotional politics of belonging. As Melissa implied above, the feeling of not quite belonging to Britain produces a search for a place of attachment to a to call ‘home’; but having gone to Jamaica she discovered that home was back in Britain. She continues,

Jamaica was the beginning, so it didn’t happen overnight. I didn’t think ‘Gosh I’m British’ or anything [...] I can’t say that I am Caribbean. I can say Caribbean *descent*. But I can’t say I’m Caribbean because I’m not, and actually when I go there they probably treat me more as a foreigner there than I am treated here. It was around that time that I started to define myself as Black British. (Melissa)

Thus for this speaker moving into Black British identity was accomplished neither by a simple positive identification with Britishness, nor through a sense difference from white Britishness,

as Stuart Hall suggests (Hall 1996: 116), but rather through both of those in combination with coming to understand herself as *not being fully Jamaican* and Jamaica *not* being home. This contrasts with several other women who found that going to the Caribbean did not so much change their sense of identity as British or Caribbean, as alter their sense of themselves as Black people and what that signified. In other words it helped them find an invigorated pride in being Black to see a Black majority country “where everyone looked like you” from the road sweeper to the Prime Minister as one person put it. For this reason nearly all of the women regarded it as very important that their own children should visit the Caribbean.

So that they have a place in this whole hierarchy of events and life and history. They have to have that. [...] Living in an environment where children see themselves in all dimensions is the most powerful thing that they can experience. Waking up and going to the dentist who looks like you; getting on the aeroplane and seeing the pilot who looks like you; going to the beach, the hotel, the conference the school the university and seeing yourself reflected on all these levels means that *this is a reality*. It can be. (Mandisa)

Visiting the Caribbean was viewed as important for helping Black British people of Caribbean descent to have a sense of their place in the world and in history. In this way the Caribbean represents both a physical place of identification and belonging but also a psychic space of mutual recognition and existential validation. This process of physical journeying between the Caribbean and the U.K. transforms the Caribbean from a mere symbolic idealisation based upon family stories to a lived reality. Reality was a word often repeated across several interviews to describe going to the Caribbean and keeping connected with Caribbean cultures *in the Caribbean*. Even Melissa, who discovered her Black Britishness after visiting Jamaica, nevertheless regarded visiting the Caribbean and staying connected with the Caribbean as imperative if one was not to have a mistaken impression that racism had been eradicated and that Black people were fully accepted into British society. So going back to the Caribbean was considered important because

I feel it keeps you attached to yourself. It keeps you *grounded in the reality* of the stuff that is happening out there, In the sense that you could almost be in thinking there is equal treatment for all out there, [in British society] and as long as you get educated and go out into the workplace everything is going to be fine and that you can almost be assimilated into this society and everything is fine and they are going to treat you equally. I think you need to keep yourself grounded and therefore connected back to your community and hence back to some place in the Caribbean because *that is the reality*. (Melissa)

This sense of the Caribbean as reality is also reflected in a certain pragmatism about the limits of African Diaspora and transnational identities. Women were very aware of being located in Britain and had clear conceptions of the differences between their experiences here and those of Black people in other places. So as cited earlier Linette's sense of herself as an African and as a Grenadan had changed as a result of travel to those places. All of the women agreed that a sense of connection to an island and knowledge of Caribbean culture and history was crucial in empowering Black people in Britain to resist racism. All stressed the importance of having an awareness of oneself as being shaped by a Black culture and history, However, only one person, Elizabeth, thought that this did not require one to physically travel to that country.

I suppose you've got a sense of where your roots are. If your parents.... If you're of African descent, you've got a sense of that country in your life as having helped shaped you as well as where you are now and your schooling and all those other experiences. So it's a sense of a Black country having helped shaped where you are now. So I think that's the most .... the biggest defining thing. [ ] That doesn't necessarily mean that you would have had to been there but you will have been in contact with people from that country more than likely be your family. (Elizabeth)

The majority did not share Elizabeth's view that identification without experience was sufficient. Identification and knowledge must be accompanied by direct personal experience of a majority Black country. This was regarded as especially important for the self-development of children born and raised in the UK. One of the key benefits of visiting or living for a while in a Caribbean country, was that it was believed to provide a counter-balance to what many saw as the partial sense of self that comes from living in a majority white governed nation, where the horizons of racialised existence is restricted and confined by racism and social and psychic marginalisation.

Living In Jamaica... and I know that everybody that I have spoken to, who has ever taken their children out of here to *any* island, to any country in the Caribbean confirmed for us that living in an environment where children see themselves in all dimensions is the most powerful thing that they can experience. Telling them everyday is very difficult. Physically it is very difficult because it feeds on you as an adult. Having to remind them all the time.

This clearly indicates that white governmentality is felt to restrict Black freedom to *be*. The interviews also indicated that Black Caribbean identities in Britain are both collective and personal accomplishments. By the time these professional women had reached their mid-thirties to late forties, Black identity was no longer experienced as fragmented but multiply located. Black British Caribbean identity as a process of adaptations is articulated through a

wide range of transnational sensibilities, experiences, personal and community histories and narratives. Black identity is not primarily dislocated then but rather occupying multiple physical, psychic, and cultural locations simultaneously or sequentially. The changeability of Black identifications also points to the temporality of Black identity. It is here and there, but also then and now, which suggests that what being Black and Caribbean means today, regardless of current appearances may alter in the future. At the same time they suggest that what being Black Caribbean has meant in the past retains significance and meaning as part of the narrative of both personal and community biographies. What their personal identities were or are, change in response to personal experiences but also as we will see in the next section in response to social factors that constrain or enable the formation of particular identities and elective affinities.

### ***The Temporalities of Black British Identities***

As stated earlier the theme of the different temporalities of Black Britishness is a powerful one emerging through the interviews. This data suggests that there are two separate but interconnected structures of temporality: - the first private and autobiographical and the other public and linked to social group formations. The first outlines an individual's personal autobiographical temporality, tracing each woman's understanding of her own identity formation within a particular sense of herself as an individual in and for herself and in relation to her immediate family and intimate networks. The second refers more to how their social identities are formed through being positioned and interpolated within shared social contexts and cultural worlds and which public discourses of identity are made available. Of course in reality these things are entwined.

All but two of the women interviewed had grown up as part of the first large visible cohort of Black children and teenagers to go through the British education system and enter en masse into British society in the nineteen seventies and eighties. Thus they represent the children of the post-war Caribbean immigrants to Britain. This is the generation from which a public Black British identity emerged hegemonically interpreted through the experiences of people from the Caribbean. In saying this I am not erasing the pre-war presence of large Black communities from India, Africa and the Caribbean in places like Cardiff, Bristol and Liverpool (Fryer 1984, Hesse 1993). Rather I am marking a particular moment in the transformation of race politics in Britain, which we might describe as a transition from the colonial to the postcolonial. The now institutionalised Windrush narrative of post-war Black arrival dominantly represents this phase (*see chapter one*).

Rather than seeing post-war migration as the moment at which racial difference enters the nation, it is much more accurate and insightful to regard it as the moment in which the place of race and racism in British modern state formation, was decolonised and nationalised and their inherent internality to Britain and Britishness rendered visible. One of the things that identifies these women with this era of formal decolonisation is the way in which their narratives of their lives and identities traces the piecing together of new postcolonial identities or new ethnicities out of the remains of old colonial ethnicities. The story that emerges from the interviews is of Black Britishness being constructed over time and across different transnational and local spaces and in the encounters between dominant media and government representations and the practises within which Black people seek to become more self-governing than less, more self-determining than determined.

Many women identified the initial formation of a common Black identity in Britain as something that occurred as they moved out beyond the confines of the home and family and into British society first through schooling and later leisure and work. This sense of being Black-British surfaced *outside the* home in contrast or in accompaniment to the continuation (albeit in an adapted form) of specific island and pan-Caribbean 'home' identities. Island identities were largely taken for granted within the family and expressed through things like food, language, family pictures and household ornaments. A sense of the significance of being from a particular island tended to emerge as children came into contact with other people beyond immediate family based networks.

I always remember it being very strong in terms of the photographs, the flag and tea towels – very much Jamaica. We didn't really have discussions about people from other islands and I always remember not knowing if I saw a Black person ... I'd think first and foremost Jamaican. Not so much African at the time because I was born in Birmingham and at the time there were not so many African people in Birmingham so it was Blacks were Jamaican and I'm sure, in fact I know now that they weren't all Jamaican, but I just made an assumption that if you were Black you were Jamaican.<sup>12</sup>

This exemplifies the ways in which being from a particular island was closely entwined with a pan-Caribbean identity, but it also raises questions about how Jamaica and Jamaican culture figured in the formation of a common Black British public culture and identity in the nineteen

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<sup>12</sup> This conflation of Black with being 'West Indian' and West Indian with being Jamaican was also found in official discourses of public agencies such as the police as well as academic experiential research (Bulmer 1999)

seventies and nineteen eighties. As they entered into British society and ventured beyond the confines of family networks, girls became increasingly aware of being both from a particular island but also sharing a common sense of an identity *different from their parents*. This emerging Black Britishness was strongly articulated for these women through a sense of being Black in Britain (though not British) and through sharing a common youth culture of Jamaican patois and Reggae music.

### ***Jamaican Reggae and the Emergence of Black-Britishness***

Reggae and Jamaican culture were central to the identify formation of children of the post-war immigrants from the Caribbean and arguably Africa too. Jamaicans represented the largest percentage of Caribbean immigrants. Also being the largest of the British-speaking Caribbean islands has since imperial times given Jamaica a prominent status in relation to other Caribbean islands (Paton 2004: 4). By the nineteen seventies a common Black youth culture had emerged centred around Reggae music, which provided a way for the first mass generation of Black Britons to carve out a new identity that was linked to their parental Caribbean cultures, yet could also address their experiences of growing up *Black* in a white society facing metropolitan rather than colonial forms of racial rule and racism. To find their place in nineteen seventies Britain, the children of Caribbean immigrants had to find a way of transforming themselves from immigrants and children of immigrants. For staying an immigrant as Stuart Hall noted in his own coming to know himself as Black “isn’t a tenable place to be” (Hall, 1996: 116).

The discourse of Rastafari and the ‘Roots and Culture’ genre of Reggae music that it created at the time provided a common public language beyond the ‘home cultures’ of their parents. The pan-Africanist critique of neo-colonialism and continuing cultural imperialism offered by Rastafarian and Reggae at this time, provided a way of interpreting and give meaning to the different experiences that Black young people were having within British schools and the wider society (Cashmore 1979, Hebdige 1987). A number of women from other islands acknowledged the importance of this early common Black identity formulated around Jamaican-ness.

I guess we owe a lot to Jamaicans really, because the Jamaicans sort of .... were the first to resist. If there was any trouble, it was always the Jamaicans. They helped us fight back. Reggae, Rasta... kind of helped us all to challenge what we were experiencing. We could all be Jamaicans in a way.. even if we weren’t.

Two observations can be drawn from these experiences. Firstly, the important role Jamaican culture and identity played for this generation. Secondly, how complex and prolonged was the process of cultural transformation from being a Caribbean immigrant to being Black British, both in terms of personal biographies and collective group identities. Learning to know yourself as Black was not accomplished smoothly, any less than coming to know yourself as Black British. For these women coming to know themselves no longer simply as children of Grenadan or Trinidadian parents involved becoming Black and the discourse of Rastafari and reggae assisted this generation through the struggle of coming into Blackness as a positive self-identification, rather than a negative subjectification within prevailing stereotypes of the time of the Black mugger, the Black single mother or under-achieving West Indian child.

Thus constituting oneself as 'Black' (in Britain) involved more than the recognition of self through difference from 'whiteness' (Hall 1996: 116). I have already spoken about how this Black-Britishness was in part shaped in relation to transnational Black differences. In relation to whiteness, what the formation of Black Britishness in the nineteen seventies shows is how Black-British identity was constituted in relation to a split rather than monolithic yet still governing construction of whiteness. Since Whiteness transcended Britishness at the same time as it fully occupied it, this meant it was possible to become Black in Britain without feeling British. It is this moment of being caught between no longer being a Caribbean immigrant but a Black person, but not yet allowed entry into Britishness that Black-British identity organised around 'Jamaican-ness' begins its emergence in the nineteen seventies as an ethical, political and a cultural practice of freedom. Elizabeth, London born to a Grenadan family, highlights not only this moment of transition, but also how Black identity in Britain remains fluid and adaptable, yet continuous.

I suppose when I was growing up there was a far greater influence from Jamaica; what with Bob Marley's music, Reggae music, dub poetry and the lyrics you would see and the language used was very heavily Jamaican. Whereas now people from different islands are much more into the different words and phrases and ways that they speak. I know that words and phrases I use are not Jamaican and they are definitely not Jamaican and I see that as quite a proud thing to hang on to.

Apart from highlighting the thriving and continuing significance of Caribbean ethnicities, this passage underscores the significance of Jamaican culture in the formation of a common Black youth culture and identity in the U.K. at one time. Yet there are two aspects of this that merit closer attention than they have hitherto received and which a genealogical enquiry alerts us to. Genealogy tracks the moments of emergence of new formations or ideas from the scene of



battle between the embattled powers of government and the powers of freedom (Foucault 1984)

A genealogy of Black-Caribbean British identity therefore recognises the 1970s and 1980s as the moment of emergence of Black Britishness out of the non-space in which racism had positioned British born Black children. This is the psychic space that the children of Caribbean immigrants had occupied between the twin dominations of Whiteness as ‘non-race’ (producing Blackness as race) and Whiteness as ‘nation’ (producing Blackness as non-British). The second aspect of this emergence of Black freedom relates to its representational masculinity. This is reflected in the hegemonic visibility of Black masculinity and men both in state and media stereotypes of ‘Black youth’ (Hall et al 1978), in social and cultural theory analyses of culture and race in Britain, and in the public culture of emergent Black Britishness. Thus what is still not received adequate attention empirically or theoretically is how Black women were and are located in Black British identities, Black politics and the politics of race in Britain. Chapters six and eight will address contemporary Black youth cultures in order to analyse not only the importance of youth cultures in the politics of Black British culture and identity, but also how gender is now an increasingly central dimension.

***British Black: “What is your ethnic group – Choose ONE<sup>13</sup>”***

Since 1991, the term Black British has been used as a primary ethnic category by the Office for National Statistics and is divided into the following subcategories – Black-African, Black-Caribbean and Black - “any other.” However the term African-Caribbean is also a widely used category used in the *analysis* of ethnic monitoring data. Thus there appears to be on the part of many public authorities a re-interpretation of these census categories when it comes to analysing the data thus produced. Many public agencies extrapolate from the census ethnic codes of Black Caribbean, Black - African to produce an everyday distinction between African-Caribbeans and Africans, whilst sometimes the term African-Caribbean is used as a catch-all term to include all non-whites of Black-African descent. The possibility that some people who define themselves as Black Caribbean might also be Asian (i.e. Indian or Chinese-

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<sup>13</sup> The wording of the ethnic question in the National Census is “What is your ethnic group? Choose ONE section from A to E, then tick the appropriate box to indicate your cultural background” (CRE 2005).

Caribbean) is thereby occluded by this rhetorical gesture. How other Caribbean ethnicities map themselves into British racial categories merits investigation.

However, the term African-Caribbean or even African/Caribbean is also used as a catchall phrase by many organisations including Black organisations. The ambiguity of the term African-Caribbean reflects the struggle between African Diaspora conceptions of Black identities, residual European colonial categories and postcolonial governmental racial categories. The ambiguity of the term was recognised by some women interviewed and presented as the key reason by those who mentioned it, as to why they did not like it and actively dis-identified with the term.

Elizabeth 's primary identification of herself as African and Caribbean had changed from when she was younger, now defining herself as a Grenadan Black British Londoner. Elizabeth acknowledged her African ancestry but placed greater emphasis upon being Caribbean and on the diversity of Caribbean identities, and mentioning East Indians, Chinese and Lebanese as just a few of the many ethnic groupings in the region. She felt that the emphasis upon African tended to obscure or even promote a dis-identification with the diversity of the Caribbean. To illustrate this, she offered the example of a colleague of part Indo-Caribbean descent who whilst being keen to explore her African ancestry was totally uninterested in her Indian heritage. Elizabeth said "That's my whole thing about this African notion because [ ], yes it will be predominantly African, but there will be other things as well!"

Another woman repeatedly used the term African-Caribbean, but when asked to explain what she understood by the term replied that the term was confusing and she was not sure what it really meant. Yet she then went on to say it referred to Caribbean of African descent, but should not because both groups (African and Caribbean) "are very very distinct and to lump them together in that way is not right." Melissa reacted defensively when pushed to explore how African identity fitted alongside other ethnic differences within the Caribbean. I interpreted this as an unwillingness to tell me about her family ancestry. Melissa was the lightest in skin shade of the people I interviewed and her facial appearance strongly suggested there was some Chinese ancestry. Evidence for this impression is that like Elizabeth, Melissa went on to say, that whilst she would not deny her African heritage she would "celebrate" her Caribbean heritage more "and feel more affinity with someone who was Jamaican Indian (interestingly she did not choose to say Chinese) than someone who is African. The community is about Caribbean not the African bit."

### *Locating the African in the Caribbean*

Melissa and Carole were the only two people who expressed strong reservations about identifying with Africa in terms that suggested an active dis-identification and desire to disassociate themselves from African culture. Melissa explicitly declared that she does not identify with Africa, whilst Carole's dis-identification with Africa emerged through what she had to say about her feelings about her body, which she felt attached her to aspects of African identity that she regarded as negative. Interestingly where Melissa was the fairest of the women in the group, Carole was the darkest. Melissa who was fair skinned and had pronounced 'Chinese-looking' features had been the least willing to talk about the different ethnicities that were in her background and so her disengagement with Africa and emphasis upon being Caribbean and British is perhaps not surprising. Carole on the other hand only spoke about Africa in relation to skin shade, beauty and femininity. She regarded her dark shade of Black skin, arched back and pronounced buttocks (which she referred to with sardonic humour as her "African heritage") as being socially disadvantageous within Black cultures. Carole had very negative attitudes about Africa and this was strongly related to her painful memories of being called an African by other Caribbean girls at school, which was always intended as a pejorative taunt. For her to be called African or regarded as *looking African* was and remains negative, denoting ugliness and being therefore unfeminine and less desirable to Black men.

We had this negative about Africans and still till this day there is this negative about Africans [...] of being associated *as* an African and I was always associated as an African, which I felt, was a negative. Because of the tone and shading of my skin. (Carole)

In contrast most women expressed high levels of identification with an African heritage, understood in terms of shared history, common ancestry and some common values and practices (see earlier discussions). Two women currently defined themselves as Africans and had changed their names to African names – Njeri and Mandisa, though several others spoke about their sense of the place of African in their identities shifting over time. Sonia described herself as African with a connection to the Caribbean, yet went on to say very little about what was African about her but spoke extensively about being Trinidadian and what that entailed. This woman was married to an African man and had like the other woman been heavily involved in Pan-Africanist and Black Power movements.

The person with the strongest and most active engagement with Africa was Mandisa, ethnically Jamaican, who described herself as "a conscious African woman." Mandisa had had many years of involvement in various African-centred movements and organisations. She had

moved from being a Rastafarian in her twenties to now in her thirties being involved in a number of African-American based Afrocentric organisations operating across the Diaspora. I shall be discussing Mandisa's political and philosophical beliefs in chapter seven that examines an African-centred Women's healing programme. At this point I am concentrating simply on how Africa figures in the construction of social identity. In this regard, Mandisa had the most politically elaborated analysis of the significance of Africa in her personal identity, spiritual belief system and lifestyle as might be expected in someone who has been involved in African-centred religious and political movements.

Mandisa's lifestyle and identity was intimately bound up with a political, cultural and spiritual commitment to valuing, promoting and regenerating the African components of Caribbean and in her case particularly Jamaican culture. The ways in which Jamaica and Africa were entwined in her sense of returning to a more "natural" African way of life was linked to an African Diaspora sensibility that expressed itself through Black Nationalism. For Mandisa, Jamaica where her parents had come from was important because it was a Black nation within the African Diaspora. Therefore as a nation where Black African descendants were in a majority, Jamaica for her was an important location in which African culture had survived and sustained Black life and culture. For Mandisa holding on to the African elements of Black cultures was imperative in order to resist western cultural and psychological domination and ultimately pathological Black identities and lifestyles. Consequently, Mandisa regarded retaining a connection with *any* Black majority nation as imperative in maintaining a connection with African Diaspora cultures and therefore Africa. As an alternative to going back to Africa, going back to any majority Black nation was therefore crucial in the development of a healthy sense of self for all Black people living in Britain or any other majority white nation. This could not be achieved merely through education or exposing Black children in white majority countries to African culture and history, "you need to take them *home* - wherever home is – Mek dem see! Because this isn't enough."

This view that *any* Black country could expose Black children to African culture reflected what Mandisa considered to be her shift away from an Afrocentric fundamentalism, that insists on a complete return to all things *authentically* and *originally* African. However, many of the other women in the interview group would have considered Mandisa to be extreme in her ideas about Africa. The vast majority of women placed importance on a sense of shared history, and cultural *similarities*, but they also drew a distinction between having a sense of a connection to Africa and defining oneself as being an African or adopting African practices that you were not brought up with. This was regarded as a form of self-deception that is futile.

I think some people are lying to themselves. I think this whole

going back to Africa... why am I going back to Africa? I just think.... Oh! I don't know! It just breaks my heart to some degree because it's almost as if to say a Black person can only be a certain type of way. If you are truly Black you can only be a certain type of way.(Elizabeth)

Two women referred to Africa as the “Motherland” and Blackness was closely linked to a sense of being part of an African diaspora that also importantly included the Caribbean as an important point of reference. One woman said that having visited both Grenada and Africa she no longer called herself an African as despite many similarities and connections, each location of the African Diaspora had differences and to describe herself as an African would be “to deny other parts of yourself.” The complexity of the ways in which women understood the place of Africa within Black British identities is conveyed clearly here by Njeri when talking about why she considers it important to pass on to her three daughters a strong sense of themselves as Black people, with cultural traditions and history. Like the majority of women studied, Njeri took the view that without knowledge of African Diaspora histories and cultures, Black children in Britain are left vulnerable to distorted eurocentric knowledges which promote a view that Black people and Africa contributed nothing of value to Britain or world civilisation. Moreover, they are left without the resources needed to critique and withstand the proliferation of narrow and/or racist representations of Black people found in the media and popular culture.

I think there's so much change going on nowadays, I'm just trying to give them a certain sort of grounding that, as Black people. It's not even Caribbean, it's as African people. Certain things we do, we've got respect for the family, and, we have a belief in the Creator, in God. Oh ... something about the way people work together. [...] So it's trying to incorporate all those sorts of basic principles in, as well as just make sure they realise that, “You are British”, you know? They are very British. (Njeri)

So far in tracing the genealogy of Black British identity as experienced by the women interviewed, we have travelled to various inner city locations in Britain, the Caribbean, African and the United States and France. We appear to have come full circle in the last woman's words back to Britishness, yet a Britishness that is almost prosaically experienced and interpreted through transnational connections. What we have seen confirms that thinking through the categories of Black British and Caribbean identities cannot be contained within the limits of national borders, yet at the same time are constituted within national identities or *identifications* without necessarily being contained by them. Here thinking through denotes both an experiential and epistemological perspective that deploys the experiences of the women interviewed as a point of entry into a discursive field of subjugated knowledges.

## *Conclusion*

The ways in which these women understand and live *being* Caribbean, Black and British reveals Britishness as itself an increasingly culturally hybrid transnational identity. They also disclose Black Britishness as dislocated, mobile and under-erasure yet nevertheless, located, settled, and perpetually under reconstruction. Cultural hybridity and transnationalism in short are lived realities that do not preclude strong attachments to ethnic, racialised and national identities and places. Black–Caribbean identities in Britain are *under-erasure*, yet also perpetually being re-formulated and multiply *re*-hyphenated through a variety of changing connections to other geographical and identity spaces.

The cultural hybridity and creolising sensibilities of Caribbean British identities confirms notions of Caribbean identities as emblematic of modern identity as unfixed, and Black Atlantic cultures as cultures of flow and movement (Gilroy 1993). Yet, a transnational feminist perspective attends to the dangers of romanticising hybridity in the name of poststructuralist critiques of difference (Kaplan 1994: 146) or post-nationalist critiques of essentialism (Puri 2004: 6). It involves avoiding the temptation to universalise the local in the name of ‘woman’ (Kaplan *op cit*: 149) or conflate mobility with freedom (Probyn 1990: 182). Black Caribbean identities are transnational precisely because they do not simply flow *through* places but they *settle* and become *attached to* and in a number of places all at once. As Robin Cohen has pointed out, the literature by cultural theorist of the Caribbean diaspora has tended not to translate their theoretical sophistication into empirical studies of the lived experience of these cultural formations. As Cohen concludes and this chapter indicates, only by studying the “social behaviour of Caribbean people in their places of sojourn and settlement” (Cohen 1997) can we uncover the evidence of cultural diasporas as *lived experiences*.

The women in this study used a wide range of labels to name their identities and often used more than one. Whilst some were able to very comfortably refer to themselves as Black British, these were the minority and nobody referred to herself simply as British. This suggests that Britishness as a national identity still has connotations of racial exclusivity that requires the addition of ‘Black’ in order to incorporate other kinds of British ethnicities. All of the women used Caribbean-based national identities to speak about their cultural or ethnic background, even if they had been born in the UK.

The category African-Caribbean was not used as a self-referential term by any of the women, although one woman did use it to speak generally about Black people in Britain, though with ambiguity regarding whether it included both African and Caribbean people. In general what became apparent was that for all of the women that referred to the term African-Caribbean, it

was regarded as a state-defined category of ethnic monitoring and therefore, connoting Black people as a specific category of Other-citizens within the British nation. As such the term African-Caribbean appears from this perspective to be part of the state management of race. Yet as a technology of racial governmentality, the term African-Caribbean is highly ambiguous. Its ambiguity arises because it is both a technology of racial subjection and discipline as well as a technology for the conduct of racialised citizenship, defined by state-led equal opportunity policies.

The interviews confirm that Black-British Caribbean identities are still heavily invested in a diaspora consciousness in which overlapping circuits of culture (the Caribbean Diaspora, the African Diaspora; the Black Atlantic) are creolised into local Black identities and cultures within particular national locations and identities. Rather than being *migratory subjects* (Boyce Davies 1994) circulating somewhere in the mid-Atlantic (Gilroy 1993), Black British identities are located, and settled. The poetics of postcoloniality mean that the diverse diaspora locations of Blackness unsettle homogenous representations of both Blackness and the African Diaspora. Secondly, in relation to their places and spaces of settlement, Black British identities also produce *multicultural transruptions* into settled accounts of modern western nations (Hesse 2000a: 2). What this means is that in being settled and therefore invested in the nation, they reflect on the terms (and terminologies) of citizenship to “either question or accept racialised forms of *governmentality*” (Hesse *ibid*).

Women viewed ethnic and racial identity categories as inherently questionable when generated by the state, other public agencies or the market (see chapter seven). Therefore they were viewed negatively or at least ambiguously in terms of their usefulness for the self-defining and self-crafting practices of those so designated. So whilst most women would define themselves as Black this was always just one element in a complex *dynamic* multi-ethnicity. However, the most consistent identity label they defined themselves by was *Black woman*. The next chapter explores how women describe what being a Black woman means to them and the values, experiences and knowledges which they saw as defining Black womanhood and shaping a Black woman’s perspective.

## CHAPTER 4

### INDEPENDENT WOMEN AND THE PARADOXES OF BLACK WOMANHOOD

*My mother brought me up, you know, she ran the show! A strong Black woman, she ran the show. And I grew up with that, thinking that if I didn't do certain things, I'd be failing the Black race, because I wasn't managing ... The Black race, yes! All the Black women who have gone before (Njeri, interviewee)*

*"[A]uthority as conventionally exercised is masculinized, not because men are in authority (and that is an important distinction to emphasize) but because in its origins authority was constructed as authority over women [ ] The idea of women exercising authority, having a right to be legitimate leaders remains deeply traumatizing in the psyche of states, civil institutions, citizens and far too many women" (Barriteau 2003: 26)*

#### ***Introduction***

In the UK Black women have been marginal as producers of theory and as the objects of theoretical analysis. This marginality stands in contrast to certain prevailing representations of Black women both in the family, popular culture and in public life in the UK, particularly in a city like London. Here Black women are highly visible as professionals in most public sector agencies, icons of empowered femininity and style leaders in popular culture. If we take recent media reports at face value, it would appear that Black women – particularly women of Caribbean descent, have been the primary beneficiaries of equal opportunity policies since the nineteen eighties. A number of recent government surveys and statistics<sup>14</sup> appear to show that Black-Caribbean women and girls are doing disproportionately well in some social indicators

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<sup>14</sup> For a comparison of differences between men and women by ethnicity, see, *Ethnic Minorities And The Labour Market – Final Report* (The Cabinet Office Strategy Unit – COSU, March 2003). Also *Ethnicity And Education: the Evidence on Minority Ethnic Pupils*, (DtES 2005), For comparative figures for different groups of women by ethnicity see, *Ethnic Minority Women In The U.K.* (Hibbett 2002); also, *Ethnic Differences In Women's Demographic, Family Characteristics And Economic Activity Profiles 1992 to 2002* (Lindley and Dale 2004).



compared to Black Caribbean men and some other groups of minority ethnic women. After Chinese women Black Caribbean women's hourly income levels are highest of all other groups of women, whereas Black Caribbean men on the other hand, are amongst the lowest (COSU 2003: 15) and most likely along with Bengali and Pakistani men to be unemployed<sup>15</sup>. In addition in 2003, the proportion of Black Caribbean and girls attaining five or more GCSE (grade A\* - C) at 40% compares with only 25% for their male counterparts (DfES 2005: 13). This mirrors the gender achievement gap across Black pupils of other ethnicities.<sup>16</sup> Media reports have highlighted figures that report Black Caribbean women's levels of professional and managerial employment, along with Indian and white women have since 1999, "experienced more rapid progress than others" (COSU op cit: 22).

The media response to these recent figures has been to ask why it is that Black Caribbean women are doing so much better than Black Caribbean men and what are the implications of this gender disparity for Black men's employability and social inclusion in the future? The ways in which recent statistics have been used to paint a picture of Black women's success and Black men's failure obscures the realities that Black women are disproportionately raising children alone, are the most likely of all groups of women to be unemployed and receiving benefits or engaged in full-time work (COSU 2003; Hibbett 2003; Lindley and Dale 2004), with the implications of both of these things in terms poverty, stress or the quality of family life. Like all other categories of women they are earning less than their male counterparts and all earning much less than white men. The attention given to the educational and scholastic success of Black girls relative to Black boys, in expressing bewilderment *and concern for Black males* seems less concerned with the reality that the attainment level of Black girls in terms of achieving five or more A\* - C in GCSE/GNVQs grades, at 40%, falls far short of the 56% national average for girls. Or that this is almost the same as Bangladeshi and Traveller girls, and only surpassed in term of underachievement by Roma girls<sup>17</sup>. This is quite startling given that these three latter groups are considered by educationalists to place a lower priority on the educational attainment of girls, and the latter two to be particularly peripherally connected to the education system (DfES 2005), quite in contrast to the image of powerful aspirational Black women. Is it too cynical to wonder if what this media response in part

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<sup>15</sup> In 2000, unemployment rates for Black Caribbean women were seven percent compared with twenty five percent for Black Caribbean men.(COSU 2003: 15)

<sup>16</sup> Black as defined by the DfES includes the following sub-sets:- White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, Black Caribbean, Black African, Any Other Black (DfES 2005).

<sup>17</sup> The figures are for Travellers of Irish descent and Bengali girls is 39% and Roma girls: 23%.

signals is uneasiness with the reversal of the 'normal' gender gap in which boys and men 'traditionally' excel educationally and professionally above girls and women? Given that boys in all ethnic groups are educationally under-performing girls, is this part of the creeping anxiety about the 'feminisation' of the public sphere. If the problem is as much about apparently anomalous and aberrant gender relations then this might explain why analysis in both the Black and white media has focussed on searching for explanations for this disparity within minority ethnic cultures rather than in the different gendered experiences of Black and minority ethnic girls and boys, women and men within British society. This is not a new approach as a review of earlier sociological debates indicates.

The public discourse of integration and assimilation in the 1960's when it was not about immigration, or crime was centrally about families - and the control of families, which is always about the control of women and children. In the 1960's the focus of concern was the child rearing practices of minority ethnic families, which were viewed as either too punitive (Caribbean) or too 'traditional' (Asian). These were reflected in social services, health and education being the key institutional sites within which minority ethnic women were rendered visible in both British society and the academic literature. Writing in the early 1980s and reviewing literature on Asian women in the 1960 and 1970's Sheila Allen remarked,

"Almost all of the literature assumes that immigrants are male, who produce male children who enter the education system, the labour market or become unemployed or homeless. Women emerge in the literature occasionally as wives, and a little more frequently as mothers; as independent actors they are largely invisible." (Allen 1982: 130)

These fixed visibilities or stereotypes of Asian women, principally as mothers and wives, allowed them visibility only in terms of the problems they presented for Asian men, children and the state. (Allen op cit: 131). This is so similar to the mode of stereotypical categorisation applied to Black Caribbean women that one can only conclude that ethnic minority immigrant women were very rapidly positioned in a "racial ordering" that focused attention only on those features in their lives considered salient to the problems they are perceived to present to the state (ibid)

The recent debates concerning education and ethnicity are not new either. They go back at least to the 1980's (Mirza 1992: 15). Then as now explanations sought to link Black Caribbean girls' educational achievement to the central and strong position of women in the Black Caribbean family (ibid). These perspectives on the Black Caribbean family have tended to rely on a model of Black families as matriarchal and a set of beliefs about gender that view matriarchy as at least aberrant if not pathological. This introduces a paradox into evaluations of

matriarchy. For even if matriarchy offers girls positive female role models, which in turn help Black girls' educational achievement (a good thing), it is regarded as also the cause of Black male *underachievement* (a bad thing) because of the lack of a male authority figure or positive a role model within the home (Mirza op cit: 16).

Across these two areas of social policy a tripartite structure of racial representation emerges. Firstly it locates and defines Black and Asian women in terms of the domestic sphere - marriage and motherhood (gendered ordering); it then ethnicises the domestic sphere by attaching it to culture as ethnicity (ethnic ordering). However, since ethnicity often stands in as a cultural code for race and race is already constituted as an alien problem imported into the nation on the bodies of racialised groups, this then generates a third level of closed signification in which woman, ethnicity and race connote difference and pathology at all levels (gendered racialised ethnic ordering). In the analyses of Black and Asian women's lives in Britain this has contributed to the prolonged failure to address the structural factors in the wider society which bear on black women's lives differently to those of black men. It also renders the inner lives and cultural practices of minority ethnic women invisible. Defending themselves and black families against these assaults has for a long time also inhibited minority ethnic women from going public about the sexism within their own homes and communities (Sudbury 1998: 66).

Focusing on Black Caribbean cultures, since the 1980's, there has been a move away from the deficit model of Black cultural life and more attention to identity and cultural resistance. However, such work has reproduced a largely gender-blind approach to Black cultural politics in which the marginalisation of Black women's experiences has if anything been intensified. Subcultural theory, which for a long time was a primary paradigm for analysing Black cultural life persistently focused on the experiences of young Black males (Cashmore 1979; Cohen 1972; Hebdige 1976; 1979; 1987). This mirrored a masculine gender-blindness within subcultural theory generally (McRobbie 1980; Pini 2001). Meanwhile, theoretical discussions of race and racism, similarly reproduced the old conflation of race with men's experiences (Gilroy 1987). Even, feminist studies of girls and women's participation in youth cultures and club cultures have overwhelmingly ignored issues of race and racism and the subcultural practices of minority ethnic girls (McRobbie 1981; 1991; 1994; Pini 2001; Thornton 1995). This in effect has marginalised Black girls and women, and conflated race and Black identity with the experience of Black men (Mirza: 1992: 20) and gender with the experiences of white girls and women.

Where gender has been raised within British critical race theory, it has often taken as its focus Black masculinities as a way largely of contesting the authoritarian and essentialist forms of

nationalism and identity (Gilroy 1988; 2000) that are often associated with them. For example in *Small Acts* Paul Gilroy (1988) raised the important issue of how the contemporary crises of Black social and political life were being “exclusively represented as the crisis of Black masculinity” (Gilroy op cit: 205). This was important in opening up room for debate concerning the way in which a range of Black political and cultural movements advocate ‘empowering the Black man’ as a way of re-invigorating what some see as the Black man’s lost authority and status as head of the home and ultimately leader of the nation. This masculinist strand within Black nationalist discourses has a long history going back to the Abolitionist texts of Frederick Douglass (1855) in the nineteenth century, the Black nationalism of Marcus Garvey and the Civil Rights movement of the nineteen sixties (Bond and Peery 1970).

In Britain, outside of the field of poetry and literature, it has largely, though not exclusively, been left to Black feminist academics (Amos and Pratibha 1984; Bhavnani and Phoenix 1995; Boyce Davies 1994; Brah 1997; Lewis 2000; Mirza 1992; Sudbury 1998; Young 2001) to give visibility to the cultural lives and perspectives of Asian, African, Caribbean and other minority ethnic women of colour. Outside of this work, we struggle to find, studies that pay close attention to the cultural and self-constituting practices of diverse Black women and their struggles to shift the ground of Black cultural politics and theorising to include women and the intersections between gender, sex and racism.

It may be that this sorry situation reflects not only the inferior status of women in society, but also the marginal status of Black women within Britain’s universities. Where Black and ethnic minority women came into view in public discourses of race and gender, it is invariably to highlight the anomalous status of ethnic minority gender relations (too permissive in Black-Caribbean cultures and too oppressive in Asian cultures). From this a variety of perceived ‘social problems’ experienced by specific minority ethnic populations can be explained in terms of maladapted cultural lifestyles and inadequate families. In relation to Black Caribbean populations, lone parenthood, family and child poverty, educational under-achievement and high male unemployment rates can be variously ‘blamed’ on the failure of these dysfunctional family patterns and gender relations to adequately prepare Black young girls and boys for entry into society.

The discourse of Black family pathology in the UK has altered only slightly in the past twenty-five years (Lawrence 1982). However, the old model of Black family pathology based on a view of Black women as either down-trodden victims of Black men or feckless welfare mothers has either given way to or been supplemented by a new model of Black family pathology. This asserts that excessively independent and aspirational Black women are losing

in 'a battle to raise their sons.' Black men are still largely represented as mainly absent from Black family life. However, rather than seeing this simply as a result of an irresponsible and promiscuous masculinity as in the past, this is being supplemented by a view that says that Black boys and men are victims too, victims of Black women's social empowerment. I want to suggest that what we are seeing is the importation into British social policy discourse of the latest versions of the Caribbean 'marginalisation thesis' of Black gender relations and family life

### ***The Marginalisation Thesis: Black Women in Power and Black Men In Crisis?***

The marginalisation thesis asserts that Caribbean women's economic and social autonomy and advancement has occurred at the expense of Caribbean men's familial marginalisation and social disadvantage. The marginalisation thesis is accredited to Errol Miller's *The Marginalisation of the Black Male: Insights from the Development of the Teaching Profession* and subsequently elaborated and further conceptually defined in *Men At Risk* (1991). Anita Reddock presents a summary of Miller's thesis in which she acknowledges that the idea of marginality first emerged in the colonial period of the 1950's in discussions of the traditional matrilineal traditions of Caribbean families (Reddock: 2003: 94)

Analysing contemporary Caribbean society Miller argued that in colonial and postcolonial Caribbean societies, education has been a primary institution reproducing Black male marginalisation.. His argument is that the erstwhile white colonial establishment sought to constrain Black men's social mobility and access to power and thereby stifle Black male militancy. Miller argued that the colonial authorities achieved this by using Black women as teachers to replace the old mission-based school system which was suspected of fuelling Black male militancy for greater political rights. Miller argues that teaching became a female dominated profession as a deliberate strategy of the colonial system to concede a degree of social advantage to Blacks as a whole, whilst denying Black men in particular. In other words, "the Black woman was used against the Black man.... An accessory after the fact" (Miller quoted in Reddock op cit: 95).

In short Miller argues that Caribbean slave and post-emancipation colonial societies were *white patriarchies* in which Black men were denied access to a share of patriarchal power through slavery and colonial domination. Patriarchs, he argued, "have always treated alien men as potential if not active enemies; this antagonistic relationship with alien men can be neutralised through patronage clientship or vassalage or conquest and subordination" (Miller quoted in Reddock op cit: 96). Miller continues in this vein saying that since independence from Britain, dominant groups of Caribbean men continue to delimit the power of subordinate

men through allowing the advancement of women of both the dominant and subordinate groups. We can summarise Miller's thesis as inferring that in a liberal democratic state, dominant men can use gender equality as a ruse or political technology in order to keep subordinate groups of men in check. The three key sites in which Black women's alleged autonomy and power are said to result in Caribbean men's disempowerment are education, the family, and employment (Lindsey 2002: 56).

Despite being subjected to considerable academic challenge the marginalisation thesis has continued to have currency in both popular and official discourses in the Caribbean. For example, Keisha Lindsley challenged Miller's thesis on the grounds that it: - conflates female headship of households with social power, regards women's advancement solely as the passive effect of actions by men; positions women as pawns in male conflict and reduces women's experience to mere by-products of male history (Reddock 2003).

A striking feature of the marginalisation thesis is both its longevity, having surfaced in the nineteen fifties, and its transnationalism. These ideas about Black families and Black masculinities and femininities have ebbed and flowed within academic and popular writing on all sides of the Black Atlantic in the Caribbean, the USA and Britain. In Britain the Black educationalist and columnist Tony Sewell (1996; 2005) has in the past been a key player in the popularisation of the thesis that Black masculinity in Britain is in crisis and a good deal of this crisis is due to macho working class representations of Black masculinity in popular culture and the marginalisation and disempowerment of Black men by Black women's autonomy and the matrifocal family. Why should it be that the marginalisation thesis has been able to enter British official and Black popular discourses so freely?

In order to understand the attractiveness of the marginalisation thesis in its transnational journey around the American, Caribbean, and European ports of the African Diaspora we need to consider the social and political context in which its entry visa gets stamped. The male marginalisation thesis re-emerged in the Caribbean over the past twenty years hand in hand with of the rise of Masculinity Studies and the Men's Movement. The Men's Movement in the Caribbean and in the African Diaspora more widely spans a wide perspective from pro-feminism to "an antagonistic" men's rights perspective (Reddock 2003: 91). Yet across its internal differences, Reddock argues that the strongest drive influencing the emergence of the men's movement and academic Masculinity Studies has been a reactive response, or backlash against the negative representation of Black men and fathers in the Caribbean media in the 1980's and 1990's and challenges to traditional idea of Caribbean gender relations by Caribbean feminists.

Similarly, in the UK the marginalisation thesis has emerged in response, I want to argue to two primary factors. The first is the apparent disproportionate ‘success’ of Black women relative to Black men. In Black communities there has for at least the past ten years been a growing popular discourse of Black female success in which Black women regardless of their marital and parental status are seen to be in higher status and salaried jobs particularly in the public sector becoming more socially mobile *and therefore* becoming less dependant upon Black men economically and socially. This has contributed to a popular image of ‘the independent Black woman’ who is not only a single mother but also if not a professional at least in a reliable white-collar employment and economically comfortable.

The second has been the apparent confirmation of this popular narrative by figures emerging since 2003, from a number of UK government statistics. As the discussion at the start of this chapter indicated, this often distorts the actual findings of these social surveys. So for example whilst surveys support the idea that Black women are very heavily represented in public sector employment<sup>18</sup>, and rates of unemployment amongst Black Caribbean men are twice those of Black Caribbean women and three times those of white men (ibid). The idea of Black women’s disproportionate success as is a myth. An intriguingly different picture emerges, if we examine the figures on those *in work*. The Labour Force Survey of 2002 (Hibbett op cit: 8) indicated that whilst Black Caribbean women were the most likely of all women to be single parents they are also most likely to be in full-time employment (Hibbett op ibid). Yet, whilst Black men have much higher unemployment rates than both Caribbean women and white men, those Black men (both African and Caribbean) who manage to be in work, in real terms earn more than Black women per hour and a significantly greater proportion of them have higher managerial and professional positions than Black women<sup>19</sup>. This picture of an elite of high achieving Black men though small still represents a larger proportion of the Black male population than the number of high achieving Black women do the Black female population. Surely it would make more sense to investigate what has enabled that group of Black men to do so much better than other Black men than to ask why Black Caribbean women are ‘doing better’ than Black men.

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<sup>18</sup> This last point is supported by workforce statistics which show that a massive approximately forty percent sampled Black women of all ethnicities worked in the public sector (Hibbett 2002: 7)

<sup>19</sup> The Labour Workforce Survey of Spring 2002 based upon a survey population of 2,543,000 in managerial and professional employment, found that less than 10,000 were Black women (their base rate) compared with an average of sixteen and a half thousand Black men Hibbett op cit: 12).

Writing in the context of the Caribbean region, Keisha Lindsey in *Is the Caribbean Male an Endangered Species* (Lindsay 2002) sums up the marginalisation thesis as one in which Caribbean gender relations are locked in a paradigm of “demonised woman/victimised man.” (Lindsay op cit: 74). However, it might be better to think of the paradigm as one in which the positions that men and women occupy change but the structure and narrative of the representation remains in place: perpetual antagonism in Black gender relations producing dysfunctional relationships and woman-headed households. This chapter draws on the findings of my research to argue that underlying these explanations are hegemonic assumptions about gender, power and authority, which the experience of Black women threatens to denaturalise and expose as myth.

