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African-Caribbean Women: Migration, Diaspora, Post-diaspora



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ISSUE 13

African-Caribbean Women: Migration, Diaspora, Post-diaspora

Editors: Leith Dunn and Suzanne Scafe

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Contributors

Leith Dunn

Senior Lecturer and Head of Department
Institute for Gender and Development Studies, Mona Unit
The University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, Jamaica

Suzanne Scafe

Visiting Professor
School of Arts and Creative Industries
London South Bank University, UK

Andrea A. Davis

Associate Professor
Department of Humanities
York University, Toronto, Canada

Jenny Douglas

Senior Lecturer in Health Promotion
Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies
The Open University, UK

Natasha Kay Mortley

Lecturer, Institute for Gender and Development Studies
Regional Coordinating Office
The University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, Jamaica

Aisha T. Spencer

Lecturer, Language and Literature Education
The School of Education
The University of the West Indies, Mona
Kingston, Jamaica, W.I

Saran Stewart

Senior Lecturer, Comparative Higher Education
Deputy Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Education
University of the West Indies, Mona

Shirley Anne Tate

Professor of Race and Education
Leeds Beckett University, UK
& Honorary Professor
CriSHET, Nelson Mandela University, South Africa

Paulette Ramsay

Professor of Afro- Hispanic Literatures and Cultures
Department of Modern Languages and Literatures
The University of the West Indies
Mona Campus, Jamaica

Nadena Doharty

Lecturer in Education, Culture and Childhood
School of Education
The University of Sheffield, UK

Pauline Muir

Lecturer in Arts Management
Goldsmiths College, University of London

Charmaine Crawford

Lecturer
Nita Barrow Unit
The University of the West Indies
Cave Hill Campus, Barbados

Leigh-Ann Worrell

Research Assistant
Nita Barrow Unit
The University of the West Indies
Cave Hill Campus, Barbados

Christine Barrow

Professor Emerita
Previously, Professor of Social Development
The University of the West Indies
Cave Hill Campus, Barbados

Verene A. Shepherd

Previously, University Director
The Institute for Gender and Development Studies
The University of the West Indies

Violet Eudine Barriteau

Deputy Principal
The University of The West Indies
Cave Hill Campus



African-Caribbean Women: Migration, Diaspora, Post-diaspora

Editors

[Leith Dunn](#)

Senior Lecturer and Head of Department
Institute for Gender and Development Studies, Mona Unit
The University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, Jamaica

[Suzanne Scafe](#)

Visiting Professor
School of Arts and Creative Industries
London South Bank University, UK

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Special thanks to Desrie Thomson-George for her exhibition Jilo-the Survivor and for giving us copyright permission to use one piece of her artwork for the cover of this Special Issue.

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Introduction

This Special Issue of the *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies* (CRGS) includes articles that have been developed from a two-year project of collaboration between London South Bank University and the Institute for Gender and Development Studies Mona Campus Unit at The University of the West Indies. The project was led by Suzanne Scafe (LSBU) and Leith Dunn (IGDS Mona) and was funded by the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) for twenty months from 2017. Its purpose was to establish a Research Network of scholars from the Caribbean, Canada and the UK. The title of the research network was African-Caribbean Women's Mobility and Self-Fashioning in Post-Diaspora Contexts. The aim was to explore specific ways in which gender enables or necessitates African-Caribbean women's mobility, and the unexpected intimacies and experiences that emerge from these mobilities. The project developed a concept of "post-diaspora" in order to articulate the political, imaginative, affective and economic affiliations that challenge the proscriptions of the nation-state. It asked how this concept can be used to reimagine new ways in which African-Caribbean women achieve agency through mobility in twenty-first century contexts of globalization, transnationalism and deterritorialization. In our meetings, workshops and conferences, Network members returned to expanded concepts of diaspora and examined how existing definitions of diaspora might be used as a way of describing Caribbean women's plural identities and multiple sites of belonging. Post-diaspora, then, is neither a departure from, nor a continuation of contemporary usages of diaspora: rather the "post" signals a new problem space that allows us to imagine new futures by focusing on mobility both as a defining feature of Caribbean identities and as a route to self-fashioning for African-Caribbean women. Rather than linear journeys that result in the reconstitution of a remembered past in a present of new physical and cultural geographies, post-diasporic journeys are rhizomatic: they radically reconfigure the assumed significance of "home" and "away". In rhizomatic journeys, roots are provisional and unfixed. Routes are often circuitous, and return – physical, rhetorical and economic – is a key component of Caribbean women's mobility in an

increasingly globalized world (Trotz 2006; Mullings and Trotz 2013; Fog Olwig 2012; Putnam 2014; Lawson 2013 Reynolds 2008, 2011). In this Special Issue, contributors use concepts of diaspora/post-diaspora to examine the ways in which Caribbean women reimagine their affiliations and identities beyond those that pertain either to the nation state or to fixed notions of culture (Rushdy 2009; Thomas 2007; Gilroy 2004, 2011; Hall 2007).

African-Caribbean Women's Mobility and Self-Fashioning in Post-Diaspora Contexts Research Network: activities and outcomes

The Network facilitated a transdisciplinary, trans-historical and transnational dialogue around themes of diaspora/post-diaspora in a collaborative environment that created what members described as an “oasis of serendipity” and psycho-social support. Our dialogue spanned three countries and took the form of meetings, seminars, workshops, performances and a final conference. The first meeting and the final conference were held at London South Bank University in April 2017 and July 2018 respectively. The second dialogue was held in September 2017 at the UWI Mona Campus and the third was held in April 2018 at the University of Toronto. The following questions were addressed by a wide range of scholars. First, taking into account the emphasis on multi-directional mobility and instability, what are the gender dimensions of concepts of post-diaspora for African-Caribbean women? Second, how do non-linear forms of mobility and the production of multiple affiliations produce the conditions for African-Caribbean women's agency and self-fashioning? Third, how does an expanded concept of return, including circulatory patterns of migration, the return of goods, money, culture and ideas, assist in the articulation of post-diaspora identities? And finally, what forms of expression are available to reconfigure identities as post-diasporic?

The articles in this Special Issue continue and reflect the dialogue begun in these transnational exchanges. Our first meeting in London in April 2017, examined existing research that related to our Network's themes. Leith Dunn's focus on

migration and globalization reminded participants that migration is a major feature of Caribbean people's history and cultural identity. Survival strategies that have been adopted in response to globalisation have been developed during centuries of enslavement and the colonisation of women, men and children in the Caribbean. Caribbean waves of migration at distinct periods in history have been in response to emerging demands for labour to fuel economic growth. This has included Caribbean migration to build the Panama Canal; migration to establish plantations for export and processing raw materials, and migration to Europe to fight as service women and service men in the British Army during the first and second world wars. "First generation" Caribbean women who settled in European diasporas were often recruited as nurses, housekeepers, caregivers, hospitality workers, teachers and auxiliaries in the British Army. Globalisation, Dunn argued, serves as a push factor for Caribbean migration in response to limited job opportunities, high levels of unemployment and poverty, especially for women. Waves of migration from the Caribbean region to other regions have also been linked to the search for education and job opportunities within and outside the Caribbean archipelago. Inhibiting factors to settlement in host countries include entrenched forms of discrimination on the bases of gender, class, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Analysis of the globalisation trends also show that migration has been feminised. Since the 1980s, more Caribbean women than men are migrating to North America and Europe in search of a better life, better education and a better standard of living. Many of the Caribbean women who migrate are single female heads of household with triple roles and responsibilities, consistent with Moser's (1993) gender analysis framework. These include: productive (paid) work, reproductive (unpaid) work, caring for the very young, sick and elderly and also community management work. The diverse forms of migration experiences range from planned migration to forced and illegal migration as well as circular migration, as individuals move from their homelands to overseas countries and return voluntarily or are forced, as illegal over-stayers, to return.

Presentations by other participants at this first meeting included work that focused on: the role that women played in the black supplementary school movement in the UK (Andrews 2016); the gender dynamics of migration narratives in “Jamaican transnational families”; and the historical and contemporary significance of concepts of “political blackness” used, in a UK context, to articulate a black feminist praxis. Gemma Romain presented work that uses archival sources to examine the experiences of African-Caribbean women who migrated to study in the UK in the 1920s and 30s; her presentation reflected research used in a recent publication *Race, Sexuality and Identity in Britain and Jamaica: the biography of Patrick Nelson 1916-1963* (2017). Beverley Mullings’s paper explored the ways in which “more mobile and enabling articulations of diasporic identity, particularly among second and third generation women, could enhance the transformative potential of diaspora/state encounters in the multiple spaces that constitute the Caribbean diaspora”. Several participants framed their presentations with a series of questions around the extent to which the journeys between “home/s” might enable the construction of emancipatory subjectivities. Andrea Davis’s paper focused on forthcoming research that uses “three tropes – horizon, sea and sound – to frame an understanding of out of place identities, of bodies that are “slippery, amorphous, expansive and transformative”. These tropes, Davis argued, are “layered one upon the other and are in many ways interdependent”. By applying these tropes to work by African and Caribbean Canadian writers, Davis’s presentation examined the ways in which a settler colonial nation like Canada can be made more critically aware of itself and the inequalities it perpetuates.

The Network’s second activity was a two-day seminar hosted by the Institute for Gender and Development Studies (IGDS), Mona Unit at The University of the West Indies (UWI) Mona Campus in Jamaica and was held in September 2017. It included presentations from early career scholars at the UWI Mona Campus, Natasha Kay Mortley, Aisha T. Spencer and Saran Stewart, whose work is included in this publication. A key feature of the research network’s activities has been our public events that have included performances and readings

from the work of contemporary African-Caribbean-diasporic women writers. The seminar in September 2017 also included a public forum, with a guest lecture by UWI Mona's Professor Paulette Ramsay, based on her novel *Aunt Jen* (2002) and a discussion underscoring the nexus between writing, language and identity. In her lecture, Ramsay emphasised the value of writing as a means of exploring identity formation, discovery and reclamation. Other presenters were Tanya Shirley, who read from her recently published poetry collection *The Merchant of Feathers* (2014), and Velma Pollard who read her short story "My Mother" as well as extracts from the series "On the Way to Somewhere, Of Course" from the collection *Considering Woman* (2010). Pollard's work, which examines in detail the affective consequences of Caribbean women's migration, speaks directly to the Network's themes.

The Network's third activity was a two-day workshop hosted by the Women and Gender Studies Institute at the University of Toronto and was held in April 2018. The workshop extended the themes of the Research Network by focusing primarily on migratory routes between the Caribbean, Canada and the UK. The issues raised were wide-ranging but can be encapsulated by Denise Noble's presentation which examined "the intersections of race, gender, class and sexuality ... and the interdiscursive cultural politics, lived poetics and quotidian mass-mediated practices through which diasporicity is produced as a practice of being". The workshop programme included a public forum entitled "Black Feminist and Queer Organising in Canada and the UK: Early Years to the 1980s". The panellists were Suzanne Scafe, Beverley Bain and Junior Harrison. There was also a public performance of Honor Ford-Smith's *Song for the Beloved*.

The Network's fourth and final activity was a two-day conference hosted by London South Bank University and was held in July 2018. In response to a Call for Papers, the programme included contributions by scholars from Europe, the UK, the US, Canada, Japan and the Caribbean countries of Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. Gina Athena Ulysse, one of two keynote speakers, offered a lyrical meditation on the politics and poetics of movement and

suspense, culling diverse archives in search of an unsettled post-diasporic blackness. Alecia McKenzie read her short story "Full Stop" from the anthology *Satellite City* (1992), and from a forthcoming collection of poetry that reflects her experience as a Jamaican writer living in Paris and negotiating a diasporic identity that moves between, and sometimes engages with African and Caribbean communities un/settled in Paris. The conference programme also included two book launches. The first was the launch of British author Diana Evans's third novel *Ordinary People* (2018) which, like her previous work, is a meditation on what it means to be black and British and how an intersection of African, Caribbean and white British cultures contribute to those identities. The second was the launch of the 2018 edition of the ground-breaking publication *Heart of the Race: Black Women's Lives in Britain* by Beverley Bryan, Stella Dadzie and Suzanne Scafe, originally published in 1985. The new edition contains a foreword by London-based teacher and black feminist activist Lola Okolosie, and an Afterword which is an extensive discussion with all three authors, chaired by Professor Heidi Mirza.

The cover of this Special Issue features the work of Desrie Thomson-George, a Guyanese-born, UK-based visual artist who was the co-founder of the Black Ink Collective (1978-87), an independent publishing house and the first to publish work by young black British writers and artists, many of whom have continued to have successful careers in the creative arts. The conference hosted Desrie's first solo exhibition entitled: *Jilo-the Survivor*.

African-Caribbean Women: Migration, Diaspora, Post-diaspora

This Special Issue includes contributions from Research Network members and workshop participants, most of whom have presented at the Network's activities in London, Jamaica and Canada. The first two articles focus on "first generation" fictional characters and activists who are negotiating spaces for agency in unwelcoming diasporic homelands. Andrea Davis's article, "Un/belonging in Diasporic Cities: A Literary History of First-Generation Caribbean

Women in London and Toronto" centres on an analysis of fiction by Beryl Gilroy, Joan Riley, and Makeda Silvera. By foregrounding the novels' forgotten female characters, the article examines Caribbean women's migration stories as a narrative of un/belonging, marking their distinctive relationship to the settler colonial state and the British empire as an ongoing search for independent self-actualization. The article argues that the incongruity between Caribbean migrant women's dreaming of a romanticized home/coming and the reality of recurring traumatic loss, creates a constant dystopic tension that plays out in the novels as a struggle between an imagined be/longing and familial, national and cultural disarticulation. This tension between a "post-diasporic" desire for national be/longing and a diasporic reality of displacement and loss also implicates the novels' characters in the designs of empire. Characters' movements away from the hegemonic nation and toward a diasporic condition, therefore, mark a journey toward a more critical self-awareness in which they develop a greater capacity to both critique colonial imperialism and the family as the bedrock of the Caribbean nation.

The second article in this Special Issue is Jenny Douglas's "Black Women's Activism and Organisation in Public Health: Struggles and Strategies for Better Health and Wellbeing" which focuses on UK based black women's health activism. Using Avtar Brah's concept of "diaspora space", Douglas argues that black women in the UK have organised in diaspora space to challenge inequities in health and to develop strategies to improve health outcomes for black communities. She explores the post-war contribution of black women nurses in the UK to public health, both as activists for change and as organisers of change. Douglas concludes by exploring the confluences and synergies between the concept of "diaspora space" (Brah 1996) and that of "(post) diaspora" as espoused by Scafe (2018), arguing that both concepts are useful for understanding the ways in which black women have used their agency to challenge health inequities.

Natasha Kay Mortley's "More than Dollars and Cents: Leveraging the Multiple Roles of Caribbean Migrant Women within the Diaspora for Sustainable Development" returns to a focus on migration that has been a constant thread throughout our seminars and conferences, arguing that women from the English-speaking Caribbean have rarely fit into traditional theories of migration and the Westernized ideal of the trailing and passive wife accompanying the male breadwinner and migrant. Caribbean migration from the 1960s onwards, has shown that women, motivated by a complex range of factors, migrate independent of men, and play a critical role in facilitating the movement of other family and kin, as well as in the circular flows of goods, services, knowledge and technology. Drawing on the theory of love power migration by Baldwin and Mortley (2016), Mortley demonstrates that Caribbean female migrants from the English Caribbean exercise love and care within the family, and use migration as a strategy for survival, rebuilding and empowerment. She argues that because Caribbean women's migration is based on a complex decision-making process incubated and determined by love power migration, there are even more reasons to maintain strong ties with multiple households and communities in the country of origin. These ties, nurtured by women's caring role, foster the creation of a transnational space linking multiple households, networks and diaspora communities.

Suzanne Scafe's article "Gendered, Post-diasporic Mobilities and the Politics of Blackness in Zadie Smith's *Swing Time* (2016)" extends the concerns, expressed in presentations by UK scholar and Network member Denise Noble, with Caribbean subjectivities that emerge in the context of Black Atlantic journeying. Using Zadie Smith's novel *Swing Time* (2016), she analyses the ways in which, by traversing the geographies and temporalities of the Black Atlantic, the narrative unsettles conventional definitions of a black African diaspora, and interrogates easy gestures of identification and belonging. In her analysis of the narrative's representations of mother-daughter relationships and female friendships, Scafe demonstrates that experiences of diaspora/post-diaspora are complicated by issues of gender. Borrowing Nassy Brown's concept of "diasporic resource", Scafe suggests that dance is used by its young female characters as a

“diasporic resource” (Nassy Brown 2005, 42), and is a means of negotiating and contesting existing structures of gender, class and culture. Forms of black dance and African diasporic music also represent the novel's concerns with the gendered nature of mobility and stillness.

Another article that focuses on literature, speaking to and extending the issues raised by Paulette Ramsay's *Aunt Jen* (2002), is Aisha T. Spencer's "Reshaping Girlhood, Reimagining Womanhood: The Female Child Protagonist and the Post-diasporic Condition in Jamaican Female-authored Children's Literature". Spencer argues that the female child protagonist has always been a major figure in the work of several Jamaican female fiction writers. More recently, however, Jamaican female writers from across the diaspora have begun to reveal a new kind of poetics through the presentation of their female child protagonist and the situations they encounter. Spencer explores the use of an emerging post-diasporic poetics in the work of Jamaican children's literature author Diane Browne, which introduces fluid female identities constructed through the realities of globalisation and post-diasporic conditions. The female child protagonist represents a newly emerging female sensibility and consciousness, which enables readers to access both girlhood and womanhood through realities and perspectives tied to the migrant experience across different periods of time. Each protagonist portrays a self which exists beyond boundaries and outside the dictates of the social ideals framing femaleness and the female migrant experience, embedded for so long in Jamaican culture. Browne challenges both traditional and to some extent postmodern models of womanhood and female identity, through the way each of her female child protagonists are portrayed as they move through a post-diasporic process of navigating both self and space in Browne's texts.

The 2018 London conference included papers which focused on autoethnographic examinations of diasporic/post-diasporic alienation, belonging and agency. Beverley Bryan used autoethnography as a research tool to explore the role of black women activists in the formation and evolution

of a black community identity in the austerity phase of Britain in the 1970s, and Leith Dunn's paper used her Cuban-born Jamaican mother's narratives to provide insights into the intersections of gender, race, class, religion and culture in diasporic identity formation. Saran Stewart's article in this collection develops this focus on autoethnography as a research tool, focusing on a research area and a "lived poetics" that has been central to our discussions as a Network of transnational black Caribbean women scholars. Stewart's article argues that black women are less likely to be retained in tenure-track faculty positions than any other gender and racial/ethnic group in higher education institutions. Black women encounter "dual acts of race and sex discrimination" from the academic community, arguably leading to disparities in the number of tenure-track black women faculty. Stewart argues that: "As an expat in my "foreign homeland", I am often reminded of how I must navigate power and privilege in the university as forms of resistance and subversion in a hetero-patriarchal hegemony". These various experiences of navigating the Caribbean academy while young, black and female, serve as an ideal backdrop for understanding the impact of colonial patriarchy and what can be done to dismantle it. Stewart employs an Afro-Caribbean feminist autoethnographic frame to deconstruct everyday derogatory acts, comments, and behaviour in the academy that devalue female academics by persons of professional hierarchy (known as hierarchical microaggressions). This work builds on Young, Anderson and Stewart's (2015) framework on hierarchical microaggressions and by applying it to Afro-Caribbean feminist thought, illustrates some of the conditions needed to create agency and a strong sense of the emancipatory self in order to transcend academic spaces.

Shirley Anne Tate's presentations for the Network have reflected and continued to develop her interrogation of the political, aesthetic and socio-cultural significances of the black woman's body and discourses of beauty within which black female subjectivities are articulated. In her article for this Special Issue entitled "The Dark Skin I Live in: Decolonizing Racial Capitalism's Aesthetic Hierarchies in the Diaspora" Tate argues that dark skin on black women's bodies has become a Black Atlantic diasporic (post) colonial artefact, circulating

discursively within the skin value hierarchy of racial capitalism. Tate uses a black decolonial feminist approach to analyse racial capitalism's "second skin", discourses of dark skin as contemptible object established prior to and during enslavement and colonialism. Drawing out its contemporary manifestations in the narratives of/about black women celebrities, her analysis shows that libidinal economies of dark skin continue to impact women's lives. Indeed, the impact of "second skin" discourses can produce alienation from oneself if one begins from shadism and/or whiteness. Tate concludes, however, that women with dark skin dis-alienate from "second skin" (Cheng 2011) discourses to construct the skins they live in as objects of love through naming and critiquing diasporic discourses which reproduce their skins as valueless. Through the routes of social media, their critiques of 'second skin' discourses produce and maintain alter/native constructions of dark skin value, a radical black aesthetic consciousness and a new "livity" within diaspora which unsettles dark skin's negation (Chevannes 1994).

GENDER DIALOGUES

Paulette A. Ramsay's "Interrogating Diaspora: Lessons Learnt from a Fictional Protagonist" develops her keynote address given at the public event organised by the Research Network in September 2017 at The UWI Mona Campus. Ramsay uses her popular novel *Aunt Jen* (2002) as a point of departure for engaging in a conversation on issues related to diaspora, migration, identity, gender and other post-colonial and diasporic issues. In her article Ramsay provides an overview of the novel, its epistolary structure, its focus on migration, and the effects of migration on children. Her discussion and analysis of the issues provide insight into family, maroon heritage, religious preferences and the resilience of a young girl faced with the silence of an absent mother who has migrated. The meaning of silence in the novel is addressed in relation to questions of diaspora. The bildungsroman's development amidst concerns with migration, questions of connection to country, individual identity and agency brings into focus several post-colonial and post-diasporic concerns of who wants to be part of a

diaspora and of how individuals may engage in the reconstruction of new diasporic identities and links to communities and nations.

BOOK REVIEWS

This Special Issue includes two book reviews. The first review is of Shirley Anne Tate and Deborah Gabriel's edited collection *Inside the Ivory Tower: Narratives of Women of Colour Surviving and Thriving in British Academia* (2017) by Nadene Docherty. In this anthology of autoethnographic essays, women of colour in British universities explore how their experiences are shaped by race and gender and how racism manifests in day-to-day experiences in the academy, from subtle microaggressions to overt racialized and gendered abuse. The second review is of Amanda Arbouin's *Black British Graduates: Untold Stories* (2018) by Pauline Muir.

A NOTE on contributors' use of [B]black

In UK scholarship "Black" is often capitalised, used to refer to what is termed "political Blackness", a strategic identity that takes into account the constructed nature of race and the history of Empire. In this context the term is "performative, relational, and dialogic rather than literal" (Gunaratnam 2014, 4). This Special Issue focuses on fluid, uncertain or shifting identities created by diasporic/post-diasporic journeys. Our contributors' use of "Black/black" reflects the term's identity as a "flawed signifier" (4) and emphasises the unfixed, unstable nature of identity privileged in these contributions.

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Un/belonging in Diasporic Cities: A Literary History of First-Generation Caribbean Women in London and Toronto

Andrea A. Davis

Associate Professor
Department of Humanities
York University, Toronto, Canada

Abstract: Through close readings of Beryl Gilroy's *In Praise of Love and Children* (1996), Joan Riley's *The Unbelonging* (1985), and Makeda Silvera's *The Heart does not Bend* (2003), this article offers a comparative literary history of Black¹ Caribbean women's experiences in London and Toronto in the mid-twentieth century, from the 1950s to the 1970s. By foregrounding the novels' forgotten female characters, the article examines Caribbean women's migration stories as a narrative of un/belonging, marking their distinctive relationship to the settler colonial state and the British empire as an ongoing search for independent self-actualization. The article argues that the incongruity between Caribbean migrant women's dreaming of a romanticized home/coming and the reality of recurring traumatic loss creates a constant dystopic tension that plays out in the novels as a struggle between an imagined be/longing and familial, national and cultural disarticulation. This tension between a "post-diasporic" desire for national be/longing and a diasporic reality of displacement and loss also implicates the novels' characters in the designs of empire. Characters' movements away from the hegemonic nation and toward a diasporic condition, therefore, mark a journey toward a more critical self-awareness in which they develop a greater capacity to both critique colonial imperialism and the family as the bedrock of the Caribbean nation, and to articulate non-hierarchical terms of community be/longing.

Keywords: Be/longing; un/belonging; diaspora; post-diaspora; literary history; Caribbean women migrants; Windrush Generation; Beryl Gilroy; Joan Riley; Makeda Silvera

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Introduction

This article traces a comparative literary history of Black Caribbean women's experiences in diaspora in the post-war period from the 1950s to the 1970s when Caribbean families migrated in large numbers first to England and then to Canada and the United States.² Foregrounding the forgotten female character as a symbol of Caribbean women's double marginalization as racialized migrants and women, the article draws on Beryl Gilroy's *In Praise of Love and Children* (1996) set in 1950s and 1960s London; Joan Riley's *The Unbelonging* (1985) set in the 1960s in London and its surrounding areas; and Makeda Silvera's *The Heart does not Bend* (2003) set in the late 1960s in Jamaica and 1970s in Toronto. The novels detail the disconnect between Caribbean migrants' assumption of British subjecthood and their estrangement from their wider societies because of their seeming racial, gendered and cultural differences as a tension between a "post-diasporic" desire for national be/longing and a diasporic reality of displacement and loss. The novels' forgotten female characters, written out of the triumphant myth of empire, struggle in every instance to articulate/negotiate the terms of their *being* in alien landscapes with no existing maps, no navigable routes demarcating their right to be/long. By reflecting critically on Caribbean women's hopeful arrival in the UK and Canada and their immediate and systematic disenfranchisement, the article thus narrates their search for new geographies of be/longing (McKittrick 2006) as a critical practice of survival in unwelcoming diasporic cities in which they face an ongoing climate of anti-blackness (Sharpe 2017) and in which they are positioned always as external to dominant national and patriarchal cartographies. In addition, Silvera's queer characters challenge the terms of social and cultural citizenship in Caribbean nations, suggesting that re/turn is impossible. In the face of frustrated national desire and the impossibility of re/turn, these novels engage in a productive critique of the family as the bedrock of the Caribbean nation, while contesting British imperialism and the settler colonial state. In reaching past the death and despair that haunt Black and Caribbean communities in the aftermath of slavery and colonialism, the novels' characters search for a sense of be/longing beyond Black death, struggle and loss.

In writing from the unique location of their characters' multiple intersectionalities (Crenshaw 1991) and in their interventions into questions of family and citizenship, Gilroy, Riley and Silvera allow us an important re/turn to a specific moment in British and Canadian histories. Such a re/turn is significant for a number of reasons. This article's reflection on the experiences of first-generation Caribbean migrants³, indeed, appears at an important juncture in the history of Caribbean diasporic communities. June 22, 2018, marked the seventieth anniversary of the arrival of the Empire Windrush at Tilbury Docks in England, a milestone that was widely acknowledged and celebrated. Those celebrations, however, also took place in the shadow of what has been dubbed the Windrush scandal, resulting from reports that British government agencies wrongfully detained, and denied jobs, benefits and healthcare to approximately five thousand British subjects who had arrived in the UK (most of them as children) as part of the Windrush generation. These migrants, who had lived their entire adult lives in the UK and who contributed to the development of post-war Britain, found themselves cast as "illegal immigrants" and facing the threat of deportation (Serhan 2018). While the British government has since apologized and pledged to address these errors, this scandal demonstrates the peculiar ease with which the histories of Caribbean and racialized people go missing in European and North American national narratives, and functions as one concrete example of the tenuousness of their be/longing in "neo-imperial" nations (Alexander 2005). This article thus serves as an intervention into the practices of cultural amnesia routinely deployed against minoritized populations in North America and the UK by deliberately re-centering the literary histories of early Caribbean migrants to England and Canada.

In addition, the article chooses to highlight the experiences of women and girls, a unique group among these early migrants, who face double erasure as migrants and women. The "arrival story" of post-war Caribbean migrants to England, for example, continues for historical and political reasons to be largely "memorialised as masculine," foregrounding the 492 Jamaican men who disembarked from the *Empire Windrush*, even though their number was less than half of the people who landed at Tilbury in 1948 (Courtman 2012, 86). Indeed, of

the 941 adult passengers who arrived, “257 were women with 69 of them accompanied by their husbands and 188 travelling alone” (Courtman 2012, 87). As Courtman correctly contests, “the *Windrush*’s multiple narratives of class, race and gender are occluded within the [singular reporting of] ‘492’ male Jamaicans” (87). This repetition and emphasis allowed the media and British officials to exacerbate concerns about Black male migration and its potentially contaminating effects on white women (Lindsey 1992, 66). This over-emphasis on the arrival stories of Black men that centred their relationships with white women, combined with a bias in the British publishing culture of the 1960s in favour of male writers, effectively erased the presence and significance of Black migrant women from the public discourse (Courtman 2012; Gilroy 1998). For these reasons, Samuel Selvon’s body of work, most notably the *Moses* trilogy,⁴ and Austin Clarke’s impressive *Toronto* trilogy⁵ have long stood as foundational literary representations of early Caribbean experiences in London and Toronto. While recognizing the importance of these contributions, this article seeks to expand our understanding of first-generation migrants in these two cities by focusing on the often-overlooked fiction of a less recognized group of Caribbean women writers. Gilroy’s and Riley’s novels are among the earliest literary contributions by women of Caribbean descent in reimagining the histories of migration experienced by Caribbean communities in London. Silvera’s novel published almost two decades later, reconsiders first-wave migrant experiences from a Canadian perspective, offering a nuanced reflection of Caribbean people’s multiple locations and dis/locations in North America. In its reading of these novels as a chronological history of Caribbean communities in London and Toronto between the 1950s and 1970s, the article re-narrates the challenges Caribbean women faced in the establishment of first-generation migrant communities during a period of unique resettlement and extreme social and cultural alienation. The article reads Gilroy’s and Riley’s identity quest narratives and Silvera’s semi-autobiographical first novel, therefore, as a new kind of female trilogy, offering a layered and comparative representation of early Caribbean migrant experiences in two metropolitan cities.

This article pays tribute precisely to the women of the Windrush generation who “disappear[ed] without trace into traumatised post-war Britain” (Courtman 2012, 87), as well as the women whose voices went missing from the early telling of Caribbean life in Canada. In re-inserting these women writers and their forgotten female characters into the national histories of Canada and the UK, I draw on a specific understanding of *be/longing* to mark their distinctive relationship to the nation and ongoing search for independent self-actualization. In this regard, I use the intransitive verb *be/long* and the noun *be/longing* to register Black Caribbean women's multiple exigencies in historical time and place: as in, the need to *be*, to exist without fear, to be accepted across our differences; and the *longing for* recognition, the longing for a moment beyond struggle and loss. *Un/belonging* correspondingly denotes the absence of certain *being* in time and place, the frustration of the urgent desire to live beyond loss. The incongruity between Caribbean migrant women's dreaming of an ideal and romanticized home/coming or re/turn and the reality of recurring traumatic loss creates a constant dystopic tension that plays out in the three novels as a struggle between an imagined *be/longing* and familial, national and cultural disarticulation. I register this tension between desire and lived experience further in the use of the term “post-diaspora” to mark first-wave Caribbean migrants' sense of connection to Britain and Canada and their often willing complicity in the designs of empire. In these novels, characters' movement away from the hegemonic nation and toward a diasporic condition marks a movement toward a more critical self-awareness in which they develop a greater capacity to critique colonial imperialism and the settler colonial state and to articulate non-hierarchical terms of community *be/longing*.

The sense of imagined *be/longing* I signal in the term “post-diaspora” was powerfully foregrounded in first-generation Caribbean communities' sense of affinity to Britain. In the selection and reading of the three novels, the article focuses on Canada and England precisely to demarcate the Commonwealth relationship between the two countries and the former British colonies of the Caribbean. Caribbean migrants who chose to relocate to England and Canada in the post-war years relied on their understanding of this

Commonwealth relationship and a sense of imperial kinship to facilitate their cultural crossings (Bidnall 2017; Foster 1996). All major institutions—the school, church, criminal justice system, and family—had carefully inculcated in Caribbean populations in the 125 years after the abolition of slavery an ideology of British cultural paternalism. As Bidnall (2017) explains, “Britain’s prestige value” was considerable given its reputation for educating the Caribbean elite and the British style, structure and curriculum of Caribbean education (27). The sacrosanct images of Great Britain and British Canada in the post-war years could, thus, easily be elaborated through historical and contemporary constructions of British liberalism and cultural elitism, and Canadian democracy. The British, after all, had abolished the slave trade, and Canada, with its historical Black populations carefully out of view, had managed to avoid the widespread public accusations of racism levied against the United States during the struggle over civil rights in the middle of the twentieth century.

Post-war Caribbean migrants in England did not immediately see themselves, therefore, as displaced diasporic subjects—they were rightful heirs of the British Empire travelling to the mother/land on British passports. In the opening scene of Beryl Gilroy’s novel *In Praise of Love and Children* (1996), the protagonist, Melda Hayley, stands in Paddington Station “unbelieving, yet conscious of a boundless joy” (9). Identifying London as a metaphoric lover with whom she is finally reunited, she narrates her arrival as a triumphant rite of passage: “At last I’m here! I’ve come! We’re together, London and I” (9)! Many first-wave Caribbean Britons, like Gilroy’s character, indeed, considered themselves first as British or English and only secondarily as Black and geographically as Caribbean or West Indian (Bidnall 2017, 35). Similarly, Foster argues that Caribbean and African migrants to Canada “sold themselves into colonialism” (23). Arriving from countries in a prior colonial relationship with Britain, they “subconsciously agreed to live, although perhaps for not too long a time, in a colonial relationship in their adopted country” (23). By prioritizing their Britishness as a sign of shared cultural imperialism over their Africanness as a sign of subjugated and traumatic chattel slavery, Black Caribbean migrants thus, imagined themselves largely as “post-

diaspora" British subjects and saw their arrival in England and Canada as a natural and rightful result of long and intimate colonial relationships.

This sense that their cultural and historical relationship to Britain guaranteed their acceptance within British society was seemingly confirmed by the enactment of the 1948 British Nationality Act that granted all Commonwealth citizens not only the right of entry and settlement, but also the same legal rights as British citizens, a right that would last until 1962 when the Act was replaced by the Commonwealth Immigrants Act (Thompson 1990).⁶ This sense of Commonwealth fraternity combined with intense post-war patriotism preceded any serious debates over Caribbean political and economic independence and cultural autonomy from Britain, which would not take place for another ten years. England as the "Mother Country" and Canada as a "big sister" with no discernible neo-colonial designs of its own (Foster 1996, 46), promised loyal Caribbean subjects, many of whom had faithfully served Great Britain during the war, a cultural kinship they could draw on to navigate the uncertain terrain of first-wave migrant resettlement. High unemployment and limited opportunities for post-secondary educational improvement in the Caribbean and a corresponding demand for labour in the UK and Canada further strengthened the lure of migration, which promised a better life and new possibilities not only for the Caribbean middle classes, but also for the first time for the working poor (Byron and Condon 2008). It was this new demand for mobile labour and the reassurance of cultural familiarity that encouraged the large outflow of Caribbean migrants especially from Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, and British Guiana (later Guyana) to work in post-war industries, as well as in healthcare, education, and domestic service in the mother and sister countries. Caribbean migrants initially saw themselves, therefore, less as newcomer immigrants and more as migrant "settlers" (Bidnall 2017, 21); less as displaced and exiled diasporic subjects and more as emergent "post-diasporic" citizens.

Despite this narrative of be/longing, it is noteworthy that Canada only became a default host nation for Caribbean migrant workers after the UK was no longer

available as a preferred option. Five years after the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act publicly challenged the discourse of shared Commonwealth citizenship by curtailing post-war migration opportunities for Caribbean workers to the UK, Canada introduced a new points system that provided an unexpected outlet for Caribbean migration. Prior to the 1960s, Canadian immigration legislation had prioritized newcomers based on race and country of origin, explicitly favouring immigrants from Western Europe and Euro-Americans, who were considered more likely to assimilate into British or French Canadian society (Walker 1997). This selective admission strategy meant that very few racialized people, even those from former British colonies (including Black people from the United States, the Caribbean and continental Africa) could migrate to Canada (Ash 2004). Motivated, like the UK, by demands for post-war labour, as well as by increasing national and international pressure to redefine Canada's global image in response to anti-racist and political liberation movements in the Global South, Canada began a long-overdue process of immigration reform (James and Davis 2012). Post-1960 immigration laws, in particular the 1967 points system, offered aspiring Caribbean migrants, now shut out of the UK, access to Canadian economic and educational opportunities alongside the old promises of cultural familiarity. In addition, Canada appeared to practice a subtler and more controlled form of racism, offering greater security for an aspiring Caribbean middle class away from the overt racism and escalating racial tensions in the United States and the UK in the mid-twentieth century.

Like the UK and the United States, however, Canada was/is not without its racial tensions. Canada preserves its global image as a welcoming liberal democracy precisely by employing "the obfuscation and justificatory arguments of democratic racism... to demonstrate continuing faith in the principles of an egalitarian society while at the same time undermining and sabotaging these ideals" (Henry and Tator 2009, 6). The problems of racism, xenophobia and classism operate as deep barriers to the education, employment and well-being of racialized and poor citizens. The fantasy of Caribbean people's be/longing in Canada in the 1960s and 1970s, as it had been for post-war migrants in Britain

before them, was short lived, replaced by the swift and deliberate transformation of their status from welcomed colonial migrants to unwanted Black immigrants, from “post-diasporic” to diasporic subjects (Henry 1994; Thompson 1990). The better life Caribbean migrants imagined in both England and Canada, in short, was a dystopic nightmare. Their very presence in these societies increased public animus against them, fuelling expressions of anti-black racism and xenophobia (Henry 1994) and even calls for “repatriation” (Lindsey 1992; Thompson 1990, 66).

An important quality that distinguished first-generation migrants in England and Canada from those in the United States was, indeed, the particularity of their raced construction in countries that saw themselves overwhelmingly as homogenous and white (Fleras 2004; Foner 1998). In the United States, the presence of a large resident and historical African American population provided an important foil for Black Caribbean immigrants arriving in the 1960s through a new immigration system that prioritized advanced education and skilled labour. The new communities when measured against older African American communities tended to be viewed more favourably by white Americans as ambitious, hard-working and well educated (Foner 1998; Jones 2008). On the other hand, while both England and Canada also had historical Black communities, their relatively small size and profound marginalization served to absent blackness from the public discourse (Olusoga 2017; Walcott 2003). First-generation Caribbean migrants in London and Toronto, particularly Jamaicans who made up the largest percentage of new arrivals, represented for the first time a visible and culturally influential minority that could be made to bear the full weight of British and Canadian anti-Black racism (James 1993; James and Davis 2012). The tendency toward a homogenization of blackness (that in England also included South Asians) marked the host societies’ increasing sense of cultural distance from *all* their racialized and still colonized citizens and a deliberate re-constitution of their collective identity not as desired settlers but as undesired immigrants (Foner 1998, 50). The dilemma for Caribbean diasporic communities in Canada and the UK involved knowing how to balance the desires of a better future with the frustration of daily living. Faced with the

disillusionment of poor housing conditions, racism in the workforce, and the overall micro-aggressions of living in a raced, classed and sexist society, Caribbean migrant communities struggled, and continue to struggle, with what it means to actually live in historical time and place.

These tensions over place and be/longing for Caribbean migrants have been played out overwhelmingly in large cities where migrants congregate in search of jobs, the cultural familiarity of the past, and the anonymity necessary for the reimagining of new futures. Anonymity, as Brand's narrator explains in the novel *What we all Long for* (2005), "is the big lie of a city. You aren't anonymous at all. You're common, really, common like so many pebbles, so many specks of dirt, so many atoms of materiality" (3). Tasked with holding the past at bay, migrants in a big city are surrounded by the spillage their daily lives produce—the past constantly pressing into the present:

All the lives they've hoarded, all the ghosts they've carried, all the inversions they've made for protection, all the scars and marks and records for recognition—the whole heterogeneous baggage falls out with each step on the pavement. There's so much spillage. (Brand 2005, 5)

A relentless repetition of past and present failures—the unavoidable "spillage" of the migrants' unfamiliar body and rhythms and language and history—exposes their fantasy of a romanticized future and frustrates their dreams of big-city life.

In England, first-wave Caribbean migrants congregated their hopes and dreams, as well as their failures, in the large metropolitan centres where jobs and substandard housing were more readily available. The British conurbations were not only experiencing high labour demand, but the local white population, rejecting this badly paid and overly demanding labour, was also abandoning the urban areas in which they were concentrated (Byron 1994; Peach 1998). The Caribbean, as Peach (1998) explains, "was a geographical as well as an occupational replacement population" (206). This spatial redistribution based on race, ethnicity, immigrant status, labour and class is articulated powerfully in

Joan Riley's *The Unbelonging* (1985) in a scene in which the protagonist, Hyacinth, returns to the Highfields area where she first lived with her father and stepmother. Her re-acquaintance with "the shabby streets...the poverty smells, the old familiar dread" collapses into memories of her abusive father "returned to haunt her" (89). So preoccupied is she by the memories of the past that it takes her a while to recognize the changes that have taken place: Indian smells were replacing West Indian smells; Eastern Caribbean accents had replaced Jamaican inflections (89). Still the poverty and neglect are constant: "The streets looked seedy and blighted as she wandered along, and there was something eerie about the silent rows of condemned and boarded up houses, doors hanging off their hinges where vandals had forced their way in" (89). Riley's verisimilitudinous portrayal of both the stagnation and evolution of the Highfields area captures the disparity between Caribbean migrants' desires and their actual daily lived experiences, exacerbating Hyacinth's feelings of cultural estrangement and strengthening her resolve "to never end up here again" (89). The sharp contradictions of Caribbean life in England—the unexpected disconnect between the imagined and real circumstances of Black migrant workers—were thus made explicit in the social, cultural, and physical places they occupied.

Hyacinth, having come to England as a child to a father she does not know and cut off from the nurturing past, experiences her arrival in London very differently from Gilroy's protagonist in *Praise of Love and Children* (1996): "There had been a sea of white faces everywhere, all hostile. She had known they hated her, and she had felt small, lost and afraid, and ashamed of her plaited hair as she looked enviously at the smooth straightness of theirs" (Riley 1985, 13). Like Riley's character, migrants and their children found their conditions of daily living marked by an immediate and sustained environment of hardship in which their Black bodies, skin and hair were anomalous and out of place; their alien and alienating bodies had to be carefully managed and contained by cordoning them off into select communities (Peach 1998; Richardson 1989). Still, as James (1993) explains, the sense of familiar community and mutual dependence made possible in poor segregated neighbourhoods was also vital for Asian and

Caribbean communities in the early years of migrant resettlement. Policies of “black geographic dispersal” after the 1958 Notting Hill and Nottingham disturbances—aimed at “de-ghettoization” and “integration”—in effect undermined the sustaining possibility “of black communities in the making” (262).

Cities, however, regardless of their physical conditions, are not only the sites where newcomers converge for the perceived rewards of labour and the desired “safety” of community. They are also the places to which they go in search of Brand’s anonymity, to deliberately escape the past, to re/imagine a future in the shadow of loss. In Gilroy’s *Praise of Love and Children* (1996), it is, indeed, the smallness of Melda’s past and the inherited pain of familial un/belonging that delineate the difference between her initial unconditional embrace of London and Hyacinth’s terror. London—large enough and far enough away from the painful memories of an abandoned and abandoning Guyana—offers her an unexpected opportunity to rearticulate her life story, to rewrite her traumatic history:

I drew my resolve about me as if it was one of those beautiful coats in a clothes' shop window. I was going to prove myself by my work, as generations of black women had done. My worth would be reflected by useful deeds for this great country. I could feel it in my bones. . . . I was far from home and free of those invisible cords that had bound me. I felt freedom for the first time in my life. (14)

Melda’s desired freedom, however, never materializes despite her careful espousal of Black respectability politics. Smith (2014) explains that “respectability politics evince a distinct worldview: marginalized classes will receive their share of political influence and social standing not because democratic values and law require it but because they demonstrate their compatibility with the ‘mainstream’ or non-marginalized class” (np). Melda’s belief in the infallibility of British cultural values and her commitment to prove her worth through respectable gendered behaviour are predictably quickly and systematically undermined:

In the space of six months of teaching, I had begun to understand how the class to which you belonged fitted you into the jaws of the system. West Indians, being thought of as foreigners, were condemned always to stand on the fringes. Ma and Pa, who believed in Queen, Country and Empire, would not have been able to understand that those of us who dared to claim our colonial inheritance had to plead or even grovel for a hearing. (61)

The sense of homelessness and maternal abandonment Melda experienced in the Caribbean, thus repeats in her experiences of rejection in England the "Mother Country," entrenching her sense of historical and contemporary un/belonging.

In Silvera's *The Heart Does Not Bend* (2003), Toronto city life fails similarly to provide the main female characters, Maria/Mama and her granddaughter Molly, with any sense of freedom or self-actualization. Migrating to Canada from Jamaica in 1971 under the family reunification programme, they find themselves imprisoned within Toronto's large high-rise apartment buildings, struggling to navigate an alien environment. The cramped, confining apartment and incomprehensible and hostile landscape replace the lush garden on Wigton Street in Kingston and rob Mama of her will to dream: "Many evenings that winter, Mama looked out at the snow and sighed, complaining about the dampness in the apartment, conveying her disappointment in Freddie and her difficulties with Glory" (111-112). Maria, the family's matriarch, having temporarily abdicated her physical freedom and economic and emotional control to her children who "sponsored" her to Canada, experiences a new kind of vulnerability, a new kind of loss. In Toronto, she must learn both to "act her age" (140) and to act appropriately in space: "Mama, please, remember we have neighbours, dis is not Wigton Street" (127). The choice between poverty in the Caribbean and "a better life" and social respectability in England and Canada is always complex. The past, Molly admits, is "where we lived and dreamed our lives to perfection" (88); we cannot easily abandon it. The repeated desertion of the dead-end street in Kingston "to seek opportunity, to get an education, to better [one]self" (12) demands in each instance, in each

generation, a certain kind of self-abnegation. This loss echoes in the novel in Maria's plaintive rendering of the Scottish folk song, "My Bonnie lies over de ocean." In her reconstitution of the traditional folk song into a new ballad of diaspora loss, she mourns the emotional and physical abandonment of her children while marking diaspora loss as an inevitable and repeating condition of life for people of African descent. Her rendition of the song in Jamaican Creole importantly registers both her mastery of and distance from the British culture of the Caribbean and Canada in which she has been trained, but from which she has always been alienated.

In the representation of extreme alienation in the three novels, the environment, indeed, often functions like an oppressive character. The unrelenting cold in *The Unbelonging* (1985), for example, subsumes every aspect of the traumatic physical, emotional and psychological environment in which the protagonist, Hyacinth, lives. Coldness, clamminess and dampness are repeating metaphors in the novel symbolizing the stages of her extreme physical and emotional estrangement from London and her desperate longing to re/turn to an imaginary Jamaica. In the first half of the novel when she is still living with her father, the competing sensations of warmth and cold are associated with the nocturnal enuresis she experiences during each of her dreams in which she seeks to escape to the idealized island home of her childhood:

Coldness enveloped her, clammy cold fingers dragged her back to consciousness.

Her mind struggled in confusion, unable to grasp the change for a few, endless seconds.

'You wet the bed again!' (10)

The relentless cold thus becomes immediately symbolic of her intense emotional trauma and physical and cultural dis/ease: "Her third winter in England and she wanted to die. She was so miserable, so unhappy, and so cold – always so cold" (37). The violence of family life, the hostile authority of the school, the threatening images and sounds of the playground and the streets together

create a pervasive and inescapable climate of un/belonging and impending annihilation.

In her discussion of Black life in the aftermath of chattel slavery, Sharpe (2016) draws on the trope of “the weather” as a condition of *being* that I find useful in the reading of the climate in Riley’s novel. Sharpe identifies the weather literally as “a condition of the atmosphere” and figuratively as a “state of mind” (102), both meanings converging powerfully in the physical and emotional alienation of Riley’s young protagonist. The weather, Sharpe argues, for Black people in historical and contemporary time and place represents “the totality of our environments”; it is “the total climate; and that climate is antiblack” (104). But the weather, she also suggests, “necessitates changeability and improvisation; it is the atmospheric condition of time and place; it produces new ecologies” (106). Thus, Sharpe asks, “When the only certainty is the weather that produces a pervasive climate of anti-blackness, what must we know in order to move through these environments in which the push is always toward Black death?” (106).

In this article, I am interested finally, therefore, in thinking about how these forgotten female characters negotiate the shifting and unexpected climate of anti-blackness in London and Toronto in the mid-twentieth century. How do they perform the kind of “changeability and improvisation” (Sharpe 2016, 106) that might allow them to be/long, to exist without fear beyond Black death? How might they realize a sense of be/longing beyond struggle and loss? In exploring these questions in the remainder of the article, I am interested in the novels’ representation of heteronormative violence as a product of the hegemonic nation and the ways in which Black female characters negotiate the demands of family, race, class, and immigrant status in the face of overwhelming capitalist patriarchy. I am interested, further, in how these novels, by exposing the nation—both in the Caribbean and the metropolis—as flawed, might productively critique Black people’s settler desires in colonial imperialist polities like Britain and settler colonial states like Canada. I am interested finally in queer

characters' negotiation of alternative citizenships, the desired but impossible re/turn to the past, and how characters articulate new geographies of belonging (McKittrick 2006).

For the female protagonists in the three novels, the symptoms of Black death do not only originate from the violence of the external white environment, but even more dangerously they are precipitated by internal contestations within Caribbean families and communities over gender, sexuality and Black women's *being*. Diaspora communities everywhere, Hua (2005) explains, are "not exempted from sexism, racism, classism, homophobia, [and] ageism" (193). Amina Mama's 1993 study details the widespread conditions of domestic violence experienced by Caribbean, Asian and continental African women in first- and second-generation immigrant communities in London. The factors precipitating abuse as enumerated by the women participating in the study are varied but repeatedly linked to other experiences of racism, classism and sexism in the wider society and their subsequent convergence and expression in the family. The impact of the external factors of racism and classism, "such as bad housing and economic stresses," on intimate family life (Mama 1993, 129) becomes even more exacerbated in first-wave migrant communities. In these communities, migrant men not only experience new and unfamiliar forms of oppression, which then get expressed as violence toward women and children, but racialized women are also more likely to be rendered powerless by their alienation and to distrust authorities and agencies put in place to protect white women. The chain of violence against racialized women, Crenshaw (1991) argues, however, cannot be explained simply through the lens of racism and its effect on patriarchy:

Racism is linked to patriarchy to the extent that racism denies men of color the power and privilege that dominant men enjoy. When violence is understood as an acting-out of being denied male power in other spheres, it seems counterproductive to embrace constructs that explicitly link the solution to domestic violence to the acquisition of greater male power (1258).

While it is important to understand racialized women's experiences at the intersections of race, class and gender, therefore, it is also important to insist that they not delay their own well-being at the expense of men; to demand that "women of color need not await the triumph over racism before they can expect to live violence-free lives" (Crenshaw 1991, 1258). Caribbean communities and metropolitan governments must acknowledge that racialized women face exceptional challenges as they struggle "with the material and spiritual insecurities of exile, with the demands of family and work, and with the claims of old and new patriarchies" (Clifford 1997, 259) and must envisage ways of addressing these challenges that recognize women's intersectional pain.

Queer identities likewise constitute a fraught site of struggle in Caribbean migrant communities. Claims to cultural "authenticity" and appeals to fundamentalist Christianity as an integral component of national identity work to reproduce understandings of "home" that are really meant to entrench old patterns of oppressive heteropatriarchy. These attempts to re-articulate specific nationalist discourses in new geo-political contexts demand an unquestioning loyalty to the tyrannical past and encourage new and existing hegemonic and homogenizing narratives about Caribbean cultures and cultural identities (Davis 2006, 25). As Walcott (2016) explains, two parallel streams of oppression operate against queer members of Caribbean migrant communities: "queer homonormative racism and Anglo-Caribbean homo-hatred" (132). These dual oppressions, both internal and external to Caribbean communities, operate like heteronormative violence against women to mark the multiple ways in which race, class, sexuality, religion, language and region converge in the preservation of patriarchy, national hegemonies and neo-liberal capitalism.

In each of the three novels, the family is the site in which heteronormative violence as a symbol of the hegemonic nation is expressed. In this way the family functions as a metaphor of first-wave Caribbean migrants' conflicted relationship with their new host societies and the ones they left behind. The novels thus explore what it means to be trapped between worlds—imprisoned

between the desire for be/longing and the repeating reality of loss—rejected by both the irretrievable Caribbean home and the betraying mother and father/land.

In Gilroy's novel, *In Praise of Love and Children* (1996), the extreme trauma experienced by the protagonist Melda originates, as it does in all three novels, in the Caribbean and not in the metropolitan city. As the illegitimate offspring of an unspoken sexual encounter between her father and his wife's younger sister, she is forced to negotiate a fraught relationship with an unforgiving step/mother half-mad from the grief of betrayal and siblings who exploit her guilt-laden penance in tortured childhood abuses. Her step/mother's eventual recovery from insanity, her education with the help of her teacher Mrs. Penn, and the opportunity to migrate offer her some distance from her painful past, although her craving to be/long still leaves her searching for a meaning of family she can trust.