Rather than starting out, as the marginalisation thesis does, with the assumption that female autonomy and leadership in the home and in public are problematic, this chapter examines the meaning and significance of autonomy and self-determination offered by the women interviewed. It starts by asking whether the idea of ‘the independent Black woman’ has any meaning for them, and if so what and how it is realised? In exploring both the idea of independence and the idea of ‘Black woman’ what is revealed is how individual subjectivities and shared but inconsistent identifications with an imaginary of the strong Black women is lived and interpreted through the idea and ideal of independence.

### ***Defining Selfhood: The Meaning of Independent Womanhood***

The figure and ideal of the independent Black women has a great deal of currency within African Diaspora cultures. The absence, presence, or merits of female independence is an on-going topic of debates, jokes, or concern. This proliferation of references to Black women’s independence invites an investigation into its significance as both idea and experience for Black Caribbean women in the UK. The specific questions posed interviewees included: What does being independent mean? Is the idea of Black women’s independence a myth or reality? Would they define themselves as an independent woman? What are the advantages and disadvantages of being independent or being expected to be independent?

All of the women interviewed when asked if the term ‘independent Black woman’ had any meaning for them or reality replied that it did and all spoke of the idea and the experience of independence in ways that confirm it as a central value and goal shaping the formation of their ideas of female virtue and Black womanhood. Independence could denote a number of things but was always intricately and exquisitely inscribed in gendered conceptions and experiences of racialisation. Thus the idea of independence was inextricably bound up with being a women and being a Black woman. As one woman said when asked whether she would



describe herself as Black woman replied, “I am a Black woman. Independent Black woman. Carole.”

When asked to define an independent woman two over-arching distinctions emerged, with one being more prevalent than the other. More commonly, independence denoted autonomy, as self-determination. It encompassed being able to make decisions for yourself and more centrally to think for oneself, rather than autonomy as the expression of isolated individualism. The second meaning of independence was often connected to the first but women repeatedly drew a distinction between them. This denoted material and economic independence and the ability to cope, to do what needs to be done to survive.

*For me, being an independent person is this. Being able to stand in the bigness of who you are and being comfortable with that. And when you can do that, then it means that nobody else can shape or frame your identity for you, that you have a sense of who that is, and understanding how that impacts on others. So, for instance, while I may want you to like me and have a friendly interaction with you, I can survive without it. [...] While I may want the bigger house, I can survive without it. So, in my life, I don't have anything which you can hold against, that you can take from me ... that is going to make me do what I don't want to do. I'm happy with little, I'm happy with a lot. I think that's, that, for me, is what it is about. (Janet)*

Several respondents placed great emphasis on “independent mindedness” as an important value. This independent-mindedness was sometimes defined in terms of not allowing one's ideas and thinking to be controlled by an external authority. Most usually this authority was figured as male, in the form of fathers, brothers and lovers, but also racially in the marking out of these men as Black men or white men. When expanded to include white men it usually also connoted the societal and institutional power of white men as line managers, policemen, politicians and the like. In this sense self-determination was a form of resistance to a blind acceptance of authority. So a key dimension of independence *for a woman* was defined as freedom from being forced to submit to male authority as a result of being so economically, emotionally, or sexually dependent on a man, one cannot walk away or say no.

*This sense of independence – my mum always drummed it into my head ‘don't depend on no man. Don't depend on no man. Don't make nobody control your mind. So I thought for myself, I can speak for myself and say that that has shaped the way that I am. (Linette)*

Maintaining this independence places a responsibility upon Black women, regardless of their marital or parental status to be able to manage the demands of living life as a woman (usually linked to motherhood), to be able to support one's family survive and prosper.

Independent woman? Well what does that mean? Well you just get on and you do what you have to do," [ ] ... that's partly because I have no choice.... [P]eople regard me as an independent Black woman, *however* they perceive that. I regard myself as somebody doing what I have to do to make a particular lifestyle harmony for myself and my children."  
(Mandisa)

These two ethical dimensions of independence; self-determination and survivalism reappeared time and time again in interviews. What became apparent were the contradictory and ambivalent attachments these two notions of independence have to a range of other ideas and experiences to do with motherhood, marriage and work. Therefore I will present the analysis of the data under those themes together. As the last two quotes indicated, discussions of independence very quickly invoked the theme of motherhood such that it became difficult to prise apart ideas of Black womanhood from ideas of Black motherhood. However, as we shall see later it would be a mistake to simply conclude that their prevailing conceptions of Black womanhood are based entirely on her reproductive and mothering capacities.

The women interviewed were acutely aware of the paradoxical nature of the two dimensions of independence – as an ideal or aspiration and as an experience that was not necessarily freely chosen. Angela who described independence as a “Catch 22” best illustrates this. On the one hand autonomy was associated with a strong ethic of survivalism and determination to not be beaten by circumstances or obstacles - particularly lone-motherhood, which many women regarded as a high risk or possibility for Black women, regardless of their class or educational status. Angela spoke of her mother a medical doctor who balanced her career and mothering roles after her husband “abandoned” her with two children. Although Angela realised that this was not a unique or natural attribute of Black women, Angela did regard this capacity to balance one's public role as worker with ones domestic role as mother and carry on achieving one's personal ambitions in both roles as a specifically Black woman's *tradition*. For Angela the tradition of the strong Black woman/mother was one that she valued as a source of confidence in her own resilience and fortitude.

My mother was a professional, she had to work, and I didn't have a father figure, so I just thought, “Well, if my father ... (excuse the language) ... fucks off, and it's the women who have to, you know, do the dirty work. Well I can do that as well. I can do both.” So if I, you know, push comes to shove, and I don't have my husband any more, I can sustain myself. I

can do it, because I have that tradition of a strong Black woman behind me..... And it's not [one] kind of Black ... it's *any* kind of Black woman. It's not just a Haitian, or a French Black woman, or American... (Angela)

Independence appears to be entangled in ideas about motherhood and marital status in ways that seem to place motherhood rather than marriage as the principle variable impacting independence. In other words independence did not necessarily imply remaining single i.e. *man-less*; but rather retaining sovereignty over oneself and ones children within a partnership, i.e. *man-free*. At the same time choosing to be child-free was a much more radical move it seems and one which marks a notion of independence that seems to subvert the cult of motherhood and position Black women differently in relation to motherwork. In the following two extracts Elizabeth implies a differentiation between different kinds of female independence. In the first it is the quality of being autonomous as an individual (rather than as a mother) being both *man-free* and *childfree* (rather than *childless*) that marks an attitude of independence from hegemonic Black feminine subjectivities.

So I think it [independence] is about women, say somebody like my aunt who is not married whose just turned forty having her own home and even making the decision you don't necessarily have to have kids, or a lot of these women haven't got children as well. They're independent they can stand on their own two feet; they can go on holiday on their own and still feel good about that level of assertiveness because they have really decided who they are and where they want to be and sometimes that *does* mean foregoing some of the things that people naturally say you should have – like a man and children and family and whatever. (Elizabeth)

Elizabeth then immediately went onto give the example of another family member who she likewise regarded as independent but on a very different basis;

I think Black women have been independent. You can still have a family – like I am thinking of my sister who is no longer with her partner - very very independent. Because you have to be independent and I think that is a theme that has been going for a very long time. If you think about it some women came over without their men to England and then the children came, or the men came over and they had to be self-sufficient back home. So I think it's been a really really strong thing really. (Elizabeth)

This is a very important distinction because each potentially envisions a different conception of the person and of freedom. The first invokes autonomous unfettered individualism in which a woman's personhood is invested in her own subjectivity or sovereignty. The Other invokes a

communicative inter-subjectivity in which the self is constituted in relation to an Other, rather than opposition to Others. These conception of personhood and freedom have been variously described in terms of an ethic of care (Gilligan 1982), a maternal ethic (Willett 1995: 100), maternal thinking (Ruddick 1980). All articulate a female conception of morality, based on a non-essentialist understanding that gendered experiences (rather than gendered bodies or mental structures), produce particular values and knowledges. An ethic of care, can be defined as a female morality that is

[c]entred around the terms of care and sympathy. From the perspective of the: female self” whose development occurs along with the experience of solidarity and identification, the individual person exists only within and on the basis of a web of social relationships. She views others therefore not primarily as restrictions, but as conditions of the possibility of her existence. This means that society consists not of individual people, but of relationships, and that is held together by human connections and not through a system of rules (Maihofer 2000: 384)

### ***Motherhood, Motherwork and Working Mothers***

Many women were very conscious of having acquired values associated with being a strong Black woman from their mothers. It was striking how quickly and often mothers and motherhood were introduced into interviewees’ narratives of independence. Mothers and other women kinfolk in a mothering relationship to one, appear to be important variables shaping and influencing individual and shared ideas about independent Black womanhood. Independence in motherhood could refer to being a woman bringing children up on your own, or in a partnership. The key aspects of independence were therefore invested in self-determination and not being so dependent on another person, that if they withdraw their support you would be unable to carry on as an effective mother. Effective motherhood involved taking care at least of the basic survival needs of children, which included primarily providing food, clothing, shelter and security. The following quote represents a typical view expressed that mothers, being mindful of the unreliability or at least variability in male economic and emotional support carefully inculcate in daughters and girl children an expectation that they should become emotionally, physically, and mentally independent. Linette recounts receiving clear messages about this as she grew up.

This thing about not depending on nobody. “Make sure you don’t have to depend on nobody, because you have to be a strong woman. You have to be strong when you’re a mother.” When I became a mother I heard it more and more. You’ve got to be strong. You’ve got to look after yourself, you’ve got to

look after your child and you have to protect them from all kinds of stuff. (Linette)

The connection between being independent, strong and mothering was uniform across all of the interviews. All of the women interviewed could trace their internalisation of these values of being strong and independent to significant female relatives. Most commonly it was mothers and grandmothers, who the women identified as having ‘trained’ them into these ideas, but aunts, older cousins and other female kin were also important socialisers of girls. The possibility of single-parenthood and just the burden of *Black motherhood* it seems means that mothers feel the need to “push” their daughters to “strive” as Carole put it

I think we as parents tend to bring up our children equally, but as a Black mother and foster carer I do tend to feel that you are more protective of your girl children and you will push them because of the preconceived idea that if they become mothers, they’d have to (seventy-five percent of the time) bring up the children on their own. Therefore they have to strive. (Carole)

This mirrors Alissa Trotz’s findings in her research amongst Afro-Guyanese women in Guyana, where motherhood and employment are not viewed by women as mutually exclusive; “on the contrary, participation in income-earning activities was an inextricable aspect of women’s mothering obligations. Employment was also singled out as one way of ensuring access to an independent source of income. Linked to an awareness of male dominance it was identified as a critical means of achieving more egalitarian gender relations in the home” (Trotz 2002: 263)

Women who had been raised in the Caribbean spoke of the powerful influence and example of grandmothers who may have raised their children alone because their men had travelled away for short or long periods seeking work in the town, on other islands, or in South America, the USA, or Britain. Then in their middle and old age these same women were then left again raising grandchildren on behalf of daughters and sometimes sons who had in turn similarly emigrated in pursuit of employment or ‘a better life’.

These practices support the criticisms made by Black feminists (Hill Collins 1994; Rowley 2002; 2003; Wallace 1978), of some of the prevailing assumptions of Euro-American feminism regarding the family, work and gender. An important aspect of these challenges has been to question feminist agendas around motherhood and the family, which have tended to see women’s reproductive and mothering roles as a central locus of women’s oppression. Against this view, Black feminists have argued that in the Americas the family, mothering and caring have been important sites of African Diaspora women’s cultural and social agency through which they have mobilised resistance to racism *and* sexism (Hill Collins 1990; 1994;

Scafe and Dadzie; Sudbury 1998). The experience of Black women and women of colour has been used to disaggregate the feminist problematic of mothering, family and the home as key sites in which women's inequality and marginalisation from power are reproduced.

The interviewees overwhelmingly expressed an enduring sense of the continuity of Black women's lives and history of struggle *as Black women*. This consciousness of a Black woman's tradition of struggle and survival was viewed as a source of inspiration and strength. Many saw themselves as embodying this tradition in how they lived their lives. However, one respondent Evelyn felt that women in Britain had become corrupted by consumerism and western values and consequently were losing these capacities and qualities.

I am used to seeing this strength from being born in the Caribbean and I am used to seeing them there so *strong* all the time *regardless of come what may*. And you know especially if the husband gone away. You know, probably gone to foreign [abroad], probably come here, or gone to America or wherever, working in the town or wherever. And they are there coping with everything and *they manage*. *They deal with it*. It's not like here. And this is what I am used to. I was bent and moulded one way and what I see here, I don't like it.  
(Evelyn)

Evelyn aged forty eight and raised in Jamaica, had no children by choice, because she had never married and she believed strongly in ideas of marriage and respectability (*see the next chapter*) Staying single had also been by choice, as despite having had long relationships with white partners she wanted to marry a Black man, but had never found one she felt she could respect enough to marry. Evelyn spoke with the most commitment to the ideal of the strong independent Black woman. As the previous quote shows, the figure of the strong Black mother was central to her understanding of the strong Black women's subjectivity. So much so that she said she hated to see women of her mother's generation cry. She would prefer to see a man cry, because Black women "are supposed to be the rod. They are the strength. No! Oh God! Oh Jesus, I freak! Yes I would feel my world is crumbling because they are not supposed to cry."

However, this ideal of the Black superwoman has been challenged by many Black feminist writers (Wallace 1978; Hill Collins 1994) because, they argue, it produces a moral injunction against Black women showing vulnerability, legitimises Black male irresponsibility and silences Black women from speaking out against misogyny and violence within Black communities. Rather than seeing the Black superwoman ideal as myth the majority of interviewees described it as a *tradition* of the strong Black woman. This suggests that the

figure of the Black superwoman remains an active, normative, hegemonic and *governing* discourse of virtuous Black womanhood.

How else can we interpret EG's description of herself: "I don't have any children but let's just say I played the mother role because from the time I was nine I was *qualified*. I would do anything, I cook anything, I'd do anything the house" (Italics added). In this account, competence in what are designated maternal tasks is the qualifications for womanhood not actual biological motherhood. This seems to disrupt the idea that mothering is tied to biological motherhood. In foregrounding a maternal ontology for the strong Black woman, Evelyn who remember is not a biological mother implied that mothering is both a learned set of skills (rather traditionally defined in terms of a range of practical domestic skills), values, associated with caring for and with others and an acquired identity routed in these roles and a certain psychological disposition of determination and survivalism.

This suggests that family and motherhood may signify quite different things to Black women than they do to many Black men and for that matter white feminists. Furthermore, that contrary to Black Nationalist attempts to reconstruct the family in a patriarchal mode, Black women may deploy the trope of family in pursuit of very different notions of freedom. For example, Heidi Mirza found in her study of Black mature students, that motherhood, rather than confining women to the home, often propelled women, by necessity or inspiration out of the home and into education and training in pursuit of both an independent income and as a way of being a role model to their own children (Mirza 1992). This reaffirms the importance of avoiding simply transposing Euro-American feminist critiques of motherhood universally (Glenn op cit: 5) and of paying attention to the cultural context and material conditions under which mothering is carried out (Hill-Collins 1994: 45)

The poetics of mothering that emerges from the interviews are encapsulated in Patricia Hill Collin's concept of "motherwork" (Hill Collins 1994: 48). The concept of motherwork provides a way of centring racialised ethnic women's experiences of mothering and the family and making them available for the epistemological work of expanding, decolonising and rewriting feminist knowledge from the perspective of a wider range of women (ibid). The concept of motherwork is useful because it both distinguishes and encapsulates motherhood and mothering, without reducing the latter to the former. Hill Collins says that there are three aspects to motherwork: - (i) working for the physical and cultural survival of children and the community; (ii) negotiating the dialectic of power and powerlessness, and (iii) identity work

involving self-definitional work constructing individual and collective identities. (Hill Collins op cit: 49). This raises a question, that is central to this discussion and which was been raised by the debates within feminism in the 1980's over *maternal ethics*<sup>20</sup>. That is, to what extent might a non-essentialist concept of motherwork, in not tying maternal competencies to biological motherhood also enable us to dismantle motherwork from women, making it available as a set of practices, dispositions and ethics useful to men as well? I shall return to address this question at the end of this chapter.

Evelyn's ideas of the indomitable strong Black mother were heavily critiqued by the majority of other women. Although they viewed mothering as a source of Black women's authority and power, the majority questioned the ways in which motherwork could paradoxically become a source of oppression and a burden for Black women. Njeri married with two children questioned the idea that Black women

... don't need nobody. We can take the whole world on our shoulders, and inside you're just, like, kind of falling apart. I think, in a way, it has served us, but in a way it hasn't served us, because we tend to, like, ignore our own needs. "We're strong Black women doing our thing out there", [but] we forget we still need to nurture ourselves, we still need to make time for us. That it's okay to cry, yes. But, like, "strong women don't cry." "Strong women get up at six, the crack of the dawn, and go to work, come home, *do* ..." You know what I mean? My mother brought me up, you know, she ran the show! A strong Black woman, she ran the show. And I grew up with that, thinking that if I didn't do certain things, I'd be failing the Black race, because I wasn't managing ... The Black race, yes! All the Black women who have gone before and who've all done it. You know, "We've all struggled and raised our children, and juggled and struggled." This word "struggled." I don't want any more struggle. They struggled so that we don't have to struggle. And, like, for me, I'm struggling now, doing certain things, [so] that my children don't have to struggle. They'll have other struggles, yeah. But, like, what is so great about struggling, anyway? (Njeri)

What we can see is recognition of the complexity of the relations of power and powerlessness in which the "motherwork" of all women is structured. This reflects the "double paradox" of gender relations (Momsen 2002: 45), in Caribbean cultures and societies, where women's power in the home exists in cultural and social contexts that variously and unevenly privilege masculinity and male power whilst erasing, debasing or demonising women's power. The

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<sup>20</sup> For an overview of this debate see, Andrea Maihofer (2000) 'Care' in *A Companion To Feminist Philosophy*. Oxford: Blackwell.



apparent social autonomy of women in the Caribbean often signified by single-headed households, particularly amongst the poor and lower middle-classes is often to varying degrees strongly constrained by what Momsen calls the “patriarchy in absentia” (Momsen 2002: 48) of Caribbean societies. In other words, matrilineal and matrifocal household arrangements exist within a social context where despite the regional diversity of class, language, religion and ethnicity within the Caribbean “there is an ideological unity of patriarchy, of female subordination and dependence” (Momsen 2002: 45). This produces Caribbean gender relations *in the Caribbean*, as a double paradox (ibid) where women’s personal autonomy, signified by being heads of households and having an independent income, coexists with domestic and state patriarchy (ibid). Although Momsen historicises the development of patriarchal ideology in the Caribbean, linking it to the post-emancipation reconstruction of Caribbean societies in the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries (discussed in chapter five), she too quickly incorporates the uneven attachments of different classes and groups of Caribbean men a single ideology of pan-Caribbean patriarchy. In the next chapter I explain why I disagree with this.

In recognition of the fact that patriarchy assumes that women’s central role in the family as mothers, is reproduced in wider ideological and institutional structures of power in society, the term patriarchy has been abandoned by Caribbean ethnographers and sociologists. The terms matrifocality and matrilineality better express the centrality of women within the kinship network and household without assuming her ideological and institutional empowerment in the broader culture and societies of the Caribbean (Rowley 2002). This paradox of women being central in the home but marginal culturally and institutionally in wider society is it seems scarcely contradicted by the experience of Caribbean people in the U.K. All of the women I interviewed were in professional and managerial posts. For the two who were not, one was a graduate but not available for work due to ill-health and the other was a basic grade white-collar worker. An equal number were single as were married or cohabiting in heterosexual relationships. Whilst sixty percent had children under sixteen, only twenty percent of these were single. In this respect they were not typical of the working class Black Caribbean population in Britain. I have not been able to find out if this reflects the general picture of professional Black women. Only two had partners who were not Black and it would have been useful to have enquired into the professional and income status their partners given the issues that have arisen in the course of this analysis. Despite these omissions the next section discusses the women’s attitudes to marriage. My interview schedule did not pursue any questions concerning marriage (apart from asking about marital status). Again I now think this was an over-sight and a reflection of my own disregard of the significance of marriage in the self-perceptions of many British Black Caribbean women.

## *Marriage and Family Households*

The pattern of large networks of female kin who provided practical support as well as male kin upon whom women could rely, for economic, sexual and emotional input (Holt 1992: 171) has been a feature of Caribbean peasant and working class families both prior to and since the abolition of slavery in the British Caribbean in 1834. Therefore the meaning of family life and gender relations for Caribbean peoples cannot simply be deduced from studying household arrangements (Holt op cit: 170). Despite the persistence of matrifocality and matrilocality in Black Caribbean cultures, there is great diversity in household structures and family relationships across time, from family to family (Holt *ibid*), and in the different locations of the Caribbean Diaspora. Matrilocal woman-headed households can cover, households where unpartnered women bring up children on their own, multi-generational households of married, cohabiting or single kin and their children; a single mother and her children who sustains a long term, stable and often life-long relationship with a non-resident partner who may or may not be the father of the children; what is termed a 'visiting relationship' by Caribbean ethnographers, through to a collection of woman-headed households connected through largely female kin and friendship-based extended family networks of mutual support (Hodge 2002; 478). It is this culture of female authority and or autonomy within a variety of household arrangements, as well as an investment in the ideal of marriage and respectability, that informs the cultures of marriage, home and family that Caribbean women brought with them to the UK after 1948 and which they had to adapt to the new cultural and economic conditions they found here (*see chapter 6*).

The impact of migration has meant that families are dispersed in many parts of the world. For the first generation of migrant women workers in the 1950's and 1960's, this meant that the intergenerational support of grandmothers and older kin relatives was unavailable, although intra-generational support of sisters and brothers and cousins helped to retain the importance of the extended family. Therefore the culture of the extended family has been unevenly passed on in the next generation in the UK and is largely dependant on the individual migration patterns within families. In addition the transition from mostly rural to urban living that migration involved, together with the kinds of housing and work available in cities and finally the hegemonic status of the nuclear family in Britain have all contributed to a diminution in the levels of contact and day-to-day mutual support that a mother could be afforded by networks of extended female *and male* kin.

The way I see the community at the moment, one of the big things I've noticed is, when I was growing up I think the family links in the community were really really used; they were important. The extended family was important and I think it's becoming less and less, and I've seen more and more stress in the community. And I think it's because the support systems are going. People like my dad they have come and "Whoa! Goodbye. I've done my bit. Goodbye now." So people are going. So those support systems are going. People are doing their own thing, "Well I'm just too posh now for all of you. I'll see you around Christmas time." "No I don't wanna look after your kids." The family closeness I think is really really going. (Elizabeth)

The continuing prevalence of remaining unmarried, with or without children is supported by U.K. government studies which show that Black Caribbean women are three times more likely to be unpartnered (neither married nor cohabiting) than white women. Also their rates of marriage are half that of white women and a third less than African women (Lindley and Dale: 2004: 158). Women who defined themselves as Black Caribbean have similar cohabitation rates as white women (seven and eight percent respectively) but are almost twice as likely as African women to cohabit (ibid). Of course these figures cannot tell us whether these women are still engaging in the Caribbean practice of long-lasting non-resident "visiting" partnerships or a series of (hetero or homosexual) lovers who may have differing levels of long or short-term investment and commitment to a woman's household as well as the woman herself. On this basis it seemed pertinent to ask the women interviewed where they got emotional support.

All spoke of networks of female friends and colleagues rather than relatives as their main sources of support both personally and/or professionally. This seems to support the general view expressed by several women that the extended family had become less significant. Yet women were also able to talk about the retention of different kinds of connections and contacts with extended family living at a distance either in other parts of Britain, in the USA, Canada and the Caribbean. Thus extended familial emotional attachments remained important and were incorporated into family life through phone calls, emails, financial remittances 'back home', letters and during school vacations children being sent to stay with grandparents in places as far apart as Manchester and Barbados or grandparents in the Caribbean coming to London to care for grandchildren; and let us not forget family visits for holidays, weddings, family sickness, funerals and reunions. Since so little work has been done on investigating the *meaning* and *practices* of family, marriage and work for Black women, it is impossible to say how these family arrangements has impacted the culture of Black Caribbean family life in the U.K. and with it Black-Caribbean women's mothering capacities or *the* capacity of the wider networks of male kin to assist sisters, cousins, aunts daughters etc in raising their children.

For most of the women I interviewed being married or in a cohabiting situation, was not necessarily viewed an unalloyed desirable state. It was the *quality* of relationship and the extent to which one could retain self-determination whilst being supported in the pursuit of ones ambitions and being able to reciprocate that with an equally independent minded man that seemed more significant than the institution of marriage.

The significance of marriage or cohabitation, for the majority of women I interviewed was clearly secondary to a commitment to retaining self-determination and avoiding personal dependency. A willingness to endure material hardship in the defence of self-determination for oneself as a woman and mother was seen to mark Black women out from other groups of women. The interviewees' responses implied that they considered Black women to be free from the constraints of the cultural expectation of female submission to masculine power that many believed limited other groups of women from leaving unhappy relationships. Consequently, this was considered to empower Black Caribbean women with the courage to inhabit this liberty with greater confidence.

I think there is this idea of the independent Black woman because .... when you see single parenting – and I talk to some women from different cultures who are in relationships they're unhappy [and stay]. It's the loneliness or the not being able to manage, how they are gonna cope financially with the children? Whereas Black women probably have thought about it but it's not a barrier to them. If you're not with me wholeheartedly then they'd rather be on their own than take half measures. People say it's a bad thing but I see it as a more positive thing because at least you're with somebody because you want to be with them as opposed to having to be with them. (Linette)

There was thus a self-consciousness about this as a liberty particularly defining Black women's sense of sovereignty: one that involves the readiness to pay the price of exercising freedom in contexts governed by forms of racialised and gendered expectations in education, health, the media and so on, which variously seek to promote, penalise, limit or generally govern the terms of female power and women's authority. The desire to secure as much independence as one can exists within a value system that is hegemonically heterosexual and in which marriage is both a desired and privileged state. In other words independence did not necessary imply female autonomy from heterosexual relationships or from men. Thus marriage was viewed ambivalently. The practice of women's independence meant that as Hodge found in the Caribbean, legal marriage was often aspired to as an indicator of social mobility, yet women often saw "wifedom as a kind of handicap and a wife as a diminished

woman” (Hodge 2002: 481). This is demonstrated clearly in another example where we see how growing up in a home with ‘traditional’ gender roles in place could in fact reinforce this ideal of female autonomy. Janet, a divorcee regarded her mother as a weak and dependent woman precisely because she had stayed in a violent relationship for many years before divorcing and entering a new relationship where she again played the accepted traditional wifely role of submission to her husband’s authority. What Janet problematised was not marriage but her mother’s lack of self-confidence and independent-mindedness as she put it, which she contrasted with her grandmother’s strength and independent –mindedness

My mother wasn’t like that. I mean, my father dominated my mother, and my mum’s husband dominates her [now], but my mum takes that kind of ... role of “can’t do”, “I don’t know how to do this”, “I don’t know how to do that”, what have you. (Janet)

Therefore, it is not the fact of marriage that Janet questioned, but the submissive and helpless status her mother accepted in marriage. The paradoxical tensions between the *value* of female independence, the *desire* to be in a heterosexual relationship plus the common *reality* of lone parenthood, produce difficulties and emotional ambivalences that are differently managed by heterosexual Black Caribbean women. These are demonstrated very clearly by Mandisa a single parent of two young children, a Masters graduate and higher education manager and lecturer. Mandisa related an incident when her thirteen-year-old daughter had announced that she would like to have children one day but she didn’t want to have a husband. For Mandisa this was a worrying statement, because it suggested that her daughter had assumed unmarried single-parenthood was an aspirational life choice. As we have seen already, the decision to raise children alone was most often a pragmatic decision to discard a partner who was not augmenting a woman’s capacity to be a good mother and an independent woman or the result of abandonment. Mandisa’s response was to explain why she was without a partner.

I said “You see Mummy here? Doing what she is doing. She’s trying to make sure you and your brother are okay. If I had a husband it would be much easier. I would prefer it that way, but I also will not put up with rubbish. So it’s about saying to you two, I love men. I would have a man in here but I will not have a man in here who will abuse me or abuse the two of you. So that is why I am doing it on my own *until that time*.(Mandisa)

This confirms the on-going importance that the majority of women placed upon heterosexual partnerships and ultimately marriage. It is apparent from the research that the ideal of independence is a paradox. This is because not only does it mean many things, but also living up to it produces equivocation and dilemmas precisely because it is also a powerful technology

of governance as well as freedom. Where we have seen its potential for empowering and liberating Black women from gender oppression, it can also be a source of hardship – especially within social contexts that do not provide institutional or ideological support or cultural validation for lone parenthood. For Melissa a bisexual woman living alone with no children independence was preferable to relying on others (particularly men) whose practical, economic support or emotional and psychological engagement could not be relied upon.

I have actually been in a [heterosexual] relationship where I felt alone ... and I have always thought that would be the worse things that could happen. So I have always thought if it is a choice between independence and that, I'd go for the independence any time. (Melissa)

Melissa felt that as women become more and more independent as a result of being let down by men, the men in turn become more and more irresponsible. Melissa was the only person who described herself as bisexual and although very critical of Black men's reliability stressed that contrary to what many people in the Black community think, for her being bisexual was not a reaction to bad relationships with Black men, but an innate natural expression.

### ***Irresponsible Men or Marginalized Masculinities?***

The next section examines how the women interviewed explained the apparent unequal achievements of Black Caribbean men and women in Britain. The ways in which male power and powerlessness are understood as shaping differential gendered experiences of both racism and Black identity suggest that it is more useful to think in terms of cultures of masculinity or masculinism (Nurse 2004: 4) The introduction of the term masculinism to denote the discursive and ideological nature of cultures of masculinity is important for two reasons. Firstly the use of the term overcomes the problems of a universalising concept of patriarchy by acknowledging that “[m]asculinity is not just a simple reflection of patriarchal power” (Nurse op cit: 12), but socially and historically contextualised, therefore diverse and mutable. Secondly the term masculinism helps us to locate contemporary masculinisms within the trajectory of a *global problematique* in which sexism, modernity, capitalism and imperialism are the core features of westernisation and globalisation (Nurse op cit: 4).

Women were asked about what they thought might be contributing to the disparity in educational and professional achievements between Black Caribbean men and women in the UK. Two factors were offered to explain this. The first can be summarised as a sense of Black female empowerment that comes from the strong history of female survivalism or overcoming that all of the women regarded as a specifically Black woman's tradition. A Black woman's feminised culture of independence and resistance was seen as empowering Black

women with the confidence that they can overcome obstacles and succeed, because they have seen and know of other Black women who have done so in the past. As Sonia a senior social work manager described it as a belief that,

Something will work out. There will be an opening. When one window shuts... a door opens! ... [Black women] have seen the evidence. So they can have the faith to trust the process. I am not sure if Black men have that concrete evidence to refer to. (Sonia)

Whilst women acknowledged the importance of positive female role models in passing on these qualities and values to Black girls, Carole wondered why Black boys often brought up by lone mothers, and often expressing disappointment in their fathers failed to identify with their mother and similarly acquire this culture of resistance and independence? Although Black mothers tended to inculcate values of hard work and independence in girls she felt mothers were increasingly now for the first time consciously thinking about how boys were being raised.

We are trying to get our men to be more responsible so I suppose we have to look at how we bring up our children and how we gear them towards education and fitting in, in the general public. Because even with my ex-husband he tended to feel the world *owed* him something. And there's a lot of Black guys out there who feel that we're owed something. I think we as parents need to try to get that away off of our children. Get that out of their heads and say nobody owes us anything. We owe ourselves. That's how I tried to bring up my son – to be independent and to be self-sufficient. (Carole)

Carole considered that Black men have a culture of independence, but it was the *wrong kind of independence*. She considered the masculine culture of independence to be centrally about irresponsibility and autonomous individualism as opposed to a feminised culture of independence as responsibility and inter-connectedness. Carole felt that what Black men needed to learn was the capacity to be less autonomously self-sufficient and more communally self-sufficient in the sense of being invested in their interdependence with women and their families. Where for girls the values and competencies of *responsible* independence and striving had “been drummed into them from a very early age”, she lamented that boys appear to have not acquired this spirit of independence from their mothers. In fact several of the women considered that there was a masculine culture of victimhood amongst Black men that undermined the development of responsibility and encouraged a propensity towards excessively blaming others for the situation of Black men. Many considered this to be an important obstacle to Black men's advancement and a problem for the whole Black

community. At the same two respondents expressed the view that it was work within the home or wider Black culture that could do the most to overcome this.

I think there is a problem with the Black community, and I think that we, as a Black community, need to address that and say, “You know what? Number one, it’s not all the women’s fault... you know”, and we need to teach our children to be proud in themselves, as a woman, and a Black ... as a male, as well as a female. (Annabelle)

The feminine culture of independence and survivalism was believed to empower girls and women to strive for themselves and be more self-motivated and self-sustaining than many Black men who had either never acquired an attitude of independence, or were constrained by racism from exercising meaningful autonomy, power and independence. Many commentators have argued the ‘soft’ skills and qualities of team work, effective communication and adaptability (Gillard 2004) that are stereotypically culturally promoted and supported in many girls regardless of ethnic background, currently give women greater employability in a service-led ‘new economy’ like the U.K. However, the alleged feminisation of the job market often produces a ‘pay penalty’ (Chevalier 2002) for feminised occupations; that is they attract lower pay rates than ‘masculine’ occupations. These factors may provide an explanation both for why unemployment rates for Black women are half those of Black Caribbean men *yet* the hourly pay rates for Black men remain higher than those of women.

In opposition to the marginalisation thesis, and contrary to wider society’s perceptions of Black boys, what emerges from the research is that *within the* Caribbean home Black girls and boys are believed to be brought up largely equally in terms of gender role expectations. However, as noted earlier this belief may not in fact reflect reality. All except one woman felt that as they were growing up, expectations regarding household chores, childcare and education had been the same for boys and girls. However, some women felt that expectations of girls as they entered more independently into the public sphere began to veer significantly from those of boys. All the women who spoke about this said that their brothers were allowed much greater social freedom during adolescence and they recalled strong messages that normalised male freedom of movement, whilst girls behaviour and freedom in public was much more heavily governed and limited. If we bear in mind that these are women who largely were teenagers in the nineteen seventies and nineteen eighties, this mirrors the situation for white girls as well (McRobbie 1980), it is not a unique feature of Caribbean families as Figueroa suggests (Figueroa 2004).

So there is a certain gender paradox in relation to Black masculinity as well. The ‘soft skills’ that are promoted in the home, are not those that are valued in men in society. Given that



Black Caribbean boys are permitted a greater degree of autonomy and social freedom beyond the home, might it be that they quickly learn that the qualities validated in the feminised home culture are not those that they need to survive in the hegemonically masculine environments of urban youth cultures and British society. Neither are they consistent with the prevailing stereotypes of Black masculinity that Black males encounter in the public sphere and in which they are positioned. Thus Black males must quickly learn that there is a dissonance between female power and authority in the home and the gender of authority in wider society. Avoiding the allure of psycho-analytic theory, we do not need to delve too deeply into the structures of power and privilege that define the liberal public sphere and mark its gendered difference from the domestic, (*See Chapter 5*) to recognise that if authority is constructed as masculine (Barriteau 2003: 26) taking one's place in British society as a Black man involves being ambivalently linked to authority through the differential racialised privileges of masculine power. However, exploring how Black men are governed through their freedoms is for another study. Since in a liberal society women are not denied all freedom, the issues raised in this chapter underscore the necessity to consider how women's freedoms are governed. What are freedom's contemporary permissible gendered and racialised forms and what kinds of self-actualising practices do they enable, promote and legitimate? This leads on to the second explanation that women offered for the disparity in Black male and female achievement levels - racism.

### ***Racism and Black Male Underachievement***

The vast majority of women felt that it was societal stereotypes and expectations of Black masculinity and more particularly institutional racism towards Black boys and men (particularly in schooling, policing and employment) that had the overwhelmingly greatest and more deleterious impact on Black male educational and professional attainment. This is most eloquently summed up by Mandisa,

I don't think it's totally what happens in the home. There are issues of expectation outside the home. There are issues about racism and how racism impacts upon Black men and Black women. If we accept that the society is capitalist and capitalism is about white men ruling, their counterpart is Black men. So what you do, you have enough obstacles in place that that never happens. So how Black men are trained in the home is one area. There is also the way that they are dealt with at school, their expectations and tolerance in the workplace and there are more subliminal things that happen in society that impact upon Black men and Black women. So I think its not just about home, though I would say that that does play a part.  
(Mandisa)

Mandisa was careful to point out that she was not implying that Black women experience less racism or have it easier in Britain. Pointing to the gendered complexities of racism she suggested that racism can impact Black men and women differently and these have effects not simply on Black individuals but also Black families and therefore Black children. The impact of racism's marginalisation of Black men economically and symbolically, through the forms of privileged or debased visibility accorded to Black masculinity, Mandisa argues, produces stresses and tensions which impact Black relationships and Black families.

So it may seem to be easier, i.e. you [Black woman] go for the job interview, you get the job, you get the promotion, you work your way to the top and then you are head of department or whatever. So that may seem easy, but often those doors that open effect the ways that families are run. So you may find that if a woman is in a relationship with her partner at the beginning of that journey she's not at the end, which then impacts on the children.

So what is at least partially seen to explain Black male underachievement relative to Black women, is not the matrifocal family structure or women's social or familial empowerment, but capitalism, racism and the governing mentalities of masculinity they promote. Mandisa's comments suggest that racialised capitalism (Lowe 2005) has deployed racist educational, policing and cultural regimes and technologies that target Black men through stereotypes of Black masculinity that validate or invalidate certain behaviours and dispositions in Black men, which have as their goal the incapacitation and political and economic disempowerment of Black men.

Yes, and I think the sexual politics come in there as well. I don't know if its stuff around ego operating... because maybe there is something about 'maleness' – I'm not even saying manhood, I am saying maleness that make Black men less likely to put up with discrimination and insults, maybe in a way that Black women might be more prone to do it. And it may well be the Black women may talk to each other more about their experiences and so be able to rationalise them and cope with it on a day-to-day basis. (Mandisa)

Mandisa went on to give an example of her son's experience in school to demonstrate how in a white patriarchal society, the attributes viewed as normative aspects of masculinity (being direct and confrontational) are not acceptable when performed by Black men, who in her view are excluded from the racialised patriarchal regime. There is also a subtext of class in here, in which Mandisa implied that entrenched class hierarchies in British society carried heavy expectation that subordinate groups of men should defer in their everyday conduct to those in authority, including middle class white women.

Hence for several of the women gendered forms of institutionalised racism which target Black men and women in particular ways, excluded men and women *differently* from the privileges and protections of state patriarchy on the basis of their aberrant masculinities and femininities (see the next chapter). However, the different coping strategies and cultures of resistance of Black Caribbean men and women were seen as effecting how equipped and capable each was in responding to these challenges. Vulnerable and besieged Black men were viewed as positioned precariously between warring racist masculine cultures of white governmentality and Black masculine cultures of irresponsible freedom. This much seems to concur with Miller's contested patriarchies model. However, where Miller positions Black women as pawns in a patriarchal game of one-upmanship, this research begins to indicate that it is racism and sexist masculine governmentalities that are the problem.

### ***Conclusion***

This chapter has focussed on the meanings and experiences of motherhood, work and being an independent Black woman experienced by the women I interviewed. Their views present a cogent defence of women's power and they challenge the marginalisation thesis, which blames Black women for the situation of Black men. What becomes apparent is how racial governance *and its resistance* are intimately bound up in questions of power, gender, and sex. The perspective of these women suggests a quite alternative way of understanding Black gender relations, family life and politics. It suggests that one of the reasons that the figure of the Black lone mother, linked to the strong Black woman as head of a household, has been so consistently problematised as victim or demon, is because it represents a threat to the assumption of male power and privilege in both African Diaspora and eurocentric gender discourses. The figure of the independent Black woman and mother also unsettles the hegemony of a bourgeois model of the family which serves to culturally reproduce white and western masculinity as the normative ground of political and social power.

Secondly, drawing on the findings of the interviews I conclude that one of the reasons for the seductiveness and persistence of the Black male marginalisation thesis is that it provides a way of displacing crises within the liberal gender order that gendered racism generates. In other words the disempowerment of ethnic minority men in the UK has the potential to threaten the assumption of masculine privilege and hegemony at the same time as it normalises the masculinity of racialised capitalism's *white racialised governmentality*. By blaming Black single mothers and Black women generally this crisis is reconfigured as a crisis of racial and cultural difference. Reframing the crisis as being about the pathological gender identities of

Black women can guard the hegemony of Eurocentric conceptions of power and privilege that are embedded in normative assumptions about the family and gender.

Miller's marginalisation thesis in seeking to challenge white patriarchy's racialised exclusions relies on a series of assumptions, that the next chapter will argue are inherent in liberal statecraft: - firstly that men have a 'natural' authority and power over the person of women; that there is a natural homology between state power, masculinity and men (Barriteau 2003: 335) and therefore that the political is masculine.

The pathologising of the Black family and with it Black motherhood has been a consistent feature of debates about race but also I want to suggest implicated in tensions over the role of all women in the workforce and gender relations within the family. Jones (Jones 2001: 33) characterises the historical debates over women and social policy in terms of contentions over whether the welfare state has extended patriarchal control of women through state patriarchy (socialist/feminist perspective) or if the welfare state has undermined traditional family values by enabling women to rear children outside of the traditional family structure (the neo-conservative model, particularly associated with the Conservative administration of 1979 - 1997). Jones does not address the racialised nature of the public debates over single-parenthood, motherhood and crime that emerged alongside the populist rhetoric of pathological Black families from the seventies onwards. In order to address the significance of race in both these perspectives, it is necessary to address (i) how race and gender are intimately entangled in British state responses to women in the twentieth Britain and (ii) how these struggles are intimately entwined in the macro-politics of international (race) relations, such that we might more usefully speak of the racial governance of both Black and white women as the domestication or "domestic politics of colonialism" (Stoler 1989: 636) and post colonial racism. The relationship between managing population growth as a key element in maintaining a racial balance of power has been a central dilemma throughout the history of imperialism and colonialism *and* I want to argue remains unevenly imbedded in postcolonial British state race relations policies.

If we take seriously the different meanings of marriage, motherhood and work for the women interviewed, it becomes necessary to address Black women's experiences of marriage, family and work outside the home and how contemporary relations and patterns bear the traces of colonialisms' gendered formations. A colonial history of the present draws our attention to the material as well as cultural production of woman and women's experiences and the context of their emergence within global systems of power, which frame local and national articulations of 'women's issues' and gender relations.

This chapter has often presented a positive and empowering account of the importance of both work and mothering in the subjectivities of Black Caribbean women. The next chapter will unsettle this positive account of mothering and motherhood to ask how women are “caught in the nexus of celebration and castigation in which we celebrate the sign of mother without commensurate attention to the incapacitating socio-economic components of this identity” (Rowley 2003: 32). To understand how a feminised culture of resistance based upon the ideal of Black women’s independence and survivalism has developed it is necessary to historicise the matrilineal and matrifocal structure of Black families in the UK and not simply regard the prevalence of single—parent households as the effect of poverty, promiscuity or cultural pathology. To do this we have to examine how Black women and Black women’s reproductive and productive labour has historically been located in the changing contexts of western global capitalism and European rule.

The next chapter will continue this genealogy of Black womanhood, to show how the figure of the Black woman has been a key site through which state-led crises and contestations over changing historical technologies of racial and sexual governance, political power and authority are implicated not only in the disciplinary and self-constituting discourses about and of Caribbean’s women, but in the very identity of the liberal state and the meanings of freedom it makes possible.

## CHAPTER 5

### **Discrepant Women, Imperial Patriarchies, And De/Colonising Masculinities**

[R]acialized understandings of free labour, civility, and concepts of personhood were equally parts of humanism's legacy. Modern racial thinking and racialised ideas about gender and sexuality emerged in the contradiction between humanism's aspirations to universality and the needs of modern colonial regimes to manage work, reproduction and the social organisation of the colonized" (Lisa Lowe forthcoming 2005: 2)

"A politics of location that theorizes the histories of relationships between women during colonial and postcolonial periods, that analyses and formulates transnational affiliations between women, requires a critical practice that deconstructs standard historical periodizations and demystifies abstract spatial metaphors" (Kaplan 1994: 138)

#### ***Introduction***

In the previous chapter independence was a powerful idea informing how women understood themselves and the meaning of Black womanhood. The ways in which the memory of empire, slavery and immigration figure in their accounts, reveal that many women interpret their lives and experiences in Britain in ways that transcend the geographical, temporal and emotional spaces of the nation. The importance that is placed upon remembering and history, particularly the ways that Africa, slavery, imperialism and post-war immigration figure in personal as well as collective memories of Black Britishness and personal identities expose the contemporaneousness of Britain's colonial past. The colonial traces that imbue these women's self-identities suggest that understanding the lives of Black women in Britain requires what might be considered a "discomforting colonial history of the present" (Stoler 2002: 141), in which we are forced to encounter the traces of Britain's colonial past in contemporary social formations.