The theme of maternal abandonment that frames the novel importantly mirrors the abandonment and guilt experienced by first-generation Caribbean migrants in London. Betrayed by the economic, social and emotional disappointments of the Caribbean home they once loved, they came seeking a "better" life in the mother/land, their hopes wrapped in cheap suitcases, as quickly discarded as their dreams. Faced with a different kind of un/belonging in London, where racism and class prejudice are experienced through a series of "of course" situations—"clear for all to see beyond a doubt" (50)—Melda, like many of these migrants, swiftly abandons her dreams. Long past the days of her unqualified, expectant first arrival, she is forced to accept her transformed social position, not as a rightful settler, but as an undesired immigrant. Migrant workers, she explains "went from having a firm identity – of family, village, island or religion –to having only a nominal one: foreigner" (86). While her own history of familial dispossession and childhood abuse challenges this automatic claim to family and identity and suggests that the past can be as terrifying as the present, her current experiences of racism, classism and sexism encourage the

reifying of a patriarchal notion of family, nation and religion. Melda's reluctance to accept a position as foreigner and immigrant outsider also paradoxically denies her the ability to critique the nation's imperialistic designs, to contest the colonial authority of "Queen, Country and Empire" (61). In addition, her critique leaves patriarchy unchallenged. It is surprising that Melda never blames her father for his infidelity or even his inability (or refusal) to protect her. Throughout the novel, her father as symbol of Caribbean patriarchy and Mrs. Penn as symbol of Black middle-class womanhood remain as the idealized figures of her childhood. Coming to terms with the hurt and hurting working-class mother—"what made Ma the way she was – so cruel, so violent, like slave days?" (28)—is too difficult a proposition that would demand an examination of the deep historical and contemporary sources of Black women's pain, including her own.

Still, in the necessary quest for "changeability and improvisation," for "new ecologies" (Sharpe 2016, 106) that can move us past death, Melda continues to search for new ways to adapt to the metaphoric mother/land that has rejected her. She eventually finds a measure of healing and balance by creating her own community of care. Melda mediates the pain of her childhood abuse not through marriage and nuclear motherhood, but by rescuing and healing abandoned Caribbean children in the foster care practice she establishes in the house she resourcefully purchases from her inheritance from Mrs. Penn. Indeed, at the end of the novel, Melda begins some of the difficult work of re-imagining Caribbean familial relationships from a woman-centered rather than a patriarchal perspective: "We had sung in praise of Pa's love for his children, but what of Ma?" (108).

The ongoing struggle between desire and rejection, as dramatized at both the national and familial levels, is also represented in the novel in the relationship between Melda and her sister-in-law—the blond, blue-eyed East German refugee, Trudi. Trudi's extreme whiteness, her suspect ethnicity, and her exaggerated claims over her Black Caribbean husband (animated ironically by her own wartime suffering) prevent both women from acknowledging their

shared pain and using it as a bridge across which to transcend their historical differences. As Gilroy explains in an interview with Bradshaw (2002):

The change that must occur in these ladies is that they have to develop new forms of philosophy. New forms of belief, self-belief, relationship to the world that is different for both of them and a different moral vision, a different form of communication pattern. (384)

This knowing how to negotiate and honour difference is at the heart of both the family's healing and the ongoing decolonial project. The death of Melda's father ultimately heals the breach between her and Trudi, joining their families across their differences and multiple continents in one final act of mourning, thus, opening up possibilities for healing on many levels. In this novel, family and be/longing are thus re-articulated in subtle but necessary ways. Across deep divisions and pain, Melda finally learns to enlarge her definition of family and explore new definitions of self:

For me, perhaps, the search was coming to an end, and my whole scrambled world was swinging into clearer focus. The clouds were breaking up. My wounds were healing. I saw a beautiful and happy girl smiling up at the sun from the bottom of the rainwater barrel. (148).

The novel's ambivalent ending—with Melda making plans to leave London for New York to care for her brother Arnie—suggests nonetheless that there still remains a fundamental disconnect between Black women's desire to be/long to place, family, and community and their dreams of self-actualization. While Melda rediscovers her family, she has yet to fully find herself.

Joan Riley's *The Unbelonging* (1985), like Gilroy's novel, explores the young protagonist's experiences of intense abuse within the framework of the family. Forced to leave her aunt in Jamaica at age eleven to join a father she does not know in England, Hyacinth conjures up memories of an idyllic childhood to shield her from the unrelenting cruelty of her new stepmother and her father's physical and sexual violence. While Hyacinth's stepmother functions like Melda's

unforgiving mother in *Praise of Love and Children* (1996), it is the terror of heteropatriarchy that is the primary theme of Riley's novel. As a harsh and emotionally damaged character, the father's notion of masculinity is distorted by his inability to exercise power in a society where he is estranged from white male economic and political control. His working-class authority as father and husband is thus expressed through the physical and emotional abuse he unleashes with impunity against his daughter and wife.

The father's ability to exact complete control of his daughter importantly depends on both the physical and violent torture of her body and the psychological control he exerts over her mind. The father's greatest control over his daughter, therefore, operates in the skilful way he abuses her racial and gendered positionalities in a society she does not understand and in which she exercises no power either as a young woman or a Black person. The father's careful reading of the society thus allows him to deliberately exploit his daughter's "intersectional subordination" (Crenshaw 1991, 1249). His constant inventory of the terror of whiteness and the violent effects of racism exacerbates his daughter's gendered and raced oppression. In this way, "the consequence of the imposition of one burden" (child abuse, sexism, misogyny) interacts "with pre-existing vulnerabilities" (fear of racism and self-hate) to create new layered dimensions of gendered disempowerment (Crenshaw 1991, 1249). Hyacinth's conviction of Black death, her deep sense of racial inferiority and her growing gendered self-hate are her father's greatest weapons against her, trapping her in a cycle of abuse that ensures his power and impunity and critically delays her attempts at escape: "She felt sick with fear, trapped, sandwiched between the hate and spite of the white world and the dark dingy evil that was the house of her father" (51). Indeed, Hyacinth's fear of whiteness becomes inseparable from the fear of her physically and sexually abusive father:

She tried to banish her fear, fear of the white world juggling with the horrible images of that swollen exposed lump. 'I don't want to die,' she moaned, teeth chattering. 'Please don't let me die. I want to go home to my auntie.' She was immersed in her fear, huddled and

shaking with the horror she had left and the one her imagination conjured up. (64)

Like one of Melda's abandoned, homeless and abused children, Hyacinth finds reprieve only when she is forced to confront her dual fears, escapes from her father and is transferred into foster care.

Still, the constant reminder of her physical and cultural differences leaves her vulnerable and permanently alienated, struggling with self-hate even into her adulthood. In the search for physical and emotional self-correction, Hyacinth employs a different version of respectability politics by deliberately cutting herself off from other Black people: "She always made a point of ignoring the black students, lifting her nose high when they came close to her, feeling the need to establish herself as different in other people's minds" (81). Her burden of Black shame, complete self-abnegation, and simultaneous fear of and desire for whiteness lead to her permanent and absolute isolation and renders the healing of the traumatic past impossible.

Rather than confronting the past, Hyacinth hides instead in the fantasy of the dream world she creates. By reimagining her childhood in Jamaica in a series of dreams and daydreams, she succeeds in constructing a picture of an idyllic but deceptive past. These dreams, which occur routinely after a traumatic event at home or school, conjure up memories of a triumphant, newly independent Jamaica, a nurturing and comforting Aunt Joyce and sustaining childhood friendships. In this way, her dreams come to represent a parallel reality—an imaginary sanctuary in which she can seek protection from the harsh truths that circumscribe her sad and ordinary life. The fact that her own mother goes missing from the narrative is telling. Her dreams are also always a precursor of a new bout of trauma. Since each of her early dreams end in an episode of enuresis, the fantasy of childhood bliss is always followed by her father's abuse and the personal conviction of her growing shame.

After her separation from her father, as she struggles to accept her body and becomes exposed to new political ways of thinking about the world—including critiques of her beloved Jamaica—Hyacinth's dreams become increasingly disturbed. It is in these dreams turned nightmares that the painful secrets of the past begin to emerge. The two dreams, which bookend the novel, portray this deep dichotomy between the reality and duplicity of the past. The first dream recalls a triumphant independent Jamaica, while the other unearths the forgotten horrifying death of her childhood friend Cynthia. It is only at the end of the novel, then, that readers discover that Hyacinth's trauma originates in the Caribbean. It is out of her desire to be/long somewhere and for love and forgiveness, that Hyacinth has had to reconstruct Jamaica as a preferred mother/land framed by the substitute maternal relationship with Aunt Joyce. Like Melda's family in Guyana, however, the Jamaican "home" is in reality a place of unforgiveness where women go half-mad from grief and children die abandoned in fires. Hyacinth's absolute detachment from reality is reinforced in her friend Florence's harsh indictment at the end of the novel of her abandonment of Aunt Joyce: "yu neva even sen somting fe pay docta bill" and "is when yu neva rite that she start drink de wite rum" (141). Florence's accusations fail, however, not only to recognize the damaging extent of the institutional racism Hyacinth experiences in England, but also the extent of her childhood trauma and psychosis originating in their friendship. The reality is that Hyacinth never feels any sense of adult responsibility for her aunt, and can never develop any meaningful adult relationships of her own, because she remains trapped in childhood, still searching for adult love and protection, still searching for the mother she cannot find.

Makeda Silvera's *The Heart Does Not Bend* (2003) appears initially to shift the focus of the family away from the power of patriarchy by centring the lives of five generations of Jamaican women. At the head of the family is the indomitable Maria, who is both Mama and great-great grandmother. In this representation of the Jamaican mother, Silvera deliberately "disrupts the common belief that woman-headed households are powerless" by depicting an alternate representation of Caribbean family (Beckford 2011, 227). By

portraying Maria as an overbearing, unforgiving matriarch who sacrifices her own life and dreams for those of her children, the novel is also concerned, like Gilroy's novel, however, with the burden and pain of motherhood. The crushing weight of motherhood, which overtakes each generation of female characters, stymies their dreams of the future and leads to repeated patterns of familial neglect and failure and abuses of maternal power. As Beckford (2011) explains, "the contradictory and oppressive side of the grandmother, as a product of a patriarchal, seemingly religious society, has been shaped by the [very] gender system that informed her characterization as a matriarch" (250). Patriarchy remains, therefore, at the heart of the decisions that animate this matrilineal household.

It is noteworthy that it is the failure of heteropatriarchy's promise of marriage and motherhood as the ultimate achievements of Black middle-class womanhood that combine to mark the deepest failures in Maria's life:

A nuh likkle try mi try wid all mi pickney dem. Mi really try. An' de second man mi fall for was Oliver, and him worse. De only thing him ever give me was a wedding ring, which mi had to sell, fi feed de pickney dem. (63)

Yet, despite her failed relationships, Maria's ultimate conviction in the validity of patriarchy remains intact, played out in her obsessive relationships with her sons and her final blind obsequious dependency on her grandson, Vittorio, to whom she bequeaths her entire estate. Her deep disappointment in each of her children, particularly her male children, and her husband's multiple abandonments, produce in her a harsh and necessary strength, but also translate ultimately into an unshakeable sense of her own failure. Her inability to succeed in the socially valued roles of wife and mother dislocates her sense of self, resulting in successive drunken binges that mark each of her personal betrayals. The harshness of Black women's lives—poverty, demands of single parenthood, and repeated male abandonment—leads to a kind of self-inflicted cruelty, a ruthless unforgiving love, a heart that breaks but cannot bend (Beckford 2011).

The novel's critique of the overbearing and unrelenting family is also made explicit in its portrayal of Caribbean queer subjectivities. The novel's expressions of "Anglo-Caribbean homo-hatred" (Walcott 2016, 132) confirm the role of fundamentalist Christianity as a by-product of hegemonic patriarchy. While Maria frames her opposition to her son's and granddaughter's gay and lesbian relationships as an expression of maternal care and protection—"Den yuh nuh 'fraid a de talk, unnu nuh 'fraid people shoot unnu? Or a unnu so powerful? A unnu so bold-face" (229)—her actions are primarily motivated by a sense of Christian middle-class respectability. She importantly understands the performance of this respectability as another extension of her "proper" role as a mother and wife, a performance she encourages Molly to emulate: "Molly, yuh have a daughter. Think 'bout her, if yuh won't think 'bout me" (186). While Molly, indeed, sacrifices her "quest for individuation" to the demands of family (Beckford 2011, 258), Mikey refuses this project of self-annihilation, articulating an alternative path to family and citizenship:

Mama, ah love yuh, but a lot happen over de years since yuh left mi, and mi survive without any help from de family.... Mi not walking and begging on de streets. Me nuh wear tear-up clothes and mi nuh walk and holler and mi nuh tief. (230)

By naming his independence as separate from the family and nation, Mikey reminds Maria of her own abandonment of him and critiques the nuclear family as an infallible model of love and security. His exemplary, but unrecognized, citizenship also indicts the Caribbean nation for its abject rejection of its queer subjects. In the end, Silvera's novel challenges not only the patriarchal nuclear family but argues for a more redeeming, sustaining definition of community that can supersede both the demands of the Caribbean "home" and the colonial settler state.

The Heart Does Not Bend (2003), like Gilroy's and Riley's novels, also explores the desired but impossible re/turn to the past. Female characters' search for family, home and be/longing demands the multiple negotiation of physical and emotional detours between the Caribbean "home" and its metropolitan

diasporas. Seeking to escape the socio-economic “dead-end street” (256) which characterizes life in urban Jamaica, and subsequently disillusioned by life in Canada, Maria and her children and grandchildren undertake, like Gilroy’s characters, multiple migrations first to Canada and later to the United States and Europe. As in England, Canada’s promise of upward mobility and financial and educational success is never realized, initiating for Maria’s children and grandchildren a new set of journeys in search of new horizons, and for Maria herself the final, fated return to Jamaica. Ostracized by the changing circumstances of her class from the now-abandoned house on Wigton Street, she ends her final days not in an island paradise but in an “iron coffin” (11) where she dies of a broken and unforgiving heart. Maria may have returned to Jamaica to die but, like Gilroy’s and Riley’s characters, she has yet to find her way “home.”

Since the “home” to which one re/turns always exceeds nostalgic memory, final re/turn, for Maria, as it is for Caribbean migrants in London and Toronto, is ultimately impossible. The painful disillusionment with the dystopic present is confounded by the knowing that “place is always bound by time” (James 1993, 248). It is not that the returning immigrant is simply a foreigner in her own country, “it is that [s]he has no country at all and is a foreigner everywhere ‘an eccentric at home and exile abroad’ a citizen without a nation” (James 1993, 248-249). Melda explains this dilemma in *Praise of Love and Children* (1996):

I had now spent nearly twelve years in Britain.... Every bad winter, every ice-cold spring or so-so summer, I had vowed, ‘This is the last’, but here I was still in London, not yet able to understand the country. I accepted my given synonyms: foreigner, immigrant, dark stranger. As long as I lived here, that was what I would be. (99)

In finally accepting her status as immigrant, Melda comes to understand diaspora be/longing not as neo-colonial resettlement but as a process of self-recognition. Diaspora re/turn as another kind of arrival is never useful in and of itself.

In *The Unbelonging* (1985) the desire for re/turn and its resolution are more complex. The novel suggests that the “better life” Caribbean migrants entered was a dystopic nightmare they may have survived by developing strategies of “deferred gratification” in which they transposed their failed emotional, social and economic desires back onto a Caribbean “homeland” (Thompson 1990, 49-50). But the homeland they constructed was invariably one to which re/turn was impossible. The Jamaica Hyacinth remembers—fixed and frozen in time—does not exist in reality. Home is an unrealisable, romanticised fiction that cannot be re-inhabited again. While physical re/turn may take place, emotional and psychological re/turn are impossible in all directions. At the close of the novel when Hyacinth physically returns to Jamaica, the image of the romanticized Aunt Joyce as metaphor for the idealized maternal home/land fragments into a terrifying nightmare:

The double bed she had shared with her aunt was gone, in its place a broken-down single one. On it lay a withered old woman, covered with a torn and grimy sheet.... Hyacinth stared at her in horror, frozen with shock and disbelief.... The bony body shifted uncertainly on the bed, feet moving with painful deliberation.... Then it was standing, swaying uncertainly, movement unsure as it started toward her. (139)

“The horrifying maternal body,” and not just the patriarchal father, is at the heart of women’s pain in this novel (Hoving 2001, 63). While the father’s betrayal symbolizes the violent duplicity of the colonial mother/fatherland with its false promise of economic and social advancement and its historical abuse of colonial power, it is the inability to return to the actual mother, symbolized in the image of the idolized Caribbean island “home,” that cuts Hyacinth off from any sustaining sense of the future. The de-mythification of Hyacinth’s “desperately desired ideal, motherly, Jamaican home, as a soothing contrast to the cold, destructive, male world of England” (Hoving 2001, 65), forces her to confront “the full horror of both (surrogate) mother- and fatherland” (66). Her dreams, thus, come apart in the final pages of the novel in the face of Florence’s nationalist directive: “Go back whe yu come fram. We noh like farigners ina J.A.” (142). Still, perhaps in destroying the fiction of “home”—in the recognition

that “home” is simultaneously “a place of safety and terror” (Brah 1996, 177)—and in the disrupting of the myth of the nurturing nation, Hyacinth may have discovered the point at which healing may begin.

As Caribbean migrants disillusioned by their coming “home” to the mother/land and as Caribbean nationals desiring a triumphant return to a past both fixed in and altered by time, the novels’ characters must eventually come to understand diaspora be/longing not as neo-colonial resettlement but as “a homing desire” (Brah 1996, 177). This desire for be/longing, as Brah (1996) explains, “is not the same thing as desire for a ‘homeland’” (177), which is always a desire for post-colonial repossession and new hegemonic relationships. Not all diasporas, in fact, “inscribe homing desire through a wish to return to a place of ‘origin’” (Brah 1996, 189). What happens “when one cannot or does not want to look back for political or economic reasons” (Brazier and Mannur 2003, 9) or when queer diasporic subjects and women reject the desire to look back to nations marked by patriarchal and heteronormative violence (Hua 2005)? In Riley’s *The Unbelonging* (1985), re/turn to the family and nation opens up a wound that bleeds. Their necessary unmasking, however, provides a tentative opening that may lead to self-recognition and release Hyacinth into the freedom to live independently beyond fear. *In Praise of Love and Children* (1996) ends with a departure rather than a re/turn. Melda’s productive critique of the nation gives her a more expansive vision of the world. As she faces outward, she reaches toward familial be/longing, even as she is still searching for autonomous being. *The Heart Does Not Bend* (2003), of the three novels, points most resolutely toward a future based on new articulations of citizenship. The path to the future, significantly, is left in the care of Maria’s great-grandchildren, the second and third generations born in Canada. Precisely because these new generations, cut off from Jamaica and permanently marooned in Canada (Brand 2001), do not know how to look back—“This? This? This is the house all the fussing was about?” (258)—they are best positioned to critique both nations and delineate a new map toward a different kind of future.

In the readings I have offered of the three novels by Gilroy, Riley and Silvera, I have suggested a new kind of female trilogy that might help us reimagine Caribbean women's post-war experiences in London and Toronto. The novels' critique of the patriarchal family and their representation of heteronormative violence as a product of the nation reveal the unique ways in which Caribbean women might have attempted to negotiate the demands of new migrant communities and new and old patriarchies. The novels' demarcation of the need for new geographies of be/longing (McKittrick 2006) ultimately unmask the pretense of the "post-diaspora" subject even while they contest the notion of the innocence of family, memory and nation. In their rejection of any simple and singular return to the Caribbean "home" and in the articulation of alternative strategies of "changeability and improvisation" in the metropolitan city (Sharpe 2016, 106), these texts also explore the terms through which their characters might enact new imagined communities and futures beyond the imperial colonial nation and the settler colonial state. In this way, the novels re-narrate new possibilities, no matter how tentative, for Caribbean women's *being* in historical time and place and begin to articulate new possibilities of be/longing beyond erasure and loss.

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¹ The author's decision to write the word Black with an uppercase B serves as a linguistic re-assertion of the humanity and agency of people of African descent in societies where that humanity and agency have historically been, and continue to be, under attack.

² The article's use of the term Caribbean refers exclusively to the Anglophone Caribbean, specifically the former colonies of Great Britain in the region. Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, and British Guiana / Guyana were among the most significant sources of migrants to the UK and North America during the post-war period. For a breakdown of migrants by island between 1955 and 1961, see Byron (1994, p. 79).

³ I use the term "migrant" to denote a sense of autonomy in Caribbean people's choice to relocate to the UK and Canada in the mid-twentieth century. Their decisions to migrate were not only based on strategic educational and economic choices, but also on cultural and political considerations (Bidnall 2017). Later in the paper, I use the term "immigrants" to designate the raced and classed re-classification of these communities that stripped them of any social and political agency and saw them only as economically and culturally "backward" newcomers who contributed little to the overall well-being of the societies in which they were situated. The transformation of status from migrant to immigrant also makes possible, however, important critiques both of the neo/colonial nation and the Caribbean home/land. The article also signals the tension between migrant and immigrant in the use of the term "post-diaspora" as a marker of Caribbean immigrants' deceptive desire for full national recognition in the UK and Canada.

⁴ Samuel Selvon's trilogy includes *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), *Moses Ascending* (1975), and *Moses Migrating* (1983). The novels offer the first comprehensive treatment in fiction of Caribbean migrant life in London, but do so almost exclusively from the perspective of the protagonist Moses and the other male characters with whom he interacts.

⁵ Austin Clarke's Toronto trilogy includes *The Meeting Point* (1967), *Storm of Fortune* (1973), and *The Bigger Light* (1975). Like Selvon's work, the trilogy, set in the 1950s and 1960s, offers an indispensable portrayal of the complexities of Caribbean immigrant experience in the post-war period. Clarke's novels differ from Selvon's in their treatment of the lives and friendships of a group of Caribbean domestic workers in Toronto.

⁶ Ironically, the 1948 British Nationality Act was a response to Canada's decision in 1946 to declare separate citizenship from Britain, thus, ending the common status that all British subjects shared and necessitating a new way of maintaining commonality across Commonwealth territories. See Bryon and Condon (2008.)



Black Women's Activism and Organisation in Public Health - Struggles and Strategies for Better Health and Wellbeing

[Jenny Douglas](#)

Senior Lecturer in Health Promotion
Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies
The Open University, UK

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Abstract: Using Avtar Brah's concept of 'diaspora space', this paper argues that black women in the UK have organised in diaspora space to challenge inequities in health and develop strategies to improve health outcomes for black communities. The paper explores the post-war contribution of black women nurses in the UK to public health, both as activists for change and as organisers of change. The paper concludes by exploring the confluences and synergies between the concept of 'diaspora space' and that of '(post) diaspora' as espoused by Scafe (2018). The paper argues that both concepts are useful for understanding the ways in which Black women have used their agency to challenge health inequities.

Keywords: Black women, Caribbean, health, activism, intersectionality

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Introduction: Diaspora space as a site for Black women's health activism

Avtar Brah contends that:

diaspora space is the point at which boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, of belonging and otherness, of 'us' and 'them', are contested. My argument is that diaspora space as a conceptual category is 'inhabited', not only by those who have migrated and their descendants, but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous. In other words the concept of *diaspora space* (as opposed to that of diaspora) includes the entanglement, the intertwining of genealogies of dispersion with those of 'staying put'. The diaspora space is the site where *the native is as much a diasporian as the diasporian is the native*.

Brah, 1996:208-209

Notwithstanding the complexities and ambiguities contained in this definition, the concept of diaspora space is a useful lens for exploring the ways in which black women in Britain have organised around health issues. While the majority of women in the black women's groups I discuss were women who had migrated from the Caribbean, these groups also included indigenous women, black British women, women from Asia, Africa and women of mixed heritage. Black women health professionals as well as black community workers, black women from other professions, and black women who had experienced health inequities, came together to challenge professional boundaries and to explore health issues by listening and giving voice to the experiences of women and parents concerned about particular health issues. These groups provided spaces for women who were providers and consumers of health care to come together to develop strategies for social change.

Migration from the Caribbean

Following the Second World War, Caribbean women migrated to the UK, USA and Canada to work. However, the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 substantially reduced migration from the Caribbean to the USA between 1952 and 1965, and

diverted migration from the English-speaking Caribbean to the UK. The British government actively recruited workers from English-speaking British colonies in the Caribbean to rebuild Britain (Goulbourne, 1998, 2002). The National Health Service was established in 1948 and people from across the Caribbean were recruited to work in the NHS. Many women migrated independently to work in the NHS. They were employed in public health work as nurses, health visitors, midwives, community health workers and allied health professionals as well as auxiliaries and cleaners. However, academic literature on these health workers has focused on their experiences of discrimination (Doyal 1995) as the majority of these women experienced racism and discrimination which impacted on their ability to progress into senior management roles in the NHS (Beishon et al. 1995). The substantial contribution that these women made to public health development has not been acknowledged or documented. This paper looks at organisations and action developed by black women to advance the public's health, in areas such as mental health, reproductive health, sickle cell and thalassaemia disorders. It also explores the development of black women's groups to challenge racism and ethnocentrism in health in these areas.

While some women who migrated from the Caribbean were already trained nurses, others came to Britain to train as nurses. Here they faced discrimination within the NHS as many black women were directed towards training as State Enrolled Nurses (SENs) rather than State Registered Nurses (SRNs) (Beishon et al. 1995; Olwig 2012) which restricted their career development and progression. Despite the undermining and negative experiences of day-to-day racism and the lack of career progression that these women experienced whilst working and enabling change with the NHS in the UK, they were active in their local communities and churches. They established and actively contributed to a range of voluntary and community organisations. Some of the early voluntary organisations were established through their national geographic networks such as the Nurses Association of Jamaica, UK, founded in 1978 and the Barbados Overseas Nurses Association founded in 1994. These associations still exist but both organisations involve individuals from across the Atlantic diaspora. Later organisations such as the Confederation of Black and Ethnic Nurses, Midwives

and Health Visitors; the Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia Association of Counsellors; the Sickle Cell Society; Cancer Black Care were developed around specific health issues to name a few in the UK (Douglas 2018)). These organisations served as diaspora space and sites of activism. From the 1970s black women in the UK were involved in campaigning for change, setting up black women's groups to challenge inappropriate, racist and ethnocentric practices within the NHS – for example Birmingham Black Health Workers, Brixton Black Women's Collective and the Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent (OWAAD).

However, there is limited research and scholarship on both black women's activism and on black women's health activism specifically. Sudbury (1998, 5) comments:

While the seeds of black women's political activism in Britain can be identified as far back as the black women who attended the Somerset case of 1772 and the societies of escaped enslaved and indentured servants which enraged white Londoners in the late eighteenth century, it was not until the early 1970s that black women began to organise autonomously

Sudbury 1998:5

From the 1970s there was a rise of black women's organisations so that by the 1990s there was a range of black women's organisations across the UK, some funded and some not funded, in cities, towns and rural areas with significant black populations (Sudbury 1998). However, these black women's organisations and black women's health activism in particular, remained an area of erasure that was ignored by historians, sociologists and white feminist scholars. It remained undocumented by white feminists or researchers undertaking research on the rise of black political action. Research on feminist agency was focused on that of white women and the work on black political action was focused on black men.

One notable early publication was *The Heart of the Race: Black Women's Lives in Britain* (Bryan et al. 1985). This publication documented the impact of employment, unemployment, poor housing and deprivation on the lives and health of black communities in the 1980s and concluded that while black women were expected to be cleaners, nurses and auxiliaries in the NHS, the health needs of black communities were not acknowledged or indeed addressed. *The Heart of the Race* acknowledged the agency and activism of black Caribbean women and was one of few publications to do so.

Sudbury also aimed to 'redress the erasure of black women's collective agency in contemporary thinking about social change' (1998, 3). Sudbury (1998) in *Other Kinds of Dreams*, demonstrated how black women's organisations were extremely heterogeneous; they changed and were reborn during the 1990s. She argues that the rise in black women's organisations was in response to the harsh, social, economic and political environment in the early 1970s in education, social justice, housing and social services. She contended that:

In the field of health, racist practices led to disproportionate numbers of black people being diagnosed as mentally unstable (Bryan et al. 1985). Black women in particular suffered from unsafe and irreparable birth control methods

Sudbury 1998, 3

Furthermore Sudbury argued that black women's autonomous spaces 'offer fertile ground for the examination of the intersection of economic, ideological and political structures, forces and counter-forces in Britain'. Despite the lack of recognition of black women's agency by white feminist scholars and sociologists exploring black political agency, black women in the UK were actively involved in campaigns for public health and health care (Douglas 1998). Black women's groups grew out of a need to take action on the inequities in health experienced by black women and their families. The issues I will focus on in this paper are reproductive health, mental health (Wilson 1994) and the paucity of adequate and appropriate services for sickle cell disorders (SCD) and

thalassaemia (Douglas 1992). This paper aims to redress this gap and now outlines three case studies that show black women as service users and providers of health care have actively campaigned for better public health policies and services during the twenty first century.

Depo-Provera.

In relation to reproductive health, black and minority ethnic women appeared to be more likely than their white contemporaries to be offered hysterectomies (Bryan, Dadzie and Scafe 1986), and they were subjected to discriminatory practices in the use of the injectable contraceptive Depo-Provera (Brent Community Health Council 1981). Black women reported the misuse of the injectable contraceptive Depo-Provera. Depo-Provera (DP) was a long term injectable contraceptive lasting three months; it was manufactured by UpJohn. It was trialled in Jamaica in 1963 before its more widespread use in Britain and the Third World. The Food and Drug Administration did not recommend its use in the USA and it was only approved by the Committee on Safety of Medicines in the UK for very limited and specific use: for women whose partners had recently had a vasectomy and for those women who had recently been vaccinated against German measles (rubella). Never the less, it appeared that DP was being prescribed to large numbers of black women without their knowledge or consent in London hospitals and in hospitals serving populations of white working class and black and minority women across the UK. It was certainly being administered to black and minority ethnic women in hospitals in Birmingham. Black and white women launched a campaign against Depo-Provera in the late 1970s, aiming to have its use banned. One of the Black women's groups that collectively campaigned against the use of D.P. was Brixton Black Women's Group. Brixton Black Women's Group was formed in 1973 to discuss Black women's experience of racist and sexist oppression (Bryan, Dadzie and Scafe 1985). They campaigned by going on demonstrations and writing about the impact of DP in their newsletter 'Speak Out' (Speak Out, Numbers 1 and 3), aiming to raise awareness of the effects of DP amongst local black women. The

campaign against Depo-Provera, although focused on the inappropriate and racist use of DP, also served as a forum for discussion and action about reproductive justice for black women more widely. While white feminists were calling for abortion on demand, black women were campaigning against the disproportionate way in which black women were given terminations more readily than white women and were being encouraged to have terminations when they had not requested them. Black women and white working class women were targeted for abortions and long-term contraceptives by health professionals and policy makers who had a view that they should not reproduce.

The use of Depo-Provera comes out of a very different approach to health care. An approach which accepts uncritically ruling assumptions- in this instance the desirability of reducing the black birth rate and the assumed ignorance and unreliability of black women – and seeks to change people's behaviour accordingly, whatever the suffering this may cause.

p.24, Brent Community Health Council 1981

Despite the view of black women as fertile, fecund and feckless, black women organised to challenge this notion and to campaign against the unwarranted use of Depo-Provera amongst black women. In April 1982, the Minister of Health declined to grant Upjohn Ltd a license for long-term use. This decision was in part due to the sustained attack by the Campaign against Depo-Provera (Timmins 1982). Despite the Committee on Safety of Medicines being prepared to approve Depo-Provera based on scientific evidence, the Minister of Health (Kenneth Clarke) did not accept the advice and was swayed by the arguments that vulnerable women may be given Depo-Provera without their informed consent (Timmins 1982). Upjohn appealed the decision and a public hearing under the 1968 Medicines Act took place in April 1983 to discuss the licencing of Depo-Provera for long term use. After the public hearing, the decision remained that Depo-Provera should only be licensed for short-term contraceptive use

following a vasectomy or rubella vaccination. (Denning 1983). This action demonstrates the effectiveness of black women to organise, challenge and change health service provision that was seen as detrimental to black and working class communities.

Sickle Cell Disorders.

Sickle cell disorders, including sickle cell anaemia and thalassaemia, are inherited blood disorders which are more prevalent in black and minority ethnic communities. Cases of sickle cell anaemia were documented following post war migration in the UK; however health services failed to recognise this as an important health issue, although the number of individuals affected was similar to those affected by haemophilia and cystic fibrosis (Anionwu 1985). Black families complained about the lack of information about sickle cell disorders, poor treatment in hospitals and a lack of sensitivity from health workers. One of the key campaigners for improvements in sickle cell disorders was Professor Elizabeth Anionwu. Elizabeth Anionwu highlighted that during her training as a nurse, midwife and health visitor, she received very little information about sickle cell anaemia. She realised her own lack of knowledge when she attended a community meeting and was asked about it. When she failed to provide information the community members retorted: "if you don't know, how are we supposed to know?"

Douglas (2016)

Professor Elizabeth Anionwu became active in campaigning for sickle cell services and became employed as one of the first sickle cell counsellors at the Brent Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia Centre in 1979. In this post, Professor Elizabeth Anionwu continued to be an active member of the Sickle Cell Society which provided information on sickle cell disorders and also campaigned for improved health services and awareness training for health and social care workers, teachers and social security officers. Campaigning for improved services for sickle cell disorders became an important political issue in the UK in the 1970s

and 1980s when community groups, with the combined efforts of OSCAR (Organisation of Sickle Cell Anaemia), Sickle Cell Society, Community Health Councils organised public meetings to raise awareness and fund-raising events. In response to complaints from families, patients, support groups and health workers, the government established a working party of the Standing Medical Advisory Committee in 1992. The aim of the working party, which included people with sickle cell anaemia, specialist and non-specialist doctors, and Professor Elizabeth Anionwu as a sickle cell counsellor, was to develop guidelines for health services for improved services for sickle cell disorders.

The development of appropriate services was very slow and several authors argued that the reason for this was institutional racism as sickle cell disorders affected predominantly minority ethnic families (Ahmad and Atkin 1996; Anionwu and Atkin 2001). A number of haemoglobinopathy counselling centres, employing specialist haemoglobinopathy workers were established based upon the model of the first centre in Brent in 1979 and by 1995 there were 37 district health authorities employing 57 sickle cell and thalassaemia counsellors (Anionwu 1996). The sickle cell and thalassaemia counsellors were minority ethnic nurses and midwives. Although it was encouraging that some district health authorities recognised and attempted to meet these needs, the centres were often inadequately resourced (Anionwu 1993; Potrykus 1993; Gould et al. 2000). After a number of years of campaigning, all pregnant women in England are now offered screening for sickle cell disease in pregnancy and all babies are offered screening as part of the new-born blood spot test (NHS choices).

Mental Health Services

In relation to mental health, the early research emphasis was on black Caribbean men with high rates of serious mental illness, while black women were seemingly ignored (Edge 2013). The emphasis on research on black men and severe mental illness was reinforced by the stereotype of black men as 'dangerous' and feckless. Thus research on black women's mental health and

wellbeing has been sparse. There are limited studies that have pointed to inequities in health in relation to African-Caribbean women and mental health. Edge (2013) argues that one of the issues relating to anxiety and depression is that often black women do not wish to talk about anxiety and depression and that they do not want to discuss their personal issues with white health professionals who do not understand the social and cultural context of their lives. The National Service Framework for Mental Health in 2001 (NSF 2001) stated that the rate of depression in African Caribbean women was believed to be about 60% higher than in the white population, but black women were least likely to receive treatment. Although black women may experience anxiety and depression, they do not appear to be seeking or receiving treatment.

As well as projects in London such as the London Black Women's Health Action Project which aimed to promote the general well-being of black women in London and offered advice and counselling (Wilson 1996) and the Shanti project which was set up in 1989 in South London by West Lambeth Health Authority to provide a mental health service for women in a community setting (Stephens 1996), black women's groups across the UK campaigned for appropriate mental health services.

In Liverpool, the black women's group, Liverpool Black Sisters, identified mental ill health and the lack of appropriate mental health services as a grave concern in the early 1980s. Liverpool Black Sisters and the Granby Community Mental Health Group campaigned vigorously for appropriate provision which materialised in 1989 as the Granby Community Health Drop-In Centre – Mary Seacole House. Torkington (1991) discusses the difficulties, disappointments, obstacles and tensions with seeking funding from the Health Authority and the City Council:

Unfortunately, many large institutions see their relations with non statutory groups in a conflictual mode, rather than seeking to develop a co-operative relationship with them

Torkington (1991, 180)

A black women's support group for African-Caribbean women in Sheffield started in the early 1980s. This group campaigned on health inequities including mental health support for black women. It was founded by the late Dorothy Dixon Barrow, a midwife, feminist and political activist, who had been a member of the West Indian Association formed in 1955-56. This group became the Sheffield and District Afro Caribbean Community Association (SADACCA).

Watt and Jones (2015), in documenting black women's activism in the Abasindi Black Women's Cooperative in Manchester, discuss how the late Louise Da-Cocodia, a state registered nurse, was involved in a range of community development organisations in Manchester in the 1980s and 1990s, in addition to her work in the NHS. Health and wellbeing, health issues and health inequalities run through the narratives of the women involved in the Abasindi Co-operative in Manchester, although health activism has not been highlighted specifically and this is an area that needs documenting more fully.

Achieving success: improved services for sickle cell disorders; mental health advocacy and reproductive health

The black women's groups in all of these case studies provided 'diaspora spaces', where black women could come together to discuss health issues that were concerning them and explore creative ways to develop strategies and create solutions. In the case of sickle cell this was to collate the experiences of people who had experienced sickle cell disorders and sickle cell crises, particularly the experiences of young children through their parents. Then they developed strategies to change health services through service managers and also change local, regional and national policies through politicians and policy makers. Educating the community and health professionals about SCD was a very important part of the strategy as myths and misunderstandings existed in black communities about sickle cell disorders. In the case of reproductive health, different strategies were used involving community demonstrations, marches and lobbying politicians as well as working with other feminist

organisations and building alliances. In challenging the omission of appropriate mental health services for black women it was important to create those spaces for black women who were experiencing anxiety and depression to be supported as well as to influence research funders and research agendas to focus research on the mental health and wellbeing of black women as well as black men. Mental health and black women came onto the agenda in the National Service Framework (2001) policy report which reported that black women were more likely to experience depression but less likely to report it (NSF 2001).

These case studies demonstrate that more recently research and activism on black health issues in the UK has been led by black women who have worked in the health services as nurses, physiotherapists, health promotion specialists and other health practitioners and have become health researchers because they were outraged by the racist, ethnocentric practices that they observed and so developed a research focus on black health issues and concerns as black women practitioner/activist/scholars. An example of this is the Black Women's Health and Wellbeing Research Network at the Open University (www.open.ac.uk/black-womens-health-and-wellbeing).

The Black women's health groups reported in this paper have used a variety of strategies to achieve change and improve health outcomes for black communities. This has involved learning from each other and learning together (Etienne, 2016); building alliances with white feminists while keeping the health issues of Black women at the fore; working with and challenging white politicians and policy makers; learning from other international struggles at the time - in the US and South Africa.

In addition, black women's health groups were instrumental in challenging myths and stigmas in black communities. In all of these health issues black women have taken an intersectional approach, knowing that race, gender, class, sexuality, culture and religion all intersect in a range of ways to affect the

health and wellbeing of black women. Black women worked across professional and disciplinary boundaries and were able to apply learning from one context to another. Bryan et al. argued in relation to Brixton Black Women's group 'As the first autonomous black women's group of its kind, certainly in London, there were no models for us to follow, no paths laid out. We just had to work it out as we went along.' (Bryan et al. 1985, 150) Black women brought their knowledge that had been developed through their histories and geographies and the migratory processes that some had experienced to bear on public health issues and to organise for better health and wellbeing for black communities and for black women. Other people organising in different communities to achieve social change can learn from these struggles and strategies.

These case studies have demonstrated the importance of the concept of (post) diaspora advocated by Scafe (2018). Although the women were active in specific local campaigns for improvements in health and wellbeing, they drew upon experiences, knowledge and examples for action from the Caribbean, the USA and Africa.

Future Action

This paper has argued that while black women's health activism has been largely ignored by white feminist scholars, it needs to be acknowledged and documented. Although black women's health activism in the USA has been documented, black women's activism in general and health activism in particular has received scant attention in the academic literature in the UK (Sudbury 1998; Watt and Jones 2015). In a review of black women's health activism in the United States, Susan Smith (1995) argued that black health activism emerged in the 1890's at a time when the American welfare state was expanding, but black rightere was decreasing. The book documents black health activism through to 1950. The National Black Women's Health Project was established in Atlanta, Georgia in 1983 following the first national conference on Black women's health issues at Spelman College - thus marking a shift from

black women organizing for their communities, to black women organizing for themselves. The contemporary black women's health movement in the US asserts that poverty and racism, as well as sexism and homophobia, continue to contribute to the poor health status of African- Americans.

Although we do not have such a long history of health activism In the UK, in the 1980s and 1990s, black women's groups were active in public health, promoting the health and wellbeing of black communities and for many black people access to medical health care remained an important and over-riding concern (Bryan, Dadzie and Scafe 1995). More recently black scholars have attempted to address the erasure of black women and document and acknowledge their activism. While this has happened in relation to education, employment and social justice, there has been limited recognition of black women's health activism in the UK, which has remained a lacuna except for the work of Bryan et al. (1995), Sudbury (1998), Wilson (1994) and Watt and Jones (2015). The lack of attention that black feminists in the UK have paid to health activism remains an area that warrants further exploration. Often references to health in black feminist scholarship in the UK are implicit rather than explicit. This is inexplicable, given the number of black women who worked in the newly established NHS in different roles.

The concept of 'Diaspora space' in the context of black women organising and agitating for change, provided a creative, reflective space for critical discussion and analysis to challenge inequities, accepted norms and to develop alternative policies and practices. These spaces transcended the professional backgrounds of the public health practitioners, policy makers, community workers and activists within them.

Scafe (2018) espoused the concept of (post) diaspora:

What I'm proposing here with this specific example of "political blackness", as practised by late twentieth-century black feminist activists, is a theoretical space that is multiple diasporic, but is also

specific and local, rather than abstract or instrumental. As such, it offers multiple and overlapping possibilities for belonging through affiliation and difference, and it can be mobilised to develop new meanings in contemporary Caribbean and black British cultural production. By claiming this space as “post-diasporic”, it is possible to project beyond the loss and longing, the fragmentation and dislocation to which all theories of diaspora, old and new, are attached.

An examination of the three case studies I have presented, demonstrates that by Scafe's definition, they could be described as examples of (post) diaspora. They were specific and local, and offered multiple and overlapping possibilities for belonging through affiliation and difference. Hence I see synergies and commonalities between the concept of ‘diaspora space’ and that of (post) diaspora. Future health concerns may be more focused on a wider African diaspora and the connections and discontinuities between African and Caribbean health. Whether we call it diaspora space or (post) diaspora, The AHRC network created a space where intergenerational, international and interdisciplinary black women scholars from the Atlantic diaspora came together to discuss a range of intellectual concerns including health which recognised intersectional approaches to health and the intersections between gender, class, ‘race’, ethnicity, culture, sexuality and health.

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More than Dollars and Cents: Leveraging the Multiple Roles of Caribbean Migrant Women within the Diaspora for Sustainable Development

[Natasha Kay Mortley](#)

Lecturer, Institute for Gender and Development Studies

Regional Coordinating Office

The University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, Jamaica

Abstract: Women from the English-speaking Caribbean have rarely fit into traditional theories of migration and Westernized ideal of the trailing and passive wife accompanying the male breadwinner and migrant. Caribbean migration from the 1960s onwards, has shown that women, motivated by a complex range of factors, migrate independent of men, and play a critical role in facilitating the movement of other family and kin, as well as in the circular flows of goods, services, knowledge and technology. Drawing on the theory of love power migration by Baldwin and Mortley (2016) this paper demonstrates how Caribbean female migrants from the English Caribbean exercise love and care within the family, and use migration as a strategy for survival, rebuilding and empowerment. The paper argues that because Caribbean women's migration is based on a complex decision-making process incubated and determined by love power migration, there are even more reasons to maintain strong ties with multiple households and communities in the country of origin. These ties, nurtured by women's caring role, foster the creation of a transnational space linking multiple households, networks and diaspora communities.

The paper thus explores an under researched area in Caribbean migration scholarship, situating female migrants within the global policy agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the national policy agenda of Caribbean governments that seek to engage and harness remittances and skills of persons within diaspora communities. It provides examples of women's achievements and challenges as they navigate their host countries, as well as the creative ways through which they reconstruct, maintain and connect networks and communities.

Based on the analysis of secondary data and primary case data with Caribbean nurse migrants, the paper argues that if Caribbean development planners want to better leverage their diaspora they need to first look beyond remittances. Further, employing a gender lens, they need to develop a comprehensive understanding of who makes up the diaspora. Migrant women by virtue of their triple roles, represent a valuable resource in the migration process and within diaspora communities, and their voices and experiences must be central to advocacy and policy processes for development.

Key words: migrant women, love power migration, Caribbean diaspora, sustainable development, transnationalism

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Introduction

Migration is an integral element in the history, culture and socio-economic life of Caribbean people (Byron 1999). In today's globalized and increasingly interconnected world, Caribbean migration has only intensified. The International Migration Report estimated that in 2017, migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean made up the third largest share of international migrants (United Nations 2017). The Caribbean region, relative to its population size, has the highest emigration rates in the world (Mishra 2006) and thus presents an excellent case for studying the effects of migration, as well as the role and impact of the diaspora on regional development.

Furthermore, the Caribbean, according to Stuart Hall is "the first, the original and the purest diaspora" (Hall 2001, 28). Despite being deeply entrenched in Caribbean history and culture, comprehensive data on migratory flows and composition has always been problematic due to a paucity of official and reliable data at both country and regional levels. Anecdotal evidence however suggests a 1:1 ratio between Caribbean nationals living in the Caribbean and people of Caribbean descent residing abroad. The Caribbean diaspora is far from being a homogenous group and represents a sizeable, well-educated and affluent demographic whose large majority maintains strong ties with home communities and country.

The Caribbean diaspora is a diverse and vibrant collection of individuals, many of whom have strong emotional ties back to the homeland that reflect in the types of economic connectivity with the region that they maintain or aspire to create (World Bank 2016, 32).

Caribbean migrants, even after decades abroad, continue to identify strongly with their homelands, retaining what observers such as George Gmelch call an ideology of return; (Gmelch 1992; Philpott 1973). In his work on Caribbean culture and identity, Hall (2001) reinforces this point. He argues that culture,

...provides a kind of ground for our identities: something to which we can return, something solid, something fixed, around which we

can organize our identities and our sense of belongingness. And there is a sense that modern nations and people cannot survive for long and succeed without the capacity to touch ground, as it were, in the name of their cultural identities (Hall 2001, 25).

This desire to return to the country of origin or home country is one of the defining characteristics of the Caribbean diaspora and this is closely associated with the existence and nature of transnational linkages established between migrants and their home communities and country (Thomas-Hope 1999). Return is not always manifested in actual permanent return to the country of origin, but manifests in potential for return, return flows of remittances, knowledge, technology, circulation and short-term visits. This culture of return and circulation, viewed within the transnational framework, forms the basis of the argument being put forward in this paper. The paper argues that in order to better manage and direct migration flows towards development, Caribbean development planners and policy makers need to gain both a comprehensive and more nuanced understanding of this multi-faceted phenomenon.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of 2015 have explicitly focused on the importance of migration to the global development agenda and highlight several migration-related targets, calling for disaggregated data to better track and monitor progress made towards these targets. In the Agenda, governments pledged to “facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies” (SDG target 10.7)

In the Agenda for development, migration is also a cross-cutting issue related to female migrants, calling for recognizing and valuing of care and domestic workers (SDG target 5.4), strong focus on female migrants (SDG target 8.8), empowerment and promotion of rights of all regardless of sex and age (SDG target 10.2) and equal opportunity and reducing inequalities within migration processes (SDG target 10.3). For the past decade, while Caribbean

governments have been moving towards engaging their diasporas for national development, the discourse and policy directives remain predominantly centred around remittances and economic investments. Remittances do in fact contribute significantly to Caribbean economies, registering an eight per cent increase for Latin America and the Caribbean between 2016 and 2017 (Orozco 2017). Remittances constitute a significant source of household income that improves the livelihood of families and communities through investments in education, health, sanitation, housing and infrastructure. However, much remains to be done as it relates to reducing transfer costs and creating an enabling environment to better leverage remittances for national sustainable growth. Further, the limited understanding of remittances as being financial does not take into account social remittances (Levitt 1998) such as skills and knowledge, and thus obscures the gendered realities of migration. There is thus the need for improved strategies and mechanisms that harness the range of resources that the diaspora possesses. In order to achieve this, there is a need to better understand the differential experiences of male and female migrants, their roles and contributions at all stages of the migration process.

Traditional scholarship on Caribbean migration has generally adopted a neo-classical framework which characterized migration as predominantly a male-dominated phenomenon, where those individuals with the ability to project themselves into the role of “Western man” headed off to the cities where the benefits of modern life could be attained (Lewis, cited in Mahler 1999). This view of the male migrant was buttressed by the dominant and influential ideology in Western industrialized societies of the nuclear family with the male breadwinner and the dependent female. It was assumed therefore that women mostly migrated as a “trailing wife” rather than migrating in their own rights. While it might have been the case that men dominated migration flows in the initial stages of emigration from the English-speaking Caribbean, by the 1960s women, motivated by a complex range of factors, began migrating independently, and even surpassed their male counterparts in some cases.

In 2017, women accounted for 48 per cent of international migrants, while female migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean for that same period outnumbered their male counterparts (United Nations 2017). Caribbean women, who rarely fit into the “trailing wife” mould, migrate independently, and often go first to set up a benchmark for the rest of the family to follow, a process known as family reunification (Chaney 1985). This paper focuses on female migrants from the English-speaking Caribbean because not only are they dominating migratory flows, but they experience migration differently and their motivations and impact due to migration are under-researched in the Caribbean migration scholarship.

Female migrants facilitate the movement of other family members especially their dependents, while at the same time maintaining strong ties and links to households and communities in the countries of origin. This paper draws on the theory of love power migration by Baldwin and Mortley (2016) and argues that because Caribbean women's migration is based on a complex decision-making process incubated and determined by love power migration, there are even more reasons to maintain strong ties with multiple households and communities in the country of origin. These ties, nurtured by women's caring role, foster the creation of a transnational space linking multiple households, networks and diaspora communities. Female migrants are thus critical in the creation and reconstruction of networks and communities that benefit economic and social development. Baldwin and Mortley (2016) argue that when we view migration of Caribbean women within a love power framework, we get a more complete understanding of the motivations for migration, as well as the multiple roles and the range of opportunities that result from the agency and empowerment of these female migrants.

At a theoretical level, gender is a core organizing principle that underlies migration and its related processes, such as the adaptation to the new country, continued contact with the country of origin and possible return. Policy makers and development planners, as they continue to find ways to better engage

their diasporas for inclusive development, need to better understand who makes up the diaspora and to give special focus to female migrants who play a critical role in constructing and maintaining diasporic communities, as well as linking communities across time and space. This paper draws on secondary migration data, as well as on primary data from Mortley's 2008 study of Caribbean nurse migration (updated 2017) and 2011 study of diaspora tourism. With special focus on female migrants from the English-speaking Caribbean, the paper aims to theorize contemporary migration towards a more comprehensive understanding of its impact, while examining the central role that female migrants play within today's context of globalization and transnationalism.

Caribbean women paving the way through love power migration

Caribbean women migrate as much as men and in some countries have surpassed their male counterparts. For the US, which is the top destination for Caribbean migrants, women accounted for 55 per cent in 2013 (Platanova and Geny 2017). The high emigration rates among Caribbean women are mainly driven by a growing demand for migrant women's labour in destination countries, especially in the care, health, service, and manufacturing sectors. Cynthia Enloe (2014) explains the process by which some manufacturing industries including garments, food processing, cigarettes, and textiles have been feminized. Factory managers in these industries prefer to hire women, because of gender stereotypes (they are compliant, hardworking and docile), that make women "ideal candidates" for manufacturing jobs.

The Caribbean also has one of the highest emigration rates of skilled and tertiary-educated individuals in the world (Platanova and Geny 2017), and women also account for a large percentage of those flows. A main factor accounting for this is the aggressive recruitment by private agencies (UN INSTRAW 2007), and the exodus of nurses from the English-speaking Caribbean (Mortley 2008). Other factors driving the increasing rates of female migration include more pronounced and visible inequalities in wealth and opportunities

within and between countries and the globalization of labour markets. Mortley in her study of nurse migration found that one of the attractions of Caribbean registered nurses for recruitment agencies in North America and the UK is the compatibilities in standards of training and language (Mortley 2017; 2008). Caribbean women are thus moving independently of men and paving the way for other family members.

Baldwin and Mortley (2016) argue that for many Caribbean women, migration is an extension and expression of their love and care, as well as an exercise of their power. Caribbean women have been socialized to care for their families, including children and other dependents in a variety of ways. Under the plantation system, the “Westernized nuclear family” was aspired to, but was hardly ever realized for slaves (Patterson 1967). Men lived separately and were stripped of their “provider role” and women bore the responsibility of caring for children, the sick, elderly and disabled. Smith (1962) argues that slavery involved the fragmentation of elementary families and encouraged alternative forms of union, which were neither obligatory nor stable. Further, because of the precariousness of family life, women were forced to find creative ways of protecting those in their care and ensuring the survival of loved ones. These strategies for care and family survival continued in the post-slavery period since in many ways, the culture of the plantation system persisted, despite new legal and economic arrangements. Hall (2001) argues that it is the culture, ideologies and pressures of the Caribbean that have prepared women to utilize methods to survive and transcend the creolized space. He goes on to say that the process of migration must thus be understood within that context which makes it a wholly Caribbean act. Bénitez-Rojo (1996) argues too, that the Caribbean flows outward past the limits of its own sea with a vengeance. His statement is important here, signifying that the very decision and act of migrating is an act of Caribbeanness, because to be Caribbean is to be globally resourceful and unbound. In this way, migrating women's sense of themselves could be theorized as fundamentally tied to the Caribbean region in a way that also transcends the region and connects it to the diaspora.

Love power migration developed by Baldwin and Mortley draws on Anna Jonasdottir's theory of political sexuality (2009 and 1994) and Eudine Barriteau's theorizing of Caribbean gender systems (2004). Understanding love power as crucial to the way women interact in their relationships with men and how love power results in women taking on more of the care work in these relationships, has several implications for understanding their migration. A woman's migration decision should not be reduced solely to economic necessity. The decision-making process and actual movement are more complex for women. A woman who is in a relationship and/or has a family and who decides to migrate may do so not only because of the politics of labour and the push/ pull of gaining a measure of economic power/reward but also due to the politics of love and the push/pull of creating or sustaining love, and the power this has to drive a person to act in creative, even though alienating ways.

Love power migration presents a different view of migration, moving away from a focus on men or women only, to a more nuanced approach to gender identities that recognize intersectionalities between and among male and female migrants. This new theorizing thus demonstrates how the love incubated in the social and cultural context of Caribbean gender relations can be the underlying motivation for the migration of women, and how this decision can be simultaneously empowering and oppressive/alienating not only for them but for their families as well. This more robust view of migration also frames the discourse in such a way that it no longer solely focuses on the economic or political nature of migration as the motive and the reward. Rather, it shifts our lens of understanding to women's migration as a manifestation of love and as a method used to care for themselves and those that they love. According to Barriteau (2004) women, in assuming responsibility for those that they love and care for, are motivated to explore economic survival strategies in times of economic crisis when existing state welfare allocations are cut. Furthermore, to do so, they are more likely than men to use money designated for their personal spending to boost collective expenditure on food and family items.

Caribbean women thus exercise agency and power through migration for the betterment of themselves and their families even when the move is a difficult and alienating one. Mortley (2008), in researching Caribbean nurses in the UK and later in the US, found that these professional women, in spite of overwork and feelings of alienation, remained optimistic about the positive contributions they were able to make to their families and countries of origin. Feelings of “missing home” and alienation were tempered by a sense of accomplishment and self-actualization. While the improvement in financial status was often mentioned, these nurses also celebrated the professional development and empowerment that they experienced due to migration and working in healthcare systems that valued their work and provided greater opportunities for them. Many spoke excitedly about returning home to visit and the various contributions that they were able to make to health institutions back home.

Migration, gender and sustainable development

The traditional scholarship on Caribbean migration has generally viewed the phenomenon as having a destabilizing effect on Caribbean families, communities and economies through discussions on brain drain (Mishra 2006; IMF 2006), escapism, broken families and the “barrel children” phenomenon (Crawford-Brown 1994). Such theorizing often presented a bleak picture of migration and ignored the attachment that Caribbean migrants maintain with their home communities, as well as their agency and creativity in managing the migration process. The global economy and labour markets have changed tremendously and migrants today operate within a transnational space facilitated by technological advancements, ease of travel and greater connectivity among geographical locations (Mortley 2008; Thomas-Hope 1999). The discourse has also changed from viewing migration as a loss to countries of origin to focusing also on benefits in the form of remittances, social capital, investment opportunities, knowledge and technology transfers. Minto-Coy’s 2009 study of the role of diasporas in the internationalization of business presents a dynamic view of the diaspora as active and purposive transnational agents.

As stated earlier, the new global agenda for development speaks to migration and the rights of female migrants as cross cutting issues. Goal 8 on growth and decent work, Goal 10 on reducing inequalities, Goal 16 on peaceful and inclusive societies and access to justice for all, and Goal 17 on global partnership on sustainable development are all relevant to this discussion. Migration is a human right and has become a critical feature of modern day society. The goals therefore show the importance of movement to achieving decent work, better opportunities and greater parity among various communities of people. They also for the first time point to opportunities for governments and other stakeholders to demonstrate their commitment to achieving gender equality in all of its dimensions. This can be achieved by addressing the challenges faced by women, including female migrants, to effectively exercise and enjoy their human rights and realize their full potential.

Caribbean migration is no longer a unilateral, one-time movement. The circular flows of people, goods, knowledge and skills are well documented (Mortley 2011; Thomas-Hope 1999, 1985) and Caribbean women are at the vanguard of these flows (Ho 1993). In rethinking Caribbean migration with a gendered and transnational lens not only do we begin to appreciate the benefits that can result, but we begin to better appreciate women's roles in giving form and content to these circular flows. Through migration, women's increased economic participation and empowerment enable them to have control over their lives, provide for their families, lessen their vulnerability, and exert influence in society. The benefits from women's economic participation and empowerment thus extend beyond the personal and impact the overall national development process and outcomes.

Although Caribbean women have outperformed men at all levels of the education system (Reddock 2004; Chevannes 1999), they still have a long way to go in achieving equality in employment rates, pay and formal leadership. The World Economic Forum (2017) Global Gender Gap Report highlights that even though qualified women are coming out of the education system, many

industries are failing to hire, retain and promote them, losing out on a wealth of capacity. These gender inequalities in economic participation, coupled with the fact that women have historically played a leading role in providing and caring for their families, lead them to find creative ways to self-improvement and enhanced economic stability and security (Reddock 2004). For example, many women participating in the Canadian Seasonal Agricultural Work Program (SAWP), including from Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, are single mothers who have few economic opportunities in their home country, and are the main breadwinners for their households and extended families. The wages they earn in Canada are significantly higher than what they could make in the few income-generating activities available to women in their country, such as petty commerce, domestic labour or work in export processing zones (Grez 2011). Migration has been one of the main ways in which Caribbean women exercise their agency and power (Hall 2001) for greater security and equality. Not only are women migrating to improve themselves, but also to set a benchmark for their children and families (Mortley 2008).

On the negative side, there is a tendency to overlook the costs of migration for women and their families. Caribbean female migrant workers also face gender-specific risks and vulnerabilities while abroad. Their work can be characterized by gender stereotypes and gendered expectations, and thus undervalued in comparison to migrant men. Migrant workers, particularly women working in informal sectors or jobs or other precarious employment (e.g. low-skilled jobs, temporary or agency contracts) face high risks of unemployment, and typically have limited access to social protection, unemployment insurance in particular (Hennebry 2014). This too is important for development in the country of origin, as during periods of unemployment, remittances decrease or are less regular causing financial strain and other stresses for families and households who depend of them.

The plantation system has indeed created a culture of resilience and creativity among Caribbean women in overcoming economic and social hardships.

Through migration and the reconstruction of networks and diasporic communities, women exercise deliberateness, agency and power within a transnational space. While maintaining multiple households and forging new links and networks, these female migrants are reconstituting gender relations, gender dynamics and institutional arrangements. They do so within alienating, discriminatory and oppressive spaces. An expression of this is Paule Marshall's fictional representation of the Barbadian immigrant women of her mother's generation. Her novelistic representation of the Barbadian immigrant community reflects the central role that women played in the production of Caribbean identity in the US. For these immigrants from Barbados, language was therapy for the tribulations they endured as invisible citizens of a new land— invisible because black, female, and foreign.

Women thus represent a valuable resource, fostering strong ties between and among communities. Mortley's 2011 study of diaspora tourism found that the knowledge of, and attachment that second and third generation Jamaicans in the UK had with Jamaica stemmed from stories and experiences passed down from their mothers and grandmothers. Their love and heritage ties with the Caribbean also translated into a deep passion to contribute to social and cultural development in Jamaica, both individually and collectively, through their churches, schools, community groups and associations. While these attachments stem from personal and kinship relations, they have the potential to translate into mobilization, activism and concrete investments for the Caribbean.

If governments' new agenda for sustainable development is to truly be inclusive and foster more access, opportunities and global partnerships, then diasporic communities must be included in a meaningful way in development plans for social transformation and growth. The new gender dynamics which empower migrant women and give them increased access and opportunities must be factored in. Similarly, gendered realities that might disempower and discriminate against women, thus creating challenges for them, must also be given attention.

This can be achieved through a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the link between migration, gender and inclusive growth. The voices and experiences of female migrants, who are at the vanguard of diaspora communities, must be central to advocacy and new policies towards engaging diasporas.

The diaspora: More than dollars and cents

According to Minto-Coy (2016), while increasing light is being shed on the role of diasporas and migrants as purposive transnational agents who help to create businesses in their adopted countries, the discourse largely ignores the role that the diaspora plays in growing and internationalizing businesses in their countries of origin. Caribbean migrants are far from unwitting pawns or passive sojourners in the migration process. Rather, they are hardworking, skilled, professional, politically aware and resourceful persons who not only send back remittances to multiple households, but who contribute to cross border partnerships, heritage and diaspora tourism, trade and investment opportunities. Among Jamaican female migrants living in the US (who emigrated after the age of 22), 50 per cent have at least a college education. This is double the attainment rate in Jamaica, where only one-quarter of women have a college education (Beaton et al. 2017). Further, data reveals that nearly one-third of all women with at least a college education in Jamaica have emigrated, compared to about 13 per cent of those with high school education or less. These patterns reflect the significant numbers of Jamaican nurses and healthcare practitioners who migrate (Beaton et al. 2017). As a skilled and professional group, the diaspora even in the face of alienating and discriminatory circumstances, has built new relationships, vibrant networks and in some cases their own businesses. The contributions of Caribbean nurses' associations to health care (Mortley 2011 and 2008) and Caribbean Alumni Associations (Roberts 2010) to education systems in the Caribbean are well documented.

The professional successes of Caribbean women in the diaspora and the various ways that their achievements have built bridges for other Caribbean people

over time must be recognized and harnessed. Some notable cases include nurses such as Mary Seivwright and Hermi Hewitt, who as return nurse migrants contributed to health and health education through knowledge building and skills transfers. As an International Food Ambassador, Chef Nina Compton, who owns one of the top restaurants in New Orleans today, has put her home country St. Lucia on the map of culinary excellence. Rihanna, Barbadian musical/fashion icon and International Cultural Ambassador to her country, has contributed to Barbados' tourism product through her music, activism and now Fenty Beauty Makeup business. These Caribbean women represent success stories that are well known. They also represent cultural and social capital that contributes to various aspects of Caribbean economies either through trading partnerships, direct foreign investments or the tourism product.

Through their own businesses, their associations and networks it is possible for the Caribbean diaspora to remain connected, engaged and to participate in various aspects of development. Rapid changes in the global economy and the diffusion of space-time compressing technologies have intensified exchanges between migrants and their home of origin, so that persons can participate and contribute while living and working abroad. Research on remittances has focused overwhelmingly on economic development and investment, while the transfer of norms, ideas, skills and other assets occupy a subsidiary role. According to Hennebry et al. (2017), emerging literature has indicated that financial remittances, though undeniably important for stakeholders, should be understood as subordinate to social and cultural remittances, rather than vice-versa.

Women represent 58 per cent of remittances sent from the US to the Caribbean (Beaton et al. 2017). While remittances sent home by female migrants play a substantial role in ensuring sustainable livelihoods in recipient countries, their potential for broader development remains largely untapped. Much of these remittances in cash and kind go through informal channels due to high transfer costs and high duties in recipient countries. While the Caribbean diaspora has

the desire to contribute through targeted investments and other business opportunities, they confront a number of challenges including perceptions of security and stability, established systems necessary for attracting investment and a lack of confidence in government institutions in the Caribbean (Minto-Coy 2009). Diaspora financing also has the potential to play an increased role for development organizations. Some of the avenues for this include development finance institutions, impact investors, aid agencies looking for co-financing opportunities or nongovernmental organizations involved in international development projects. However proper management, well monitored institutional systems and an enabling environment need to be put in place if these contributions are to reduce poverty and influence growth and sustainable development for the Caribbean region.

Besides sending back money and barrels to family and friends, the diaspora maintains social, cultural and political ties with the home country either through return visits, donations of goods, knowledge or information exchange. The collective ideology of return of Caribbean migrants and potential for return foster these continued ties not just with immediate family, but also manifest in a deep interest in seeing home communities flourish. Women, by nature of their love, power and caring roles for family, kin and community, have more reason to maintain and invest in home country ties. Alumni and nursing associations predominantly led by women in the diaspora, contribute consistently to schools, hospitals and health care in their home communities (Mortley 2011). The business and personal networks that migrant women establish abroad have the potential to translate into tangible benefits through small business development, trading links and direct investments in Caribbean countries. Caribbean migrant women are leaders within civil society and advocacy groups that are resourceful and have political links and clout. This socio-political capital at the local level in host countries can translate into influencing policy actions that impact Caribbean immigrants and their families as well as institutions in countries of origin. Women in the diaspora are also ambassadors who market their home countries and the region, thus contributing to increased tourism. This in turn leads to direct job

creation, spin-offs into the construction, hotel industry, transport, entertainment, insurance, banking sectors and others.

Leveraging female migrants and diaspora for development

Migration can have both positive and negative impacts on women. In terms of positive impacts, women gain higher income, assets and resources, self-esteem and decision-making power through migration. On the negative side, they also stand to experience further disempowerment and increased vulnerability and multiple forms of discrimination including exploitation, deskilling, and stigmatization. IOM's 2015 study found that government policies, which aim to support women in the attainment of economic goals, are crucial to women's empowerment and to national development. These policies can be extended to migrant women and women in the diaspora, who are already achieving so much through their own volition and without government assistance. At the same time, policies should also include social protection policies that cover informal and undocumented female migrants, so that these women are not further marginalized with increased vulnerabilities.

The first step in leveraging the resources of the diaspora is identification through a comprehensive profile of persons. This mapping of Caribbean diaspora should include disaggregation of data not only by sex but also by other factors such as age, educational level and occupational grouping. The IOM's Caribbean Migration Consultations (CMC) launched in 2016 represent a platform for Caribbean governments and stakeholders to share information and best practice on common migration issues. One of the CMCs top three areas of cooperation includes data collection, management and sharing towards the analysis of migration issues. CMC has held a series of workshops in the region towards this end. This forum is important for a targeted migration dialogue policy process promoting migration partnerships among sending and host countries. The data mapping is critical for raising awareness about the diaspora,

identification, resource allocation and also to provide evidence for policy design and better governance around migration and development.

Governments also need vital information on the locations and length of stay of their diasporas for more targeted engagement and for forging trade and investment links with these communities. The experiences and specific challenges that women face within diaspora communities should be an important aspect of this analysis. For instance, it is not sufficient to merely track the amount of remittances they send back, but the differential sending patterns between males and females, channels used and challenges that women encounter help to shape better policies for national development. The gender dynamics of remittance processes reveal a number of gender differentiating factors between women migrants and men migrants, such as: ease of access to financial institutions, sector of work, working hours, financial inclusion and literacy, among other factors (Hennebry et al. 2017). The promotion of sound migration data management is thus important not only for those who wish to contribute while living abroad, but also in social and economic reintegration policies for migrants returning home.

While several lessons can be learned from countries that have successfully leveraged the resources and capital of their diasporas, no one model fits all. The government of the Philippines, for example, pursues a strategy of large-scale contract labour deployment overseas to reduce unemployment and maintain a constant stream of remittances. India and China, by contrast, have in recent years given priority to encouraging diaspora entrepreneurs and highly skilled professionals to develop activities in their countries of origin. Caribbean policy makers thus need to engage their diaspora through ongoing discussions and consultations. These can be facilitated through diaspora conferences and forums organized through Caribbean embassies and consulates. Ongoing discussions result in streamlining diaspora needs to development goals of the country of origin. Development plans and policy within the framework of the SDGs for access to justice for all, inclusive societies and global partnerships

cannot be designed within a vacuum. They must be based on engaging the financial, intellectual and social capital of the diaspora from the outset. They must be designed based on real experiences, circumstances and positionality of Caribbean migrants. Female migrants play a triple role – reproductive/care, productive and community roles – which represent a critical conduit to linking community needs and priorities with broader development plans and actions.

Governments deal with their diasporas through a combination of both direct measures including projects, and direct financing, as well as indirect measures such as voting rights, property rights, improved infrastructure and the creation of a favourable investment climate. The Caribbean diaspora has indicated that they want more than just voting rights, they want to have a voice in governance and policy. The granting of dual citizenship can be one of the most significant measures, as it symbolizes Governments' commitment and the diasporas' double belonging, which facilitates investments in home countries. Caribbean migrants return home for various reasons including short visits (diaspora tourism), business meetings (business tourism), for health and wellness (medical tourism). These sectors can be developed into lucrative industries through niche marketing and employing a global value chain framework for development (Mortley, Jarvis and George 2014).

Whether they return for short visits or maintain a desire to return, the Caribbean diaspora maintains its collective identity and heritage, and also remains connected with their country of origin. This connection and Caribbeanness is passed down to second and third generation diaspora and buttressed by women through language, culture, love and power. While migration can be alienating and oppressive for Caribbean women, it also provides a range of opportunities for self-advancement and empowerment. The resourcefulness, agency and empowerment of women who play a vital role in the diaspora need to be factored into discourse as well as development planning and policy for more inclusive growth and transformation. Caribbean policy makers thus need to focus on removing barriers to women's economic participation not only

locally but also within the global labour market, as well as creating an enabling environment that will facilitate the circular flows of migrants, economic and social capital that come from migratory flows and cross border networks.

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Gendered, Post-diasporic Mobilities and the Politics of Blackness in Zadie Smith's *Swing Time* (2016)

[Suzanne Scafe](#)

Visiting Professor
School of Arts and Creative Industries
London South Bank University, UK

Abstract: Zadie Smith's novel *Swing Time* (2016) traverses the geographies and temporalities of the Black Atlantic, unsettling conventional definitions of a black African diaspora, and restlessly interrogating easy gestures of identification and belonging. In my analysis of Smith's text, I argue that these interconnected spaces and the characters' uneasy and shifting identities are representative of post-diasporic communities and subjectivities. The novel's representations of female friendships, mother-daughter relationships, and professional relationships between women, however, demonstrate that experiences of diaspora/post-diaspora are complicated by issues of gender. Forms of black dance and African diasporic music represent the novel's concerns with mobility and stillness; dance is used by its young female characters as a "diasporic resource" (Nassy Brown 2005, 42), a means of negotiating and contesting existing structures of gender, class and culture.

Keywords: Zadie Smith, *Swing Time*, post-diaspora, dance, mobility, race, gender

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The title of the novel *Swing Time* (2016) is taken from a 1936 Hollywood musical of the same name, featuring Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. In the course of the movie, Astaire dances and sings the number “Bojangles of Harlem” in blackface as a tribute, it has been suggested, to Bill “Bojangles” Robinson (Hill 2012). The novel also includes important references to Robinson and Astaire's little-known female contemporary, the dancer Jeni Le Gon, whose presence in the narrative illustrates ways in which dance, as a form of cultural production and expression, continues to reflect and reproduce racial and gendered inequalities. As the title suggests, the narrative's use of dance as the novel's dominant motif and its numerous references to swing era musicals, to dancers and dancing, present a reconsideration of how, in the context of contemporary Britain, racial, cultural and gendered identities are structured and reconstructed across transnational contexts. Black performances of popular dance forms are represented in the novel as a “diasporic resource” (Nassy Brown 2005, 42). They are used by its young female protagonists to counter the challenges of a racist, classist society. Representations of black dance forms are also used to reveal the asymmetrical power relations that structure its protagonists' coming of age. While the novel's locations and its references to various forms of cultural production and consumer commodities are presented in specific realist detail, its style, structure and the register of its first person narrator, reflect contemporary preoccupations with time-space compression and with the ways in which time and space are refracted by diverse technologies. Zadie Smith's novel traverses the geographies and temporalities of the Black Atlantic, unsettling conventional definitions of a black African diaspora, and restlessly interrogating easy gestures of identification and belonging. In its representations of mother-daughter relationships and female friendships, the narrative demonstrates that the experience of diaspora is complicated by issues of gender. Characters in the novel are both compelled by and resistant to the home/hostland paradigm that discourses of diaspora construct: with its focus on mobility, border and boundary-crossing, and mixing the narrative suggests the need for a “new homing sensibility” (Zhang in Rollins 2010, 232). The uneven, dislocated, but also felicitous and unexpected cultural connections that are the novel's focus, create intra and international communities, that in their shifting formations and

identifications, can be defined as post-diasporic, a term used in this essay to privilege aspects of diaspora theory's open-endedness and ambiguity (Rollins 2010). Post-diaspora does not signal a rejection of concepts of diaspora, rather the "post" represents another way of thinking about diaspora in an era of increased globalization (Laguerre 2017).

Diaspora, (Post-) diaspora

In his essay on the Canadian poet Fred Wah, Jonathan Rollins (2010) argues that Wah's repeated question, "What am I?" should be interpreted as a "statement of identity" (239), as an expression both of his plural, multiply-hyphenated identity and his unfixed, open-ended relation to his diasporic location, Canada. Such an identity situates Wah and his work in a post-diasporic space. As Rollins argues, the term "post-diaspora" moves discussions about place, time, belonging, and displacement into a conceptual space that is "beyond diaspora" (246) and better reflects "newly emerging forms of identity on a local and global stage" (247). Making a similar point, but focusing his more sustained theoretical argument on issues of citizenship and statehood, Michel S. Laguerre argues that "Postdiaspora identity develops and is made possible through the acquisition of full citizenship rights" in the homeland and hostland: it is to "become cosmopolitan", rather than to be attached to a single, identity-defining nation state (3). It is an identity, philosophical world-view or "condition" made necessary by the transformation of the global landscape by emigration and the remaking of nation states into what Laguerre defines as "cosmonational states" (161-3). In Laguerre's work, a concept of "postdiaspora" opposes what he identifies as the negative connotations of diaspora, which consolidate diasporic individuals into a "subordinate relationship to a mainstream group" (14) and which categorise and rank diasporic identities, thus reinforcing racialized structures of inequality. Rollins and Laguerre's use of the term post-diaspora/postdiaspora attempts to address concerns about diaspora's insufficiency when applied to the contemporary transnational moment. It is a concern that other theorists of diaspora have shared. Khachig Tölölyan, for

example, laments that the term diaspora, its “very multiplicity”, has brought with it the danger of becoming “a promiscuously capacious category that is taken to include all the adjacent phenomena to which it is linked but from which it actually differs” (Tölölyan 1996, 8). Despite this later position, he inaugurated the journal *Diaspora* in 1991 with an affirmation of the potential for concepts of diaspora to describe our contemporary, globalized world, arguing that “diasporas are the exemplary communities of the transnational moment” (Tölölyan 1991, 5). Diasporas, he argued, reflect an increasingly deterritorialized world “whose varying intersections in real estate constitute every ‘place’ as a heterogeneous and disequibrated site of production, appropriation and consumption, of negotiated identity and affect” (6). Rather than expressing a contradiction, however, Tölölyan’s attempts to reconfigure concepts of diaspora reflect the urgent need to theorise and narrate how increased migration and the creation of “cosmonational states” differently construct individuals, and shape cultural practices and cultural transmission in the contemporary transnational moment.

My use of the term post-diaspora in this essay owes much to the work of the theorists cited above whose use of concepts of diaspora/post-diaspora address the speed at which migratory flows in the contemporary period are transforming identities, cultures and concepts of statehood at a national and local level. Although Smith’s two young female protagonists are what is popularly termed in Britain “mixed race”, and both have a Jamaican and white British parent, I am resisting using post-diaspora as a way of situating an individual’s experience of either mixedness or multiple ethnic identities. Rather I am using the term to theorise the unevenness of African diasporic affiliations and the asymmetrical relations of power within which diaspora’s resources are produced and consumed, and to examine the significance of the narrative’s representations of multiply diasporic spaces. Post-diaspora in the context of this essay is also used in a specifically political sense to describe the character of the mother and her black internationalist sensibilities and political practice. Her politics, I argue, specifically reflect the feminist praxis of black British feminist activists organising in the later decades of the twentieth-century. Theirs was a political identity with

roots in a version of Pan-Africanism articulated by Caribbean political theorists and activists such as George Padmore and Walter Rodney who saw "their struggles as not only involving black people everywhere but also as being organically related to Third World struggles generally and to the worldwide struggle of proletariat and peasantry regardless of race'" (Drake in Rushdy 2015, 293). I am suggesting that the politics of post-diaspora, as expressed by the mother's black British feminist praxis, reflects a dialectic between the transnational black social movements of the past and the contemporary present of the narrative (Lee 2009). Although resistant to her mother's black internationalist politics and, when younger, defiantly claiming a "half-caste" identity (37), the daughter's self-positioning as a young adult and her social and cultural affiliations suggest that she identifies as black, rather than mixed race. As the citations above suggest, however, emerging discourses opposing the inequalities inherent in concepts of diaspora, which have settled on the more emancipatory meanings of post-diaspora (Laguerre 2017), have omitted to include a consideration of the gender inequalities that persist in concepts of diaspora and post-diaspora. By focusing on the intergenerational relationships between the novel's female characters, representations of female friendship, the coming of age of young black British girls and the marginalization of black women dancers both in the era of Swing and the novel's present, I use this analysis of Smith's *Swing Time* to address this omission.

In the scenes analysed below, set in the North West London community of the novel's protagonists, Smith creates a post-diasporic space formed of intersecting migrant communities who share the same local resources, but whose difference is not, in the narrative, based on culture or race, but on class. The unnamed first-person narrator, her white English father and black Jamaican mother, also unnamed, live in specific areas in Kilburn and Willesden, North West London. Although Louie, the father of the narrator's childhood friend Tracey, is also Jamaican and frequently escapes to Jamaica to avoid the consequences of his criminal activities, neither of the two families which are the narrative's focus are situated in a community that might be defined as having a shared diasporic identity. In fact, in several scenes used to characterise this area of

London, the community is represented as a complex interconnection of cultural sameness, difference and inequality. The narrator's primary school, for example, is contrasted with that of her best friend, Tracey: Tracey's is a single-sex school, where "almost all the girls were Indian or Pakistani, and wild ... A rough school, with a lot of fighting" (Smith 2016, 34). The narrator's mother's more aspirational choice is a school in Willesden, a middle-class area, where the pupils are "more mixed: half black, a quarter white, a quarter South Asian. Of the black half at least a third were 'half-caste', a minority nation within a nation, though the truth is it annoyed me to notice them" (34). Here Smith's narrator provocatively uses what is, and was during the period in which the novel was set, a derogatory term. As Nassy Brown (2005) argues in her study of "Black Liverpool", "half-caste" was a deficient identity, transformed to "black" during the ascendancy of Black Power in Britain (51) but also, as I suggest above, redefined in the context of a black internationalism that framed the ideological context of a significant strand of black/ "Black" community politics of the 1960s to the early 2000s, and used in the narrative to contextualise the politics of the narrator's mother.¹ "Half-caste" then, is the daughter's implied rebuke to her mother, as is the following:

I could not avoid seeing in front of me all the many kinds of children my mother had spent the summer trying to encourage me towards, girls with similar backgrounds but what my mother called 'broader horizons' ... Tasha, half Guyanese, half Tamil, whose father was a real Tamil Tiger, which impressed my mother mightily... There was a girl called Anoushka with a father from St. Lucia and a Russian mother whose uncle was, according to my mother, 'the most revolutionary poet in the Caribbean' (Smith 2016, 34).

Although the daughter continues to present her mother's political affiliations ironically, the narrative point of view echoes the mother's political perspective, emphasising throughout the ways in which race and class define and structure routes to social mobility in multiply diasporic or in post-diasporic spaces of intersected migrant communities. By indicating the mother's privileging of other characters' political exile, Smith introduces the idea of exile as a diasporic identity that is also marked by class and education. Exile, as the narrative suggests, brings with it a political consciousness and social understanding that

allows for the marginalized spaces assigned to the migrant to be transformed into emancipatory spaces of possibility, even privilege. As Edward Said argues, even though the two positions – of the exiled and the migrant – must be in dialogue, there is a great difference between the “optimistic mobility” of the exiled intellectual and the “massive dislocations, waste, misery, and horrors endured in our century’s migrations and mutilated lives” (Said 1994, 403). In its representations of difference and contestation within and between migrant communities, Smith’s novel creates a space within which to construct a dialogue between the intellectual as theoretician or activist, who distils then articulates “the predicaments that disfigure modernity – mass deportation, imprisonment, population transfer, collective dispossession, and forced immigrations” (403), and the subjects of that collective dispossession. This difference permeates the locations of the narrative. The theorizing perspective of the intellectual is explicitly expressed in most scenes involving the mother and is one that shapes the narrative, informing the point of view of the narrator, who admits to “channelling” (Smith 2016, 112) her mother when responding to scenes and experiences that need historical or sociological underpinning. Her mother, she narrates, was proud of not being like other mothers: at the same time, because she recognises a sameness of cultural and/or class origins, her mother maintains an affiliation with those from whom she has also separated as a result of educational success and class aspirations. As the narrator observes, “channelling” her mother, for many of “our mothers” who had become mothers not long after leaving school, Parents’ Evening was like detention: “It remained a place where they might be shamed. The difference was now they were grown and could not be forced to attend” or if they did, could “begin shouting at the teacher” (Smith 2016, 41). Her mother was affiliated, or sympathetic, but different: “I say ‘our mothers’, but of course mine was different: she had the anger but not the shame” (42).

The narrator observes a similar difference and distance between her mother and Louie. Having discovered that Louie, Tracey’s absent father and recidivist, had destroyed or at least had organised the burning down of the bike shed which the narrator’s mother had refurbished and transformed into a

“‘community meeting space’” (238), the mother is able to situate reports of Louie's inadequacies and transgressions in the context of a history of slavery: he becomes to her, a “sociological phenomenon or a political symptom or a historical example or simply a person raised in the same grinding rural poverty she'd known herself – a person whom she recognised ... *that* Louie my mother could deal with” (Smith 2016, 245).

The mother's and Louie's cultural sameness is represented in her migratory journey, which repeats a familiar pattern of migration from the Caribbean to Britain from the late 1950s and '60s to the mid-1970s. Having followed her own mother to England and having experienced a childhood that was full of emotional and physical violence, the narrator's mother chose to return to study as a mature student and young mother herself, passing her A Levels then working for a degree at a local polytechnic.² Her route to social mobility and intellectual achievement is enabled by her commitment to her own emancipation as a woman. While the narrator's father was relegated, reluctantly, to the domestic sphere, the mother embraced the “life of the mind”, rebutting his resentments by emphasising “the importance of having a revolutionary consciousness, or the relative insignificance of sexual love when placed beside the struggles of the people, or the legacy of slavery” (35). Her difference is therefore a reflection of her education but also of a black feminist praxis that frames her choices about her role as a wife and mother. She opposes the role of care that, as Eudine Barriteau argues in her work on Caribbean women's empowerment, continues to subjugate women including those who have access to considerable economic resources and social capital (Barriteau, 2012). The mother's achievements are possible because, the narrative suggests, she already understands the economic and psycho-social contexts and implications of the intimate and the sexual: for the mother, “The Personal is Political”. She does not perform the role of carer or caretaker in either of her subsequent relationships; not coincidentally, perhaps, she has claimed what Audre Lorde defines as “the erotic” – “a passion to live fully, to experience feeling” as a source of power within herself (Lorde in Barriteau 2012, 75). The political contexts of her personal choices and her social and intellectual

achievements thus mark her as different from other black diasporic subjects such as Louie, or her brother Lambert. This can be understood as a difference between the perspective of the intellectual (and exile) and the migrant, and is evidence of narrative's repeated preoccupation with the extent to which concepts of diaspora are strained by poverty, class and racism. The exile or diasporic intellectual might, in dialogue with the migrant, ameliorate or contextualise experiences of racism but her difference cannot but disarticulate concepts of diasporic unity.

The mother's black internationalist politics are characterised by what Michelle Stephens, locating her analysis in the black internationalism of the early twentieth-century, defines as a "resistance to Empire", characterised by the forms and traditions of a "diasporic blackness" that emerged after the first World War (104). In that moment, "black internationalism as a real political philosophy, radical epistemology, and institutional practice" emerged from an understanding of the material conditions of Empire. Such a theoretical understanding created a context for black solidarities across nations: "black subjects found themselves asking deeper structural questions of capital and the political world around them, questions that would then lead them to an analysis of the very forces that produced the differences that divided them in the first place" (Stephens 2005, 104). These structural questions were given material significance as the colonial subject journeyed from the periphery to the centre, "a journey toward seeing and mapping the bigger picture within which you were articulated" (Stephens 2005, 107). Stephens's focus on radical black Caribbean intellectuals such as C.L.R James, however, omits important black internationalists such as Claudia Jones.³ Smith's representation of the mother inserts a consideration of gender into this representation of black internationalism. Through Smith's historically contextualised representation of the mother's politics, she places her in dialogue with the past, situating her in a political space that Christopher Lee defines as "postdiasporic", a contemporary political consciousness that is in dialogue with the past (Lee 2009, 144).

Her character can be further understood within a context of black British feminist activism that is now, in the second decade of the twenty-first-century, being recovered, archived and celebrated in local and national institutions in the UK. Testimonies from black feminist activists reveal a commitment to what has been termed “political blackness” or a black socialist internationalist politics shaped by their experience of a “diaspora of Empire within the nation” (Williams 1999). Like the mother’s activism, theirs was shaped both by the demands of specific, geographically located, multiply diasporic communities and an anti-colonial and anti-imperialist ideology. As interviewees in *Heart of the Race* (2018/1985) explain, theirs was a politics of affiliation, of shared histories, rather than of a corporeal or narrowly defined cultural identity:

Despite the differences in our histories and our culture, the racism in this society affects the Black community as a whole. Afro-Caribbean as well as Asian women are victims of deportations and Home Office surveillance tactics ... Asian youths as well as Afro-Caribbean youths are harassed and victimised by the police. During 1981, the most serious of all charges during the uprisings were made against Asian youths in Bradford” (Bryan, Dadzie and Scafe 2018, 171).

Interviewees who discuss their involvement in the Peace Movement for example, argue that for a black British feminist, the politics of peace necessitates an international context that takes into account the raced politics of global capital: “uranium mining in Namibia, the nuclear testing that’s been going on on the Aboriginal’s land” (175). Such internationalism brings together activists who identify differently in relation to nation and culture, but whose practice of interconnection and collectivity works to strengthen a liberationist politics (Ambikaipaker 2016), thus creating a multiply diasporic or post-diasporic space of political activism. Theirs is a way of organising that opposes the politics of nationalism and refuses narrow identitarian categories. In *Swing Time* such post-diasporic spaces are in part constructed around its focus on the mother’s activism: her regular attendance at Saturday demonstrations, her commitment to nuclear disarmament, her affiliation with the politics of the IRA and the Tamil Tigers, her opposition to the shrinking state.⁴

The politics of blackness: “Our People! Our People! I am a Duck! I am a duck! Quack and babble” (Smith 2016, 311)

The novel constructs its characters within the geographies of the Black Atlantic – London, New York, West Africa – locations that are used to demonstrate the ways in which black identities are shaped by the unevenness of global power relations. The use of these locations also allows for a reconsideration of how diasporic subjectivities are constructed in a world characterized by greater mobility, bringing into proximity and seeming reachability the “things”, experiences, people and relationships that not long ago would have seemed distant and unreachable, and problematizing the value of stillness. The speed of technology, the narrative suggests, heightens the characters’ experiences of inequality. The instability of forms and processes of racial and cultural identity are expressed in large part through representations of the conflicted relationship between the narrator and her mother. In her role as PA for a Madonna-like pop singer and dancer, the narrator travels to the Gambia, where her employer is building a school for girls, equipped with sophisticated educational technology. While there her employer also adopts a young child: “White woman saves Africa... Very old idea” (153), says the mother. The narrator’s adjunct position involves so much travel and at such speed, that she senses that she had passed her twenties “in a weird state of timelessness” (149). As her mother, now a Member of Parliament for the fictional constituency of “Brent West” and a thorn in the side of the government, observes: “People come from somewhere, they have roots – you’ve let this woman pull yours right out of the ground. You don’t live anywhere, you don’t have anything, you’re constantly on a plane” (155). This comment, juxtaposed with a scene at the father’s funeral during which the narrator reflects on the limited spaces offered to her as a child to negotiate her own mixedness, brings into sharp focus questions of home, belonging, racial and cultural identity. Smith’s representations of place as specific and material allow questions of difference in the construction of a black diasporic identity to be articulated. Although the mother roots her identity in Africa, used as a cultural signifier of resistance to white European dominance, her participation in Britain as a full citizen including her role as a Member of Parliament defines her, according to LaGuerre, as “post-diasporic”: her “sense of belonging is located

in one territory but distributed over many sites" (3). Through its representations of the accidental nature of cultural encounters, combined with the occasionally breezy, unselfconscious tone of the first-person narration, Smith's novel allows for a rethinking of the "the workings of 'race'" in an articulation of black diaspora that is "inherently *décalé*, or disjointed, by a host of factors" and cannot be "propped up ... into an artificially 'even' or 'balanced' state of 'racial' belonging" (Edwards 2003, 14).

All black diasporic identifications are, in this novel, provisional, uncertain, and contradictory. The scenes set in the Gambia intersect those in London or New York and are used to trouble unexamined assumptions of an African, home, origin, roots, or claims to what Saidiya Hartman (2008) refers to as a singular "we". Although Smith's narrator remembers having said, perhaps for her mother's benefit, that a visit to the "old slave forts that once held my ancestors" would have been a form of "'diaspora tourism'" (176), once in the Gambia, she feels the need to make that journey, describing it as a reconnection and search for origins. At other points during her extended visit to the Gambia, she refuses a collective, homogenizing notion of belonging: "I was not, for example, standing at this moment in a field with my extended tribe, with my fellow black women. Here there was no such category. There were only the Sere women, the Wolof, and the Mandika" (205), yet her mother's face is recognizable everywhere, and in a busy street scene a woman reminds her of "a Jamaican lady at Lord's, following a day's cricket" (165). Her relationship with Hawa reveals a similar unevenness: Hawa does not inhabit a pure, originary cultural space to which the narrator can return. Rather, Hawa is caught in a web of globalized consumerism to which she has little material access and, despite being "middle-class" (219), both her relative poverty and the traditional roles she occupies as a young Gambian woman function to separate her from the narrator. Like many young girls the narrator remembers from her London school days, Hawa has a determinedly optimistic, lighthearted view of life: African-American popular music is the soundtrack to the drudgery of her everyday village routine that includes cooking, cleaning, and teaching in an impoverished classroom. The narrator sees no connection between herself and "the small army of women" in

her compound and across the Gambia's rural landscape. Their work was a world away from hers: "Everywhere I looked women were working: mothering, digging, carrying, feeding, cleaning, dragging, scrubbing, building, fixing. I didn't see a man" (178-9).

While holding these complex, unsettled feelings about her African heritage and differences of gender identity, she visits the original slave trading posts and slavery museum, a scene of dusty desolation and failed commerce. The narrator reflects on her inability to feel the desired emotional connection to this site of diasporic origins. She realizes instead that this was yet another example of the exercise of power over the weak: "Power had preyed on weakness here: all kinds of power – local, racial, tribal, royal, national, global, economic ... But power does that everywhere ... Every tribe has their blood-soaked legacy: here was mine" (316). Mitigating against an experience of tragedy and blocking the narrator's ability to feel the pain of capture, incarceration and enslavement are the crowds of informal entrepreneurs, hoping to make a living from that past. For them, the traumatic slave past can be understood as one of diaspora's resources. In Jacqueline Nassy Brown's work, "diasporic resources" are forms of cultural production, people, places and ideologies that circulate around the African diaspora. Rather than referring simply to products, however, a concept of "diasporic resources" can serve as an analytical tool, used to identify the power asymmetries revealed in the ways in which these resources are appropriated and consumed. They are a means of "map[ping] diasporic space, helping to define its margins and centers, while also crucially determining who is allowed to go where, when, under what conditions and for what purposes" (41-2). In its representations of the repurposed slave ports as commemorative sites that are primarily a diasporic tourist location, and its characterization of African popular culture suffused by Caribbean or African-American cultural forms, I suggest that the narrative remaps black America as the economic and cultural centre on which the home, Africa, is dependent. As Sadiya Hartman observes, in contemporary West Africa, simulated commemoration represents a commercial opportunity underwritten by American and European multinational corporations. Shell Oil, USAID, the

Ghanaian Ministry of Tourism, encourage the promotion of diaspora tourism around a model of what Hartman refers to as the "McRoots tours to Gambia and Senegal", Ghana's equivalent of a "fried chicken franchise" (163).

Every town had an atrocity to promote – a mass grave, an auction block, a slave river, a massacre ... Few of the tour operators, docents, and guides put any stock in the potted history of the 'white man's barbarism' and the 'crimes against humanity' that they marketed to black tourists or believed the Atlantic trade had anything to do with them. They only hoped that slavery would help make them prosperous (163).

Africa's scattered descendants experience the economic dislocations and complex inequalities that were begun with the trade in slaves and are continued and repeated in the present. By exposing those inequalities of power, *Swing Time* refuses to construct diaspora as a replica state of kinship and belonging.

Hartman's extensive historical research serves to separate her from the African scholars with whom she travels on her second research visit to Ghana but her book ends with a spontaneous moment of connection through her participation in a scene of song and dance. Although Smith's narrator also reflects, as she watches the kankurang, "here is the joy I've been looking for all my life" (165), the narrative only rarely allows even such small moments of unproblematic connection. Rather, in its continued return to the raced inequalities and thwarted mobilities that have characterized black dance and other forms of black diasporic cultural production, inequalities exacerbated by mobile communication technologies and the technologies of travel, it repeatedly exposes what Hayes Edwards (2003) refers to as the prosthetics of diasporic unity. Discrepant juxtapositions are used to present provisional gestures of racial unity where, as with the scenes of Aimee's gay African-American minder in the Gambia, such moments of identification are destabilized by an unassimilable trace of difference used not simply to negate or undermine the integrity of the experience, but to create a dialogue between discrepant perspectives:

“Granger had loved it here ... despite the existential threat the visit had surely represented for him ... Where I saw deprivation, injustice, poverty, Granger saw simplicity, lack of materialism, communal beauty” (222). That love is represented in his exuberant participation in all forms of black dance, transnational forms of black music and what he experiences as a life with meaning, and is reciprocated – if not unconditionally – by the villagers.

Post-diasporic mobilities: Dance, Dancers and Dancing

During the narrator’s time at university, she embarks on an unhappy relationship with “a conscious young man called Rakim” (287) who “was repelled by the media that I was supposed to be studying – the minstrels and the dancing mummies ... even if my purpose was critique” (290). She continues:

Too stoned in company once, I made the mistake of trying to explain what I found beautiful about the origins of tap dancing – the Irish crew and the African slaves, beating out time with their feet on the wooden decks of those ships, exchanging steps, creating a hybrid form – but Rakim, also stoned and in a cruel mood ... said: *O massa, I’s so happy on this here slave ship I be dancing for joy* (Smith 2016, 290).

The narrator’s wistful misrepresentation of the origins of tap marks a key moment in the narrative’s use of dance as a diasporic resource in order to map the complex and uneven histories of American Hollywood musicals of the Swing era on to the lives of its protagonists in contemporary North West London. The narrative’s use of Kilburn as one of its main North West London sites provides a context in which the overlapping histories of American Irish and African dancers can be examined, and past and present collapsed. After leaving university, the narrator meets her childhood friend, Tracey, in a local pub that had once been described as “Irish”: while there Tracey reveals that she will be dancing in the chorus of a West End revival of *Guys and Dolls* (1955), “one of our favourite shows” (329). Kilburn’s Irish roots, and in particular its reputation for harbouring members of the IRA at the height of the “Troubles” in the mid-twentieth-century, are referred to several times in the novel. Kilburn’s contemporary Irish/African identity is more explicitly the focus of Smith’s novel *NW* (2012), which also centres

on the friendship between two girls as they grow into adulthood, one of Irish descent and another of African-Caribbean parents. Like *Swing Time*, *NW* examines the uneven interconnection between the two communities and the area's changing demographic. As Pauline, an Irish Protestant nurse in the novel *NW* and migrant from Ireland to Kilburn, reflects: "... and the Nigerians wily, owning those things in Kilburn that once were Irish, and five of the nurses on her own team being Nigerian where once they were Irish" (Smith 2012, 17). This complex, interwoven history of racial difference and discrimination repeats the history of tap as it emerged in the U.S and that history opens up a space within which to reflect on how discriminatory practices simultaneously mutate and remain the same.

As several recent dance historians have demonstrated, tap dancing emerged over a three century period of musical and social exchange, appropriation, exclusion, mixing, and borrowing between African slaves and their descendants and Irish indentured labourers in North America and the Caribbean (Dixon Gottschild 1996, 2003; Johnson 2003; Hill, 2010; Crawford 2014; Siebert 2015). Rakim's more knowing comments suggest that the emergence of tap dance is inextricably woven into North American traditions of minstrelsy where, in the early nineteenth-century most of the blackface minstrels performing a mixed version of the Irish jig and African *juba* or *gioube*, were Irish immigrants (Hill 2012). The white blackface minstrel was often selected to perform instead of the African American dancer, thus Fred Astaire's blackface imitation of or tribute to Bill 'Bojangles' Robinson in *Swing Time* stands as a metaphor for the ways in which, as Constance Hill demonstrates, the performance history of tap dance "inevitably takes on the history of race, racism, and race relations in America" (3). Robinson's erect pose, his careful precision were, according to Hill, carefully crafted to oppose the stereotype of the shuffling, shabbily dressed African-American jig dancer (66), or the loose body movements and exaggerated limb gestures that came to characterise American tap. As she notes, however, whereas his posture and iconic stair dance represent "Robinson's aspirations for ascendance", the stairs lead nowhere (66). It is both ironic and inevitable that his most famous roles were not ones where he starred

in his own right, but where, as in *The Little Colonel* (1935), he played the loyal Uncle Tom to a six-year old tap dancing Shirley Temple (Hill 2012, 121).

The novel's detailed description of Jeni Le Gon's dance in *Ali Baba Goes to Town*, containing an angular dance movement repeated decades later by Michael Jackson (Smith 2016, 190-192), reflects tap and contemporary black dance's indebtedness to Henry William Lane, the "proto tap dancer" credited with inspiring the Africanist postures that characterised black tap dancing during the Swing Era (Dixon Gottschild 2003, 111-112). The narrative's repeated references to Jeni Le Gon also illustrate the gendered dimension of black performance and the near impossibility of "ascendance" for black female performers. Tracey's career as a dancer is situated in the historical contexts of tap dance and movie making in the 1930s and '40s Swing Era but is specifically refracted through the dance biographies of Bojangles and Jeni Le Gon, the latter of whom becomes the two girls' childhood obsession. Le Gon was Robinson's first African American dance partner in *Hooray for Love* (1935) but was consistently overlooked for parts in big productions such as *Easter Parade* (1948) or *Broadway Melody* (1936). In the latter, despite being used to choreograph the lead female role, she was dropped from the cast (Hill 2010, 124-5). In the novel, the girls watch *Ali Baba Goes to Town* (1937), where Le Gon performs solo alongside a blackface Eddie Cantor and where, as a member of the chorus, she is dressed like the others in "loincloth and feathers, outlandish head-dresses" (Smith 2016, 191). In this film, as in many others, she was consigned, according to the cast list, to a "speciality spot", defined as such because it could be neatly excised from the plot when the movie was played in the American South (Hill 2012, 99).

Smith's narrator's imagining of both Tracey's father, a repeated offender and perhaps not a dancer at all, and Tracey herself as Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, reflects her deliberate reconfiguring and regendering of a problematic past and its repetitions in the present. Despite her mother's efforts to point her to dance's raced past, for her eleven-year self, her dream of the film *Stormy Weather*

(1943), featuring Cab Calloway and the Nicholas brothers, Fayard and Harold, performs a much needed counter-narrative: "In my dream we were all elegant and none of us knew pain ... None of our people ever swung by their necks from a tree, or found themselves suddenly thrown overboard, shackled, in dark water" (Smith 2016, 100). In contrast to the narrator's desire for an alternative reality with which to "shore" herself up against the injustices of the past (Smith 2016, 100), however, the novel's repeated references to historically resonant figures such as Le Gon, Astaire, Judy Garland, Bojangles among many others, perform its own time-space compression, demonstrating history's repetitions, and mapping progress as recursive rather than linear. As the novel demonstrates, dance can be read as a form of cultural knowledge; moreover, social and cultural contexts assist in the interpretation of dance. In other words, in its use of dance as a diasporic resource and dominant motif, the novel asks, "how does the movement mean" (Cresswell 2006, 59) and in turn, what does the dance aesthetic reveal about its socio-historical origins?

After an estrangement of several years, the narrator sees Tracey on stage when she performs in the chorus of a West End revival of the musical *Showboat*. In this scene, as throughout, the novel uncovers the contexts of black dance and interrogates its potential as a vehicle for social and geographical mobility and escape. Dance, in the novel, is freighted with the historical and cultural meanings of the black African body in the diaspora, objectified, strong, with an enormous capacity for labour but at the same time servile and passive (Thomas 1996). Tracey's role as one of the chorus, dancing in the infamous "In Dahomey" scene, constitutes her as the failure already predicted by the narrator's mother for whom dance was, for black girls, a means of entrapment in a long-term limbo, and a poor alternative to academic achievement. Whereas Tracey spent most of her time at dance school and in dance competitions, the narrator's weekends, "as [her] own middle passage approached", were spent accompanying her mother at political demonstrations: "I was told there was 'no time for dancing' or, in a variation, that 'this was not the time for dancing', as if the historical moment itself forbade it. I had 'responsibilities', they were tied to my 'intelligence'" (Smith 2016, 209). The narrator's decision to refuse the

mother's route to achievement, mobility and freedom, is presented through the image of the train, itself connected to the earlier metaphor of the middle passage:

And then there were all the outrageous historical cases I heard of at my mother's knee, tales of the furiously talented women ... who might have run faster than a speeding train, if they had been free to do so I didn't feel like travelling on their train, wrote a few words here and there, ignored the pages of maths and science, flagrantly failed (212).

The mother, and the narrator retrospectively, are situating their aspirations for movement in the context of the enforced stuckness of the chained and incarcerated slave: the train represents mobility as escape and the hard-won passage to freedom. The daughter's flagrant failure is her attempt to resist the entanglements of history.

In summarising recent trends in what has been termed "the now established mobilities turn" (Cresswell 2012, 645), cultural geographer Tim Cresswell argues for the need to see stillness or "stuckness" (645) as a corollary of mobility. Stillness, he argues, is everywhere, taking the form of waiting, a deferral or a kind of blockage. Now Tracee Le Roy, Tracey's role as one of the "Dahomey Dancers" in the musical production of *Showboat* mirrors Le Gon's role in the Hollywood Africa of *Ali Baba Goes to Town*, and is evidence of stuckness precisely as the mother defines it. The musical itself, as the narrative explains in some detail, is deeply problematic, though no less so than the musicals the girls watched over and over again. And, like many of the movies cited in the narrative, its history is deeply implicated in the politics of race and the raced and gendered contexts of the black body (Dekker 2013). Despite the self-conscious subversions of the Dahomey scene's original meanings in the production of *Showboat* described in the novel, her participation as a dancer in the chorus represents for Tracey, mobility without agency. As the narrator comments, its difficult performance history cannot be overwritten: "They saw that what they were watching was intended to be funny, ironic ... These folks weren't from Dahomey after all! They were good old Negroes, after all, straight from Avenue A, in New York City itself!"

(361). Despite the performance's postmodern inflections and attempted subversion of the racist depictions of Africa evident in the original script, its black dancers are still compliant performers, dancing to a white script.

Thinking of stillness only in relation to mobility, however, constructs stillness as a condition without value: as "stuckness", as a gesture of refusal, as a moral imperative against the rapid advance of consumerism or, as illustrated in the narrative's descriptions of the narrator's pop-star boss Aimee's meditation routines, as "stillness sanctioned by capital and compliant with the need to recharge and re-energize the body to respond to the demands of working life" (Bissell and Fuller 2011, 5). The novel's closing scene, which sees the narrator return to North West London after her mother's death and having lost her job with Aimee, seems to point to a way of viewing stillness that is not synonymous with being stuck. As she watches Tracey and her three children by three different fathers dancing on the small balcony of the same council flat in which she grew up, the narrator considers that this image of Tracey might represent not a return to failure but an alternative to frenetic, unproductive mobility. This might be Tracey just being. Here too, the narrator's watching stillness can be defined as "attunement or perception", a reflective moment that is "*without* investment; without allegiance and without trajectory" (Bissell and Fuller 2011, 6-7), a moment of unreadability: after so many hundreds of thousands of air miles, the narrator is, if only for a moment, brought back down to earth.