Their historicisation of the present confirms the salience of a genealogical approach that seeks to map the mutual constitutiveness of metropolitan and colonial formations. Ann L. Stoler

asks whether these reconfigured histories push us to “rethink European cultural genealogies across the board and to question whether the key symbols of modern western societies – liberalism, nationalism, state welfare, citizenship, culture and “European-ness” itself – were not clarified among Europe’s colonial exiles and colonized classes caught in their pedagogic net.. .. and only then brought “home” (Stoler 1996: 16). Kingsley Kent (1999) on the other hand suggests that metropolitan state formations become represented through ideologies of gender that at moments are also racialised through the practicalities and ideas of imperial rule. It seems that in the end it is probably not always possible to conclude where metropolitan or colonial formations first ‘emerge’ - in any case the search for origins is not the goal of genealogical analysis. They are more often mutually informative, each shaping and being shaped by ideas, practices and concerns flowing in an imperial circuitry of power, in which colonial and metropolitan regimes are both “prior to and coterminous with Europe’s bourgeois liberal order” (Stoler op 1996: 53)

The centrality of the value of independence in the shaping of Black women’s feminised identifications is apparent from the extent to which it is operationalised through women’s narratives and experiences of motherhood and work, such that independence begins to take on the appearance of a regime of truth attached to specific social arrangements, prescriptions, performativities in the formation of a morally and politically valorised Black feminised subjectivity. This chapter argues that a genealogy of the figure of the ‘strong independent Black woman’ and the idea of independence reveal Black-Caribbean women’s contemporary practices and experiences of marriage, family and work outside the home bear the traces of colonialism’s gendered and racialised rationalities of rule. Tied to bourgeois liberalism they are articulated through ideas of work and the family that fuse gender, race and sex in a *racialised grammar of freedom*. To understand the significance of motherhood, work and family in the contemporary multi-ethnicities of Britishness and Black-Caribbean women’s lives and subjectivities we must map the different and often discrepant processes of feminisation and racialisation through which gender and racialised labour were governed and liberated.

Therefore, this chapter pursues the relationship between freedom and governance in relation to the formation of the figure of the Black women from the Caribbean to Britain. I want to suggest paying attention to the close relationship between government and freedom (Rose 1999) in modernity, when applied to an investigation into the genealogy of the figure of the Black woman reveals how race and gender are paradoxically entangled in the post-emancipation nineteenth century reconstruction of Britain’s Caribbean colonies into free

societies based upon liberal humanism yet subjected to European colonial rule, and the post-1945 twentieth century formation of Britain as a multicultural nation.

Susan Kingsley Kent in an analysis of the shifts in state formation in Britain from the seventeenth to the late twentieth century argues that conflicts and debates occurring at the level of state authority have at different historical moments been represented through discussions about the family and the status of men and women relative to each other; i.e. through ideas about masculinity, femininity, and the natural or right conduct of family life (Kingsley Kent *ibid*). Drawing on this approach, this chapter sets out to examine three nodal points in the interface between metropolitan and colonial state formation as moments of conflict over power, authority and the limits of freedom, and how the issues they raise become represented through gender and family arrangements. The three 'moments' under discussion are: - the post-war migration of Caribbean women to Britain; the reconstruction of the Caribbean after the emancipation of slaves in 1834 and finally the beginning of decolonisation in the Caribbean from the 1940's. What unites these moments is how in each, state interventions in the organisation of civil society and family life, are key enunciative moments in the historical construction of the figurative Black Caribbean woman. All three moments represent significant transformational phases in state policies for the management of systems of labour, family life and race. In fact these three moments historically are two, as the first and the last overlap. However, part of what this study is interested in is how co-existent and mutually dependent social worlds become represented as distinct and separate.

The first part of this discussion will examine the immediate post-war period of mass migration to the U.K. of Caribbean women from 1948 to the Immigration Act of 1962, which halted large-scale immigration from the Caribbean. This will look at how developments attendant on changes occurring after World War Two, such as tensions over Europe's colonial authority in the world caused by the rise of anti-colonial nationalism, the rise of the USA and USSR as the two major Super Powers; the new international consensus against racism represented by the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and the post-war rebuilding of Britain - were all represented in state discourses and policies towards women and the family both within Britain and in the British Caribbean territories. It argues that the Beveridge Report contained inherent paradoxes in its attitudes and recommendations regarding British women and the British family and that these relied on assumptions about race and empire. Secondly that the figure of



the Black woman enters into Beveridge's New Britain in ways that mediates, exposes and exacerbates those contradictions.

The second moment covers the abolition of slavery in the British Caribbean colonies between 1834 - 1838 in which imperial policy towards the region was framed by the problem of how to end slavery and transform Britain's Caribbean territories from plantation economies based upon slave labour to peasant societies based upon wage labour. It also covers the period from the high point of the Abolitionist Movement in 1823 to 1917, when the importation of Indian and Chinese indentured labour ceased. This period of reconstruction of the British Caribbean will be analysed in its relation to liberalism as the primary political and philosophical discourse defining modernity following the various liberal revolutions in America, France and Haiti in the eighteenth century. This section will examine the ways in which emancipation and freedom for the colonised people of the Caribbean were represented and managed through discourses of gender and race intimately linked to conflicts over British state authority and the meaning of *colonial freedom*.

The third moment covers the period of 1934 to 1962 when social unrest in the Caribbean coupled with the changing post-war international political order necessitated the process of political decolonisation by Britain of its Caribbean territories. It also overlaps the period of mass migration referred to in the first section. So this part of my discussion will investigate how the figure of the Black women and colonial gender relations become a way of addressing and representing the orderly relinquishment of colonial power in a way that ensured both the continuance of British influence in the world and the spread of liberal democracy. In other words how policies that actively target Black and other colonised women, the family and gender arrangements were *an integral part of the decolonising process*.

### ***Race, Gender And The Figure Of The Black Caribbean Woman In Post-War British National Reconstruction: Marriage, Work And Citizenship***

A study of British state policies towards women at home and towards women in the colonies demonstrates how women's labour has been an essential component in national and international governance. The role of colonial women's migration in a racialised and gendered discourse of the nation in the immediate post-war period has been noted by several writers (Yuval-Davies; Grosfoguel 1998; Brah 1997). Avtar Brah has shown in relation to South Asian women, the importance of attending to how the subsequent settlement processes of different immigrant populations have differently inserted them into the nation. However, there is little that I have found that recognises how the figure of *ethnically and racially differentiated* categories of new Commonwealth women immigrants were implicated and deployed in

changing constructions of women's role in British society as mothers and workers. The evidence of the immediate post-war period suggests that Black and colonial women's labour mediated the tensions between state maternalist policies towards women and white feminist demands for women's rights. Situating these developments within the wider frame of decolonisation suggests that these developments also had implications for the reconstruction of Caribbean societies as self-governing independent nations and Britain as a multi-cultural nation.

The Beveridge Plan of 1942 that heralded in the Welfare State, rather than being an unalloyed advance in the condition of the people, had differential effects on different parts of the population. Furthermore, its outcomes in relation to women were uneven, due to the paradoxically "restrictive and emancipating features" of its social policy (Jones, 2001: 321), especially in relation to women. Rose Jones explains that these paradoxes arise from the attempt of the state at this time to use social policy to regulate women's behaviour and enforce particular normative ideals of femininity, family and marriage. She highlights the growth of maternalist policies, which sought to address female and child poverty through policies aimed at improving the quality and capacity of mothering (Jones 2001: 322). Importantly for my argument here, Jones links this preoccupation with mothering to the international political and economic situation.

Maternalist arguments emerged in Britain at a time when public and official anxiety was growing over economic competition from Germany and the United States, over the strength of the British Empire, and over the declining birth rate and persistently high levels of infant mortality" (Jones 2001: 323)

Beveridge's plans for establishing a universal social insurance scheme was centred on the idea of universality and citizenship; everyone would contribute to and everyone should benefit from National Insurance as a common social good, thereby removing the stigmatisation of the Poor Law system. Yet to contribute required that one should be working. Good citizenship thus revolved around participation in the labour market. (Jones 2001: 327). However, Jones points out that Beveridge assumed that the vast majority of women would marry and become dependent economically on their husbands and that women's unpaid labour would be compensated for through her husband's social security contributions. Thus Beveridge made an explicit distinction between single and married women's productive and reproductive labour within the nation.

The attitude of the housewife to gainful employment outside the home [ ] is not and should not be the same as that of the single woman. She has other duties. ...in the next thirty years

housewives as mothers have vital work to do in ensuring the adequate continuance of the British race and of British ideals in the world” (Beveridge quoted in Jones 2001: 328)

What is fascinating in this is what it reveals about the intimate connections within post-war social policy between domesticity, nationhood, sexuality, race and gender. It is quite clear that producing more British babies was crucial for the domestic economy but also producing more *white* babies was equally critical in terms of resisting a demographic threat at the level of international politics. Maintaining British dominion in the world required more white British babies to be born, to ensure an international demographic order that would not give the advantage to the numerically more populace colonies. In addition although the welfare state vastly increased employment opportunities for women, the best of these occupations were largely in the hands of middle-class women especially in the teaching, social work and other kinds of social welfare interventions as principally feminised areas of work. In such a situation, recruiting non-white women from the Commonwealth was to be a crucial arm in state maternalism towards *white women and mothers*, by enabling more working class and lower-middle class white women to stay within the home and the patriarchal marriage.

Recruitment policies in relation to Caribbean and New Commonwealth women workers was clear about the types of work they were to enter – largely at the lower rungs of already lower-paid female occupations in the welfare sector – certainly not as clerical and professional workers (Webster 1998: 146). The recruitment of women from the Caribbean into the National Health Service in the 1950’s was primarily siphoned into lower grades and lower status branches of nursing such as mental health and geriatric care (Webster 1998: *ibid*) and to become cleaners and cooks. (Jones 2001: 331). Although the influence of early eugenicists on later social welfare and immigration policies has been given more attention in recent years (Webster 1998; Jones 2001) insufficient attention has been paid to the discursive as well as structural insertion of Caribbean and colonial *women’s* labour into British post-war nation building. I want to highlight the significance of gender and race in the post war gender reconstruction of the nation and national identity in order to highlight how non-white colonial women’s labour was intimately bound up with the regulation of women, the white British family and female labour. For the immigrant woman and the figure of the Black woman worker played a powerful symbolic as well as practical role in attempts by the state to manage anxieties and social problems associated with the impact of international world politics on the intimate spaces of the nation.

Wendy Webster in *Imagining Home: Gender Race and National Identity 1945 – 64* (1998) offers an important advance in filling the chiasmic gaps in studies of Black women’s lives in Britain and more importantly in feminist theorisations of how Black and colonial women’s

immigration into Britain positioned and positions them in the nation differently to Black men and white women. Webster's study pays attention to how white feminist conceptions of home and family have often failed to recognise how both have historically been saturated with racialised connotations which mean that the meaning of *home* and *family* for Black and colonised women may be very different to those of white women. For example, where white feminist have seen the family as the location of patriarchal domination of women, Webster draws on the work of African-American feminists to highlight how the experience and meaning of home is often different for Black women. Where home and the family symbolise patriarchy for white feminists, African-American feminists have highlighted the importance of home as a place of autonomy from racial domination and resistance to it (Webster op cit: x). However, Webster's analysis of women's labour in Britain situates the meaning of Black women's work only in this national context. So although she rightly identifies how Black women are paradoxically situated in relation to state-led policies concerning women in the family and women in the workforce she does not connect the meaning of work and its relationship to their identities as mothers and/or wives back to the values and cultural norms that they may have brought with them from the Caribbean, or elsewhere. Neither does she problematise the paradoxical role of the importation of Black and New Commonwealth women's labour as *waged workers* in a national context framed by state maternalism towards white women. It is as if Black women arrive in Britain with a blank slate as workers. A postcolonial feminist analysis requires that we locate these new immigrants within the history of Black women's labour in the Caribbean and global capitalism. Also that we map the points at which the interiority of the colonial relations of labour are rendered visible or invisible, connected or separate. For example, Jones enigmatically writes that Beveridge's vision has been radically undermined by the demographic changes in post-war Britain. Most notably she claims being the "dramatic increase" in lone-parenthood since the nineteen-seventies due not to widowhood as previously but due to the rise in divorce, separation and unmarried motherhood.<sup>21</sup> Given the disproportionate rates of lone-parenthood amongst Black-Caribbean women in Britain and the history of successive moral panics regarding this, surely some analysis of this seems needed. If we return to the issues of marriage and motherhood for Black women, neither Webster nor Jones illuminate the meanings of these for Black women more than superficially. Webster neither discusses single parent motherhood nor the significance of

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<sup>21</sup> Between 1961 and 1994 lone-mother headed households increased from 5% to 21% of all families with dependant children and by the end of 1999 more than 33% of all births in the Britain occurred outside of marriage. Jones op cit: 332. What I am raising is the possibility that colonial concerns to recruit

the experience of immigration for Black women as mothers, many of whom came as single women or wives joining husbands *expressly in order to engage in waged employment*. These women were often constrained by circumstances to leave children behind, either intending to return in a short period of time, or to bring children over to the U.K. as and when their situation permitted. Likewise single childless women came in large numbers again with the primary intention of gaining waged work or in the case of the many women who came to staff the new National Health Service to gain a professional qualification and return home. The way in which marriage is linked to ideas of respectability and class mobility in the Caribbean as elsewhere (Reddock 1994; Besson; Wilson, 1969; Hill-Collins 2004; Thomas-Hope 1998) suggests that marriage and the idea of marriage might have been very significant for newly arriving aspirational Caribbean women. Yet this is persistently overlooked in numerous studies of gender and migration, and I have yet to find any that specifically address this issue. What this omission does is fail to consider the histories and traditions of marriage and the family that Black women brought with them. However, Webster importantly does identify how work signifies different things to immigrant women. Whereas for professional white women work signified individual aspirations and individualistic goals which often placed their identities as wives and mothers in tension.

Caribbean women in particular – seen in terms of an *incapacity for family life*, especially through constructions of black motherhood – used their employment for familial goals, reversing the way in which their construction as workers denied them a domestic or familial identity (Webster 1998: 131; italics added)

Whilst Webster is quite right, surely we need to account for this assumption of “an incapacity for family life.” Furthermore, we need to pay more attention than she does to the meanings and priorities motivating Caribbean women’s migration, particularly in relation to marriage, work and motherhood. Principally we need to appreciate the extent to which the *separate spheres* concept of women’s work was unevenly and insecurely anchored in Caribbean women’s concept of both marriage and labour or how the “concept of work as perceived by the women themselves is crucial to understanding their position in Caribbean society and their strategies of survival” (Byron 1998: 218).

Margaret Byron’s research amongst first generation migrant women from the Caribbean island of Nevis indicates that the culture of independence and survivalism that I found in my interviewees was also present amongst the women she interviewed. Byron refers to Caribbean women having developed in the Caribbean “an aura of independence” (Byron 1998: 218) linked to “strategies of survival” (Byron 1998: 219) which she argues leads them to prioritise securing economic independence, even if they were married or in a stable conjugal relationship

(Byron *ibid*). On this basis Byron challenges Phizacleas assertion that all migrant women prioritise motherhood and domestic labour within the home over and above waged labour (Byron 1998: 221). Byron says that Caribbean women came to the UK after the Second World War *expressly to undertake waged labour* not primarily as dependants of men (Byron 1998: 222). Their attitudes to work and their role as wives and mothers was informed by the historical legacies of the impact of slavery on Caribbean economic and social development, women's location within pre and post-slavery colonial labour systems and the high levels of unemployment pertaining in the Caribbean from the 1930's due to the impact of the Depression and World War Two upon Caribbean exports and international Trade (Bolland 1995). It is important for this argument that we recognise that all of these were powerfully defining influences shaping African-Caribbean cultures of work and family life at this time produced a deeply entrenched feminised culture of independence and survivalism.

Webster's geographically and historically limited framing of these issues within a narrow national framework means that she neither considers the marital status of women on immigration nor after, nor the cultural significance of marriage for Caribbean women. This is an important oversight and there is a need for research which tracks Caribbean women migrants' experiences of marriage, cohabitation and divorce if we are to be able to compare and analyse changing patterns in Black family life and gender relations in Britain. The implicit assumption in Webster's study that most Black women were also wives and that being a wife meant similar things to them as it did for other groups of women is a problem. It overlooks the colonial history of Black women's relationship to the institution of marriage as well as their cultural experiences of marriage. This means that Webster does not question the 'separate spheres' assumptions imbedded in both the positions of government and women's representatives on the question of 'working wives' through the Black-Caribbean women's very different location within the bourgeois ideology of gender relations and the family.

Instead, Webster's examination of the 'dual-role advocates' of the inter-war and post Second World War period highlights the class identity of its feminist advocates, but no attention is given to the significance of race or colonialism. Advocates of women's rights in the mid-twentieth century she tells us were primarily concerned with the problems of 'professional' women and how they might claim their rights to work, whilst balancing being wives and mothers. The decline of domestic service after the war threatened the class distinctions between the work of professional middle-class women and unskilled working class women that prior to the war had principally been in domestic service. The fear for middle class women was that the post-war state drive to return all women to the home and family might potentially undermine the status of professional women. Here it is important to be aware that a

key aspect of Beveridge's maternalism involved the institutionalisation of a new social welfare category of the "housewife", defined in the report as "a married woman of working age" (Beveridge 1942: 10). So when Webster reports that dual-role advocates "were particularly concerned to differentiate themselves from housewives, and in so doing they often assigned a primarily domestic identity to other women" (Webster 1998: 135), we can see the extent to which the 'housewife' and the 'working wife' were attributes with clear class connotations. Webster concludes that the professionalisation of Domestic Science as a rational technology for making the housewife more efficient and scientific in her execution of her domestic 'job' can be understood as part of the "prising apart of the identities of working woman, working (house)'wife' and mother" (Webster 1998: 136) and the valorisation of women as workers, which by the 1960's has begun to make the working wife a more acceptable figure in Britain.

Whilst this may be so, this overlooks the history of '*Domestic Science*' as a legitimate arena of bourgeois 'professional' *women's work* in the education, moral training and 'upliftment' of colonised non-European and working class European women in, the arts of domesticity and womanly virtues; virtues seen, as the pre-requisites for non-European and European working class women to be granted the social and political freedoms of liberal democracy. In other words how the informal and formal teaching of domestic skills and science, were technologies for the government of governing gender and class in Britain and gender and race in the colonial racial order. As the next section shows from the Abolition of Slavery Act in 1834 through to decolonisation in the twentieth century the teaching of Domestic Science and later Home Economics were just two in a range of technologies deployed on behalf of westernisation and the civilising mission in the modern management of gender relations and 'family life' in the Caribbean. A eurocentric or narrow nation-bound history of modernity and gender relations in Britain neglects the different historical moments in which the figure of the 'wife', the 'working woman' and the 'independent woman' have been historically constructed through ascriptions and prescriptions, regulations, but also practices of freedom i.e. governmentalities, concerned with race, sex and class. These often discrepant constructions and experiences of woman are invariably counterpoised in relation to the figure of the mother, who is in turn annexed by an assortment of nationalisms.

The diasporic historicity emerging from the interviews in this research offers a counter-history of Britain as *diaspora* space (Brah 1997) that contests eurocentric constructions of Britishness. If this work is to be informed by this sensibility we have to connect as they do experiences in Britain and in the Caribbean with Britain's colonial history and national formation. Bringing the memory of other places and other times to bear witness to the contemporary nation means transcending the eurocentric perspective on gender relations and the Woman Question in post-

war Britain. For in overlooking the coloniality of Britain, this perspective disavows the three hundred years of Caribbean women's enslaved and indentured labour within and on behalf of the British Empire and global capitalism, and the historical intermeshing of the Woman Question and the Race Question.

The structure of memory that emerges from the interviews repeatedly centres on slavery as a defining moment of Black Caribbean subjectivity and political imagination. Slavery is invoked repeatedly as a way of understanding present injustices, practices and attitudes. The Caribbean descendants of the Triangular Trade have a similarly triangulated structure of memory. One strand recalls Africa as a lost homeland from which one has been exiled; the next insistently remembers slavery in the Americas - both the brutalities and the overcoming spirit of survivalism and the third recalls post-war immigration and settlement in Britain. Each of these strands of memory inscribes a Black Caribbean trajectory and formation of Black Britishness that for a long time represented a hegemonic representation of Black Britishness, though this is less and less unquestioned today as other historical, political and cultural expressions from other Black and Asian groups settle and raise their voices. What this triptych of Black Caribbean Britishness does is consistently forget, overlook or disavow the *post-emancipation* history of the Caribbean. One of the consistent reasons given for this in the interviews was one of shame. This seemed in most cases not so much a shame based on their own disdain but an anxiety induced shame born of the fear of the disdain of a powerful and only partially internalised external legislative 'Other'. British born respondents in particular felt that their parents did want to talk about their experiences in the Caribbean very much and apart from the telling of personal and family anecdotes were reluctant to speak about Caribbean societies more generally. Some went so far as to suggest that the colonial education system prior to independence had rendered older generations of Caribbean people both here and in the Caribbean largely either ignorant of their own histories or ashamed of it. Consequently many of those interviewed said that their parents had either been unable or unwilling to pass on their history to the next generations.

In the next section I want to follow in part the flow of this structure of memory back to slavery, but to subvert it slightly by focussing on the period of transition from slavery to freedom in the early to mid nineteenth century. I choose this time frame to both respects the importance given to slavery by the women interviewed, but also to reveal the forgotten post-emancipation period and to challenge the *governmentality of shame* that has produced this forgetting; I will discuss this idea in more detail later. For now it is sufficient to say that this is a shame that has been in part actively produced by westernisation as a technology of the



bourgeois liberalism that promised freedom at the same time as denying it and then ‘blamed’ its postponement on the colonised populations lack of civility and backwardness.

### ***From Slavery To Emancipation: The Racial Taxonomies Of Freedom***

The task of emancipation was to transform Caribbean plantation slave economies into free societies and the enslaved into free modern subjects, or as George Phillipos Baptist Missionary put it in 1834 into ” a new world... surrounded by a new order of beings” (Phillipos quoted in Hall. C 2002: 180). The relative weight given to the different factors, which influenced Britain’s decision to end the slave trade in 1807 and abolish slavery finally in 1838,<sup>22</sup> is contested but it is generally agreed that the two over-riding factors were economic and moral. For most of the nineteenth and twentieth century the abolition of slavery has been represented in popular and academic discourses as the triumph of humanitarianism prompted by moral considerations for the common humanity and right to freedom of all people. This moral explanation for the ending of slavery was only challenged in the twentieth century in the work of Eric Williams (1964) who argued that there were pressing economic factors that precipitated the end of slavery. Slavery as a method of production particularly after the abolition of the Slave trade was becoming increasingly unprofitable by the beginning of the nineteenth century. The ending of the slave trade had required slave owners to adapt the organisation of plantation labour. Previously slave masters could afford to literally work slaves until they dropped because importing new supplies of African labour was cheaper than maintaining and reproducing the slave population naturally (Reddock 1994; Holt 1992). After 1807, efforts to reproduce and sustain the existing enslaved population through new working and living arrangements aimed at prompting childbirth and family life failed. This together with continuing sporadic small and large-scale slave rebellions and acts of sabotage (Beckles 1991) and international trade competition were all making slavery increasingly economically disadvantageous. Furthermore, the influence of the *Age of Revolution* in the eighteenth century that had seen the revolutions in America (1775-1781), France (1789-1799) and St Domingue (1791- 1803) had resulted in major political shifts in the name of liberty and humanism. The St Domingue (now Haiti) Revolution had a great impact on the region because it was the first successful rebellion of slaves and Free Coloured people, which succeeded in overturning slavery and establishing the first independent Black republic in the Americas. Remarkably it is

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<sup>22</sup> The Act of Abolition was passed in 1833 and became law in 1834. However, the system of ‘Apprenticeship was designed to effectively keep the Black population enslaved to their slave masters for another twelve years. However, uprisings forced the complete emancipation of slaves 1838.

also the one liberal revolution of this period that has largely been erased from popular historical memory in the U.K. at least. This contrasts with the awareness and fear of the Haitian revolution instilled in planters and the colonial interests at the time. This fear that it might be a catalyst for the spread of insurrection amongst slaves on other islands had a major impact in precipitating the end of the slave trade and slavery itself. Planters in both North America and the Caribbean feared the spread of revolutionary spirit from Haiti to the rest of the Americas.

Thomas Holt makes clear in his study of the transition from slavery to freedom that it was the nexus created by a number of developments that provided the conditions of possibility in which abolitionism as a *social movement* (based upon a moral cause) and abolition as political *colonial policy* (born of economic pragmatism) became mutually effective in advancing bourgeois liberal ideology (Holt 1992: 23). In this way the needs of capitalism, Christian morality and liberal humanism become fused in the name of anti-slavery as evidence of Britain's Enlightenment commitment to progress and civilisation. The "rise of secular philosophies and evangelical religions stripped away slavery's governmental "screening mechanisms", exposing it as merely a blatant power relationship sustained by the material greed of the master (Holt 1992: 24). It is also clear that the moral arguments against slavery also represented in part the ascendancy of bourgeois liberalism in Britain.

The Reform Act of 1832 in Britain introduced a measure of property-based voting rights to the upper and middle-classes and effectively contained the power of the landed aristocracy replacing it with a regime of classical liberalism exemplified by individualism and laissez-faire capitalism. Thus we have to also see abolition in the context of the emergence of bourgeois liberalism as the hegemonic political consciousness of the British state (Kingsley Kent 1999: 167). This was a state-led consciousness that the anti-slavery movement mobilised and popularised and in so doing united a number of factional interests in a common mass-based national cause – the abolition of slavery. It united working class Chartists who had been unhappy with the Reform Act's failure to grant universal male suffrage, the newly enfranchised middle-classes, and male and female Christian evangelicals, known as Dissenters. Thus abolition harnessed the reforming and liberal zeal of diverse factions into the nationalist cause of shedding the old British identity based on an English aristocratic oligarchy to a new vision of Britain as a liberal imperial nation state spreading the values of the Enlightenment and civilisation across the globe. The implications of this in terms of the post-emancipation reconstruction of Caribbean societies and the transformation of an economic and social system based upon slavery to one based upon a wage labour system are key in understanding the entanglement of colonial and metropolitan developments and how gender relations and the

family were central terrains through which liberal notions of *freedom, personhood, individual morality and discipline* (Holt 1992: 25) became part of the colonial project in the Caribbean.

The next section examines how ideas of Black womanhood are altered by the transition from slavery to wage labour. It addresses the contestations over power and authority that surrounded this transition in order to examine how Black-Caribbean women were targeted as subjects of freedom between 1834 and 1938. I am going to focus on colonial policy in Jamaica. The reason for focussing on Jamaica is because Jamaica serves as both a specific case study and because a “Jamaica of the mind” (Hall. C 2002: 174) served at this time as a powerful symbol of Britain’s colonial relations. Jamaica’s economic significance to Britain rendered it synonymous in the colonial and national imagination with the West Indies as a whole, such that what happened in Jamaica “had a disproportionate impact upon British colonial policy and on the formation of popular understandings of emancipation” (Paton 2004: 4). Furthermore, Jamaica and Jamaican culture have continued to be powerful symbols of post-war immigration and its impact upon Britain national identity and more recent developments within global popular culture (Lipsitz 1994). Historians of slavery have highlighted the significance of Jamaica (Hall 2000; Holt 1994) and Diana Paton notes that “Jamaica...was uniquely influential within and beyond the British Empire..... Jamaica provided the paradigmatic case for British observers imaging and later evaluating the emancipation process” (Paton 2004: 4).

Two of the important points of entanglement between abolition and the spread of bourgeois liberalism in the metropole and the colonies lies firstly in the intimate connections between state patriarchy at home and in the colonies and secondly the way that gender and sexuality became integral to the colonial relation and the imperatives of colonial governance (Stoler 1995; Stoler 2002). These two aspects: bourgeois liberalism and modern systems of rule based upon the internalisation of mentalities of governance can be examined by looking firstly, at the arguments against the power of the planter class; secondly the technologies and strategies deployed in attempts to govern the sexual and family relations of different parts of the colonised populations.

### ***Bourgeois Colonialism v The ‘Effeminate’ Aristocracy Of The Planter Class***

It is no coincidence that the institutionalisation of the bourgeois liberal state in Britain in 1823, also witnessed the revival of the Abolitionist Movement in the same year. The political interests that had congealed in the period leading to limited property-based enfranchisement in 1823 and culminated in full adult male suffrage in Britain in the Reform Act of 1867 were

exported and replicated albeit in altered form to the colonies and can be seen reflected in debates over how to re-organise white rule in Britain's Caribbean colonies after Emancipation.

Susan Kingsley's account of the close inter-relationship between changes in British state formation, the rise of classical liberalism and gender ideology from the seventeenth to the twentieth century is a tour de force that enables recognition of the entanglement of metropole and colonies. Kingsley Kent demonstrates how in the period leading up to the Reform Act, an alliance had been forged between Britain's working classes and the middle-class bourgeoisie *against* the power of the aristocracy and their system of personal patronage and corruption. In the struggles that took place gender had been an important discourse through which aristocratic power could be both attacked and evaluated. Middle class claims to power were substantiated in part by appeals to a discourse of gendered respectability as the sign of liberal virtues, which were contrasted with aristocratic hedonism, sexual debauchery and moral corruption (Kingsley Kent 1999: 155). Working class radical support for parliamentary reform was betrayed in the passing of the Reform Act, which imposed at the behest of the middle and upper-classes a property-based franchise that most could not meet. Thus political rights within classical liberalism become identical with property rights. Subsequently, the working class Chartist movement agitating for male enfranchisement increasingly deployed the ideal of bourgeois virtue and the rhetoric of domesticity as the foundation of their claims as "respectable men" to a share of bourgeois liberty. The ideal of domesticity rested on the separate spheres' model in which women were the possession of husbands and fathers and confined to the private space of the family and domestic sphere. Men as owners of themselves and owners of women were to be charged with exercising power in the public sphere on behalf of women.

Similarly in the Abolitionist Movement planters were being described as despotic rulers who were both morally and sexually corrupted by their absolute power over their slaves (Kingsley Kent 1999: 92) and rendered debauched and lascivious by the heat of the tropics and their proximity and free access to enslaved and free Black women (Holt 1992: 93; Kingsley Kent 1999: 96). Abolitionists saw the West Indies as a place where, distanced from the influence of liberal respectability, planters developed both the excesses of the old aristocracy i.e. "luxury, effeminacy and profligacy" (Fothergill cited in Kingsley Kent 1999: 92) and due to their intimate proximity to 'natives' easily forgot their European manners becoming *creolised*, i.e. more like those they were supposed to be governing (Holt 1992) - sensual, selfish and indolent. West Indian planters were perceived as inclined to sexual indulgence, immoral excess and displaying all the vices more suited to the ancien regime than the new enlightened political order. For abolitionists the image of the whip and the naked Black woman slave were potent symbols of the worst excesses of the planter's autocratic rule; an image that united ideas of

race, sex, gender and disorder to ideas of freedom (Paton 2004). Black-Caribbean women were iconoclastically represented in abolitionist literature as “chaste, modest victims of lustful brutal representatives of a vicious planter aristocracy whose commerce in human cargoes offended most upright, moral manly Britons and brought tears of pity to the eyes of compassionate British women” (Kingsley Kent op cit: 110)

The British government’s initial attempts to get the co-operation of Caribbean planters in advancing the new liberal national consciousness failed. A series of Amelioration Acts passed after 1823 had been intended to produce an adjustment in the organisation of plantation societies after the end of the slave trade in 1807. The hope was that the need to sustain and reproduce a slave population now that new imports could not be relied upon would lead planters to gradually adjust the organisation of plantation life and gradually concede to a system of free labour. Persuading the planters to agree to abolition involved a battery of new legal provisions known as the Amelioration Acts permitting a range of measures aimed at both easing the financial losses that planters feared and establishing fundamental changes to Jamaican society.

“The planters were encouraged to move with all deliberate speed to prepare their slaves to join a free labour force. Slaves should be given religious instruction; marriages and families should be protected; physical coercion especially whipping, should be controlled if not abolished; and manumission should be encouraged (Holt 1992: 18)

A large part of the planters’ resistance was expressed within the terms of classical liberalism; i.e. emancipation threatened the loss of their rights in their own property (i.e. the slaves). Thus amelioration involved softening the impact of emancipation on the planter on the one hand by ensuring he suffered no loss in profit or wealth and acculturating the enslaved into the mentalities and habits of a free labour force on the other. Thus amelioration and acculturation represented a single process aimed at a gradual movement towards liberation (Holt 1992: 19). The failure of planters to concede any changes led in 1831 to the Morant Bay slave rebellion incorporating five parishes, involving thousands of slaves and lasting into January 1832. In response to the planters’ recalcitrance, fears over the spread of rebellion and increased abolitionist demands, the Emancipation Act was passed in 1833 and enacted on August 1<sup>st</sup> 1834. However, in the continued spirit of acculturation, slaves were not to be immediately liberated but a system of Apprenticeship was introduced which was planned to last for six years prior to the granting of full emancipation. The aim of Apprenticeship was literally to give the newly emancipated population an apprenticeship in freedom. So though slavery was legally abolished ex-slaves were to work for their masters in return for food, clothing, accommodation and medical care for a further six years. A proportion of the labouring week

was to be set aside as 'free time', but in which ex-slaves were required to work for their masters for a wage. In addition the planters were given twenty million pounds in compensation for loss of 'their 'property' (Holt 1992: 49) So on the one hand the planter's right in his property was to be safeguarded by compensating for his loss and on the other, slaves would be inducted into the habits of wage labour. In effect slavery continued in all but name. Here is an example of the contradictions and hypocrisies of liberalism writ large. Emancipation was aimed at inducting slaves into the market economy as a disciplined free wage labourer not primarily as a free subject of political liberty. The apprentices of freedom were expected to acquire a sufficient sense of self-ownership and self-possession as would demonstrate their acquisition of the liberal virtues of self-discipline and respectability. These dispositions and qualities were those necessary to overcome what many planters viewed as the Negro's natural slothfulness and to develop the habits of a disciplined wage labourer and virtuous wife.

### *Freedom's Apprentices: Amelioration, Acculturation and the Family of Man*

The primary mechanism by which this was to be done was through changes to the rules governing work, family life and education. This involved acculturation processes steeped in the ideals of Christianity, liberal governance and bourgeois patriarchy in which "they would be free but only after being socialised to accept the internal discipline that ensured the survival of the existing social order" (Holt: 1992: 56) Contestations over power and authority in the period of emancipation between 1833 and 1865 in Jamaica were addressed in debates and policies, which fused preoccupations over labour with ideas of gender. What split different factions of colonial power (planters, British government, missionaries) was what freedom for the enslaved Black population would mean and how freedom would be managed. Planters sought to block most attempts to reduce their personal control over both the Black labouring population and political control of the local Assembly that governed Jamaica. The British colonial state represented by the Colonial Office and the Governor was concerned to implement a policy of freedom based upon the values of liberalism within a colonial regime; i.e. maintaining white superiority and colonial authority *through* bourgeois liberal governance. The mostly Baptist missionaries wanted to liberate the Black population into Christian salvation and the universal Family of Man. In addition population control was imperative in a society where the majority Black population were subjected to rule by a National Assembly government by a small white planter elite and an even smaller membership of Free Coloureds. These political debates were reflected in state as well as Church policies and practices towards Black families and Black women. In short the reconstruction of Caribbean societies from slave-based economies to wage-labour economies involved also transforming the system of rule from imperial domination to a form of freedom that could satisfy British liberal nationalism's perception of

itself and of emancipation as bringing a proportionate and manageable advance in freedom to the slaves.

The colonial state and the independent Baptist missions were largely unified through their common antagonistic relationship with the planter class which continued to resist and obstruct attempts to fashion a new liberal colonial order and to a lesser extent attempts by the nominally free population to secure greater social autonomy from white control. Church and state were often linked through the position that key policy makers held in both systems<sup>23</sup> and through the state's reliance upon the Baptist missions for implementing key social aspects of colonial policy such as schooling, religious education and the provision of medical care. In many respects the missions and the Colonial state represented by the Colonial Office and the Governor forged a liberal civilising alliance particularly prior to the imposition of Crown Colony rule in Jamaica in 1865.

Shifts within British state power in England had involved changes to notions of selfhood and personhood whereby the imposition of the external coercion of the King, was replaced by internalised forms of self-governance based upon possessive individualism in which men exercised personal control over their own bodies (sexual and labouring) and political and economic responsibility over their wives and children within the privatised sphere of the home. Likewise the shift from planter domination to colonial freedom was aided by the efforts of the missionaries to convert Black men into husbands and wage earners and Black women into wives and mothers. Although the goal of inculcating the values of bourgeois liberal domesticity and a Protestant ethic of labour and piety on the newly free was shared by the colonial state and the Baptist missions, their motivations were often informed by slightly different hierarchies of moral to economic values. The Colonial Office was concerned to appease planter power and maintain the efficient running of the economy, so measures such as removing women and children from a legal requirement to work on plantations were primarily intended to establish a gendered as well as racialised system of wage labour. The bourgeois discourse of female domesticity was deployed to encourage marriage and family based reproduction of the labouring population at the same time as making women dependant on a male wage earner. It was considered that introducing the separate spheres gender order would

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<sup>23</sup> The author of the 1833 Emancipation Act was James Stephen the son of a prominent abolitionist family and devout evangelical Christian (Holt 1992: 48)

be one way of ensuring the free *male* population would be forced by economic necessity to offer their labour to plantation owners (Holt 1992).<sup>24</sup>

The Christian missions on the other hand, saw themselves as bearers of a Christian duty to eradicate the legacy of slavery and raise the newly emancipated 'immature' population into the state of Christian manhood and freedom (Hall. C 2002). They also saw themselves as defenders of the vulnerable newly emancipated 'children' in the Family of Man against the wilful exploitation of the planters. A primary way in which they aimed to do this was through establishing 'free villages' to counter planter interests which sought persistently to block attempts at Black social and economic autonomy from the plantation. Baptist missionaries became active in purchasing land for the purposes of liberating apprentices from reliance on plantation owners for both work and housing (Hall. C 2002: 117). Thus missions played an important role in establishing free villages of peasant farmers and communities of Christianised conjugal families. The missions' role in purchasing and setting up free villages demonstrates the processes of westernisation and religious conversion through which the newly emancipated were to be inducted into the western freedoms of liberalism and Christianity and their norms of gender and sexuality. A key area of this work was the promotion of marriage and Christian family life.

Marriage had been illegal amongst slaves for the bulk of slavery but had become legal in the years leading up to the end of the slave trade as part of the plan to increase the natural reproduction of the slave population. After 1833, marriage was not merely encouraged but itself became a mark of being a free Black subject in which conversion and emancipation were fused (Hall. C 2002: 117). Baptist missionaries shared the colonial ambition to establish bourgeois family norms and remove the power of the former slave master over both male and female slaves, whilst replacing it with Black male authority over Black women based on Christian marriage. For the missionaries this involved reconstituting the Black man not merely as a wage labourer but also as an 'independent' husband and father with proprietorship over the intimate sphere of family life, whilst at the same time positioning him as a 'child' within the liberal Family of Man, in need of tutelage and benign white paternal governance. In this regard the Baptists vision of Black African-Caribbean freedom was wider than that of both planters and the colonial state, but no less gendered.

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<sup>24</sup> Remember the biggest fear of the planters and the colonial state alike was that the freed population would refuse to continue to work on the plantation thus ruining the colonial economy.



“Manhood for them was associated with independence, the capacity of a man to stand on his own two feet to look after those who were properly dependent on him, his wife and children.... Slavery had produced an unnatural phenomenon: male slaves who were entirely dependent on their masters, who could not, therefore, truly *be* men. Emancipation marked the moment at which they could cast off that dependence and learn to be men in the image of the middle-class Englishman” (Hall: 2002: 124)

By these means Black men were encouraged to become ‘independent’ of the plantation and this independence was marked by ownership of a cottage with surrounding land upon which his wife, now largely removed from wage labour, would raise crops for the family whilst children – also increasingly withheld from field labour were to be sent to the mission-run village school. However, governing strategies do not always become fulfilled in practice or may produce unintended consequences some of which can become harnessed in the cause of resistance or simply avoidance. This means we have to address how the newly emancipated used their new powers of freedom to resist colonial state and religious governance.

Transforming the slave into a new type of subject, a *subject of freedom*, at the same time as they remained the *objects of colonial rule*, was “simultaneously an act of westernisation and act of resistance” to the absolute power of the planter class (Mintz quoted in Holt 1992: 149). Westernisation was thus not simply a technology of governance, but for newly emancipated populations could also be deployed in the elaboration and exercise of *their own* visions of freedom. So for example removing the legal requirement that Black and Native American women must engage in field labouring (now considered by the colonial authorities as ‘unfeminine’) was deployed after emancipation by Black women in Jamaica to increasingly avoid wage labour and instead focus on growing ‘female’ crops grown on family owned land or slave provision grounds<sup>25</sup>. The intention of the colonial authorities and the Church was to encourage women into the domestic sphere of the household as dependants of male wage earners in the public sphere (Holt: 1992: 170). Instead in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the overwhelming majority of Black women used this new freedom not only to continue growing food for family subsistence but also to amass autonomous income through the small scale marketing of the crops. This enabled them to resist marriage and maintain their

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<sup>25</sup> Newly emancipated slaves were soon able to purchase land through money accrued selling their skilled trades and by selling crops grown on slave provision land during slavery and after. Provision grounds were poor areas of plantation land that during slavery had been set-aside for slaves to grow food crops for their own subsistence. Slaves often used provision grounds to grow surplus crops, which they traded in towns to the free population of whites and Free Coloureds or bartered.

personal autonomy from male control through establishing shared networks of female-headed households (Holt 1992). For whilst some women aspired to the ideals of marriage and domesticity as a mark of prestige and status this was not feasible or desirable for most Black women (Reddock 1994: 23). In resistance to the liberal ideology of separate spheres as well as out of a pragmatism born out of the impossibility of the economically deprived Black man to maintain an 'angel in the house' Black women also resisted the concerted efforts of Church and state to settle into conjugal families based on two married parents with children. For example between 1811 and 1835 the St John's Parish register in Jamaica shows there were hundreds of baptisms but not a single marriage (Reddock 1994: 23). Meanwhile Mrs A.C. Carmichael the wife of a planter who owned an estate in Trinidad in the early nineteenth century observed that whilst long-term cohabitation was common, both men and women expressed reluctance to be tied to the expectations of bourgeois marriage which defined the proper roles of wives and husbands.

In responding to the Methodist missionaries criticisms that the planters were discouraging marriage, Mrs Carmichael suggested that the men often wanted more than one wife, while slave women saw marriage as a tie which forbade the wife from leaving the husband, and put her under his control and subject to his punishment" (Reddock 1994: 23)

The irresolvable dilemma of governmentality as both a mode of government and freedom is demonstrated by the way that Christian marriage (as religious governmentality) could also itself be deployed as a practice of freedom to resist planter power. Aspiring to bourgeois family life could as we have seen also be a strategy of resistance. In the struggle between the differing conceptions of what freedom should mean; between planters, the British government, the Church and the newly emancipated, marriage and establishing an 'independent household' was welcomed by some Black men in so far as it represented a means by which freedmen could reconstitute themselves "economically as men" (Holt 1992: 149). What was being sought was "access to a lifestyle that would allow them to retain both a sense of patrimony and a sense of self-respect" (ibid).

Other ways in which the newly freed population resisted, evaded or simply adapted westernisation were through the persistent use of African religious practices such as Myalism,<sup>26</sup> Obeah<sup>27</sup> (Hall. C 2002 151) and Ethiopianism,<sup>28</sup> and the continuation of the

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<sup>26</sup> Myalism is a African religious tradition used to explain misfortune and illness. "Myalists believed all misfortune stemmed from malicious forces embodied in the spirits of the dead and activated by the unfriendly. Myal men were

'invisible' autonomous Black Christian churches that had been established behind the backs of European missionaries by the slaves themselves. The history of slavery and post emancipation Caribbean societies is replete with examples of Africans and Native Americans constant attempts, to escape revolt and sabotage the imperial systems of labour. This persistent culture of resistance demonstrates that "the slaves consciousness of themselves as human beings with their own values and aspirations, different to those of the slave owners" (Campbell 1990: 1) continued after emancipation. It is clear that that beyond the common goal of ending slavery, African-Caribbean and European Abolitionism did not share the same vision of Black freedom (Beckles 1991). These contested visions of freedom did not disappear after emancipation and if anything grew stronger.

### *Colonial Patriarchy And The 'Intimacies' Of Racial Governmentality*

The contradictions of emancipation in the name of liberalism at the same time as the continuance of colonial domination were reflected in the contradictory gender relations espoused by Colonial Office discourse. Emancipation was as much about labour as it was about freedom (Holt 1992; Reddock 1994; Paton 2004). This part of the discussion deals with the ways in which freedom and labour are governed through a specific categorisation of bodies. It argues that as technologies of *racial governmentality*, these construct racist taxonomies of bodies in the service of maintaining white authority over labour and white hegemony over freedom.

By racial governmentality, we mean the political technologies that generate racial taxonomies for the purposes of colonial management of labour, reproduction, and social organization of the colonized population. As an analytic, it draws from Foucault's important concepts of governmentality, biopower, and power-knowledge to describe racial classifications not as a priori constructs that precede colonial relations, but as forms of racial subjection, management, and hierarchy that grow out

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the specialists who could identify the spirit causing the problem and exorcise it" (Hall 2002: 151) including bad spells inflicted by Obeah.

<sup>27</sup> Obeah combined traditional medicine practices with African beliefs in sorcery and witchcraft. The Obeah man or woman was like the traditional African witch doctor both native healer and expert practitioner in the arts of witchcraft through the use of everyday objects as familiars through which the Obeah practitioners malign or beneficent influence was transmitted to a person.

<sup>28</sup> Barrett explains that, Ethiopia or Ethiop is a Greek translation of the Hebrew word 'Cush' meaning Black. Thus Ethiop in the bible stands for the black African in general. When the first independent Black churches emerged in America after slavery, they invariably identified themselves as African Churches and used the word African in their titles. (Barrett 1977: 68).

of the colonial needs to divide and administer work, nature,  
and society (Lowe forthcoming 2005: 5)

Lisa Lowe describes the interconnectedness of race and gender as one of the many “intimacies” and entanglements brought about by imperialism that brought Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas into a global world system of economic and cultural flows. Lowe’s conceptualisation of intimacies is very useful in enabling us to analyse how the continuum between freedom and colonial governance gets mapped onto and through the differential sexual and gender codifications of racially specified bodies. Her conceptualization of intimacies has three aspects to it. Firstly Lowe refers to intimacies as “spatial adjacency, proximity or connection” (Lowe forthcoming 2005) by which men and women from Africa Asia and native Amerindian and Creole people were forcibly taken into the service of slavery and indentureship which went to enrich and enable the rise of bourgeois states in North America and Europe. Secondly, intimacy denotes personal, affective and sexual closeness or connection that these spatial proximities facilitate or prohibit. Finally intimacy can denote privacy – most commonly the privacy of private conjugal family relations in the bourgeois home, by which the separate spheres ideology of gender roles was consolidated. (Lowe op cit). This conceptual framing of intimacies enables us to recognise not only the close cultural, economic and political connections between a series of symbolically and morally segregated yet economically and politically integrated racialised embodiments, experiences and states of being, but also between geographically remote, yet politically and economically intimate places. It also reveals a different periodisation of multiculturalism than the one contained in narratives of postcolonial globalisation, by reminding us of the longstanding interiority or intimacy of colonial society to Britain and British national identity. Furthermore, it provides a way for us to analyse how bourgeois liberalism set out to colonise the meaning of freedom through an apparently contradictory increase in racism. That is, how racism as racial governmentality in post-emancipation Caribbean societies was intensified through an expansion in the racialisation of categories of labouring bodies and increased technologies for interiorising of this marking within the souls of the colonised. The focus on intimacy draws attention to the specificities of how bourgeois patriarchy becomes conjoined with European colonial paternalism through technologies of racial governance.

By the end of the nineteenth century Crown Colony rule had been established across Britain’s Caribbean territories. This marks the end of all attempts to work through local National Assemblies dominated by the planters. Black people's visions of freedom had placed a premium on the independent ownership of land, the development of a free peasantry in villages and social and economic autonomy from the plantation system of labour, which was associated with slavery (Besson, 2002:201). This led to a flight from the plantations as former slaves

resisted both wage labour and plantation work, which would keep them within the control of their previous slave masters. The emancipated populations abandoned the plantations in pursuit of their own visions of independence as self-sustaining peasantry growing their own crops for sale and subsistence and establishing families on family grounds purchased or captured through squatter's rights claims. In response to this, almost immediately following Emancipation a system of indentured labour was introduced across the Caribbean, in an effort to undercut the wage demands of the newly liberated Caribbean worker (Reddock 1994: 27).

Lowe looks at the figure of the Chinese woman within colonial discourse as represented in the documents of the Colonial Office of this time. She finds that the figure of the Chinese woman was deployed in colonial policies aimed at the management of labour, family and population and moreover in the colonial governance of liberty. Representations of Chinese women as passive, domesticated and confined in the private sphere of the home were deployed prior to emancipation in debates concerning the racial differences between Chinese labour and Negro slaves "through imagining the Chinese as more assimilable to European ways" (Lowe forthcoming 2005: 6). After the ending of the slave trade in 1807, the Colonial Office debated a plan to replace Trinidad's slave labour with Chinese free labour. The reason for this was the anxiety raised by the Haitian revolution of Black insurrection.

No measure would so effectively tend to provide a security against this danger, as that of introducing a free race of cultivators into our islands, who from habits and feelings could be kept distinct from the Negroes, and who from interest would be inseparably attached to the European proprietors" (Great Britain Colonial Office Correspondence cited in Lowe op cit: 9)

Thus as Lowe notes, the Chinese were represented in colonial discourse as a kind of in-between 'buffer' category of workers and persons: a nominally free labour force but also racially distinct and socially and racially distinguishable from both planters and slaves (Lowe op cit). From reading Lowe, the proximity of the Chinese to the European is based in part on their perceived degree of civilisation, in part discernable in the view of the Colonial Office from the position of women in Chinese culture and family structure. Lowe relates that in discussions within the Colonial Office between 1803-1807, "the idea of Chinese family reproduction was a way of marking a *racial* difference between "Chinese free labour" and "Negro slaves", through imagining the Chinese as *sexually* more assimilable to European ways" (Lowe forthcoming 2005: 5).

As already noted, by the 1850's the withdrawal of African men and women from field labour was posing a threat to production. The withdrawal from field labour was both a protest against

low wages offered by planters and a mark of Black social freedom and economic independence from the old system of plantation labour. The importation of indentured labour from China and India was represented in the public rhetoric of the Colonial Office as a response to “labour shortages” (West India Royal Commission 1945: 415). However, Lowe found within the Colonial Office papers of 1850 to 1860 that colonial administrators were making explicit racial comparisons between different racialised categories of workers, specifically the Chinese, the East Indians and African ex-slaves in which the

imaginary Chinese family continued to figure as a part of a racialised classification of labouring cultures. In both periods, the racial differentiation of Africans, East and South Asians, and native Indians emerged as a colonial taxonomy that both managed and spatially distanced these groups from the cultural and political sphere within which “freedom” was established for European subjects.

What Lowe discovers in Colonial Office papers of the time is that the Chinese were viewed as closer to a liberal conception of personhood and bourgeois respectability, thus civility, defined in terms of male proprietorship in women and female confinement within the domestic sphere. This contrasts with the view of Africans as devoid of proper gender values due to innate lasciviousness and promiscuity, and East Indians as being compromised in their attitudes towards women by oriental despotism (Kingsley Kent 1999; Midgley 1998). It seems the Chinese were viewed as ‘closer’ to middle class European family values evidenced by their “protection of the chastity and virtue of women” (Lowe op cit: 17) In other words the desirability of the Chinese as a intermediary class of free men is based upon their possession of virtuous wives.

The colonial management of sexuality, affect, marriage and family among native and mixed race Americans, African slaves and Chinese indentured workers formed a central part of the microphysics of colonial rule” (Lowe op cit)

The introduction of Chinese and Indian labour into the Caribbean after emancipation then was both to reinforce and perpetuate a colonial ordering of labour based upon race, whilst also introducing a racialised and gendered taxonomy of freedom intended to weaken the claims of the Black African population to equal rights. Lowe’s careful and conceptually precise analysis demonstrates the intimate discursive connections between race, sex and gender in the proliferation of colonial freedom as instances of racial governmentality. What becomes clear is that racial governmentality is entangled in other bio-political technologies of liberal rule. This offers a more precise conceptualisation of the relationship of competing constructions and experiences of gender and sexuality within a European patriarchal regime that avoids the too common haste towards conceptual inflation (Miles 1989: 41 – 68) that afflicts some of the

debates within Caribbean feminist theory, where the term patriarchy is applied to cover too varied a range of formations.

Caribbean feminists have embraced the concept of patriarchy and attempted to develop the work of African-American and postcolonial feminists regarding the relationship between patriarchy and colonial rule. Writing about early twentieth century Trinidad, Patricia Mohammed addresses the complexities of gender in a society shaped by separate yet also shared cultures of gender (Mohammed 1995). As a result of the introduction of Indian indentured labour, Trinidad has the second highest ratio of Indian to African populations in the Caribbean after Guyana where Indians are now in the majority. Mohammed argues that three different coexistent patriarchal systems developed in Trinidad in the colonial era: the dominant white patriarchy which controlled state power, the Creole patriarchy of the African and mixed Afro-Creoles (emerging from and in relation to the dominant white form) and Indian patriarchy operating within the Indian group. The Caribbean context says Mohammed produced new Indian gender identities and sexual behaviours that would not have been possible in the context of the Indian societies they had left behind. It also, she argues, positioned Indian men and women in an antagonistic relation to African Trinidadians within the colonial racial economy. For example, she states that Indian women could collude with Indian male dominance as a way of gaining strategic advantage in relation to Afro-Creole men and thereby Afro-Creoles as a whole. She argues that the context of Trinidad at that time produced a new patriarchal contract both between the different racialised patriarchal systems as well as between women. Countering the idea of patriarchy as a force that simply oppresses, Mohammed argues that “[b]oth men and women [have] different sources of power in various areas of life and these are [ ] negotiated each day in different spheres of interaction and at different levels” (Mohammed 1995: 39). Mohammed argues that across these levels - the individual and the institutional, the allocation of power between men and women is not identical, nor between different groups of men and women. Mohammed suggests that it is this dispersion of power across all levels of the social that makes possible negotiations across and within patriarchal formations. Following Kandiyoti (cited in Mohammed 1995: 27) Mohammed refers to this as ‘patriarchal bargaining’ Summarising Kandiyoti, Mohammed says,

Whilst the patriarchal contract still influences women’s gendered subjectivity and determines the prevailing ideology, women themselves ‘strategise within a set of concrete constraints that reveal and define the blueprint of what I will term the patriarchal bargain of any given society, which may exhibit variations according to class, cast and ethnicity’ [ and] are susceptible to historical transformations that open up new areas of struggle and negotiation of the relation between

genders” (Mohammed quoting Kandiyoti in Mohammed 1995:27)

This analysis is very interesting as well as problematic. It asks us to take seriously the differences between gender systems, their relationships to each other and how specific hierarchies, affiliations, conflicts and negotiations enunciate particular and localised discursive fields in which power is unevenly articulated through race, gender and sex. Although Mohammed does not use the concept of governmentality, she seems to be thinking of patriarchy not merely as discipline (Bartky 1988) but as much a strategy of freedom as government. However, the real problem here is that this is guesswork, as Mohammed does not explicitly conceptualise her use of the term patriarchy. In attempting to make patriarchy more historically and contextually accountable, Mohammed just contributes to the conceptual inflation of the concept that she is seeking to evade. The work of writers such as Lisa Lowe and Ann Laura Stoler invite us to be much more careful about how we deploy the term patriarchy particularly in relation to the period of colonialism proper from the mid nineteenth century into the interwar years of the twentieth century when European rule took on the more liberal and modern form of settled administrations through “rationalized rule [and] bourgeois respectability” (Stoler 1989: 652) rather than simply domination. Since colonial rule was racially asymmetric and gender specific” (Stoler 1998: 651) the ways in which medical, educational, labouring as well as penal policies targeted and penetrated the colonised populations through gendered racial classifications and prescriptions means that whilst different racialised groups may have retained importance aspects of pre-existing gender arrangements and ideologies these cannot experientially or conceptually always be defined by the term patriarchy.

A brief look at the ways in which the Indian woman figured in post-emancipation labour arrangements confirms the implication within Lowe’s argument that the management of gender formed a core dimension of the microphysics of colonial rule. Colonial rule in the Caribbean especially from emancipation through to political independence in the twentieth century is characterised by the tensions caused by the competing imperatives of economic government and bio-political government (Dean 1999: 50). In other words a contradiction between liberalism as a moral and civilising philosophy and liberalism as free market economics. In relation to the issue of gender one of the persistent paradoxes that it produces is a tension between women’s labour in the domestic sphere and women’s labour in the economic sphere; between the discourse of female domesticity and the demands of the colonial economy for labour at the cheapest cost. As already stated the importation of Indian indentured labour into the Caribbean was designed to depress wages and enable planters to assert their power over plantation labour. (Reddock 1994: 27). At the same time we have already noted,



colonial policy in the nineteenth century, was also heavily committed to presenting the humanitarian face of colonialism to appease British public opinion (Hall, C 2002). This gives rise to many tensions and contradictions for colonial governments as we see here in the instance of the handling of Indian indentured labour by the colonial government of Trinidad.

When Indian indentureship began in Trinidad in 1834, as in the case of the Chinese in Jamaica very few women came. The planter's emphasis upon labour discouraged recruitment of women and the possibility of children. So whilst the colonial policy of both state and Church had been to foster the patriarchal family amongst the newly emancipated Black population, the demands of commerce favoured single Indian men as indentured labourers. This created concerns from both the Anti-Slavery Society and the colonial government in India about "the absence of provision to safeguard families that were left behind in India" (Reddock 1994: 43). On these grounds in 1839, the British authorities in India stopped emigration to the Caribbean. To address this problem the Caribbean authorities agreed to increase the proportion of women. The problem that then arose was the 'kind of woman' that was being recruited. The majority of women who came out to the Caribbean did not come as wives or dependents of men. By the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century only approximately thirty percent of the women were accompanying wives. The remainder were mostly what the Colonial Office in 1917 described as 'the wrong kind of women'; that is women from the "non-moral classes" in India, low caste women, unmarried pregnant women, "widows and women who have run away from their husbands or been put away by them. A small percentage were ordinary prostitutes" (Colonial Office cited in Reddock 1994: 30)

These Indian women therefore, far from being docile, dependent, subordinate characters, were instead women whom social and economic circumstances had forced to become *independent and take more control over their lives*" (Reddock 1994: 3. Italics added)

This independence was viewed as a major problem by both the Caribbean colonial authorities and Indian men. The low ratio of men to women in the early period of indenture made it easier for Indian women to leave husbands and find more congenial partners if they were dissatisfied and therefore to maintain more autonomy than would have been possible for them in India (Reddock op cit: 43). One result of this was that between 1872 and 1882 in Trinidad there was an increase in the murder of Indian women by Indian men as men competed to control women (Reddock op cit: 34). This situation led Indian men to petition the Trinidad colonial government for the right to prosecute an unfaithful wife and her lover in court, with redress of financial compensation to the husband or imprisonment of the lover *and* imprisonment for wives who refused to return home. Reddock concludes from this that what Indian men wanted

by this was not divorce but preservation of their households. Another way of viewing this might be to see this also in terms of the will to preserve their property in women, for as Reddock notes this perspective positions women as objects of disputes between men (Reddock 1994: 32)<sup>29</sup>. Other ways in which the colonial government sought to reinforce Indian women's control by and dependence on Indian men whilst also keeping them within the sphere of plantation labour include paying them lower wages than men and withholding from Indian women their right to a free allocation of land after their period of indentureship was done. Indian indentured labourers were entitled to either free passage back to India or a free allocation of land in the Caribbean if they did not wish to return to India. However, allocations of land were only made to Indian men even though Indian women as indentured labourers were also entitled in their own right to free passage back to India. Therefore the only way that a woman could benefit from the land allocation policy was to attach herself to a man. It is clear from this description that although Indian men were able to maintain a great deal of personal power over Indian women as well as socially sanctioned authority through the state that traditional Indian patriarchy was not implanted wholesale into the Caribbean. Colonial attitudes towards Indian men and women reflected attitudes of Orientalism, which viewed Indian women as passive victims of despotic men, despite clear evidence to the contrary in the Caribbean.

It is possible to see in these examples of how African, Chinese, and Indian gender and family arrangements<sup>30</sup> are differentially targeted by colonial policy and practice, the imperatives of labour and the exigencies of everyday life in the Caribbean. It is also apparent that the gender and class specificities of colonial rule were intimately bonded to a racial taxonomy of the social environment that organised not only the public sphere of power, rule and labour, but through the layers of intimacy outlined by Lowe above sought to control the intimate 'private' spaces of family, sex and reproduction. For example, a range of practices aimed at preventing miscegenation between Indians and Africans sought to maintain the separation and isolation of Indian women away from African men in order to secure the reproduction of a racially distinct labour system. This means that systems of patriarchy that may have existed prior to contact

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<sup>29</sup> Although Indian men got their wish in the passing of the Indian Marriage and Divorce Ordinances of 1881 and 1899, none of this applied to Indian religious weddings that had not been registered with the colonial state. Muslim and Hindu Indian marriages were not granted legal recognition in Trinidad until as late as 1936. This reluctance can be understood in terms of the desire to Christianise the Indian population.

<sup>30</sup> It is beyond the scope of this study to examine colonial policy and practice towards the emancipated Native American population in places such as Guyana or white families and women. Anne Stoler (2002) has addressed the latter in relation to Dutch Indonesia in *Carnal Knowledge And Imperial Power*.

and movement to the Americas were radically destabilised and re-organised in the new situation and were subservient to the needs of racial government and capitalism.

The extent to which racial rule brought different groups of people together but then sought to control the kinds of contacts and intimacies they could have problematises the loose application of the concept of patriarchy to describe the diverse cultures of male privilege and power that shaped post-emancipation Caribbean societies. Different groups within the Caribbean were arranged in a colonial hierarchy of sexual and gender respectability linked to racial personhood and rights to freedom *and therefore political rights*. Claiming one's rights to political self-rule becomes expressed within 'respectable' Caribbean nationalism of the 1940's and 1950's in terms of ones proprietorship in women. We are beginning now to connect the memory of slavery and the immediate post-war period of Caribbean immigration to Britain.

### **Women Labour and Anti-colonial/Decolonial Politics: 1938 – 1948**

By the end of the nineteenth century Crown Colony<sup>31</sup> rule had been established across all of Britain's Caribbean possessions. Across the British Empire as a whole settled colonial administrations had been established in most places and the economic machine of empire was turning over efficiently and profitably. Thus we can say that certainly the beginning of the twentieth century through to the inter-war years of the 1930's represent the peak of British imperial power and might in the world, (Stoler 1989: 651). From the 1940's and particularly after 1945 this begins to change as Britain enters into the period of decolonisation.

A number of global economic and political factors provided the external 'pushes' for decolonisation. Principle amongst these the declining profitability of the Caribbean territories as a result of the Depression, the economic impact of World War Two on world sugar and commodity prices and shifts in the internal balance of power as a result of the Cold War. These also contributed to international factors within Caribbean territories agitating for change. The slump in world demand for sugar had contributed to high levels of unemployment in the Caribbean during the mid to late 1930's. In the past temporary migration to other parts of the Caribbean Basin and Latin America to undertake agricultural work had offset seasonal and

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<sup>31</sup> Crown Colony rule refers to the direct rule of a colony by an executive governor, elected under a limited franchise. The Governor General was the *de facto* representative of the British government until the mid-1940. This is when Britain began the long road to full decolonisation by granting self-government under universal adult suffrage but still under 'dominion' status. Trinidad and Jamaica were the first Caribbean countries to be given full constitutional independence in 1962, and that process continued throughout the Caribbean into the late 1980's. Several Caribbean countries remain British Overseas territories (e.g. Monserrat, Bermuda, Anguila) with very divergent degrees of self-government.

other fluctuations in employment. Due to the worldwide economic conditions this safety valve disappeared. Unemployment, poverty and even malnutrition spread across the whole Caribbean Basin and South America, the whole region was affected by the international economic downturn. This led to a prolonged period of labour unrests, hunger marches, and rebellions in the British Caribbean territories from 1934. These came to a head between 1937 – 1939 culminating in major civil unrest across the whole of the British Caribbean and British Guyana. At its peak in 1937 and 1938, British troop ships were stationed off several islands and troops used to quell the unrests. These events sowed the seeds of both the Caribbean unionised Labour Movement and Caribbean anti-colonial nationalism. It is here in the formation of both these movements that we find once again concerns over gender relations and the role of colonised women in the workforce and public life coming to the fore in debates over the future of colonial rule in the region.

The specificities of colonial state responses are particular to each Caribbean island, but it is possible to discern a general policy of the British Colonial Office to these events especially when we look at the twin development of constitutional (political) and labour (economic) policy through the prism of gender and women. The response of the colonial policy can be summed up as seeking firstly to separate economic concerns from political concerns; i.e. to break the power of the unrests in which political and economic demands were fused and secondly, to remove women from the category of worker.

Another factor influencing labour unrest was the rise in ‘colour consciousness’ amongst African Diaspora populations at this time; or what in the terms of both the USA and European colonial governments was perceived as anti-white “colour prejudice” and “colour feeling” (CO 1945: 59). Much of this is attributed in the literature to demobbed Black servicemen returning from the First World War, embittered by their experiences of discrimination in Europe and intolerant of white political and financial power at home (Bolland 1992). Yet it would be a mistake to imagine that the consciousness of racial exploitation in the African Diaspora had not existed amongst colonised populations long before the *concept of racism* had been formulated in Europe to explain German Nazism (Furedi 1998). Ethiopianism had helped to establish an African Diaspora sensibility and in the twentieth century this has informed both religious and secular political movements. For example Ethiopianism found secular political expression in the nineteen twenties and thirties in the Back To Africa movement led by Jamaica émigré to the USA, Marcus Garvey. At its height in the mid-twenties, Garvey’s United Negro Improvement Association (the UNIA) had approximately fifty branches inside the USA and around two hundred and seventy outside of the USA in Latin America, the Caribbean, Canada, England and Africa. Garvey asserted that it was only on racial grounds

that the Black man was universally oppressed and therefore any political programme would need to address the question of *race first*. (Martin 1976: 23). In addition, the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 further inflamed Black resentment to white rule.

In 1938, following the labour unrests the British government set up the West Indies Royal Commission which sent out a team to tour the whole of the British Caribbean to survey the situation and decide what action needed to be taken. This report, also known as the Moyne Report was the most important report on the West Indies in the post war period and shaped colonial policy in the Caribbean through the forties until the granting of independence to the first Caribbean territories in 1962. That the labour rebellions of the 1930's contributed to both the growth of Caribbean trade unionism and the political parties that went on to shape Caribbean decolonial struggles of the 1940's and 1950's is uncontroversial. What is less well established is how this period impacted the sexual division of labour in the region and masculinised decolonial and nationalist politics. Nigel Bolland (2001) identifies the Moyne Report as marking a shift in British Colonial Office Policy from one based prior to the disturbances on a policy of gradual social and political reforms, to a new sense of urgency especially after the outbreak of war aimed at "rehabilitating" the Caribbean region in particular but the Empire as a whole in order to keep the colonies content during the war and avoid giving propaganda opportunities to Britain's war time enemies (Bolland 2001: 385 – 387). The Colonial Office had in the early days of the war impressed (not without resistance) on the British Cabinet its concerns that failure to implement social and economic reforms in the Caribbean could lead to a resurgence in labour unrest in the region and more generally could hand a propaganda opportunity to Britain's war-time enemies to fuel anti-British feeling in the Empire. So although the West India Royal Commission Report into the social conditions that had contributed to the labour rebellions was completed by 1939 and reported to the Cabinet Office in early 1940, and its recommendations published and implemented soon after, the government used war time censorship powers to keep the publication of the full report back until 1945.

Bolland characterises the thrust of the Moyne Report as being concerned with rehabilitating Caribbean colonies back into acquiescence and away from confrontation with the colonial governments, by two primary mechanisms: firstly the use of welfare reforms and public works programmes to assuage the poverty, poor living conditions and unemployment that had fuelled the rebellions; secondly, the use of labour legislation and policies to encourage "responsible trade unionism" and in so doing separate economic concerns from political concerns (Bolland 2001: 392). Bolland offers an extensive discussion of the activities of the British Trade Union movement in the development of trade unionism in the Caribbean at this time and the direct

interventions of Sir Walter Citrine General Secretary of the British TUC (Bolland, 2001: 213). In this way the British TUC became an agent of colonial racial labour reform. A number of interventions sought to promote trade unionism but inhibit their autonomous development by requiring affiliation to the British TUC and therefore the governance of its rules and to restrict political demands in the region (Bolland 2001: 392).

In Bolland's account of Caribbean labour and politics there is no attention to gender. What this does by virtue of the naturalisation of a separate spheres ideology is masculinise the categories of both 'worker' and 'politics'. Contrast this with Rhoda Reddock's account of both the labour rebellions and the Moyne Report. Reddock convincingly argues for the centrality of gender and women in the civil unrest of the 1930's, the rise of the labour and nationalist movements and the Moyne Report. Reddock provides countless examples of women's involvement in Black consciousness movements - especially the Garvey movement in the 1920's and 1930's as well as the emerging labour movement of the 1930's. Women were active both in organising and participating in hunger marches, labour marches, strikes and the trade union movement. (Reddock, 1994: 133). Reddock argues that the significance of the Moyne Report lies in how it systematically set about securing a sexual division of labour based upon the separate spheres model and transforming Caribbean gender relations. This is implemented from the 1930's onwards through labour regulations aimed at transforming women's participation in the labour market *and* educational and social welfare policies aimed at an intensification of the domestic ideology. Both of these become part of a concerted effort to manage both the effects of high unemployment by removing large numbers of women from the labour force<sup>32</sup> and reconstituting them as 'housewives' or re-categorising feminised occupations such as domestic worker and shop worker outside of the category of wage labour and thus ineligible for trade union membership. In short Reddock sums up colonial post-war labour and social welfare policy represented by the Moyne report as "not meant to liberate the colonized but rather was the means whereby the values and interests of the colonisers and masters would be internalised as their own" (Reddock, 1994: 48). This domestication of women's labour meant that by the mid 1940's women's role within unionism had been marginalized to supportive roles, as Caribbean men asserted their leadership of unionised labour. Thus it is clear that the Moyne Report's policies of education and labour reforms were

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<sup>32</sup> For example, in 1946 changes in Census categories and measuring systems removed many jobs done by women (e.g. domestic work and shop work) from the category of employed work and then switched to measuring unemployment by the labour force model, rather than counting the whole population. This instantly removed large numbers of women from the unemployment figures and redefined unemployed women as housewives.

key technologies of westernisation as modernisation, so that by the mid to late 1940's in "the middle strata takeover of the labour movement, women were increasingly excluded." (Reddock 1994: 284). Reddock's analysis is important in enabling us to trace the twin processes in which liberalism is advanced in the Caribbean at the same time as its naturalised gendered gender-blindness (Wendy Brown 1995) is reproduced.

The Moyne Report is remarkable by the way in which it attempts to balance a number of apparently opposing positions. Firstly it is strongly committed to the importance of promoting marriage, the nuclear family and a separate spheres philosophy at the same time as appearing to advance an enlightened policy of equal rights based upon *non-racialism* and women's rights. So for example it assiduously refuses to enter into a consideration of special provisions for East Indians on the grounds that

"The future of this population is bound up with the West Indies... In the circumstances any measures which cause the East Indians to look upon themselves, or to be looked upon, as a people apart will at once pave the way for inter-racial rivalries and jealousies and at the same time prejudice the proper handling of the many problems involving all the peoples of the West Indies" (CO 1945: 417)

In a society so ordered and governed on racial lines, this is quite an astonishing assertion but one which becomes more understandable once one acknowledges the political importance for Britain at this time<sup>33</sup> to be seen to be disavowing race as a legitimate basis of political organisation and social organisation. In the post war period British *colonial* and British *domestic* systems of racial rule were on a collision course. Within the U.K explicit forms of racial discrimination expressed a powerful government resistance to Black and Asian immigration to Britain and on the other colonial governors in the Caribbean were urging the Cabinet to permit immigration to Britain as a way of easing the high levels of unemployment there, which were threatening the stability of the colonial order (Spencer 1997: 39). Also at the international level colonialism and the Colour Bar in the U.K. were appearing increasingly anomalous. This followed the shifts in the international climate of opinion on race following Nazism and the subsequent United Nations 1945 Declaration on Human Rights. The disavowal of the significance of race in the Moyne Report contrasts with the view of the 1949 Royal Commission on Population in Britain which in recognising that Britain would need one hundred and forty thousand extra labourers per year argued that this policy

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<sup>33</sup> Although the report was conducted in 1938, it was not published until 1945, although many of its recommendations had already been implemented by then.

could only be welcome without reserve if the migrants were of good human stock and not prevented by their race or religion from intermarrying with the host population and becoming merged with it" ( Home Office correspondence to the Under-Secretary of the Colonial Office, 1954 cited in Spencer 1997: 72)

The concealed discourse of race and sex contained within the Home Office's fear of racial and religious intimacy is transparently revealed here and contrasts with the Colonial Office's rhetoric of non-racialism and universal rights. It is in the contradictory attitudes and positions of these two Ministries that the dilemmas of colonialism and the pressure for decolonisation are most acutely articulated.

In terms of gender the Moyne Report's assertion of equal rights for women recommends a range of measures for improving the status of women. However there is in fact little contradiction here between this apparent liberalism and its paternalism. For the Moyne Reports view of women's ideal status is both as respectable mother and wife, but also responsible middle-class citizens sharing in the civic running of the colony through Civil Service appointments and public office (CO 1945: 230). Given that at this time few Black women would have had the education to take up such positions implies that the women Moyne has in mind for public office are not the same ones who are the targets of the report's social welfare reforms aimed explicitly at dealing with the "lack of family life" (CO 1945: 220) in the Caribbean. Improving Caribbean women and family life was clearly to be the task of the mostly white and brown elite and middle class women, through their work in charitable organisations. These respectable women were to be the active reformers of their mostly darker-skinned working class Caribbean sisters.

A surfeit of comments regarding the promiscuity ignorance and immorality of the Black population blames the poverty and high infant mortality rate in the Caribbean, not on the inherently exploitative system of colonialism but on pathological Black families, promiscuous mothers and irresponsible fathers (CO 1945: 221). The Report cites illegitimacy rates of sixty percent (ibid.). This is supported by the 1931 census in Trinidad that showed that legal marriages had increased from 21.3% in 1901 to just 26.5%<sup>34</sup> by 1931 (Reddock op cit: 83). We can interpret this either as a failure of Black people to be 'civilised' by westernisation or indicating an alternative or oppositional gender system. The Moyne Commission rejected submissions made to it that cited the legacy of slavery as the reason for the unpopularity of

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<sup>34</sup> We must recall that Hindu and Muslim marriages were not given legal status in Trinidad law until 1945.



marriage, when slaves were not permitted to marry. Instead the report blames the “social evil” of illegitimacy and unmarried cohabitation on “the absence of strong opposing public opinion among a people whose immature minds are ruled by their adult bodies” (CO op cit: 221). The remedy as already mentioned is a proposal for a battery of social welfare and educational provisions to instil the attitudes and habits of ‘proper’ family life.

The discourse of the Moyne Report also reflects an emerging colonial response to rising nationalism and ‘colour-consciousness’ in the Caribbean. Its preoccupation with women’s status presents the treatment of women as a yardstick for measuring the moral and *political* distance between different racialised categories of Caribbean men and the degree to which Caribbean men as a whole were not yet fit for self-government. Their lack of readiness was to be inferred by the high levels of unmarried cohabitation and illegitimacy, which proved in the eyes of the Colonial Office that Caribbean men had not yet fully gained possession of their sexualised bodies or the social control of their women. In contrast its rhetoric of gender rights signalled how advanced European culture and civilisation was in comparison with Caribbean Creole cultures.

Countering this view, Reddock argues that Black Caribbean women developed their own philosophy of gender relations in which marriage was not appealing. Whilst marriage was an unattainable ideal for many women who viewed it as requiring signs of respectability that they could not afford, such as expensive weddings, receptions and a ‘respectable house’, many others regarded marriage as giving men legal authority over women thus reducing women’s autonomy and freedom to leave (Reddock 1994: 60). Reddock cites the example of a couple who despite having had a long-term stable conjugal union are forced by the wife of the plantation owner where they worked to marry. The woman protests to the plantation owner’s wife;

I ain’t neber go wid no odder man all dese years. Morgan treat me good cos he knows plenty o mens would be well glads for me to go to dem. If I marry he, he gwine know I cain’t leave he by de law, so he gwine commence to treat me dif’reent. He gwine give me bad words and beat me (Black plantation worker cited in Reddock 1994: 60)

Needless to say they marry and her predictions come true. In contrast, within the Indian community, contact with the Indian Nationalist Movement in the 1940’s helped to promote an ideal of Indian womanhood characterised by the qualities of the Hindu Goddess, Sita – charity, devotion to husband, mistress of the house and motherhood (Reddock op cit: 61). Clearly there is a fit here between the values of colonial patriarchy and Indian gender systems, but I think it is incorrect and unhelpful to describe these practices as patriarchy as both Reddock and

Mohammed do. For this conflates the power of different groups of men with state and Church power within a given nation. This distinction is important in terms of having some precision in how our conception of different levels and types of power.

This woman plantation worker's attitude towards marriage tells us something about African Caribbean women's meanings of freedom. Their rejection of marriage I want to suggest amounts to a rejection of the assumption of female submission to male sovereignty. Thus it also enunciates a counter-conception of personhood. In classical nineteenth century liberal philosophy women are not legally or morally persons but subordinate members of a patriarchal household. A woman's personhood and therefore her access to rights is accessed through her status as the possession of a man (Moller Onken 1980: 249), be that her husband or father. Although some nineteenth century liberals such as John Stuart Mill and non-conformist Christians like the Quakers and Dissenters attempted to assert women's 'natural freedom' this seldom strayed from assumptions about the gender arrangements with the family. Having secured their freedom from slavery it is clear from the unpopularity of marriage that African Caribbean women were largely unwilling to give up the ownership in themselves that legal marriage implied. The prevalence of cohabitation suggests that it is not commitment they eschewed but marital bondage and the assumption of women's natural subservience to men within the domestic realm. Likewise African Caribbean men may also have rejected marriage because they recognised that marriage would subject them to additional responsibilities towards dependant household members without a sufficiently rewarding increase in their social and economic power as *men* entitled to a share in patriarchal power within civil society and state power. Still others as we have already noted may have embraced patrimony as a sign of both their own and their women's freedom from the domination of their old masters, the planter class. Thus the weak integration of patriarchal marriage into Caribbean working class cultures from emancipation to the mid-twentieth century at least, suggests not so much moral weakness on the part of the African populations as the absence of the material and political conditions of possibility in which the discourse of liberal patriarchy could be both politically viable or morally appealing to Black people. So put simply, under the restrictive terms of the colonial social contract, what was the pay-off for African-Caribbean<sup>35</sup> men and women in entering the sexual contract of marriage? We might even consider the refusal of marriage in favour of cohabitation and other modes of family life to be a form of resistance to

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<sup>35</sup> I specifically say African here because the experience of domination under slavery had largely eradicated pre-existing African clan-based gender philosophies and marriage practices, whilst Chinese and Indian contract labourers arrived with existing gender systems in tact, even if these were subsequently abandoned, adapted or altered by the conditions of Caribbean society.

westernisation and white domination. For *colonial liberalism's* vision of *Black freedom* promised the substitution of a coercive labour system with one based on *contract* as the sign of a relationship *freely* entered into. Yet it is liberalism's racialised colonization of humanness that simultaneously absented or at least deferred the newly emancipated from the category of persons who could be permitted full self-ownership (to withhold themselves from waged labour) personal privacy from the incursion of the state and civil society into the intimate spaces of a family life (to choose not to marry) and the autonomy of a self-directed moral consciousness (to refuse assimilation into colonial morality, Christianity and European culture). Thus the resistance of Black and Native American populations to enter into these new contractual relationships (marriage and wage labour) was interpreted not as signs of freedom, but by some planters as evidence of their racially inherent laziness and moral degeneracy or by the colonial state and the Church as evidence of their moral immaturity and need for civilising governance. Thus the introduction of indentured Chinese and Indian contract labour as Lowe demonstrates was not simply a matter of economic expediency but expresses the Colonial Office's assumptions about the family life and gender practices of differently racialised labouring populations. Indentureship must be understood therefore as also part of the elaboration of a racialised and gendered taxonomy of freedom.

The introduction of Chinese (and later, Indian) contract labourers, as "free labour" was likewise an instrumental use of the discourses of freedom at a historical moment when the practical meanings of the concept of free labour were still emerging. .... The use of the category of "freedom" was central to the development of a hierarchy of labouring groups, and to the emerging international division of labour. (Lowe 2005: 11)

The policies and practices of both state and Church that governed the reconstruction of Caribbean societies as free societies sought to transform Caribbean slaves and indentured labourers into free persons and willing wage labourers. In the context of British nineteenth and twentieth century colonialism this involved advancing the values of nineteenth century classical liberalism and state patriarchy at the same time as those values were constrained by liberalism's presumptive white hegemony. In liberal patriarchy the sexual subordination of women in marriage is both required by and an effect of the social contract that generates liberal political orders (Brown 1995: 136). In other words liberal patriarchy rests on a social contract between men and a sexual contract between men and women. Yet colonial states as racial states govern by restricting civil rights and denying political rights *on the basis of race*.

Whether the newly emancipated consciously rejected marriage for political and ethical reasons or simply found it unattainable materially, the reality is that the conditions of slavery had

seriously undermined the capacities of African-Creole men to retain and maintain any pre-existing African or Native American cultures of male privilege based upon paternal power within the domain of the family. If slavery is understood as representing pre-modern forms of domination, we can recognize that slave masters could in deed rule their plantations like despotic monarchs if they wished and thus their sovereignty could extend into the intimate spaces of enslaved bodies and family life. In this respect European abolitionists had got it quite right. If the transition from feudalism to liberalism involved separating out the private domain of the family from the public domain of the state and civil society through “the shrinking productive function of the household, the steady removal of production and exchange to the distinctly bounded realm of the economy” (Brown 1995: 137), then Caribbean colonial societies do not fit comfortably into this model of the emergence of modern freedom. Increasingly we are recognising that the transition from pre-modern to modern forms of power represents not so much a break as a transition (Paton<sup>36</sup> 2004: 3) or even an on-going repressed continuity (Brown 2001: 12). If the separated spheres of the liberal social order are *contractually* reintegrated through the figure of the liberal man who in consenting to the authority of the state (the social contract) is able to represent the interests of his household on behalf of women, who have similarly consented to their subordination to men in marriage (the sexual contract), how did this work in nineteenth century Caribbean societies where colonised men were liberated from slavery and indentureship only to be subjected to colonial governance and denied access to the hegemonically therefore invisibly racialised, class and masculinised civil rights of liberalism?

I pose this question because I am interested in Wendy Brown’s challenge to the pre-eminence of patriarchy in feminist explanations for women’s subordination within liberal orders (Brown 1995: 137). I am interested for two main reasons: firstly, because of how her response enables us to better grasp the genealogy of Black women’s relationship to modern freedom; Secondly, because how Wendy Brown answers this question exposes an epistemological dilemma. Wendy Brown asks whether deploying an analysis of women’s subordination based upon nineteenth century liberalism remains valid for analysing the contemporary situation of women in late modernity? This question is important because it forces a consideration of the

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<sup>36</sup> Diana Paton’s study in *No Bond But The Law* of the changes in the colonial penal system in the Caribbean between the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (i.e. during the transition from slavery to freedom) critiques Foucault’s argument that modernity marks a radical break between feudal systems of power based on coercion and modern systems of power based on processes of rationalisation and normalisation. Paton shows how in the Caribbean at this time, this distinction consistently broke down in the practice despite the colonial state’s efforts to rationalise and impersonal systems of punishment. (Paton 2004: 10)

explanatory limits of using the experience of Black and colonised women under the conditions of Caribbean emancipation or mid-twentieth century decolonisation and immigration to analyse the contemporary experiences of Black British women. Pursuant to Brown giving a negative response to this question (which I will explain in due course) Brown then asks, given the weakened and diminished significance of patriarchy, how “does a liberal discourse of generic personhood re-inscribe rather than emancipate us from male domination?” (Brown *op cit*: 141). Examining the first question through the prism of Black and Other colonised women in the nineteenth century forces a radical interrogation of the second and underscores the epistemological imperatives of thinking narratives of modernity *postcolonially*.

### ***Decolonising Freedom: Slaves, Contracted Persons and Equal Rights***

We need to understand the Moyne Report as a decolonising technology of liberalism. The decisive shift in colonial state power represented by the Moyne Report is the shift from classical liberal colonialism to decolonising liberalism. This is the reform that decolonisation requires within liberalism from the language of *contract* to the language of *rights*. It is discernable in the Report’s contradictory attitudes towards family life, gender and race. In order to recognise this, it is necessary to understand firstly, how its policies to promote women’s domestication contrasted with a concern for improving ‘women’s status.’ Secondly, its studied impartiality towards differently positioned racialised groups reflects not only the gendered ontology of liberalism that transcends its patriarchal moment (Brown 1995), but also the racialised ontology of liberal conceptions of personhood and freedom that becomes stretched to breaking point by its decolonising moment. This involves deploying genealogy to remember and uncover what is usually forgotten and disavowed in the history of modern liberal humanism. Bringing together Lisa Lowe’s interrogation of the intimacies of colonial governmentality and Wendy Brown’s discussion of the gendered ontology of liberalism helps us to bring together what is habitually held apart.

Black political discourses in so far as they have used the Black family to articulate anti-colonial or anti-racist politics, have tended to either argue for more patriarchal power to be given to Black men to be ‘real men’ (examples would be the Nation of Islam and the Black Power Movement) and/or to defend the matriarchal /matrifocal home as the ‘natural place’ of Black women’s empowerment or the Black family as a place of refuge from racism (Black

Feminism, Afrocentrism).<sup>37</sup> Less acknowledged at least in relation to the Caribbean is the position of Black and other non-white/non-European men and *therefore women and families* within “modern liberal humanism and its subsequent civil, economic, political, and epistemological institutions”. (Lowe 2005) The racialised taxonomies of labouring families judged by the criteria of nearness to a European norm of family life and gender relations that Lisa Lowe describes also inscribed a hierarchy of free *gendered* persons. It is here that Lowe’s conception of intimacy (within the family) as a sign of the right to privacy is key in understanding how nineteenth century liberalism was not simply gendered as Wendy Brown argues but also racialised.

Wendy Brown argues that the relationship between the “naturalness” of civil society and the “naturalness” of the family in liberal doctrine lies in the extent to which “each is gendered such that the nature of man is expressed in the former while the nature of woman is realised in the latter” (Brown 1995: 147). Brown’s critique of nineteenth century patriarchal liberalism is littered with references to freedom, slavery and even one to race, yet she does not include the fact of colonialism or the different experiences of different categories of women within patriarchy in her analysis. So in exposing the naturalisation of masculinity within conceptions of civil society and the naturalisation of femininity within the family Brown appears to obliquely acknowledge the presence of racial difference but to then to immediately disavow its analytical significance. This is particularly apparent when she describes the significance of liberal conceptions of equality and their capacity to transcend patriarchal relations whilst retaining the subordination of women. She argues that whereas a “contractarian discourse once demarcated the legitimacy of a liberal capitalist order vis-à-vis... feudalism or slavery” in late modernity, liberalism has become hegemonic and no longer reliant on the social contract for its legitimacy. Instead it is liberalism’s discourse of generic personhood or sameness that paradoxically re-inscribes male dominance. (Brown op cit: 141) Brown’s impressive argument is too full to relate here, but in summary she argues that the gendered ontology of the liberal social order (feminised family domain/masculinised public domain) is naturalised and rendered invisible by the liberal discourse of equality as sameness, as rights.

In this regard, liberalism both produces and positions gendered subjects whose production and positioning it disavows through naturalisation .... and produces abstract genderless, colourless sovereign subjects .... whose sovereignty and abstract equality

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<sup>37</sup> One of the few exceptions to this is the Marcus Garvey Movement of the 1920’s and 1930’s that actively promoted the empowerment of women within the movement and eschewed the domestication of African women.

contend uneasily with the discourses marking relative will-ness and inferiority to socially marked attributes” (Brown 1995: 142)

In other words liberalism naturalises a spatial grammar or government of the social based upon gender; in so doing it essentialises and conflates gender as difference/inferiority. It then glosses over this with the generic or neutral language of equality (as human sameness); thus disavowing the significance of difference through the language of justice. The only difference that is given analytical import is gender difference and in this regard Brown offers a convincing conceptualisation of liberalism’s inherently gendered ontology and sexism. However, it is perplexing how in this formulation Brown reproduces by the same moves she identifies in relation to sexism, liberalism’s eurocentrism that erases and disavows liberalism’s inherently racialised ontology. For example, she says that “the sameness of men requires the difference that is woman, just as whiteness requires people of colour, heterosexuality requires homosexuality and so forth. Put another way, differences among men are named “woman”, displaced from men onto women” (Brown op cit: 153). In deploying a modernist oppositional dualism the intersectionality of race and gender are overlooked. The partial recognition and then forgetting of the connections between liberalism’s spatial distinctions between Europe/non-Europe; male/female in the inaugural moment of modernity and liberalism (Hesse 2005) demonstrates a deeply interred set of epistemological habits, that we could describe as ‘the hegemonic narrations of modernity that disavow the conceptual influence and social governance of race even where reference is made to its empirical incidence’ (Hesse 2005: 1)

Well where does this leave us in trying to understand the significance of the Moyne Report? Well Brown’s suspicion that feminism has made a fetish of patriarchy as the foundation of women’s subordination within liberal orders (Brown op cit: 137) helps to better conceptualised the significance of the infrequency of marriage, but only if we reintroduce the disavowed significance of race to liberal patriarchy. For as Lowe notes, “Understanding intimacy to be the property of the liberal individual is precisely a *racialised* effect of modern institutions of citizenship, family, and civil society that continue to displace their conditions of emergence.” (Lowe forthcoming 2005: 8). The efforts of the colonial state to impose a patriarchal family structure on the Black family represents the resolutely illiberal incursion of the state into the very private life of the colonised non-European that patriarchal liberalism relies upon and is supposed to prevent. In addition, the granting of patrimony to African-Creole men as a technology for inculcating a new contractual order, sought to establish a sexual contract between the Black man and Black women but to support only a partial and *racially restricted* social contract between the state and Black men. Black men were to be granted the new right of patrimony and the racially defined civil protection of the state against the invasion of their

privacy and ownership of their bodies by the planter class in return for freely contracting to the civil contract of wage labour. They were not (yet) to be granted full citizenship (i.e. political power in the sphere of the state) until they could demonstrate maturity *as men* (Hall. C 2002) in the familial and economic spheres. This supports Wendy Browns argument that “while the familial and civil dimensions of liberalism’s split subject are inter-constitutive and their histories correlated, these histories are not identical nor even deducible from each other” (Brown 1995: 139). Therefore whilst capitalism shapes the family it is not its sole discursive constituent and “old liberalism’s ideological naturalisation of the family” (Brown 1995: 139) within the sexual contract has now given way in late modernity to a rights based discourse that permits the invisible man of capitalist possessive individualism to flourish “across the world” (Brown *ibid*) even in the absence of the patriarchal family.