Mobile Technologies

Smith's last three novels are concerned with the ways in which technology and the speed of technological innovation make possible and transform our expectations and experiences of reading literary forms such as the novel. In her essay, "Two Directions for the Novel" (2009), Smith questions the value of literary realism, its relevance to contemporary society, and the mobilities within which we are almost all networked: "the ghost of the literary" she seems to suggest, has become a distraction, over-valued in and of itself. It has become self-serving, indulgent, "a nicely constructed sentence, rich in sound and syntax,

signifying (almost) nothing" (81). Such literary forms cannot, the essay argues, ask the right questions of the twenty-first century:

Do selves always seek their good, in the end? Are they never perverse?
Do they always want meaning? Do they sometimes want its opposite? ...
Do our childhoods often return to us in the form of coherent, lyrical
reveries ... Do the things of the world really come to us like this,
embroidered in the verbal fancy of times past? Is this really realism? (Smith
2009, 81)

These questions form the core of her previous novel, *NW* (2012), where the long passages used to mimic txt and Twitter messages, blog postings and messages to online dating sites interrupt an otherwise realist narrative and signal its anti-literary intentions. Moreover, the protagonist Keisha/Natalie's inexplicable unravelling in the novel's penultimate scenes, signify a self-conscious abdication of authorial control (Scafe 2015). While the narrative of *Swing Time* is not so frequently interrupted by the language of other technologies, there is an absence of literary framing, the nicely constructed sentence and embroidered verbal fancy. As the narrator observes, the earliest emails mirrored novelistic prose, or the prose of the literary letter but are now bare, functional, and often abbreviated; it is a style this novel reflects without completely abandoning its attachment to the literary. The mobile phone, almost a character in the novel, signifies the ways in which space, personal relationships, identities, individual and cultural, are shaped and transformed through mobile information technology. In a satirical gesture to readers and literary critics who still rely on libraries and physical archives for information, the narrator explains that her description of the cultural contexts of the Gambian kankurang dance was taken from information she had looked up on her mobile phone once she'd returned to New York, and later that she had "googled" LeGon's dance and personal history on her phone, during a car ride across the border of Luxembourg (427). The novel's own networked and remediated identity is evident in the internet postings that follow You Tube clips of Astaire dancing blackface in the movie *Swing Time*, where the first of sixteen comments is: "Anyone else here because of *Swing Time* by Zadie Smith?". In response to footage of Jeni Le Gon dancing in *Ali Baba Goes to Town*, the first of twenty-four comments is: "How many people came

here after reading Zadie Smith?" Discussions about the parodic status of Astaire's blackface, or the routine excision of scenes with black dancers are exchanged in subsequent replies.

Several scenes set in the Gambia repeat the narrative's concerns with the gendered contexts of mobility, technology and stuckness. Lamin's more successful trajectory and his achievement of freedom and independence through dance cast a shadow across Tracey's inability to achieve social mobility through her career as a dancer. Hawa's escape through marriage and a more pious performance of religious obedience is indicative of the ways in which gender shapes opportunities for freedom. Her brother Babu, in contrast, is able to return to the Gambia and immediately find a job with the Treasury: his achievements in North America have constructed him as an ideal returning diasporic subject (Mullings and Trotz 2013), in comparison to characters such as Hawa's father who, by leaving the "back way" and finding himself in Milan, exchanged his position as a university teacher for a job as a traffic warden. Once married to an Italian and therefore a legal resident, he sent for Hawa's brother, "but that was six years ago, and if Hawa was still waiting for her call she was far too proud to tell me" (220). The factual, unsentimental tone of the narration echoes Hawa's pragmatic acceptance of gender inequalities and thus her decision to leave the village via the culturally and socially sanctioned route of marriage.

Everywhere in Banjul, the narrator hears reggae, hip-hop, soca, high-life, "the whole glorious musical diaspora could be heard" (197) but at the same time that technology allows connectedness and the virtual experience of mobility, access to technology is economically contingent. As descriptions of Bachir, stuck in a run-down café with his fake American accent, and laptop possibly without internet connection demonstrate, communication technology can exacerbate the experience of displacement and estrangement, even when the subject is at home. And in fact, as Hawa explains, even as migration from West Africa to Europe and the US has increased, leaving villages emptied of fathers,

sons and husbands, technology in the form of highly securitized actual and virtual borders, has also increased its difficulties and the dangers of taking the “back way” (272-73).

Neither Africa nor the Caribbean is, in the novel, an easily available diasporic home; Africa neither presents itself as such nor, as the narrative demonstrates, can its characters experience it as such. The novel’s black diasporic characters seek connections, however transient or provisional, through moments of recognition that might be historically determined, culturally or racially defined, and economically contingent. These connections, as the novel suggests in its representations of dance histories and of music and dance as diasporic resources, are refracted by issues of gender. Intergenerational and transcultural female relationships are used to represent the narrative’s claim throughout that possibilities for freedom, mobility and achievement are complicated by cultural and gender roles and identities. The fact that the novel is routed around the geographies of the Black Atlantic suggests that its preoccupations can be mapped within discourses of black diasporic identification. However, it unsettles the very triangular connections it maps, indicating a desire to construct new subjects and places from which to speak. The novel reaches into a less clearly defined space, a post-diasporic space that reflects the complex liminalities of its fictive subjects who are both defined by and at a distance from diasporic communities.

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¹ I have used "black" in this essay to refer to characters of African descent. The descriptor "Black" was used by political activists and theorists in Britain from the 1960s to 2000 to refer to a politically defined identity. As Jenny Bourne argues, "...because Black, in the UK, had taken on a political meaning derived from its anti-colonial provenance, it attracted to its standard immigrants from the Indian sub-continent, Africans, Indo-Caribbeans" (Bourne, J. "When Black Was a Political Colour: a Guide to the Literature." In *Race and Class* 58:1 (2016): 122-130. The authors of *Heart of the Race: Black Women's Lives in Britain* (2018/1985) also use "Black" to emphasise the political meanings and contexts of race. Black is also, of course, frequently capitalised by contemporary academics, including those who oppose the use in British contexts of so-called "political Blackness" (see Andrews, K. "The Problem of Political Blackness: Lessons from the Black Supplementary School Movement" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 39:11 (2016): 2060-2078).

² In 1992, "Polytechnics" were designated Universities. This term makes the mother's trajectory time-specific.

³ Claudia Jones (1915-64) was a Trinidad-born black feminist activist. She was active in anti-racist, anti-imperialist organising in Britain during the 1950s and until her death in 1964. While in the US, she was a member of the Young Communist League, and worked with Amy Garvey, Paul Robeson.

⁴ See Gerlin Bean, *The Heart of the Race: Oral Histories of the Black Women's Movement*. London: Black Cultural Archives, 2009. Audible audio. Bean, a founder member of the Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent (OWAAD), Brixton Black Women's Groups and several community activist groups in South London, talks about anti-imperialist activism and describes going to Northern Ireland with other black feminists in solidarity with the 'Troops Out' movement.

See also Pragna Patel. *Sisterhood and After*. Interviewed by Rachel Cohen. London: British Library 2011. Audible audio. Pragna Patel speaks of going to mining communities in Yorkshire and Kent with the black feminist activist group Southall Black Sisters.

Stella Dadzie states that black feminist activists celebrate the connections between women of Caribbean and African descent. They recognise cultural differences between African-Caribbean, Caribbean and South Asian women but are committed to a common endeavour, grounded in anti-imperialist politics. Stella Dadzie *Sisterhood and After*. Interviewed by Rachel Cohen. London: British Library, 2011. Audible audio.



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“Reshaping Girlhood, Reimagining Womanhood”: The Female Child Protagonist and the Post-diasporic Condition in Jamaican Female-authored Children’s Literature

[Aisha T. Spencer](#)

Lecturer, Language and Literature Education
The School of Education
The University of the West Indies, Mona
Kingston, Jamaica, W.I

Abstract: The female child protagonist has always been a major figure in the work of several Jamaican female fiction writers. More recently, however, Jamaican female writers from across the diaspora have begun to reveal a new kind of poetics through the presentation of their female child protagonist and the situations they encounter. This paper will explore the use of an emerging post-diasporic poetics in the work of Jamaican Children's Literature author Diane Browne, which introduces fluid female identities constructed through the realities of globalisation and post-diasporic conditions. The female child protagonist represents a newly emerging female sensibility and consciousness, which enables readers to access both girlhood and womanhood through realities and perspectives tied to the migrant experience across different periods of time. Each protagonist portrays a self which exists beyond boundaries and outside of the dictates of the social ideals framing femaleness and the female migrant experience, embedded for so long in the Jamaican culture. Browne challenges both traditional and to some extent postmodern models of womanhood and female identity, through the way each of her female child protagonists are portrayed as they move through a post-diasporic process of navigation of both self and space in Browne's texts.

Key words: girlhood, womanhood, postdiasporic, Caribbean children's Literature, Diane Browne

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“I have come
Without papers
To tell you
I am me”
(from “Third World Girl”)

The journey of Caribbean people can never be characterized as static and linear. We have had a long history of moving across national borders and immersing ourselves in communities other than our own with the hope of gaining economic stability and social mobility. As Franklin W. Knight comments, “[m]igration has been fundamental in the Caribbean experience” (7). As a result, it has been common practice for us to navigate socially constructed realities often alien to our own identities and cultures. Each journey has caused us to constantly acquire new ways of accessing and adjusting to systems in ways that would open doors of possibility for ourselves and our families. Tied to migration is the factor of gender. Gender becomes deeply interwoven into the context of migration because of the large number of Caribbean women who have exited their local Caribbean spaces and entered foreign places with the hope of offering “support [to] their weakened households” (Crawford 2012, 323). The experience of Caribbean women who have sought to explore different avenues through which to provide for their children through migration has been well documented over the years. This reality has constantly situated motherhood as being intricately associated with the experience of migration for, as Charmaine Crawford asserts, “[w]orking-class African-Caribbean women play a central role in their families, as both providers and caretakers of children and of others, marking the interconnectedness of their productive and reproductive roles” (324).

It is important not to utilize the terms “migration” and “diaspora” synonymously for though one has led to another, migration, Meredith Gadsby reminds us, speaks of “the movement and dislocation, whether voluntary or involuntary, of peoples of African descent, from one place to another” (13). The term “diaspora” pulls much more into the equation. As Avtar Brah states in *Cartographies of Diaspora* (1996), “at the heart of the notion of diaspora is the image of a journey” (182). It is not, Brah explains, that every moment of casual travel is to be associated with the diasporic experience but rather that it is the historic framing of that journey that pulls into existence the concept of diaspora. The concept of diaspora can be complex and contradictory, but through the work of writers like Paul Gilroy, it is now being interrogated more fulsomely by Caribbean literary critics and historians. What tends to remain scant, however, is a representation of the emotional and mental dimensions of the immigrant existing in the diasporic condition.

Many Jamaican female writers have presented the psyche and experiences of the child protagonist as part of their own poetics in the exploration and reconstruction of Caribbean female identity and experience in Caribbean society. Diasporic explorations have been foregrounded in many of the short story collections written by Jamaican writers such as Olive Senior, Velma Pollard, Lorna Goodison, Alecia McKenzie, Curdella Forbes and Paulette Ramsay, to name a few. For decades, these writers have been inscribing the condition and experience of Caribbean women (and men) as they move away from the small, cuddling embrace of the homeland to inhabit foreign spaces which often complicate their identities, creating feelings of displacement and invoking a sense of anxiety. Many of these stories have featured the “foreign mother” whose relationship with her child is severed by the ocean between them but restored through the barrel or the letter that is excitedly received in the local space, especially because it has arrived as the main means of connection between parent and child. There is a way then, that diaspora has always been a felt, if not known, category.

The migrant experience is therefore not new to Caribbean literature but, without attempting to provide a historical account of migration in the Caribbean, it is noticeable that, as Brah documents, "there has been rapid increase in migrations across the globe since the 1980s" (33). This is due to varied realities: economic inequalities, the desire for better opportunities and political wars, among other factors. The socioeconomic and political shifts brought about through the constantly evolving presence of globalization have, in varied and multiple ways, transformed the experiences associated with diasporic realities. Already associated with notions of diaspora are such experiences as displacement, loss and the never-ending search for an identity or set of identities that will aptly reflect the Caribbean self and community. It is this never-ending search and the need to adapt to constantly shifting time periods and changes in societies across the globe, which has enabled the production of what Brah has termed "new diasporas". For Brah, our understanding of the diaspora needs to accommodate an account of "a homing desire which is not the same thing as [the] desire for a 'homeland'" (189). This homing desire shifts the gaze away from a longing to return to the homeland, to an acceptance of inhabiting geographical spaces away from the homeland, but at the same time being desirous of embracing and establishing in psychological and spiritual ways, a clear set of images and experiences of the Caribbean self, individually and collectively. Such an outlook eliminates notions of fixity and, according to Ngong Toh, "disregards absolutism" in its varied forms (54). Additionally, by moving away from focusing on the notion of the diaspora as a group of people yearning to return at some point to their homeland, this homing desire of which Brah speaks, seems to move us into an understanding of why the term "postdiaspora" has become important. As is usually the case with anything "post", postdiaspora as a concept contains the foundation seeds of the concept of diaspora but extends the boundaries to enable the inclusion of new responses to new realities and new ways of being, within a space that continues to transform and evolve.

The theoretical notion of postdiaspora follows the shifting patterns being introduced by the structures of nations and states as they evolve and begin to

create possibilities for immigrants who are no longer relegated, Michel Laguerre argues, to an “outsider status” (2). Laguerre explains that “[p]ostdiaspora is the latest phase in the evolution of the status of immigrants and their descendants” (17). To speak of the postdiasporic condition then, is to engage in discussion about a new experience for Caribbean immigrants as they are now able to acquire citizenship, which enables them to combine and embody both homeland and hostland identities and realities. The term postdiaspora can therefore be used to speak of the experience of those who inhabit spaces that are both away from the homeland physically and away from the feeling of home psychologically. It speaks of the formation of a community of people who have now begun to embrace notions of difference while at the same time charting a course of and for unity and togetherness, regardless of the “away” space they occupy. As it has been described by Ngong Toh, postdiaspora speaks to a mode of existence where Caribbeanness is celebrated and accepted, based on a system of the coexistence or merging of various cultures, races and classes, to promote progress amongst members of the group. Such a system would be used to enable the construction and/or reconstruction of what he states is a “discourse suitable for Caribbean people attempting to negotiate space in the global stage” (54).

These definitions of postdiaspora are significant because they enable a new way of reading Caribbean literary texts which continuously fuse together past, present and future realities as experienced or constructed not simply by the protagonist in the texts, but also those connected to the protagonist, who must also maneuver their way through the factors and processes resulting from both the act of migration and the consequent changes in their modes of existence. What has not received enough attention however, is the representation of girls and women who experience postdiasporic conditions in Caribbean children’s literature by female writers. Caribbean children’s literature tends to be marginally recognized for the power it contains to articulate the constantly shifting paradigms for children who have had to experience the region through the eyes of globalization, where the foreign space and the local space conflate in complex and ambiguous ways. The Caribbean children’s literature texts which

deal with this reality often highlight the journey of both the children and the adults as they struggle to understand and survive the diasporic conditions they encounter both in and outside of the foreign space.

In her short story "Girl", Jamaica Kincaid details the expectations of the process of growth from girlhood into womanhood and the painstaking ways in which this occurs. Though this story is not about migration, diaspora or postdiaspora, what we receive in this story, is a clear indication of the ways in which many Caribbean females are socialized in the home space based on patriarchal traditions and practices which relegated them to conditions of inferiority and oppression because of their identities and experiences. As females, they are constantly being subjected to and suffocated by dominant ideologies emerging out of colonial spaces. The point here is that even when outside of the foreign space, Caribbean women have been accustomed to having their bodies and psyche read and interpreted by outsiders for more than a century and have consequently been a part of a perpetual process of being misunderstood and stifled. They, therefore, have often needed to navigate between foreign impositions of identity and experience forced on them and their own natural states of existence based on the environment and culture of their own "lived reality" in their homeland (Forbes, 27).

The child character has always been an important one in Caribbean literature because he/she was commonly used in literary production to symbolize the growth of the newly independent nation at the end of the colonial period. Caribbean female authors continue to use the child character to play significant roles in their stories but many of these examples are housed within texts that are written for the adolescent/young adult reader. Very few critics have examined the experience of the child negotiating the diasporic and postdiasporic spaces she occupies within children's literature texts.

The focus of this article is an exploration of the journey of the female child and the female adults with whom she engages in their varied encounters of

postdiaspora realities both in and outside the Caribbean. I examine these representations in two Caribbean children's literature texts written by Diane Browne: the short story collection *Every Little Thing will be Alright* and the chapter book *Island Princess in Brooklyn*. My critical attention is predominantly on the world of the female child protagonists explored by Browne and all they reveal to us about the internal and external conditions of postdiaspora and the possibilities this space and experience offer in helping to reconstruct identity and experience for the Caribbean female. Browne provides new ways of reading the experience of the female child in the twenty-first century through a seemingly calculated presentation of the female consciousness of the child protagonist and through her, the female adults participating in her socialization. This consciousness displays the complexity involved in the navigation of the self as it participates in postdiasporic realities. It highlights the struggle of mothers and daughters, mothers and grandmothers, granddaughters and grandmothers, mothers and aunts and nieces and aunts in the postdiasporic space as they all attempt to retain their own identities and sense of self-worth in spaces which often reject and devalue both these characteristics and the ways in which the female must participate to enable progress and growth at various stages of her life. Significant representation is made of the grandmother figure so commonly present in the historical accounts of the migrant experiences of Caribbean women. Browne allows an exploration of the emotional and mental challenges experienced by different generations of females as all attempt to remain true to themselves and at the same time facilitate the necessary processes that will enable a better life for all.

By presenting the female child in her stories, Browne creates two significant effects. Firstly, she reshapes the way the Jamaican female child sees herself in a world that has become dominated by globalization and as a result has characterized her (her appearance, behaviour, cognitive processes) based on "outside", "foreign" standards, rather than those more naturally suited to her based on her cultural traditions, beliefs and realities. Secondly, Browne portrays the way the Jamaican woman has slowly reconstructed herself based on the circumstances within which she has had to exist. By providing an intimate display

of the female child's consciousness through her narratives, she reveals the female psyche as it negotiates this diasporic/postdiasporic space and displays the ways in which the Jamaican adult world surrounding the child plays a key role in imposing continued classist, racist and sexist attitudes upon the child, through the traditional perceptions being used by adults to guide the child. By striving to become other than "other", and to be deeply Afrocentric and against all things European, some of Browne's stories demonstrate the ways in which the very same women, affected by prejudice and inequality in the diaspora/postdiaspora, perpetuate age-old practices which are misunderstood and ultimately rejected. What becomes more significant however, is the way healing is enabled through the willingness of the child female protagonist to position herself at a midpoint which enables her to fuse together generations of experiences and emotions in order to chart a new course forward.

It is customary for Caribbean literature to provide models which counter or offer an alternative to Western models, but it is noteworthy that this kind of example is also present in Caribbean children's literature. It is the structure of Browne's stories and the way she utilizes characterization with much more focus on the mental processes of the individual and connects these beautifully with the dialogue and action in the text, that enable us to comprehend the impact of the social on the literary and vice versa. Browne's characterization and narrative technique allow for a practical understanding of the ways in which postdiaspora produces and harnesses much more possibility for hybrid formations of both self and community, which help to reshape patriarchal constructions of girlhood and womanhood in Caribbean society. Additionally, her use of the first-person narrative in many of her books and short stories enables a thorough, intimate presentation of the female sensibility and consciousness in ways that produce deeper understandings of the realities she represents. Critical explorations of Browne's work highlight three main factors present in postdiasporic literature on the Caribbean, which are revealed to the reader through the Caribbean female's participation in and response to postdiasporic conditions: 1) the ability to refashion her identity as Caribbean and as female in both the local and the foreign space; 2) the act of rejecting

Eurocentric patriarchal notions of motherhood and mothering which encourage feelings of alienation, displacement and abandonment for both the mother and the child in the act of migration, and replacing these with what has become known as “transnational motherhood” (Crawford, 331); and 3) the process of reinterpreting the female Caribbean experience within the postdiasporic world.

In her collection of short stories, *Every Little Thing Will be Alright* (2003), Browne demonstrates how diasporic/postdiasporic experiences affect the Jamaican female child in both subtle and overt ways. What is different about Browne’s representation of these conditions however, is that it extends discussions on the emergence of a new kind of response to diasporic realities which subsequently pulls into the equation the postdiasporic condition and the extended notions it offers of ways of negotiating identities and participation in foreign and local spaces. Rather than focusing her stories mostly on the plot of the story, Browne spends significantly more time presenting the thought processes and internal reactions of the child protagonist as she moves through imposed negatives. This introduces a critical principle on the navigation of the new generation of females through the diasporic and into postdiasporic conditions. It is that rather than being focused on fixed moulds shaping the response of black women in previous generations, these female protagonists are choosing more fluid, integrative responses to the challenges they face as citizens, receiving help from immigrant parents or as immigrants themselves who are struggling to adjust in a foreign space. The concept of postdiaspora becomes much more easily comprehensible through the literary representation Browne provides of the way her female child protagonists function within a new diaspora.

Identity has always been an important issue in any critical discussion on diaspora. As Shalini Puri reminds us, “...the Caribbean has had to negotiate its identities in relation to Native America; to Africa and Asia, from where most of its surviving inhabitants came; to Europe, from where its colonizing settlers came; and to the United States of America, its imperial neighbour ” (2). Browne’s female protagonists, who have been born into the twenty-first century, are not

presented as victims of identity crises. They do struggle with understanding who they are and how they fit in (both in the local space and the foreign space), but Browne quite clearly places the root of this struggle on the shoulders of the adults surrounding these female children. Additionally, despite the complexities they face in attempting to negotiate an understanding of who they are and how they fit in, this generation of female children in the text are insistent on remaining true to themselves, no matter what. Although they may experience the feelings of alienation and displacement so commonly associated with diasporic realities, their responses stretch beyond those associated with the women and men of previous generations. As a result of globalization and the advancement of the information age, the Jamaican female protagonists in Browne’s stories have often already encountered the processes and products associated with the foreign space because of the occurrences intricately tied to the parent-child relationship when at least one parent or guardian (usually the mother) lives in the foreign space. They also have access to images, sounds and experiences associated with the foreign space, which they are able to gain, through technology. The main female character in *Island Princess in Brooklyn* for example, constantly compares the reality she experiences in the foreign space with the sensory details of the space she has encountered through what she has watched on television while living in Jamaica. As she attempts to mentally and physically navigate the foreign space she has only recently encountered, she shudders to think of having to face weather that is colder than what she is already presently experiencing. “It got colder than this? But of course it did. I had seen it on TV; America covered in snow. When we found out that I was really going to live with Mom, Granny and I had watched more American TV movies than usual, searching for clues to Mom’s life, which would soon become mine” (Smith 2011, 4). In an effort to help her adjust psychologically to what she is currently physically experiencing, she uses the knowledge of the foreign space she previously accessed through the media when she was at home.

Through the parent, relative or sibling abroad, the child is introduced to a kind of postdiasporic experience long before she encounters the actual physical reality of living in a foreign space. Her identity is already challenged by the absence of

the mother figure and the deep yearning for that mother. Her sense of identity and belonging are, however, intricately tied to both the local and the foreign space, as though she is physically in the local space, her heart and mind are constantly attuned to the need for the mother, who exists in the foreign space. The female child therefore comes into contact with the psychological, emotional and mental realities associated with the diaspora long before she experiences the physical reality of this space. The diasporic/postdiasporic conditions therefore become well-absorbed and internalized by children at a very early stage in their lives. Though prior to migration they are still in their physical "homeland", they are often still not "at home" because of the impositions being placed on them regarding how they ought to behave and the kind of values they need to internalize in the hope that they might someday enter the migrant space. An example of this can be found in Olive Senior's "Bright Thursdays" where, though the grandmother, Miss Christie, is "the lady the female child now lived with" (p.36), it is the son's new wife who proposes that the marvelous conduct and speech of the child are more closely aligned to the foreign space than the rural, local space she currently occupies. A similar trend occurs in Alecia McKenzie's fiction, though what McKenzie presents is not restricted to the female child. In her collection of short stories *Stories from Yard* (2005) , both her adult male and female characters the adult male and female struggle to place themselves in the migrant space and have a difficult entry into life in the foreign metropolis, predominantly because of the narratives embedded within them through their mothers' voices from their childhood past about what ought to be seen as acceptable sociocultural norms and practices. There is the constant pressure therefore to align their conduct with certain ideologies governing behaviour and appearances so that these individuals will be seen as functional, *normal* social beings and not deviant, *merely* third world participants in the foreign space who will eventually become alienated by their inability to fit in to the society. This script is read and re-read to the child in the local space long before she or he encounters the foreign space.

Though we observe the impact of childhood on adulthood and experience the childhood realities of many female characters in Caribbean female-authored

fiction, we are rarely able to completely access the sensibility of the female child in a way that enables us to observe the mental and emotional processes of the navigation of experiences of diaspora and postdiaspora for the Caribbean child. Browne provides this kind of access by displaying the mental and emotional journeys of her female protagonists as they attempt to understand the identities of their parents and their own identity in spaces that stretch them beyond the experiences of local frames of reality and pull them into a reality marked by a fusion of experiences tied to different worlds within which they must exist and learn to function.

This process of refashioning is evident in *Island Princess in Brooklyn* (2011) where the reader is introduced to a young thirteen-year-old girl who has moved to the United States to be with her mother. For the first half of the book, Princess, the main female character, moves between both the local and the foreign space in her mind, while she is at home with her grandmother in Jamaica, thinking about her mother in Brooklyn. When her mother sends for her and she is about to embark on her journey to Brooklyn, she suddenly experiences extreme anxiety while at the airport bidding her grandmother farewell. She feels torn and conflicted as she tries to determine to which space she is most strongly attached and to which she ultimately belongs - with her mother in the foreign space or with her grandmother in the local space. Her thoughts reveal these feelings to the reader when in her mind she declares that "...all of a sudden, I began to worry that a mistake was being made, I began to feel that I should turn back before it was too late" (8).

Identity is tied to home and home for the female protagonist seems naturally to be tied to a place and the people who occupy that place. Princess is at first solely focused on trying to determine which space she ought to see as home. She struggles with leaving her grandmother but believes she cannot stay because "[t]here are just some things that you know you cannot do. I had to go to my mother. I belonged to her and she had sent for me" (Smith 2011, 8). Within moments, however, the reader sees her wondering if she has made the right

decision by coming to live with her mother, when she exclaims, "Home! My new home, and already something was very, very wrong... This was all a big mistake" (9). Browne illustrates the initial struggle of her female protagonist to locate herself and her identity. Towards the end of the story, however, the reader encounters a much more mature Princess, who has slowly begun to survive through use of her collected memories of Jamaica tied with the lessons she learns from her mother and through her experiences at school in America. "And I thought perhaps everything was going to be okay after all. America with mom might be okay and there were little bits of Jamaica there for you when you needed them" (111). Although she struggles therefore with maintaining a sense of completeness about her existence, Princess, at the same time, comes to a place where she realizes that she might belong in both worlds. Gradually therefore, she moves away from the guilt surrounding her initial need to choose one over the other and accepts that both now form an important part of her female identity.

We find a similar situation in the short story "Jenny's Great Gran" which forms a part of Browne's short story collection entitled *Every Little Thing Will Be Alright*. Jenny, Browne's main female character, is embarrassed that she takes her grandmother for walks in the garden surrounding her house in England. Jenny already struggles with being different in a foreign space. The story immediately introduces us to the conflict she faces with having the other children see her walk around with a gran who wears "a headtie" when no other grandmother in the country, in Jenny's mind, would do that. Such apparel she believes is associated with "old time Caribbean people" (Smith 2003, 28). Browne, it seems, inserts this form of apparel into the story to highlight its cultural value and connection even in a contemporary, global space. Jenny has chosen to more closely identify with the foreign space and the modernity of the apparel and customs attached to it and so struggles to accept the local space as part of her identity. The story also introduces the common situation of the young feeling embarrassed by their associations with their older relatives due to peer pressure and the need to fit in with a peer group.

The reader observes as Jenny painstakingly takes her grandmother for walks, based on her mother’s demands and is teased by her friends based on this action. It is not that she does not love her grandmother, but Jenny’s struggle at first is based on the notion that one cultural experience and place is superior to the other. Through establishing the grandmother’s presence as central to the story’s plot, Browne demonstrates the need for a balance through the interconnection of both cultures, rather than the placement of one over the other. Jenny becomes agitated by the idea of her grandmother being called up to the stage at school to make a musical presentation at a school function put on for Parents’ Day. This is because she is striving to *fit in* and believes her grandmother’s cultural presentation will highlight how different she is from the other children in the school. “This can’t be happening, Jenny thought. But it was. There were Mum and Gran, and Dad helping Great Gran – slowly, ever so slowly, up the steps onto the stage” (Smith 2003, 35).

Browne represents Jenny’s journey to the reader by allowing us to observe how Jenny works herself through this problem. She also demonstrates quite clearly that very often it is the adult’s response that helps to solidify the reaction and feelings of the child. Through the teacher’s compliments about her grandmother’s presentation, which highlight the value of Caribbean culture and family life, Jenny begins to experience a sense of pride about the four generations of women inhabiting her home. She comes to realize that choosing one space or the other is not a feasible option for her because she is rooted to both spaces – a postdiasporic reality. Eventually, the narrative states, ‘Jenny felt very proud walking around the garden with her Great Gran’ (38): she even manages to have a more positive response when she is teased because she has come to the point of embracing the local space as part of her past and her future in the same way as the foreign space has now become a part of both timelines for her. As Ngong Tou insists, “for postdiaspora to be all it can be, there has to be a negotiation of diasporic identity which bears the past in mind” but which at the same time reconstructs itself to represent the differences which have surfaced (54). Jenny is still able to preserve her difference; she is not like her grandmother and does not associate with all aspects of the “old time”

Caribbean culture out of which her gran has emerged, but she is also able to arrive at a point of unity by embracing who her grandmother is through the understanding she gleans about her from her mother and her teacher.

The last line of the story strongly exemplifies the new postdiasporic response to the negotiation of identity when Jenny says " ...you can't always change people's minds about things, but you can change your own, and sometimes that is enough" (Smith 2003, 38). The mother-figure therefore plays a crucial role in the construction and negotiation of the Caribbean child's concept of self and negotiation of identity, particularly in the foreign space. This relationship deserves much more attention by Caribbean critics not simply as it relates to the complexity of the characters' existence but also as an element of Caribbean female-authored children's fiction which enables more in-depth depictions and understandings of the paths navigated by the Caribbean female child experiencing life in postdiasporic spaces. The mother-daughter relationship in Caribbean female-authored fiction functions as an important signifier in any discussion surrounding diaspora and postdiaspora as it reveals the slight shift from an old diasporic mode of existence to an evolving postdiasporic mode which places both mother and daughter in a new space as they negotiate their own self-identities while at the same time crafting a new identity for their relationship with each other. This is especially the case with *Island Princess in Brooklyn* where we gain access, through the narrative technique, to an intimate display of the mother-daughter relationship as both attempt to learn about each other defensibly and carefully, each not wanting to be hurt by the other.

Charmaine Crawford introduces a crucial point through her exploration of the situation of motherhood in diasporic/postdiasporic conditions. She argues that one of the major struggles both mother and daughter endure is one that is imposed upon them by a Eurocentric, patriarchal set of principles which emphasises motherhood as being tied to physical presence and "exclusive mother-child relations primarily within the nuclear family unit" (327). Browne seems to be establishing a similar conceptual framework through her

representation of Princess and her mother in *Island Princess in Brooklyn*. The main question which plagues the female protagonist as she gets ready to leave the local space and enter the foreign space at the very start: "Would my mother be there?" (Smith 2011, 1). It is a question that also recurs throughout the novel as she attempts to locate and comprehend herself and her environment. The physical and emotional presence of her mother is, it would seem, crucial to Princess's confidence in herself and her abilities to negotiate the spaces she occupies. She constantly fights the fear of being abandoned and rejected throughout the early parts of the chapter book because of her memories of her mother's absence during her earlier years of childhood. Browne does not pretend that this is not an important reality for the female as she grows and matures. She does not make light of the complexity framing the mother-daughter relationship, but she also shows the two sides of that story, making it clear that the mother also struggles with the idea that she will not be "good enough" for her daughter or that she will not be seen as the central maternal figure in her daughter's life.

The reader notes how betrayed Princess feels when she relates the fact that her mother "had promised to send for me forever, but it never happened" (17). What Browne does bring to the surface though, is the fact that Princess's fear and lack of confidence chiefly occurs as a result of one main reality: her grandmother's negative vocal insertions and attitude towards her mother and her mother's act of migration. Her grandmother is introduced as meaning everything to Princess and she therefore internalizes her grandmother's characterization of the foreign space and the situation of her mother's presence there, as being the only possible truth. Her grandmother's words against the foreign space (and therefore against her mother) become almost prophetic, based on Princess's experiences. She uses these words to affirm all she feels, based on the situations she encounters. Each section of the narrative which displays Princess's emotional instability is preceded by a memory that is evoked about something her grandmother has said or done in offering an opinion about the migrant space and the departure of Princess's mother. It is her grandmother's traditional assertions about the foreign space that results in

tainting Princess's perspective and creates an extremist type of outlook of the diaspora for the teenager. The notions her grandmother puts forward are fraught with the kind of gender essentialism that presents what Crawford terms a "maternalist ideology" encouraged by Eurocentric, colonialist beliefs of motherhood. These beliefs perpetuate the idea that mothers who "leave their children behind" (328) are not fit to be mothers and have somehow deprived their children of fundamental primary social and personal needs, which no other human being is able to provide. Yet, apart from the damning expressions about America and subtly about her mother, which were expressed by her grandmother during Princess's upbringing in Jamaica, Princess feels quite at home with her grandmother and feels she has all she needs at home in Jamaica with her. Her grandmother is the only real mother figure Princess knows prior to her move to the United States. When she struggles through where she desires to live, she describes not wanting to go to America to attain any of the things everyone associated with America, she says plainly: "I didn't feel I had lost out on anything, really. I had Granny" (17). This is one of the most powerful characteristics of Browne's narratives – her ability to examine in a very precise and direct manner, the way Princess' emotions and cognition gradually evolve throughout the chapter book. What Browne also demonstrates however is the ambiguous, complex relationship between the grandmother and the child's mother. The grandmother's negative statements help the reader to realise that a part of the confusion the child experiences occurs because of the subtle and explosive statements her grandmother has made in the past about the child's mother. Again, this "mother-grandmother" relationship issue is also evident in McKenzie's collection of short stories *Satellite City and other stories* (1993) where McKenzie allows the reader to recognize that a large part of the child's negative impressions of her mother, which she received predominantly through her grandmother, might be inaccurate or exaggerated.

It is through this close exploration of the female sensibility that we detect the shift away from old ways of participating in the diaspora to new ways of living in what has grown into a postdiaspora space and experience. Browne subverts the notion that motherhood needs to be chained to a space of domesticity at

all points throughout the mother-daughter relationship and demonstrates how the Caribbean mother has from the very beginning of her journey, mapped out a way to be with her child at a time when she feels the situation is now a healthy one within which to raise her. Despite the alienation and isolation (so deeply connected to diaspora living) experienced by Princess's mother, she pushes on nevertheless. She is a nurse's aide, though her entire family at home believes she is a nurse, and she has life a lot harder than her family members at home realise. Princess is home one evening when her mother's husband has a mild heart attack. She calls the ambulance and accompanies him on the drive to the hospital in which her mother works. She searches for her frantically, asking the nurses to locate her. It is at this point that she is informed that her mother is not in fact a nurse, but a nurse's aide. Her mother arrives just at the point that Princess receives this shocking information. When the outbursts die down, Princess and her mother stand together in an awkward silence. "She was looking at me. She knew. Was she going to just try to get through it, pretend I hadn't heard?" (120). Princess awaits an apology from her mother, but her mother is in no hurry to offer one. It is one of the strengths Browne highlights about Princess's mother - she accepts Princess's struggle to acclimatize, but she also accepts her own reality as an immigrant in a foreign space that regardless of its negativities, is also providing her with the opportunity to become better and attain more, for herself and her family. This stretches beyond the feeling of despair associated with the diasporic condition and adds an entirely new dimension that does not merely demonstrate the will to survive but also the will to grow and develop emotionally and financially. This new dimension is therefore deeply connected to an outlook of home as being based on what is inside and within her consciousness, rather than that which is solely characterized by the physical space which she inhabits. Even when she gets things wrong with Princess at the start (painting her room in a colour she despises, observing Princess's reaction to finding out that she is now married to an Indian man, not being able to prevent Princess from missing conditions "back home"), she still continues to pursue a bond with her daughter, introducing her daughter to this new mode of existence which will allow her to fuse together the pleasant experiences of both the foreign and the local space, rather than needing to choose one over the other. As a mother, she accepts

that she has made wrong decisions, but her motives all surround a positive focus – the betterment of herself for the betterment of her child.

The climactic section of the text occurs when Princess explodes during a moment of concern that her grandmother is ill and might not make it. “I don’t know where the money coming from, but I have to go to Granny. Suppose she die! Can’t you see, I have to go! I am the one to go!” And as if to explain fully, I added, “She is more my mother than you, any day. Granny is my real mother, not you!” (144) Browne allows the reader to be pulled into this exchange to reveal the deep struggle the child experiences as she tries to come to terms with how she has been taught to view her mother, how she actually views her mother based on all her mother says and does, and the decisions she needs to make to adjust her perspective based on all she has witnessed for herself. It is a significant moment because it illustrates the deeply entrenched ways in which female children (just as in Kincaid’s short story “Girl”) wrestle with a scripted characterization of who they ought to be and who their mothers ought to be as adult versions of themselves. This scripted characterization occurs in contrast to who they see themselves as being, and how they perceive their mothers, as these mothers strive to provide for their families regardless of the narrowed pathways constricting their ability by Eurocentric, capitalist systems framing perceptions of their identities as Caribbean female immigrants within the diaspora.

Rather than an idyllic representation of all Caribbean mothers who migrate, Caribbean female-authors have clearly demonstrated the variation which exists in the way individuals choose to participate in the migrant space. To label all immigrant mothers from the Caribbean as women who have abandoned their children is horrifically false and misrepresents a large population of women who have only entered the diaspora to secure the future of their children. As Crawford affirms, “[m]igration has been a strategy for Caribbean people in countering the unemployment, poverty and limited opportunities that result from the structural inefficiencies of their dependent capitalist economies” (328).

Migration is therefore a response of Caribbean mothers that forms a major part of their efforts to raise the standard of living they are prepared to make accessible for their families and children.

Browne's stories therefore promote a rethinking of the female self and the collective experience of females from childhood through to adulthood, through the direct use of the female child and her journey in a postdiasporic space. The newness of the diasporic condition aligns itself easily with the newness the child brings to the space as a member of a new generation with a mindset that is transformative and able to reshape how we read and respond to the situation of migration and the experiences of diaspora. She shows, through the careful details she provides of the main female character in *Island Princess in Brooklyn*, how "lived experience tends to supersede ideology" (Forbes 2005, 27). As David Chariandy argues in his discussion of migration and diaspora in contemporary Caribbean literature, "secondary migrations...might consolidate or shift the 'old' diasporic identities and/or introduce a new array of diasporic identities into the mix" (250). What needs to be monitored is the insistence of a traditional way of being associated with old diasporic realities and the way this is consciously or unconsciously imposed on the child's reality as she enters a new zone of time. The story "Louise Jane and the Street of Fine Old Houses" in Browne's collection *Every Little Thing Will be Alright* introduces both this kind of conflict and the subtle hint that by reconstructing these mental processes, a new generation of individuals might be able to more meaningfully participate in the postdiasporic space. Essentially then, Browne seems to be encouraging a rethinking of ways in which the self might be able to exist confidently through a *modus operandi* that moves beyond colonial perspectives of what it means to be Caribbean, to be black, to be from the working-class, and ultimately, to be female.

When Louisa Jane comes home from school to find her grandmother closing all the windows, she recognizes immediately that something is wrong and assumes that her parents had not sent money from England. This is a small insertion about the migrant space placed in a story that focuses on the way modernization

continues to destroy the lives of those in the homeland who are vulnerable and seen as marginal. The connection is immediately made however with the migrant space and the negative realities being experienced in the homeland. When her friend suggests that instead of becoming troubled by the government's plan to destroy her grandparent's house in order to erect new town buildings, she should "go to [her] Mummy and Daddy in England" because "lots of people go there" (65), Louisa immediately declares that she has no desire to migrate. Like Princess, in *Island Princess in Brooklyn*, Louisa feels indebted to her grandmother who has raised and nurtured her. The grandmother's decision to remain in Jamaica seems to indicate to Louisa that England is an undesirable place. "It's cold and it rains all the time and the houses are closed up, not open like ours" (65). The reader realizes that these descriptions are likely to have been offered by Louisa's grandmother. Once again, the conflict of an old, traditional way of viewing the migrant space and experience comes into conflict with the possibility of a new perspective on the diaspora. Louisa admits that "Mummy sends for us all the time but Granny does not want to go" (65). Browne does not turn this story into one about the migrant space but positions both the foreign and local realities alongside each other in a way that encourages an interrogation of the fixed position or posture of the grandmother who though having all good intentions for her granddaughter, also forgets to "tell[her] to get ready for school" and forgets to make her porridge (63). Browne subtly hints at the fact that although the grandmother verbally encourages the child to go and live with her mother, the kind of relationship she has shared with the granddaughter and the ways in which she has influenced her granddaughter's thoughts have complicated the situation further for both herself and her grandchild. It is not a narrative that points out a wrong or right way of viewing the migrant space, but it is one that prompts readers to question the fixed, rigid and often linear perceptions that are held about diasporic realities.

By the end of the story, Louisa's parents make the decision to remain in Jamaica, much to everyone's surprise. It is not the ending the reader expected. What becomes the focus, however, is not simply that there will be no migration,

but that the option exists as to whether to remain in the foreign or local space. This is a new reality and Browne introduces it subtly. It demonstrates that our way of seeing ourselves in both spaces, as Caribbean people, is no longer bound to traditional notions of needing to migrate, but of choosing to migrate. Those who once existed in the diaspora and have acquired knowledge and experience in that space, can also return home, taking with them all they have acquired about themselves when living in that migrant space. Postdiaspora enables them once again to do this. The focus is not on return but rather on a kind of acculturation process which allows everyone (except the grandmother) to accept and merge experiences for the benefit of all, rather than separate and devalue.

This process of rethinking and reconstructing self-identity and the collective experience of the Caribbean female in the migrant space is also evident in *Island Princess in Brooklyn*, where towards the end of the chapter book, Princess realizes that the statements she has made about her mother have deeply affected her. When her mother pours out her heart to her, detailing all she has sacrificed because of her love for her daughter and making it clear that those on the outside, in the homeland, were not always allowed to know things because of how negative they often were, Princess starts to reconstruct the shape of her memories. Suddenly, the first-person narrative voice explains: “I saw my mother perhaps for the first time as a real person...eyes like mine, eyes that now held me in their grip” (171). This is a momentous moment in the text as through Browne’s creative writing style, the reader gains entrance into the delicate nature of a moment where mother and daughter meet each other in a moment of truth, unmasked and without concern for the scripted codes governing their identities and responses to each other. Princess makes this evident when she admits: “It was then that I stopped watching the movie of my life. I stopped listening to the voices of Granny and Sister that I played over and over in my mind” (172). When these things are released, Princess freely expresses exactly how she feels to her mother and explains quite openly that sometimes she doesn’t “know what to do or how to feel” (173) but that she is acutely aware of her love for her mother and she desires to remain with her. By the end

of the novel, Browne has taken us through the journey of a mother-daughter relationship which becomes infused with love and understanding by the decision of a mother to place her child and her child's desires above the need to fulfill the dominant role of mother prescribed for her by her Caribbean society. When she does this, Princess realizes that her mother is willing to send her back to Jamaica because her mother believes being with her grandmother will make her happier than being with her. Princess responds with deep emotion to the possibility of being separated from her mother again and she pleads with her mother to allow her to stay with her. "Then I felt my mother's arms around me, a real tight, deep hug, much bigger than any hugs I had got since I had been here" (173).

Browne's representation of the female child protagonist is key to an understanding of how she positions the postdiasporic space as an important space for a new generation of Caribbean children. She presents the female child as constantly evolving and flexible, able to adapt to circumstances, people and experiences, based on their deep levels of self and communal awareness and their determination to participate in their societies (wherever these societies are located) in ways that ensure balance and purpose. Perhaps due to globalization, the children in Browne's stories are not in any way as pressured as their parents to see the migrant space as the main space for financial opportunities and socioeconomic growth, but they are acutely aware that they have options, which need not bind them to the physical space of the Caribbean. They embody a kind of fluidity and flexibility characterized by postdiasporic conditions and they demonstrate the value of embracing the complexities associated with their journey as black Caribbean females who embody an awareness of self and identity which remains unchained to distinct spaces and which can thrive, regardless of conflicts and oppressive realities, whether home or abroad.

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Navigating the Academy in the Post-Diaspora: #Afro-Caribbean Feminism and the Intellectual and Emotional Labour Needed to Transgress

[Saran Stewart](#)

Senior Lecturer, Comparative Higher Education
Deputy Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Education
University of the West Indies, Mona

Abstract

Black women are less likely to be retained in tenure-track faculty positions than any other gender and racial/ethnic group in higher education. We encounter “dual acts of race and sex discrimination” from the academic community, arguably leading to disparities in the number of tenure-track Black women faculty (Holmes, Danley Land, and Hinton-Hudson 2007, 107). As an expat in my “foreign homeland” (Stewart 2016), I am often reminded of how I must navigate power and privilege in the university as forms of resistance and subversion in a hetero-patriarchal hegemony. These various experiences of navigating the Caribbean academy while young, Black, and female serve as an ideal backdrop for understanding the impact of colonial patriarchy and what can be done to dismantle it. Accordingly, in this paper, I employ an Afro-Caribbean feminist autoethnographic frame to deconstruct everyday derogatory acts, comments, and behaviour in the academy that devalue female academics by persons of professional hierarchy (known as hierarchical microaggressions). This work builds on Young, Anderson and Stewart's (2015) framework on hierarchical microaggressions by applying it to Afro-Caribbean feminist thought. To transgress some of these academic spaces, I illustrate some of the conditions needed to create agency and a strong sense of the emancipatory self.

Keywords: Afro-Caribbean feminist thought, hierarchical microaggressions, higher education, Black female faculty

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The Multiplicity of a Woman – Part 1

This morning was riddled with the usual exhaustion and as I rolled over to look at the clock, I saw it was 6:36 a.m. Realizing I had overslept by 26 minutes meant this would be another late morning. But I couldn't be late, it was Friday and I had two sets of data collection: the first at 9:00 a.m. and the second at 2:00 p.m. Crap! The night before, I should have just gone to bed as soon as Nina closed her eyes but instead I tried to meet my thirty-minutes daily writing goal. More so, I had to teach tonight from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. and it was my student's funeral. My mind was on pace with the day ahead, quickly mapping my to-do list alongside compartmentalizing my emotions. I didn't check Alexis's homework last night. Did Andre do it? As I quickly stirred the oats for both girls and cut the watermelon for Nina's lunch snack, I remembered Alexis only wanted banana chips for her snack. Were their school bags packed? I continued to stir the cooling oats on the table, foreshadowing *I am definitely going to be late*. Then I looked at Alexis barely eating her oats and I knew I needed to pick my battles. At one week short of her ninth birthday, her attitude ranged from delightfully happy to a sour orange. It was a sour orange type of morning. Trying to rush the breakfast process as my husband got dressed and ready to drive the girls to school, I consciously strategized about picking my argument with Alexis. I looked at her and saw that she was disinterested in breakfast but more so murmuring under her breath, *I am going to forget the spelling words*. I decided to give the empowerment argument. At this point, I remind her that she is brilliant and created for excellence, and that she will be a better scientist than I was as she outshined my younger eight-year old self by ten-fold. She smiled at me and in that moment, I knew I had picked the right battle. I finally got both girls and husband loaded in the car, handed Andre his morning coffee and wished them a safe drive. It was 7:46 a.m. – *I knew I was late*. I rushed to get ready and paused to think about the funeral I would attend. I lingered for a moment recounting the last conversation I had with my student a month before she passed. The familiar pain from her loss paralyzed me and in a breath I exhaled and remembered, *I am late*.

An article in Huffington Post stated “moms who juggle kids with paid jobs end up working 98 hours per week!” (Khoo 2017, para 2). I would argue that that number may be short of an additional ten hours during exams or grading periods for academic moms. The assumptions surrounding the life of an academic mom is layered with the realities of perpetual exhaustion, watching the clock and being constantly late. The pressure to perform, and in some cases outperform peers, is especially attributed to well documented studies on Black women being viewed as intruders in the academy (see hooks 2010; Gabriel and Tate 2017; Gibbs Grey and Williams-Farrier 2017; Griffin 2012, 2016). These studies explain in varying detail how “Black female faculty ... are at once at home (i.e., deserving of our positions) and homeless (i.e., Othered by, at a minimum, racism and sexism) in the academy” (Griffin 2016, 366). While these studies speak to Black women in UK and US contexts, this essay will provide a Caribbean-based context to describe Black female faculty resilience and grit through the experiences of a new tenure-track, junior-faculty.

The More Things Change, the More They Remain the Same

This year (2018) marks the seventieth anniversary of the Caribbean region's most prestigious research university. During this time, the flagship campus has only had one woman appointed as head and Principal of the campus. Moreover, for the past seventy years there have been only a few female deans appointed within the Campus and roughly ten women in the last decade were promoted to the rank of full professor (The UWI, Mona Principal's Report 1996-2000, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008; The UWI, Mona Annual Report 2007-2008, 2008-2009, 2009-2010, 2011-2012, 2015-2016). As displayed in Figure 1, in 2010, female academic staff across the institution's campuses made up less than 40% of the senior lecturer pool and less than 30% of the professorial pool, but more than 50% of the lecturer and assistant lecturer teaching population.

GENDER DIFFERENTIALS OF ACADEMIC STAFF BY LEVELS OF APPOINTMENT

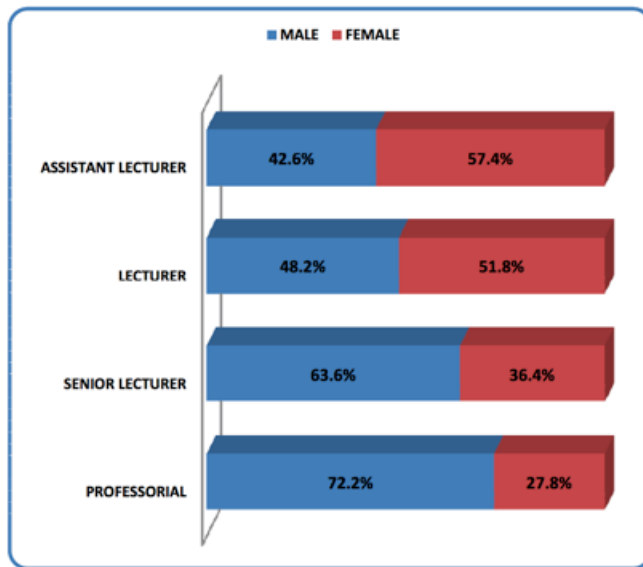


CHART 14

ACADEMIC STAFF BY LEVEL AND SEX: 2009-10

LEVEL OF APPOINTMENT	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
PROFESSORIAL	72.2%	27.8%	169
SENIOR LECTURER	63.6%	36.4%	332
LECTURER	48.2%	51.8%	966
ASSISTANT LECTURER	42.6%	57.4%	162
OTHER	47.8%	52.2%	67
TOTAL	53.1%	46.9%	1696

Figure 1. Charts reflecting the gender differentials of academic staff by levels of appointment. Taken from The UWI, Statistical Review (2009/2010).

What the data illuminate is the disproportionate number of women, (in particular, I would argue Afro-Caribbean women) who are overlooked and/or denied tenure and promotion. This data supports what Jackson and O'Callaghan (2009) have called the glass ceiling effects, which denote a range of impediments that women and people of colour encounter in their quest for senior-level academic positions. These impediments refer to conscious and unconscious acts of discriminatory practices that often result in gender inequities and racial disparities. Practices such as lower salaries albeit similar qualifications, sexual harassment in the workplace, poor maternity leave policies, and numerous appointments to service committees continue to impede Black female faculty's accession to senior-level academic positions (Jackson and O'Callaghan 2009).

Although Black women are receiving more doctoral degrees and entering the academy as lecturers, they are still viewed as interlopers and intellectual intruders. Globally, Black women faculty are viewed as "intruders in the academic world who do not really belong" (hooks 2010, 101). More so, in the United States, Black women are less likely to be retained in tenure-track faculty positions than any

other gender and racial/ethnic group in higher education (Holmes 2003). Further too, "African American women are under-represented in full-time faculty teaching positions" (Holmes 2003, 103). Black women encounter "dual acts of race and sex discrimination" from the academic community, arguably leading to disparities in the number of tenure-track Black women faculty (Holmes, Danley Land, and Hinton-Hudson 2007, 107). It is further noted that "Black women must understand how to navigate the volatile history of White academic spaces that may fly under the radar of White male understanding" (Gibbs Grey and Williams-Farrier 2017, 520). This argument reinforces other scholars' findings of the "systemically orchestrated misrecognition of Black femininity as deviant bereft, and anti-intellectual" (Griffin 2016, 366).