What this reveals is how race was an integral aspect of nineteenth century liberal patriarchy’s gendered ontology. Colonised men and women were differentially subordinated by liberal patriarchy’s gendered and racialised ontology and racialising governmentality. Black, Indian, Chinese and Creole paternal power existed within marriage but was constrained by colonised men’s residual powers within the public and political sphere, whilst their paternal power outside of a marriage contract was constrained by the lack of legal status accorded to other forms of heterosexual partnerships and the freedoms that women could retain as cohabitees or non-resident partners. In this arrangement African-Creole populations in the absence of religiously or culturally unified alternative gender systems were especially effected. Thus paternal power was unevenly distributed, initially by racial distinctions and then as a Black working class and peasantry developed in the twentieth century by class as well. So that marriage becomes increasingly a mark of both ethnic distinction and class status especially from the 1940’s and 1950’s once working class labour-led anti-colonial agitation is overtaken by the middle-class led constitutional decolonisation process (Bolland 2001: 591) and post-independence nationalism. This confirms that whilst the nineteenth century colonial regime could be described as patriarchal, the conditions of a racial state compromised the relationship between the civil and familial dimensions of a contractarian discourse and introduced a split in male power. The gendered *and racialised* spatial grammar of liberal colonial society in constructing the political sphere of the state as hegemonically male *and white* makes it impossible to think of liberalism then or now as simply gendered.

The tension in the Moyne report between moral paternalism and universal rights points to the transitional nature of colonial authority as colonial contractual patriarchy gives way to a post-war decolonising discourse of international human rights. This identifies the beginning of the decline of liberalism’s patriarchal hegemony as much earlier than ‘late modernity’ and



relocates it in the post-war context of decolonisation. Exposing the colonial and racialised context of this shift involves remembering the importance of the war against Nazism in producing a discourse of anti-racism as well as shaping the post-war international consensus on human rights. These developments along with realignments in the international world order produced by the rise of American power and the Cold War all precipitated the move towards decolonisation (Bolland 1992; Furedi 1998; Spencer 1997). The exposure and remembering of Black and colonised people's experiences and knowledges that a postcolonial genealogy enables, demonstrates why "the *de*-colonial preoccupations of postcolonial readings are increasingly obliged to be explicit in deconstructing what is concealed, excluded, marginalized" (Hesse 2005: 1)

How does this genealogy of Black and colonised women's experiences of liberal freedom help us to read the Beveridge Report alongside the Moyne Report? Well it makes clear that the maternalism of the Beveridge Report operates in the service of a decolonising British nationalism; a residual patriarchal nationalism that begins to look increasingly like the last-ditch attempt to revive liberal patriarchy at home; one that is informed by the need to 'keep Britain white' by rebuilding the homogenous national family by placing white women firmly back in the domestic sphere, after her temporary 'liberations' of wartime. In this the invisible figure of the colonised woman as a racialised class of female labour becomes important in maintaining white liberal patriarchy *in Britain*. In contrast the Moyne Report is caught in the transition from a patriarchal colonial gender order in which colonial morality is still residually functioning as criteria for judging the colonised population's fitness for self-rule; and an emergent and pressing universal rights discourse of equality. The latter in being shaped by the imperatives of containing and assuaging the racial consciousness underlying the anti-colonial protests and demands of the 1930's, is at pains to disavow racism (in the name of universal rights) and deny racial difference (in the name of universal sameness). At the same it is also caught between, asserting the rights of women, as a way of marking the political superiority of white masculinity over colonised men and the moral superiority of European culture and values over those of the colonised populations. At the same time the Moyne Report also introduced or intensified education, social welfare and employment policies aimed securing the subordination of colonised women within carefully defined gender roles within both the family and civil society. An unintended consequence of this is that a skilled reserve of racially differentiated but domestically trained women become available after the war just as Britain

was looking to find a way of addressing a shortage of female labour<sup>38</sup> to staff the expansion in ‘women’s work’ in the newly formed Welfare State and in the newly nationalised industries.

### *Conclusion*

In this chapter I have brought together the Beveridge Report of 1945, which shaped the fabric of Britain as a Welfare State, and the Moyne Report of the same year, which shaped the post-war fabric of the British Caribbean territories as nations preparing for decolonisation and independence. I have argued that examining the ways in which the Black Caribbean woman enters into the discourse of those reports (even where apparently absent as in Beveridge) reveals how concerns over state power and authority become represented and operationalised through racial grammars that are indelibly penetrated by both sex and gender.

Between these two moments (which are in fact one) I locate emancipation and the transition to freedom in Britain’s Caribbean territories; which is in fact anterior to both. I do this for three reasons. Firstly, to respect the structure of memory used by the women interviewed in this research; secondly to denaturalise and problematise their historical framing by introducing the post-slavery experience of Caribbean freedom to trace the legacy of this moment in contemporary ideas of the independent Black woman; thirdly, to unravel the shifting discourse of freedom in which Black women have been both subjects of government and subjects of freedom.

Colonialism’s racial taxonomies of freedom positioned the white coloniser, the emancipated Black and Native American ex-slave, the Chinese and the Indian indentured labourer within a racialised regime of sex and gender. Modern conceptions of race, sex and gender were imposed via liberal ideas of family life producing a normalisation of both labouring bodies and sexualised bodies on a grid of civility and therefore proximity to freedom and political citizenship. Before emancipation the planter could afford to maintain his Brown or Black concubine as sign of his white privilege and his masculine power. After emancipation and the ascendancy of colonial bourgeois liberalism, the sexual excesses and brutal systems of maintaining the order of the planter class had to be constrained by the pious respectability of

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<sup>38</sup> The decamping of some industries such as textile and electronic manufacturing to South Asia during the war, similarly meant that South Asian women were a readily available source of industrially trained female workers after the war. As Ian Spencer notes, Caribbean women’s familiarity with the English language and culture was regarded as better fitting them for service work whilst the mechanised nature of factory work meant that the language barrier was not an obstacle to recruiting South Asian women to work in the textile and electronic industries.

the new liberal order and modern rationalism. In slavery the Black family had not been a domain of the enslaved's privacy but part of the plantation owner's private property. Black family life was neither valued nor promoted until the end of the Slave Trade and then only as a means of securing a self-reproducing labour supply and profit stream. Thus the idea of Black paternal power under the conditions of slavery is an oxymoron. As we have already noted post-emancipation efforts to produce a free waged labour force through inculcating patriarchal family arrangements involved firstly, the colonial state legally enforcing particular social arrangements aimed at establishing a waged labour force discursively based upon the male breadwinner model. This required the privatisation of the Black family and the domestication of the Black woman, and concomitantly the Church inculcating the values and moralities of self-regulating Christian families required to sustain these arrangements. Whilst their motives may not have always coincided both state and Church visions of Black freedom saw freedom as coterminous with patriarchal families. In this regard such practices can be understood as attempting to simultaneously privatise the Black family by releasing it from the dominion of the slave owner into a freely contracted relationship between workers and landowners instead. This evidence seems to support Stoler's rejection of Foucault's claim that the new bio-political regimes of modern sexuality and racism emerged as a result of sexual governance. The complementarity that nineteenth century bourgeois liberal patriarchy assumed between paternal power (within the private domain of the family) and political enfranchisement (within the civil and state domains) was denied under the conditions of colonial rule. The successive efforts of the education system, charitable and church work and the reorganisation of labour regulations since the nineteenth century sought to entrench the attitude of domesticity and marriage in Caribbean women and obscure and disavow their involvement in wage labour. The post-war shift towards a rights based model of universal equality as sameness both promoted the elevation of the status of Black and colonised women, whilst the residual compensatory patriarchy of decolonial nationalism in both Europe and the colonies, demanded their marginalisation to supportive roles in anti-colonial politics and nationalist projects.

The Moyne Report of 1945 is saturated in a rhetoric of moral condemnation and shame that reflects the way in which twentieth century liberalism had come to bury and forget its inherently racialised ontology in which racially defined and gendered categories of people were rendered ineligible for full admission into the category of citizenship, but simultaneously targeted as subjects of freedom through moral governmentality as part of the civilising mission. The Moyne Report's disregard of Black women's cultures of family life and their ideas of gender had no other way of understanding Black family life and Caribbean gender relations other than as morally sinful and socially pathological. This moral governmentality sought the internalisation of colonialism's racialised regime, which "took the form of asserting

a distinct colonial morality, explicit in its reorientation to the racial and class markers of being European.... It instilled a notion of Homo Europeans for whom superior health, wealth and education were tied to racial endowments and a White Man's norm" (Stoler 2002: 64). In this the colonised – especially perhaps the Black-African descendent of slaves was required to recognise her shameful condition as a precursor to her admittance into universal humanism and the freedoms offered by western liberalism. Black Caribbean women have resisted this governmentality of shame by behaving shamelessly and asserting pride in themselves as women and as Black people. Through a critical attitude towards marriage, valuing women's independence and power in both the private sphere of the family and the public sphere of paid work, many women have demanded respect and autonomy.

## CHAPTER 6

### Rude Bwais, Ghetto Gyals and the Transnational Logics of Postcolonial Blackness

Well dis is like ah menace to de society!  
Bigging up fi all de ghetto lady.  
All girls!  
Bruk out and go crazy!<sup>39</sup>  
(Beenie Man, Slam 1994)

Through the blues, black women were able to autonomously work out - as audiences and performers - a working class model of womanhood. .... it revealed that black women and men, the blues audience, could respond to the vastly different circumstances of the post slavery era with notions of gender and sexuality that were, to an extent, ideologically independent of the middle class cult of "true womanhood." In this sense..... the blues was a privileged site in which women were free to assert themselves as sexual beings. (Angela Davies 1998: 46)

#### *Introduction*

The previous chapter argued that the history of colonialism in the British Caribbean from emancipation in 1834 to the granting of political independence beginning in 1962 involved transforming the Caribbean from plantation societies based upon planter domination and slave labour to Creole societies based upon colonial rule and free labour. The entangled emergence of the modern bio-political rationalities of race, sex and gender with colonialism and bourgeois liberalism is acutely revealed in the tensions between laissez-faire capitalism and liberal colonial governance. Firstly, the paradoxes of a liberal colonial order are revealed in the spatial and bio-political governmentalities in which Caribbean societies emerged through a racialised and gendered grammatology of the *creole social*.

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39 *Transl.*: "Well this is like a menace to society, Compliments to all the ghetto ladies. All girls! Break out and go crazy!"

Secondly, whilst the intimacies of colonial moral governmentality attempted to domesticate the new subjects of freedom into the ideals of bourgeois respectability, Christianity and a separate spheres gender discourse, the competing demands of laissez-faire capitalism for the maximum extraction of profit and colonialism for the maintenance of white power and privilege, persistently undermined and restricted the capacity of the colonised to fulfil these moral prescriptions. Against this colonial moral order, the colonised deployed both sacred and profane modes of resistance and accommodation. Some of the non-secular practices by which the newly freed population resisted, evaded, or simply adapted the civilising and assimilationist imperatives of this westernising moral governance of freedom included the use of African religious practices such as Myalism and Obeah. By combining African retentions with the new cultures of the Caribbean, the Black population utilised their freedom to creolise Christianity and harness its powers in the service of their own self-constituting practices of freedom (as in Ethiopianism, Pocomania and the Black-led Baptist churches) The next chapter will explore a contemporary example of how Africa and the sacred are deployed in the formation of oppositional ethical and political Black subjectivities. This chapter focuses on uses of the profane in the making of Black countercultures of resistance, self-creativity, and freedom and how those freedoms can also paradoxically and perversely be/come new formulas of oppressive and disciplinary power.

From slavery to the present religion and music have been central locations for the creation of a Black public sphere in which oppositional and alternative meanings and knowledges of self, politics and society have been created, disseminated and transmitted. Black music within the counter-modernity of the Black Atlantic (Gilroy 1993) has been the site of both profane and sacred discourses of freedom, selfhood and resistance to racism and westernisation. Music has facilitated an anti-modern Black modernism (Gilroy 1993: 73) in which the horizon of modernity as the ground of reason was interrogated and reconfigured from the point of view of those visible invisible insiders (Mohanram 1999: 26) always positioned, initially outside, then subsequently on the margins of liberal humanism, yet crucial to its claims to progress. Black music has deployed orality, sound and the body to challenge the hegemony of the scribal, the visual and reason as the basis of modern self-understanding and knowledge. In the absence of political rights, music constituted an African Diaspora public sphere in which the cultural was the means of politics long before either postcolonial or post-structuralist theories problematised cultural representation as a site of colonial power and contested social constructions (David Scott 1999: 14).

Hip-Hop and to a lesser extent Jamaican Dancehall music cultures currently enjoy commanding positions in global popular music markets. Should we regard the influence of

Black popular music and African Diaspora cultures and styles on the nation and popular cultures of developed western nations as signalling the successful completion of decolonisation and therefore the 'post' colonial identity of the present? Does the mainstreaming of a variety of Black and other decolonised cultural products indicate the triumph of anti-racist democratic politics in transforming Blackness from a marker of inferiority to a signifier of style and success? Furthermore does the syncretism of Hip-Hop and other popular music cultures usher in a future beyond race? (Gilroy 2000). Currently visions of possible futures where race no longer defines social relations are accompanied by moral panics concerning the influence of popular culture on the morality of young people and the impact of multiculturalism on the nation. In Britain particular attention has been given to the pernicious impact of so-called 'Yardie gun culture' (Davison 1998) homophobic Jamaican 'murder music' (Tatchell 2004) and the 'corrupting' influence of Hip-Hop gangster culture on the inner cities of Britain (Harker 2002).

If the cultural logics of transnationalism concern the ways that inequalities and oppressions are not just imbedded in economic and political structures of states, but also disseminated at the level of culture (Ong 1999: 4). This suggests that Black popular music needs to be critiqued and analysed not just as a site of resistance (Stoltzoff 2000; Cooper 2004) but also as a technology of late modern government. Secondly, if mass mediated popular culture is a technology for the government of contemporary neo-liberal freedoms, what conceptions of freedom are imagined, promoted or contested and how? This chapter focuses primarily on Jamaican Dancehall music. I therefore commence with an introduction to Dancehall music focusing on its emergence within the Caribbean island of Jamaica in the mid 1980's. I argue that in order to understand Dancehall in the context of Black British culture we must first understand the history of Dancehall's emergence in the context of Reggae music and of Jamaican postcolonial nation-state formation.

Following this I then present an analysis of how popular culture was viewed by the group of Black Caribbean women whom I interviewed. I argue that their attitudes to the role of the media and popular music in particular in shaping hegemonic ideas about Blackness and young peoples identities in particular, reflects the shift in Black cultural politics from the politics of *the relations of representation* to the politics of representation. Having identified some of the central concepts and issues raised by these interviewees I then move on to consider them in

relation to an event at which Dancehall<sup>40</sup> music and dancing, or Bashment as it is also known, were utilized by a group of London teenage girls in a school performance. This observation enables a discussion of the particular contexts in which Dancehall as one currently popular genre of Black popular music is deployed in pursuit of very localised and generationally specific cultural practices and social negotiations. This discussion moves on to address the politics of location in order to highlight the complex even contradictory relations and practices of power into which transnational cultural formations and diverse global cultural currents flow. As these involve unequal locations and relations of power and privilege, I suggest that only a close and specific examination of the sites and contexts into which transnational cultures are deployed can reveal the new and emergent modalities of late-modern/postcolonial government and the range of “different formulae of freedom at work in our present history” (Rose 1999: 65).

### ***Slackness Verses Culture: Gender And Sexuality In Jamaican Culture***

Dancehall music emerged in the nineteen eighties from a range of musical styles in Reggae music. At that time it was more commonly known as Ragga music. Ragga is an abbreviation of ragamuffin, a word that emerged in the eighties, within the lyrics of male DJ's, as a self-referential term. To call oneself a ragamuffin was to state an attitude similar to the uses of the term "rude boy" or "rudie" in the sixties and early seventies. A ragamuffin is located in ghetto culture, and has a "bad" attitude towards authority and mainstream conventions. The positive re-appropriation of the ragamuffin identity was a subversive re-articulation of pride in an identity which had been devalued within legislative mainstream Jamaican Creole culture as well as the hegemonically Africanist cultures of the ghetto. Instead of a term of abuse, to be called 'Ragamuffin, (subsequently abbreviated to 'Ragga') became a badge of pride and belonging to a set of marginalised and devalued practices and values. David Scott has argued that the figure of the *rude bwai*, to use Jamaican Creole, has and continues to be a key signifier of Reggae ethics. Scott argues that the figure of the *rude bwai* operates as a signifier of the Jamaican body, upon which the contested cultural politics of colonial and postcolonial Jamaica has been marked (Scott 1999: 208). Whilst he is right, he is only partially right because as I will argue later in this discussion, the figure of the Black woman both in her 'respectable' and 'rude' manifestations has also been a pre-eminent site of Jamaican and arguably Black Diaspora cultural politics.

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40 Bashment roughly refers to glamorous ostentatious style indicating subcultural taste and money.



The lyrics of Reggae DJ's subvert the official culture of Jamaican society, and seek to escape the appropriation of folk culture into the scribal literary tradition by asserting an urbanised folk ethos, a "verbal maroonage" (Cooper 93: 136). Cooper explains that the word "Culture" represents the authorised values, morality, and behaviour of official Jamaican national Culture, which seeks to present itself as the representative culture of Jamaica. Cooper explains that within Reggae, *slackness* represents "backward" "rude"<sup>4</sup> folk/ghetto culture, vying for recognition and value within official Jamaican national identity. So, Slackness and Culture represent oppositional values within Jamaican society, centring on the ways that class and patriarchal or male dominated gender ideologies establish hegemonic or commonsense standards of decency. (Cooper 93: p141). Slackness in short is an "an (h)ideology of escape from the authority of omniscient Culture". (Cooper *ibid*).

I would add that Bashment, as the contemporary expression of *slackness* also represents a fissure that is not a total break within Reggae as the hegemonic expressive culture of the poor in Jamaica. Dancehall not only diverts from mainstream creole bourgeois culture, but also unsettles the hegemony of Pan-Africanist Rastafari consciousness as the legitimate and authoritative culture of the ghetto. Both creolised and Afrocentric versions of respectable Jamaican culture (and the elevation of Pan-African and Afrocentric culture to the status of respectability is a relatively recent development) are concerned with the maintenance of the values and forms of Black cultural life, which can promote racial advancement; an objective regarded as an important aim of Black expressive culture. Dancehall, on the other hand is viewed by many, in its preoccupation with sex, as a meaningless distraction, crude and rather than culturally uplifting to Black people, as mere "slackness". *Slackness* is a term that is used in everyday speech as both an adjective and a noun to describe anything considered sexually, morally, or physically 'dirty' or loose, i.e. unclean or immoral. Dancehall's 'slackness' is most acutely expressed through its preoccupation with sex and sexuality and the erotic Black body. The less popular 'gun-man' sub-genre of Dancehall is defined by the themes of violence, guns and territorial warfare within the ghetto. This discussion focuses on the Bashment genre within Dancehall which is more popular in the UK. Bashment celebrates heterosexual sexuality and glamour expressed both in the masculinist lyrics of male DJ's but also through the feminised styles of dance and dress – particularly women's fashions - that have developed as part of the Dancehall scene.

Ragga is now known as Dancehall after the primary spaces of its production, performance, and consumption within the sound system culture of Jamaican society. Within the island of Jamaica, the dancehall as both geographical place and symbolic space, is "a field of active cultural production" (Stolzoff 2000:1), a site and technology by which the poor of an

economically underdeveloped nation contest the terms of Jamaican postcolonial national identity and politics, but also simply assert the pleasure of their freedom in music and dance. Black popular culture across the diaspora is a repetitious practice of emergence that at different moments resists the alienation of the Black bodies within arenas of work that are variously viewed as white/western/or simply exploitative. Black Diaspora popular culture is characterised by attempts to re-claim bodily integrity and autonomy from racial rule through the celebration of uses of the body in pursuits of leisure and pleasure - song, dance, sport and sex; and the creation and claiming of public spaces of Black autonomy beyond the boundaries of white and/or mainstream authority. This is achieved notably through the Black churches, the dance hall, or bar room. In the past fifteen years or so Dancehall culture has broken out of the dancehall and come to permeate and structure all aspects of everyday life in Jamaica (Stolzoff: *ibid*). The pervasiveness of Dancehall is explained not only by its current domination of Reggae music but more acutely, the central place that Reggae music holds as arguably *the* voice of the subaltern within post-independence Jamaica.

As in many other forms of mass mediated Black popular music, the main producers of Dancehall have tended to be male, expressing through the lyrics, and the DJ sound systems, as exemplary forms of musical production and distribution, a strongly urbanised working class male culture. Yet through the nineties women have gradually gained significant influence and power to shape the nature and content of Dancehall culture and to both become complicit with and to challenge the power of the *rude bwai*. Since its gradual rise in the mid-eighties, the Bashment dancehall has become less and less an uncontested Black male working class space. Here I offer three examples of this feminisation. Firstly, there has been a shift in focus from the male "ragamuffin" D.J./audience as the predominant sign of Dancehall identity in the mid - late 80's, to a greater presence and recognition of the female Dancehall devotee or 'Dancehall Queen'. Secondly, in Dancehall lyrics the male DJ's no longer conduct a man-to-man dialogue about an absent woman as in early Ragga lyrics. Now their mode of address speaks mainly directly to the female audience. Thirdly, and a key aspect in the feminisation of the Dancehall, has been the development of the Dancehall style in clothing, hairstyles and dance, largely driven by women. The production and distribution of Dancehall clothing and hairstyles within the predominantly female practices of fashion retailing, dressmaking and hairdressing, reveals a specifically Black lower class female culture.

The celebration of the Black female body is a particularly strong theme within Dancehall lyrics<sup>41</sup>.

You turn me on, with your sexy body  
You turn me on - and your bumper<sup>42</sup> heavy....  
You turn me on - you fat and you heavy"  
(`You Turn Me On' Bounty Killer, African, Simpleton, Major  
Mackerel, Colin Roach, Ian Sweetness, Glen Ricks and  
Jennifer Lara, 2002)

From these lyrics we can recognise how in the celebration of common aspect of Black female bodies, Dancehall subverts mainstream Eurocentric constructions of the feminine body which have tended to devalue Black women's bodies as either 'unfeminine' or as saturated with irresistible but dangerous sexual potency. Many Dancehall songs celebrate the size shape and appearance of the Black woman's buttocks ("bumper"). Within European gender discourse the Black woman's buttocks has been the sign of her 'exoticism' and her deviation from a European norm of female sexuality. The body of the African woman was appropriated in nineteenth century medical and public health discourses, through physical comparisons of the buttocks of Italian prostitutes with that of African women and used to construct a physiological link between the Black woman's buttocks as a sign of her excessive sexuality and the 'deviant' sexuality of white prostitutes (Gilman 1992). In Dancehall this deviant image of the Black woman's body and sexuality is rejected and the image of the idealised female form as represented within mainstream Eurocentric and mass culture - slim, fragile and acquiescing, is completely overturned. In the context of racism and the domination of Eurocentric standards of beauty and female respectability within post-emancipation Jamaican society, just celebrating a common aspect of the Black female form, which has so long been devalued or distorted, is in itself a powerful and affirmative act.

The male D.J's celebration of fatness as sexy and beautiful, finds a response in the Dancehall dress style. It is a style that invites women to show as much of their body and body shape as they dare. So Black women who previously agonised over their large size now wear the tightest and most revealing of clothing, and flaunt their shapes with feisty confidence. In the D.J's appreciation of the Black woman's body we see Dancehall music's re-valorisation of the

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<sup>41</sup> Limitations of space prevent more examples, but see Noble 2000.

<sup>42</sup> "Bumper" is slang for buttocks.

Black female body, reclaiming it from the deviant and exotic, and renaming it as familiar, feminine - and erotic. However, this celebration remains problematically trapped and entwined within a European discourse of sexuality, race and gender which ties Black subjects to their dismembered and highly exoticised parts (big Black buttocks, the long Black penis, bare Black breasts) as both the location and sign of a licentious Black libido. As the previous chapter illustrated, in the moral order that developed within post-emancipation colonial Jamaican society poor Black women became the target of a reforming effort to inculcate in them the values, attitudes, dispositions, and deportments of respectable femininity. This racist history of European ideas of sexuality and femininity complicates any attempt by Black women to assert their sexual selves in the public domain. This has produced a preoccupation in Black women's self-liberation ethos (Beckles 1993), with the gaining and securing of respect and respectability not simply as Black people, or as women, but as Black women.

In the Caribbean, Christian and middle class Afro-Jamaican women utilised the freedoms within colonial moral governmentality as part of their own self-crafting practices in order to firstly, challenge the gender specificity in the dominant discourse of white racism and secondly the sexism within the sub-dominant cultures of Black social life. Of course they would not at this time have conceived of what they were doing in these terms. However, since political independence through the varied strategies of the Christian and Rastafari middle and working classes African-Jamaican women have found a variety of ways to stake a claim on respectability. In my view this has produced a Black female cultural tradition of respectability that has failed in many regards to see any value in or to take seriously the contribution of those lower class Black women, whose lifestyles and values might not conform to the liberal project of gender respectability.

The degree to which the values of respect, reputation and respectability hold great importance within many Caribbean cultures has been the subject of extended debate since Peter Wilson (1969) argued that not only are they were significant in Caribbean cultures, but they are also highly gendered. Wilson claimed that Caribbean women of all classes are particularly invested in the values of respectability, characterised by European middle-class values of feminine respectability. Reputation on the other hand, argued Wilson, is an *exclusively male* value system; characterised by an emphasis upon male competition for personal rather than social worth. Social worth on the other hand is measured by material possessions, money, having a status bearing occupation, being the head of a family and breadwinner. Personal worth on the other hand Wilson argued is secured by being able to demonstrate individual skill in verbal virtuosity, sexual virility and anti-establishment activities. As such reputation has been accepted as "an indigenous counter-culture .... rooted in personal, as opposed to social worth.

It is a response to colonial dependence and *a solution to the scarcity of respectability*" (Besson, 1993:16 italics added).

Jamaican anthropologist Jean Besson disagrees with Wilson and argues that these oppositional values are not exclusive to Caribbean working class men but also shared by women and what is more class, age and location are also important marks of distinction alongside gender (Besson op cit: 19). If working class Black women are also invested in values of social reputation and spurn respectability as a solution to their difficulty in accessing respectability and social value we then need to identify the gendered aspects of this value system. The male DJ's reject respectability and operate at the lower end of social values. Their emphasising of verbal virtuosity and sexual boasting assert a claim for social value in terms that correspond with a value system based upon reputation. The *masculine* Dancehall aesthetic stresses individual performance and skill, sexual prowess and anti-establishment sentiments, values we would expect to find circulating within a value system based upon reputation. I want to suggest that reputation for men in the dancehall it is primarily based upon particular forms of cultural competence. These are firstly, orality ('toasting' or DJ'ing on the microphone) and using their loquaciousness together with their sexual prowess to secure the attentions of and maintain sexual proprietorship/access over one or several women and dominance over other men.

For women in Dancehall it is primarily visuality (looking good, dancing well and sexual skill) that are the key competencies of a feminised Dancehall aesthetic, which can be deployed in securing and maintaining male attention, proprietorship and access over one or several men's wallets. In both the feminised and masculine working class culture of Dancehall, reputation is strongly allied with heterosexual competence. Whilst there are women DJ's and men are also heavily invested in looking good and dancing skill historically far fewer women attempt to challenge men's domination of toasting or MC'ing. Only a very small number of women DJ's such as Lady Saw and Tanya Stevens have risen to international success in more recent years. It is mainly (though not exclusively) through fashion and dancing rather than verbal virtuosity that women transform their primary role as consumers of music and become co-producers of Dancehall culture. It is for these feminised heterosexual competencies that the male DJ's typically praise women in their songs (Noble 2000: 156). Thus there is a dialogic aspect to the male DJ's orality and the women's spectacular visuality. This is principally achieved through the dialogic call and response aspect of Dancehall performance and consumption, so typical of other forms of Black popular music. This call and response motif does not respect the Eurocentric division between art and social life, but creates 'dialogic rituals' in the moment of performance and consumption. In these encounters the authority of the lyrical text is transformed through 'de/reconstructive procedures' to create new meanings (Gilroy, 1993: 40).

It is primarily in this interdependent and dialogic relationship between DJ and D.J, and D.J and audience, dancer and dancer, that Black women have elaborated and feminised the Dancehall masculinist lyrical texts and developed their own feminised practices of sexual freedom and reputation.

In the Bashment style of dance, dress and deportment, the 'Black-woman's-body' is spectacularly revealed - often near naked - yet tantalisingly 'veiled' in garish shocking pinks, yellows, and lime greens. The Dancehall Queen in this light can be viewed in her 'loud' appearance as displaying a kind of 'kitsch' and drag style. She is kitsch in that she puts together clothing and contexts to produce a disruptive, jarring, falsifying, irreverent spectacle, wearing chiffon iridescent blouses over beachwear or underwear to go to a nightclub. Like female rappers in Hip-Hop, the Dancehall queens, "refuse to be civilised" (Skeggs 1994). In their styles of dress, dance, hairstyles, walk and speech the Dancehall divas assert a braggadocious spectacle in which they display their 'natural' Black beauty through a highly processed, fabricated and commodified Black style. In this Bashment performance of sexual, racial and class freedom, they refuse to conform to the governmental demand that working class Black women who fail to meet the standard of mainstream Jamaican respectability be humble, silent and invisible. The loudness of their self-presentation and behaviour refuses the "structural silencing" (Wallace cited in Skeggs 1994: 108) of Black women's sexuality that both white bourgeois and Black nationalist gender discourses have prescribed. Their celebration of sex as a source of female reputation refuses to accept responsibility for the management of orderly sexual conduct implied by respectable femininity. However, the accompanying rise in sexual and domestic violence in Jamaican society since the nineteen eighties<sup>43</sup>, reminds us of the reasons why claiming and maintaining respectability has been such an important technology of freedom by which Black women have sought to manage their heightened vulnerability to racialised cultures of gender oppression and sexual exploitation (Etter-Lewis 1995: 155).

As we saw in the previous chapter Jamaican anti-colonial nationalism was in part expressed through a discourse of gender and moral respectability in which the adoption of Eurocentric ideals of female domesticity and male social power demonstrated the maturity of Caribbean

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43 Between 1980 and 1998, rape, incest and domestic violence rose in Jamaica by 110% (Wellcome Trust, *Fighting Back: Tackling Violence in the Caribbean* <http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/doc/WTD006146.html>. Date last visited 20/07/ 2005) and gender violence and the sexual exploitation of women continues to grow as violent crime and murder rates continue to spiral (See National report On the situation of Gender Violence Against women – Jamaica March 1999, United Nations Development Programme Regional Project RLA/97/014 <http://www.undp.org/rblack/gender/jamaicabigfile.pdf> Date last visited 20/07/ 2005)

civil society and peoples for self-government. In the immediate post-independence period two of the problems that confronted Caribbean nationalisms were, firstly, how to forge a common national culture from the colonial legacy of social systems based upon colour and class; secondly, how to overcome the continued legacy of colonial morality in postcolonial Jamaican subjectivity and national identity expressed in a collective anxiety and shame, that after all Caribbean people would fail to prove they had mastered the moral and political competencies of bourgeois liberalism on the basis of which their claims to national self-determination had been claimed and granted.

As also highlighted in the previous chapter, the mass labour movements of the Black and Indian working and peasant classes of the 1930's had been transformed by the 1940's into Caribbean nationalisms led by an overwhelmingly brown and white middle class elite. It is beyond the scope of this study to elaborate on this in depth. However, it is important to recognise the problems that post-independence Jamaican nationalism sought to address, because I want to argue that Reggae as a folk or working class counter-culture within Jamaican society is defined by its subordinate position within the cultural – political space of the new Jamaica and its problematisation of and resistance to the official state discourses of Jamaican Creole nationalism.

### **Reggae, Decolonisation And The Subaltern Voice Of The People**

Ska as an emergent form of Reggae music began in the late 1950's as a specifically Jamaican home-grown form of music. Ska mixed local musical folk practices like Mento, Buru and Pentecostal revival music with American *R n B* and Jazz to produce a uniquely Jamaican home-grown music (Stolzoff 2000: 60). One of the earliest recording producers of Ska music was Prince Buster who in 1960 established a sound system tellingly called "Voice of the People". (Stolzoff, *ibid*)

In many ways this turn to local musical production paralleled Jamaica's move toward national independence. A feeling of self-reliance in the cultural sphere was a boost to the nationalist feeling among the black masses" (Stolzoff, 2000: 60)

If the emergence of Ska testifies to the mood of national decolonial confidence in the early 1960's, it also argues Stolzoff has imbedded within it the counter-nationalism of the Black masses that challenged the eurocentric liberal nationalism of the brown middle class leadership of the two main nationalist parties, the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) and the Peoples National Party (PNP). In Ska we see the emergence of an indigenous cultural formation that drawing on the decolonial spirit of independence becomes a means by which the Black working classes

begin to stake out their conceptions of what it means to be a Jamaican. Ska turned to the folk practices of the Black masses and the values of Rastafari and through the autonomous sound system culture of the ghetto was able to carve out the dancehall as an oppositional public space within the postcolonial nation. This oppositional culture of resistance reaches its ascendancy over the culture of the dancehall and arguable Jamaican society with Rastafari-led Roots music of the 1970's. This was a period when decolonial national confidence had turned to disillusionment as independence revealed its incapacity to radically alter the relations of inequality established by colonialism or to shed economic subordination to the interests of Western capitalism.

Within the Caribbean region the mainstream against which Roots Reggae of the 1970's emerged and came to define itself is represented by the post-independence national Creole culture of the Jamaican state. In other words, the Rastafari roots genre within Reggae that came to dominate Jamaican popular music in the 1970's and early 1980's challenged the mainstream nationalist vision symbolised by Jamaica's national motto "Out of Many, One People". This rhetoric of Jamaican nationalism sought to smooth over and annul the deeply entrenched racial inequalities that colonialism had bequeathed by espousing a syncretic hybrid cultural national identity (Puri 2004: 45). Rastafari Roots music with its strong grounding in Pan-Africanism successfully forced Jamaican society to confront the post-independence reality of a society where the majority of the population sitting at the bottom of the economic pile were Black dark-skinned African descendants. The discourse of Pan-Africanism within Roots Music insisted on a recognition and re-valuation of the place of African culture within Jamaican national identity (Barrett 1977; Nettleford 1970). The post-independence creole identity of Jamaica whilst espousing cultural hybridity in fact had little time for the African elements within Jamaican culture, promoting instead an anglophile eurocentrism. Through songs, which revised the postcolonial national history of Jamaica's present,<sup>44</sup> Rastafari Roots music interrogated the contemporary social, political and cultural arrangements of Jamaican society in terms of the continued legacy of slavery, colonialism, shadism, and the impact of neo-colonialism on Jamaican society and culture. Its historicism also deployed Afrocentric traditionalism as a way of challenging and turning away from western modernity viewed as damaging and hostile in its racist treatment of African Diaspora peoples.

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44 One of the best examples of this is *Slavery Days* by Burning Spear (1980), which challenges the post-postcolonial Jamaican state's failure to reverse colonialism's institutionalised forgetting of slavery with the haunting chorus "Do you remember the days of slavery?! Oh Slavery days! Try and remember. Please remember! You *must* remember!"



The 1970's had revealed that despite political independence many of the new postcolonial states were still highly economically dependant on western national and commercial interests as a result of unfair trade agreements and the control of multinational companies over the local means of production. The Democratic - Socialism of the Michael Manley<sup>45</sup> PNP government of 1972 – 1980 had by the 1980 elections been decimated by the impact of public spending limits imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. In his attempts to forge 'a new Jamaica', the charismatic Manley incorporated into his political rhetoric the symbolism of Rastafari language and Roots music in order to win popular support in the 1972 election campaign (Meeks 2000: 121). It is during this time that Reggae came to be seen as the national home-grown music of Jamaica and to be granted a degree of mainstream respectability.

In 1980 the conservative Jamaica Labour Party under the leadership of Edward Seaga won the elections. The 1980's in the Caribbean as elsewhere was characterised by monetarism and the dominance of the pro-American, neo-liberal policies of the JPL government. In the mid-1980's Ragga emerged as a celebration of the scruffy ragamuffin ghetto youth, symbolising the subculturally central but economically marginalised '*hard-time sufferer*' of the Jamaican ghetto. Many commentators have linked the rise of the Dancehall aesthetic of materialism and ostentatious consumption to the culture of monetarism that dominated at the time (Stolzoff; Meeks 2000; Gilroy 1987). Thus by the 1990's the *hard-time sufferer* image of the ragamuffin was beginning to be replaced by the 'bashy-bashy'<sup>46</sup> or bling-bling culture of the Dancehall 'kings' and 'queens' with their capacity for making money (legally or illegally), conspicuous consumption and a braggadocios and assertively sexual style. For the first time in Reggae we see the values of individualism, consumption and modernity being explicitly desired, aspired to and celebrated by the DJ's in defiance of Rastafari rejections of '*Babylon system*' and assertion of the pride in being Black, poor *and* righteous. Thus the slack roots aesthetics of Reggae was transformed by Ragga music as it emerged in the 1980s by Ragga's slack sexual aesthetics.

This marks a significant shift in the discourse of Reggae, which in part reflects the shift in the moral-political character of the Jamaican state from the socialism of the PNP to the neo-

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45 The Peoples National Party led by Manley was a democratic-socialist party that governed Jamaica from 1972 – 1980, when the conservative Jamaica Labour Party won the elections governing Jamaica until PNP regained power in 1989.

46 An appreciative adjective to describe the quality of Bashment; i.e. denoting the qualities of ostentatious glamour and materialistic style.

liberalism of the JLP (Scott 1999:193). As indicated earlier, Dancehall as a lower class subaltern culture *within Jamaican society* represents a change in the vernacular discourse of Reggae that is not a complete break but definitely a shift. The most stark aspects of this shift is marked by a movement away from questions of race as a marker of class to a preoccupation with gender relations and sexuality as the key indicators of class difference. Part of Dancehall's class resistance was against the hegemony of Eurocentric ideals of gender respectability for both men and women within Jamaican bourgeois-liberal national culture. As David Scott importantly points out, the basis of this rejection was not a complaint about the masses exclusion or lack of access to liberal respectability. Dancehall discourse neither values nor wants a share in middle class Jamaican liberal civility (Scott, 1999: 194). Dancehall's *slack* discourse of gender and heterosexual<sup>47</sup> liberation as a practice of freedom "produces a transgressive interruption of the circulation of the normalized consensual identities in urban postcolonial Jamaica.... It constitutes a site of internal *danger* to the norms of bourgeois civility" (Scott 1999: 214)

Secondly as a sub-genre within Reggae music, Dancehall was also negotiating a different position in relation to Rastafari consciousness, which had become the governing morality of ghetto respectability, especially in relation to the working class youth. The move within Dancehall discourse from the *hard time suffer* Raggamuffin aesthetic to the Bashy-Bashy ghetto don, was in part a rejection of Rastafari's piety and anti-capitalism. Having said this, increasingly it is no longer possible to draw a rigid line between the slack aesthetics of Bashment and the Rastafari consciousness of Roots music. DJ's such as Buju Banton, Beenie Man, Capleton and Elephant Man are as likely to sing *slack* lyrics as conscious with apparently no sense of irony. Therefore a degree of caution is wise when seeking to compare Bashment and contemporary Roots music. This said, whilst Dancehall has increasingly come to assert its attachment to particular notions of tradition as a means of contesting what it views as western/modern/white/European values, in the main Dancehall has rejected much of the African traditionalism which defined Rastafari resistance to the modernity of western culture. Rastafari romanticism espouses a pastoral image of African tradition that is reflected in the Rastafari concept of 'livity' which denotes 'natural African' ways of life symbolised by a vegetarian diet, avoiding manmade fibres, allowing the body to be 'natural' i.e. wearing hair in dreadlocks and no wearing of makeup for women. Dancehall directly rejects this through a celebration of materialism, money, and the processed Black-female body - signified by

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<sup>47</sup> For a discussion of how Dancehall is also a space within which compulsory heterosexuality is policed and heterosexual masculinity and femininity also governed, see Noble 2000.

elaborately often chemically processed hairstyles, the obvious wearing of wigs in ‘unnatural colours’, false nails, make-up and highly ostentatious forms of dress.<sup>48</sup>

Contrary to David Scott’s view that the figure of the rude bwai is an icon of working class resistance to the moral and political hegemony of the Jamaican middle classes, I want to assert that the figure of the Dancehall queen or the rude *ghetto gyal* so frequently praised in Bashment culture is just as much or even more significant. Scott offers a masculinist interpretation of Dancehall that re-instates the very erasure and silencing of Black women that both the male and female Dancehall practitioners contest. As Scott makes clear it is the popularity of Dancehall amongst all classes of Jamaicans that has positioned the rude bwai as a threat to the government of middle class decency and symbol of the crisis of hegemony within the Jamaican present. The *rude bwai* figure of the menacing gun-toting “*shottas*” or “*shotta-yoot*” [youth] is the iconic sign of the power of the gangster dons who now rule some parts of urban Kingston and of the lawlessness that has taken hold of some parts of Jamaican society (Meeks 2000). This breakdown in some parts of Jamaican civil society has contributed to Jamaica currently having the third highest murder rate in the world.<sup>49</sup> Politicians have been able to use this situation to blame the alienation of the people from politics not on the years of corruption and political gangsterism, or the failures of decolonisation, but on the moral depravity of ‘ghetto’ culture and the people themselves.

The disreputable conduct of the *rude bwai* and the *ghetto gyal* has escaped the space of the dancehall to permeate and get a hold on the national popular in Jamaica (Scott op cit). This has contributed to a moral panic within Jamaican society about firstly the threat of popular (ghetto) culture on all young people, and secondly the growing fear that large sections of the Jamaican poor have become both morally and politically *ungovernable* (Meeks 200: 3). However, against Scott’s masculinism, I want to suggest that the figure of the rude *ghetto gyal* represents for mainstream Jamaica a more deeply entrenched and therefore almost unthinkable threat to Jamaican moral gender and sexual order – even if in the end it does not as many media commentators have feared herald the destruction of Jamaican society. That is the danger of Caribbean women refusing to invest their freedom in being long-suffering yet ‘respectable Black women’ The threat to gender law and order posed by the ghetto feminism (Thomas 2004: 252) of the *rude ghetto gyal* lies in her refusal to accept responsibility for the moral governance of the Black family and her rejection of *respectable* womanhood and *responsible*

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48 For a fuller discussion on dancehall fashion see Noble 2000

49 <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2005/lac/jm.html> Last visited 7-Jul-05

motherhood. The Black feminised culture of respectability as discussed previously has been inseparable from an ideal of motherhood, in which Black women accepted the major responsibility for the economic and domestic care of the Black family and the emotional and moral well-being of the Black communities in the name of family survival and racial uplift. This has in part been shaped by and in resistance to Black masculine counterculture of male privilege and reputation that is itself ambivalently caught between identification with and resistance to patriarchy. What I mean by this, is it is neither totally confluent with nor opposed to liberal patriarchy. Neither is it limited to lower class Black men. In other words, patriarchy is not the only determinant of male power in the Caribbean (Lindsay 2002: 76). Despite Black women's ever growing social empowerment in education, work and the family since independence, patriarchal and non-patriarchal male power continue to rule Jamaica. So for example being the head of the household can be also be disempowering for women because in the Caribbean it is often associated with low paid service sector, rather than professional work (Lindsay op cit: 78) and even professional women continue to be accorded less social status than their male counter-parts. "In other words, women's institutional advances can and often do leave in tact the "rest" of patriarchal power" and male domination (Lindsay 2002:76). Here Lindsay raises in a Caribbean context, where Black patriarchy has always been precariously sedimented, the same question posed by Wendy Brown (*see chapter five*): that is, why is it that a decline in patriarchy has not led to women's social equality? I will return to address this question in the concluding chapter.