Foreign Homeland

After 14 years living outside Jamaica, I returned home feeling like an expat in my "foreign homeland" (Stewart 2016). Upon my return, the similarity of experiences outside and within Jamaica was reminiscent of feelings of dislocation, home/lessness and exclusion, allowing for an expansion of concepts of diaspora, as proposed by Laguerre (2017). "While in the diaspora condition, an immigrant longs for emancipation from the hostland and equal citizen status from the homeland, in the postdiaspora condition, the struggle is fought for equal status in the hostland" (19). I had returned home within a postdiaspora condition, where home was foreign and I was reminded of how I must navigate power and privilege at home and in the university as forms of resistance and subversion in a hetero-patriarchal hegemony. These various experiences of navigating the neo-colonial Caribbean academy while young, Black and female serve as an ideal backdrop for understanding the impact of colonial patriarchy and what can be done to traverse it. Accordingly, in this paper, I employ an Afro-Caribbean feminist autoethnographic frame to deconstruct everyday derogatory acts, comments and behaviour in the academy that devalue female academics by persons of professional hierarchy (known as hierarchical microaggressions). This work builds on Young, Anderson and Stewart's (2015) framework on hierarchical microaggressions by applying it to Afro-Caribbean feminist thought. To traverse some of these

academic spaces, I illustrate some of the conditions needed to create agency and a strong sense of the emancipatory self.

Framing the Discourse: Microaggressions and Afro-Caribbean Women Faculty in Higher Education

Writing Myself within the Discourse: Afro-Caribbean Feminist Thought

While working on another collaborative manuscript aimed at theorizing intersectionality (Crenshaw 1993) as both a method and methodology, my co-authors and I analysed six hundred and eighty refereed journal articles written for and by Black women scholars and activists in US higher education institutions. Building on the theoretical frames of intersectionality and Collins' (2009) Black Feminist Thought, I was triggered by the naming of Black women's resistance and oppressions within the academy. Those triggers jolted a call to action to write myself into the narrative and discourse for and by Afro-Caribbean women academics. My identity as an academic is privileged and one I have negotiated and debated as oftentimes politically oppressive (Stewart 2016). My ability to voice critical discourse reflects my agency and responsibility, knowing that my silence is equally as loud as my written thoughts. As a novice to Caribbean feminism, I relied heavily on the teachings and critical scholarship of Barriteau (2003), Mohammed (2000) and Reddock (1994, 2001, 2007), noting that Reddock defines feminism as "the awareness of the oppression, exploitation and/or subordination of women within society, and the conscious action to change and transform the situation" (1988, 53). Located within the Caribbean, feminism then "privileges the subaltern voices of a people marginalized by both gender and race, in a region which itself is increasingly marginalized in the global economy" (Momsen 2000, 51-52), the result of the colonial legacies of European imperialism. Although seemingly monolithic, Caribbean feminism has branched into Indo-Caribbean feminism (Hosein and Outar 2016) and Afro-Caribbean feminism, allowing for more intersectionality-driven classifications of feminism.

Afro-Caribbean feminism acknowledges the intersecting privileged and oppressed identities of Black Caribbean women, simultaneously recognizing the

contribution of Caribbean feminism to critical scholarship but also its monolithic limitations of Caribbean identity. Furthermore, Afro-Caribbean feminism recognizes the continued legacies of colonialism on the commodification of Black women's bodies. In this respect, Afro-Caribbean feminism is linked to the colonial history of the Caribbean and its implications on current neo-colonial societies within the Caribbean and the diaspora. Afro-Caribbean feminism further disrupts the neo-colonial appropriations of race, gender and class and the current hierarchies of colourism within the Caribbean and the diaspora. Reddock (2007) provocatively disturbs the meaning of race and its intersection with gender and class within the Caribbean, noting how colonial history created stereotypical differences within and between Indo-Caribbean and Afro-Caribbean women. She illuminates the distinction as "Afro-Caribbean women, for example, were constructed as loose, immoral, loud, independent and sexually available; In contrast Indo-Caribbean women were constructed as chaste, pure, controlled and sexually unavailable" (Reddock 2007, 4-5). Barriteau (2003) presents the analytical prowess of feminist epistemologies by examining how "conceptual tools and methodologies [to] yield additional insights into women's persistent but differing experiences of asymmetrical power relations in societies" (59-60) .

Afro-Caribbean Feminist Thought extends from Reddock (2007) and Barriteau's (2003) earlier writings by reclaiming and recognizing the experiential knowledge and intersecting identities of Black Caribbean women as powerful and critical embodiments of consciousness. From a socio-historical and political vantage point, Afro-Caribbean Feminist Thought confronts the oppressed legacies of colonial definitions of womanhood and femininity, noting for example that Black female slaves were regarded as "enchained wombs" and vestiges of reproduction but were neither women nor feminine because of "her alleged muscular capabilities, physical strength, aggressive carriage, and sturdiness" (Beckles 1999,10). Beckles further acknowledges pro-slavery historians' role in the defeminisation of enslaved Black women and the characterisation of femininity within the embodiment of white women. These colonial misappropriations of race, class and gender over time have led to the stratification of class-colourism within the Caribbean. Afro-Caribbean Feminist Thought

problematizes the role of race, gender, class, heteronormativity, femininity and patriarchy in society, and provides a framework for Black feminists regardless of gender-orientation to socio-historically and politically understand and deconstruct the experiences of Afro-Caribbean women. Within this study, I attempt to use Afro-Caribbean Feminist Thought as a framework for the construction of autoethnographic narratives of my experiences as an Afro-Caribbean, junior female faculty on the tenure track.

Afro-Caribbean mothering.

Embedded within Afro-Caribbean feminism are examinations of mothering and the roles women play as the primary nurturers and caregivers. Within pervasive patriarchal societies such as many of the Caribbean nations, mothers are expected to be the primary caregivers of the home and children (Beatson 2013). Within a higher education framing, mothers who are also academics often struggle with the balance of sustaining themselves on the tenure-track while caring for the family (DePouw and Matias 2016). Additionally, mothering transcends the home into the classroom especially within the context of Black students and Black female academics. That relationship is considered as *othermothering*, which refers to a “relationship [that] goes far beyond that of providing students with either technical skills or a network of academic and professional contacts” (Collins 2000, 191). More so at the primary and secondary school level, “the practice of othermothering allowed Black women to educate and socialize children in their own ways and traditions in order to uplift the Black community” (Douglas 2005, 715). Black women, especially in the US, who enter the academy prior to becoming a mother, often pay a “baby penalty” by foregoing motherhood until they are further along or have received tenure (Mason, Wolfinger and Goulden 2013). As such, Black women in the US tend to delay the tenure track and take up more adjunct positions to raise a family without the demands of the tenure requirements. However, in the Caribbean, there is little research on Afro-Caribbean, academic mothers’ experiences. This auto ethnographic reflection will shed light on the constant struggle to strike a balance between the demands of the academy and the demands of the home, while *othermothering* in the classroom.

Hierarchical Microaggressions

While othermothering in higher education classrooms, Black female academics embody multiple roles as nurturers and caregivers which often contradicts the intellectual presence and position of knowing and subjects them to a range of microaggressions. These contradictions are further highlighted from an Afro-Caribbean feminist analysis and an examination of hierarchical microaggressions. The term hierarchical microaggressions (Young, Anderson and Stewart 2014) derives from racial microaggressions, and provides an expansive view of everyday derogatory acts, comments or behaviour in the workplace that devalues a person by someone of professional hierarchy, such as a supervisor. The residual effects of feeling isolated, experiencing lower satisfaction with the job, and resigning from a post are some of the outcomes of enduring hierarchical microaggressions. The term microaggressions stems from Sue et al's. (2007) seminal work for developing the typology for racialized derogatory acts, which includes three types: microinsult, microinvalidation and microassault.

According to Young, Anderson and Stewart (2014) hierarchical microaggression refers to four salient themes: actions related to role, change accepted behaviour, terminology related to work position, and valuing/devaluing opinion (see Appendix for model). *Valuing/Devaluing based on role/credential* accounted for the highest occurrence or 52% of the examples of hierarchical microaggressions. This theme pertains to the way in which employees in higher education describe how they experience privilege and oppression based on their job role. *Actions related to role—ignoring/excluding/surprise/interrupting* accounted for 36% of the examples of hierarchical microaggressions. This theme refers to “actions people experience from others that are related to roles held at the university. These actions include ignoring, excluding, surprise, and interrupting” (Young, Anderson and Stewart 2014, 68). *Changing accepted behaviour based on role* occurs when “a person changes how s/he acts depending on the role ... of the person they are interacting with, this shows how institutional hierarchy matters in these interactions” (Young, Anderson and Stewart 2014, 67). This theme accounted for 10% of the examples of hierarchical microaggressions and specifically included

the example of junior faculty feeling invisible to tenured faculty when providing suggestions or contributing to meetings. The final theme, *terminology related to work position* accounted for 2% of the examples of hierarchical microaggressions and related to the labelling of job titles. This theme draws attention to levels of ability and skills and refers to employees as objects of their job function rather than the subject of their responsibilities. Given that Young, Anderson and Stewart's (2014) study was conducted in the United States, applying the framework to a Jamaican context requires a framing of the context and a cultural adaptation of the themes. The institution's context will therefore be described and similar to the three levels of data analysis completed in Young, Anderson and Stewart's (2014) study, the procedure for data analysis will detail theory-based coding (Saldana 2009). Coupled with Afro-Caribbean Feminist Thought, hierarchical microaggressions provides a framework in which to analyse data and a theoretical lens to deconstruct the *isms* experienced as a young, Afro-Caribbean, female, junior academic in a predominantly heteronormative and patriarchal-constructed higher education institution.

Methodology: Toward an Afro-Caribbean Feminist Autoethnography

Critical Black feminist scholars have argued for more representative theories and methodologies that centre the experiences of Black women in general but specifically Black women in academia. Whether it is critical race feminism (Patton and Ward 2016), Black womanist storytelling (Baker-Bell 2017), Black feminist autoethnography (Griffin 2012), or scholarly rearing (Edwards and Baszile 2016), these methodologies address the movement of theories to praxis by "becoming an integral part of the research process" (Patton and Ward 2016, 332). The call for an Afro-Caribbean feminist autoethnography bridges the principles of Afro-Caribbean feminist thought and autoethnography to robustly document and analyse the lived experiences of Black women as, for and by the *self*. Specifically drawing on some of Ellis' (2004) iconic work on the ethnographic *I*, she explains autoethnography as, "research, writing, and methods that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural and social" (Ellis 2004, xix). Further, auto-ethnography is a practice of reflexivity where the self is the unit of measure. The dichotomous process of internally and externally critiquing the self is to

juxtapose and project the political, cultural, and decolonized constructs of self in society. Coupled with an Afro-Caribbean feminist perspective, this methodology or form of autoethnography (for this study) grapples with what Mohammed (2000) describes as gendered realities and with Parry's (2000) work on gendered methodologies, noting that "the starting point of feminist analyses is patriarchal society" (91). Parry further looks at how socialist feminists grapple with the intersections of class and race to completely transform the social system. Acknowledging the importance of women's experiences at the centre of research, Parry (2000) states that "this position reflects the feminist programme of celebrating the subjective experience of women and the rejection of rationality as an agent or pillar of patriarchy" (93). This approach is about truth telling, forms of radical honesty (Williams 2016) and framing knowledge within a decolonizing frame. The tensions experienced in writing this article centre on some of the difficulties of this approach; 1) exposing your vulnerability at the discretion of others to critique; 2) revealing what was once hidden for others to judge, deny and negate as subjective and feminine (thereby weak and not robust or critical of research); and 3) revealing a form of decolonizing methodology within a colonized space.

Setting the Context

As mentioned earlier, the Caribbean University flagship campus in which this study is based celebrates seventy years of establishment. Considered a flagship, research-based regional institution, the university has four campuses; three are considered residential campuses located in Jamaica, Barbados, and Trinidad and Tobago, and one is considered a virtual campus providing online and distance education. The oldest campus is situated in Jamaica and makes up the largest population of students with an approximate enrolment of 18,000 students and just under 750 full-time academic staff members. The continued British colonial legacies of "inherited customs of higher education practice reflect conflicting power dynamics aimed at continuing colonial traditions" (Stewart 2016, 10). The institution, I would argue, is in a constant search for its identity. Its location, in close proximity to the United States, allows for the economic benefits of US exchange students but the incorporation of US-like accreditation standards. Being

emancipated from British ownership, the institution's organizational culture, examination protocols, conferral of degrees, guild of students, and examination-driven culture remains a mirrored image of the colonial past. The very location of the Jamaican campus on a former plantation, led today by a Black, male, economic historian, speaks to the challenge of what Howe (2000) describes as the "political and ideological struggle for the soul of the university" (15).

Data Collection and Analysis

Back in August 2013, my sistah scholar and I started at the academy as newly-minted tenure-track faculty and our first weeks in the academy were met with similar microaggressions. Although she was in Colorado, we shared similar frames of devaluing comments, disregard and distrust. Having been trained together as social justice and critical pedagogical scholars, we committed to documenting our journeys through self-reflexive journals, video, emails and free writes. Data was also analysed from nine staff meeting minutes and four end-of year review reports. Theory-based coding was used to analyse the data against Young, Anderson and Stewart's (2014) findings. Below is a reflection of the codes found and mapped to the themes of the hierarchical microaggressions framework: valuing/devaluing based on role/credential; actions related to role; and changing accepted behaviour.

The Homelander versus Hostlander

As Laguerre argues, "postdiaspora is an emancipatory move refuting not the connection with one's place of origin but rather one's unequal status vis-a-vis homelander and hostlander" (2017, 22). For me, I was an outlander in the United States, "standing" in an imaginary 14-year line to rectify my immigrant status. By the time I arrived at the front of the line, it was time to return "home". I had finally become a naturalized citizen of the United States but I could not reconcile my feeling of alienation in the hostland and returned to what I termed my foreign-homeland (Stewart 2016). Foreign in terms of my returning positionality and the elusive nostalgia of familial culture, music and old stomping grounds. My entry into the academy was met with much distrust and disdain, mostly by the

very women I wanted to learn from. There were layers of internalized oppression where female lecturers in particular were overlooked for promotion, were bogged down with administrative duties and assigned to many committees, resulting in low research output. The men, albeit few, were more senior in rank and capacity with arguably less committees to serve on. I would later learn that the “old boy’s club” in the academy was not solely an American saying but was present in the department and throughout the university. During my first week of classes, having not met all the staff, I sat behind my desk with my door open and heard...

Surprise! Surprise! (Actions related to role (36%)—ignoring/excluding/surprise/interrupting)

...“What are you doing!” shouted the woman outside my door. “This is Dr Stewart’s office, why are you sitting in her chair?” she continued. I smiled cautiously, waved hello and pointed to my chest, “I am Dr Stewart. Nice to meet you.”

“OH my goodness, look what I have lived to see” beckoning to other persons on the floor to come see the spectacle, she then said, “You could be my daughter – You sure you have a PhD?” As a lecturer, who was noticeably older than I, she was in shock that I could possess a PhD. Shock soon turned into doubt as other lecturers met me and questioned how I assumed my role, in other words how did I get hired into a post that was reserved for more senior scholars. During the first staff meeting of the semester, the seemingly reasonable explanation came that I was hired as a part of the junior-faculty scheme, alongside assistant lecturers; it then became more plausible to accept my presence in the department. Even though I had earned a PhD, had already presented at multiple international conferences, published refereed articles and was hired as a full-time lecturer, I was considered an assistant lecturer to my colleagues. During that same staff meeting...

“Embodying Little Stewart” (Valuing/devaluing (52%))

...I was given a nickname of sorts – Little Stewart. Having two little girls, I am used to living betwixt the fantasy worlds of cartoon and animation. The Stuart Little movies were a favourite of my daughters, who often cheered on the adventures

of the little mouse and were in awe of his miniature clothes and constant outwitting of the family cat. When I was first called Little Stewart, I immediately thought of the character that played the white-haired, two-inch mouse and assumed it was a mistake, so I didn't respond as I wasn't sure who was being referred to. However, the second calling of the name was followed by laughter and snickers at the "originality" of my surname, not as Dr Stewart or even Little Dr Stewart (as if that would be better) but just Little Stewart as if I had not earned my doctorate. The rationale behind the naming was due to there being two Dr Stewarts in the department: the other being older was referred to with respect as Dr Stewart within and outside of her presence, however when outside of her presence, the reference to Little Stewart was made in several staff meetings by the Director and other coordinators. The feelings of being devalued echoed strongly when references to me as Little Stewart were made in departmental meetings. The name calling was extended outside of the department and at external examiners' board meetings when both Dr Stewarts' mark sheets were being reviewed. Even when I corrected my name callers, it did little to change things, so instead I would not respond unless my correct name was used. From an Afro-Caribbean feminist perspective, I recognize that my gendered embodiment as a woman played a role in my male supervisor thinking it appropriate to refer to me as "Little" Stewart. Had I been a man, there would be no distinction necessary based on my name or age. Having been trained in social justice work and delivered training on microaggressions, I knew that the "nickname" (when first used) was not intended to be hurtful or disrespectful but it provided an opportunity for others to misuse and essentially belittle my qualifications.

#MamaScholar: Caribbean Faculty and Mothering (Changing Accepted Behaviour (10%))

During my second academic year, at seven months pregnant, I was waddling up 3-flights of stairs to my office, when a senior academic, female staff stopped me to say, "Finally, this will slow you down"...

My first born was four-years old when I started my post as a lecturer. I started the post knowing that my identity as her mother and thereby my commitment to her

would always supersede the academy and my identity as a scholar. Fast-forward five years later, my daughter has sat inside the halls of more universities around the world than the average nine-year old. She also knows my absence as when I am physically present, my mind transcends to the overwhelming responsibilities of the university. As the primary bread-winner, the overwhelming burden to support a family on a daily-devaluating economy is riddled with oxymorons. Not wanting to complain or be overlooked for opportunities, I teach more courses for additional pay and take on consulting jobs to offset my student loans, all the while balancing the countless remarks, that *I should have more children while I'm young and fertile*, which often reify the negative stereotypes of being both a breeder and being in a weakened state, that reinforce "Black women's oppressions" (Lewis 2012, 35). The Black female body "always already represents deviant sexuality" due to historical narratives and images of "mammies, jezebels, [and] the breeder women of slavery" (Lewis 2012, 35). The pressure to be a good mother and wife, while supporting the household and being respected as a quality academic is a perpetual cycle of negotiating the perceived strength and fragility of my body and value of my intellect. The balance to be struck between motherhood, marriagehood and academic progress is ever elusive and one that deserves more attention. While I agree that I am not a *single mother with a husband*, which describes a mother who takes "primary responsibilities of childbearing and household management" (McWilliams-Henderson and Tindall 2013, 197), I am the primary breadwinner. That role in the Caribbean, although becoming more popular, is still socially taboo and met with much public scrutiny as to the husband's role and capacity.

The narratives reveal the varying acts of microaggressions experienced as an Afro-Caribbean, junior faculty. Specifically, these microaggressions ranged from discrediting actions related to perceived roles, the devaluing of prior experiences and qualifications, and the disregard of women as both academics and mothers. The commonality amongst those who would commit the acts of microaggressions were persons older in age and often women. These acts would often result in tensions in the work environment and lead to unresolved issues between colleagues.

Multiplicity of a Woman – Part 2

Writing this article has been difficult given the tensions of working within an institution that only values parts of me but not me in its full entirety. Knowing that my value as a researcher and principal investigator outweighs my personhood as a mother and a woman, lets me know we are still colonized and in search of an identity that is decolonizing. I. AM. Burned out. I work for a large research flagship, regional institution where I teach three graduate courses per semester, coordinate two postgraduate programmes and lead a cluster of six postgraduate programmes. As the chief editor for a regional journal, I am also responsible for the editorial duties of the journal. I supervise five PhD students and three masters' students while writing countless recommendation letters per semester. Administratively, I sit on four committees: three are departmental and one is campus wide. Collectively they take up 40% of my time. However, my responsibility as a researcher counts for 80% of my promotion to tenure, 15% from teaching and roughly 5% towards service; however, most of my time is filled with teaching and service. Notwithstanding my role as a mother of young children (ages nine and three), I leave work to go home to a full-time job. Coupled with my philosophy and epistemology as a critical and inclusive pedagogue (Stewart 2013, 2016), educating students is not confined to the classroom nor within course outlines. I take with me the lived experiences of my students and use them to plan my lessons, change my assignments and fuel my understanding of transformative and engaged pedagogy within the Caribbean context. This becomes a form of emotional and intellectual labour– a labour often borne on Black women mimicking historical enslavement roles as mammies and caregivers.

So this morning as I got dressed for both data collection and my student's funeral, I reminisced on the last meeting with her. We met in my office and she sat on the couch, noticeably distracted and uncomfortable but hopeful. We laid out a plan for her graduation; one that was manageable and considered all the moving variables she was experiencing of becoming a mother and wife within weeks of

our meeting. I spoke to her about the resilience of becoming a mother and the strength she did not know she already possessed.

As I walked passed her casket and sat in the pew to hear the tributes and eulogy, I thought what a mighty woman was she. Amidst my tears, anger and grief, were feelings of grit and resilience. I knew how she lived and therefore how much she was loved. Walking away from the church, I reminisced on my own strength as I had to collect myself and prepare for class at 4:00 p.m.

Vibranium in the Academy: Strategies for *How to Transgress*

Vibranium, Marvel comics' fictional super metal represents a collective of strategies I use to sustain me, and propel me to fight against the *isms* in the academy. When I walked away from the funeral, amongst the many thoughts flooding my mind were thoughts about from whom and how I was going to draw on strength. I called my research partner first and then my research assistant explaining I couldn't attend the second round of data collection, and to complete it in my absence. I then called my father for counsel; to reason through my emotions and ready myself for class. From my training as a doctoral student within a cohort model, I knew forming a community would be key to my tenure. My community includes a network of *sistah* scholars, and mentors within and outside the academy, both of which reinforce the continuous work of reclaiming power and the need for self-care.

Embedded systems of bureaucratic traditions rooted in colonial principles are difficult to dismantle and disrupt. Acting as a tempered radical within the system affords for "more good by staying within the organization, and temper[ing] [the] activities and strategies to create change from the bottom up" (Kezar, Gallant, and Lester 2011, 130). Even so, there are risks of being marginalized and labelled as an agitator. These risks can hinder the tenure process and place the lecturer in a vulnerable state. However, I believe strategies can be put in place to identify the critical changes needed and work within the system to make those changes systemic.

Find a Sistah Network

As a graduate student, I joined a sistah network, a collective of Black women postgraduate students, academic and administrative staff. This collective was headed by strong and resilient Black women academics and practitioners who provided a community of emerging scholars for writing, emotional, and at times financial support and networking (Joseph and Allen 2018). After graduation, I maintained my role in the sistah network and joined others globally. These networks sustain me, provide a space for me to thrive and edify my work as meaningful to the academy. These women become the iron that sharpen my iron and push me through. We write together, co-author and publish together, we present research together and co-chair on academic conferences. In my second year, I attempted to start a similar network at my institution, designed for junior-academic staff members but I soon learned that the labour and ownership became mine alone to bear. The culture to sustain such a network was not evident and I couldn't expend the additional labour to sustain one as a newly hired junior faculty with children. My plans to take up this charge once again are renewed in my drive to mentor and share best practices for transgressing the academy.

Seek Mentorship

Beyond seeking mentorship within the sistah networks, I seek out and retain mentors from within and outside the academy. My mentors are comprised of my former doctoral supervisor, former teacher, my father, husband, organizational leaders whom I affectionately term #BossLadies, ambassadors and former departmental heads, to name a few. These persons provide counsel, advice, review my research and suggest opportunities for me to thrive. I recognize that these persons serve different and overlapping roles, each of which is able to pinpoint different aspects of my strengths and weaknesses so that I continue to transgress.

Reclaiming Power - Critical Self Work

Having engaged in three years of intense training on critical self-work, deconstructing autobiographical educational journeys and analysing power, privilege and agency, I had a pretty good understanding of what the academy was and was not. I also wrestled with my accession to the ranks of knowledge elitism, and understood the political role of my presence as an oppressor in the classroom, and how I must consciously work to transform my classroom space to one of inclusion and not exclusion. Through my training I also understood that to dismantle the master's narrative, I had to learn the master narrative. Most of my scholarship has been devoted to critically examining issues in decolonizing methodology, postcolonial theories, critical/inclusive pedagogy, and access and equity issues in higher education at the levels of the classroom (i.e. pedagogies) and the structural (i.e. climate and policies) in order to interrogate the status quo and hegemonic normativity regarding who has access to educational institutions, resources and opportunities. This is how I attempt to develop critical consciousness and wrestle with the art of becoming as I acknowledge myself as a *work-in-progress*.

The Act of Self-Care

In the U.S., women of colour academics have attributed psychological trauma, stress, and anxiety to unhealthy working environments in the academy due to "internalized unresolved experiences with racism; isolation and withdrawal from social network; weight problems; and overwhelming caretaking responsibilities" (Vakalahi and Starks 2011, 188). More importantly Vakalahi and Starks (2011) state that for the women of colour academics in their study, "their lives in the academy reflect a struggle to survive" (188). The authors go on to suggest prevention and intervention strategies that include self-care in order to find balance and cope with the stressors within the academy. To be transparent, this is the strategy I struggle with the most – acts of self-care. I define self-care as the mental, emotional and intellectual break and release to recharge and reset one's mind, passion, vision, and purpose within and outside the academy. Self-care is taking time away from the academy to treat the self; not just the mental

self but the physical, psycho-social and emotional self. It is the release and relief Black women need to recharge themselves for the home life, the work life, the societal life and global expectations. Historically, enslaved Black women were documented as “ideally suited for manual labour” and fitting for the (re) productive growth of slave societies (Beckles 1999, 10). Centuries later Afro-Caribbean women are demanding a seat at the senior level, decision-making table and making strides to command the respect of their intellectual labour.

Conclusion

Within the Caribbean, critical research regarding women academics (particularly Afro-Caribbean women) and their experiences within the academy is largely absent, especially as it pertains to their experiences with hierarchical microaggressions, prejudicial-trauma, and their resulting health and well-being. More targeted academic policies are needed to create inclusive work environments that better allow women to achieve tenure and promotion, have workload equity, and more strongly “support women’s choices to have a family and a career” in the academy (Vakalahi and Starks 2011, 188). Until these research and policies are developed and acted on, the post-diasporic illusions of finding home betwixt the hostland and homeland remain elusive for the im/migrant.

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Appendix

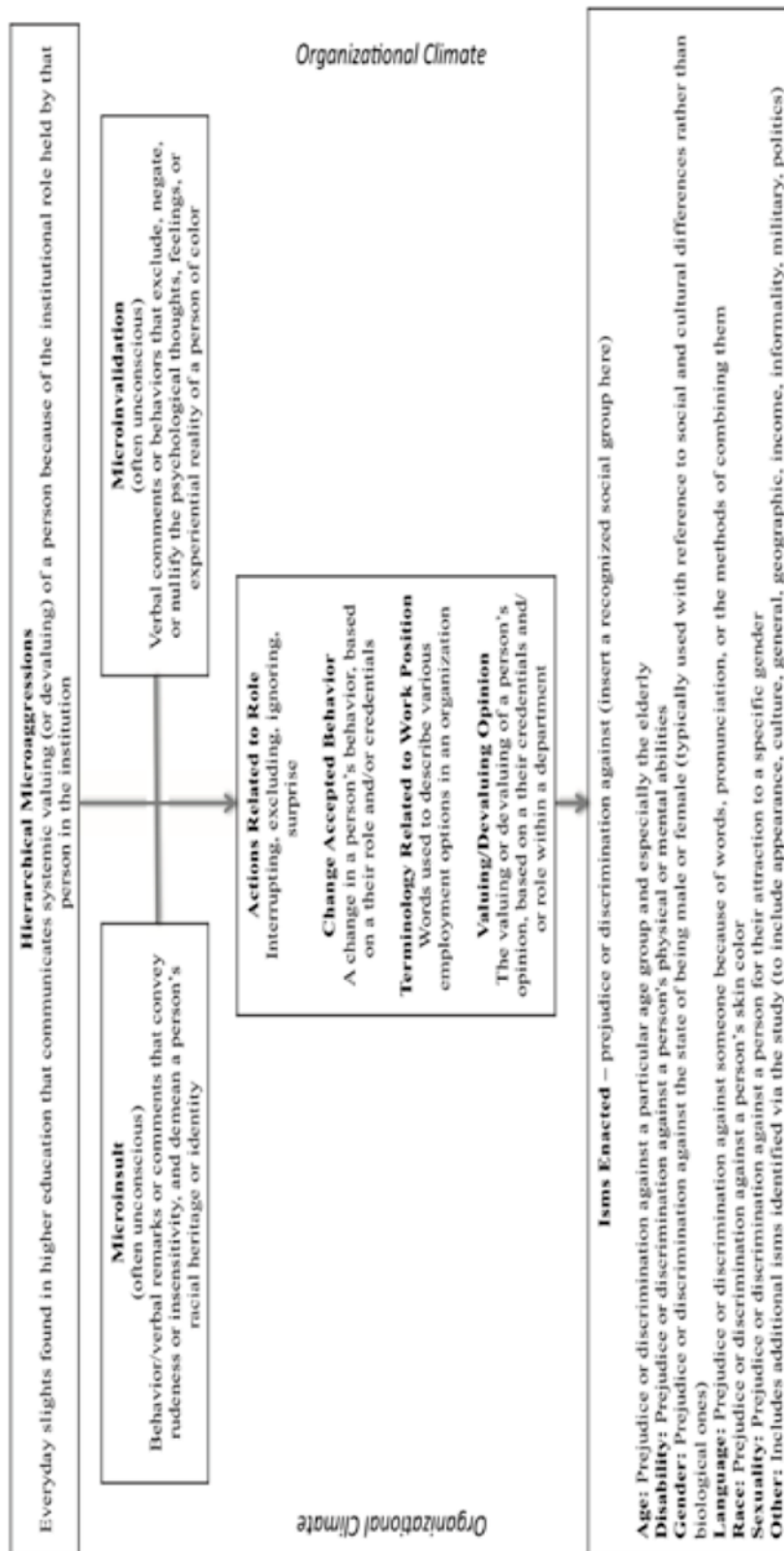


Figure 1. Hierarchical microaggressions framework by Young, Anderson and Stewart (2014)



The Dark Skin I Live In: Decolonizing Racial Capitalism's Aesthetic Hierarchies in the Diaspora

[Shirley Anne Tate](#)

Professor of Race and Education
Leeds Beckett University, UK
& Honorary Professor
CriSHET, Nelson Mandela University, South Africa

Abstract: Dark skin on Black women's bodies has become a Black Atlantic diasporic (post) colonial artefact circulating discursively within the skin value hierarchy of racial capitalism. This article uses a Black decolonial feminist approach to analyse racial capitalism's "second skin" discourses of dark skin as contemptible object established prior to and during enslavement and colonialism. Drawing out its contemporary manifestations in the narratives of/about Black women celebrities, the analysis shows that libidinal economies of dark skin continue to impact women's lives. Indeed, the impact of "second skin" discourses can produce alienation from oneself if one begins from shadism and/or whiteness. However, this article argues that women with dark skin dis-alienate from "second skin" (Cheng 2011) discourses to construct the skins they live in as objects of love through naming and critiquing diasporic discourses which reproduce their skins as valueless. Through the routes of social media, their critiques of "second skin" discourses produce and maintain alter/native constructions of dark skin value, a radical Black aesthetic consciousness, a new "livity" (Chevannes 1994) within diaspora which unsettles dark skin's negation.

Key words: racial capitalism, decolonizing, diaspora, dark skin, libidinal economy, "second skin"

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Introduction

According to Cedric Robinson (1983) Western racism existed in Europe before capitalism and the encounter with Africa and the “New World”. Racism and capitalism produced a modern world system of “racial capitalism” which was dependent on slavery, imperialism, violence, genocide and epistemicide (Robinson 1983). It was in the West that “the Negro” (Robinson 1983), “the Indian” (Wilderson 2010) and the Human as white (Wynter 2003) were constructed and racial boundaries policed through extensive psychic, intellectual, affective, aesthetic, and legal means. Part of this policing was the erasure of the Black Mediterranean and the African contribution to European civilization so as to reproduce Europe as “racially pure” (Robinson 1983), whilst aesthetically and affectively dark African descent skin was constructed as repulsive and contemptible (Tate 2015). This article seeks to extend Robinson’s ideas by including aesthetics based on whiteness and shadism and their concomitant affects within racial capitalism.

The discussion shows that the construction of dark African descent skin as antithetical to whiteness already existed in the Middle Ages and that the West’s “Negro” extended to aesthetic discourses on and affective attachments to whiteness and shadism as they came up against dark African descent skin. Shadism intimately attaches skin colour to the trauma of racial capitalism as it spreads out across the roots and routes of the Black Atlantic like other cultural objects and artefacts (Gilroy 1993). However, shadism’s denial emerges in the Global Northwest which believes itself to be “post-race” (Goldberg 2015) with “post-race” aesthetics being constructed through the inclusion and consumption of the bodies of Black women with dark skin within global skin markets. Concomitantly, Lupita Nyong’o, Alek Wek, Michelle Obama and Nyakim Gatwech can be named the most beautiful women of the year, become the global faces of beauty products that sell trans-racially and be feted as super models, while Jamaicans Zahra Redwood, Miss Jamaica Universe 2007 and Miss Jamaica Universe 2017, Davina Bennett can be praised for their

natural hair and darker skin. Indeed, Bennett was one of the last three in the Miss Universe 2017 competition; her hair style is said to have “broken the internet.” Fans started the hashtag #MissJamaicaShouldHaveWon and she is now being sought after for modelling contracts. These examples of aesthetic inclusion recast dark skin as a valuable mobile diasporic object. Indeed, one could begin to believe that “Black is beautiful” as a site of aesthetic political contestation, and its accompanying anti-racist aesthetics (Taylor 2016), are no longer necessary in the Global Northwest because of some Black women’s inclusion in “beauty”. However, continuing anti-Black racism, shadism and misogynoir (Bailey 2010) make anti-racist aesthetics still relevant. This is so because shadism as part of racial capitalism’s construction and consumption of “the Negro” maintains colonial aesthetic hierarchies, keeping a colonial politics of skin values and devaluations in circulation in the diaspora irrespective of the inclusion of some women with dark skin.

As a hyper-visible signifier of Black African descent racial difference in the Global North/South West, skin is still the bedrock of anti-Black woman racism – “misogynoir” (Bailey 2010). Misogynoir has embedded within it affects, aesthetics and politics continually circulating through racial capitalism, as discourses of physical and moral ugliness attach to dark skin. These discourses of dark skin as ugly lay over the surface of Black women’s bodies as a “second skin” (Cheng, 2011) and condition the politics of hyper-visibility which surround dark skinned African-descent women.

From a Black decolonial feminist lens, this analysis uses skin narratives from/about Michelle Obama, Lupita Nyong’o, Nyakim Gatwech and Davina Bennet’s November 2017 Instagram post reported in the Jamaica Observer, to outline the emergence of other skin values beyond the politics dictated by colonial aesthetics. The discussion thinks through the complaints within these women’s skin narratives as resistance to the colonial aesthetics kept alive within contemporary racial capitalism. Robinson’s (1983) analysis of Black revolt in the Western hemisphere categorizes these as either based on maroonage and

reproducing African social life in the case of early revolts, or latterly, as being focused on the transformation of social relations. Women living their skin lives through resistance and focusing on the transformation of aesthetic social relations negate the impact of "second skin" discourses even whilst these extend across interpersonal, political, social, and cultural life. Their refusal to problematize their dark skin whilst it still continues to be problematized in the diaspora is enabled by what Aimé Césaire (2000) calls "dis-alienation" from these discourses. Dis-alienation as resistance is a turning away from "second skin" discourses of dark skin's negation as valueless, which in turn produces a new "livity" (Chevannes 1994). Within the virtual politics of the media's life their resistances become mobile, diasporic objects leading to dark skin validation, and towards different modes of becoming which do not start from colonial aesthetic discourses of whiteness or shadism.

Skin and its discontents: From colonial discourses on Black women's difference to shadism

In the Black Atlantic diaspora Black women's bodies are always already marked as ugly, especially if dark skinned. This is a North Atlantic universal (Truillot 1995) which travelled around the routes of racial capitalism-settler colonialism, empire and enslavement - and still resonates in the diaspora today. In the Global Northwest the construction of dark African-descent skin as antithetical to whiteness and ugly already existed in the Middle Ages which supports Robinson's (1983) claim that race thinking began within Europe itself. Religious scholar, Peter Abelard (1119-1142), wrote to Hèlōise about the *Song of Songs* and the Queen of Sheba being desired by and sexually intimate with King Solomon, "it so happens that the skin of black women, less agreeable to the gaze, is softer to touch and the pleasures one derives from their love are more delicious and delightful" (Sharpley-Whiting 1999, 1). Black women's skin, although softer, was already constructed as ugly in the Middle Ages, whilst paradoxically, they were seen as offering intense sexual pleasure. Skin and hyper-sexuality already marked Sheba and, therefore, all Black women as

racialized “others”, desirable but contemptible. Constructing the gendered and “raced” boundaries of European national identities and white supremacy continued with early European travel writers who represented African women as monstrous bodies, “desirable and repulsive, available and untouchable, productive and reproductive, beautiful and Black” (Morgan in Hall 2000, 39). These discourses emerged centuries before the European colonies in North and Latin America and the Caribbean were established (Gilman 1992).

Skin shades and dark African-descent skin have had resonance within the Black Atlantic world for centuries. For example, in *El Archivo de Indias* in Seville it is possible to see requests for licences to travel to Latin America from Spanish families which list household members, both free and enslaved, in terms of the constructed caste-shade categories generated from “race mixing” and blood quantum, for example, *mulata/o*, *zambo*, *morisco*. In the Mexican *Las Castas* classification *mulata/o* had white and Black parents, *morisco* had *mulata/o* and white parents and *zambo* had Indigenous and Black parents. Needless to say each blood quantum category had different discursive constructions attributed to skin and through that to people, which enabled Spanish whiteness to have boundaries setting it apart from those who were “mixed race”, Black or Indigenous. According to Hilary Beckles (1999), during enslavement in the Caribbean the Black woman was ideologically constructed as essentially “non-feminine” in so far as primacy was placed upon her alleged muscular capabilities, physical strength, aggressive carriage, and sturdiness (10). Pro-slavery writers presented her as devoid of the feminine tenderness and graciousness in which the white woman was tightly wrapped.

The history of *the* Black woman's body in the European-North/Latin American imagination is imbricated within racial capitalism, its racialization regimes and technologies of governance based on skin shade further developed during Western Hemispheric colonialism and enslavement. These regimes and technologies still remain active today both in metropolises and former/present colonies. Indeed, for Hortense Spillers (1987) *the* Black woman's body has

provided and continues to provide an essential other for the construction of white US American/European women's bodies. The dark skinned Black woman continues to be a marginalized corporeality in white and light skinned US-UK/European-Latin American-Caribbean cultural consciousness and representation.

We can say that there is a repetition of images of dark skin as ugly in the UK-US (Collins 1991; hooks 2000; Wilder 2010), Latin America (Pinho 2010) and the Caribbean (Tate 2009) deriving from shared North Atlantic universals (Truillot 1995) of what dark skin on women's bodies constitutes. For example, ugliness, backwardness, African-ness, masculinization and poverty. The gaze from white and lighter iconic skins continues to reproduce dark skin as multiply displaced and undesirable, though paradoxically a source of endless fascination (Fanon 1986; Yancy 2008; Wilder 2010).

Drawing on the earlier work of Charles Parrish, Jeffrienne Wilder (2010) asserts that there has been no change in colourist ideology among African Americans. The attitudes and names associated with light skin tones tended to be negative whilst those related to dark skin tones were derogatory, but medium skin tones were viewed most positively. For Wilder (2010), colourism in the USA seemed not to operate in the traditional binary logic of racialized skin politics but was within a three-tier system with brown at the top of the hierarchy. This preference for brownness and orientation away from dark skin also maps onto Jamaica's "browning" (Mohammed 2000; Tate 2009), Brazil's "mulata" (Caldwell 2007; Pinho 2010), Cuba's "mulata" (Arrizon 2006) and the Dominican Republic's denial of African descent but embrace of indigeneity and Spanish descent brownness (Candelario 2000).

In the Global North/South West, dark skin colour continues to speak racialized otherness and ugliness in post-settler, post-plantation and post-colonial societies. Indeed, it is through skin shade that we still intuit who can be human even in those societies which appear to be racially homogeneous (Pierre 2013; Tate 2016; Wynter 2003, 2001). As Kobena Mercer (1994) reminded us, skin is not just

organic but highly politicized as a hyper-visible signifier of racial difference. Our racialized and gendered identifications emerge in the flow *between* skin shades as meaning-filled and affective body surfacings. Skin shade continues to be the building block of national politics, aesthetic hierarchies, transracial intimacies/dislocations and structural inequality within the USA, Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean and the African continent (Pierre 2013; 2008; Fokuo 2009; Hope 2009; Brown-Glaude 2007; Tate 2016). It is from within the historical and contemporary aesthetic matrix of racial capitalism that we see discourses of dark skin on women's bodies as ugly, backward, masculine, desirable, repulsive, and contemptible, spreading out as a "second skin" (Cheng 2011) to impact Black women through misogynoir.

Affective and aesthetic economies as second skins: Misogynoir, Michelle Obama, Lupita Nyong'o, Nyakim Gatwech and Davina Bennett

Marie Solis (2016) notes that Professor Moya Bailey coined the term "misogynoir" in 2010 to describe Black African-descent women's experiences of the intersections of sexism and racism. This is experienced as absence within presence, hyper-visibility plagued by invisibility, as well as hatred but inclusion with provisos (Solis, 2016). Misogynoir is intimately attached to dark skin on a Black woman's body as shadism's discursive "second skin" with its centuries of construction as signifier of racial otherness, inferiority, atavism and primitivism (Cheng 2011). We can see this discursive "second skin" in the media debate on Michelle Obama's "right to (bear) bare arms" in her first term as First Lady of the United States (FLOTUS) (Tate 2012). The furore over her "rippling biceps" illustrated that in the USA FLOTUS's respectable femininity is still judged from the gaze of dissection (Fanon 1986; Yancy 2008) emanating from whiteness. It was unnecessary to say "Hey! Look! FLOTUS is Black and dark skinned". This is because through drawing attention to her "rippling biceps" her masculinization (Beckles 1999) was also compounded by her dark skin. This discursive "second skin" forged within the racial capitalism of "New World" plantation economies, impacted Michelle Obama in the twenty-first century because she was *not* the

FLOTUS “somatic norm” (Puwar 2004; Tate 2012). As a dark skinned Black woman she co-existed uneasily with the white somatic norm as we can see in the “ape in heels” comment when she was compared unfavourably with Melania Trump and its aftermath in 2016 (Simpson 2016).

Through this comparison between Obama and Trump, we see the same naked racism as the attention to her arms because she is known only through a “second skin” which places her as (un)knowable threat to the white body politic socially, politically, culturally, aesthetically, and psychically. This “second skin” is always already known within the Global North and South West racial epidermal schema in which irrespective of gender, class, age, ability or sexuality, black bodies are “sprawled out, distorted, recoloured animalistic, bad, mean, ugly, cannibalistic, lascivious but, most importantly, feared” (Fanon 1986, 113). Over-determined by “this second skin”, Obama had to performatively enact a “known” bodily hexis as FLOTUS through “civility” as in colonial times. This civility was measured through how her body spoke, looked, behaved, and was adorned. She had to use glamour and professionalism to undermine the threat posed by her dark skin to the body politic imagined as white and male. We can see this assumed threat in the focus on her arms, muscles covered by her dark skin themselves covered by the “second skin”, where we can perceive fear, contempt and white ontological insecurity even as “the force of the racist episteme is imprinted on the body” (Puwar 2004, 41). As Charles Mills (1997) argues, the white body continues to be the somatic norm even if it is no longer juridically or constitutionally supported because the racial contract demarcates and reserves space for its white first-class citizens. Thus, reactions to Obama show the connectedness between anti-dark skin aesthetics and negative affect within racial capitalism. Dark skin is also affective outside of the White House space as we see next in a *Teen Vogue* article on Nyakim Gatwech.

South Sudanese model Nyakim Gatwech, called ‘Queen of the Dark’, has taken the world by storm simply because she celebrates and loves her darker skin (Sahu 2017). Nyakim went viral after posting a story of her interaction with an Uber driver on Instagram. When the Uber driver asked if she would bleach her skin for \$10,000,

Nyakim laughed it off. 'I would never do that. I consider my skin to be a blessing'", she told him (Roberts 2017)

To "take the world by storm" because you celebrate and love the dark skin you live in, means that dark skin continues to be seen as problematic by "the world" and dark skin on African-descent women's bodies is something that still attracts negative affect. We see this in the article which makes us assume that she should *hate* rather than *love* her dark skin as well as *not* celebrate it. Thus, self-hate and its binary self-love need to be looked at briefly here. According to Peter Hadreas (2016), personal love is looking together in the same direction and personal love wears down inequalities. If we take the back of the cab as a microcosm of the world in which she lives, Gatwech cannot look in the same direction as the taxi driver because to do that would be to reproduce herself as unequal and as ugly. To do that would be to reiterate that very hatred of dark skin which generalizes and constructs her through "an exclusive or" (Hadreas 2106, 2). The generalization is the assumption that she must hate her skin enough to want to change it, and the exclusive or is that she is both a *fare* and contemptible. The world she inhabits in the back of the cab is one in which a "limiting case of hatred emerges when groups of people are believed to be monolithically *necessarily* worthy of harm and blame" (Hadreas 2016, 2). That is a world dominated by white supremacy and shadism which together produce the iconic norms of whiteness and lightness as skin ideals and reproduce dark skin as ugly. Gatwech turns away from this world towards love of dark skin, towards self-love without reliance on the other to come into being. In contradistinction to the world of darker skin hatred she sees her skin as a blessing and would not bleach it even if offered a considerable sum of money.

She negates the ruling episteme within racial capitalism where whiteness/lightness is prized and brownness is desired, even whilst she undertakes global aesthetic labour as a model within it. She has "caused a storm" because she transgresses a racial aesthetic contract in the Global North/South West which has been centuries in the making and which is so pervasive that it has almost

managed to disappear into thin air because its negativity is a taken-for-granted aspect of social life. It is something that we are all inculcated to expect within a Global North/South West aesthetic “libidinal economy” which, for Frank Wilderson,

functions variously across scales and is as ‘objective’ as political economy. It is linked not only to forms of attraction, affection, and alliance, but also to aggression, destruction and the violence of lethal consumption... it is the whole structure of psychic and emotional life... something more than but inclusive of or traversed by ... a ‘structure of feeling’; it is a dispensation of energies, concerns, points of attention, anxieties, pleasures, appetites, revulsions, phobias capable of great mobility and tenacious fixation (7).

The avid consumption, contempt-hate and love of dark African descent women's skin show the ease of slippage produced by Hadreas's concept of “exclusive or” in terms of racialized skin dynamized by phobia (Hadreas 2016). Within this libidinal economy dark skin on a woman's body as a “second skin” places her at the bottom of the aesthetic hierarchy because of the limited value attached to that skin tone. It is worth repeating that this “second skin” is produced in political and social conditions not of its inhabitant's choosing. Therefore the libidinal economy of dark skin is important to think through because of how tenaciously fixated we all are on skin through *philia* or *phobia*. As the object of *philia* or *phobia*, dark skin structures affective and psychic life, political economy and societal structuration.

Dark skin's libidinal economy is textured by racial capitalism's whiteness and shadism. Here dark skin is reproduced continuously as negative and is subject to aggression, phobia, as well as violent consumption, as we see in the cases of both Obama and Gatwech. However, such an economy can also be positive, in terms of attraction, alliance and affection as we see with Gatwech's comments. Dark skin's libidinal economy can also be the source of exceptional

inclusion into an industry which prizes and fixates on “unusual skins” as we have also seen through the modelling careers of Alek Wek and Grace Jones (Tate 2009; 2015). The psychic life of dark skin phobia means that Gatwech should see her skin as a burden not a blessing, something to be vilified, not prized or praised, something to be erased from representation, not reproduced by her or others in Instagram and YouTube posts. This psychic life of dark skin phobia is also reproduced through Black communal and individual shadism as we see next in the example of Gilbert Arenas’s comments about Lupita Nyong’o:

Gilbert Arenas has found himself under fire for his comments about dark-skinned women on Instagram in which he claimed that very few dark-skinned women are beautiful. The athlete even slammed actress Lupita Nyong’o as not “cute”. In response to an Instagram post from *ProBlk* that read “Dear Black Girl: You don’t have to be mixed to be beautiful”, Arenas went on a rant: “How black are we talking??? Not to be funny can u name a beautiful black woman on the outside... not brown skin...like tyrese black.... when you say African features black then u have (#1 lupita nyong’o) and she’s cute when the lights are off... so the black beautiful women u try to boost up is [sic] technically light skinned or brown skinned”. After intense backlash Arenas still refused to apologize for his comment on Nyong’o. (The Grio 2017)

Arenas separates Black from brown skin when he talks about beauty because for him African Blackness such as Nyong’o’s is “not cute”. In fact, he sees her as cute only when “the lights are off”. Although he later apologized to Black women, the tone of his apology is deeply offensive and misogynist, so will not be repeated here. This brutal assault on dark skinned women brings to mind the words of Peter Abelard with which we began to historicize connections between dark African-descent skin on a woman’s body and ugliness constructed in racial capitalism. This should be a point of concern for members of the Black community in the diaspora and on the continent who think and act in shadist terms.

What can be done in the African phobic world we inhabit where misogynoir dictates that Black women with dark skin continue to occupy the space of ugliness? What Gatwech and Obama have shown above is resistance to this “second skin”, which takes the form of a turning away from it as a determinant of who they are and can become. They absolutely reject its boundaries and limits. In this re-orientation (Ahmed 2006), this turning away from dark skin phobia, we see the resistance of dis-alienation (Césaire 2000). This is essential to re-constructing dark African-descent skin at one step removed from what it once was perceived to be within “second skin” discourses and white/shadist imaginaries. Dis-alienation is focused on constructing Black women turning away from their inscription by Abelard in the Middle Ages and from Beckles's (1999) historical account of Black enslaved woman and the aesthetic politics which surrounded them on Caribbean plantations. Resistance through dis-alienation begins the work of decolonizing “second skin” discourses, affective life and aesthetic politics. This is necessary to do if we are to continue to assert dark skin's aesthetic value away from contemporary racial capitalism's market in skins, or even within those markets when they have been stripped of their tendency towards “violent consumption” (Wilderson 2010). Decolonizing “second skin” discourses by resistance through dis-alienation enables the creation of a new libidinal economy of dark skin based on philic attachments. The turning away from the libidinal economy of dark skin as negative which Gatwech and Obama have modelled above and will do again below is also shown by Nyong'o and Davina Bennett.

Creating a new libidinal economy of dark skin: Resisting dark skin othering through dis-alienation

For Aimé Césaire (2000), the being and becoming of the colonized is circumscribed by white supremacy such that the colonized cannot fully occupy the category human. In order to become human and leave being a colonized thing behind, the colonized woman has to dis-alienate from the scene of her racial subjugation, from the white supremacist constructed impossibility of her

being and becoming human. This is at root the work of dis-alienation. It is about resistance to the “second skin” constructed during a long history of European production of Black women as other which had its zenith in settler colonialism and enslavement. Such resistance through dis-alienation severs links to racial and gendered subjugation by re-constructing self and society based on the gaze of a Black decolonial feminist critique (Tate 2017). What are the outlines of such a critique?

In her response to white feminism from what I interpret as a Black decolonial feminist perspective, Jamaican scholar Sylvia Wynter OJ (1982; 2001) repeatedly avers that her focus is on “genres of Man” rather than just gender. This is because focusing only on gender leaves man intact which will not enable women’s emancipation. Thus, placing gender at the centre of a Black decolonial feminist theory will not lead to Black women’s liberation. Rather, critiques must be built on the colonality of power, race, gender, and other intersections to enable feminism to liberate Black women (Tate 2018). What if women do not necessarily recognize what they do, see and believe is Black decolonial feminist critique? Can we still say that their resistance through dis-alienation is Black decolonial feminist critique? The Dominican Republic-born, Black decolonial feminist Yuderkys Espinosa Miñoso (2007), helps us in thinking through this, when she asserts that we can say that art [also read here knowledge and other forms of cultural production and practice] by women which is inventive, sagacious, radical and committed to women’s existence, is feminist, irrespective of whether or not feminist consciousness led to its production. Espinosa Miñoso’s (2007) view is that if it is not anti-racist, feminism is racist and we must make visible patriarchy, colonization, and the Western gaze within existing feminist discourses. Indeed, we must question both the existing conditions of subalternity and the mechanisms of privilege within modern heteropatriarchy from an anti-racist, decolonial, and anti-capitalist position (Espinosa Miñoso 2007). It is only by doing this questioning that we can critique racial capitalism’s negation of dark African-descent skin on women’s bodies and illustrate that women live their dark skin lives through dis-alienation forged by radical Black aesthetic consciousness.