Dancehall's aesthetics and ethical practices refuse the cultivation of respectability and the culture of Black moral upliftment or "vindictionalist Blackness" that defined both Pan-African cultural and creole political anti-colonial nationalisms as well as the revolutionary discourses of Rastafari (Thomas 2004: 229). "Instead they have developed a racialised working-class expression of the dominant elite ethos of globalisation, even as they have simultaneously exposed, critiqued, and satirised that ethos" (ibid) What this has produced argues Thomas is an individualistic and consumerist '*ghetto feminism*' (ibid). To conclude this section of the discussion, I want to suggest three main things. Firstly, that respectable Black womanhood has been a defence against patriarchal femininity by asserting responsible Black motherhood and the respectability of Black women's independence from marriage. Secondly that is has also been a response to the irresponsibilities of what was until relatively recently a predominantly masculine culture of reputation. Secondly that the ghetto feminism represented by contemporary Dancehall culture refuses both patriarchy and the governmentality of respectable Black womanhood and its cult of self-sacrificing responsible Black motherhood.

### ***Who is this Black in Black Popular Culture?***

Dancehall music *within the context of Jamaican society* has been closely bound up with the moral and political legacies of colonialism and effects of postcolonial economic and social relations on Jamaican culture and society. However, Reggae is not just a local Jamaican culture. It is also a transnational culture of the Caribbean and African diasporas and now increasingly part of mass global culture. If Dancehall is a subversive discourse of subcultural resistance to hegemonic legislative national and Eurocentric culture in Jamaica, what is the 'work' that it is doing in other contexts? How does it 'work' and why? If the Dancehall vernacular constitutes a slack parole escaping the authority of omniscient culture (Cooper 1993: 141) what versions of legislative Culture is it seeking to evade and what rationalities of government do its practices of freedom negotiate in London? How and what new problematisations and practices of freedom does Dancehall culture enunciate – if it does - as it circulates across different locations of the transnational Caribbean and as it flows into the different and unequal tributaries of power that map the overlapping global circuits of the African Diaspora and mass global culture?

Black popular music, for the women I interviewed, was defined largely by the currently most popular forms of music by Black artists (e.g. Hip-Hop, Garage, Dancehall, R 'n' B) within the local British and global media (e.g. legal local and national radio stations, terrestrial and non-terrestrial TV stations, national music charts). It also included the subordinated cultural circuits of music production and consumption defined and shaped by local formal and informal networks (e.g. local DJ's, clubs, music played in the home and pirate radio stations), and the music of the mainly, though not exclusively English-speaking Caribbean diaspora (e.g. Reggae, Soca, Zouk<sup>50</sup>, etc). This traces the Black Atlantic locations of the African Diaspora (e.g. the UK, the USA, Jamaica and the wider Caribbean region). Amongst the women interviewed, it was clear that Black popular music was viewed as having an extremely powerful impact upon not just young Black people but also on the wider society's attitudes towards Black people and the place of Black culture within British national identity and culture. All respondents viewed popular music as contradictory in its effects and therefore posing dilemmas concerning how we should understand the status and power of music as a form of Black cultural expression and as an indicator of the state of racial politics. On the one

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50 Zouk is a form of dance music found in the French Caribbean islands of Guadeloupe, Martinique and now widespread in those British Caribbean islands that at one time in their colonial past had been under French control. So it is popular in islands such as St Lucia and Dominica, which retain a strong cultural link with the Franco-phone Caribbean through their French derived Creole languages. Zouk is a Creole word for party.

hand several respondents saw the sheer weight of Black visibility within popular music as a very positive change since their youth. This was particularly so in relation to the greater mainstream accessibility of Black music in general but particularly Caribbean musical forms such as Reggae and Soca. Sonia contrasted this with the excitement she experienced in the 1970's as a new émigré from Trinidad via the USA when she found a Desmond Dekkar album in a record shop otherwise devoid of Caribbean music.

‘Wow! This is great, being able to find it! [Laughs]. Being able to play it. It was like a unique thing... it wasn't something you heard on the radio. It was something I chanced upon so that I could play it in my bed-sit. It was like my link.

Many viewed the prominent position of Black representations in the media as a sign of progress in terms of Black people's greater inclusion into British society. Linette born and raised in Manchester said that when growing up the nineteen eighties 'mainstream' i.e. 'white' stations like Radio One were increasingly playing a wider variety of Black music but this was mainly African-American music. To hear Reggae one had to tune into Black pirate radio stations of which there were very few in Manchester. It was only on coming to London that Linette recalls hearing Reggae on mainstream radio stations and even then what little Reggae was aired, was presented by white DJ's.

When I came down here to London, Tony Blackburn had a regular spot.... Yes so in terms of a Black presenter playing Black music to a Black audience when I was growing up that wasn't my experience. So it's Tony Blackburn a white man who usually played soul music. It was Rodigan a white man again playing Reggae. And if I wanted to hear the music I liked to hear you would have to play it yourself or go to a party ...and so the younger generation, people growing up now their experience is different. There are so many legal radio stations that can play a variety of [Black music].  
(Linette)

This is a very representative response in terms of recognising and appreciating that there had been a significant growth in Black representation in terms of both content and presenters in the British media. Despite this, all of those who spoke about the impact of this increased Black presence within mainstream national and global (sic American) media also raised a series of consistent concerns about it. These can be summed up as being about: i) the types and limited range of representations that were most prevalent; ii) the impact of those representations – particularly upon young Black people in Britain in shaping dominant meanings around Black

British identity and finally, the role of the media in hegemonising constructions of Blackness. What now interested or concerned the majority of respondents was not so much the degree of Black visibility in the media but the form and range, especially in popular music. For example, two women considered that the range of types of Black and Ethnic Minority women in particular were broader in terms of skin shade, and body shape and so more inclusive of the diversity of Black women.

The thing is seeing these videos with a variety of complexions warms my heart because at least they are not all white or not all blond. Yes, I feel we are moving in the right direction and I see dark shades. Some of them have fuller figures, not all of them. They are not all bony stick insects – [ ] maybe a little it of cleavage. But you can see the variety of women's shape. Yes there's a variety of colours and I think it's a good thing.  
(Linette)

On the other hand, Angela viewed these representations as racist but yet opportunities that could be used to the advantage of Black people,

Black is exotic. It is something [white people] can dip your toes in. It's the zeitgeist, the avant-garde, isn't it? ... Black *people* aren't 'in'. I don't know .... I hope for the day, but I don't know... But hey! I've got it! I'll flaunt it! 'I've got natural rhythm!' Whey hey! I make fun of it. (Angela)

This suggests a view that certain aspects of Black popular culture fulfil a postmodern desire for Otherness in which Black cultures signify new-ness, the cutting edge or simply more cultural variety for consumption. Harris has called this a postmodernist valorisation of difference as a meta-utopian imaginary which privileges 'now' as the moment in which all our dreams are or can be fulfilled, "not in the sense that now is the best of all possible worlds, but in the sense that now holds the possibility of heterogeneity...." (Harris 1993: 33). This heterogeneity in being collapsed into the temporality and spatiality of a knowable and therefore manageable culture of the 'urban present' says Harris, transforms the contested and unknowable differences of otherness into a known multicultural wholeness or community. The trope of the city and the marketing category of Urban Culture into which global media companies have increasingly assigned Black popular music is a good example of this.

All of the women interviewed expressed concerns over the narrow range of Black visibilities within the media and specifically the hyper-sexualised images of Black women in music videos. The respondents had very clear ideas about the impact of these stereotypes upon young Black Britons – especially those of Caribbean descent. Sonia a Social Services manager with two teenage boys remarked,

Yes. So I would think that even if we are in the media I am not convinced that it is in a positive way. I think it is in an exploitative way! And I think maybe we need to take some of that back and I suppose we are responsible, but I think that if we look at Hip-Hop for example (sighs) maybe that's what the marketing people think will sell records, I don't know and so it's a way for these artistes to make money and they go along with it. But what does it do for us as a group of people? I don't think very much. (Sonia)

Like Angela, Sonia implied that the limited ways in which Black people are permitted visibility and agency within the local British and global culture industries is largely shaped and controlled by powerful decision-makers within those industries. Whilst respondents valued the greater inclusion of Black artistes and the expanded opportunities for some individuals to achieve success and greater personal freedom, they were worried that this was mainly on the terms dictated by powerful white commercial interests and not by Black artistes and audiences. Generally respondents saw the narrow representations of Black people as just the continuance of long-standing racist stereotypes, or as Patricia Hill-Collins calls it “past-in-the-present-racism” (Hill-Collins 2004: 84) through which old stereotypes of Black bodies, Black life and Black sexuality are cast in new often apparently more valorised images, but which mask the reproduction of the same old racism. Elizabeth saw this very narrow range of media images as directly aimed at disempowering and subjugating Black people in Britain and the USA.

They are not representing anything else.... They want to have this one type of Blackness and when you look at the type of Black women and the way they are being represented and how they are behaving, that's what they want to see. I think that is what our children are picking up. But when you go to school and you are with your peers you are more likely to talk about music and if that is the only type of music you are seeing.... I do think that the media is portraying one type of Blackness. Because they don't want the next generation to grow up with the notion that they can be a powerful force in society. 'Know your place and this is your place.... making music'. When you speak to young people who are disaffected they think they are gonna come out of it by making music they don't see the other options, because the other options haven't been put in front of them. (Elizabeth)

Elizabeth expressed a common concern that “one type of Blackness”, a standardised branded form was being promoted as the only terms by which one can be visible, included and accorded value. The arena of popular culture was viewed as simultaneously desiring and holding out the promise of Black equal inclusion into a common culture defined as both national (multicultural Britain) and international (global culture). At the same time, several interviewees considered that the terms of inclusion, though expanded from the overt forms of media exclusion and racism of the mid to late twentieth century, still reproduce old stereotypes



of Black hyper-sexuality, violent masculinity and Black women's exoticism. Thus the very saturation of these images across the popular field was seen to produce highly contradictory effects that they feared many young Black people were often ill equipped to manage or resist. Consequently younger Black Britons were often perceived by the post-war generation of Black Britons that I interviewed as being at risk of consuming these powerful Black images uncritically and accepting media-led definitions of Black culture and identity. The power of the media was viewed as having a disproportionate effect in shaping the identity formation and self-understanding of Black young people, in the absence of sufficiently retained and developed independent Black-led structures for cultural transmission. Where in the seventies and eighties Black teenagers were confronted by the scarcity of Black representations in the media coupled with negative stereotypes of young Black people as muggers, single mothers and impoverished 'inner-city youth', today's Black teenagers now have no shortage of Black images and sounds from the daily T.V. soaps through to newscasters. Nevertheless, many of these apparently more 'positive' and appealing Black images were thought to reproduce old racist stereotypes in new subtler, more appealing, and apparently 'liberating' garb.

The interviewees all took the view that in consuming and identifying with what they saw as mass media driven depictions of Blackness and Black culture, many young people were at risk of conflating Black culture with this very restricted range of Black popular cultural representations. The hyper-visibility within music videos and music stations of gangster culture, hypersexual exoticised femininities and masculinities and the glamorisation of the ghetto and 'thug life' were seen as having pernicious effects upon the cultural and moral self-constituting practices of young audiences. Several considered that most of the Black music that is given airtime in the mainstream mass media fails to offer any critical social commentary on or reflect the complexities of Black life, but rather to normalise racism in the name of profit.

Women took the view that the incorporation and popularisation of Black musical genres within the global media had come at the expense of the social critique that had defined early Hip-Hop and Roots Reggae music of the 1970's and 1980's. As noted earlier the importance of African Diaspora music cultures within the oral cultures of the African Diaspora means that music has played an important role in the creation of alternative Black knowledges and public spheres. This is especially so under conditions of slavery, colonialism and inequality where Black populations were denied access to the white-dominated institutions of civil society. The criticisms of the kinds of Black music that currently dominate global youth cultures reflect a concern that Black music appeared to be changing and losing its force as a social movement in which Black populations could generate alternative collective stories, moralities, histories and political critiques. Music videos in particular were criticised for promoting what all of the

women regarded as mythical fantasy depictions of Black reality. In the following passage Elizabeth expresses a concern about the possible impact of these distorted messages.

I think it's a powerful influence. I mean it's the music and it's bought quite a lot but in terms of all the young girls that I know, they don't dress anything like that – very very respectable... They still might listen to the music but they are not physically representing themselves like that really. [...] but I am not sure how representative the young women in my family are of what's actually happening out there really. Because when I go down to the Elephant and Castle I see some of the girls down there and the way they are and the way they are speaking and the way they are acting, I think "Oh my God, I'm glad you are not my daughter!" [...]. The type of talk as well is adult talk... I know I sound terribly old fashioned here... and I should stand back and think that well maybe they are just practicing what they are hearing. Words... you know they would not say those words around their family or near their Mum or their Dad or their carer, they wouldn't be seen... But on the streets it's all right! And I think 'oh no! You have to represent us better than this really. I think this is where the influence of the music shows - more the language I am hearing from people and more the body language... the explicitness in terms of how much flesh you can see and the type of clothes you can really see. (Elizabeth)

Sexually explicit language, dress and deportment are here contrasted with both the parental culture of the home and the 'respectable' conduct of girls who do not hang around 'on the street'. This concurs with Patricia Hill Collins' view that mainstream western-dominated media has promoted and supported the elevation of a narrow representation of working-class Black culture as the sign of Black authenticity, which in turn has tied Black identity to highly sexualised images and ghettoised ('street') locations as both the essence of Black authenticity and freedom. Hill Collins argues that these images of pathological lifestyles centred around the ghetto, premature and hyper-sexualisation and problematic Black masculinities have come to replace old biological explanations for Black poverty and poor educational attainment (Hill Collins op cit: 45). In other words for Hill Collins the media has become a primary technology for the production of ideas and knowledges about Black populations and of a new cultural racism.

For all this, sexualised images within popular music were viewed as having some benefits. A typical view is offered her by Angela, who felt that Dancehall opened up spaces in which sex and sexuality could be discussed more openly in Black communities. With the dangers of HIV/Aids and other sexually transmitted diseases she regarded this as very important. However, she was concerned that the openness to talk about sex did not necessarily reflect or

lead to more open-minded attitudes about sex and sexuality and thus could contribute to confusing messages being received particularly by young Black people.

Talking about sexual things or being a sexual person doesn't change people's inherent views about being a slag or a whore. Just because it's more out there doesn't mean conservative values in the Black community has changed. 'Yeh she put her ass out ...Yeh yeh yeh, she'll like it'. Especially when it comes to sexual assault... there is a dangerous side to this... especially with the ideas of the Black man; the sexual marauder! There needs to be respect on both sides. (Angela)

Thus Angela along with several other women felt that whilst Dancehall was in some ways celebratory and empowering for Black women, it could also be potentially menacing precisely because the freedoms and equalities it celebrates are not sufficiently realised in practice. The above passage reflects the anxiety that most of the women expressed about the power of racist discourses of Black masculinity and sexuality to have a damaging impact upon the emergent sexual subjectivity of adolescent boys. In this regard the hyper-heterosexuality and assumption of male power that characterises a great deal of contemporary Hip-Hop and Dancehall are no different from that found in white popular music or youth cultures such as Heavy Metal, the Mod's and Rockers, Teddy Boys or Skinhead cultures. Angela McRobbie (1981) has argued that rebellious subcultures<sup>51</sup> have often deployed misogynistic and sexist language towards girls and women and often rely upon forms of macho masculinity that assumed women's subordination to male control.

In relation to the status and power of women in Dancehall, Angela drew a distinction between the freedoms implied by the very sexualised forms of Dancehall performativity – especially in terms of dance movements, and the spaces in which one might be able to safely perform them. She argued that Dancehall is a racialised space of Black exclusivity *and* inclusively.

Angela: It's the inclusiveness of the Dancehall culture itself – all Black. You'll see a white person, white Jamaican or white Caribbean or lighter skinned whatnot; but inherently we all know why we are there. There's an exclusiveness of it, you know. There's an exclusiveness of it. It's not like going to Hyde Park to an open-air concert is it? It's like you know where the party's at.

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<sup>51</sup> Like Paul Gilroy (1987) I think is a mistake to view Reggae as a youth culture. As the previous discussion of Dancehall in the context of Jamaican society has shown, the place of music within the oral traditions of African Diaspora cultures may mean that although Reggae may be deployed within specific youth practices, these often retain strong connections to ideas and values of the parental culture, as much as they may also contest them.

Interviewer: It's a Black space?

Angela: It's a space of dialogue. It's a space as a *whole thing, a whole thing*. You can't look at it as race, or class or gender and dissect it. You have to take everything and then start breaking it down. If you take it from one aspect ...uugh! You have to refer to the other aspects.

What Angela seems to be suggesting is that the Dancehall is exclusive in the sense of being a space that is under the governance of shared Black cultural norms and more specifically Dancehall morality. It therefore has the power to exclude those who do not share in this symbolic world and evade or reject the power of authoritative white culture to legislate on what is permissible and how it should be judged. As I have argued previously, "modern Black popular culture can be defined as the formation and articulation of public spaces of resistance, reclamation and autonomous creativity against and beyond the hegemony of western modernity and racism" (Noble 2000: 157). It is this identity of the Black dancehall as both a physical and symbolic public space that defines it as *not a white space* (like other public spaces in Britain such as Hyde Park), because its terms and meanings are not under the legislative authority of white culture. As a part of a Black public sphere it is under Black cultural (rather than Black phenotypic) authority, in terms of who is empowered to shape its aesthetic production (lyrics, music, fashion, and dance) and generate its authoritative meanings. It is in this context that Angela considered Dancehall culture a safe place for Black women to perform their sexual selves and display their bodies in exuberant and erotic ways. They are safe, Angela assumes because its norms and conventions are shared and understood; i.e. that all of those present understand what is going on and that these performances are understood not to imply sexual availability or promiscuity. This implies a historicity to Dancehall and knowledge of that historicity in order to 'correctly' interpret it, within the terms of its own preferred readings. For unless one situates Dancehall within the history of Black cultural production in Jamaica specifically but the history of slavery and post-slavery colonialism in the Caribbean more generally, it can appear incomprehensible, irrational or simply exotic.

However, Angela insists that Dancehall cannot be understood merely as a racialised space, because its racialised hegemony is interrupted by colour, ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality. I prefer the term interrupted to fragmented, because fragmentation suggests that difference breaks things down and inevitably deconstructs hegemonic categories. Whilst differences often do have this deconstructive capacity, in Angela's account difference also is re-constructive and connective; it creates new connections between different aspects of the self and self and others producing new articulations of Dancehall identification *through difference* as well as well as breaking down and problematising Blackness in itself. Angela experienced Dancehall culture

as a very inclusive space in which a variety of people come together on the basis of a shared understanding of Dancehall's meaning within the context of Black Diaspora cultures and experiences. This is illustrated by Melissa who volunteered in response to my request for fans of Dancehall music. The complexities of Melissa's love of Dancehall illustrate its deconstructive/reconstructive capacities. Melissa saw Bashment-Dancehall as addressing issues of class, race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. In relation to class, she saw Dancehall as allowing poor working class people especially in Jamaica – an escape from the drudgery of their lives: -

Yes, a bit like Cinderella. You know in the day I might be nothing. You can escape in all of that and I think that's the aspect of it that I like because it's coming from the ghetto. It's coming from people who live these lives all the time. So that it's not prettied up. That's their reality. This is the reality of politics. This is their reality of drugs. This is the reality of violence. It's all there and they live it day in day out and they can still survive it and some of them can also get through and make something of themselves. And I think that's a distinction more between Bashment and Roots, which is more about a conscious message. (Melissa)

Melissa is a senior manager heading a major public organisation with nation-wide responsibilities. Yet staying close to what she described as her working class roots in the Black community was important to her as a way of avoiding falling into what she considered to be a false sense of the reality of the position of Black people in Britain (*see chapter three*). Thus Dancehall was one way she maintained this connection. Melissa's distinction between Dancehall Bashment and Roots was not so much in terms of political outlook, but in terms of the lifestyles they reflected and the sound-style of the music that she felt reflected the key differences in their ethical outlook. Where Bashment speaks in the defiant rude voice of the ghetto modernity of sex and violence, she felt that Rastafari was softer and this was reflected in the tone of Roots music; "The reality is there but it's almost coaxing almost 'listen to me'. Whereas Bashment is 'I don't care if you listen to me or not this is my reality'. This is what I deal with."

In relation to representations of gender and sexuality, Melissa considered Dancehall to be contradictory. She saw it as offering working class women opportunities to express themselves more freely and assert a pride in themselves as Black women, in a way previously denied them;

It's that bit about being true to yourself, about being who you are [...] if you think of the typical Bashment women, some of them – only some of them, I think you're really bold, [...] I think its like 'I don't care what you think. You can say what

you want. I think I look good and I'm gonna go out because I feel good about myself. It's the music; it's the dress, it's everything! You know. The fact that they are gonna wear a blond wig – I think some of them take it a bit too far (chuckling) but it's almost political. I know it's *not* political but it's *almost* political. (Melissa)

Melissa felt that many of the Bashment women were not politically conscious about what they were doing and that quite often they were colluding with the sexism of the DJ's and displaying forms of sexual excess that merely accepted the terms of their visibility and therefore the sexual governance of heterosexual men in Dancehall culture. However, for all this, Melissa felt that even if the women were not politically conscious, Dancehall could have political effects; "I just don't think it's overtly political, but if you dissect it there is a political stance in there. But they are not driving it and they are not a lot of times aware of it."

In relation to Dancehall's governmental heterosexuality, Melissa demonstrates the complex relations of difference that Angela spoke of. Melissa was the only woman I interviewed who described herself as bi-sexual. Melissa's only reference to Dancehall's homophobia was to say that the "lyrics sometimes leave a lot to be desired." It was the "different urgency", that she experienced in the beat of Dancehall that most appealed to Melissa. She explained that it expressed for her a culture of resistance that enabled her in sense to 'tune out' its homophobic lyrics and not allow them to impede her enjoyment. Yet the homophobia of Dancehall has triggered a global campaign led by gay and lesbian groups. Despite its homophobia the primary appeal of Bashment for Melissa was its culture of defiance and resistance to incorporation into legitimate culture – whether Jamaican or British. This defiance was deployed by Melissa as a way of shedding her working-life identity and escape the pressure she felt as a middle class Black woman to succumb to an expectation that she should conform to particular forms of 'respectable' conduct;

There is almost a concept that you can't be good and like Bashment. The amount of times people have got in my car, and I'm listening to Elephant Man or whoever, and they'll look at me; "You like this sort of music? Oh! I didn't think you'd like this sort of music." Well what sort of music did you think I'd like?' Then it gets into 'Well I thought you'd probably like R n B or jazz and it's almost like it's not an acceptable form of music because it's ghetto, so I do think there is that thing about 'it's bad.' It's rough. It's what slack people do. It's not decent. (Melissa)

We can see how Dancehall is deployed by Melissa as a way of identifying and staying in touch with the culture of Jamaica and the culture of the Black poor and ghettoised in Britain. She also described 'clubbing' as an opportunity to relieve the stress of racism that she experienced

as a Black manager during the week. Her appreciation of the beat enabled her to look past the homophobia of many of the lyrics and still be caught up in the rhythms, sounds and atmosphere of Dancehall as a defiant space of Black self-expression and resistance to racism, poverty and hegemonic whiteness. Yet, Dancehall's libertinism clearly has its limits and the pervasiveness of homophobic lyrics marks it as a disciplinary space of compulsory heterosexuality (Rich 1980). Despite its celebration of sexual licence, women's assertive sexual agency and social autonomy, it is also "a space within which Black heterosexual men seek to control and contain emerging womanist, gay, lesbian and bisexual identities; whilst also reassuring themselves of their own representation of phallogentric heterosexuality as the only way to be a 'True Back Man'" (Noble 2000: 163).

To sum up the main findings from the interviews, women considered that in the past ten or fifteen years media representations of Black people had changed significantly from when they were children and young people in the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's. The major area of improvement was the volume of Black representations. It was the narrowness of the range of representation that in obscuring the variety of Black identities, lifestyles and cultures in Britain that was seen to carry racist potential. They were concerned that the preponderance of highly eroticised images of young Black women in music videos might also encourage young women to see such behaviour as the best way to gain social value and success. Similarly in relation to Black masculinity, the women felt that representations of Black men were mostly confined to highly sexualised, criminalised or foolish images. In short the women interviewed felt that powerful media industries had an investment in reproducing narrow therefore, racist representations of Black people and that these constituted powerful knowledges by which Black people come to be known and more perniciously know themselves.

This seemed to raise the question of how media representations can be technologies for governing the conduct of particular population groups, not only by controlling the terms and spaces of representation, but by offering alluring and inviting but none the less limited images of Black sub/cultural power and social distinction. Their suspicion of the capacity of western dominated media institutions to *fairly* represent Black and minority ethnic populations suggests that despite their sense of things having changed for the better, women felt that the both the local British and global media industries continued to express a racialised visual regime tied to legislative white western culture and racism. They viewed the greater *apparent* inclusion and mainstreaming of Black representations in popular culture, as offering young people if not a false (after all things have improved, haven't they?) but certainly a distorted and *inaccurate* understanding of both what Black identity *is* and the place of Black people in British society. The interviews suggest that since the nineteen eighties, the independent Black

critical spaces or discourse offered by a range of Black Nationalist discourses have been lost and not replaced. This is understood as leaving a hermeneutic vacuum, where young Black British people lack the critical language with which to interpret media images and the terms of their inclusion into the mainstream. This they saw as tending for many children and young people to be leading to an uncritical consumption of media representations of Black people and popular cultural commodification of Black culture.

In order to explore the ideas that were held about the impact of popular culture on young Black people, I am going to analyse the use of Dancehall in a London school. One consequence of Dancehall's recent elevation into the mainstream of 'urban' musical culture is that when the production and dissemination of Dancehall becomes increasingly determined by the marketing strategies of global media corporations, this inevitably impacts patterns of consumption. Whereas once, Dancehall's primary spaces of production and consumption were confluent with social places and imaginary spaces that were clearly under the authority and ownership of Black people and hegemonic Black discourse - usually the Dancehall or the home, in the U.K. we find that Dancehall music and its attendant styles and subjectivities now enter new social spaces where this is less and less so.

***“My Milkshake Brings All the Boys To The Yard”*: Race, Gender and Femininity in a Multicultural School<sup>52</sup>**

In December 2003 a Christmas concert took place at a multicultural comprehensive school in the heart of London in the United Kingdom. The concert consisted of pupils aged between eleven and sixteen playing instruments, singing, performing sketches, and dancing. Half way through the evening, a group of year eight girls (aged between twelve and thirteen) mostly of Caribbean descent took to the stage dressed in track pants and tee shirts. As they began to dance, the equally youthful sounding but much more Jamaican tones of Miss Thing broke through the Yule-tide cheer to resonate around the assembled audience of parents, teachers, governors and fellow students as she sang the chorus to Beenie Man's Dude song (2004)

I want a dude with the wickedest slam  
I wanna one, two, three hour man  
I wanna dude who can do me in his van  
I thug that can handle his biz' like a man  
(‘Dude’ Beenie Man and Miss Thing 2004)

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<sup>52</sup> “My Milkshake Brings All the Boys To The Yard” Kelis 2004 Virgin.



As Beenie Man solicitously replied to let us know that Miss Thing had never “had it so deep”, a stunned silence fell upon the audience. On the stage – the girls revelled in the hot beats of Jamaica: in the school hall - the audience sat shocked and frozen as if unable to come to terms with the unexpected eruption of tropical ‘heat’ on stage in the midst of the familiar seasonal cold of an English winter. As this troupe of about eight beautiful and effervescent Black, mixed and one white girl displayed their undoubted skill in all the latest Dancehall moves, including a variety of erotised movements of the groin and especially the ubiquitous ‘booty’ shaking movements of Dancehall, R n B and Hip-Hop videos, they exhibited no awareness of the shock inducing impact of their performance. At the end they bowed and beamed with pride as the audience silently and politely clapped.

Can we say that the meaning and politics of Dancehall remain unchanged when transferred across different locations of the African Diaspora or mainstreamed into the hegemonically white western culture of British society? Can we assume that the uses of Dancehall for twelve year old Black girls in an inner city London school are identical with those of twenty or thirty something Black women in downtown Kingston Jamaica? Such questions begin to unsettle the celebratory academic discussions of Dancehall which argue for it to be seen as a space where the racially, economically and culturally marginalized and dispossessed of both the economically developed and developing postcolonial nations get to seize some control from a variety of economic and cultural mainstreams in relation to which they are subordinated (Noble 2000; Stolzoff 2000; Cooper 2004). If Dancehall is concerned with struggles over sexuality and gender relations within Black cultures what does its use by young teenage girls in a London comprehensive suggest about how they are imagining their identities?

In a discussion of how a group of teenage girls in a Birmingham secondary school respond to Black popular music, Debbie Weekes (2002) responds to my argument regarding Black women’s responses to representations of Black women in popular culture (Noble 2000). Weekes agrees that many Black women experience a tension between how they are represented in the media and how they want to experience themselves and that many Black women's enjoyment of how their sexuality is celebrated and valorisation in the media contradicts the desire of Black women to be viewed within the wider society as respectable. Weekes uses this observation in an analysis of how the sexualised representations of Black femininity in popular music were deployed by the young Black girls that she studied in a Birmingham secondary school. Weekes’ research found that representations of Black women in popular music were interpreted by the adolescent girls she interviewed as reinforcing the ideal of the *strong independent* Black woman that was important to them. She found that this ideal of Black female assertiveness helped them assert themselves in the heterosexual culture

of school as people who deserved and could command respect – especially from Black boys. School was an environment where the need to manage the sexual advances of Black boys and keep in check attempts by those boys to fool them with ‘chat’ was considered an important value and skill for the Black girls. But also school was an environment where they were in competition with white girls for the attention of those same Black boys. One way that these girls managed this situation was through this claim to respectability as *Black girls* that simultaneously allowed no fragmenting off of any part of their identities. In other words respectability and value was not claimed solely on the basis of being Black but on the basis of being Black heterosexual and female. Weekes found that amongst the girls she interviewed Black womanhood was indivisibly racialised sexualised and gendered.

One key way that the girls asserted their moral respectability Weekes found was through a racialised discourse of femininity and sexuality shaped by comparisons with white girls and white femininity. Weekes found that the girls constructed white girls, especially white girls who had associations with Black boys as slack and morally disreputable. For these twelve to sixteen year olds what they claimed white girls ‘did’ – was perform oral sex on Black boys; something they claimed Black girls don’t do.

Weekes found that in the situation of an ethnically and racially mixed inner city school environment, competition between Black and white girls over boys meant that the Black girls were concerned to strike a balance between being attractive to Black boys at the same time as conforming to the ideal of strong independent Black womanhood. Weekes says that the way that they overcame this was by establishing a moral distance and superiority over white girls who they viewed as ‘easy’ and weak in their conduct with Black boys. Weekes argues that what this does is reinforce a racial marker, which distinguishes between Black women and white women performatively. In the area of femininity it was sexual performance that marked the differences between what Black girls were said to do and what white girls were said to do. This narrative of Black female respectability argues Weekes re-positions the ways in which Black and white femininities and sexualities are inscribed onto gender in defiance of the stereotypical representations within white patriarchal culture and the Eurocentric post-feminist culture of hypersexualisation. Instead of white femininity signifying either purity and untouchability, or in the terms of post-feminist culture more prestigious and beautiful, in the Black girls’ counter-culture of the school yard, white femininity now signified slackness, uncritical sexual availability and racial incompetence in the management of Black boys. However, and this is for me the most interesting observation, Black femininity is positioned not as pure and passive – but sexually assertive and strong at the same time as being also morally respectable therefore superior.

Weekes' account suggests that the girls she studied were aware and critical of how Black women figure within Black popular music in particular. The uses to which they put the meanings generated in music around race, ethnicity, sexuality and the body demonstrated strategic and located negotiations to do both with the sexual and racial politics of the schoolyard culture and the ways in which Black femininity is visible within popular culture.

Black girls experience their (non) sexualities as excluded from a spectacle taking place between others. They also recognise that in their role as spectator, young sexual relationships are governed by stereotype and as such are essentially unequal. Yet, they are nevertheless sexual, through their awareness of the problematic scripts racialised heterosexuality produces, respectable and knowing in the identities that they are marking out by and for themselves.

These insights suggests that for the 12 year old girls performing a Dancehall routine at the Christmas concert might not have been as naive and duped by the power of the media as the perspective of the older women I interviewed might lead us to imagine. It also helps us to consider why perhaps their pride in their performance could not be deflated. These girls were working within a very localised interpretive community of the schoolyard culture, which is strongly fragmented across gender and race but sharing a common heterosexual bias. This is also a context in which there are daily struggles over personal value and reputation social recognition and respectability, which are similarly often played out along the lines of race, gender, and sexuality. Thus to be called nigger, whore or a lesbian could all be signs of disrespect. From conversations with these girls I know that they are acutely aware of how racism sexism and homophobia figure in the subcultural economy of the school environment. By understanding the positions occupied by the girls within the pupil subculture of the school yard (which is not the same as the teacher culture of the class room) perhaps we can begin to step into the interpretative community of the girls themselves and postulate that in the dance routine these girls were asserting pride in their blackness, pride in being girls, as a way of asserting their distinction from and superiority to white girls in the heterosexual competition over boys, but also pride in being beautiful independent Black girls who the boys found attractive but still respected.

To conclude this section, the current leading status of Black popular music within what is increasingly marketed as 'urban' culture has given a valorised visibility to young Black femininity. Whether as female rappers, R n B singers or one of the stock characters of semi-clad background dancers in music videos, the reserve of popular cultural capital (Thornton 1995) of young Black women and other women of colour is currently high. Black bodies now have a new visibility within mass media representations of Black popular music that is based

around beauty, 'Black style' and an assertive hypersexual heterosexual eroticism. Weekes' suggests that rather than being duped into a false consciousness of their true positions, many young Black girls are able to interpret and evaluate such images and their capacity to distort or accurately represent their lived experiences. This concurs with other writers (Angela McRobbie 1981; Hall 1998), who have argued that, drawing on the available cultural resources to hand, a media-literate generation are able to negotiate and transform dominant representations in the media in their own signifying and self-constituting practices. Thus Weekes' analysis suggests that the resistant and oppositional assertion of an empowered Black femininity that is part of the diasporic politics of both Hip-Hop and Dancehall is appropriated by the girls she studied and deployed in the local negotiations around status, race, ethnicity and gender that they encounter in the environment of an inner city British school. What this means for young Black girls and women (and increasingly white girls too) is that being able to copy the hair, clothes and dance of Beyonce, Tweet or Missy Elliot provides them the stash of popular cultural capital that they can deploy in their competition for popularity and respectability. Competence in a largely media driven style of vernacular Black femininity and style can convey the marks of distinction that gives Black girls the edge as style leaders within contemporary 'urban' culture and which can be deployed to ensure that it will be their "milkshake" that brings all the boys to the yard. This reflects the ascendancy of individualism and market values as the normative morality of global mass culture, which is in turn reflected in the aesthetics and values of a post-feminist culture. This celebrates assertive sexual agency and erotic style as the performance of women's financial independence and freedom. The dominance of hypersexual representations of femininity in media aimed at a youth market as well as, in the talk, dance and dress of girls and young women are key manifestations of this.

### *Conclusion*

This chapter has specifically addressed how Black identities and cultures travel between different circuits of postcolonial globalisations (western capitalism, transnational movements of people, African and Caribbean diaspora formations). What this has begun to highlight are the dilemmas and contradictions that arise when a subaltern diasporic cultural formation becomes entangled and implicated in emergent forms of power, privilege and oppression that diversely ally with and contest racism, sexism, capitalism and Western cultural hegemony. In this regard this chapter also addresses the transformations in racisms that have been precipitated by the postcolonial/neo-liberal phase of capitalist globalisation and how these economic formations are entangled in the cultural logics of transnationalism. Aihwa Ong describes the cultural logics of transnationalism as referring to "all transnational processes that are apprehended through and directed by cultural meanings" (Ong, 1999: 4). Thinking through

the cultural logics of transnationalism involves addressing how late modern capitalist globalisation conjoins unevenly with the cultural logics of transnationalism and diaspora and how in different global cultural currents and slip streams the political, the economic and the cultural are constantly flowing across space at the same time as being “embedded in differently configured regimes of power” (Ong: *ibid*).

I have suggested that Dancehall's entanglement in the intimate governmentalities of advanced liberal freedom can expose tensions and crises in the conditions of postcoloniality, both within and between the multicultural nations of the West and new decolonised nations of the Third World. I have sought to conjoin a genealogical approach to the present with a postcolonial conjunctural methodology in order to undertake a situated analysis of a transnational cultural formation. This has involved a twofold movement. The first involved analysing Dancehall in terms of its emergence as a local Jamaican practice of freedom therefore culture of resistance to postcolonial liberal national projects. This perspective has illuminated how contemporary Dancehall within Jamaican society, reveals the crisis of governmentality within Jamaican nation and how traces of earlier colonial and decolonial formations are present in the postcolonial present.

The second move in this analysis was to analyse Dancehall as an African Diaspora transnational culture. Dancehall has moved into the local cultural politics of Britain via the bodies of Jamaicans and other Caribbean peoples and their descendants settled in the UK. The example of Dancehall's deployment by a group of girls in a London school has revealed how Dancehall has provided both a public space and a set of governing mentalities in which the politics of gender, class and sexuality can be both resisted and asserted in their self-fashioning practices. By considering these practices in relation to the attitudes and concerns of an older generation of Black Britons of Caribbean descent we have also been able to recognise the generational differences that at least in part reflect the shift there has been within Black identities and cultural politics from an earlier primary preoccupation with claiming Black recognition and inclusion within the nation (Hall 1996: 442).

Reggae as the subaltern voice of the people has been a powerful technology of freedom *and* government through which Caribbean peoples and particularly those of African-descent have been able to shape themselves as free people both within the terms dictated by a variety of governing cultural and political rationalities. It has also enabled them to carve out new spaces and practices of resistance that do not always trace existing lines of power. In this regard, examining the changing moments *and* the changing discourses and practices of Reggae have enabled me to move beyond the simple assertion that Reggae is an oppositional culture through which the racism and class oppression have been contested. This chapter has revealed

how Reggae as a practice of freedom has both provided a cultural space and symbolic means through which *the lives actually lived* by morally and politically marginalised or silenced groups within the nation and *within Black* identities might be represented and so claim recognition and inclusion. The use of Dancehall to interrogate, reflect on and attempt to shape and redefine what it means to be Jamaican, to be an African Caribbean, or Black Briton within the postcolonial social of both nations constitutes it as an ethical practice, with political effects. Through a subaltern discourse of the popular Reggae unsettles hegemonic discourses of 'the people' who can legitimately be *equally included* in the nation. In the immediate reconstruction of Jamaica as an independent nation, Rastafari Roots Reggae questioned the continued power of British culture and Western knowledge to shape the mentalities in which post-independence Jamaican identity and Black freedom were being shaped by successive governments. In Britain, Reggae has continued to provide the means by which the children of Caribbean immigrants have both opposed racism and re-fashioned new subjectivities out of old and new ethnicities. Roots Reggae of the 1970s provided a means for contesting the terms upon which racism had attempted to reconstitute them as subordinate and unwelcome immigrants/Others into the nation. In this way Reggae offered a way to *become first Black in Britain* and subsequently Black British. Contemporary Dancehall has re-routed Reggae discourse, through the transnational logics of late-modern capitalist globalisation. Bashment now enables young Black people to experience themselves as style leaders and commanding stakeholders in global commodity multiculturalism. It exploits the limitless choice that *boutique multiculturalism* promises to claim other spaces of identity either in the name of an expanded Black identity, or in opposition to the expectation that race should be their primary or only axis of identification and subjectivity. In this way Dancehall in its highly contestatory field of strategic power has become a key site within which transnational struggles are taking place over the meaning of Blackness and the limits of liberal identity politics.

This chapter has focused on the profane, disreputable and empowering practices of Dancehall music culture. Shalini Puri has criticised a pattern of analysis that she says has come to acutely afflict Caribbean Cultural Studies. That is a tendency to firstly emphasise reputation as a practice of resistance and secondly to challenge the notion that this is a purely masculine culture by demonstrating how working class women deploy cultures of reputation to transgress the dominant gender and sexual order. What this has tended to produce she says is a paradoxical disregard for the everyday practices in which respectability is deployed by women to contest structures and processes that oppress or marginalize their interests (Puri 2004: 113). The next chapter will address this by examining how Black women have deployed Afrocentric spirituality and ideas of femininity and respectability in the Sacred Woman women's healing programme.

## CHAPTER 7

### Remembering Bodies, Healing Histories:

#### The Emotional Politics Of Everyday Freedom

*“The Negro suffers in his body quite differently than the white man” (Franz Fanon 1967: 138).*

*“When the African came to the New World, she brought with her nothing but her body and all the memory and history which that body could contain” (N. Nourbese Philip, 2002:3)*

#### ***Introduction***

This chapter is an examination of the Sacred Woman African-centred women’s healing and personal development programme. Through close textual analysis as well as interviews, I set out to understand the formal discourse of the programme interweaving narratives from interviews showing how women used the programme and what they thought about it. I examine how embodiment is deployed - strategically<sup>53</sup> and non-strategically - in the untidy everyday tactics that some Black women deploy to empower themselves in struggles against the various individuals, groups, institutions and systems that they understand as blocking their path to autonomy, self-determination or freedom. These ‘new’ liberation struggles take place largely outside of the old forms and arenas of politics increasingly emerging at the level of the individual and acted out in the contours of the everyday, the personal, and on the body, producing a poetics and aesthetics of the self. Through analysing how the body, the Black body is both represented and worked on in this programme I am interested in the what conceptions of personhood, freedom and the body are produced within the formal discourse of the programme, as presented in the Sacred Woman Handbook. I then move on to consider how the freedoms imagined in the programme as a return to an authentic African culture and past

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<sup>53</sup> Gayatri Spivak (1990) in *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, introduces the concept of strategic essentialism to argue that there are moments when it might be necessary for members of oppressed groups to essentialise themselves, in order to resist forms of oppression.

are resolutely modern and in many aspects expressive of the very modes of liberal governance it seeks to reject.

The Sacred Woman programme is one of many life coaching and self-development programmes specifically targeted at Black women that have appeared in recent years. From the popularity of books by Iyanla Vanzant (1993; 1998, 1999; 2001) to workshops run by a variety of Black trainers in the U.K. many Black women have been embracing these programmes as a vital resource of self-development and self-empowerment. In the analysis that follows, I suggest that the programme is concerned with the aesthetics of Black existence and freedom and the states of mind, health, body and social relationships that ought to be considered as adequate signs of freedom for Black women. In order to introduce the programme I shall first outline its general philosophical and ethical base before outlining the structure of the programme and some of its key techniques.

### ***Afrocentrism and the Khamitic Nu(bian) Woman***

The Sacred Woman programme, devised and written by Queen Afua – herbalist, holistic health specialist and lay midwife – is based primarily on Khamitic-Nubian African-centred philosophy, which provides the core historical, religious, bio-medical and philosophical knowledge-base of the programme. In addition to this, it also relies heavily a variety of alternative therapy models such as yoga, numerology and herbalism. These are brought together to produce an educational, therapeutic, and spiritual self-development programme. In this analysis I shall concentrate on the philosophical discourse of the programme and how it is developed and deployed in the construction of what I call a khamitic - melanin discourse of the body and history.

The stated core knowledge base of the programme is Khamitic-Nubian cosmology and philosophy. Although the training manual makes no direct reference to Molefi Kente Asante, its philosophy is clearly that of Afrocentrism as developed in his work (1990; 2001), which in turn relies heavily on the ideas of Chiek Anta Diop (1963; 1974), and Maulenga Karenga (1984; 1989). However, the main Afrocentric sources cited in the manual are Wallace Budge's 1895 translation of the *Egyptian Book of The Dead* and Karenga's translation of *Selections from the Husia: Sacred Wisdom of Ancient Egypt* (1984). The African-centred interpretation of ancient Egyptian cosmology expounds a philosophy of human existence and the body that regards the human body as a miniature universe, in which each part of the body is linked to one of the Egyptian deities or divine principles. Each principle governs a part of the body and their influence can be brought to bear on it, through rituals of supplication and homage. It is grounded in a homology in which all parts of the body are joined to each other and to the



particular divine principles, associated with particular parts of the body in a spiritual exchange. In addition one's lifestyle is regarded as a manifestation of the psychological, physiological and metaphysical processes of the body, which are themselves manifestations of cosmic spiritual processes (Gadalla, 2003). Consequently, how one looks, behaves, thinks and so on are all expressions of one's level of spiritual development and Khamitic consciousness.

Afrocentrism conjoins this Egyptian cosmology to an African-centred historiography offering an alternative theory of history and knowledge about Black people, culture, and Black reality to that of Eurocentric and Western epistemologies. The primary preoccupation of Afrocentric philosophy then is to challenge Eurocentric accounts of the world and specifically the status of Western modernity as the hegemonic time/space of normative reality (Asante, 1990: 5) through the elaboration of an alternative theory of African history, existence and historical consciousness, in which a Black – African Egypt is the centre of and standpoint of knowledge.

Re-assigning Egypt's place in human history is a fundamental tenet of Afrocentrism. In this the work of Chiek Anta Diop is central. The main thesis of Diop's work is a redefinition of the place of Egypt – or Khamit (a pre-Grecian name for Egypt) - in African history in particular and in world history in general. Diop lays out extensive historical, archaeological, and anthropological evidence to support the argument that the civilization of Egypt is Black African, is inseparable from a unified continental African culture (rather than classical Greek culture) and is the real origin of Western civilization. Diop argues that a redefinition of history is a pre-requisite for the empowerment of a people's capacity to know itself and to resist external aggression (Diop 1974: 214). Rediscovery of self involves developing an African historical consciousness. This requires the recovering and recentering of the true African Personality through a process of moral, historical and psychic re-education and transformation in which the African rejects the impositions of western 'Black' subjectifications and identities (ibid). This rejection of modern Black identities is extended in the Sacred Woman manual to use of the term 'Afrakan' to denote African descendants. Similarly Afrocentrism reclaims African terms such as Khamit for Egypt and Nubian or Afrakan for Africans. Terms such as 'Black' and especially 'Negro' are discarded as Western impositions, which obfuscate African reality (Asante: 1990: 134)

The debates concerning the origins and status of Egyptian civilisation have been exhaustively addressed elsewhere (Bernal 1987; 1991; Howe 1998; Lefkowitz 1996; Appiah 1997; van Binsbergen 1999; 2000) and the veracity or otherwise of the philosophy upon which the Sacred Woman programme is built, is not my primary concern here. What is of interest is how Afrocentrism is applied within the Sacred Woman programme to: - (i) produce an ethical and aesthetic programme of self-transformation and creativity in which biology and history are

fused in a poetics of African-Diaspora femininity and subjectivity; (ii) reject the Cartesian dualism of western modern subjectivity; at the same time as inscribing an alternative *bio-history* (Foucault 1990; Burkitt, 1999) of modernity (iii) how the formal discourse of the programme that by any reckoning would fail the ‘hybridity – good, essentialism – bad’ test is disorganised and adapted through the processes of translation that occur as it flows on the cultural circuits of the African Diaspora.

### ***The Sacred Woman Programme: liberating the Black woman***

The structure of the Sacred Woman programme is a nine – stage developmental programme for ‘healing the feminine mind, body and spirit’. The nine stages or *gateways* that one must pass through to reach true womanhood, all involve a range of techniques aimed at healing and liberating women of African descent through a programme of education, consciousness raising, self-healing and spiritual development. In fact there are ten gateways. There is a pre-requisite ‘Gateway 0’ that one must pass through in order to gain access to the others. The purpose of liberation is to empower each participant to be healthier, more effective in her role as partner, mother and healer of the African family and community, and ultimately all of humanity, “This book is a reminder from the universe that you possess the innate power to create transformation and change – personally, communally and globally” (Afua 2000: 3). It targets women of African descent in the Diaspora, especially African-American women, and aims to connect them to what Queen Afua says is the ancestral philosophy and way of life in ancient Egypt from which Black people have become forcibly alienated through the effects of racism – that is Nubian- Khamitic philosophy.

Liberation of one's authentic Khamitic feminine selfhood involves becoming conscious of oneself as a spiritual African woman, and how to care for the particular needs of the African body. Freedom is constituted in rediscovering and re-entering the “spiritual traditions of ancient Khamit – the Mother of Northern Egyptian culture”. (Afua op cit: 5) through overcoming ignorance (Afua op cit: 7) and thereby achieving Nubian Afrakan- Khamitic consciousness and harmony - *Ma'at*. The gateway to Khamitic consciousness and *Ma'at* is through both knowledge of the body and embodied knowledge of an “ancestral memory” (Afua op cit: 14) written in and on the body.

The idea promoted by the programme that there is a problem that needs to be addressed was accepted by both the two women interviewed who had used the programme. The two women were Njeri and Mandisa. Both women were university graduates in their mid-thirties. Njeri was married with three children and Mandisa had always been a single parent to two children. Both women had adopted African names. The problems that had brought each of them to the

programme were personal and political. Both women had turned to the Sacred Woman programme at moments of crisis in their lives; for Njeri it was the early death of a close cousin and for Mandisa it was finding herself for the second time in her life a new mother estranged from the father of her child. Both women spoke about feeling they were not coping, not managing their lives as they should. Their reasons for choosing Afrocentric programmes reflected a strong sense of themselves as women with particular needs as *Black women*. Both women strongly identified with the ideal of the strong Black woman and so the sense of not coping threatened their self-identities not merely as capable women, but as Black women with a responsibility to themselves, their children and to the wider community. Thus failure to manage themselves and their lives competently would as Njeri said not only be letting themselves down but also “I’d be failing the Black race, because I wasn’t managing ... The Black race, yes! All the Black women who have gone before.” Therefore working on the self was an aspect of political consciousness raising and self-empowerment in order to effect change around you.

You have to work on yourself, because healing begins with self. *You cannot build a bridge without yourself.* At the same time the ideology if everyone is working on their self, really working on their self, we wouldn’t have half the troubles we have. The system would be different. It is because we allow ourselves to be ruled by anger greed jealousy, hatred and racism and all the other things, that is why we have the systems we have. If you change your own internal system to one of purification, peace, cooperation living in harmony with the natural laws then that would be effective in the policies. So it’s like it’s hard to separate one from the other. (Njeri. Italics added)

The programmes capacity to speak to specific personal and emotional experiences, at the same time as connecting the personal to wider political concerns to do with being Black in a hegemonically white world and to racism marks its particular appeal to these women. The programme sets out to heal the self through a racialised discourse of Nature, an embodied spirituality and consciousness of self in order to release women’s capacity to ‘naturally’ heal their personal as well as racialised wounds *as Black women*, thus releasing their social power to act powerfully for change. The political aspect of the programme lies in its challenge to western modernity’s constructions of history, freedom and Black personhood. Yet its responses to these political questions are largely therapeutic and self-directed. Here the concept of self is consistent with the inter-subjective maternal personhood that we identified in the discourse of the independent woman. By teaching Black women how to get back to their natural selves through developing a new khamitic or at least African-centred consciousness of

self the Sacred Woman programme sets out to enable women to resist submission to eurocentrism and to be more empowered in their relationships and lives

### ***The Sacred Gateways To Self-Knowledge***

Each of the gateways offers a set of regimes which Queen Afua calls “spiritual exercises” (Afua: 28). Each represents a complex care regime, targeting different aspects of the self and its relationship to the body, self and others. These include bathing, altar and libation rituals, prayers, chanting, affirmations, breathing and meditation exercises, dietary observances and daily journal writing. The most intensive and detailed is the Sacred Womb Gateway, which is the introductory gateway that must be passed through in order to proceed onto the programme. The final gateway is the Sacred Initiation Gateway. All the other gateways can be undertaken in whatever order each participant finds appropriate to her needs. Rather than go through each gateway in detail, a brief summary will indicate the primary target of each and how it is pursued. The primary discourses outlined above, a repeated with fairly equal distribution across each gateway. I shall then move on to a more detailed presentation and analysis of the Sacred Womb Gateway.

#### **Gateway 0: Sacred Womb**

This gateway focuses on renewal of the womb as “the natural foundation of our self-discovery and recovery” (Afua: 28). It targets the whole body in an holistic programme of self-awareness in which the body, spirit and consciousness are administered to.

#### **Gateway 1: Sacred Words**

This gateway focuses on communication and cognitive awareness. “Sacred Word teaches us how to use speech to elevate, not injure our spirit ... You will learn how to elevate the language you use” (Afua: 28).

#### **Gateway 2 - Sacred Food**

“Sacred Foods will give you the ability to eat and assimilate food and ideas that heal” (Afua: 160). This part of the programme addresses eating and weight disorders, nutrition, and the social aspects of food preparation and consumption, together with the rights and responsibilities of women as feeders of other people.

### **Gateway 3 - Sacred Movement**

This gateway acts directly on the body in terms of posture and movement in order to harmonise body mind and spirit. “Sacred Movement revitalizes the physical body and teaches us how to spiritualise matter” (Afua: 184). Key exercises are yoga, spiritual rituals and dance.

### **Gateway 4 – Sacred Beauty**

This gateway addresses skin and hair-care, cosmetic procedures, dress, etiquette and sexuality in order to harmonise the inner and outer body and release spiritual energy. “Sacred Beauty embraces the divine aesthetic of harmony within and without... through the Khamitic Nubian spiritual path” (Afua: 216)

### **Gateway 5: Sacred Space**

This gateway addresses the aesthetic and physical aspects of the home, hygiene, the use of colour, aromas and positioning of objects to enhance a harmonious environment. “Sacred Space will assist you in bringing your home and work space into divine clean order that will create balance and harmony within and throughout your life” (Afua: 248).

### **Gateway 6– Sacred Healing**

This gateway teaches women how to use intuitive knowledge and natural healing methods together with herbal remedies to heal ones mind, body and spirit (Afua: 260)

### **Gateway 7 - Sacred Relationships**

This gateway “eliminates toxic, dysfunctional relationships that destroy life and creates and supports cleansed, honest and harmonious relationships that energize one’s life” (Afua: 322). It does this by techniques, which seek to explore and change one's inner relationship of self to self, and to others, especially other women.

### **Gateway 8 - Sacred Union**

This gateway builds on the previous one and focuses on intimate heterosexual relationships, marriage, and sexuality. Interestingly it is the only gateway that includes exercises for men.

### **Gateway 9 The Sacred Initiation**

This initiates the successful adherent of the programme into the Khamitic community marked by adopting a new African name.

Each largely repeats and consolidates the same rituals and regimes laid out in *Gateway O*. Additional techniques target the particular focal point of that gateway and the divine principle or deity associated with that part of the body. Through this vast array of practices one is invited to transform oneself from a Negro to an Afrakan, from a pathological identity and way of life to a free person. Freedom is achieved and maintained through the work one does on oneself, for “If one expects to sort out freedom and move from a dead to an alive existence, one must have the courage and willing to sacrifice one’s old worn out non-effective self.” (Afua op cit: 3).

### ***Bearing Slavery, Feminising Freedom***

The Sacred Woman programme provides health education through the provision of diagrams and information regarding the structures and processes of the human body and psyche. The programme offers a diagnostic and therapeutic discourse of the Afrakan body, which produces novel explanations for the causes and appropriate cures for a variety of physical and emotional ailments. The Sacred Woman programme sets out to correct and manage what it regards as the pathological inauthentic identities, bodies and modes of existence of Black people within Western modernity. Queen Afua asserts that

Afrakan people in America and the Caribbean and various parts of the world” are in a state of physical, cultural, and social pathology. This pathological identity and lifestyle is the result of Diaspora Afrakans’ enforced separation from Africa and from their traditional culture and religion. Slavery, racism and imperialism have produced incomprehensible trauma, carried through our blood into the present day. (Afua op cit: 126).

Therefore the aim of the Sacred Woman programme is the recuperation of what it regards as the authentic pre-modern Afrakan consciousness and personhood. Transformation and liberation involve an ontological recovery of self through care of the body. Failure to follow the programme’s prescriptions for liberation and health leaves you in a “toxic” state of existential, spiritual and physical pathology, a “non-effective self”<sup>54</sup> suffering all manner of somatic symptoms of your soul’s distress.

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<sup>54</sup> Queen Afua: Mission Statement @ <http://www.blacknet.co.uk/sacredwoman/mission.htm> on

Queen Afua deploys melanin to establish her authority to guide and instruct initiates when she states “I have been blessed to pick up where I left off thousands of years ago, because knowledge of self is in my DNA, in, my melanin” (Afua op cit: *ibid*). Just as melanin is posited as the essence of the Afrakan body and emotionality within the ethical regime of Queen Afua, so the womb is the centre of the Afrakan woman’s being and virtue. In numbering the Sacred Womb Gateway zero, the womb is represented as the zero-sum of Afrakan woman’s being. Gateway 0 aims to raise Black women’s consciousness through “womb enlightenment” (Afua op cit: 33). Womb enlightenment “promotes the ability to contact true femininity through grounding in the female organs; the integration of the feminine with the female sexual and biological self” (Afua op cit: 31). The womb secures the Afrakan woman to her symbolic value and social identity – creator/mother. This also affects her biological, emotional and social functioning. Although the womb physically and symbolically is the centre of an Afrakan woman’s power, it is also the site where the emotionality produced by melanin makes her most vulnerable. Queen Afua says that since opening her Heal Thyself Centre in New York in the early 1980, she has “discovered first hand that African women “are holding 400 years of pain, abuse, secrets, rape, incest, anger and resentment in our wombs”.<sup>55</sup> The impact of this for Black communities Afua continues is potentially catastrophic, because the Black woman is the Mother of the nation and ultimately humanity and is responsible for its well-being (Queen Afua: 2000: 75). Therefore care of self is a pre-requisite for care for others and for exercising personal agency and social power. This requires bringing to the surface, the deep embodied memory of these womb traumas.

Two important exercises in Gateway 0 involve journal recordings and confession. Women are asked to produce a Womb Work Journal in which participants are to record, reflections on their wombs and the histories and stories of their wombs; the pleasures, the abuses, the sexual relationships, miscarriages and abortions, and so on (Afua op cit: 44). In producing this journal Queen Afua counsels women to avoid putting their minds above their bodies (Afua op cit 43) and instead let their wombs speak to them. “As we enter into the depths of our wombs, we will discover that our womb remembers and is prepared to speak to us of every fear and joy” (Afua op cit: 44).

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20/07/02

<sup>55</sup> Queen Afua Interview with Angie La Mar on The Women’s Room Choice FM 107.1 London 2000  
Transcript available @ <http://www.blacknet.co.uk/sacredwoman/ladiesroom.htm> on 20/07/02

The second exercise involves forming a Sacred Circle with other women in which each woman shares with the group the insights she has gained through their Womb Work Journal work. As each woman takes turns to tell her womb story, the rest of the group recite a chant called “I Cry A River of Tears That Heal”. One verse of this chant is

“I am an Afrakan Woman, crying out my pain, screaming and retching Rivers of Tears from generation to generation. My tears boil up from the bile of plantation slave life here in America the Beautiful. Here, where institutionalised sex factories were brutally imposed upon a stolen people” (Afua op cit: 57)

We can understand this exercise as attempting to work directly on the pain and shame that slavery and racism imposed upon Black women in the Diaspora. The efforts of colonial morality to civilise the Black Caribbean women through training her in modes of life that her impoverished condition within colonial rule simply could not make possible, involved inculcating in her forms of conscience that would encourage her to blame herself for these failings rather than the structural conditions of Caribbean colonial society. These are the mechanism by which women acquire “learned engendered attunement to shame” (Bartky 1990: 95). The specific embarrassments and humiliations that Black Caribbean and African-American women have become attuned to are not identical, though many are the same. Since this study has alerted us to the temporalities of liberalism and the changing modalities of its governing technologies, analysing the contemporary politics of emotion in which women experience shame that silences them about sexism within Black cultures as a learned emotional response requires that we pay attention to two things. Firstly, that although women’s shame appears to be a universal phenomena (Bartky op cit.), since the category woman is not universal we need to specify and historicise the different contexts in which shame has been produced and in relation to what governing ideas.

The prevalence of fibroids, menstrual problems and hysterectomies amongst Black women in America, are explained by Queen Afua as the scar tissues left by slavery and racism. However, by practicing the techniques and regimes laid out in the Sacred Womb Gateway, Queen Afua assures Black women that we can rediscover the natural state of our wombs that our ancestors once possessed in Africa, when Africa first gave birth to humanity. It is this DNA-melanin embodied memory of Africa that must be discovered and released through exercises that attempt to fuse contemporary experience and historical memory. It is through such acts of performative remembering that the programme sets out to facilitate the internalisation of Afrakan-Nubian consciousness in which “mind, body and spirit” are unified in ‘*Ma’at*’ harmony.



African - American women's wombs have indeed been a site of intense social and political struggle concerning the right of Black women since enslavement to control their bodies and their reproductive capacities. Loretta Ross (1993) in an analysis of African-American women's experience of abortion and reproductive rights, from 1800 to 1970 offers a harrowing account of African-American women's health experiences. In the slave economy the Black woman's womb was a source of profit and labour for the slave owner. Ross outlines the practices by which enslaved women would seek to both control their own fertility and also resist the alienation of their sexual bodies by the economic system of slavery, in which the prime value of a Black woman was as a 'breeder woman'. This included various means of preventing pregnancy and inducing abortions as pragmatic acts of resistance to slavery (Ross op cit: 144). Even more compelling and tragically, infanticide was one way that an enslaved woman could refuse to pass on the "uterine legacy" (Bush 1990: 137) by which the slave status was passed on through the maternal line<sup>56</sup>. Infanticide and abortions in this context became practices in which the enslaved African woman could seek to liberate her hyphenated subjectivity as *slave-woman*, shackled to an alienated and objectified body, in which her own womb and its creative potential was itself the source of her inherently feminised and racialised dishonouring.

In post-slavery America, Black women's procreativity has been no less the target of white racist and Black sexist power. African American women's activism around reproductive and women's rights in the twentieth century has contended with issues such as forced sterilisation under the influence of the eugenics movement prior to the Second World War; the anti-birth control lobby within masculinist Black nationalist discourses since the 1960's; contemporary public policy initiatives which target, pathologise and then penalise Black women's' reproductivity through the stereotype of the 'welfare mother'; inadequate public health provision for uninsured poor people and the misogyny and violence that can be found within certain elements of Black urban communities and expressed in some forms of popular music (Ross 1993).

In targeting the womb as the centre of Black women's subjectivity we can see an attempt to address the situated historical and contemporary experiences of Black femininity within the USA. However, whilst Queen Afua acknowledges the statistical evidence regarding the health outcomes for African-American women, her explanation and remedy lies not in society but in contemporary Black women's relationships to their bodies and to history. In an interview in

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<sup>56</sup> The slave status was legally passed on through the mother, as the law governing slave societies did not allow slaves to marry or recognise paternity in slaves as a significant social or legal status (c.f. Gutman 1974).

London with the Black - British comedienne and radio presenter Angie La Mar, Queen Afua was asked to explain what “womb wellness” means. She responded:

"I have seen thousands of women over the years who have come to see me for different health-related problems. What they all have in common, approximately ninety percent of them, is some kind of womb affliction, whether it was incest, or rape or they were in a relationship which was sexually abusive, whether they did not take good care of themselves or they went from one relationship to the next trying to find a blessing but instead received hurt and pain, so they ended up having some form of womb trauma."<sup>57</sup>

In a disturbing conflation of rape, bad relationship choices and ‘not taking care of oneself’ Queen Afua seems to make individual Black women solely responsible for overcoming the effects of poverty, racism, sexism and male violence. Yet it is important to recognise that the Sacred Woman programme is acknowledging and responding to the situation of many women of African descent across the African Diaspora, where female-headed households are prevalent (Senior 1991) and women have accepted the responsibility of earning, rearing children maintaining the home as well as taking care of the general well-being of the community. In many African Diaspora cultures as in most others, motherhood is a paradoxical condition: For it is the ‘gateway’ to honour and adulthood status, *but simultaneously* to an increased vulnerability to poverty, sexism and racism (Noble, 2000: 161). In this regard, it could be argued that the programme seeks to re-valorise Black women's reproductive and caring labour which structures and governs the lived experience of so many Black women - in order to transform it into a source of power rather than victimisation. Njeri felt that an important aspect of the programme was that it could help women overcome internalised racism and its effects on the Black family and Black relationships.

The programme does help to address internalised racism because Black people living in this society, in America we do take on board so much rubbish; we do internalise it. [...] and it's really trying to break that cycle and it needs the Queen Afua programme. It's also about the mother/daughter, mother/son relationship trying to create a more foundation grounding loving. For the husbands to love their women's womb and for the woman to respect and love the womb and pass it on to the son. It's a whole dynamic circle thing. For me it's got to start with someone and as women are more generally more receptive and more creative let's work through women. (Njeri)

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<sup>57</sup>Sacred Woman: Ladies' Room Interview - pg. 2.

The way that the Sacred Woman programme seeks to reclaim women's 'nature' through the womb as a source of empowerment rather than shame or debasement is directly worked on. In the powerful Womb Circle exercise we see firstly the naming of the historical trauma of rape, sexual exploitation and the specifically feminised forms of dishonouring that racism and sexism inflict upon Black women's bodies. Secondly, Queen Afua locates the scars of this experience deep in the womb of the contemporary African-American woman in the Americas "that damaged them down to their DNA" (Afua op cit: 57). This embodied memory of contemporary and historical trauma is brought on by the sensitivity and vulnerability produced by the effects of melanin, that we all, regardless of where in the Diaspora we might be, share in and are at risk from. However, through the painful and moving Womb Circle exercise this history of Black women's suffering is reified, and thereby rendered accessible to Black women's personal agency. It becomes personal, manageable, and available to therapeutic intervention creating the possibility of not just health but also self-empowerment.

### ***Khamitic Ethno-Biology: Melanin, Trauma and the Bio-politics of Remembering Bodies***

In the Sacred Woman programme, melanin is cited as the primary ontological and biological mechanism within the Afrakan body, its defining and master DNA marker. Beyond this no explanation is offered of what DNA or melanin are. Instead we are only told of the effects of melanin on the African body and consciousness. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss the biological evidence for the properties and importance of melanin. However, the uncontroversial properties of melanin are that it the biochemical mechanism and substance that gives the colour to the skin as well other organs of the body – both visible and non-visible (Nicolaus, 2000). Melanin is also a substance impacting on a number of important biochemical functions within the body. As we shall see many of the claims made about melanin in the programme reflect an emerging melanin discourse within Afrocentrism that has been widely disseminated within the USA and is being globally disseminated across the technologically advanced locations of the African Diaspora through the many Black and African-centred websites accessible on the Internet.

Within the Sacred Woman programme, melanin is conceived as being at the interface of the inner body (soul/spirit) and the outer body (skin colour/social identity). Queen Afua says that melanin is the transmitter of the 'natural' emotionality of the Afrakan, which in its damaged state of unconsciousness is at risk of a terrifying assortment of somatic responses to the pain of racism and existence within the West.

Melanin plays a contributing factor to our ill health... The stronger your melanin, the more you will hold emotions and chemical toxins. When it is time to let go other races with less melanin can release these things more easily, but our melanin holds on to all that.” (Afua op cit Women’s Room Interview)

This implies that being Black is inherently risky, for in the absence of a proper awareness of this relationship of self to the body, the 'Afrakan' subject is in a state of unconsciousness leaving one vulnerable to a variety of dangers. By these mechanisms the programme establishes a relation between self and the body that is racialised. It also feminises this racialised subjectivity through particular practices of the self, which seek to naturalise and authorise a particular construction of 'true Afrakan womanhood'. It does this by asserting that the Afrakan woman's body 'naturally' produces particular needs, which if left unattended (due to ignorance or indiscipline), produces psychological, emotional and physical ailments. In short, lack of self-knowledge makes you sick and keeps you oppressed. The programme advances a model of Black subjectivity that is grounded in a dialectical relationship between the racialised body and an embodied memory or history. In so doing it establishes continuity between these two aspects of the self as the ontological truth of Black existence. Thereby it denounces the racial bodily schema of modern/ westernised Black identities as being damaged by fissures and discontinuities in the 'proper' or 'truthful' relationship between the body, memory and the self. The programme asserts that isn't this fractured state of disembodied and self-alienated consciousness the African descendant in the West cannot experience real and effective freedom. Therefore, liberation requires knowledge of the body. In this regard, the programme offers an alternative bio-politics of the Black body to the secular hedonism found in some elements of contemporary Black popular music such as Dancehall and Hip-Hop (Gilroy 1994). It also retains the African Diaspora feminised project of gender respectability whilst seeking to detach feminine respectability from its reliance on Eurocentric constructions of morality and gender. Through an Afrocentric axiological re-inscription it dis-invests from those pervasive commodified or Eurocentric representations and sets out to re-invest the Black body with more spiritual and historically accountable meanings.

The ways in which Mandisa and Njeri responded to the discourse of melanin was often contradictory. Both agreed that melanin held special properties that in some way or another shaped the ontology of Blackness. However, Mandisa was more reserved in her attachment to melanin saying that she was not “fundamentalist” about it, as she had come to learn that white people also have melanin in their bodies. However Mandisa did feel that there were racial memories that could be recalled through meditation and she recounted an experience during a

retreat in Devon to celebrate African Remembrance Day. She recalled they had gone to Devon because it was there that some bones had been found which at that point were believed by the authorities to be bones of slaves who had escaped from a slave ship travelling from St Lucia and been washed up on the shore. During a meditation session during the retreat many of the women had experienced very traumatic regressions and she had ‘called up’ the figure of a very young girl. She reports that the girl spoke to her saying,

‘Why are you disturbing us?’ And for me it was an horrific experience because I felt like one, I hadn’t been prepared and I had disturbed something that had been still for a long time and I didn’t know what to do with it [...]. So I think there are racial memories and they can be tapped into in the environment that is about that happening. (Mandisa)

Whilst Mandisa, was willing to ascribe to the idea that racial memories could be stored in the body, she was not sure if this was caused by melanin. Similarly Njeri described herself as “comfortable” with the idea that the body could store memories but was less confident about whether it was due to melanin. Nevertheless she had no difficulty in accepting that melanin produced particularly natural inclinations and spiritualities in Black people; “I think within most Black people, deep deep down there is that ‘oh the sun! Come out the sun’. It does something because of our melanin; in a subconscious level spiritually we *know* we are connected to this earth”

The kinds of knowledge or remembering being articulated through the role assigned to melanin can be explored through the literature on trauma and post-traumatic shock syndrome. Allen Young (1996) describes the processes by which a relationship is established between physical trauma and mental trauma in Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. A transferral circuitry is set up between physical trauma and the mental and emotional memory of trauma. This circuit is established by analogy and genealogy. Analogy establishes a psychological connection by transferring images, emotions and words located in one space (the external body/ the world) into another (the interior of the body). Genealogy establishes an historical connection where the memory of an event triggers neurological reactions in the body that become learned and instinctive triggers producing instinctive fears (ibid: 89 – 91). Applying this model to the Sacred Woman programme, we can see how harmful and painful experiences in the world (racism and sexism) are transferred to the inner space of the body. Secondly, the collective memory of slavery and the personal memory of past individual experiences of racism and sexism are explained as the ‘triggers’, which instigate the instinctive reactions of melanin, producing particular pathological effects on the body, mind and spirit, “Memories are acquired ontogenetically, through the organism's own experience of pain and they are acquired phylogenetically through inherited fears” (Young, 1996: 91). This insight is helpful, for it

enables a way of understanding how the *memoro-politics* of the Sacred Woman's ethical regime, invests in melanin as the master gene structuring Afrakan ontology. Ontogenetically, melanin is the mechanism and substance by which the Black female body, mind and spirit are rendered vulnerable to the traumatising effects of contemporary racism and sexism. Phylogenetically, melanin is the transmitter of the traumatic as well as redemptive legacy of African history. In this way the programme establishes a psychogenetic model of cultural transmission and historical knowledge. It is melanin that connects the diverse ontogenetic experiences of contemporary racist-sexist abuse, to the phylogenetically embodied memory of the historical trauma of slavery and colonialism that unites Africans in the Diaspora within a single structure of being.

In articulating this performative, embodied "memory-politics" (Young 1996: 89) the Sacred Woman programme constructs a theory of a universal Afrakan subjectivity in which melanin is the transcendental marker of Afrakan being and identity. The Khamitic-melanin discourse of the Sacred Woman programme both *uses and refuses* old and new forms of racial science and racial discourse. In this regard, it appears to offer an African-centred counter-narrative or complement to new scientific uses of racial and ethnic categories emerging through the new Life Sciences (Kohn 1996). It is as though in the face of the new geneticism of the Life Sciences, it becomes necessary for Queen Afua to seize some control over this new science and find a way of making it work in the service of Khamitic femininity. In this sense it directly engages the bio-politics<sup>58</sup> of modernity.

### ***Bio-History and The Racial Ecology of Modernity***

Bio-power refers to the rationalisation and mechanisation of life and the body that emerges within modernity. It is a modern mode of governance, which deploys technologies for disciplining the body and securing the docility and integration of citizens into the efficient social and economic running of society (Foucault 1978: 261). Bio-power can be contrasted with bio-history, which describes the interaction between life and the processes of history (Foucault cited in Burkitt 1999: 15). In *Bodies of Thought – Embodiment, Identity, and Modernity*, Ian Burkitt (1999) develops this concept in order to challenge the splitting off of

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<sup>58</sup> Bio-power also relates more closely to the actual biological efficiency of bodies. It deals with the regulation of biological processes to do with reproduction, health, death etc. In contemporary society this takes the form of systems of health and social care, which invest in the body as the object of systems and procedures for the care and welfare of the population. "Their supervision [is] effected through an entire series of interventions and *regulatory controls: a bio-politics of the population*" (Foucault 1978: 262).

the body and subjectivity within modern humanism. He argues for the mutual interdependence of mind and body in human nature (1999: 17). Not only are mind and body in mutual interaction and therefore both responsive to changes in either, the body also exists in time and space. Thus the human body develops in relation to environmental conditions, which are also constituted in historical and cultural processes (ibid: 16). He calls this interaction *bio-history* and the body is the very axis upon which *bio-history* turns (ibid). Thus Burkitt argues that “life is a relation that can only be sustained as an ecology, as a series of interrelationships between different life forms and between these life forms and the environment”, in interaction with the relations of social history (ibid).

If we understand *bio-history* then to refer to the matrix of combined biological, social and cultural processes, social relations and discourses historically produced over time and space, we can suggest that the Sacred Woman programme engages the bio-politics of modernity as a deeply racialised ecology. In this The Sacred Woman programme deploys melanin as a paradoxical substance. The mutual interdependence of mind and body within the programme’s philosophy means that working on the body can harness melanin’s potency in the service of self-care and self-determination. Yet the body’s malleability is not infinite (Burkitt 1999: 17), for the capacity of *bio-history* to shape the body through cultural processes (*bio-power*) is limited by the materiality of bodies. For just as a “body can be worked too hard, placed under too much stress” (ibid) likewise according to Queen Afua melanin both enables and limits the capacities of Africans in the Diaspora to deal with the racial trauma of modernity. The programme’s attempts to secure an authentic unchanging African identity is constantly being undermined and unravelled by the ethno-biology of the programme, which insist on the body’s *bio-historical* formation, and the interactivity of melanin, environment and experience. For of course this also means that the capacity of an homogenous melanin-fixed Black identity to provide the guarantee of liberation is also constrained by the differential *bio-historical* formations of African identities across the multiple diasporas and creolising formations in which it exists.

### ***‘Natural’ Bodies in Unnatural Places***

In the programme the racial ecology of modern Black existence within the West, is closely aligned to a discourse of ‘naturalness’ that promotes the idea that living within the West is in some way unnatural for Black people and therefore harmful both psychologically for the self and physically for the body. The basic truth claim of the programme is that what is ‘*naturally*’ good for the Black body is getting closer to ‘*natural African*’ traditional practices. The discourse of nature in the Sacred Woman programme invokes an ethical Black personhood

rooted in Afrocentric spiritual beliefs, and an Afrocentric science of the Black body. Rediscovery of this knowledge of the Black body as a spiritual and ethical entity was regarded by women interviewed as an important form of resistance to western culture and the internalisation of racism. Africa and the *idea of Africa* as the governing episteme of African-centred philosophy, represents a state of Nature. So Africa represents a natural harmonious state of being, where African people can be themselves. Yet there is a rationality to African-centred as Mandisa acknowledged. The alternative science and philosophy of nature in Afrocentrism is expressed in the holistic science of spirituality, diet, bodily care and morality that informs the Sacred Woman programme. Below, Mandisa (a former Rastafari follower) explains how the Queen Afua regime is in many ways just a more rational or ‘scientifically’ developed version of the Rastafari philosophy of *livity*.

Within Ausar Auset they have a science to how you eat. Queen Afua’s organisation is called the House of Ptah which came out of Ausar Auset so they have a very similar lifestyle, *livity*, but the basis of that is that there is a science to eating, so if you have a particular temperament and a particular character then there are particular types of food that you should expose yourself to and not any and everything. But generally the environment was more conducive for us as people than this environment is. The kind of fast living the constant movement of mind and body is not where I think we perform our best.  
(Mandisa)

The ideas of nature and ‘naturalness’ appeared repeatedly in the narratives of the women who had participated in the Sacred Woman programme. Both Mandisa and Njeri used the word natural to describe hair care, food, spirituality and lifestyle. Mandisa spoke about desiring but failing to be a “one hundred percent natural Black African cultural political Black woman” because of the contradictions that life in the West imposed upon her. For Mandisa nature denoted Africa and a state of existence outside or beyond Western modernity’s governing lifestyles.

I believe that part of that [being natural] is being in an environment where the stress level is lower than being in a city like London. Having lived in Jamaica and having visited west Africa and seen African people in their environments I know that when [Black] people live in an environment where there is sunshine, open space, fresh food as opposed to processed food, generally we look and feel better. When we are denied those things particularly by living in an environment like this over a long period of time then we are not in our own natural place.  
(Mandisa)

So for Mandisa, naturalness denoted *livity* in the Caribbean. *Livity* is a Rastafari word meaning a natural way of living. For Mandisa it is the natural environment of the Caribbean



and its similarity to Africa (tropical climate and food stuffs) that are the conditions of possibility in which *livity* can be reclaimed. For Mandisa, the harsh social conditions in which African descendants in the Caribbean have had to live have both constrained and enabled particular adaptations of African knowledges and embodied sensibilities to the social and natural ecology of the Caribbean. On the other hand the environmental conditions of Europe (cold climates and technologically driven lifestyles) together with the social hardships of being Black in predominantly white countries run counter to the achievement of *livity*. Thus for Mandisa born and raised in the U.K, there was a clear distinction between the developed West, the African Diaspora and Africa. The modern history of the Caribbean represents from this point of view a liminal state - within modernity but on its edges, whilst retaining a sense of connection to Africa. For Mandisa this marginal position has enabled a 'natural' continuity passed on through particular dispositions within which the Black body and the Black self, the Black body and the natural environment interact. The ideal of a natural ecology for the Black body enabled her to make a distinction between the different environmental and social conditions of life in the Caribbean past and present, and contemporary life within a developed nation such as Britain.

Again I remember being in Jamaica and hearing older people making certain comments "No you [should] always drink coconut water"! Or "you should drink plenty of this" - just by observing the kind of person that you are. Some of those people are natural healers some of them have learned through experience of raising their own children. But generally the environment was more conducive for us as people than this environment is. The kind of fast living the constant movement of mind and body is not where I think we perform our best.  
(Mandisa)

So the social ecology of Black life in Britain was seen to block the deployment, continuity and adaptation of ways of knowing intimately connected to the body and the body's relationship to its environment. For both Mandisa and Njeri, meditation was an important form of resistance to the demands of normative life in Britain.

I have got to be still because I can be out very externalised a lot of the time and again being in London adds to that because being in Jamaica I didn't meditate but I had lots of quiet time and time by the sea, lots of time in the country where we did nothing. You were just there. Whereas here you just always seem to be doing something. You just feel like you always have to be doing something and your brain is always registering what is gonna happen next or the day after.  
(Mandisa)

The structural location of Black people in Britain – as urbanised labour – by this perspective is viewed as inherently detrimental to good health, to affirmative self-knowledge and the retention of counter-hegemonic shared or public memory. For both Mandisa and Njeri, living within a technologically and economically advanced nation such as Britain is understood to require active work to remember, retain and use these embodied forms of modern Black knowledge. This notion of living within western modernity as somehow forcing Black people to live disassociated and alienated from their natural selves was extremely powerful and reinforced throughout all of the interviews, not only by women who had used these programmes or were familiar with Afrocentrism. It was strongly associated with ideas about bodies and embodiment and the relationship between a consciousness of self and ones natural rights to experience and perform one's own body on your own self-defined terms. The most prevalent use of the word natural was in the discussion of hair, but also it was used frequently to talk about diet and body shape. The naturalness of the body, hair or diet was contrasted with various forms of unnatural manipulation of the body associated with the influence of western aesthetics, morality or cultures. This indicates that Queen Afua's programme is responding to an already existing set of ideas and formulating techniques, which address them, rather than simply imposing a self-created discourse of the body on women.

So although Mandisa and Njeri had the most consciously developed set of ideas about nature and Black embodiment, other women too had clear ideas in this area, which informed how they spoke about the Black body and being a woman. There were two dominant meanings of nature in the narratives of women interviewed regardless of whether they ascribed to Afrocentrism. The first denoted the Black body and its 'natural' appearance and the second connoted Africa. In Njeri and Mandisa the two are fused, but this was not necessarily so for everyone. The natural body was considered to be the body unmediated by and unadapted to western aesthetic and ethical judgements. For all of the women interviewed, natural Black hair referred to unprocessed worn in 'natural styles, either plaited or left out – but definitely not straightened. Natural Black hair should not be dyed or only dyed in 'natural Black colours' i.e. not blond. Natural beauty is represented by dark brown skin, full lips, a round and full figure with a large shapely buttocks and naturally curly hair. So the natural body was also a set of aesthetic criteria that could be used to evaluate a range of things, such as Black consciousness, self-esteem, and racial competence - depending on what values were assigned to particular 'natural' attributes. Secondly, for many though not all, Africa and Africanness symbolises the state of *Black Nature*. That is Africa before the Fall, before the white man, before slavery, before Christianity, before racism, before modernity, when Africans had autonomy from western rule. Like Rousseau's State of Nature before civilisation, Queen Afua helps women

imagine how we were before western modernity separated Black embodied ontology from the State of Nature in Africa.

This embodied ontology of natural Black subjectivity and identity is paradoxically entangled in ideas of tradition and modernity that suggest it is better understood as the poetics of a racialised (counter) modernity. It is modern in so far as it expresses concern for the Black body in the terms of the “two fundamentally modern concepts” of self-preservation and self-ownership (Tierney 1999: 233). It is counter modern in so far as it reformulates these concepts in a way that is contrary their normalisation within western modern conceptions of the self. Firstly self-ownership informs the very contemporary preoccupations with health and fitness in which autonomy and freedom are measured by each person’s capacity to demonstrate self-ownership by controlling and shaping their bodies and its presentation. Self-ownership is linked to self-preservation by the individual’s acceptance of his or her responsibility for preserving a healthy and prolonged life through a well-managed lifestyle and to generally do all that it takes to maximise our capacities in pursuit of autonomy and self-actualisation.

“At this level the concepts of self-ownership and self-preservation shape individuals to follow certain routines in their behaviour, to treat their bodies in specific ways, to organise their time in a particular fashion. In performing these routines, individuals participate in the collection and dissemination of that knowledge of individual’s bodies and groups of bodies, which ... is endemic to modernity” (Tierney *ibid*).

These ideas of self-ownership and self-preservation are threaded throughout the Sacred Woman programme’s exhortations to take responsibility for ones own body and life and the imperative of preserving one’s true self and reality. Yet - and here’s the twist, the Sacred Woman programme, deploys Afrocentric knowledge to re-direct and oppose the westernised racial forms of governmentality (Hesse 2000b: 2; Goldberg 2002: 110) – both scientific and historical (Goldberg 2002) that define modernity’s racist bio-politics – not in order to evade racialisation but to reclaim it, and in so doing re-claim self-ownership. This takes us to the second function of self-ownership and self-preservation in modernity, which is in fact anterior, historically to the first. That is their constitutive function within modern ideas of politics and private property (Tierney: *ibid*)

The historical denial or reduction of the non-European’s capacity for rationality within Enlightenment and colonial discourses (Tully 1993) served to naturalise the claim that Africans could neither claim sovereignty or ownership of their own bodies nor its productive capacities, which were the prerequisites of freedom. On this basis the African had no claim on the right to freedom – *thus justifying slavery*. Similarly the cultural assertion that diverse non-

European ‘natives and savages’ lived in varying States of Nature (Hobbes 1651; Locke 1690) meant they were denied the natural law of self-preservation that was regarded as due to civil(ized) societies - *justifying imperial conquest and colonialism*. So while the bio-therapeutics of the programme are closely linked to modern disciplines and practices in which freedom involves the “the modern responsibility for self-preservation” (Tierney 1999: 249); its Khamitic regime of self-care is not only a practical demonstration of self-ownership and therefore of freedom, it is also a treatise on what constitutes the terms of Afrakan freedom.

Queen Afua’s sceptical stance towards Western reality is a critique of the present that rejects conformity to reality’s normative mode of interpretation (Foucault, 1984: 81). However, Queen Afua’s history of Afrakan selfhood is more anthropological and archaeological than genealogical, being much more in line with Diop’s archaeology of the African Personality. Both proceed by an historical method that seeks to shed the layers of “western falsification” in order to reveal the ‘true’ Egypto-Nubian origins of all African cultures and peoples (Diop 1974: 214). Yet Queen Afua also departs from key aspects of Diop’s model of African historical consciousness. Diop does not locate an African historical consciousness in the body but in the cultural and psychic invariants which he argues are passed on from generation to generation through cultural traits and values and “supportive” historically situated social structures (Diop 1974: 218). For Diop the African Personality is a transcendent teleology rooted in historical and linguistic factors, which constitute the cultural co-ordinates of a pan-African (rather than Pan-African<sup>59</sup>) spatial-temporal horizon or reality. It is the recuperation of this historical consciousness through *culture and knowledge* that Diop argues can secure the African self against the onslaughts of history and Western cultural aggression (ibid). Diop uses melanin solely to biologically authenticate the Black African identity of Egyptians. Diop does not ascribe to melanin any *culture transmitting properties* (Diop 1974: 247) “We have never invoked any peculiar genius or special aptitudes of the Black race to explain why it was the first to attain civilisation” (Diop 1974: 252).

What one is compelled to recognise is the programme’s deep attachment to the very modern modes of thinking it seeks to disavow and shed. We can understand the Womb Circle exercise as a powerful practice through which Queen Afua invites Black women to reclaim that

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<sup>59</sup> See Sidney Lemelle’s (1994) distinction between pan-African to describe the general unity of Africans across continental Africa and/or the African diaspora outside of Africa and Pan-Africanism to refer to a variety of political and cultural discourses of the African Diaspora as a political formation emerging at the end of the nineteenth century

hegemonic black subjectification – explain.

sovereignty over their reproductive bodies that slavery denied and to reject the legacy of shame she sees as deeply sedimented in the bodies and minds of modern Black people. In the racialised taxonomy of early Enlightenment thought Black enslaved populations were considered to be governed by their bodies and not eligible for full liberal personhood. On these grounds the Black enslaved populations were excluded from the category of persons able to exercise sovereignty over their bodies. Just as enslaved women struggled to regain sovereignty over their bodies by refusing to pass on the enslaved status through their womb, or by maintaining a feminised culture of mothering and motherwork in defiance of slavery's unrelenting denial of maternal and familial bonds, similarly we can view the Sacred Woman programme as updating that inter-subjective feminised ethic through a naturalised Afrocentric personhood grounded in an active dialogic body/mind relation. I will return to say more about this later.

### ***Colonial Bio-Histories and Transnational Landscapes Of Memory***

The politics of identity and racialised-embodiment have never been identical across the global landscape of either colonial or postcolonial *Black modernity* (Gilroy 1994). Almost all of the women I have interviewed in London who use spiritual development and life coaching resources turned out to be middle-class university educated professional women. All of them expressed a strong commitment to personal success and social advancement, *as well as to* ideals of social justice and anti-racism. The ways in which these women spoke about themselves as Black women explicitly fused embodied sensibilities that drew on transnational networks of the experiences (their own or other women's) in the Caribbean, Africa and in Britain and beyond as well as representations of Black women in local and global media.

All of the women interviewed considered appearance and comportment potent symbols and elements in the embodied aesthetics and poetics of Black/African identity which could elicit both potentially racist reactions from white people and negative political or personal judgements from other Black people. For women who had used the Sacred Woman programme, comportment and style were regarded as significant markers of one's political and social identification with Blackness and/or anti-racism and needed to be consciously managed and manipulated. Women who were not familiar with Afrocentrism also shared this. However, other women saw freedom in terms of liberation from the assumption that their political consciousness and social identifications could be simply read off from racially encoded modes of dress and self-presentation. Style and disposition were also used actively and unpredictably to contest a variety of Black identifications and as well as discrimination and racism. Being Black and *staying Black* was central to their attempts to shape their own identities and advance

in British society. *Staying Black* was viewed by most of the women interviewed as an important mechanism for resisting hegemonic white/middle-class incorporation. In this situation *staying Black* was often closely associated with refusing the invitation to collude with a 'white' middle-class establishment considered racist, and to dis-identify with the Black working class.

Where aspects of the programme could be useful for the personal agendas of individual women, they adopted and adapted them; where they did not, they were totally discarded. Mandisa related her experiences when she attended some workshops in the USA. She said she became aware that the women, amongst whom the programme was popular in the U.S.A., seemed very different from its constituency in the U.K. She reported that many of the women in the US workshop were from very educationally and economically disadvantaged situations, having experienced extreme levels of poverty within segregated American ghettos, high levels of domestic violence and sexual abuse. She contrasted this with the higher class and educational background of women she knew to participate in African-centred movements in the U.K and Jamaica. These women she described as women who were politically engaged and often with present or past links with Rastafari who were attracted by the Pan-Africanist and African-centred base of the Sacred Woman and other similar workshops. However, in her experience they may not necessarily accept all aspects of the programmes philosophy, but instead take the elements that were useful and relevant to them personally and politically and ignored those that were not. Her account of the differences she encountered between London and New York illustrates what can happen when transnational configurations are translated into and by new contexts.