In an interview with Oprah Winfrey (2016), as she was about to stop being FLOTUS, Michelle Obama spoke at length about how to deal with negativity. She said that she has a defence mechanism whereby she does not hold onto the “bad stuff” including being called an “angry Black woman”. Her thought at the time that this occurred was, “Dang, you don’t even know me. Where did that come from? Then you sort of think this isn’t about me but about the person or people who write it”. Obama’s claim that this is not about her but about the people who write it, think it and speak it, already orientates us to a new position on “the angry Black woman” trope. That is, it is *not of her*. That anger is being ascribed to her because of “the second skin” which threatens to encase her. From this “second skin” she can only be known as white-generated stereotype rather than herself as an individual – “me”. She goes on to say in that interview that colour and wealth are not things that define us as people but rather it is how we live our lives that matter. “So I thought, ok, I will just live my life out loud and let people judge for themselves” (Winfrey 2016). Living one’s “life out loud” is already a position which turns her away from stereotypes on the dark skinned Black woman. She lived her life as the first African American FLOTUS in a way that she chose, not as dictated by the media. In doing that, she also allowed “the American people” to judge the quality of their FLOTUS for themselves rather than being media dupes. Through her own act of freedom, she also freed “the American people” to interrogate the racist stereotypes of Black women so deeply held that they continue to inflect dark skinned Black women’s lives, even hers. At base, she engaged in a re-construction of what Black women can be and become outside of the confines of the stereotypes. Reconstructing the human as raced, gendered, abled, sexualized, and classed becomings which can be imagined otherwise and performatively enacted (Butler 1997; Tate 2005; 2009) and brought into being, is the work of dis-alienation. In this dis-alienation (Césaire 2000) from the stereotype of the angry Black woman she engages in a “liveable life” (Butler 2004) free from the grief caused by shame inducing anti-Black woman racism, misogynoir. In other words, she re-creates the libidinal economy of dark skin through resisting racist phobia and violent cannibalization of her body parts and psyche in the media: that is, if we see cannibalization as “domination, fear, absorption, revulsion and dehumanization” (Owens and

Beistle 2006, 207-208). In her resistance to this domination based on negative racialized affect, Obama refuses to be the sum of her body parts, so that the media could not project onto her their own taboos on Black women's pathological psyche and aberrant flesh.

When model Nyakim Gatwech was in middle school she cried herself to sleep thinking she wasn't beautiful enough. Now the 24-year old Sudanese model has become an icon of beauty and an inspiration to young women everywhere. Her secret? Self-love. "It takes time to love who you are. Be confident in whatever the situation is", Nyakim said in an interview with *Teen Vogue*. "If you love yourself other people will see. It will shine through you and then they have the choice to accept you or walk away... When I put a picture up I'm telling people that no matter what you say, I love who I am. I love my skin tone. I'm telling people that I am beautiful even though I look different from the majority of the people in this world I live in" (Roberts 2017).

Gatwech's resistance through dis-alienation emerges through self-cannibalization which challenges racist perceptions of low self-esteem and ugliness attached to Black women with dark skin. She does not wait to come into being through the other of the West (Glissant 2006) which would be a position of self-negation. Her pictures are a demonstration of self-love, resistance in the face of the violent consumption of shadist and white supremacist hate. Through self-love she remakes the world in which she lives which removes her resistance from being perceived as purely narcissistic or vain, to being anti-racist image making beginning from the self as possessor of radical Black aesthetic consciousness. If we notice her words above, she also begins from a position in which she locates the source for her action through the use of complaint, "I am telling people that no matter what you say, I love who I am". The *who* is as important as the self-love here as they both humanize her through her own gaze in the face of the dehumanization meted out to Black women with dark skin. For Anne Anling Cheng (2001) complaints emerging from grievance are central to anti-racist political action. Here, Gatwech's negation through racial capitalism's

"second skin" ugliness is the source of grief. She has chosen to let go of grief, to extricate herself from the suffering caused by anti-dark skin hate and to construct resistance through the dis-alienation forged by each self-love image she posts of herself. We can read each image as a grievance, a complaint which, as a Black decolonial feminist political action, turns away from the Black beauty melancholia (Cheng 2001; Tate 2005) which reaches out from racial capitalism's "second skin". Lupita Nyong'o also shows us such Black decolonial feminist turning away from dark skin negation next.

Lupita Nyong'o is again getting candid about her looks and is glad she's helping to redefine the standards of beauty... she was dubbed People's most beautiful woman in 2014 and then appointed as L'Oréal's brand "ambassador" ... she's "happy to help change the narrative that previously proscribed dark skin as unacceptable" ... Oprah Winfrey, Whoopi Goldberg and Alek Wek ... paved the way for her ... she got over believing that light skin was more desirable with the help of her loving supportive family..." I think beauty is an expression of love ... to rely on the way you look is empty... You're a pretty face and then what? Your value is in yourself. The other stuff will come and go...There's room in this world for beauty to be diverse (Saad 2014).

Nyong'o's beauty as "an expression of love" re-orientates us to how we can value ourselves by turning away from those norms based on just "a pretty face" and "dark skin as unacceptable". To not ascribe to the normative beauty values of the "pretty face" and lightness is to put oneself outside of racial capitalism's "second skin" beauty hierarchies. However, it is not just oneself that is implicated in breaking away from the violent consumption and domination of the libidinal economy of the "second skin", but also families and communities must conduct such politics from bell hooks's (2001) margins. From these margins we can begin to enact a Black decolonial feminist politics in which as Nyong'o puts it "your value is in yourself". *Your value is in yourself*, also re-orientates us to a form of world making in which we must recognize that "the body is not merely matter but a continual "'materializing' of possibilities" (Butler 1997, 404). As we do our

bodies, we can do them differently from our contemporaries and predecessors through repetitive signifying (Butler 1997). Subversion of discourses becomes possible within repetitive signifying whilst change occurs through failure in the repeat of “second skin” discourses of *the* dark skinned Black woman. Thus, Nyong’o emerges as herself, as different from the expected script of “second skin” ugliness because

Just as a script may be enacted in various ways, and just as the play requires both text and interpretation, so the gendered [and raced] body acts its part in a culturally restricted corporeal space and enacts interpretations within the confines of already existing directives (Butler 1997, 410).

Dark skin dictates a lack of aesthetic value when whiteness/lightness are the norms. However, Nyong’o asserts that lack produces something other within spaces of resistance to the “second skin” within the self, family, and community. Such resistance through dis-alienation from the “second skin” norm creates a position from which beauty can be diverse.

We see this same repetitive signifying of lack and failure in the repetition of “second skin” discourses of *the* dark skinned Black woman and resistance through dis-alienation in the case of Miss Jamaica Universe 2017, Clarendon’s own Davina Bennett. Within Jamaica’s aesthetic hierarchy “browning” (Mohammed 2000) and straight/straightened hair reigns supreme, as we see in Miss Jamaica World 2017, Solange Sinclair. Against all the aesthetic odds Bennett, who is a dark skinned wearer of an Afro, was crowned Queen to represent Jamaica on the international beauty stage that is Miss Universe. Even though we know that the Miss Universe pageant, as opposed to Miss World, allows more racially diverse “looks” in its competitors, Bennett was significant because her skin colour and hairstyle in combination spoke her African diasporic descent. Indeed, the *Jamaica Observer* states that after the Miss Universe competition in November 2017, “Bennett became an internet sensation thanks to her rich chocolate coloured skin and trademark afro” (Author (*Jamaica Observer* 2017). “Thanks to” *not* “in spite of” alludes to a new era in beauty

politics in Jamaica. As “face” of the Jamaican nation (Barnes 1994) her skin and hair spoke the resurgence of a decolonizing Blackness in Jamaica worn on the body which evokes the texture of Marcus Garvey's resistance to brown and white skin colonial power and privilege. This argument draws on Deborah A. Thomas's (2004) Jamaican “modern Blackness” by thinking about how decoloniality works at the level of everyday often micro-practices, such as dis-alienation, a turning away from dominant beauty norms. Bennett herself posted on Instagram after placing third in the Miss Universe pageant 2017.

I did not win but I got what I was seeking. I won the hearts of many, I got to highlight deaf awareness, I stand as the first afro queen to have made it thus far, I represented my little island and I received all the love one could possibly wish for... THANK YOU!!! I came, I conquered, and if you know me, then you know that's just another story and you will be seeing a lot more from me (*Jamaica Observer* 2017).

She came, she conquered hearts and was loved but she also had to face critique in her own country of Jamaica for not straightening or tying her hair back for the competition. This is significant because hair politics is linked to skin politics in Jamaica and her outward show of Afro-centrism draws attention to her dark skin which for some in the diaspora continues to be problematic within the realm of beauty. Angela Y. Davis (1994) asserts that the retro-Afro is shorn of the politics of Black liberation, self-love and anti-racist aesthetics within which the hair style originally emerged. However, Bennett calls herself “the first afro-queen to have got this far”, which makes us see her Afro in a different light. Far from being a hairstyle “shorn of the politics of Black liberation” we see Barrett asserting its Black anti-racist aesthetics significance and thus positioning herself as occupying a radical Black aesthetic consciousness. The facts that Bennett won in Jamaica, “broke the internet”, and had her success picked up by fashion and lifestyle glossies such as *Elle*, *Essence* and *Allure*, which praised her for going against tradition and entering an international pageant with an Afro, are important. This is so, first because they show her resistance to racial capitalism's “second skin” through dis-alienation from dark skin phobia. Second,

because they show that dis-alienation and Black anti-racist aesthetics continue to decolonize a Global North/South West society and culture still fixated on whiteness and browning beauty norms. Bennett's skin in combination with her hair show her Jamaican twenty-first century Black-centric decolonizing resistance to such norms through her dis-alienation in insisting on going against the beauty grain by being "the first afro queen".

Conclusion

Looking at these women's resistance through dis-alienation by the lens afforded by Black decolonial feminist critique we can see that Obama, Gatwech, Nyong'o and Bennett have developed ways of living and becoming outside of racial capitalism's "second skin" discourses. They engage in developing ways of living and becoming which start from the Black dark-skinned woman self. Beginning from the self as a site of Black decolonial feminist critique and practice means that they engage in what Jamaican Rastafarians call "livity" (Chevannes 1994). Livity is a Black Jamaican-originated philosophy which extends from aesthetics to a whole way of life centred on Black dark skinned becoming rather than seeing dark skin as a deficit, something which is in need of correction. Obama, Gatwech, Nyong'o and Bennett create a world which they make to pause and look at its own dark skin phobia as a traumatically intimate location produced by the skin values of global racial capitalism (Robinson 1983).

In doing this, they go beyond the negatively affective and violent consumption of the libidinal economy of the "second skin". They turn away from the "second skin's" reproduction of dark skin's ugliness and dark skin as a source of shame. Livity as a Black decolonial feminist practice of dis-alienation ruptures the body politics of "second skin" aesthetic regimes. This takes on board Césaire's (2000), Glissant's (2006), Fanon's (1986) and Wynter's (2003) insistence that as Black African-descent women in the diaspora we can only decentre the European civilization project by moving beyond *being* solely in opposition to whiteness in

order to *become* ourselves. Racial capitalism constructed Black African-descent dark skin ugliness and white or light-skinned beauty. We need to move beyond being in opposition to whiteness/lightness if we are invested in intersectional anti-racist liberation focused on the process of *becoming* ourselves. We see this being put into practice by Obama's, Gatwech's, Nyong'o's and Bennett's starting from themselves, from love of themselves, as they remake their worlds in their own image and through their own gaze. This is not the gaze of dissection wrought by the "second skin" but one focused on showing who "I am", in contradiction to the taken for granted position of dark skin's lack of aesthetic value in the diaspora. From the lens of Black decolonial feminist critique, these women highlight the continuing libidinal economy of dark skin subalternity, contempt, hate and violent consumption as well as the mechanisms of white/light skin privilege within contemporary heteropatriarchy and counter this with a radical Black aesthetic consciousness of dark skin as valuable, as loved.

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Interrogating Diaspora: Lessons Learned from a Fictional Protagonist

Paulette Ramsay

Professor of Afro- Hispanic Literatures and Cultures
Department of Modern Languages and Literatures
The University of the West Indies
Mona Campus, Jamaica

Abstract: The novel *Aunt Jen* (2002) is used as a point of departure for engaging in a conversation on issues related to diaspora, migration, identity, gender and other post-colonial and diasporic issues. The article provides an overview of the novel, its epistolary structure, its focus on migration, and its effects on children. The issues are discussed and analysed for how they provide insight into family, maroon heritage, religious preferences and the resilience of a young girl faced with the silence of an absent mother. The meaning of silence in the novel is studied in relation to questions of diaspora. The bildungsroman's development amidst concerns with migration, questions of connection to country, individual identity and agency brings into focus several post-colonial and post-diasporic concerns of who wants to be part of a diaspora and of how individuals may engage in the reconstruction of new diasporic identities and links to communities and nations.

Keywords: diaspora, fictional, protagonist, epistolary, identity, post-colonial, diasporic identity, agency, gender

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Introduction

The suggestion by Dr Leith Dunn to use my novel *Aunt Jen* (2002) as a point of departure for beginning or continuing a conversation on issues related to diaspora, migration, identity, gender, nation – at first seemed a bit unusual and too self-centred, too self-serving – I initially thought. However, after considering the various ways in which the same novel invites discussion of several of these post-colonial and diasporic issues through the carefully crafted letters of its curious and probing female protagonist, I decided to do exactly what was suggested. Besides, I also considered that perhaps this approach would allow me to deliver a somewhat less theoretically overloaded presentation that would appeal to a wider audience.

So, let me begin with my reason or reasons for writing *Aunt Jen*. I always knew that I wanted to write. I grew up reading voraciously and wanted to write like Enid Blyton, Andrew Salkey, C. Everard Palmer, Mark Twain, Jack Shaefer, Michael Anthony, Garth St. Omer, Roger Mais, among others. Note that most of the writers were men living faraway – even in the case of the Jamaicans, but I knew I wanted to be one of Jamaica's women writers one day and when I met Jean DaCosta as a teenager, I knew then that it was possible to write a Jamaican book like *Sprat Morrison*, albeit with a girl protagonist.

My girl protagonist would be a model girl, bright, articulate, perceptive, and fully bilingual – code-switching and moving through Jamaica's unique linguistic space with ease and facility. So, I really carried a type of Jamaican girl protagonist in my head for a very long time. I knew that when I eventually created a world and placed her in it, or followed her around in it, I would draw attention to her rich cultural space, the folk culture in which she lives, the histories of her people, their belief systems, the ancestral wisdom of the adults in her world, and the proverbs and folktales that preserve much of their world view and shape her values.

So, I wrote an epistolary novel, because in the main, I also wanted to move away from the traditional approach – omniscient third or first person narrator using very descriptive prose. I knew I had to write what I have characterised as a “talking book” by doing something I immensely enjoyed: letter writing. But I also knew that these could not just be like any everyday type of letter. These letters had to depict and very poignantly capture the way many Jamaicans speak and live in a particular space, and the issues that affect their daily lives, during the time period that is in focus.

Perhaps because I grew up with several friends who were children of either both parents, or one parent who lived abroad; perhaps because I had grown up with one parent living abroad and one who had returned from living abroad, somehow, I always knew that I would one day write about migration and its effects on children, who knew their parents or a parent mainly or only through letters. I also wrote many letters, to friends and relatives who lived abroad in different parts of the world. This fascination with talking to people through letters, I believe, explained my fascination with the epistolary genre. So, I wrote this novel in which a young girl writes letters to connect with her mother. According to Edward Baugh, “the letter writing that will bridge an ocean becomes a metaphor for the need to bridge emotional and psychological distance” (Baugh 2003, F9). The entire plot is advanced through her letters and all characters, including her absent mother, are depicted through her interesting and at times amusing letters. Sunshine voices all her experiences for public consumption and it is this public nature of her letters that leads Warner-Lewis to say that: The letters are a “charmingly revelatory mechanism to draw the reader into the mind or personality of Sunshine” (Warner-Lewis 2002, 80).

Reading Aunt Jen

There is a difference between writing a novel and then reading the novel. As writer, I set out to focus on certain themes/key issues, but later as a reader, I am in awe at the many ideas that are generated by the work's development and

unfolding. As a writer, I wanted to draw attention to some reasons people migrate, the effects of migration on children left behind and the effects on family life. I wanted to highlight the importance of family, heritage, ancestral ties, maroon heritage, and I simply wanted to depict the ways in which a young girl remains focused and alert, despite her frustrating attempts to get to know the person referred to by Edward Baugh as her “illegitimate mother” (F6).

Sunshine writes to her mother who never replies, but she continues to write because her blood connection will not allow her to not write, suggesting that blood does matter. Her sharing of events with the silent Aunt Jen is, indeed, reflective of my time of growing up – where people in a community or family were considered to be accountable to each other.

Religious preoccupations in Jamaica have always fascinated me, especially in relation to church preferences and choices because my development has been shaped by the attitudes of rural folk to church and religion. I have witnessed serious and ironic debates during my time growing up, about which churches were superior to the other. I also grew up with an army of strong grandmothers, aunts, cousins, friends, and village women who all were involved in community building; this became an inevitable part of Sunshine's world that would be explored, to bring into focus issues related to gender and genre.

Part I

As a literary critic, I was forced to distance myself from the work to probe beyond the thematic foci, to judge the ways in which this fictional collection of letters allows the contemplation, interrogation and problematising of several key issues related to diaspora, diasporic identity, migration, subjectivity, identity, and nation. Ironically, the aspect of the novel which repeatedly served to provide answers, was the aspect that in itself had no clear answers, but seemed nevertheless to pose questions: the silence of Aunt Jen who never replies. It is this

silence that led one critic to declare that the novel is very much about “the importance of things unsaid” (Baugh 2003, F9).

The letters bring to light the matter of “scattering” – the condition of people who have left their homelands to live in other parts of the world, often in a place in which they are racially and socially different. “Scattering” is accompanied by ideas of movement and migration. Sunshine brings attention to the mother, the intended recipient of her letters, living in “scatteration”¹. It is this silence that also allows rumination about several post-colonial or post-diasporic issues. But Aunt Jen’s silence suggests her disinterest in what is happening in Jamaica. That is one way of interpreting her unspoken or unwritten words. Through Sunshine’s letters we witness an attempt to pull her back into a particular identity. But her silence leads us to conclude that she is not actually seeking to preserve the identity that Sunshine and those who have known her expect her to maintain in the Jamaica British/Jamaica West Indian diaspora.

Diaspora

The term diaspora seems to be used very loosely in our local context, especially in Jamaica. This use seems to ignore the widespread dispersion of Caribbean people all over the world to the UK, Canada, Costa Rica, Cuba, Nicaragua, Panama, Mexico, and Ecuador, at different periods in our history. Often the term is used in a simplistic manner to refer only to those in the USA or Canada. The specificities or unique contexts are never usually explored and the ways in which race, politics and the specific cultural and socio-economic contexts of the multiple transnational spaces affect our people are often not considered. Furthermore, very often politicians and other persons in Jamaica, for instance, speak of diaspora as though the term referred to one single group of persons. We must be careful of using the term to homogenise all Jamaicans, or Caribbean people anywhere outside of their respective countries and regions without the specificity of locale –for instance, the Jamaican/Canadian diaspora, Cuban/Jamaican diaspora, and Nicaraguan/Jamaican diaspora.

Talks of diaspora are also premised on the assumption that all persons who have emigrated wish to continue to be associated with the past and maintain a particular identity linked to the past, space and culture. Aunt Jen's silence suggests that perhaps, she does not wish to maintain a particular identity that has been used to keep her in the minds of those left behind. It has been argued that migrants adapt to their new societies and many eventually become citizens, but are also able to simultaneously retain their cultural links and emotional attachments to their homelands. While we end this novel without knowing the truth about Aunt Jen, we may surmise that perhaps there is this ambivalence on her part. Indeed, Ashcroft and Tiffin speak of the dual ontology in which the "diasporic subject looks in two directions towards a historic diasporic cultural identity on one hand and the society of the relocation on the other" (427).

The consistent silence which meets Sunshine's letters, designed to keep Aunt Jen up to date and to remind us of her culture and the socio-political developments in her village and country, leads us to question whether or not Aunt Jen is really ambivalent or is simply involved in what may be regarded as the reconstruction of her own new cultural/diasporic identity. Indeed, Sunshine assumes that her mother still maintains a fixed identity rooted in Jamaicaness, but it could well be that this is not so.

Loss

Salman Rushdie maintains that the migrant always carries a deep sense of loss (428, 434). Indeed, loss is different from ambivalence as the former implies deep longing, mourning and the desire to repossess the lost home. Ambivalence suggests that the individual is torn between wanting to leave and wanting to stay – suggesting that both places hold the same emotional value to the person, accompanied by indecision about where to settle. There are no letters from Aunt Jen to indicate any loss on her part, but the very existence of Sunshine's letters and her insistence on writing in the face of ongoing silence, speak to her

own sense of loss. She is compelled by this sense of loss to write and make connections with someone with whom she understands that she is connected by blood and to whom she is, in fact connected. In her mind she has probably lost this person.

Sunshine assumes that Aunt Jen carries a similar sense of loss, because she embraces the commonly held generalisation that all migrants experience this loss. Here, it seems that the novel problematises this generalisation of the migrant to force us to admit that not all migrants constitute one homogeneous nostalgic type, but that there may be those for whom leaving results in no desperate longing but a happy and welcome departure. Here, we must consider Sunshine's discovery of Aunt Jen's letter and the phrase she wrote in French: "Dear God, je veux quitter cet endroit" / "I want to leave this place" (7). Indeed, I recall the words of an associate who declared to me: "An island is an easy thing to give up!" This as she was preparing to permanently leave for Canada. *Aunt Jen* forces us to rethink our overt tendency to be sorry for the mournful migrant. Of course, we acknowledge that the sense of loss is real for many migrants, and I will always recall the recollection of third generation migrants in Limón, Costa Rica, who repeatedly recalled their grandparents' constant longing and nostalgia for Jamaica and their pledge to one day return home. The same is true for second and third generation Jamaicans in Guantanamo, Cuba who long to see the "Motherland". These West Indian migrants clung to the past and recreated their British West Indian culture in Costa Rica, cooking rice and peas, speaking Jamaican creole and a type of "English", playing dominoes, attending Burial Scheme and UNIA meetings.

Language and Identity

Interestingly, Sunshine's discovery of Aunt Jen's secret confession inscribed in French uncovers her private construction of identity from an early age before she leaves Jamaica. It is easy to surmise then that her silence and the absence

of any interest in being in contact with Jamaica intimates that she has elected to define herself in terms of her connection to a new European culture.

The importance of language as an indication of cultural identity is also presented in the person of Mrs Delgado who loses her speech after tragedy, but retains one Spanish word *adiós*. She simultaneously bids goodbye to English and the present but reveals the language – a marker of identity that is deeply embedded in her psycho-system – thus revealing her preferred or chosen or true identity.

Writing

I addressed the matter of writing earlier and of how as a child I dreamed of becoming a writer. When I wrote *Aunt Jen*, I was actually a writing teacher. I spent many hours trying to convince my students of the importance of writing for clarifying thoughts, issues and ideas, for communicating effectively and for honing one's linguistic skills. I also had always valued writing in my personal life. I wrote a lot as a taciturn, young person who enjoyed writing and wrote well. I was also very conscious of how many women writers deliberately write to give voice to women since traditional forms of literature have been mainly male-authored. Elaine Showalter asserts that women have always been forced to write subversively claiming "the feminist content of feminine art is typically oblique, displaced, ironic and subversive" (270). I cannot say that I set out to be subversive in the strictly feminist sense that Showalter implies, but I was sure that I wanted to create a child narrator who could simultaneously be innocent, deeply probing and able to alert readers to inconsistencies in the behaviours of people around her, or in things people say, and one whose critical thinking skills are very sharp.

I utilise irony as a crucial discursive strategy. As a writer and literary critic, I was fully aware of the versatility and power of verbal irony in drawing attention to contradictions, inconsistencies and even dishonesty and hypocrisy. So Sunshine

writes to create her own story, include other people's stories, and question other stories at the same time. Her story seems simple on the surface, but at the subterranean level, it is a complex story about growing up and discovering the challenges of understanding adults in her immediate environment and those like Aunt Jen, who are absent and silent. It is noteworthy that the young child also questions Caribbean history and several accepted traditions. In this regard, Curdella Forbes writes:

Deceptive is the simple prose of Ramsay's child narrator (Sunshine herself writing her story in the form of letters to her mother in England who never answers) masks and reveals several layers of reality that make for a complex, finely nuanced story. *Aunt Jen* is a sophisticated exploration of the issues of migration, exile and diaspora from a point of intersection between Caribbean migration in the early days and the present. Ramsay's narrative specifically explores the effect of these issues on children, a group given scant, if any, attention both in our traditional readings of the Caribbean bildungsroman, and in the current preoccupation with adult gender and cross border identity in diaspora studies. (81)

Writing deserves full critical consideration as Sunshine realises the importance of writing at an early stage and asks Ma if she should write to her mother:

I asked Ma if she thought it was a good idea to write to you and she said she will neither say yeah nor nay. She said maybe if she was me she wouldn't write but she not me so I must decide for myself cause is ebry dankey to him sankey. So I decided to write. (1-2)

Writing therefore becomes the first way in which Sunshine establishes herself as a person of agency even at a young age. It is her way of wading through the complexities of various issues and life. She decides that she wants to write despite Ma's misgivings/scepticism. Moreover, writing is what she loves – it is her past-time:

Anyway, I was just sitting down doing nothing so I thought I would write to you. Actually, I like to write. Sometimes I write poems or letters to myself so I enjoy doing it. Sometimes I think that maybe you didn't get my letters. Sometimes letters get lost. Still it would be strange if my two letters to you got lost. Uncle Roy always gets my letters. (4)

Her writing reveals her to be the stubborn, insistent individual, who will eventually choose her career path and family members with whom she will associate. We see too that it becomes an important hobby as she sarcastically confesses one day:

I cannot write you a longer letter because I hear Ma calling me. She says I spend too much time writing, writing and my writing getting me nowhere . . . I have to stop now. (6)

It is writing that reveals her feistiness and her ability to use words as weapons to reprimand Aunt Jen and "put her in her place" or "tell her off":

When I started writing to you I thought it would be the beginning of a meaningful relationship in which we – me and you – would exchange pleasant, enjoyable and interesting letters on a regular basis. It was not my idea that I would be the only one writing and I certainly didn't think I would end up just writing to relay Ma's and Gramps' messages. But unfortunately, due to no fault of my own, this is what is happening. I have now become the scribe of two parents who feel neglected by a daughter for whom they scraped up every last penny so that she could make a better life for herself in England. (46)

As she writes her letters she realises the extent to which this mode of writing allows her to express herself in a direct manner, but also allows her the pretence of pulling Aunt Jen into her space:

Writing is now in my bones and when anything strange happens, the first thing I think of doing is to write about it. So, I am writing to you. (78)

The irony of the situation and her writing habit is emphasised by the fact that it continues to be a one-way process; she receives no letters in return, and Aunt Jen remains many miles away in her silence.

Community

The sense of community with which I grew up in rural Jamaica had a very positive impact on me and on my impressions of Jamaica and rural folk. This is the community spirit that Sunshine conveys: a supportive place in which people nurture, support and take care of each other. Sunshine writes of the people who take time to love her, counsel her, encourage her: Ma, Gramps, Uncle Johnny and Uncle Roy. So too is portrayed a world of strong women, grandmothers, and neighbours, like Ma and Aunt Sue, who form a strong foundation for her to grow, think and write and express herself.

The community is also one in which there is a rich combination of the comic and “the tragic and the tragic which borders on the comic in a carnivalesque sort of way” (Forbes 2002, 82). This is the case in the recounting of Miss Clara's daughter's funeral:

Yesterday evening was Miss Clara's daughter's funeral – Miss Clara from Bowen's Pasture, not Miss Clara from Cross Roads. We are not so sure what happened but she went to Lucea to have her baby and died before the baby was born. Anyway, yesterday when they were marching with her body from the Salvation Army church to the burial ground, the funeral car got out of control as it was coming down the hill and crashed into the big plum tree at our gate. It crashed into the tree so hard that the coffin flew right out of it and landed on its side in the middle of the gate. The dropping

was bad enough but when the coffin burst open at the sides everybody started to scream and shout. Some started to run and Major Rankine started to shout, 'Demons of hell! Demons of hell! Be gone with you!' She shouted even louder when all kinds of things started to tumble out of the coffin – scissors, broom needle and thread, baby nappy, baby bottle, baby pin, olive oil, vials with other oils and a whole heap of other things that I couldn't make out. When the things stopped tumbling out everybody just stopped bawling and screaming at the same time. Everybody stood there waiting to see if the body would drop out too. When they waited for about a half a minute and nothing happened Miss Clara threw herself on the ground and started to roll and bawl. Some men ran and lifted up the coffin and started to push back the things into it. Major Rankine said, 'Sweet Jesus, resurrector of Lazarus, what is this? Deliver us from the enemy's trap. Demons of hell be gone!' Well it seems as if Major Rankine teeth could not take the pressure any more so by the time she started to say 'Gone' again, the teeth flew right out of her mouth and landed on the pile of things that dropped out of the coffin. I thought Major Rankine would run and grab them up, but instead she just pulled up her white Salvation Army uniform above her knee and ran and ran shouting, 'Thave me Jesus, Thave me!' I don't think any of us could catch her at the speed she was going. (40–41).

This is the essence of Caribbean performance of tragic comedy which in itself may be fully placed within a broad Caribbean aesthetics which includes performance (Forbes 2004). It is the essence of Caribbean people showing how they laugh and grieve at the same time. The hilarious recounting of what is nothing less than horrific tragedy conveys this well.

Politics etc.

Aunt Jen promotes “the search for and actualization of individual and national autonomy through the act of writing – an art of identity formation and reclamation” (13). So declares Paige Gray in an article on national and individual identity in the novel. Indeed, one of the unexpected paths on which I followed *Sunshine* was the one that led to the exploration of Jamaica’s political climate in the 1980s. Even as I wrote, I did not consider that the chronology of events surrounding the Michael Manley era would come to be regarded as paralleling *Sunshine*’s journey into independence and discovery of her identity. But a reading undertaken by Gray seems to credibly/plausibly support this idea:

Aunt Jen advocates the search – the search for and actualization of individual and national autonomy through writing . . . *Aunt Jen* represents a compelling example of Jamaican literature as a means of cultural awareness in that it depicts the very state of ‘becoming’ through *Sunshine*’s physical, intellectual and emotional narration . . . *Sunshine*’s coming-of-age story corresponds to Jamaica’s coming-of-age after it gained independence from the United Kingdom . . . During the period in which *Sunshine* writes, Jamaica grappled with its own self-perception and autonomy. In the years following independence, the country faced the challenge of discerning itself and asserting authority as an entity separate from the United Kingdom after centuries of dependency. (14–17)

Indeed, as *Sunshine* continues to write, she reflects on a critical period in Jamaica’s national and political development – the Manley campaign that resulted in the national exploration of self and heritage – the importance of nation building and identity building and she later also begins to further explore history and discovers that history is “real real”, because Ma is a real Maroon:

Everything I know from history class suddenly turned real real through Ma’s stories about her parents. Ma’s great great grandparents were Maroons. My great great great grandmother

was with either Cudjoe, Nanny or Three Finger Jack. Now I know why Ma is so strong and fiery at her age. (73)

Conclusion

Finally, Sunshine develops in a space typified by linguistic diversity in which she blends standard Jamaican English with Jamaican Creole and other vernacular voices/idiolects of the community. She develops and moves from writing in perfect English in the early letters to using Creole increasingly more and more, similar to Ma, as she finds her own voice and identity.

Important questions related to gender and female agency are also raised by other female characters depicted in the strong characters of Ma, Aunt Sue, and reflect the violation of stereotypical gender representations. These women are strong, decisive, independent, and innovative. Sunshine herself develops into a strong woman, bold enough to assert self and to take her own decisions. We are given the impression too that identity is shaped by place and geography. Perhaps Aunt Jen is engaged in the restoration of her own new identity outside of a context in Jamaica. Paige Gray asserts that the birthplace is important in understanding national politics and for establishing identity and self. Sunshine has remained in Jamaica and is, therefore, able to continue to relate to the place and define herself in this space in a manner in which Aunt Jen cannot. In what we may regard as a post-diasporic construct, we may consider that diaspora is not only about place and the construction of cultural identity, but is a survival strategy which may be emotional or even financial. We may consider too that the migrant chooses to live and be identified the way in which he or she wants to, for that is the reason many leave in the first place. I participate in research on diasporic communities such as Cuba, Ecuador, and Mexico and have found that in some cases diasporic movements/contacts and reconnections are often made/done for more private and personal reasons besides "love of Motherland".

Indeed, the complexity of diaspora, migration and identity seem to be captured in an excerpt from one of my own poems, "Caribbean Global"²:

migration from Kingston, Georgetown, Bridgetown
to London, New York, Madrid, Amsterdam, Brussels
journeying
crossing boundaries
re - mapping the past
deterritorialization a constant reminder
of home, self and place
questions of belonging
reverberate through the mind
ardent Grenadian student
in the library at the Ivy League University
in New England
interrogating knowledge - power episteme
constructing identity
writing Creole identities,
asserting alternatives

all over,
Caribbean people in action
decolonization in progress
accommodating local and global
all over the world
Caribbean people
engaging oppositional politics
making place
laughing othering, (violent or subtle) in the face
writing freedom

strumming reggae songs
on the bass guitar,
writing independent identities.

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¹ "Scatteration" is term referred to by Jerome C. Branche in the preface of his book *The Poetics and Politics of Diaspora: Transatlantic Musings* (London: Routledge, 2015)

² Excerpt from the poem "Caribbean Global", in *October Afternoon* (Hertford, UK: Hansib Publications, 2012), 16–17



Book Review

of

Amanda Arbouin - *Black British Graduates: Untold Stories*. 2018

Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books

[Pauline Muir](#)

Lecturer in Arts Management

Goldsmiths College, University of London

Abstract:

Arbouin's text tracks the educational experiences and career outcomes for ten African and Caribbean British graduates. In this review Pauline Muir provides a synopsis of some of the key themes.

How to cite

Muir, Pauline. 2019. Review of *Black British Graduates: Untold Stories* by Amanda Arbouin (2018). Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books. *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies*, Issue 13: 217–222

Education is viewed as a prized value in most households of African Caribbean migrants. Many of the Windrush generation, although lacking knowledge about the British education system, encouraged their offspring to pursue further and higher education for career advancement. Furthermore, many, like myself following in our parents' footsteps, still place a high premium on education and are keen to see our children pursue the route to higher education (H.E.) despite increased fees and greater competition in the sector. Unfortunately, in a British society riddled with inequality, racism and dwindling resources, H.E. is still possibly the only way that marginalised groups can gain social mobility. While there are policy papers and some academic material on the experience of minorities in H.E., we know little about the personal, educational, and professional journeys undertaken by Black graduates in the U.K. Arbouin's book addresses this gap. It is a welcome and highly engaging contribution to this area of knowledge.

The book provides a rich data set spanning an extended period. It focuses on the careers and educational experiences of ten H.E. graduates of African Caribbean parentage. Tracking not just the outcomes and the psychological trauma encountered by this group, Arbouin also explores how issues of race, ethnicity, and social class impact on their experiences. Drawing on theoretical frameworks from reproduction theory, critical race theory, and Black feminist theory, she skilfully weaves the narratives of these ten male and female respondents using an intersectional method. She traces their experiences from primary school in the 1970s to their graduate careers in the noughties. Using a life trajectory approach, the author provides rich insight into the failure of the U.K. educational system as a whole to provide adequately for the needs of this group of Black students. The book also includes rich biographical details of incidents of negative stereotyping, low teacher expectation of Black students, poor advice on career choices, financial difficulties, as well as the personal and social costs associated with being a Black adult learner. In addition, the book vividly dramatizes issues raised by recent campaigns such as "Why isn't my professor Black?" and "Why is my curriculum white?". The author's review of post-graduation experiences also reflects the negative impacts of the education experience of these Black graduates, which continued into their

employment. The narratives show that issues of marginalisation and disappointment with professional networks still prevail despite their achievement of H.E. qualifications.

Despite the bleak picture painted of these graduates' experience there is much to be celebrated. The graduate and in some cases postgraduate achievements of the respondents are all the more remarkable when one reads that all but two of the ten left school with five or more GCSEs graded at A-C. Undeterred by their mostly negative schooling experiences and extended periods in post-compulsory education, the drive and resilience of the respondents has enabled them to gain success in their respective fields against the odds. We see them deploying their agency and availing themselves of the support extended by family, church, and other community networks in the face of microaggressions, a lack of diversity in teaching staff and a sense of isolation.

I was particularly interested in the attention that the author gives to their love of learning, and the pleasure that is gained by involvement in the education process. So, for the respondents, particularly the females, engagement in the process is not merely an instrumental exercise, but one which is deeply rooted in their soul and inner longings. This section makes for fascinating reading and is something that I recognise in my own educational journey, but not a topic that I have encountered previously in research work on Black graduates.

Qualitative research of this type is by necessity limited by the experience of one's respondents. Nonetheless, I would have been interested to see results from a more diverse group of respondents as most were from a Jamaican background with a few from St Kitts and Nevis. While strategic essentialism and experiences of racism have demanded that we view Black as a homogenous entity, it would have been interesting to see whether a greater diversity of persons from African and Caribbean backgrounds would have produced more variegated findings. It would also have been interesting to explore, for example,

whether the enormous sacrifices for a private education made a qualitative difference to their educational and employment outcomes.

Nonetheless, this critique does not undermine the importance of the text and its value to a wide range of audiences. First, the richness and the deeply personal nature of the narrative style emphasises the importance of Black people writing their own stories. This is not to assert that people of other backgrounds are unable to produce informative research on such a topic. However, Arbouin's status as a 'situated knower' brings a deep affinity and an understanding of the context and the issues. Second, the text is also important for educationalists, academic staff, and policymakers, who may or may not be surprised at the outcomes and the need to consider systems, policies, and working practices in relation to the issues raised. Third, the book will be essential reading for African Caribbean parents, students and those committed to working towards a more equal and just society. One of the most gratifying elements noted in the book is the report that on completing their education graduates were committed to using the knowledge gained from their experiences to find solutions and create a positive change in the education process. I believe that with this type of giving back to the Black community, we will eventually see the changes that are necessary to ensure that the unswerving belief and high value that the Windrush generation placed in education will become a reality for many more Black British Graduates.



<http://sta.uwi.edu/crgs/index.asp>



Book Review

of

Inside the Ivory Tower: Narratives of Women of Colour Surviving and Thriving in British Academia (2017)

Edited by Deborah Gabriel and Shirley Anne Tate
Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books

[Nadena Doharty](#)

Lecturer in Education, Culture and Childhood
School of Education
The University of Sheffield, UK

Abstract: Gabriel and Tate's edited book provides a collection of articles from Black women across a range of disciplines writing with striking linearity about the subtle, but persistent, direct and indirect ways that racism operates. Shattering the meritocratic and equal opportunities' discourse that we come to know of the education system, each author describes the obstacles of navigating British academia. But the book goes further: it offers Black and other racial minorities the inspiration to keep going in spite of one's circumstances, knowing that there are networks such as Black British Academics that support you along the way in tackling racial inequalities in higher education. In spite of a hostile racial environment, Black women in this book are thriving! However, this book simultaneously represents a call to action to institutions and those within, to explore critically, how "diversity" is used, who the beneficiaries are and the impact of racism on the health and safety of its employees.

Keywords: Black women; higher education; whiteness; racial microaggressions

How to cite

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The overriding message of this book is that historically white institutions such as universities may have a few Black faces sitting in the offices you walk past or on the brochures and promotional materials you thumb through as you read about the courses you have chosen, but there is an insidiousness that haunts the corridors, meeting rooms and classrooms that you unquestioningly pass through: white supremacy. Leonardo defines this as the “direct processes that secure domination and the privileges” for persons racialised as white (2009, 75). The power of whiteness means that those ‘actors’ within the institution perpetuate, through practices, policies and behaviours, the uncritical assumption that Black bodies do not belong (Bhopal 2018; Puwar 2004) and their scholarship is inherently biased, straying too easily into identity politics. Consequently, Black women are marginalised across multiple axes including race, class and gender. These assumptions about equal opportunities ignore how knowledge is produced, thus claims to the neutrality of a university space is a positioned perspective that becomes taken-for-granted (Delgado 2009). Eurocentric knowledge has deep, obstinate roots in British universities reflecting and being reflected by wider acceptance of such knowledge by persons racialised as white. Indeed, white people are “primed” from a very early age about the world and those who do and do not belong. This pre-disposal to racial stereotypes means white people “embrace an ideology of race neutrality or colour blindness...many Whites tend to underestimate or deny racism exists but will still engage in behaviours that perpetuate racial discrimination” (Smith et al. 2007, 561). As a result, Black women within the book recount with *consistency*, the racial microaggressions they experience working in British universities and the suspicious looks and questions they receive about their roles within the university. Not surprisingly, this has led to countless instances of mistaken identity, where these academics were mistaken for administrators, students or even a coffee lady.

Not only does this insightful and illuminating book shed light upon persistent patterns of marginality, but also on the importance of informal networks. Black women have to draw on fellow Black academic and community ‘sisters’ for support and advice in the face of various iterations of white privilege. The

margins for Black women have been a source of frustration but have also revealed the potential for resistance (hooks 1990) and, as Gabriel points out, the book provides “narratives of women of colour surviving and thriving in British academia . . . ‘thriving’ with regards to our emotional and spiritual growth and development, our endurance, determination and perseverance in our ambition to be agents of change in our various roles within and beyond our institutions”(Gabriel and Tate 2017, 148). Informal networks have been useful for these women to retreat - if only temporarily - from the most abrasive forms of racism because for universities, racism is a “diversity and equality” consideration and not a health and safety issue (Tate 2017; Ashe and Nazroo 2018). Structural misogyny refers to hostile white institutions having a direct impact on the mental well-being of Black women; therefore, the book makes a strong case for framing and encouraging institutional accountability for racism *and its affects* as part of universities’ Health and Safety policies because it directly impacts upon the mental well-being of Black women (Bernard 2017; Douglas 2017; Gabriel 2017; Jackson 2017; Kwhali 2017; Opara 2017; Mirza 2017; Richards 2017; Tate 2017; Wilson 2017). And yet, Black women’s mental well-being seem to be of no consequence to the changing of institutional cultures. Consequently, the book reveals that Black women’s emotions and mental well-being are also routinely dismissed (2017; see also Duong-Pedica 2018 for an excellent analysis of white hurt and white women’s tears).

As informal rather than institutional support is garnered, the chapters focus a critical lens upon taken-for-granted notions of academic freedom, meritocracy and institutional markers of accountability that ignore the racialised and gendered challenges Black women face. Indeed, the book represents a clear need to centre race as well as gender, particularly with charters such as Athena SWAN which holds institutions to account for their promotion of gender equality, but ignores race. Thus, white middle-class women can continue being the beneficiaries of such charters and universities’ policies on tackling racist discrimination (Bhopal, 2015), while pay and progression of Black women remains non-performative (Ahmed 2004). This book is for you, Black woman, Black man, white woman, white man. You do not need any more fact-finding

books, reports or surveys to “understand” the pattern of racism on your campus. It is there. Although this book is a source of inspiration for racially minoritised women who face these daily indignities and structural barriers to their scholarship but still manage to keep thriving, it does not absolve us from personal responsibility. Therefore, the book should also be read as a call to action: what will you do? For we are all impoverished so long as the scholarship of talented Black/brown academics is marginalised or dismissed. Moreover, readers are left with the obligation of critically looking at the positions of power we all occupy and apply a critical reading of our departments, policies and personal behaviours. Black, brown, white silence is complicity and silence costs careers and lives, so I ask you again: what will you do now that you have finished reading this book?

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Editor's Note

Papers from the Nita Barrow Unit

Editors

Charmaine Crawford

Lecturer

Nita Barrow Unit

The University of the West Indies

Cave Hill Campus, Barbados

Leigh-Ann Worrell

Research Assistant

Nita Barrow Unit

The University of the West Indies

Cave Hill Campus, Barbados

Editors' Note

Feminist scholars recognize that knowledge is power so producing and disseminating new knowledge is important in tackling androcentric, enlightenment essentialist paradigms that contribute to gender and racial inequalities and devalue women's subjectivities. Since there is power in the "word", it is only fitting that we highlight the scholarship of three distinguished female professors of The University of the West Indies for our Working Paper Series. Through their thought-provoking insights, two authors probe the complexity of heterosexual gender relations through the prism of love, sexuality, family and the political economy while the other author seeks to historicize and centre black women's leadership from slavery and beyond through the "politics of memory." The pieces are drawn from different perspectives - two are from lectures delivered at the annual Caribbean Women Catalysts for Change Lecture in honour of the late Dame Nita Barrow hosted by the IGDS: NBU, and the third is a critical essay reflecting the inter-disciplinary scope of women's, gender and feminist studies. Readers are encouraged to critically consider whether post-colonial Caribbean realities can rectify the contradictory ways in which women are positioned inside and outside the nation and family when it comes to them exercising erotic agency and autonomy unencumbered by respectability politics and the lure of care work in their socio-sexual relationships, and how women strategize around power-plays in political and community leadership in forging new paths to power. By locating these pieces in Gender Dialogues, hopefully, students and scholars alike can build on these scholarly contributions in advancing Caribbean feminist thought.

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Can There Be Love in the Caribbean?

Christine Barrow

Professor Emerita
Previously, Professor of Social Development
The University of the West Indies
Cave Hill Campus, Barbados

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This paper explores heterosexual love, a neglected issue in Caribbean scholarship which has been preoccupied with the structure of family and conjugality and, more recently, focused on gender and sexuality. And yet, love is everywhere. In private and public spaces, it is celebrated as essential to human happiness – heterosexual romantic love that is, since homosexual love is still outlawed, condemned and clandestine. Paradoxically though, love is enacted within an Afro-Caribbean culture of matrifocality characterized by male ‘marginality’ and hyper-heterosexual performance, and female-centered family solidarity, features which appear to be inimical, if not disruptive, to heterosexual love scripted as monogamous, intimate and enduring. Against this background, this research posed the question: Can there be love in the Caribbean?

For the research, a total of nineteen women in Barbados shared their thoughts and experiences of heterosexual love during a series of focus group discussions.¹ Several considerations influenced the selection of informants. Foremost was research evidence indicating that it is women, not men, who are advocating for the transformation of conventional heterosexuality (Jackson 1999, 121). Age and generation were also significant. Since we, the researchers, were interested in how women sustain and reshape love as the foundation for enduring relationships with men, we sought as informants women who had experienced longer-term relationships. As it turned out, all were or had been married. They did, however, reflect on earlier phases of falling in love and forming relationships. At the same time, we were also concerned to explore intergenerational change as reflected in contrasts between their own experiences and those of their mothers and grandmothers, and so chose younger generation informants. All were under the age of thirty-five years. Eight of them had children thus enabling us to interrogate the impact of managing motherhood on relationships with men.

The selection of participants was also informed by local ideology and culture, specifically the principles and practices of matrifocality and ‘respectability’. The

scholarly spotlight has focused on both perspectives – on Afro-Caribbean matrifocal family structure centred on women's personal and economic autonomy, and on the ideology of feminine 'respectability' that privileges patriarchy, heterosexuality and marriage. But there has been little, if any, attention paid to the contradictions and tensions between them and how women navigate these. To explore this, we selected women who were black (Afro-Caribbean) and also middle class for whom marriage is a social norm. All had been educated to secondary or university level and all but one were employed. Occupations included secretary, store manager, accountant, pharmacist and medical doctor.

There are clear limitations to this research. Two require special mention, namely the narrow focus and the empirical approach. The research sample was small and confined to women who were black, employed as professionals and heterosexual. There is a clear need for a diversity of perspectives within and across class, race, ethnicity and nationality and for the inclusion of other voices – those of younger and older women, heterosexual men and LGBT persons in particular. As we listened to our informants relate their experiences, ideas and problems, we were less concerned with what romantic love is and more with how love is felt and enacted in a specific place and time (Johnson 2005, 1). We recognized, as others have, that heterosexual love is socially scripted and also relational – 'something one "does" and "feels" with others rather than a pre-existing emotion that one "has"' (Smart 2007, 59). Rather than focus on normative structures and instrumental gender roles as has traditionally been the case with Caribbean ethnography, we centred meanings and processes with love as rethought and reworked – for this study, by women as moral agents and reflexive social actors as they renegotiated their relationships with men towards love. This aligns with scholars who have called for research on love to be more grounded and to attend to real lives; as Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott (2010, 36) emphasise, to 'address everyday, interpersonal interaction and the meanings negotiated within it – which are ... crucial to understanding sexual relations.' In the process, we may well have privileged empiricism at the expense of discursive analysis and, at the same time, neglected wider material and

structural inequalities and constraints that have shaped a distinct Caribbean heteronormativity and regulated heterosexual love across the region.² We hope, nevertheless, to have transcended the spoken word and contributed, at some level, to the evolving field of 'Love Studies' (Jónasdóttir 2014) and to contemporary debates on sexual politics, heterosexuality and love, and to have done so from a non-Western perspective. We begin with a brief overview of Caribbean matrifocality and heterosexual 'respectability'.

The Context of Love: Matrifocality and Heterosexuality

Matrifocality is socially and historically embedded Afro-Caribbean society. It signifies emotionally close, supportive and enduring blood (or consanguineal) ties and extended kinship networks centred on mother-child bonds (Smith 1996). Men play key roles in their families of origin, notably as sons to their mothers, but also as brothers, uncles (mother's brothers) and grandfathers – though there is evidence of strengthening fatherhood, both practically and emotionally (Barrow 1998, 349-351; Brown et al. 1993). In contrast, relationships with wives and female partners are depicted as fragile, conflictual and unstable (Handwerker 1989, 61). They are troubled by suspicion and stress and are often short-lived – frequently disrupted by male multi-partnering and intimate partner violence in particular. Stereotypes of the opposite sex abound in public discourse and popular culture. Women see men as 'irresponsible' and 'unfaithful' while, to men, women are avaricious, calculating and untrustworthy (Barrow 1985, 58; Handwerker 1989, 111), out to snare men with pregnancy and obeah tricks. Marriage is said to 'have teeth' and the local saying 'better a good living than a bad marriage' is often quoted, along with anecdotes of couples living in harmony until the day after they marry. Caribbean feminists have refocused matrifocality away from the structural-functional lens of mothers who father children and men who go missing, by highlighting women's personal and economic autonomy and, concomitantly, their relative lack of emotional, social and economic dependence on male partners.

It is perhaps not surprising that in the Barbados context of matrifocality, marriage rates have remained consistently low despite the valiant efforts of the Church and the State to steer people towards social propriety and moral sanctity. Indeed, motherhood is privileged over marriage – more often than not, it precedes marriage, if marriage occurs at all. From the 1930s to the mid-1980s, the marriage rate averaged only 4.8 per 1000 of the population. From then, the number of marriages trebled to reach 3676 in 1996, with the rate peaking at 13.9. Subsequently though, the total dropped to 1890 in 2016, giving a rate of 6.8. Only 23.8 percent of the adult population is married and the proportion of female-headed households stands at 47.5 percent (Barbados 2013), the fourth highest globally. Marriage may be the norm in the middle and upper classes but, to the chagrin of local moral authorities, most Barbadians seem to prefer to ‘live in sin’ in common law or visiting unions (Barrow 1995).

Meanwhile, divorces, though remaining below 100 per year up to 1970, jumped to 438 by 1996, giving a rate of 11.9 per 100 marriages. Since then, the number has fluctuated with the most recent figure, for 2016, showing 469 divorces – a rate of 24.8. The Barbados Family Law Act (1981) shifted the grounds for divorce from ‘fault’ to ‘mutual consent’ and ‘irretrievable breakdown’. While the new law did not prompt a spike in divorce, it coincided with a change in social perceptions of divorce as an indicator of marital dissolution rather than a cause. Indeed, as we suggest in this research, the rising divorce rate may also signify that love is becoming a vital ingredient in heterosexual relationships though remaining elusive. Importantly here, too, is the increase in divorce petitions instigated by wives rather than husbands – between the mid-1950s and mid-1990s, these rose from 44.3 percent to 53.2 percent. However, the latest figure of 53.5 percent for 2016 reveals little recent change.

Love is invisible in matrifocality studies, perhaps because Caribbean scholars like those elsewhere³ considered it too frivolous, too elusive, too difficult to express and observe. Or maybe it simply did not exist? Raymond Smith (1988, 142), one of the founding fathers of Caribbean kinship studies and the architect of

matrifocality, portrays the sexual relations of yesteryear as instrumental and claims that 'intense affect is not necessary', and Carla Freeman's informants refer to the 'emotional coldness' of conjugal (and parental) relationships in previous generations (Freeman 2014, 63). But although love may well have been less affective and romantic, it was also likely to have been an even more intensely private matter in earlier generations – perhaps, therefore, out of bounds for discussion with researchers. Whatever the case, Caribbean ethnography in tandem with data on marriage and divorce in Barbados gives the impression of heterosexual relationships without monogamy, without marriage and without stability until death do part – each of which is considered to be an essential component of love.

Despite this gloomy outlook, there can be no doubt that love is in the air. Across the world, as moral philosophers confirm, love with sexual desire is the most intense and pleasurable of all emotions – it makes us feel special, it is what we long for (Newton-Smith 1989, 204; Soble 2008, 6-11).⁴ We hear repeatedly that to love and be loved is a natural imperative over which we have little control; love is the key to human happiness. In Barbados as elsewhere, love is increasingly codified as romantic love and depicted in images of Hollywood-style passion that saturate television soap operas, films, songs and popular fiction. Modern love demands intimate dinners, Valentine's red roses and chocolates, and ever-more lavish weddings.⁵ A plethora of guidance counselors and advice columns spotlights romance to keep marriages alive and well.

As with love, research has also been silent on heterosexuality, but for different reasons. Heterosexuality is mundane, mainstream, taken for granted and, therefore, unexplored and unproblematized (Jackson 2014, 75; Johnson 2005). Research on intimacy, for example, assumed without question a heterosexual frame (Giddens 1992, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995), as did studies of Caribbean matrifocality and 'respectability'. This normative power of heterosexuality is buttressed at multiple levels by biology, ideology and culture, social institutions and conventional gendered behaviour. Despite the reframing

of love as a social construct, the biological foundation persists and re-emerges – for example, in the notion that the intersections between love, sex and reproduction are underpinned by heterosexual love that is natural, essential and universal. At macro-social level, heterosexuality is sustained structurally and institutionally, at the same time as it is reaffirmed in private spaces in every day sexual and social practices (Jackson 1999, 181). The compulsion to perform heterosexuality co-opts women to be good wives, mothers and homemakers and to distance themselves from lesbianism, while men enact masculine sexual and social authority and, in doing so, separate themselves from the effeminacy associated with homosexuality. Romantic love works in tandem with sex to produce, normalize and legitimize heterosexuality and the concomitant life-cycle course that begins with falling in love and leads on monogamous sexual relationships, marriage and reproduction. As Johnson (2005, 3) puts it, ‘love and sexuality “work” together to authorize and naturalize the configuration of heterosexuality’. At the same time, privileged heterosexuality marginalizes and stigmatizes as transgressive those persons and practices outside its boundaries.

Despite this apparent hegemony, social and political modernization has, if anything, shaken the foundations of normative heterosexuality. In Barbados, as elsewhere, the lives of women in particular have been transformed by law reforms relating to the status of women, divorce and abortion; by enhanced social mobility as a result of participation in the formal economy and politics; by contraception that separates sex from reproduction and frees women from continuous childbearing and motherhood; and by changing patterns of family, parenting and sexuality. LGBT sexual identities and public advocacy have refocused attention from heterosexuality to sexual diversity, though not without strong resistance especially across the Caribbean (Carr 2003, Caribbean Development Research Services Incorporated 2013). As the power of conventional heterosexuality diminishes, the possibility of creating new meanings and realities of love opens up. Heterosexuality is not monolithic; it is fluid and ambivalent – there is nothing inevitable about it. Furthermore, the young women of today are less ideologically constrained than their mothers

and grandmothers – they have more leeway to renegotiate their relationships with men, or indeed to opt out of heterosexuality altogether.

The recent resurgence of studies on heterosexuality, while affirming women's subordination, also reveals evidence of change. Research in the Caribbean echoes that elsewhere in reporting that contemporary relationships are embracing intimacy and joint activity (Alexander 1978, Freeman 2014, Smith 1988, 134-48).⁶ It seems, not surprisingly, that it is women who are driving this trend; it is they, as Freeman (2014, 63) found in her research on middle-class women entrepreneurs in Barbados, 'who are now articulating desires for a new form of marriage that departs in both structural as well as emotional ways from the patriarchal relations of their parents' generation'. Our informants' testimonies resonated with these findings as they, too, sought to reshape their relationships.

It is important though, not to overestimate the transformation of heterosexuality or to underrate resistance from men, and women, too, along with institutional norms and social conventions of patriarchal power that reach into the private spaces of home, family, sexuality and love. As Stevi Jackson (1999, 121) has cautioned, 'claims that a more egalitarian form of love is emerging seem absurdly over optimistic and willfully neglectful of the continued patriarchal structuring of heterosexuality.' Neither should we forget the early feminist accounts that were overwhelmingly critical of romantic love and the marriage trap, or the contemporary discourses of heterosexual love that still carry warning signs for women. Among the first to raise the alarm was Simone de Beauvoir (1972) who warned that women's choice of romantic love represented enslavement. Adrienne Rich (1980) followed with her critique of 'compulsory heterosexuality' as a socially constructed and pervasive, yet silent, mode of ideological control over women's sexual expression, and her advocacy for lesbian relationships as a form of resistance and freedom. More recently, Anna Jónasdóttir (2011, 53-56) claims that women's 'love power', their erotic and caring labour, in heterosexual relationships is appropriated and exploited by

men. Eudine Barriteau (2012, 94. See also Barriteau 2013) is one of the few Caribbean scholars who has grappled with the issue. She states that, 'for women who prove powerful in other social, political and economic relations, there are continuous attempts to use their sexual relations with men to force them into powerless positions'. Add to this, the persistence of intimate partner violence against women and we can be in no doubt that heterosexual love continues to draw on traditional scripts of monogamy, marriage and feminine domesticity to affirm patriarchy.

Romance and marriage may well signify women's collusion in their own subordination. Indeed, Jónasdóttir (2011, 49) identifies the institution of marriage as 'a key regulator that keeps the process of male domination in action.' And yet, heterosexual love 'remains meaningful for, and highly valued by, many women', maybe because in their everyday lives, caring is integral to how they practice love and is, therefore, not seen as exploitative (Jackson 2014, 34, 43). But heterosexual love is also a site of women's agency and resistance and some feminists are now writing positively about love, even to be falling in love with love and 'willing to "come out" as secret fans of romance' (Jackson 1999, 120). In other words, for women, heterosexual love is not just about subjugation and exploitation.

Our informants' narratives echoed these themes of complicity and agency, tolerance and resistance. They cautioned against being deluded by best-loved romantic fantasies: *"Love blinds you to common sense. It's like I'm not falling for that thing again ... you need to be a little more realistic."* It seems then, that we all want love, but it is women who pay the price. It is they who are motivated to reshape love in their relationships with men and they who confront the ideological and structural forces of patriarchy and heteronormativity, public and private condemnation for flouting feminine codes of respectability, and resistance – sometimes violent – from their menfolk. These themes on the intersection of love, sex and heterosexuality are central to the ethos and lived realities of our informants.

What Kind of Love do Women Want?

Our informants identified three main ingredients of heterosexual love: intimacy with communication and romance; equality in joint decision-making and the division of labour, and the absence of violence; and fidelity. In the discussion that follows, we interrogate their rich testimonies as they elaborated on these qualities, explained how their own relationships fell short more often than not and, in the process, contrasted their ideals, expectations, experiences and decisions with those of their mothers and grandmothers.

Intimacy, communication and romance

Informants were united in the view that topping the list of qualities essential to modern-day heterosexual love is intimacy⁷ with communication and romance:

"I know someone who got married to get a house.... But I don't look at marriage like that. Marriage to me is about love and commitment, not for materialistic things";

"For me, love dies because ... not being able to communicate with the other person. Communication has stopped. You've stopped doing romantic things like talking walks on the beach hand in hand, that sort of stuff. I think that's where like the love starts dying, when you stop being excited about each other."

But they also declared that love can survive in the absence of romance, at least for a while:

"But I think as far as commitment goes, if you cannot have that romance and all the frilly stuff for a period of time, that doesn't mean that the marriage is over and you're never going to get it again."

The centrality of intimacy and romance appears to represent a break with the past when, sexual relations were about "'giving" one to the other' rather than intense affection (Smith 1988, 142), that is, the giving of material things and labour rather than love. Our informants reflected this: *"I think people in the generation before would have looked at love as more frivolous ... that when*

you marry somebody, you marry them for better or for worse.... It was all obligation, love didn't really factor in", whereas for them: "When love dies there's nothing left". In other words, what once was "frilly" and "frivolous" has assumed centre stage.

Informants also recognized women's role in initiating and sustaining romance:

"You can buy something that you know your husband is not expecting ... you see this nice negligee. Take it home, right. Just decide one night you're going to cook dinner just for the two of you. Candles on the table. You know ... make him feel special."

But they were adamant that nurturing love should be a dual and reciprocal responsibility:

"If you're the person who does it all the time and then you're not in a position to do it.... And if the person you're with is not the type of person to just pick up the baton and do it for you, you have a serious problem. What happens if you're pregnant? I can only talk about my experiences. If they don't do these things and make you feel special.... You can't really feel special at two hundred pounds."

On this note, several informants described their male partners as "detached emotionally", referring, as Jackson (1999, 117) put it, to their 'lack of emotional reciprocity' and 'incapacity to display love'. For men, love continues to be instrumental:

"He was very, very helpful in the home and he loved to do nice things for me. My friends used to get so jealous about me and this man, because he would do all these nice things, always buying me little things. He would buy flowers, he would cook, dish my food. But I wanted a man ... somebody I can talk to and relate to. But I couldn't communicate with him ... there was no communication. You can't talk about anything."

The cliché of men wanting sex: women love, also came up in their testimonies:

"That's the difference between men and women. Women like the hug up and the kiss up, while men are satisfied with only the actual intercourse";

"And I found that sex became the thing.... He was never really taught how to treat a woman. He just never understood. He just felt that when he leaned over and touched you, you must understand that he is ready. And that's not how we function.... It's going to feel like rape. We want to know that you treat us, you love us and you can hug us and don't want to have sex".

Male sex was also seen to be rooted in biology as a primordial urge:

"I find that men when they are 20 to 25 and their hormones are out of control, they have one definition of love.... I think the testosterone still drives them".

Another challenge to intimacy is the matrifocal pillar of a man's primary and life-long emotional attachment as a son to his mother and not to the mother of his children, whether wife or not. As Peter Wilson (1973, 135) put it, 'There is only one relationship which is ideally sentimentalized – a man's relation to his mother. Throughout his life he will maintain ... that he loves his mother above all else'. The mother-son bond has been described as 'exclusive and often obsessive' (Clarke 1957,164; see also Smith 1996, 56), tensions between a wife and her mother-in-law are legend, and men have been known to delay marriage until after their mothers have died (Barrow 1998, 344-6; Clarke 1957,162-4). As one informant stated: *"My husband now, from the time anything goes wrong, he went straight to his mother."*

Equality

Equality in authority, decision-making and responsibility was also perceived as intrinsic to love in modern-day relationships – as Shulamith Firestone (1989, 37) states: 'power and love don't make it together'. But, Caribbean research reveals a persistent view of men as dominant. In Wilson's gender binary model, male 'reputation' prescribes authority and control, while feminine 'respectability' encodes women's submission within the patriarchal nuclear family. This image of women triggered a feminist tirade across the region that highlighted the long tradition of black women's sexual, personal and economic autonomy, their involvement in the worlds of work and politics, and their

challenge to patriarchal authority (Besson 1993). In the lives of most Caribbean women, there is neither a sharp demarcation between private and public spheres, nor any confinement to the domestic domain. Women have always worked – they share or shoulder single-handedly the responsibilities of family support (Massiah 1983, Senior 1991). Providing child support is integral to motherhood and women continue to work rather than give up employment after childbirth.

But, matrifocality is not matriarchy; it signifies female-centredness, not female authority (Smith 1988, 7-8) and is not a model of women's strength, endurance and resilience despite the insistence of some feminist scholarship.⁸ Women who head households may experience greater personal freedom from male control, but often find themselves among the 'poorest of the poor' (Massiah 1983). And, while women's autonomy is central to matrifocality and may mitigate patriarchy, masculinity prescribes male heterosexual authority including control over women's sexuality – with violence when necessary. In Barbados, men are reported to choose as conjugal partners, women who are younger, of lower occupational status and docile in character (Dann 1987, 70,76). Women's demand for equality is seen to disrupt the natural asymmetry of male domination and female subordination and to provoke male resistance. As we shall see, there are alarming reports of the cultural normalcy of violence justified as the right of men to keep women in order.

Also debated in the Caribbean, is the comparative significance – symbolic and real – of motherhood and marriage in women's lives (Rowley 2002, 35-7). Matrifocality prizes motherhood, within marriage or not, as the primary signifier of womanhood (Senior 1991, 66) and stigmatizes childless women as barren 'mules' or 'graveyards'.⁹ Yet, at the heart of feminine decorum is marriage; it has the 'sanction of respectability' and is the 'hallmark of status', while men are reluctant, if not resistant (Clarke 1957, 47-59). Middle class femininity then, prescribes marriage and childbearing within marriage; motherhood outside of marriage represents a fall from grace, as did divorce. Though there are signs that this is less so, and that women's status is as much dependent on education and career, marriage continues to be desirable to women. Tracy Robinson

(2003, 248) cautions that we should not underestimate the power of marriage as an ideal for women that offers legal legitimacy and social acceptance. And one of our informants spoke for the others when she said, *"For me ... I've always liked marriage. I've always wanted to be in love and get married"*. Young single women 'without a man' and 'on the shelf' are pitied. In contemporary Caribbean romantic fiction, the portrayal of super-respectable women through a Victorian lens as 'restricted to the domestic sphere, virginal or maternal, nurturing, forbearing, submissive and pure' (Bryce 1998, 320-1) appeals to a female readership, even if only in their dreams. Wilson's ethnography thus continues to provide a reference point for the interrogation of Caribbean gender ideologies (DeShong 2011, Freeman 2014, Rowley 2002, 30-3), as it has for this research, though we avoid his homogenization of women and of men within a binary frame, opting instead to explore the fluidity of heterosexuality as a negotiated process.

Among our informants were those who had experienced extreme inequality in their relationships and colluded with the codes of respectability, at least for a while:

"He was head of house and lord and master. I was the child-bearer, cook and household keeper. I had to assess the situation. And thank God, I got married at 21 and divorced by 23. I got out early.... While we were married, my salary was much more than his. All of our expenses came out of my salary. And I had to ask him to spend my money. I did not have a cheque book, I did not have a credit card.... I had to ask for my money. I had no control over anything. I had to ask to buy a pair of shoes. I had to ask to get my hair done."

Another informant reported on her unwillingness to change her name after marriage:

"He was supportive of me not changing my name.... But, everything became an issue when he was leaving.... All this time he pretended that [it] was not an issue, but then it really was a problem. And he'd never said anything."

Informants were also intent on reshaping relationships towards equality in relation to joint decision-making and also male partners assuming their share of household chores and child care:

"I'm not dumb. You need to consult me when we make certain decisions";

"Why is it that the two of us bathe in this bathroom, explain to me why is it only one person that cleans it? What's wrong with your hands? I don't understand";

"For years I have been telling my husband.... He would come in take off his socks, put them in the shoes and they would leave in the cupboard for months. I would have to smell them and throw them in the wash."

Their words echo Barriteau's comment that 'women pursue erotic ecstasy and they end up with the care work' (Barriteau 2013, 17). It seems, too, that they may be prepared to put up with this. Despite the fact that none of our informants employed domestic help or nannies, no one emphasised her sole or major responsibility for household work as a cause of marital dissolution. Instead, they tended to relate how easily they slipped back into a feminine routine of caring labour:

"Just yesterday I was telling him how overworked I was because I have a four- month old daughter who is ill and I work 24-7, and I still feel obligated to come home and cook and clean and so on. I told him how overwhelmed I felt and he said that I didn't have to do all those things, but that I felt I had to do everything. He says he would clean on Saturdays, but by Thursdays the house is cleaned as my tolerance level for untidiness is lower than his."

Tolerance levels have changed over the last generation, however:

"My mother ... put up with all sorts of stuff. Like my father doesn't do anything";

"Read the newspaper, sit down in front of the television. They say, 'I want something to drink' and the wife comes or one of the children. And they feel they can do exactly that."

That said, the Caribbean construct of masculinity also embodies the notion of a turning point in a man's life when he will 'settle down' as a 'family man' – that is, marry, set up home and be faithful (Barrow 1998, 354, 356). Familial expectations have also evolved since the days when, to be a 'good family man', it was enough to provide economic support and child discipline. Some indication of these changes was reflected in the words of young (in their 30s), male informants in earlier research on masculinity and family in Barbados (Barrow 1998). As one of them said:

'Being a husband and father has changed from when I was a boy. Husbands should not just see themselves as providers but should take an active part in all the activities in the household ... cleaning and cooking, all that the wives do. The women of today are working, no nonsense women with a great sense of independence and no longer hold the view held long ago that the man is the boss. I am not a macho man. I can learn from experience and I am not too proud to say that I am sorry. Men still feel that they will be less of a man if they say sorry'.

According to another:

'My wife means the world to me. We met at a turning point in my life.... In marriage, you take things more seriously. It is more of a commitment' (Barrow 1998, 352. See also Freeman 2014, 81; Handwerker 1989, 109-12).

In general, though, the experiences of our informants portrayed an alternative image as they emphasized the inadequacies of their menfolk, their need to "grow up" and put wife and family first:

"That was my situation. You'd think he would say that I have been a boy all my life and now that I am married, I need to be a man now. I'm not saying don't have fun, but you must say, 'I'm ready to settle down now...'. If I talk about my husband, he was just plain not ready to grow up yet."

On this note, there were several references to men being spoilt by their mothers:

"They want a woman who will treat them like their mothers, in that they will pamper them and treat them like a child";

"He's quite happy to sit at home by his mother ... watch TV, give a couple of instructions here and there, and do one or two favours for somebody.... Fine! So, I leave.... And he's gone back now ... basically living by his grandmother and his mother... He's gone back to comfort zone."

Others, however, spoke of supportive husbands:

"I told D [husband] that there are certain things that I am willing to do and others that I am not, as I am not your mother and I am not a maid. I told him that I wanted to start my own business and he was very supportive. I said, 'Listen on days when I am at meetings all day, so what do you want me to bring home'".

Though she would not be cooking it, she still saw the responsibility of providing food as hers.

Violence against women (VAW) as a signifier of extreme inequality in heterosexuality, is endemic and epidemic across the Caribbean.¹⁰ Official figures underestimate the incidence since women are reluctant to make official reports due to fears of public shaming, further intensified violence and the forfeiture of male financial support. Also mentioned as a deterrent to reporting are the expectations that the police will trivialize incidents and that 'the investigation would take too long and go nowhere' (UNICEF 2014, 32). VAW is attributed, in the public mind, to men's drive to reinforce power in response to female provocation and presumed infidelity, and the threat to masculinity of women's social and occupational mobility and their push for gender equality (Chevannes 2001, 95-97; DeShong 2011, 80-84; Gopaul and Morgan 1998, 96). But the issue is complex in that we also hear that economically and emotionally dependent women are at greater risk (Gopaul and Morgan 1998, 101-2).

¹¹Research from Jamaica shows that women avoid co-residential relationships, including marriage, to reduce the possibility of violence (Roberts and Sinclair 1978, 65-6, 249).

Several of our informants reported experiences of intimate partner violence, both physical and emotional. In one case, it triggered the need to obtain a

restraining order: *"I saw my husband laughing one day hysterically during a fight and I asked him why.... He said that if he didn't laugh, he would kill me."*

But their narratives also confirmed research indicating that such violence is becoming more culturally unacceptable and is no longer as silenced, privatized and invisible. According to one informant:

"My husband was physically and verbally abusive.... I remember calling my husband's mother and telling her, 'Your son is standing in front of me with a knife.' And I said 'somebody is going to die and it ain't going to be me'",

while another reported:

"And going through the daily emotional abuse was not something that I was willing to put up with. And if it means that I am happier by myself than when I am with him, then that is what I choose".

Here, too, they contrasted their own resistance with women's submission in previous generations:

"Before ... women used to get the crap beat out of them and they couldn't say a word.... I guess they didn't know any better... low education, they didn't know they had a choice. They figured that because they are married, well this is it".

Fidelity

For our informants, as for philosophers (Soble 2008, 162-66), true love must be monogamous. From Jamaica, too, we hear that love is exclusive – 'one can have several friends, but only one lover' (Alexander 1978, 7). One cannot love two persons, at least not simultaneously, and infidelity signifies the worst form of betrayal. And yet, it happens; monogamy is an ideal often unfulfilled (Jackson 2014, 42). Philosophers in Western thought have claimed that the demands of love for exclusivity and constancy are impossible to sustain – love promises heaven on earth, but fails to deliver (Sullivan 2001, Vannoy 1980).¹² Though our informants considered male concurrent multi-partnering to be unacceptable, it was seen as commonplace, overt and inevitable, even genetically programmed:

"I heard from a man that if any woman in Barbados thinks that she has a man for herself, then she is mistaken";

"And then he has his cake at home and he has another cake on the outside";

"You are actually inclined to believe that, as soon as you get married, this is exactly what is going to happen to you. Regardless if how good your marriage is, this is what is prescribed to happen";

"We should never have gotten married.... Women would be calling the house for him";

"In terms of marriage, more and more I see men would go outside, because they think it's a God-given right. That's the problem. And they would look at you and tell you, 'but you just need to accept it'.... And it's like, this is what Bajan men do";

"I trust him ... but being a realist, I think that men are inherently the African species where they need to have more than one woman".

Their responses echoed research on Caribbean masculinity. Wilson's construct of 'reputation' positions virility as 'the most highly valued quality a man can possess ... males are permitted and expected to be sexually active ... their virility is especially manifested by their sexual activities and their fathering of children' (Wilson 1969, 71; see also Chevannes 2001; Clarke 1957, 96; Smith 1988, 147). If anything, contemporary accounts have reinforced images of performative, predatory, hyper-sexual masculinity,¹³ though more nuanced versions tackle the complexities of race and sexual orientation (Lewis 2003, Reddock 2003). In sum, a sharp tension exists between the subaltern "*hard seed*" and the ideals of loving husband and family man. There are, however, signs that men of the younger generation acknowledge that fidelity is crucial to marriage and the process of 'settling down'. According to a male informant in earlier research: 'Since marriage, I have been tempted by other women, but I have resisted and kept myself under control.... It makes no sense jeopardizing what you have just for sex' (Barrow 1998, 353).

The so-called 'double standard of sexual morality' came up as informants reiterated the view that, while infidelity with 'outside women' is the norm and promotes masculine reputation, for women it spells downfall and disaster (Chevannes 2001, 217):

"Whereas the woman [to] have an affair with a male ... turned [her] into the worst harlot that ever descended from the heavens. Why? Because she's not supposed to have control of her sexuality. You get married, your sexual organs now belong to your husband. His still belong to him and anybody else he cares to share them with. But there's this perception that you are not to have that, you know. Marriage, I tend to think, is a way in which the sexuality of women is still controlled."

However, although informants were silent on any indiscretions of their own,¹⁴ their responses implied that women are challenging monogamous 'respectability':

"I know of women now who are keeping more than one man";

"I don't think you can sit down now and say that men are the only ones who cannot be monogamous any more. Women are following along the same lines."

However, for a woman to trespass into reputational behaviour incurs high risk. Her infidelity disrupts her partner's masculinity in the most fundamental way and, as mentioned, may justify his violent reaction.

Again, informants pointed to intergenerational change:

"For all those years, his father goes out. His mother does not question where he is going, because he always has another woman. His mother ... gets the big house, her own car, but she can't possibly feel like a whole person. Because there's this other woman for thirty-nuff years.... And that's how life has been and women are supposed to accept these things".

Today's women are less accommodating. As a betrayal of love, male infidelity upsets heterosexuality as never before. Resonating with philosophical notions of love as reciprocal dedication to the wellbeing of the beloved who must come first, before all others in attention and affection (Soble 2008, 162-87), an informant commented:

"Today we're putting our feet down and saying that this is not the way that it's supposed to be I'm supposed to be your wife. I'm supposed to be the only one that you have, that you spend your life with. Not that I have to accept that you are going to marry me and think it's okay to go outside and have whoever, have however many children because you pattern yourself after your forefathers. It's not the way. That's what I think".

Modern-day considerations of HIV and AIDS and heightened embarrassment also factor in:

"You know, we have so many diseases around like AIDS and nobody wants to have their husband running around, where he can catch it and bring it home to you";

"The whole thing is embarrassing for the wife, not the outside woman. It is the wife who falls three rungs down the ladder. Yes, she's got the ring, but she's the one that everyone laughs at".

But, despite pronouncements that unlike their mothers, they would *"not stand for it"*, informants agreed that infidelity poses a dilemma – with no easy solution:

"And it is an extremely scary prospect, because you get married and you say, 'this is not going to happen to me'. And then you also look at the reality of this can happen to me. What do I do if it happens? What is my reaction going to be? And do I love this person enough not to have the reaction of – fine, it's over."

Love in Transition

The testimonies of women in Barbados revealed the complexities and tensions inherent in their quest to renegotiate heterosexual love. They expressed a desire for love and marriage and spoke of their *"romantic fantasies"*, yet were firmly grounded in reality:

"I guess that at first, when you're young, you look for fantasies, that you'd be cooking nice little food in a nice little pot, and that everything is looking nice. But that's not the reality".

Marriage, they argued, benefits men, not women:

"He looks good and stable. Um, financially, if he has a good woman who would help him build his financial ... right? In terms of the children thing, and not have to take care of them, but say, 'Oh, I am married and I have five kids'. You know? And he doesn't lose his freedom.... Whereas the female now, she has to work and come home ... after she has these kids, she has to stay home even more. But the men have all these wonderful benefits, you know? It's an insurance, an investment, and we kinda lose on our investment. It's like a liability in some cases".

Another informant summed up the experiences of those who gave up much in their lives to devote themselves to marriage¹⁵ – in her case, a post-graduate degree. In the process, she lost her own identity:

"So as far as I am concerned, there is one person that did a lot of sacrificing and that is me. Because I became something I wasn't ... and he will never find anybody else like me who is willing to love him that much. Because I lost myself trying to make my marriage work, which was the problem I completely ... aargh! I'm only now trying to find back who I was and remember the things I actually liked. You know, I am breathing again. I've taken back control of my life and he's not the central focus."

Contrasting herself with women of earlier times, she claimed that her instinct for "self-preservation" surfaced sooner. Her views echo those of feminist scholars who claim that love compromises the autonomy of women in marriage, they become 'private property' (Firestone 1989, 33). In 'union-love', according to Alan Soble (2008, 159-60), "women have merged into men, losing their identities in the relationship while men maintain a distance from it". Conversely and from the Caribbean, the voices of Afro-Tobagonian women in Michelle Rowley's research suggest that 'the very act of remaining single can possibly be seen as an attempt by women to hold on to their personal identities' (Rowley 2002, 35).

Today's women are reshaping love and doing so in an environment in which social pressure for conformity has been eased and their economic security

enhanced. Taking advantage of educational and occupational opportunities, they are making choices in their personal lives – including the choice to leave a broken relationship. For their mothers and grandmothers, marriage was permanent and divorce highly stigmatized:

“Our parent’s generation, they really bore the brunt of it. Typically, it was the wife who was not very well educated at all ... her destiny was to be his good little wife at home, bring up the children. You started out watching your mother stick it through so much crap, and you’re beginning to feel your freedom as society is beginning to allow a little more flexibility.... So, for us, the decision I don’t think is as difficult. I’m not sticking with the crap my mother stuck through.... And I admire my grandmother’s strength ... she stuck it out. But I don’t have to be strong that way. There are other ways that my strength can be used more productively and society has evolved sufficiently to let me be comfortable in it”.

With less social pressure to remain married, modern women are less tolerant of infidelity and violence, less inclined to remain in empty-shell marriages and are, as indicated, initiating a higher proportion of divorces than their husbands, albeit slightly. In the past, women *“got to put up with it ... either because of what other people would think ... or you letting down your family. Even if [he] turned out to be a real dog, you still stick with them.”* But today: *“Women who stay in marriages that are not working are not looked upon with any more respect.... Well, it is just said, ‘Well, why you don’t get outta it? I woun’ be teking dah so if I did you’”.*

Unlike before, when *“letting down your family”* was a consideration, little mention was made by informants of either family support or interference in their decisions to marry or remain married. This suggests a transition towards family modernity in which social pressure for conformity is giving way to individual autonomy (Giddens 1992). In the past, too, women *“stayed together because of the children”*, but are now more inclined to leave deteriorating marriages for the children’s sake:

“Well, I left him when my son was two years old. I could not see myself being married, raising my son in a household that was

constantly being torn apart.... I went through that. My parents were married for twenty years, never slept in the same room, never communicated, were always at each other's throats. I would not do that to my son. And I would rather pull out now that he's young and he's not at the age where he could understand, than to go down the road and be in this abusive marriage ... and then he grows up going through the same cycle again".

Opinions were divided on religious pressure. On the one hand:

"For years and years in that marriage I suffered because, according to the scripture, I didn't think I could get divorced. Eventually what I had to do, I had to leave. It was my only way out. I had to leave the Church, leave this person. I think the Church now is not so bad in terms of pressure. But as a Christian, you still keep feeling that you should keep trying.... I wanted to be a Christian and do what was right".

On the other:

"Right now, I think that, if a person is adamant that they're going to get divorced ... they'll go ahead and do it, regardless of what the Church is saying. Before perhaps, people paid a lot of attention to what the Church said".

For women also, as mentioned, the social status of marriage as the badge of respectability has diminished, though not entirely. While there are women who *"care about what persons think, so they put up with whatever in a marriage ... because they must look perfect"*, others *"don't necessarily think that marriage is the be all and end all"*. Concomitantly, the stigma of divorce has eased:

"Even though divorce is still very much out, it became something that actually was happening frequently. So that you weren't stressed with, 'I wonder if I should get divorced or not'. In our day and age, divorce is not that big a deal".

The ability of women to stand on their own two feet has also made separation and divorce more feasible. Having learnt from their mothers' experiences, informants emphasised economic autonomy as an essential prerequisite both to entering and leaving a marriage:

"I had to make sure that I was financially secure. I did not want to come into the relationship where he was the one making all of the

money and providing for me, because I didn't want to feel that dependent";

"I see my mother ... she is a housewife, totally dependent, could not get a job to save her life. She cannot afford to buy a house, doesn't have a driving license. All these things played on my decision to move on with my life".

However, a conservative morality persists in Barbados and 'the young women of today' are viewed as having 'gone too far'. While the finger of blame for marital failure still points to men's infidelity and 'irresponsibility', it now also turns towards women who, unlike their mothers, neglect the needs of husbands and children. Our informants were well aware of the public image of women like themselves who 'don't know their place' and selfishly give priority to their careers and their own wellbeing in gyms, beauty parlours and overseas trips; who are impatient and unforgiving of the waywardness of their menfolk, dissatisfied and unwilling to compromise; and who push for change and, when they don't get what they want, rush to the divorce court.

Responsibility for caring labour and the emotional well-being of families continues to fall on women as wives, conjugal partners and mothers – women care: men provide (Chevannes 2001, 222). It is women, according to our informants, who persevere, compromise and forgive – who do everything they can to keep their marriages together:

"I thought that his flaws were something that I could work with and I did want to try and bring back a family unit that was not broken";

"I always say about him, he's a man. He would always have an ego. But there are so few things that I don't like about him and there are so many things that I love about him, that I let whatever I love about him override the bad things. Because if you dwell on the things that you don't like, you would never see what you have".

"It's not that they [men] don't try But it's what they're trying to do. They're not trying to fix the marriage, they're trying to get you to accept certain things that come with what they call a marriage."

The choices that women make are not without frustration, guilt and risk. As indicated, several of our informants have survived physical and emotional violence or found themselves in financial straits as a result of their relationships with men. They have no blueprint and there are no clear signposts. Importantly here, was their uncertainty over how to reconcile the modern love they seek with conventional femininity:

"The struggle was how to I sit down and do the traditional thing of things, but still manage to keep an equal partnership";

"I do want to raise a family the old-fashioned way, which means I don't mind taking second fiddle to you to a certain extent".

When things went wrong, they questioned their own behaviour and searched for where they might be to blame. *"I think that women turn it on themselves and wonder, 'Oh God, what is wrong with me?'"*; *"What is it that I'm doing wrong?"*; *"Why is it that I cannot make this thing work?"* as they tried to put things right, often at considerable cost to themselves. According to one: *"Women hesitate to get out of a marriage. I guess feeling like you have failed at something, that you haven't tried enough.... That's basically what held it [her separation] up for two years"*. Women stayed in their marriages because their husbands were going through difficulties, such as the loss of a job:

"We went to a counsellor to see if it could work. It helped me to make up my mind that it was time to go. But he had just lost his job and I said, 'Well, let me not kick him when he is down. Let me see him back on his feet'. So, I stayed on, but..."

Another remained for a period of seven years because her husband was *"depressed and suicidal"*. Their responses reflect Firestone's comment: 'it is rare for women to leave men, and then it is usually for more than ample reason' (Firestone 1989, 33).

This is not to say that men find relationship conflict and termination any less traumatic and painful and while our informants appreciated the efforts of their partners, *"he really did try sometimes"*, they saw them as reluctant to accept that they might be at fault:

"The men see it as something wrong with the other person.... It's not because they don't hurt, but rather they do not take the blame";
"He could never say sorry".

Men are more likely to "walk out of the house", if not the marriage:

"They don't have the responsibility of sticking around";
"You have to be committed enough to get through ... and not at the first sign of trouble just take off. And that was the problem, because in that period of time he just decided to take off and find somebody else, rather than wait.... You're supposed to wait until things get back to normal. He just wasn't willing to accept that."

Conclusion

As moral agents and reflexive actors, the women who participated in this research join their sisters worldwide in challenging and reshaping conventional heterosexuality. While their mothers and grandmothers *"stuck it out"* in marriage and avoided the disgrace of divorce, modern women are no longer willing to accept the respectability-sacrifice tradeoff or *"put up with"* partners who are emotionally distant, unfaithful, dominant and violent. Drawing on their matrifocal legacy of economic, social and sexual autonomy enhanced by law reform, economic and occupational mobility and diminishing social pressure to conform to normative femininity, they are choreographing a new heterosexuality away from female submission, domesticity and duty towards love. In the process, they confront resistance from male partners for whom this represents a threat to masculinity – based on 'outside' space, not housework; on familial authority and control over women, not equality; on sexual freedom and the conquest of 'outside' women, not fidelity. Love has different meanings for men and women in heterosexual relationships. For him, love is instrumental and emotional expression unmanly and unnecessary – it's about "doing", especially doing sex, rather than "feeling". For her, intimacy is essential and undermined by his reluctance to "grow up", "settle down" and "be a man" – and importantly, to

cut the cord that ties him to his mother. His identity of “hard seed” and “macho man”, though not representative of all Caribbean men, hardly fits her image of ideal soul-mate, lover, husband and ‘family man’ and his stereotype of women as manipulative, avaricious and ever-demanding does nothing to advance the quest for love.

Negotiating love against heterosexuality is a risky business, enshrined as it is in patriarchy, heteronormativity and the orthodoxy of marriage and domesticity. Normative heterosexuality may be less compulsory and less enforced today, but as our informants sought to challenge the prescribed script of respectable femininity, they faced losing social status, family support and financial security, and were exposed to marital conflict, disruption and violence. At the same time, negotiating love away from Afro-Caribbean matrifocality and towards intimacy and fidelity means contesting and reconstructing masculinity, a tall order in a context where male ‘reputation’ is buttressed by ideology and culture and still viewed, even by our informants, as programmed by nature – in his hormones and genes. Love and marriage, they concluded, benefits men; for women it represents a “*liability*” and a “*sacrifice*” with persistent expectations to tolerate, compromise and forgive, and to give up education and career, economic and sexual autonomy, even surname and identity. They spoke willingly, in detail, and with considerable self-doubt and self-questioning as they struggled to come to terms with broken dreams of romantic love and happy marriage, and, as emotional anchors and providers of caring labour, to hold their relationships together often at the expense of their own health and wellbeing.

And yet, even as they dealt with the challenges and traumas of everyday married life, none saw oppression or exploitation as inherent to heterosexual relationships, unlike much feminist scholarship. They also parted company with philosophers who view love as idealized and unsustainable. Despite their ambivalence over marriage and the announcement from one informant that a new-found sense of “*self-preservation*” enabled her to go it alone, the majority had not given up on love. For them, love and marriage remain meaningful,

fulfilling and highly valued. To return to the question with which we started, Can there be love in the Caribbean?, it seems that if their will and efforts find a way, heterosexual love will not merely continue to exist, but will thrive by embracing intimacy, equality and fidelity.

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¹ The sessions were timed to last for 2 hours but continued, in one case for over 3 hours. They were taped and transcribed verbatim. Gratitude goes to the research assistants, Marsha Branch and Monique Springer for their meticulous and inspired work and to the informants who generously shared their thoughts and experiences.

² In this regard, Bariteau (2013, 5) has led the way among Caribbean feminist researchers by expanding Jónasdóttir's concept of 'love power' and beginning her analysis 'at a point where politicized sexuality and political economy converge, that is, the point where state policies, bureaucratic practices, societal norms and views, interact with privatized and politicized sexual relations in women's lives.'

³ Love was seen as too complex for sociological analysis (Jackson 2014, 34-38). As Jónasdóttir (2014, 11) put it, love was of 'marginal interest or considered too "awkward" and "impossible" to approach'.

⁴ With appreciation and gratitude to Roxanne Burton for her introduction to philosophical perspectives on love and sex.

⁵ At the time of writing, the 'Ultimate Wedding Expo' was being held at the Barbados Hilton Hotel. Before a packed audience, couples vied to win the 'Forever I Do Dream Wedding Competition'.

⁶ Among the three models of conjugality that Smith identifies for the Caribbean is the modern 'joint conjugal role pattern' in which partners are intimate, take joint responsibility as breadwinners, home-makers and child-carers, pool income and share leisure activities.

⁷ Freeman's (2014, 65-7) informant also spells out the importance of intimacy.

⁸ For further discussion on this point, see Barrow 2015, 218-20.

⁹ The 'graveyard' label signifies that a woman has had an abortion.

¹⁰ Reports estimate the proportions of Caribbean women who have survived violence at the hands of their male partners at anywhere between 30 and 69 per cent (ECLAC/UNIFEM 2003).

¹¹ Among those at highest risk of sexual violence are adolescent girls in transactional liaisons with older men. Yet they, too, contest feminine sexual norms of passivity and submission – virgin or victim – by celebrating and promoting an active, assertive female sexuality and empowerment (Barrow 2008, 19-22).

¹² Firestone (1989, 30) is also pessimistic: 'For every successful contemporary love experience ... there are ten destructive love experiences, post love 'downs', of much longer duration – often resulting in the destruction of the individual, or at least an emotional cynicism that makes it difficult or impossible ever to love again'.

¹³ The converse is homophobia and, in Jamaica in particular, the 'revulsion' and 'hostility' towards gay men (Chevannes 2001, 144, 220).

¹⁴ This may be a reflection of their own buy in to 'respectability', especially within the semi-public context of the focus group.

¹⁵ A side issue here linked to the debate on motherhood and marriage, is the expectation and acceptance by women of 'self-sacrifice and self-denial' as mothers (Rowley 2002,39), but no longer as wives.



The Politics of Memory: Historicizing Caribbean Women's Political Activism

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[Verene A. Shepherd](#)

Previously, University Director
The Institute for Gender and Development Studies
The University of the West Indies

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My talk this evening is about historical memory and what women of the Caribbean as individuals or as a collective, and Caribbean states more broadly, conscious of women's historic contributions, have done with such memory. Memories can be both pleasant and upsetting and what we do with memories depends on the nature of the memories, our distance from them, our philosophy of life, our activism or political commitment and what Fabienne Viala in her excellent book ***The Post-Columbus Syndrome: Identities, Cultural Nationalism and Commemorations in the Caribbean***, calls "the different national templates of memory."¹ "We can adopt a posture of willed ignorance – that is, develop historical amnesia, refusing to remember; or we can remember deliberately and act on them intentionally. It is the project of acting on those memories—should we choose not to forget— that is political about memory.

The influence of politics on memory is seen, for example, in the way history is written and passed on and the tangible sites of memory we construct to remember the past, or the heroes or heroines we advocate for as national icons. In some countries, memorials keep alive the memories of conflict, while others remove the memorials, often for political purposes. For example, I have read that Lithuania removed a Soviet era statue from the city centre of the capital and relocated it to a cemetery, an action that evoked an adverse reaction from Russia. Clearly some governments believe that there is no reason to continue the guilt of the past and that the time has come for getting past the negative historical experiences; this is why some do not support the fight for reparation for historic wrongs/crimes or even allow children to remember through history education. So, the politics of memory is equally shaped by what one wishes to hide or forget. There are reasons to forget and reasons to remember; there are strategies to erase memories and there are strategies to keep them alive. But there are those who argue that forgetfulness equals impunity and that impunity is both morally outrageous and politically dangerous.

There are contested meanings over the definition of the "politics of memory" as the field of "memory studies" expands and becomes increasingly theorised. For

some, the terminology addresses the role of officially elected politicians in shaping [collective memory](#). This is the definition preferred by Peter Verovšek who maintains that ***“political memory should narrow its focus to the operation of politicians, and deal with competing narratives and contested events only insofar as they are raised in clearly political contexts.”***² Though this excludes many cultural factors that are important aspects of collective memory, he holds that studies of both cultural and political memory will benefit from a narrower, conceptually distinct focus. “This decoupling”, he argues, does not preclude their synthesis in later interdisciplinary work, “but... both would benefit from a narrower, more manageable and consistent focus, at least initially.”³

But this association of the “politics of memory” with state actions excludes those who are not in formal politics; who do not see themselves as politicians in the modern sense. So, for me, the **politics of memory** is the political means by which events are remembered and recorded, or discarded, not only by states or politicians as they become involved in shaping collective memory through the construction of public monuments, the declaration of national days, years or decades of memorialisation, or the selection of the narrative about the past for schools and public consumption, but also about what citizens choose to do as a result of their lived experiences; their reading of the past as represented in archival sources and published texts; their reaction to ancestral representations of the past; their reaction to state politics. But such reaction, while it can be collective or individual, must fit the more comprehensive definition of political action.

In this regard, “politics” is broader than, but inclusive of, representational politics and state actions around the issue of memory. It allows for the inclusion of the protest actions by those who are not, never have been or never will be, elected officials; those marginalised groups who must use other means of seeking change.

In November 2014, we heard how activists in Cartagena, Colombia, forced the state to remove a plaque placed there by England's Prince Charles in memory of the British soldiers who died in the battle to take over Cartagena from the Spanish in 1741. The Governor stated that such a plaque was as inappropriate as a bank erecting a plaque to thieves who had robbed it, with support also for the view that the Spanish soldiers who had defended the city had not been so memorialised. The questions of what the Spanish were doing there in the first place and how indigenous Colombians regard the whole matter have been left unanswered.

Fabienne Viala also shows how civil society can force the state to rethink its actions on historical memory in public commemoration. Using the example of the Columbus Quincentenary of 1992, she examines collective memory, national commemorations and the discrepancy between the discourse about national memory officialised by the state and what the people wanted to recognise as their national heritage. Indeed, ordinary citizens in the Caribbean have always forced to the public stage the debates over cultural nationalism and scenarios of remembrance that construct a false sense of Caribbean togetherness.⁴

This is why George Frederickson & Christopher Lasch include resistance and advocacy in their definition of what is political action, insisting that,

“Resistance is a political concept; and political activity in the strictest sense of the word is organised, collective action which aims at affecting the distribution of power in a community. More broadly, it might be said to consist of any activity – of individuals or groups – designed to create a consciousness of collective interest, to subvert the system, to facilitate and regularize escape from it or, at the very least, to force important changes in it.”⁵

They explained their rationale like this: “Among despised and downtrodden people, in general, the most rudimentary form of political action is violence,

based on a common sense of outrage and sometimes inspired by milliennistic ideology....”⁶

According to this definition, when women like Nanny Grigg of Barbados, and Bermudan born Sally Bassett found ways to destabilise the slave system—so outraged were they by the brutality of enslavers— they were engaging in political action. Indeed, Lucille Mathurin Mair reminds us that “the militant acts of Jamaican women were neither isolated nor inadvertent. [Rather] they constituted a political strategy that took different forms at different times but at all times expressed the conscious resolve to confront the New World’s assault on their person and their culture.”⁷

The first female Prime Minister of a CARICOM country, Dame Eugenia Charles – however contested a political figure – admitted that there was a long tradition of women in politics. According to her: “...the coming into official leadership roles is not the commencement of Caribbean women taking the lead in politics and ensuring that the changes that became necessary from time to time took place....”⁸ But because most employ a narrow definition of politics by equating it with representational politics, these pioneering women whose politics took the form of resistance are often ignored; denied access to the corridors of power. The street became their political platform, their House of Representatives.

When we employ a more revolutionary and inclusive definition, however, we see clearly that activism and agency must feature in any discussion of Caribbean women’s politics and they that must be discussed outside of the narrow confines of the post-slavery and post-independence decolonization and feminist movements. In postcolonial societies, issues of freedom, human rights, restorative justice, citizenship and self-determination had to be settled by rebel men and women before the issues of feminism and women’s rights could form a part of the national anti-colonial discourse. Indeed, modern-day women’s movements and feminism cannot be understood without excavating and locating the prior waves of activism and theorizing on women’s conditions dating back centuries.

Long before 1851 at the Women's Convention in that Church in Akron, Ohio, where Sojourner Truth asked 'Ain't I a Woman'?'⁹ long before March 8, 1857 in New York, when garment workers protested about inhumane working conditions (and later gave inspiration for International Women's Day); and long before 1977 when UNESCO proclaimed International Women's Day, rebel women in the African Atlantic used a variety of strategies to eradicate (or at least destabilize and subvert) systems of domination. This was especially true after the mid-17th century when, on all sides of the Atlantic, slavery became a more deeply entrenched, restrictive and brutal institution, with fewer possibilities for legal freedom for the majority. Anti-slavery in fact helped the feminist movement, free women seeing in enslavement parallels to their own oppressed conditions on the basis of gender; and developing out of this, arguments for female emancipation.

The pages of Caribbean history are populated with the evidence that many women in the region have chosen to remember and act either on their own memories and their experiences, or on those of their ancestors and mentors. The strategy that many of them have chosen has been that of becoming freedom fighters, activists and advocates. For them, remembrance gives strength, and assists in recuperating the past for the benefit of the present. In the period of modernity, the women were enslaved and free, who acted on their experiences of enslavement to resist its appalling manifestations. In the post-modern period, women activists were those who acted on what they learned about conquest, colonization, enslavement and their legacies. In the contemporary period, all of those historical events, added to our own experiences of racism, sexism and pro-colonialism, have influenced and determined our own politics. We do not have to have been there and experienced unspeakable or unthinkable things to act on memory. There are things that can be understood by those who were not there.

Peter Verovšek reminds us of Barry Goldenshon's thoughts on this when he remarked that, "If an inner understanding of the experience of the victims is out

of reach, at least the behaviour of the perpetrators can be described."¹⁰ When Michael M. Tuvuzzi wrote ***The Politics of Memory: Native historical interpretation of the Colombian Andes, for example***, he did so because his sense of history and the contemporary legacies of Spanish colonialism, even the oral history passed down by ancestral stories, provoked his project. It is such "perpetrator history" that has so agitated many of the women of the Caribbean to act; that has influenced governments of the region to recognise and memorialise Caribbean women.

So how have women of the Caribbean used the memory of the past to energise their politics, with the consequence of sometimes forcing state actions? What have been their alternative strategies to political representation when those become necessary? To explore this topic empirically, I use the lives of three women of the Caribbean: Lucille Mathurin Mair; Dame Eugenia Charles and Barbara Makeda Blake Hannah. These women used academia, representational politics and human rights advocacy to illustrate the power of the politics of memory.

I start with Lucille Mathurin Mair because her work allows us to understand resistance and the politics of decolonization and the role of the historian in shaping collective memory. Eugenia Charles acted on the knowledge of women's subordination under colonialism to assert the right of women to be at the helm of power; and Barbara Makeda Blake Hannah used historical memory to advocate for reparation and influence state actions around the issue of reparatory justice.

The lives of these women and the politics they practiced had certain synergies with the life and politics of Dame Nita Barrow, who is honoured through this Lecture Series. Her actions were driven by historical memory and her experiences of colonialism. She was born at a time when the colonial government held sway and women had few rights; a time when gender functioned as a discriminatory factor in access to education, as well as the

curriculum. Above all, she was born into a family of civic activists and therefore became an activist herself. Who could have been around parents who acted on their sense of outrage at sexism, classism and racism in Barbados and grow up unaffected? Who could have been related to, and observed the work of, Errol Barrow and Garveyite Duncan O'Neal and remained the same? Who would have experienced injustice, as she did at several stages of her life and not broken a plate, as she did at one stage to demonstrate her outrage? Who could have been selected to work at the United Nations and to be involved in work designed to end the evil apartheid system in South Africa and be deemed apolitical? Who would deny the deliberate political action of a woman who sneaked into the township of Alexandra in 1986 disguised in common African garb, putting her safety at risk to secretly see first-hand the conditions of the people even though the area was sealed off by the military to cover up the brutal murders taking place?"¹¹ She left footprints along the way for others to follow and she forced the state to recognise her life and work.

Dame Nita Barrow also had much in common with Mair, Charles and Blake Hannah: women who never declared that they were feminists but who lived or in the case of Blake Hannah, continue to live feminism. Dame Nita Barrow could not have been left untouched by the ideologies and practices of feminism after her challenging appointment in 1983 as Convenor of the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Forum for the Decade of Women in Nairobi, Kenya. She would eventually declare that "...the wealth of a nation depends on the advancement of its women".¹² That was feminist enlightenment! The same type of feminist enlightenment would later come to Lucille Mathurin Mair as her work demonstrates; change accompanied such enlightenment.

Ambassador Lucille Mathurin Mair – 1924-2009



So, I turn now to the late Ambassador Lucille Mathurin Mair, a pioneer in the fields of history and women and gender studies, who passed away on January 28, 2009. She chose academia as her political strategy to rescue women's political activities from historical obscurity and to redefine the way we view politics. She was conscious that Caribbean history needed to be re-written and that there was need to excavate Black women in particular from deep layers of distortion. She was animated by the reality that "there was nothing in modern historical

scholarship about the women who came before [her]."¹³ That the racist, sexist and authoritarian ideologies of those historians who under the guise of academic objectivity and humanist values, previously attempted to record the Caribbean past needed to be exposed.¹⁴ She understood this silence, writing that: "...historiography, which has for centuries been a male academic preserve, has been stunningly devoid of a consciousness of women as significant beings".¹⁵

Her pioneering thesis, "A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica", supervised by Elsa Goveia gave access to the voices, experiences, names and memories of our ancestors and allowed us to have the data we needed to become activists in defense of their rights. As a follow-up to her seminal study, she wrote "The Rebel Woman in the British West Indies During Slavery", which put on the platform the resistance efforts of the enslaved black woman.¹⁶

With these works she wanted to give women new identities and disrupt the trend of viewing them only as inanimate plantation assets, "living in cultural antithesis

to the white plantation".¹⁷ She wanted to test the waters to see if where Goveia used race, ethnic, colour and class lens to peer into Caribbean society, she could use gender to explore whether being female mattered in Caribbean history.

Like other middle class women of her time, Mathurin Mair did not at first define herself as a feminist. In other words, she did not initially admit or recognise the political nature of her work in the interest of gender justice. In a 1990 semi-autobiographical speech, she recounted:

In the early 1960s I started to seek out the women of Jamaica's past during the period of slavery, women of all classes and of all colours, black, brown, white. I had no feminist motivation, or at least none that I recognized. I was motivated mainly by intellectual inquisitiveness, the usual ambition of the doctoral candidate to investigate virgin territory, which it was at that time.¹⁸

However, what Mathurin Mair found in the pages of history as she tried to "decode the mysteries of the black female condition"¹⁹ would not only outrage her and make her wonder at what previous historians had ignored, but forced her to become a "reluctant feminist," as her life after 1974 demonstrated. By her own admission,

"wonderful things happened on the journey into that [female] rebel past [that she explored in her PhD thesis]; I can only briefly indicate the personal process of self-growth it meant; [for] no-one could spend so many years in the company of such women and remain the same. The expansion of one's emotional and intellectual resources, the deepened pride in one's inheritance, and in one's womanhood were inevitable...."²⁰

She certainly did not remain the same. She had embarked on a project of transforming the discipline of History; the completion of the project entailed activism around disseminating the data, mainstreaming gender and transferring knowledge from text to public space. After completing her research and being exposed to the experiences of women of the slavery and immediate post-

slavery periods, she took action to ensure that Caribbean societies would not forget the travails of our ancestor women—that they would not perpetuate the slave relations of production or continue the oppression of women. She also worked with Kamau Brathwaite to provide the Jamaican government with firm historical data that saw Nanny of the Maroons being listed among the pantheon of National Heroes in Jamaica in 1975.²¹ She saw this almost as the triumph of her academic life. “More relevant was the great occasion when a personal conviction about Nanny’s profound significance to the Jamaican psyche became a public reality”, she admitted.²²

She was up against opposition, since Queen Nanny had never been represented by British Historians as the important historical persona that she really was. In fact, as Karla Gottlieb reminds us, early accounts of the Maroons of Jamaica succeeded in making Jamaicans question Nanny’s true identity and the validity of the tales told about her military and political actions against the British. There were Jamaicans who argued that making Nanny a National Heroine was intended to satisfy feminists and would embarrass Jamaica as she never really existed. Mair, Brathwaite, Campbell and others demystified Nanny, locating her firmly in the historical records. They reminded a nation (that had been too swift to dismiss slavery) of the debt they owed to women who not only refused to accept systems of domination but also used all the political strategies at their disposal to contest it.²³

Finding and appreciating Nanny and other women of the slavery era forced her to ask the question Where on earth did such women, the so-called “subordinate sex”, get the nerve [to confront systems of domination?] It came from their very subordination – the moral force of the powerless confronting the powerful – and from their ability to draw strength from that inheritance of ancestral spirits from that other side of the ocean.²⁴

Quoting Herbert Aptheker, she reminded us that “victimization does not simply make victims; it also produces heroes: - *“and heroines too”*²⁵ and she added.

The memory of these women and their brave actions influenced Mathurin Mair's later activities; she became a rebel woman, inspired by conditions of women and took action that would result in their empowerment. Such political action was manifested in her serving in Jamaica as an advisor on developing policies, measures and programmes intended to advance the status of its women and fully integrate them in the process of development. She was an advisor on Women's Affairs, Head of the Jamaican Information Service in 1974 and Deputy Head of Jamaica's Permanent Mission to the United Nations in 1975.