Despite the surface appearances of similarities and equivalences between Black urban experiences in the U.S.A and the U.K., there are significant differences between specific locations of the African-Diaspora. Black cultural practices have similarities and differences as they circulate through the global networks of the African Diaspora. To understand the different contexts in which the Sacred Woman programme is translated and localised within the experiences of being a Black women in the U.K. it is helpful to reflect on the different *colonial bio-histories* of people of African descent in the U.S.A. and Britain. Britain's relationship with its colonised reserve labour force took place at a distance, at the other end of the world, whereas America's took place on its own soil. In other words, external colonialism and internal colonialism (Lemelle 1997: 142). The effects of these two colonial experiences on the contemporary positioning of each nation's racialised ethnic minority populations within the nation and national imaginary are rarely foregrounded. Racial segregation as an element of colonial governance occurred culturally, socially and psychically *inside* the American nation.

It was tangible, visible, and routinely reinforced through brute acts of segregation and violence. Certainly until the mid-twentieth century, African-American experience and identity was fairly stable with very limited degrees of diversity due to the forms of structural and social separation and legal segregation that pertained there. Sidney Lemelle takes the view that this structural marginality informs the persistence of a unified culture of resistance across all classes of African-Americans (ibid: 142). Consequently, a popular view amongst many people on both sides of the Atlantic is that race and racism persist as the defining marker of difference in the U.S.A.

On the other hand Britain, despite its imperial history, has managed to hold on to an innocent sense of itself as a self-contained “island nation”. This, in addition to sheer distance, enabled indigenous British people to largely remain sealed off from the day-to-day brutish realities of colonial rule. Within Britain, it was decolonisation and the post-war mass migration of people from the New Commonwealth that brought the majority of British people finally into close proximity to their erstwhile colonial subjects. Unlike the U.S.A., the image of a racialised segregated Black substratum across all levels of society is not so smoothly accomplished in Britain, where Black Britishness is more visibly and audibly hybridised and differentiated by intersections of country of origin, culture, language, patterns of settlement and religion. Moreover, in Britain race is strongly articulated through class in such a way as to throw Britain’s racialised ethnic minorities and the white urban working classes together in complex networks of social and institutional proximity. These have produced antagonistic as well as ecstatic encounters and relationships, which have evolved a specifically working class ‘urban’ culture of multiculturalism that is simultaneously celebrated and fretted over. The underside of this urban multiculturalism is the uncomfortable reality that the British class structure also bears the traces of the colonial caste systems in which social advancement was often predicated on assimilation to delicately racially encoded class distinctions.

In the context of Britain, for some women oppositional Black-self assertiveness, *as the day-to-day re-enactment and re-creation of Black identities* can involve the capacity to hold your ground against *coercive racialisation’s* seductive liberal manifestations, and so avoid being alienated from one’s embodied experiences and knowledge. This means refusing the invitation to enter into an invisibly racialised (therefore white) gendered, and classed middle-class

<sup>60</sup>conformity as the condition of being recognised. On the other hand, for many of the women interviewed, Black embodiment (as an ethical or aesthetic performativity) was often strategically deployed in refusing or even mocking hegemonic assumptions by other Black people of what Black Britishness could signify.

### ***Conclusion***

By paying attention to what is presented as the specific (though not necessarily always unique) needs of Black women, the Sacred Woman programme articulates *and* responds to the question that Fanon in *Black Skin, White Mask* (1967/1986) failed to consider when he wrote that “the Negro suffers in his body quite differently than the white man” (Fanon 1967/1987: 138). That of course is how the Black *woman* might suffer quite differently in her body. The programme draws on an African-centred ethno-biology to produce a counter modern philosophy of the self that firstly rejects the mind/body dualism of liberal humanism and insists on modernity’s accountability to the traumatic bio-historical formation of African-Diaspora identity and selfhood. Yet the programme’s attempts to secure an authentic African identity are continually undermined by its diasporic circulation. Despite its own best efforts, the Sacred Woman is unable to finally hold at bay the creolising force of differential vectors of gender, class, and location within African Diaspora identities. No doubt there are women who hold rigidly onto the programme’s model of Black femininity, but what I found were more contradictory and varied responses. The Sacred Woman’s essentialism is revised and creolised through the processes of cultural translation that occur in different localities of Black identity. Translations of the Sacred Woman in London, adapted much of its core ideas of Black homogeneity whilst also holding onto a strong sense of the continuity of Black embodiment across time and space. In my research I found that the Black body was brought in as a witness to the historicity and materiality of Black existence in Britain, whilst also being a supplement to other multiply hyphenated self-identifications (e.g. French-Haitian-American, Grenadan-Black Londoner, African-Jamaican, Black British from Manchester). From this perspective, Black embodiment appears as an organising bio-cultural nexus through which diasporic circuits of personal and shared experiences, histories and narratives of the self converge, in ways that deny the possibility of finally closure but insist on the body’s complex bio-discursive ecology in space and time.

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<sup>60</sup> Such concerns are often entwined with the desire to be regarded as respectable, which for women of all identities is often bound up with interconnected themes of gender, class, sexuality and race’. See Patricia Hill-Collins (2004); Beverly Skeggs (1997) Denise Noble (2000)



Reclaiming the importance of Black embodiment is risky but does invite attention to the conditions in which emancipatory visions cannot afford to collude with an idea of freedom that assumes that the aesthetic erasure of bodies can be achieved “without damaging the overall integrity of a person, his status as a unitary whole” (Gardiner, 1979: 31) and that liberty can be detached from the structuring effects of one’s embodied social experiences. In attending to the spiritual needs of the Black body the Sacred Woman programme attempts to address this problem of freedom and in that regard it is useful. It enables certain problematisations to be revealed, even if the answers it offers are sometimes unsatisfactory. I will end by highlighting just two of the key weaknesses of the programme.

Firstly, the programme both revives and revises the late-modern imperative that individuals take on responsibility for their own health and well-being and not rely on family, Church or state; i.e. must commit to working on their own self-preservation and self-ownership. In the programme these are pursued through an African Diaspora feminised ethic of survivalism linked to a re-conceptualisation of Black subjectivity. The Black self administered to within the programme articulates a resolutely maternal ethics (Willett 1995) of self as a communicative relation of fleshy wounded body and spiritual soul. This configuration of the Black ethical or virtuous subject as indivisible flesh and spirit sets itself against the version of freedom that characterised nineteenth century political rationalities that justified freeing slaves but then colonised Black freedom. This is an Enlightenment embodiment predicated on disembodied reason as the ontology of liberal personhood, that in imaging the racialised colonial subject as ‘all body and immature reason’ justified colonial rule. Yet it also subverts liberal modernity’s normative conceptions of self, body and freedom by eschewing its paradoxical notion of the self. This is a conception of the self that dis-invests in the body yet establishes a relationship between the body and the self based upon instrumental rationality and the imperatives of self-mastery - as the *performance and condition of freedom*. Consequently, the Sacred Woman programme’s reinvestment in and re-valorisation of the body, signals a revolt against nineteenth century liberal conceptions of freedom. In this regard, it supports Cynthia Willet’s (1995) argument that the experience of slavery in America has produced a racialised conception of personhood and freedom. However Sacred Woman selfhood is not like Willet’s model of maternal ethics based on an intercommunicative subjectivity that can transcend the alienated subject/object relation that blocks empathy across difference. For the melanin ethno-biologism of the Sacred Woman programme’s formal discourse disavows internal difference and rejects external difference. So it appears to offer little space of dialogue or mutuality that might speak across the internal differences within Black identity or external differences beyond it. Thus the Sacred Woman programme can offer little to expand a feminist vision of intercommunicative subjectivity in which women of

different racialised or de-racialised identities might share and join to address their different and similar experiences of suffering and being human. Its intra-subjective ethic seeks to speak only to the homogenously racialised self and its other similarly racialised others. Furthermore, the programme's disavowal of modernity inhibits it from recognising the late-modern times we are in, or how liberal racial rule has changed. It fails to recognise that advanced liberal rule is no longer exercised only or primarily through the state or its authorities but instead governs

“through the regulated choices of individual citizens, now construed as subjects of choices and aspirations to self-actualisation and self-fulfilment. Individuals are to be governed through their freedom... as members of heterogeneous communities of allegiance, as “community” emerges as a new way of conceptualising and administering moral relations amongst persons” (Rose 1996: 41).

If it did, it would recognise that its prescriptions and practices, invite Black women to participate in the collection and propagation of that bio-political knowledge that is endemic to modernity (Tierney op cit: 233) and responsibilitised and privatised self-government that is central to late-liberal freedom. So, despite its appeals to tradition, the programme reveals itself to be deeply, paradoxically, modern, expressing simultaneously the governmentalities of advanced liberal rule and the interrogative re-historicing and postcolonial poetics of African Diaspora counter-modernity. Yet the paradoxical position of Blackness and the African Diaspora within modernity and liberalism is expressed through these ambivalences. For in drawing on African-centred knowledge as an alternative science of nature and philosophy of Blackness, the Sacred Woman programme offers a set of holistic rationalities for disciplining Black bodies. At the same time its biopolitico-ethical regime of spiritual, bodily and self-care aims through this disciplining to liberate bodies already coercively racialised by white governmentality.

## CHAPTER 8

### Conclusion: Feminising Freedom and the Temporalities of Postcoloniality

But I who am bound by my mirror as well as my  
bed see causes in colour as well as sex and sit here  
wondering which me will survive all these  
liberations (Audre Lorde 1973 Who Said It Was  
Simple?)

Seen however from the angle of those who are  
being ruled, that is those who form the subject of  
governmental relations, those being “governed”,  
politics means the agenda of creating autonomous  
spaces, defying the iron laws of governmentality,  
and claiming autonomies in life, in particular  
political life. (Ranabir Samaddar 2005)

It is clear from this study that the governmental categories in which Black British people become visible to the state cannot colonise the meaning of Black identity for those so designated. The very use of the category Black expresses the tension between government and freedom. For Black as a positive rather than debased term to identify African Diaspora people first emerged in the context of a different moment in the problematisation of racial rule. That is in the 1970’s post-Civil Rights, post-independence period, when Black populations in the Caribbean, Africa, Asian and the Americas were confronted by the failure of political independence and democracy to eradicate poverty and racism. It was also in that period that Marxist and Left-leaning activists and writers adopted the identity Black as a common Third World political identity expressing their common struggles against the on-going geo-political hegemony of the West and the impact of global capitalism in the continuing economic under-development of those regions. The British state’s co-option of the term Black to denote only people of African descent exploits the acceptability of the term that the Black Power and other Third World movements established, but then re-routes the term back to supply new postcolonial taxonomies of racial government. In this we see how freedom generated as opposition to power, can be utilised by power to reform itself and its systems of government – *in the name of freedom*, whilst also refining government.

David Scott has recently wondered whether that liberationist moment of Third World solidarity against Western hegemony, what he calls the Bandung<sup>61</sup> moment, has gone. More than this, Scott has said that the dream of a common Third World power bloc that could confront western power and global racism is dead. (Scott 1999: 221). Under the postcolonial conditions of contemporary advanced liberal rule, Scott suggests postcolonial criticism needs to abandon old questions about the failure of liberalism to deliver on its promises and address new problematisations. These he says are the *internal conflicts and* failures within the new postcolonial states, especially the struggles between subaltern populations and bourgeois elites in the developing world. There are two things that interest me most immediately about this. First of all, if Scott is correct and we have entered a new situation, what if any are the racial governmentalities of advanced liberalism? Secondly what implications flow from this for the ethical and political salience of Black identifications as emancipatory practice? This conclusion attempts to address these questions drawing on the findings of this research.

### ***Postcolonial Blackness: Between Diaspora and Transnationalism***

If David Scott is correct and the various perspectives of anti-racism in Britain can no longer continue to use Black in that old apparently passé Bandung way, does this mean that Black as a cultural and political identity can revert back to its Pan-African moment of emergence or should Black identity now be scrapped for being hopelessly unfit for our contemporary purposes? Well in order to address that question we need to know what the contemporary purposes are and how Black identity is currently being deployed by both the governing and self-liberating powers that be. The findings of this research contribute to addressing this question by showing how Black Caribbean women primarily but also men are currently deploying Black identity in their self-actualising practices and in contesting and negotiating conditions they regard as restrictive to such aims.

The Black British women of Caribbean descent whom I interviewed weaved complex identity-webs routed through local, national and regional identities as well as connections to the past. In so doing they revealed not only the diasporicity of their identities but also the (post)coloniality of their understanding of Britain. The ways in which they understood their contemporary lives as Black women in Britain, expressed the *discontinuous historicity* (Hesse 2000a: 114) of

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<sup>61</sup> The Bandung Conference in Indonesia in 1952 was attended by the representatives of the majority of the anti-colonial movements of Africa, Asia and the Americas. Its focus was on challenging colonialism and led in 1961 to the setting up of the non-aligned group of countries forming a Third World bloc ostensibly outside the purview of the USSR and the USA.

Black Britishness in which different genealogies of Black Britishness are traced via complex transnational and trans-historical maps which delineate the diverse trajectories of diasporic displacement, racialisation and subjectification under the force of British colonial rule and global capitalism. Their interpretations of how Black and other minority ethnic groups have been situated within British society demonstrated all of the poetics of postcolonial Pan-Africanism (see chapter one), even if as with two of the women they felt no positive identification with Africa.

Firstly, their narratives of identity delineate a *contestatory subjectivity that opposes colonising discourse and practices*. The transnationalism and creolising aspect to their identities resisted subjectification within the terms and boundaries of Britishness. All of the women problematised Britishness not only for its exclusions, but also for the specific ways in which it sought to *include* Black people on very particular and restricted terms.

Secondly, the way in which Africa and slavery figures in their historical mapping of the present as well as remembering of the past produces *an interrogation of western modernity's autobiography through the perspectives of a Black counter-modernity*. Both Africa and slavery were invoked by the majority of women to speak about the meaning of Black womanhood. This deployed the history of the formation of the Africa Diaspora as a counter-horizon in which to locate themselves, not outside of, but beyond the terms of western modernity. In this way Black womanhood emerges as residing in the overlapping circuits of the Black Atlantic and the African Diaspora. It comes into view through the shared remembering of imperialism, slavery and colonialism. As Tina Campt found in her research with Afro-Germans, Africa could figure in Black Atlantic identifications as “a mythic, transcendent signifier of diasporic relation, the site to/through which all routes lead as the link between Black peoples” as well as an *absence* of real kinship (Campt 2004: 189). On these terms we can say that all the women had an awareness of the African Diaspora, even if this was negatively expressed as a disassociation. For surely even the disavowal of Africa is the remembering or marking of a connection broken.

Thirdly, *a collapsing of the time/space of colonial and metropolitan relations* emerges through the ways in which their interpretations contemporary experiences of being Black routinely drew on analogies and comparisons with the conditions, cultures and lives of Black people in other parts of the world and in previous historical moments. This produces a hermeneutics of Blackness that is resolutely diasporic. Finally, the *interrogation of postcolonial racism*. This was evident in their attention to the ways in which racism has changed and so now demands new responses. This was especially evident in their views on popular culture.

What is the point of signalling this Pan-African poetics of postcoloniality? Well I think there are two reasons why this matters. Firstly they register the very *postcoloniality* of modern Blackness and Britishness. Secondly, they speak into the current debates about the relationship between the overlapping flows of culture that late modern capitalism has both utilised and intensified and questions of race and racism. The deep concern that the women had for how popular culture was hegemonising the meaning of Black identity, was wrapped up in concern for the continuity of Black cultural life, concerns about racism as well as a commitment to improving life in Britain for the whole of society. For this reason, the first part of this conclusion spends some time drawing on the ways in which they problematised the relationship between the new Black identities they saw developing, popular culture and racism.

### *New EthniCities, New Racism?*

Black working class popular cultures currently enjoy a dominate status within those Black Atlantic locations of the African Diaspora empowered on the global stage by their proximity and intimacy with the circuits of western commerce and global culture. This has produced a concern within those nations (especially Jamaica, Britain and the USA) that the hegemony of the racialised popular has produced a crisis in national culture and national governance. In Jamaica for example, Dancehall culture with its attendant 'ghetto' lifestyles is regarded as threatening the liberal project of middle-class Jamaican nationalism (Meeks 2004; Scott 1999). In the UK, not only the 'War on Terror' but also lifestyles and cultures associated with Britain's urban multicultural locations are also seen to threaten the identity and security of the nation. So for example, in January 2003, the then Home Secretary David Blunkett, warned that globalisation has changed the world so profoundly that the current threats to "our way of life" come not only from those who would "abuse" the asylum and immigration system, but also those already here whose loyalties to Britain cannot be relied upon or assumed.

"Make no mistake: the threat isn't from some alien force from whom we can protect ourselves by creating "Fortress Britain" but from individuals and groups, whether British nationals or not, whose allegiance lies elsewhere." (David Blunkett. Evening Standard 10 January 2003)

This expresses White Britain's strange post-colonial trauma over how to celebrate a highly successful 'home-grown' 'urban' multi-culture at the same time as that culture is viewed as yet another internal threat to national security and *our way of life*, through its media associations with problematic minorities and racialised urban crimes. The question that is being increasingly asked in the British media especially since July 7<sup>th</sup> 2005 is "has multiculturalism failed?" The findings of this research immediately lead us to ask, failed what? It also enables us to suggest that what is being problematised in this question is liberal multiculturalism; that

is the idea “that individuals from diverse race, class and gender groups share a natural equality and a common humanity” (Kincheloe and Steinberg 1997: 10). A series of assumption lie beneath the surface of this question. Firstly, that liberal multiculturalism delivered its promises to Britain’s Black and Asian minorities, and they have failed to keep their side of the deal, “that is to say, to recognise and act upon themselves as both free and responsible... if liberal society is to be possible.” (Rose 1999: 68) Secondly, in assuming that liberalism fulfilled its promises to Britain’s formerly colonial subjects, this question also implies that Black and Asian immigrants and their children have abused the freedoms that liberalism bestowed upon them. Finally this question further infers that the state of affairs that needs to be recovered from the failed project of liberal multiculturalism is a return to the magisterial and disciplinary power of Western Civilisation. This research enables us to recognise this as a call to reassert Europe’s Manifest Destiny to rule *in defence of democracy and freedom* those sections of of humanity viewed as unwilling and incapable of governing themselves. Now that image of Condolezza Rice bestriding the world in the name of Liberty and Western Civilisation that opened this study begins to take on an all together more cynical appearance. For increasingly, neo-liberalism is looking like a neo-colonial Western worldview.

Firstly let us consider the apparently hegemonic status of Black bodies and Black music within contemporary British urban multiculturalism and the nation. To what extent does contemporary Black popular culture, suggest firstly that liberalism has fulfilled its promise of equal rights and freedom for Black citizens within postcolonial nations and in the wider global scene? Secondly, how fair is it to say that Black people in large part have failed to acquire the moral dispositions of self-governing responsibilized freedom. I shall answer this by reflecting on the spatial governmentalities in which Black youth identities and popular culture is currently hegemonic.

This study has indicated that we need to take care with both the temporalities of modern identities as well as their governmental spatializations and how they reflect and support, time and context specific liberal projects. Nikolas Rose has referred to colonial rule as built on spatial exclusions (Rose 1999: 110), and we need to recognise that the other side of this is spatial inclusions. For example, this study has shown how the taxonomic ordering of nineteenth century colonial rule produced a gendered, racialised and classed mapping of the Caribbean social, on which was inscribed a grid of civility and freedom. We have also seen how the tensions between decolonising liberalism in the Empire and post-war social liberalism in Britain, required British racial governmentality to reform itself. One aspect of this involved re-thinking how to govern the government of race ‘at home’ following mass immigration from the Commonwealth. The philosophical and geographical mapping of the empire onto the

territorial space of the nation, involved developing new governing racial categories and new spatial mentalities. For example, the white working and lower middle class woman's freedom to stay at home and be a good wife and mother would be supported by the new social insurance and benefit system, whilst the Black woman's freedom from poverty and unemployment back in the Caribbean, would be made possible by the chance to come and work in Britain. Black Caribbean workers (male and female) could be freed from rural unemployment and destitution in the disintegrating sugar economies of the Caribbean and liberated into manual and service work in Britain's large urban centres.

### ***Ornamental Performativity And Urban Governmentalities***

Black people's lives in Britain are intimately imbricated in the city and in the urban as *both* constraint *and* possibility. Clearly for the women I interviewed 'Urban Culture' was seen as ambivalently attached to Black British cultures through their mutual co-dependency. So Black Britishness is ambivalently attached to the multicultural cities where the social and cultural infrastructures facilitate and enable more empowered and liberating forms of either transcendent selfhood 'beyond race' and/or racial belonging through the presence of larger and more varied Black communities and cultures, therefore more choice of alternative Black lifestyles. To the extent that people of all ethnicities in cities can share in the multicultures of the urban, the city then can also promise escape from the confines of subaltern hegemonic constructions of racial or ethnic identities, be they 'Black', 'Muslim', 'Asian' and so on. The city can thus represent greater freedom to be Black in all its diversities – or to evade normative racialised and ethnicised identities. Similarly for white people the city offers different opportunities to engage with diverse populations and cultures. For white Britons Urban Culture can signify an expanse in individual freedom of choice and white flight from the confines of the monocultural whiteness of 'old Britishness' and life outside the multicultural city. In its commodified forms Urban Culture merely makes the food, cultures and styles of Britain's racialised ethnicised populations available as a leisure pursuit for white people at play.

The terms urban and ghetto are widely deployed within the discourse of Dancehall and Hip-Hop lyrics and in a range of official discourses of 'Urban Culture' from arts organisations through to recording companies. The visions of the city that are invoked by both terms speak to potentially very different problematisations, values and strategies. Where Dancehall and Hip-Hop artistes and many of their core Black consumers speak in terms of the ghetto, state, public and corporate discourses increasingly speak of 'Urban Culture'. I suggest these terms express very different conceptions and experiences of the contemporary city. Where Urban Culture denotes a celebratory avant-garde culture of urban mixing and postmodern creativity, the term ghetto is a racially loaded, cynical and ambiguously encoded category. The two terms



have acquired a popular descriptive authority within popular culture and within the global media industries to denote ethnicised spaces of urban poverty and deprivation, but also cultural productivity. To understand conceptually how the two have become linked as they have and to understand the work these linkages do requires a closer understanding of both concepts as categories of spatial and racial governmentality and paradoxically racialised freedom.

The term ghetto first emerged in Europe to denote the segregation of Jews (Wirth 1928) and developed through the twentieth century anti-Semitism to refer to the spatial arrangement of ethnic and religious difference within the nation and the concerns of ruling groups over whether and how ethnic differences should or can be assimilated into the nation. (Wacquant 2004: 2). As such the ghetto is always ensnared in struggles over power, prestige and hegemony. In early twentieth century America the concept of the ghetto denoted “the restriction of persons to a special area and *the limiting of their freedom of choice* on the basis of skin colour” (Clark cited in Wacquant 2004: 11. Italics added). As this quote indicates ghettoisation is not merely control and discipline but also a way of governing and limiting the conditions of freedom, on racial, religious and/ethnic grounds. So in the pre-Civil Rights United States, African-American ghettos were not merely locations of poverty, and injustice, but also places where lives were lived, subjectivities and cultures created, resistance organised and dreams imagined – even if those visions were constrained and distorted by the horizons of the ghettoised spaces of possibility imposed by the dominant national-cultural space.

So, the ethnic ghetto within the USA was never merely a disciplinary space in which Black and other ethnicised minorities were subjected to oppression. The ghetto has been an urban space structured within the disciplinary regimes of a racial state and governmental western global culture, but the ghetto has also been the conditions of existence in which new oppositional racial states of being are created (Goldberg, 2002: 5); and in which transgressive and oppositional Black subjectivities and discourses could be forged and a life worth living be imagined, struggled for and made. This configuration of the ghetto as both a technology of spatial government and racialised freedom, invites a closer examination of how Urban Culture has emerged as a way of referring to the multicultural city and to Black cultural practices. It provides a way for us to understand this apparent contradiction between Weekes' analysis of Black girls' use of popular cultural representations of Black femininity as a resource in their self-making practices and Patricia Hill Collins concern that these merely re-configure racism in new culturalist forms and occlude the material reality of inner city poverty and social exclusion.

This study suggests two things. Firstly that Dancehall in the UK is both a technology of late modern government and a contested subaltern practice of freedom. This situates postcolonial

Blackness ambivalently in relation to neo-liberalism and globalization. As chapter six showed, Dancehall can be understood as a de-colonial practice of freedom in which the still unfinished task of critiquing, revising or displacing liberal morality is worked on and through an embodied Black subject. Secondly that through the industry-led discourse of Urban Culture, Dancehall is a technology of racial and spatial governance. In his study of modern power Nikolas Rose (1999) outlined the various identities that the modern government of freedom has taken and currently takes. He did not include the arena of culture or popular culture in this study. It is not clear to me why this should be so. Additionally although questions of race and racism are occasionally raised in Rose's work, neither is really examined as modes of governmentality in their own right, but only expressions emerging through other technologies. Rose's focus appears to be on the technologies of power through which race appears rather than the bodies, lives and material conditions so produced. Race appears conceptually with no bodies attached to it. Yet – and this moves on to my second main conclusion - this study has addressed this absence, by showing how the governing technologies of advanced liberalism have been harnessed to the reforming moral projects of postcolonial racisms and postcolonial Black practices of freedom.

Advanced liberalism has devolved many of the powers of governing racial freedoms to the market. The state we are to believe exists only to protect rights and secure safety. These are the only terms upon which race is now publicly spoken of as a concern for liberal governments. This distances western liberal states from accusations of racism. The new economism of social government (Rose 1999: 141) emphasises freedom as individual choice, individual autonomy, the commodification of the self and lifestyles where identities are defined by purchasing choices. This study suggests that popular culture's complicity and entanglement with the neo-liberal market has reduced the spaces of autonomous self-making in which subordinated groups can interrogate powers. Given that I have previously said that "in many regards modern Black popular culture can be defined as the formation and articulation of public spaces of resistance, reclamation and autonomous creativity against and beyond the hegemony of western modernity and racism" (Noble 2000: 157), we may need to be concerned if the commodification of the social that characterises advanced liberalism leads freedom's moments of emergence against governing power, to appear habitually within the identities prescribed by the market. For such a situation will inhibit the emergence of autonomous spaces in which claiming autonomy becomes the precursor to moving into political subjectivity (Samaddar 2005:1). For this reason, the power of neo-liberalism to colonise not merely social government, but self-government through cultural practices reinforces the importance of considering how popular culture has become a strategy of government within the rule of

advanced liberalism and how Black cultures and identities have become implicated in these force relations.

The marketing category of Urban Culture like the marketing of Benetton products can de-historicise and erase race and replace it with 'colour', which is then displaced from bodies onto objects of clothing, or music or any product. This diversity in turn can come to denote both consumer choice and human diversity, whilst it also takes for granted (naturalises) the relations of inequality that permit the Third World cultures and racial Other to function as a resource by the West and by white hegemony (Lury op cit: 155). In this way the global marketing of difference advances a vision of universalism which invokes the values of unity, joy, harmony etc, at the same time as it masks the hegemony of white skin, capitalism and liberalism as the normative condition of existence (Lury, 2000:152); "thus distancing cultural essentialism from many of the social and political criticisms that biological essentialism has received" (Lury op cit: 158). Thus the re-branding of difference and race through eliding old naturalist associations and re-packaging them with more acceptable cultural tropes neither naturalises nor eradicates race as a meaningful social category, even as it is eschewed. Race is detached from its fixed biological markers and re-worked through mutability of the cultural, the aesthetic and through the body of the Other's performativity. Race becomes "not a matter of skin colour, of physical characteristics, of the expression of a biological or natural essence, but rather of style, of the colour of skin, of colour itself as the medium of what might be called a second nature or more provocatively, .... a cultural essentialism" (Lury op cit: 148). Resisting the provocation that the phrase 'cultural essentialisms can evoke, involves historicising and contextualising cultural essentialism, as has been argued in earlier chapters. Historicising cultural essentialism means going beyond identifying construction, to identify the changing historical conditions that give rise to particular essentialisms *and the conditions they problematise and address*.

Where Benetton offers a multicoloured world of limitless newness and choice in which colour signifies harmony in diversity, representations of de-racialised cultural Otherness in music videos which appear on satellite channels like MTV-Base' present a post-race utopia that is darker and more ambiguous. It is a heterosexual utopia ruled by hypersexual young men of all colours but mostly Black, who dwell in a Peter-Pan 'urban' world of liminal adolescence gorging themselves on the united colours of femininity and limitless consumption of designer brands. This utopia, offers Black young people the promise of full inclusion into a fantasy reality, a chimerical world of urban abandonment and limitless diversity that belies the reality of being reduced to the 'hood' (or do I mean the 'hoodie'?) and the council estate, educational exclusion and underachievement of Black boys, targeting of Black young people through racial

profiling, the premature sexualisation of girls and boys and accompanying rise in teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, rape and sexual assault. Like the utopia of a Benetton multicultural universe, Urban Culture merges the 'real' and the fake (Lury op cit 155). What this obscures is how race, recoded as sexual freedom renders sexuality and heterosexual performativity compulsory and Black young bodies the sign of prestige and marketability, within a consumer culture of commodified individualism. Black popular culture and its relationship to global media industries sell a MTV version of Black and 'Urban' identity and authenticity back to young people of all classes and ethnicities. However, in the context of continued economic and social discrimination and disadvantage, what the responses of the women I interviewed suggest, is that the construction of Black authenticity that is being globally disseminated, valorised and permitted inclusion into the humanism of late capitalist universalism is not one that will assist most young Black people to function as equal and effective citizens in British society.

The contemporary trope of the urban celebrates the multicultures of the inner cities and appeals precisely because it transcends defensive nationalistic visions of the urban as the site of decay and a disordered threat to the imagined nation's homogeneity and progress (Jacobs 1996; McLaughlin 2000). Yet, whilst Blackness as sign may flicker brightly within the postmodern zeitgeist, this does not automatically infer that Black *people* are fully included in the networks of power, but rather are confined to what I am calling an *ornamental performativity*. Ornamental performativity as a technology of racial governmentality works to shape and train Black bodies into certain kinds of sensibilities, deportments and styles, not by disciplining them in to particular forms of docility but quite the opposite, training them into certain racialised performances of their own freedom. Black agency, Black freedom within this postmodern utopia is reduced to its permissible performances; singing, dancing, wearing fashionable clothing; *being urban*.

There is a close connection between the discourse of the urban and ornamental performativity. This ornamental performativity is simultaneously racialised and colour blind. "Commercial multiculturalism assumes that if the diversity of individuals from different communities is recognised in the marketplace, then the problems of cultural difference will be (dis)solved through private consumption, without any need for a redistribution of power or resources" (Hall 2000: 210). The city and Urban Culture is the reserved space or better still the stage on which ornamental racialised performativity has pride of place within the moral political space of the multicultural western nation. The valorised iconography of Urban Culture is symbolised by the city, ghettoised spaces, subcultural competencies and embodied performances of ethnic and sexual difference. The discourse of Urban Culture like that of the ghetto is a "Janus-faced

instrument of ethnoracial closure and control” (Wacquant 2004: 1) However, unlike the concept of the ghetto that can connote shame “stigma, constraint, spatial confinement, and institutional encasement” as a governmental enclosure within the nation, Urban Culture connotes pride, honour, freedom and global movement; obscuring its still subordinate and confined location within the hegemonic nation otherwise guarded from its encroachments. Urban culture as a marketing category re-brands emergent urban practices of freedom and enables commodity multiculturalism to enfold those practices back into governmental discourses of the city and the nation; selling ghetto mentalities back to young people as the route to social prestige. In this way the category ‘urban’ works within the western multicultural nation as both imaginary and metonym. It addresses the post-colonial tensions between homogeneity and heterogeneity.

Yet Dancehall (and other Black expressive cultures) is an African Diaspora cultural formation rooted in the experience of the ghetto as an ambivalent location of racial and economic oppression, yet also freedom from legislative white or national culture. Dancehall as it is lived out on the streets and within the subordinate cultural circuits of the African Diaspora - rather than as it is relayed via the transnational circuits of commodity multiculturalism - resists translation into the language of Urban Culture. The ways in which it brings Black British populations into contact with various ‘home’ cultures in the Caribbean and with the various parts of the world where family and friends have settled, means that postcolonial modern Blackness is held in tension between diaspora and transnationalism (Thomas 2004: 260). Local and nation struggles, negotiations over cultural hegemony and processes of identity building become entangled in very localised (as in the example of the school performance), national and transnational politics of race, class, gender, sexuality and identity. This potentially renders transnational and diaspora cultures “untranslatable” into either national or racial projects of progress. (Thomas op cit: 260). This is why they are often perceived as a threatening to projects of government. We saw this clearly in the examination of the changing moments of reggae’s, emergence and reform within postcolonial Jamaican society and culture; a culture that now extends beyond the borders of Jamaica so that “Jamaica is now wherever Jamaican are. This means that the processes of Jamaican racial, class and gender formation – both in Jamaica and in the diaspora – are always negotiated in relation to those processes occurring elsewhere” (Thomas op cit: 261).

The subculturally and financially privileged empowerment of Hip-Hop and Dancehall artists and ‘Black youth’ within the category ‘Urban Culture’, can mask the cultural essentialisms through which neo-liberal global culture and nations can advance a vision of multiculturalism and the transcendence of race and racism, whilst at the same time masking the racisms that

they rely on and reproduce. This new 'colour-blind racism' or raced racelessness (Goldberg 2002: 222) erases the colour line and so racism itself appears to have been overcome (ibid); thus rendering racism harder to both name and challenge. The potency and malleability of this colour-blind racism, like the colourful de-racialised diversity of Benetton multiculturalism, lies in its commitment to and capacity for

seeing and not seeing all as white ... while claiming to see those traditionally conceived as "of colour" *in* living colour and yet colourless" ... Either way, one is identified precisely in the default mode of racial terms. So, colour-blindness fails as it succeeds, for even in announcing the end of racism it extends exclusion by another (if supposedly now nameless) name, by other (no longer meaningless) means." (Goldberg 2002: 223)

This suggests that the new racism of global popular culture (Hill Collins 2004) or what I would prefer to call post-colonial racism advances through its disarticulations from the now discredited terms of racial biology and is articulated through discourses of gender, sexuality, class and place. The cynicism and rejection of dispositions of love and care that increasingly are being manifested within both valorised Urban Culture and perverse and ungovernable ghetto versions of Black culture, express in large part the abandonment of many young Black people of any hope in the projects of either western liberalism or Black liberation. Many now no longer care what anybody else thinks of them, because they know nobody ever thinks of them, unless they are making noise, be that the sound of the gun or the sound of the drum. Taking what they can from the liberties of neo-liberal global capitalism, many stars of the video light or the urban streets, have decided to cash in on whatever subcultural capital they currently have. Yet at the same time they refuse to invest in a promise they have lost faith in.

### ***Keeping Promises and Failed Projects***

I want to now return to David Scott's assertion that in our postcolonial present it is no longer feasible or useful to interrogate liberalism for failing to keep its promises. This study indicates that it is too soon to abandon this task of criticism. Rather we need to re-frame the questions we pose of liberalism's current governing 'advanced' manifestations. For what the genealogical approach of this study has revealed is not only the changing and multiple identities of liberalism's freedoms, but also liberalism's gendered and racialised ontology. So the more interesting question that has arisen in the course of this investigation is what has liberalism in its altered moments of emergence and reform, promised Black people and in this context specifically Black women? Abandoning the interrogation of liberalism's failure to deliver on its promises can only be useful if it involves a rigorous context specific analysis of the *subordinated freedoms* that different liberal –westernising projects have generated.

What the experience of Black Caribbean women from the nineteenth century to the present shows is that reform has been a key dimension of both racialised and gendered governmentalities, revealing their intimate co-production within liberalism's many manifestations. What we have discovered is that key moments of liberalising reform practices, mentalities and policies towards colonised men and women and towards white women have been closely linked to what we can now see as the racialised and masculinised liberal state's predicament or problematisations of how to maintain both hegemonically white-western and masculine possession of liberal freedom and state power to run the world and have the power of access over women. As Wendy Brown noted, this entails "both a general claim to territory and claims to, about, and against specific "Others" (Brown 1995). Yet we cannot as Brown does, identify the link between state masculinism and Eurocentric power and then erase the analytical relevance of race by reducing all to gender. By analysing the genealogy of Black Caribbean women in liberal freedom, we have been able to confirm how bio-power, gender, sex and race combine bodily discipline and mass regulation (Stoler 1995)

### ***Liberalism's Racialised Family Values***

The Black Caribbean woman's culture of independence emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth century out of the gendered crucible of post-emancipation Caribbean societies, where reconstructing a free society out of an enslaved one involved competing elaborations of what freedom for the emancipated population could be. Although the ideal of a man as head of the family household took hold partly under the influence of Christianity and the desire for autonomous self-governing families outside of the control of planters, there were a variety of household patterns often organised around extended matrilineal and matrifocal intergenerational kin-groups as well as a variety of types of sexual union (Hodge 2002: 476). This generated cultures of female independence and ethics of intersubjective autonomy that this study suggests persist in altered forms in the women interviewed for this study and in the practices of many young Black Caribbean women's cultures. This study concludes that to simply view Black British Caribbean extra-marital sexual unions and family systems as a redundant and pathological residuum of slavery, when legal marriage was not available to the enslaved populations (Blassingame, Gutman, 1976; Fraser, 1966), denies their almost two hundred years of adaptation and resistance to western patriarchy and liberal moral governmentality. They are expressions of the free Black women's strategies of survival and freedom developed within the possibilities of life in post-emancipation and twentieth century colonial Caribbean societies. They also reflect many free Black woman's conscious decision that the patriarchal family could serve little benefit to her personally or politically. Caribbean women's practices of female headed households and extended kin networks can now be seen

as outgrowths of the refusal of colonial liberalism's promise of 'freedom' in liberal patriarchy; i.e. Black female submission to Black male authority and Black male submission to the market. Both the large-scale refusal of marriage and in many islands withdrawal from plantation labour were militant acts of self-definition in which Caribbean men and women attempted to work out new alternative gender arrangements. However the autonomous space to do this did not exist within conditions of colonial rule. Thus Caribbean family structures and gender roles have always been ambivalently and contradictorily entangled in competing liberal projects (Church, state, the market) as well as different Black political ideologies (Afrocentrism, Black Power, Caribbean nationalism).

Failing to understand the context in which such gender and family systems developed has left British Black Caribbean women trapped between cultural habits they could not fully explain and British family and gender norms that regard them as abnormal women and flawed mothers. Therefore, in Britain there is little cultural or institutional validation for Caribbean women's feminised power within the Caribbean family, or for Black women's authority as single-mothers – particularly mothers of boys. If one adds to this denial of social validation for traditional Caribbean family values, the culture of male privilege that pervades Caribbean cultures no less than white, and we begin to find a way to explain some of the problems that are leading to the sorts of figures quoted in chapter four regarding the social exclusion of Black boys and men. Cultures of male privilege demonise women's authority whilst reinforcing and valorising particular kinds of conduct for men. This includes greater male freedom in social space; the right to roam the streets and public spaces, and the expectation of male domination (Figueroa 2004: 143<sup>62</sup>) and rule. Of course these are values we recognise as also those of European liberal masculinity that were exported around the world via the British colonial civilising system. The problem arises now when Black and other colonised men seek to move about within the spatialised governmentalities and visual disciplinary regimes of white British society with the same degree of masculine freedom. As the history of British policing of Black men attests (Hall et al 1987; Spencer 1997), Black men's visibility and freedom to move within the public spaces of the nation have throughout the twentieth century and no less now been highly politicised and problematised. In fact this is one of the arenas in which the everyday commonsense of British racial rule is most starkly in evidence. The policing of Black men's bodies and other bodies and signs metonymically linked to Black

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<sup>62</sup> Figueroa regards this as Caribbean values of male privilege. I think he is wrong. These are almost universal cross-cultural male values. The significance difference in the Caribbean is that even in lower class gender systems in which patriarchy is weakly imbedded, as we have already noted in this study male privilege remains.



men's bodies (tams, hoodies, baseball caps) expresses commonsense stereotypes of Black men as saturated with uncontrollable physicality. Its colonial traces are apparent in the previously cited quote from the Moyne Report blaming high Caribbean 'illegitimacy' rates on people whose "immature minds are ruled by their adults bodies" (CO op cit: 221). It also exemplifies the continuing disposition to govern race spatially; to govern the spaces and places that racialised bodies will move and appear in. Brett St Louis has noted how sport has become a central technology and location for disciplining Black men's bodies in the USA, producing what he calls "the athleticization of (idealised) Black identity" (St Louis 2005: 123), so that large numbers of African-American young men have rejected academic achievement for the hope of sporting success. Similarly popular music and its representative 'urban' spaces have become key technologies for the marginalisation and containment of Black boys and men. Movement outside of these racialised spaces for the majority of Black boys and men is heavily scrutinized and penalised.

This heavy containment of Black men's psychological, social and political movements is paradoxically aligned with the Caribbean male culture of reputation outlined in chapter six in the discussion of Dancehall. On the one hand the performative aesthetics of male reputation based on embodied skill and prowess, physical strength and speaking out in public have contributed to Hip Hop, Jazz, Reggae and other music cultures and movements as powerful arena of male self-creation and freedom. On the other outside of these privileged yet heavily policed and bounded racialised spheres of Urban Culture and urban inner city space, these behaviours leave them, as Figueroa has said of boys in the Caribbean "deficient with respect to the skills that are increasingly required for survival in the education system" (Figueroa op cit: 139) and the workplace; skills which increasingly are being viewed as feminised. This puts quite another perspective on Wendy Brown's assertion that "one problem with liberal state power for women then is that those recognised and granted rights by the state are walking freely about civil society, not contained in the family." (Brown 1995: 183) As this study has shown the gendered and racialised ontology of the liberal state and liberalism that Brown overlooks, locates Black men and other non-European men in very contradictory and complex relations inside of and in relation to both liberalism as a political rationality of European masculine rule and wider cultures of male privilege. Yet Black women get the blame. The marginalisation of the majority of Black men (along with other categories of subordinated men) from the usual sources of masculine power and social status and privilege, leaves many Black boys and men falling back on the strategies for gaining masculine social prestige and self-esteem developed in a colonial context. As discussed in chapter six in relation to music, in colonial situations were Black and other colonised men were denied access to the legitimate 'respectable' sources of male authority and status, yet inculcated into the liberal values of male

rule over women, subordinate men may turn to alternative sources of male power and privilege; sources which are more personal, direct and embodied. The failure to decolonise liberal rule, which this situation demonstrates, still leaves unaddressed the masculinisation and racialisation of the political. This together with underachievement, racism, the feminisation of the labour market and a masculine culture of reputation can all conspire to force many Black men into dependency on the state, criminality and macho masculinity. Yet Black women get the blame.

Even within a post-feminist, post-patriarchal advanced liberal culture, the ruling gender order has failed to change the assumption of public space and politics as hegemonically under white masculine governmentality. The very heavy handed policing of Black masculinity on the streets is replicated in less stark but no less effective ways in other areas of British life, from the nursery through to the workplace and leisure cultures. Not only does this consistently problematise the masculinities of Black boys and men, and leave the masculinity of advanced liberalism normalised. Liberalism's governing mentalities can produce a variety of self-policing and self-crafting behaviours by which Black boys and men become emotionally attuned to their problematic status, no less that Black women have become emotionally attuned to their shame (Bartky 1990). This has often meant that Black feminist organising in Britain has 'defended' the Black Caribbean family against the various assaults against it from a variety of state agencies (particularly education, Social Services and the police. The defence and care of Black men as part of the defence of communities against a commonly shared racism has led many women as Julia Sudbury found in her research into Black women's organisations, to mute the internal debates within Black Caribbean families and communities about gender and sexism.

In many cases, women were influenced by common experiences of racism to turn a blind eye to oppressive gender roles. This apparent willingness to 'forgive' sexism from Black men, and in particular family members, was rarely a result of lack of awareness about the existence of sexism, rather it was a choice expressed by women facing multiple sites of oppression (Sudbury 1998: 66)

However, Black feminists in Britain and arguably in the Caribbean and the United States, have yet to further historicise and analyse how the Black family was not merely a pragmatic adaptation to slavery, but more significantly how after slavery it was a fundamental mechanism of resistance to the liberal gender order. The Black Caribbean family in freedom

was a location of resistance not only to colonial racism (this much feminists have noted), it was also a strategy through which Black women attempted to retain personal sovereignty and autonomy from male governance in marriage *and resist liberalism's naturalised assumption of women's subordination to power gendered masculine, but also articulated racially*. I want to argue that within the conditions of freedom made possible by both colonial and now postcolonial racialised and gendered freedoms, the anti-racist and self-constituting practices of Black Caribbean women, of all sexualities, are persistently constrained from 'speaking up' about sexism by the looming goliath of liberal racism, in whatever reformed guise. So in the absence of a Black feminist discourse that gives voice to these feminised practices of Black freedom outlined in this study, many Black Caribbean women attempt to carry on living their lives, as one of my respondents Linette put it, 'in the bigness of who they are' - not outside, but inside and beyond liberalisms gendered and racialised government. In social and cultural contexts that deny Black equal power and women's authority, many Black Caribbean women as mothers, lovers, wives and women in their own right, have nurtured spaces of autonomy from government and sought to live their lives with an expanded vision of freedom *as though they are more free than they really are*. In this regard the figure of the Independent Black Woman as a governing category can discipline Black women into attitudes of forbearance and survival that can work in the service of male power and privilege. At the same time, the figure of the Independent Black Woman as a subject of freedom has been used by Black women of the Caribbean to redefine the meaning of independence and the meaning of woman producing a new liberal subject, not waiting for liberalism to fulfil its promises, but feminising freedom anyway.

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### ***Discography***

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