Mathurin Mair was also active in the development of the Women and Development Studies groups, which were formed in 1982 at the University of the West Indies to promote the introduction of Women's Studies courses and programmes within the academy. She was the first regional coordinator for the Project of Cooperation in Teaching, Research and Outreach in Women and Development Studies from 1986-1989 and was a founding member of the Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN). She was instrumental in the establishment of the Centres for Gender and Development Studies – now the IGDS – across the three campuses of the University of the West Indies.

Mathurin Mair took her advocacy for the recognition and the rights of women to the international stage as an international diplomatic figure. She was Assistant Secretary-General in the office of the United Nations Secretariat in 1979. She performed the role of Secretary-General of the World Conference on the United Nations Decade for Women in 1980 in Copenhagen, Denmark. From 1981 to 1982, she served as the Secretary-General's Advisor to UNICEF on Women's Development and between 1982 and 1987; she was the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Palestine. In 1982, she was the first woman to hold the title of Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations. She was later appointed Senator and Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Jamaica and in 1992 was the Permanent Representative for Jamaica to the United Nations.

Knowledge of the Caribbean past has not remained the same since Mathurin Mair's work. Indeed, she paved the way for numerous other studies of women that allowed Caribbean societies to know about and act on such knowledge. Thanks to her work and the influence she exerted on other historians, we can now respond to her call to sing praise songs to the Taino and Kalinago women who joined their men to protest European colonization and pioneered the culture of resistance in the Maroon women. These are women like Nanny of Jamaica and Charlotte and Angelique of Dominica, who so ably destabilised British colonialism; Nanny Grigg of Barbados, who along with Bussa struggled to end one of the greatest crimes against humanity in Barbados in 1816; Alida of Suriname and Betto Douglas of St. Kitts/Nevis who in 1825 demonstrated the power of hunger strike while in the stocks; Philda, Queen and Aba of Antigua; Charlotte, Angelique, Tranquille and Calypso of Dominica – rebel women who embodied the spirit of Black women's resistance to systems of domination; and Whaunica, referred to by 18th and 19th century writers on Jamaica as a female demon, who thwarted the overseers in the field and fomented "petticoat rebellion."

Mathurin Mair introduced us to women who used body language and dress (or undress), much as Eugenia Charles would do later, to register their discontent with discriminatory systems and policies. Mathurin Mair also introduced us to domestic women who found various ways to harass, frustrate and even poison their enslavers; to women like Sally Bassett of Bermuda who was burned at the stake in 1730 because she refused to collaborate with the system of slavery, but whose statue now, however controversially, stands tall on the front lawns of the parliament building in Bermuda.

She urges us to sing praise songs to women who joined strikes to negotiate for rights and used economic resistance to carve out a niche for themselves within the confines of slavery. These include women like the emancipationist Mary Prince who opposed the gradualism of Wilberforce and participated in armed struggle. Among these fights were the 1692 African-Barbadian protest in which 51 enslaved people were executed, 4 of them women; the Haitian Revolution of 1791 in which Cécile Fatima played a critical role; the 1736 protest in Antigua led by (now

National Hero) Court, alias Tacky, and his Creole co-conspirator, Tomboy, the 1816 war in Barbados; the 1824 war in Demerara; the 1824 plot in Jamaica; and the 1831 anti-slavery war in Jamaica which has been credited with forcing Britain to end slavery.

We must sing praise songs for women whose revolutionary ideology and programme were clearly anchored in their experience and in their sense of what had become, as Rex Nettleford often terms it, a derided and emasculated ancestral culture.²⁶ We must sing praise songs for black working class women who, in the post-slavery century of racial apartheid and sexism, made it clear that they had no intention of conforming to the Victorian gender order and the gender systems of the new era that sought to confine women to the private sphere of uncompensated labour in the home and promote the male as breadwinner ideology. Mathurin Mair forced us to recognize women like Mary Seacole who defied the gender conventions of the day to show that Caribbean women could roam and hold their own in foreign lands.

Women protested Crown Colony rule and lobbied for the franchise across the region; and from Belize to the Bahamas, joined in the labour protests of the 1930s and demanded political rights—such as the right to join Unions as well as the right to vote and participate in representational politics.

Mathurin Mair also sang praise songs to the women writers of the post-modern period who also engaged in their own acts of self-affirmation; exploring history, myth and memory and seeking cultural continuities.

Dame Eugenia Charles



I have long followed the career of Dame Eugenia Charles as part of my interest in the lives of Caribbean women who have defied the gender, class and racial conventions that historically kept them below the proverbial glass ceiling—especially in the realm of politics. I cannot say that I have supported all of her political actions and ideologies, because her politics as the Prime Minister of post-independence Dominica have been conservative and problematic to those with radical and leftist political leanings. In this regard, her support of a USA invasion of Grenada in 1983 continues to

stick in my throat. But women at the helm of Caribbean political leadership have been so rare that I must admit I cheered when she became Prime Minister of Dominica in 1980 – the first Caribbean woman to rise to such a position. Years later, I made her one of the women to be studied in detail by UWI students reading the undergraduate course, “Women and Gender in the History of the British-colonised Caribbean” introduced in 1993— coincidentally, the same year that Janet Higbie’s biography of Eugenia Charles was published.²⁷ I wanted to introduce students to strong Caribbean women who overcame the obstacles placed in their way to rise to positions of power and influence in the region. This is regardless of the type of scholarship on gender and power (now highly contested in any case), that claim many female leaders do not revolutionise the way in which they exercise power. In fact, it is argued that they tend to associate with masculine leadership styles, troped as aggressive, hierarchical and inflexible instead of participative and responsive – the “power over” (domination in a zero-sum game) rather than the “power with and to” (empowerment; a shared and cooperative effort).²⁸

Some associate Eugenia Charles with the former definition of power. At the same time, her 1993 biography opened my students' eyes to stories and images of Charles they had not previously encountered. I suspect that they do not fit the dominant images the media uses to support her "iron lady" stereotype -- a stereotype that sought to defeminise and ridicule her. The Higbie-authored biography almost cancelled out the negatives of her Republican-style conservatism that so concerned some segments of Caribbean society, including her supporters. It introduced readers to her rebelliousness as a child; her defiance of gender conventions, manifested in recreational and social preferences; her radicalism as a young student in Canada; an unwillingness to conform to overseas racial politics by demanding to be served in restaurants in the US, sitting at the front of a bus and refusing to move to an assigned position in the back 13 years before Rosa Parks made that type of resistance legendary. Higbie's account reminded us of Charles' strong support of women's concerns and her intolerance of undemocratic laws and practices. It explained what animated her entry into representational politics and why she would defy protocol and appear in a bathing suit in Parliament to protest sexist dress codes. She took that defiance of the dress code, although not to the same extreme, to President Reagan's Press Conference where her so-called "jangling African bracelets" would defy the 'dress for success Washington dress code'.²⁹

My brief foray into the Dame Eugenia Charles collection in the Library on the Cave Hill campus cemented some of these impressions in my mind. Between the pages of that collection, I met a feisty woman who was a shining example to the women of the Caribbean that we could be what we wanted. Admittedly, Charles never labelled herself a feminist or a women's "libber," because as far as she was concerned her causes were universal human rights causes. In her article, "The Reluctant Feminist: Eugenia Charles on Women and Gender", Alicia Mondesire begins with the following quote from Charles: "I don't think that I am a feminist, really; I just felt that women had the right to do what they wanted to do. Men couldn't think they had the world in their pocket".³⁰ She is also reported to have said in an Interview in *People*: "In Dominica we really live women's

liberation; we do not have to expound it", that is, wear it on the sleeves, so to speak. In fact, she seems to have been impatient with women whose feminist politics meant that they could not accept a seat offered to them in public by men;³¹ women who declared that they were feminists and who, in her words, "have made advancement in many fields of life" but were not "prepared to assist their sisters to continue with that advancement and take advantage of the lessons we have learned in advancing ourselves...."³²

However, I must stress that despite her protestations, she demonstrated feminist thinking. She never subscribed to the women as the weaker sex narrative and by her very support many Women's organisations such as The Council of Women Leaders, the International Women's Forum and The Caribbean Institute for Democratic Women, she provided an example of what women could become if they had the will and did the necessary preparation.

Charles' experiences testify that, tiny as they were in 1980, cracks were appearing in the political glass ceiling and she encouraged more cracks by promoting competent women into political positions under her leadership.

Among Eugenia Charles' papers, I met a woman who refused to be cowed by imperial and neo-imperial forces; a woman confident enough to stare down the neo-imperialist forces threatening to undermine Caribbean independence; a woman who once wrote to former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to state her opposing views on the Apartheid regime in South Africa. While indicating that she understood why Mrs Thatcher held the views on the matter that she did, Charles nevertheless told her, "You already know my view on apartheid in South Africa – they are diametrically opposed to yours...;"³³ and at a Greenpeace Press Conference held on the Arctic Sunrise anchored off Dominica during a Caribbean campaign to get a whaling sanctuary vote passed, she told the organisers to "go to hell" when they tried to pressure the Eastern Caribbean. There seemed to have been a veiled threat that if the EC

voted with Japan (who was pressuring them to oppose the sanctuary), they would be voting against their tourist industry.

These actions and ideologies of a strong Caribbean woman forced me to ask: who inspired Eugenia Charles? Which icons gave her courage to defy conventions, making her a virtual cross between revolutionary and conservative? Who influenced that taken-for-granted attitude of hers which made her refuse to acknowledge the novelty of being a female Prime Minister and party leader? In an interview with Eudine Barriteau, she said: "When persons ask me, 'how you feel about being the first woman Prime Minister of the Caribbean?' I say, I just wonder why it took so long to be the first, because in fact our women have always stood out strong."³⁴ From whence came her outrage at injustice? Her anti-colonial stance? Her unending battle with authority?

I am not sure, but I have tried to follow some of clues that she left behind. By her own admission, a firm belief in free speech was nurtured by her family. She grew up in a household that did not silence girls' voices, a household "in which perhaps my first abstract thought was built on the slogan 'no taxation without representation'",³⁵ –which incidentally had been a woman's slogan across the region from the late 19th century. She also had many female mentors.

I also submit that as a student of History, she was influenced by the women whose politics came to the fore because of the work of Lucille Mathurin Mair and those who followed in her footsteps. These scholars engaged in historical archaeology to introduce us to women who are now among the pantheon of Caribbean icons. ; They include Garveyite women who lobbied for Universal Adult Suffrage and black self-determination; women who founded or co-founded Trade Unions and political parties or women's arms of political parties; women who contested elections, won seats and participated in representational politics. Whether in formal or non-representational politics, Charles demonstrated the politics of memory in her activism and advocacy.

Barbara Makeda Blake Hannah



I come finally to Barbara Makeda Blake-Hannah – writer, film-maker, cultural activist and Director of the Jamaica International Film Festival and the best example of a woman for whom the politics of memory influenced her participation in the reparation movement and the search for rights and respect for Rastafari.

While most people know about Trevor McDonald and Moira Stuart as early black TV news presenters in the

UK (starting in 1973 and 1981 respectively) few recall that Barbara Makeda Blake Hannah made headlines in British newspapers in 1968 when she was appointed one of three on-camera reporters/interviewers on Thames-TV's daily evening show, "Today" with Eamonn Andrews. It was the first time a black person had appeared on British TV in a non-entertainment role.

By her own admission, "after nine months ... my contract was terminated and I was told that the producers were under pressure from viewers who called in daily to say, "Get that n****r off our screens."³⁶

She worked with ATV-Birmingham's "Today Show", aired in a time when Enoch Powell had made black immigration a major issue. As a result of the racist environment in which she found herself in Birmingham, she could not get a hotel room in the city and had to return each night to London and commute each morning by train to Birmingham until she finally got a room at the YWCA. She also recalls "coming back to the studio after doing a story on a miserably cold

day to find that Enoch Powell had just left after doing a live interview on condition that 'the black girl' was not there."³⁷ She also writes that she had to "listen without reacting when the production staff asked: 'What 'wog' (a racial slur to describe immigrants with dark skin) story are we doing today?'"³⁸ Or: "If black people are so equal, how come they never painted the Mona Lisa?"³⁸

Her next job, which she described as "pleasant", was as a research assistant with the BBC "Man Alive" series produced by Desmond Wilcox. But after a few months, Chris Blackwell and Perry Henzell offered her a job as a public relations officer for the first Jamaican film, "The Harder They Come", and she decided it was time to return home permanently in 1972. Her first area of activism was in the fight to get "ganja" legalized.

She has since continued her career as a journalist by writing columns, hosting TV and radio broadcasts and making films on issues of culture and black history. She was also a former Senator in the Jamaican parliament and used that position to push for causes she was passionate about. Her role in calling for reparation for Caribbean slavery directly influenced my involvement in the movement. I believe that her experience of racism in the UK, her uncompromising stand against injustice and the education she received from history determined her activism.

She was part of the Jamaican delegation at the 2001 anti-racism conference in Durban and worked with the Caribbean and other delegations there to insist that no conference on racism could proceed without placing reparations on the agenda. This included reparations not just for slavery and native genocide, but also justice for the Indian Dalits or so-called "untouchables" and repatriation for Rastafari. She would also head the Jamaica Reparation Movement and publish accounts of her work on reparation. Below are excerpts from an interview she gave on her work on reparation and the challenges she faced:

I wrote articles, I went on the radio, I called meetings and spent about four, five years literally trying to get everybody interested in joining an ... active movement for reparations. What really made me very sad was how little response I received including from the Rastafari bases in Jamaica. I

remember going to Fi Wi Sinting and took up a booth to try and get signatures and a petition. I got twenty-four signatures. I remember calling a national meeting at the University. In 2003 that meeting was called. I got twenty-eight people attending. Even the people who would speak the loudest, you know, on a radio programme on reparations... they never came around and helped. There were no artistes who would say let me keep a show so we could raise some funds.

The debate lasted for three weeks in parliament. Three successive weeks. But what I found very sad again on those three occasions I was the only Rasta in Gordon House. Because I had been a senator, I served as a senator 1984 to '87; that means that whenever I go to parliament, I literally sit against the wall where the speaker sits. I have a very privileged seat in the house itself; but it wasn't till the third and final meeting Mike Henry had brought Filmore Alveranga, who as you know is not a dreadlocks. So he sat upstairs in the public gallery and no one would even know that a Rasta was there. I was very disappointed to see the lack of support because I would have thought that Rastas would have been on the corner with drums, drumming and trying to get upstairs to sit in the public gallery.. Nobody was there.

And the word hardly got out but a decision was taken as a result of that parliamentary debate to set up a parliamentary committee on reparations. That was set up with Professor Chevannes as head of it. I am not privy to what has happened to it now because we hear nothing about it really. Shortly after the debate in parliament the Jamaica Labour Party won the election, in 2007 and I was invited to join the ministry of culture as a consultant, which I did. I made certain recommendations to the minister for the setting up of the committee and the parameters of the committee.³⁹

She is no longer now active in the reparations movement even though she remains convinced about the rightness of the cause. I think the lack of support she describes and her own pertinent and complex questions about the future of the movement and the seeming impossibility of any resolution have influenced her decision. However, other women of Jamaica, including those she brought into the movement, are carrying on the struggle.

I am not sure about the extent to which women in Barbados are a part of the reparation movement in an effort to force Caribbean states to act politically on the memory of conquest, colonization and the continuing legacies of African enslavement and indigenous peoples economic marginalization. But I maintain that there are legitimate reasons to be involved, not least the memory of what your female ancestors went through during their enslavement and the century of racial apartheid that followed. For sure there was no sisterly love under capitalism and enslavement. Under slavery, women owned other women; women oppressed other women; women profited from the labour of other women and women claimed compensation on other women.

The examples are evident for Barbados as for other Caribbean countries. We now know from the evidence provided by the University College London (UCL) team working on the compensation claims that this was not a male enterprise. The team, led by Professor Catherine Hall, remind us that in the Caribbean, roughly 40-50% of the claimants were women; and 25% of the people in Britain who received compensation were women. In Barbados there were 5,344 claims submitted, 2,143 filed by women,⁴⁰ supporting Hilary Beckles' and Pedro Welch's findings that a large number of women in Barbados were enslavers, mostly in the urban spaces.⁴¹ Among resident claimants, however, there were 420 males compared to 82 female.

The following Tables provide a brief idea of who some of these women were, the number of enslaved people for whom they claimed and the amount for which they filed. Some of these claims were contested so the total settlement of each claim is uncertain. What we know is that in the end, Barbadian enslavers received a pay-out of £1,711,345.19.7 on 82,807 enslaved Africans, plus the payment represented by the 4 year Apprenticeship, estimated by Beckles at £27 million for the entire British-colonized Caribbean.⁴²

Table 1: Top Ten Resident Female Claimants in Barbados:

Name	Estate	Amount Claimed	# of Enslaved
Mary Salter Dehany	Salters	£4361 11S 9D	205
Mary Elizabeth Datzell	Buttalls	£3825 12S 5D	176
Margaret Foderingham	Hopewell	£3808 3S 11D	191
Mary Jane Callender	Hopefield	£3334 6S 2D	154
Catherine Ann Smitten	Mangrove Pond	£3213 18S 1D	146
Margaret Ann Bend	Pleasant Hall	£2922 12S 4D	136
Ann Goodridge	Mount Brevitor	£2604 2S 10D	115
Sarah Goodridge	Mount Brevitor	£2604 2S 10D	115
Anna Maria Graham	Bourbon	£2075 18S 8D	93
Mary Ann Everley	Worthing View	£2033 4S 3D	94

Table 2: Female Absentee Owners (£4,000 and Above)

Name	Estate	Amount Claimed	# of Enslaved
Sarah Oxley Cadogan	Harrow	£4691	211
	Crab Hill	£2693	133
	Pickerings	£3864	171
		£11248	515
Elizabeth Jones	Cleland	£5348	146
Dame Mary Nagle	Hall	£4002	177
Wilhelmina Barbara Traill	Salters	£4361	205
Ann Trotman (Nee Hamilton)	Carmichaels	£3926	178
	Bulkeleys	£5080	231
		£9006	409
Rt. Hon Anne Margaret Viscountess	Lewis (Lear's)	£6956	325

Table 3: Sample of other women who claimed for and received compensation

Name	Estate	Amount Claimed	# of Enslaved
Mary Judith Adamson	Eclipse	£16S 2D	31
Joanna Alleyne	Barbados	£104 17S 3D	6
Hester Ames	Barbados	£776 15S 8D	37
Dorathy Jordan Chandler	Fairview	£895 4S 7D	48
Katherine Chase	Stanmore	£1023 9S 11D	52
Mary Clarke	Barbados	£1242 15S 11D	57
Sarah Julianna Cummins	Halletts	£580 12S 8D	35
Sarah E. Downes	Middleton	£638 17S 11D	33
Ann Estwick	Barbados	£908 16S 6D	44
Susanna T. Alsop	Edgehill	£1862 6S 5D	79

Anna Maria Graham	Bourbon	£2075 18S 8D	93
Mary Hayes	Barbados	£607 16S 6D	35
Mary Higginbotham	Barbados	£29 2S 7D	1
Jane N. Hunt	Barbados	£221 7S 7D	10
Elizabeth Ann Manning	Pleasant Hall	£679 18S 4D	43
Jane Massiah	Barbados	£638 17S 11D	31
Sarah E. Reece	Woodland	£417 10S 5D	20
Frances Springer	Barbados	£761 3S 10D	42
Elizabeth Walcott	Barbados	£708 14S 5D	34
Malvina Williams	Barbados	£77 13S 6D	4

Very few women were among those who received the largest pay-outs; and this is illustrated by Table 4 showing the claimants that received over £6000.

Table 4: Absentee (Male) Claimants in Barbados (Over £6000):

Absentee Owners	Plantation	Compensation	# of Enslaved
James Heywood Markland	Codrington	£8558 2S 2D	410
Robert Bright	Barbados	£7247 6S 0D	341
Henry Bush	Barbados	£7247 6S 0D	341
John Cobham	Barbados	£7247 6S 0D	341
George Hilhouse	Barbados	£7247 6S 0D	341
Sir George Anson	Lewis (Lears) Plantation	£6956 0S 4D	325
Edward Anson	Lewis (Lears) Plantation	£6956 0S 4D	325
Thomas Daniel	Lewis (Lears) Plantation	£6956 0S 4D	325
John Daniel	Lewis (Lears) Plantation	£6956 0S 4D	325
William Hinds Prescod	Searies	£6936 11S 11D	330

I leave it to the Barbados reparation committee to study the claims further, especially for biographical details, within the context of the CARICOM 10-point action plan for reparatory justice for Caribbean slavery and native genocide – which is, of course, much broader than financial compensation.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, whether leaders of the post-modern Caribbean want to admit it or not, they all owe a debt of gratitude to the historical legacy left by Caribbean women activists who went before them and influenced their politics. Let us ensure we do not forget the women who forced Eugenia Charles to admit that, "Long before the women got the vote in Dominica, and certainly ages before adult suffrage, women played a dynamic role in politics, in social services and in education;"⁴³ women who used their metaphorical, and real, cutlasses to clear the path so that we could now have an easier road; women who held that every form of control generates an opposing struggle for liberation; women who said, like Harriet Jacobs, "My master had power and law on his side; I had a determined will. There is might in each".⁴⁴ They too engaged in the politics of Memory. They left markers in the past that have allowed us to remember them in the present. To be remembered and memorialised in the future, you have to leave a marker in the present.

Some argue that the current obsession with the past seems to confirm Friedrich Nietzsche's appraisal that "we are all suffering from a malignant historical fever...."⁴⁵ In a similar vein, Peter Verovsek reminds us, Jacques Derrida noted that recent events signify "*a universal urgency of memory*"⁴⁶ and goes further to suggest that the meanings attributed to the past are a key component of identities.

I agree with Verovsek that our understanding of the past has strategic, political, and ethical consequences. Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone in *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory* note that contests over the meaning of the past are also contests over the meaning of the present and over ways of taking the past forward."⁴⁷ Though the content of the politics of memory is rooted in past events, the illocutionary meaning, the desired communicative effect of this discourse, is clearly directed and motivated by contemporary

politics – which is why the field of memory studies is not the preserve of historians and is in fact distinct from history.⁴⁸

Verovšek records, for example, that in the book *Los funerals de la Mamá Grande*, Columbian novelist Gabriel García Márquez declares that he must tell his story of remembrance “before the historians have time to arrive.”⁴⁹ But although memory is conceptually and functionally distinct from history and the line between the two is slippery, History can inform politics.

¹ Fabienne Viala, *The Post-Columbus Syndrome: Identities, Cultural Nationalism and Commemorations in the Caribbean* (Palgrave, McMillan, New York, 2014), 3.

² Peter Verovšek “The Politics of Memory: A Conceptual Approach to the Study of Memory in Politics,” <http://www.scribd.com/doc/177692024/Verovsek-The-Politics-of-Memory>

³ Verovšek, “The Politics of Memory,” 29.

⁴ Viala, *The Post-Columbus Syndrome*.

⁵ George Frederickson & Christopher Lasch, “Resistance to Slavery,” *Civil War History* 4 (1967): 317, 318.

⁶ Frederickson & Lasch, “Resistance to Slavery,” 317.

⁷ Lucille Mathurin Mair, “Recollections into the Journey of a Rebel Past,” in Selwyn R. Cudjoe, ed., *Caribbean Women Writers: Essays from the First International Conference* (Wellesley, Mass: Calaloux Publications, 1990), reprinted in Mair, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica, 1655-1845*, ed. Hilary Beckles & Verene Shepherd (Kingston: The UWI Press, 2007), 327.

⁸ Eugenia Charles, “The Experiences of the First Female Prime Minister in the Commonwealth Caribbean”, The 1st Dame Nita Barrow Memorial Lecture, Cave Hill, Barbados, November 3, 1995, in the Dame Nita Barrow Collection (hereafter DNBC), UWI Library, Cave Hill.

⁹ W. Terry Whalin, *Sojourner Truth, American Abolitionist* (Ohio: Barbour Publications. Inc, 1997) 129.

¹⁰ See Raul Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory: the journey of a holocaust historian* (Chicago: Ivan Dee 1996); and for evidence of such “perpetrator histories” See Ana Lucia Arajuos, *Politics of Memory: Making Slavery Visible in the Public Space* (Routledge: New York, 2012).

¹¹ Francis Blackman, *Dame Nita: Caribbean Woman, World Citizen* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1995), vii.

¹² Blackman, *Dame Nita*, 19.

¹³ Mair, “Recollections,” in *A Historical Study*, 318.

¹⁴ Mair, "Recollections," in *A Historical Study*, 321.

¹⁵ Mair, "Recollections," in *A Historical Study*, 318.

¹⁶ Lucille Mathurin Mair, *The Rebel Woman in the British West Indies During Slavery* (Kingston: Institute of Jamaica Publications Limited, 1975).

¹⁷ Mair, *A Historical Study*, viii.

¹⁸ Mair, "Recollections," in *A Historical Study*, 318.

¹⁹ Mair, "Recollections," in *A Historical Study*, 319.

²⁰ Mair, "Recollections," in *A Historical Study*, 326.

²¹ See Kamau Brathwaite, *Wars of Respect: Nanny and Sam Sharpe* (Kingston: Jamaica Agency for Public Information, National Heritage Week Committee, 1976) 18.

²² Mair, "Recollections," in *A Historical Study*, 326.

²³ Karla Gottlieb, *A History of Queen Nanny: the Mother of Us All* (New Jersey: Africa World Press, 2000), Chapter 6; See also Mavis Campbell, *The Maroons of Jamaica, 1655-1796: A History of Resistance, Collaboration and Betrayal* (Granby MA, : Bergin & Garvey, 1988); See also Beverley Carey, *The Maroon Story* (St. Andrew: Agouti Press, 1997 and Carey Robinson, *The Fighting Maroons of Jamaica* (Kingston: William Collins and Sangsters, 1974).

²⁴ Mair, "Recollections," *A Historical Study*, 327.

²⁵ Herbert Atheker, in "Recollections," *A Historical Study*, 327.

²⁶ Verene Shepherd, "Learning from Historical Tragedy to Combat Racial Discrimination Today" (Keynote speech delivered at the United Nations on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, New York, March 20, 2015).

²⁷ Janet Higbie, *Eugenia Charles: the Caribbean's Iron Lady* (London: McMillan, 1993).

²⁸ Lois Duke, *Women in Politics: Insiders or Outsiders?* (New York: Pearson Longman, 4th edn, 2006).

²⁹ Higbie, *Eugenia Charles*, 8.

³⁰ Alicia Mondesire, "The Reluctant Feminist: Eugenia Charles on Women & Gender", in Eudine Barribeau & Alan Cobley, eds., *Enjoying Power: Eugenia Charles & Political Leadership in the Commonwealth Caribbean* (Kingston: The UWI Press, 2006) 259.

³¹ Interview with Peter Richards in the "Women of the Hemisphere" Issue of *Américas*, (Sept-Oct 1985) 28-30, in Box 37, The Dame Eugenia Charles Papers (hereafter DECP), UWI Library, Cave Hill.

³² *Ibid.*, DECP, Box 74.

³³ Eugenia Charles to Margaret Thatcher, September 8, 1986, in Box 8, DECP

³⁴ Eudine Barribeau, "Contestations and Contradictions: The Political and Economic Leadership of Eugenia Charles," The 1st Dame Eugenia Charles Memorial Lecture, Dominica, 2006.

³⁵ Charles, "The Experiences of the First Female Prime Minister in the Commonwealth Caribbean", 1.

³⁶ Barbara Blake Hannah, October 23 2008, In response: "It wasn't Trevor or Moira – I was the first black British TV presenter," *The Black History Timeline*, October 13 2008, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/oct/23/television-raceandreligion>.

³⁷ Hannah, in response: "It wasn't Trevor or Moira."

³⁸ Hannah, in response: "It wasn't Trevor or Moira."

³⁹ Hannah Makeda Blake Barbara. Interview. "Let's talk Reparations."

⁴⁰ Nicholas Draper. "'Possessing Slaves': Ownership, Compensation and Metropolitan Society in Britain at the time of Emancipation 1834-40," *History Workshop Journal*, 64 (2007): 78.

⁴¹ Hilary Beckles; Pedro Welch. "Urban Context of the Slave Plantation System, Bridgetown, Barbados, 1680-1834" (PhD. Diss., University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, 1995).

⁴² Hilary Beckles' speech before the British House of Commons, House of Commons, Parliament of Great Britain, Thursday July 16 2014. 9:00 pm

⁴³ Charles, "The Experiences of the First Female Prime Minister"

⁴⁴ Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 2001) 73.

⁴⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The use and Abuse of History*, trans. Adrian Collins (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1985) 4, in Peter Verovšek, "The Politics of Memory," 4.

⁴⁶ Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, trans. Mark Dooley and Michael Hughes (New York: Routledge, 2001), 28; For more on Derrida's views on the international politics of memory and forgiveness, see, Michael Janover, "The Limits of Forgiveness and the Ends of Politics," *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 26, no. 3 (2005), 221-235, quoted in Peter Verovšek, "The Politics of Memory," 4.

⁴⁷ Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone, *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory* (New York: Routledge, 2003) 1, in Peter Verovšek, "The Politics of Memory," 4.

⁴⁸ Verovsek, "The Politics of Memory," 4-5.

⁴⁹ Gabriel García Márquez, *Los funerals de la Mamá Grande* in Verovsek, 10. but quoted in Joanne Rappaport, *The Politics of Memory: Native Historical Interpretation in the Colombian Andes* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 1.



What Love has to do with it? Sexuality, Intimacy and Power in Contemporary Caribbean Gender Relations

Editor

[Violet Eudine Barriteau](#)

Deputy Principal

The University of The West Indies

Cave Hill Campus

Editor's Note: Working Paper No. 17 is based on a lecture delivered on 10th November 2010 by Professor Violet Eudine Barriteau Deputy Principal, The University of The West Indies, Cave Hill Campus. Professor Barriteau delivered the 16th lecture in the series Caribbean Women Catalysts for Change on November 12, 2010, which is dedicated to honouring the memory of Dame Nita Barrow, Governor General of Barbados 1990-1995, and the first subject of the research project, Caribbean Women Catalysts for Change.

The paper presents and expands Jónasdóttir's concept of 'love power' and demonstrate its relevance to seeking explanations to contradictions in contemporary gender relations. Professor Barriteau is interested in the manifestations of areas of powerlessness in women's lives, and attempts to apply this conceptual framework to various experiences and conditions faced by women in Caribbean societies.

Professor Barriteau begins her analysis at the point where politicized sexuality and political economy converge, where state policies, bureaucratic practices, societal norms and views interact with privatised and politicized sexual relations in women's lives.

Keywords: Caribbean gender relations, politicized sexuality, political economy, sexual agency, women's economic autonomy, power relations, public and private spheres.

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Introduction

What is the background and context to a Caribbean feminist scholar finding the work of a Nordic feminist scholar so relevant? For some time now, the absence of various forms of power in Caribbean women's lives has been a central focus of my research, hence when I discovered Jónasdóttir's theorising of the power imbalance in women's lives through a focus on love power and sexuality, her work became immediately appealing.

A 2008 research attachment at the University of Örebro, Sweden as an International Research Fellow of the Centre of Gender Excellence provided me with the resources to begin the exploration of this topic, and in fact I am back in Sweden again, where I am pursuing another dimension of this research. I am grateful to Anna Jónasdóttir and the GEXcel project team for that vital research oasis. My lecture tonight is an outgrowth of my original research and is entitled, "What Love has to do with it? Sexuality, Intimacy and Power in Contemporary Caribbean Gender Relations."

I organise the lecture in two parts. In the first I present and expand Jónasdóttir's concept of 'love power' and demonstrate its relevance to seeking explanations to contradictions in contemporary gender relations, I am specifically interested in the manifestations of areas of powerlessness in women's lives. In the second part, I become more ambitious. I attempt to apply this conceptual framework to various experiences and conditions women face in Caribbean societies. I am particularly interested in how issues of sexual agency or lack thereof influence women's experiences of economic autonomy and in a larger project I pay attention to conditions of work and employment to illuminate my central arguments.

I enter this analysis through the subjectivity of women. However, this is an ongoing narrative about relations between women and men which seeks

understanding rather than blaming. Those of you who know my work, know I do not believe in victimhood. I believe theoretically and practically that women's inherent agency and power must always be acknowledged and held separate from any adverse conditions that women experience. I see this as a first strategy to recognising these adverse, painful conditions are yet artificial constructs even if, with devastating material or tangible results.

My analysis begins at the point where politicized sexuality and political economy converge, that is, the point where state policies, bureaucratic practices, societal norms and views, interact with privatised and politicized sexual relations in women's lives. I should tell you that I think power relations are embedded in intimate, sexualised relations, and these power relations often only become apparent when the status quo is disrupted. Further, issues of dominance and control of power relations in public demarcate the contours, scope and sites that are perceived as private, intimate and therefore off limits.

The interplay of the conceptual/ideological and juridical spheres of the public and private is fascinating, and there is a direct relation between the operation of power in these conceptual and ideological sites. The more power one has over the public, the greater a zone within the private one can erect an ideological boundary around and mark as off limits. [I shall return to the power and the public/private dichotomy in my conclusion].

However, I am saying unless you can control your "public", you have no "private", ie, the notion of a privatised zone or site that is off limits. I do not have to tell you which sex is seen or treated as having less control over their public locations and interactions, and therefore whose intimate spaces are fair game. How many male politicians in Barbados smoke again?

I told you earlier that my analysis begins at the point where politicized sexuality and political economy converge, that is because I argue that socio-sexual unions, including marriage, connect the state and economy with intimate

relations. I attempt to pay attention to the dynamics of sexuality and intimacy, and the power relations that surround these, as Caribbean women navigate the intersections of the public and the private, production and reproduction, caring and desiring, pursuing sexual pleasure and often receiving and giving emotional pain (with or without sexual pleasure, but that is another lecture).

Some of the questions this research seeks to answer are (and there are six of them):

1. Are Caribbean women's public, social lives influenced by the dynamics within their socio-sexual unions? Posed differently, are the ways women interact or experience economic, cultural and political relations, an outcome of what happens in their private, intimate spaces?
2. If we accept the premise that there is a connection, does Jónasdóttir's thesis that women's love power can be extracted, account for women's experiences of on-going asymmetric relations of gender and unequal conditions in their daily lives, encompassing employment and political participation?
3. Does this type of explanation shift blame onto women for systemic conditions of inequality?
4. In what particular ways do love power and intimacy manifest itself in Caribbean women's sexual relations with men?
5. Do women have and should women have power in intimate relations with men?
6. Is it as Jónasdóttir stated, that women enter socio-sexual unions, owners of their capacity to love which they can give of their own free will yet are without effective control over how or what forms they can legitimately use that capacity? (Jónasdóttir 1994, 224).

Or is the situation more like the observation made to me by a close friend who has been married three times, and has had numerous lovers, that in his experience women enter relationships with power and confidence and within six months they give up their power, thinking this is what men want. Is women's love power extracted? Or do women willingly surrender or compromise more readily in their intimate relationships? And if so, why?

Towards building this analytical framework, I examine three view points on the power of love. First, Jónasdóttir', she states

"My assumption means, that women and men-need, seeking and practicing love- enter into specific productive relations with each other in which they not only quite literally produce new human beings but also produce (and reproduce) themselves [and each other] as active, emotional and reasoning people" (Jónasdóttir 1994, 63).

Second, Tina Turner, perhaps reflecting on personal experience, asks repeatedly, what's love got to do with it? What's love got to do with anything? And third lesbian feminist theorists, Amber Hollingbaugh and Cherrie Moraga caution that,

"We don't really know for instance why men and women are still attracted to each other, even through all that oppression. There is something genuine that happens between heterosexuals, but gets perverted in a thousand different ways. There is heterosexuality outside of heterosexism" (Hollingbaugh and Moraga 1983, 395).

And their last statement is really an impulse for this work, unravelling heterosexuality from heterosexism.

These women offer three differing yet complementary perspectives on this energy called love power. Suspended between Jónasdóttir's theorisation of women and men needing, seeking and practising love, and the equally powerful insight by Hollingbaugh and Moraga that heterosexuality exists outside of¹ heterosexism, is Tina Turner's advice to regard love as a second-hand, overrated emotion. So where is that heterosexual, socio-sexual union in Caribbean feminist scholarship? What have we done about Hollingbaugh and Moraga's powerful suggestion that feminists, "don't really know for instance why men and women are still attracted to each other, even through all that oppression" (Hollingbaugh and Moraga 1983: 395). Has Caribbean feminist analysis dismissed, downplayed or ignored heterosexual attraction as having any significance in yielding knowledge about relations of domination in women's public and private lives?

Feminist work from the Anglophone Caribbean, (including my own) has not examined why unequal conditions continue to persist for women from the vantage point of what Jónasdóttir has theorised as political sexuality [and I have called politicized sexuality] and the socio-sexual relationship governed by her concept of 'love power'. Where there have been several studies of sexualities, none that I am aware of have sought to link the widespread and persistent practice or experiences of patriarchal relations of domination with an exploration of the dynamics within the basic socio-sexual union, that sexual relationship.

In my theorising, I am specifically interested in the complications romantic loving *may pose* for Caribbean women in sexual relationships with men. I am beginning to explore the intersections of desire and power or the relations of power embedded in desire. As Jane Flax surmises, "*Desire really has a kind of energy or force of its own, and more than that, since it is within us, it operates and undermines various other processes which like to look at themselves as separate from desire*" (Grant 1997, 5).

Do Caribbean women understand the power of the erotic in their lives or even the erotic as a source of power? Audre Lorde's pioneering work on the power of the erotic is a critical contributing strand of feminist theorising that I draw on. Lorde declares:

When I speak of the erotic then I speak of it as an assertion of the life force of women, of that creative energy, empowered, the knowledge and use of which we are now reclaiming in our language, our history, our dancing, our loving, our work, our lives (Lorde 1984, 55).

Lorde's theorising suggests that if women can come to appreciate the erotic as a source of power within them, they can come to intimate relationships and enter the social world with a wholesome understanding of themselves as social-sexual beings. Lorde's theorising of the erotic is much more comprehensive and wider than a notion of sexual relations. In Lorde's analysis, the erotic includes a

passion to live fully, to experience feeling. She speaks of work as having an erotic value of which women can be robbed. "The erotic is sensual (those physical, emotional and psychic expressions of what is deepest and strongest and richest within each of us, being shared. The passion of love, in its deepest meanings" (Lorde 1984, 56). According to Lorde, when women accept the erotic within themselves, they negate powerlessness (Lorde 1984, 58).

In spite of their pursuit of sexual relations with men, have women, especially heterosexual Caribbean women, embraced the power of the erotic in their lives?¹ Or have they instead distanced themselves from this "life force" (Lorde 1984, 55) and so contribute to their own powerlessness?

I agree that women and men come to sexual unions along a fluid and changeable continuum of sexual desires, sexual relations and sexual identities. At the two conventional extremes are heterosexuality and homosexuality. However, many individuals experience their sexual relations and desires through bisexual, homosexual, heterosexual, polysexual and transgender sexual relations². Some people harbour sexual desires that remain unfulfilled for a range of reasons. I am specifically interested in unwrapping the mystique of love power in the socio-sexual unions women have with men, and I prioritize and focus on women's intimate relations with men for several reasons:

First, in the Caribbean it is an unexplored dimension in the search to interrogate and make sense of women's experience of dis-empowerment in these relations and within the wider political economy.

Second, the contours of our dominant social, economic, cultural and political institutions are shaped by heteronormativity. Yet we have not theorized the heterosexual union at the centre of a normalized notion of heterosexual society. And even though this is beyond the scope of this lecture, neither have we examined how this 'normalized' heterosexuality feeds homophobia and its flip side, heterosexism.

Third, I maintain that interrogating the socio-heterosexual union can impart insights into combatting heterosexism and homophobia³. Now, because, like Jónasdóttir, I do not think there are mono-causal explanations for what goes wrong for women (Jónasdóttir 2007a, 5), I believe it is necessary to integrate this developing investigation of political sexuality with ongoing work on Caribbean political economy while maintaining an explicit focus on Caribbean women⁴. In George Lamming's address on Caribbean Women Traders whom he termed 'the Miracle Managers', Lamming states:

We can say that all women irrespective of their social origins are an example, perhaps the most extreme example, of a dominated class. Social theorists of the Left have difficulty with that formulation. But historical and personal evidence is abundant that all men, irrespective of their economic or racial status, hold a common belief about the subordinate role of women in their lives. The Black male labourer and the White male executive director share a profound bond of allegiance and solidarity on that question of the relation of woman to man, whether that union is marital, extra-marital, or ultra-marital (Lamming 1995, 37-38).

Lamming's identification of the sexual union as marital, extra-marital or ultra-marital (Lamming 1995, 37-38) is significant because of the central role marriage holds in Jónasdóttir's theorizing and the multiple forms of man-woman unions in the Caribbean. It is crucial to recognise the many variants of sexual unions, not from a narrow perspective of insisting on cultural specificity, but because of the material and ideological implications of these socio-sexual unions which span a range of spatial and emotional arrangements.

Part One

What's Love Got to Do with It?

It is somewhat ironic that notions of love, sex and romance are everywhere embedded in the Caribbean imaginary, yet it is unexamined and un-theorized in the day-to-day lives of women in their sexual relations with men⁵. The implications of these relations for ongoing conditions of inequalities in women's lives are also unexamined. It is not only in the marketing campaigns of tourist destinations that the Caribbean appears as saturated with desire, lust and the promise of more love, more sex, and more romance. In a range of popular expressions, musical forms and folk tales, love and sex are critical to, and fully articulated in, the rhythms of everyday life. Evidence abounds in songs by calypsonians, dance hall lyrical chants by Reggae and dub artists, dances of the Matikor, folk songs about love affairs gone awry, letters to the press (such as Dear Christine) seeking advice on relationships, popular concoctions for building sexual stamina, "putting it back" in the back, obeah remedies for recapturing straying lovers or claiming new ones⁶, appeals to psychics and spiritual healers. These all underscore the critical location of "making love as opposed to just making tools" in arriving at an understanding of the nexus of "political sexuality" and political economy in Caribbean societies (Barriteau 2011).

Yet, Caribbean feminist research to date has not focused directly on what Jónasdóttir describes as "women and men--needing, seeking and practicing love" (Jónasdóttir 1994, 63). The majority of Caribbean countries are now heavily dependent on tourism as the major earner of foreign exchange (McDavid and Ramajeessingh 2003), and the most valuable, even if vulnerable, economic activity. (And of course we are witnessing that vulnerability now, as Barbados and other Caribbean economies are experiencing the effects of the global recession primarily through declines in tourism revenues). Given the region's heavy reliance on tourism, sex tourism has become an important but unofficially acknowledged product⁷ of that sector. In the Saturday Sun of October 23rd,

Miriam Edwards, President of the Caribbean Sex Work Coalition underscored the regional spread of sex workers by appealing for better treatment of sex workers on behalf of her membership in 13 Caribbean countries. The widespread presence of sex workers is supported by the existence of a substantive body of literature on sex tourism in the Anglophone, Dutch, Francophone and Hispanic Caribbean (Chanel 1994; Albuquerque 1998; Kempadoo 1999, 2003, 2005; Cabezas 1999, 2004; Sanchez-Taylor 2001; Sharpe and Pinto 2006). Homosexual and heterosexual sex tourism/trade between gay tourists and Caribbean women and men and to Caribbean destinations has also been examined from a range of perspectives (Alexander 2005; Kempadoo 2003; Puar 2001). There is research on Caribbean women working as prostitutes/sex workers and, increasingly, UN bodies in collaboration with United States agencies have been examining the trafficking in women and girls for sex work in the region (Thomas Hope 2007).

Yet, there is almost no Caribbean feminist investigations of love, sexuality, intimacy and sexual relations with men **and** the complications these pose for women in their everyday lives⁸. Even more intriguing, I am unaware of any attempts to interrogate these as possible contributing factors to the unequal relations of domination that women experience in the wider society as well as in intimate spaces.

Politicizing Sexuality⁹

In politicizing sexuality for investigation, Jónasdóttir builds her process of inquiry around a series of questions, of which I extract the following four as the most relevant:

1. Why are women oppressed and by whom?
2. What is the valid ground for the feeling or 'sense' that 'our [women's] oppression' [Rowbotham 1972, 24] is rooted mainly in something other than the conditions and terms on which labour is organised and exploited?

3. How can we theorise *sexuality* as a field of individual agency (or performance) *and* personal experience as a complex web of socially and politically conditioned relationships, *and* what are the consequences of what takes place in these relationships?
4. How is power understood and conceptualised as part of sexuality, in distinction from power as dominance only or power merely as the effect of discourse? (Jónasdóttir 2007a, 4).

From this ground work, Jónasdóttir moves to her key concept, love power. She states that the actualisation of love power comes into the picture, emerging as a result of her assumption, "that a crucial part of the theoretical analysis of women's exploitation must be done within the field of sexuality, and not limited to economy or work, and **also** that the analysis has to be extended 'beyond oppression'" (Jónasdóttir 2007a, 4). Jónasdóttir fine tunes her discussion of the basic assumptions further. She emphasizes that contemporary, patriarchal relations or male-dominated society is produced and reproduced by means of the appropriative practices of exploitation of women's love power (Jónasdóttir 2007a: 5).

The fact that Jónasdóttir has politicized sexuality by subjecting to investigation the basic sexual union, provides a critical point of entry for examining the interconnections between what happens between men and women in sexual relations, and what happens between women and men in the economy, state and society. Jónasdóttir's insistence that this union has wider meaning than legally married or cohabiting couples is especially relevant in Caribbean societies. We know the majority of sexual unions and relations exist outside of legal marriages and even cohabiting couples. I agree with her statement that, "social interactions between women and men in direct person-to-person relations are consistently overlooked" (Jónasdóttir 1994, 213).

Love Power Defined: Care and Erotic Ecstasy

In answer to her question, what is being done to us as women in free and equal, yet still patriarchal, Western society, she replies, "men exploit a certain power resource in women, namely the power of love." She continues that this is basically what the contemporary Western sex-struggle is about (Jónasdóttir: 1994, 214). "In the search for a term that could denote precisely this 'practical, human sensuous activity', a term that could distinguish it both from the power of labor or work. . . . I came to believe that love is the best term available, if care and erotic ecstasy are incorporated as its two main elements" (Jónasdóttir: 1994: 221). Even though Jónasdóttir differentiates love power from the power of work, I will attempt to apply her concept of love power to reveal some of what happens to women in relation to the world of work.

Some aspects of the two dimensions of love power, care and erotic ecstasy have been covered extensively in investigations of Caribbean women's lives, but they have never been dis-aggregated or recombined to create any type of explanation of the power imbalances in women's lives as Jónasdóttir does. Perhaps because of the influence (or bias) of the liberal and socialist informed, Women in Development/Women and Development discourse and their early impact on feminist scholarship in the Caribbean, a great deal of intellectual energy has been expended on women's work as caring work¹⁰. This is so whether within families, households, or the state and the economy¹¹. There is an extensive literature on Caribbean women and work (Gill and Massiah 1984; Massiah 1986; Massiah 1991; Scott 1992; Elliot 2006); in households and in pursuing strategies for survival (Barrow 1986, French 1994, Bolles 1983); and in informal and formal economic activities (Barrow 1993; Seguino 2003; Bolles 1983; Jayasinghe 2001; Barriteau 2002; Lagro and Plotkin 1990; Freeman 2000; 1998; 1997).

The research that come closest to approximating investigations in the realm of the erotic are the investigations into sex work. However, I argue that sex work is another dimension of women's care work, since the primary emphasis is on

fulfilling the sexual needs of others¹², (even though it is quite possible that there are many women and men engaged in sex work who also experience sexual gratification). My main argument is that women's pursuit of erotic ecstasy is what propels and maintains them in intimate relations with men, and becomes for many the eventual source of their powerlessness. I also assume that in the pursuit of the erotic, women may end up with the care work and continue with caring. Many women continue in the socio-sexual union, either hoping the erotic would materialize, or eventually they substitute their desire to be cared for and fulfill other dimensions of their sexual pleasure with caring for others. They journey or migrate from being their lover's 'baby' to his 'mummy', and many will be eventually called mums or mother by their men.

Jónasdóttir's theorization of [the twin components of love power] care and erotic ecstasy is compelling at several levels. In one sense, I hypothesize that women pursue erotic ecstasy and they end up with the care work¹³. Caribbean women are often responsible for the care of the relationship, care of the men¹⁴, children and elders of the family, care of the organizations in which they are members, including The University of the West Indies¹⁵ and most of the caring work in the economy. Women expend a lot of 'emotional labour' in providing care (Hocshild 2002, 194). In another sense, in the pursuit of erotic ecstasy there is that man-woman dynamic which Jónasdóttir calls "women and men-needing, seeking and practicing love" (Jónasdóttir 1994, 63). Women may experience satisfying sexual encounters, they may have deeply fulfilling sexual relationships, but often what many women want is a desire to be cared for by men beyond sexual encounters¹⁶. I hypothesize that when women's powerlessness in sexual relations exists, (I am not suggesting at all that this exists for all women in all relationships), it is at the point at which their love power becomes "appropriated" or extracted, or the term I prefer, "surrendered" within the erotic dimension of Jónasdóttir's conceptualisation of love power.

Part Two

Applying Love Power to Caribbean Realities

I focus on four of Jónasdóttir's assumptions in applying her model to Caribbean women's sexual and work relations. These are:

1. Understanding and conceptualizing power as part of sexuality;
2. 'Marriage'/Socio-sexual unions as linking the domains of the private and the public;
3. Women's love as a practical [yet] human sensuous activity;
4. And the organisation (and expression) of that love being the basis of women's 'exploitation'.

In a 1992 journal article, I noted that gendered relations are characterized "as the ways in which *social realities* between women and men are socially constructed to perpetuate male dominance" (Barriteau 1992, 15; Barriteau 2003b, 4). Now I want to rephrase this statement to examine how *sexual realities* between women and men are socially constructed to perpetuate male dominance.

In reviewing the Caribbean evidence, Jónasdóttir's sense that women's experiences of relations of domination arise in something other than the conditions and terms on which labour is organised and exploited seems valid. What her analysis suggests is that by the time we recognise that women are being exploited in relations of work, there is a set of a priori conditions in which unequal relations are already a factor. In the Anglophone Caribbean, more women than men are enrolled in tertiary educational institutions and graduate in larger ratios. They are relatively more highly skilled, and possess fair to high levels of social capital (Bailey 2003; Elliot 2006). Simultaneously, women experience higher levels of unemployment, and are the first retrenched or the last to receive training when factories become high skilled. Daphne Jayasinghe's research demonstrates that as manufacturing becomes more

technologically driven, an inverse relation quickly develops with women becoming increasingly de-skilled (Jayasinghe 2003). Caribbean women receive less wages for comparable levels of work, except in the state and governmental sector;¹⁷ and of households falling below the poverty line, there are more headed by women (Seguino 2003; Jayasinghe 2001; Andaiye 2003). Camille Samuel's doctoral research on the gender dynamics of corporate leadership in Trinidad reveals that men benefit from displaying traits and characteristics stereotypically associated with women, while women leaders who display these traits are coded as weak and ineffective. If they display characteristics associated with men they are coded as masculinist and insecure, and the most effective leaders are men who combine the characteristics of men and women (Samuel 2010). In other words, neither masculine nor feminine traits serve women leaders. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean worry that the current economic crisis would increase unemployment among women in Latin America and the Caribbean in productive sectors such as commerce, the manufacturing industry, financial services, tourism and domestic help services (Barbados Advocate Dec. 15 2008, 13).

In political parties and electoral contests, all conditions of formal equality of access have been met since the 1950s, but in the area of political leadership and occupation of cabinet positions and senior governmental appointments the record is still uneven and in no way parallels men's hold on political positions and power (Vassell 2003). Joan French concludes, "women's political participation in the Caribbean is still generally well below parity and even the 30% target" (French 2008: 33).

Since the early 1970s, there has been the establishment of state machineries on women and/or gender in almost all government administrations. There has been the removal of punitive legislation, the production of numerous reports and recommendations on how to improve conditions of women. There has been the introduction of more egalitarian laws, and there is consistent reporting to United Nations bodies (such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) on governments' attempts to work towards

gender equality in Caribbean societies (Tang Nain and Bailey 2003). Yet relations of domination or inequalities for women remain. Joycelin Massiah summarizes six in-depth regional studies of efforts to promote gender equality in the Commonwealth Caribbean and provides greater analytical insights on these contradictions:

- Increases in the number of women in leadership positions do not necessarily lead to greater influence on policy.
- New issues such as HIV/AIDS are impacting women to a greater extent than men, but the general public seems reluctant to support an agenda for the empowerment of women.
- Although women display higher levels of participation and performance in education at the secondary and tertiary levels, this does not translate into significant gains in their economic, political or personal empowerment.
- While some women have benefitted from new opportunities opened by globalisation, many others have experienced new or deepening inequalities in access to opportunities and resources.
- Despite the apparent contradictory situation of women and the concern with the so-called marginalisation of men, the elimination of gender inequities is not yet a part of the core values and policy developments, programme action and administrative systems.
- Although states have signed on to various international instruments, there is no regionally agreed system for measuring progress towards the achievement of gender justice (Massiah 2003, xii-xiv).

What is missing from all these studies is a focus on women as socio-sexual beings in their sexual relations with men, and how these relations interface with economic and political developments. In other words, how politicized sexuality affects political economy. A central argument I make is that something happens in women's intimate relations that affect how they experience the economy and society. Equally, experiences in the economy and society influence women's intimate relations. I hypothesize that starting in their intimate

spaces and radiating outwards, many women are either forced into or enter a set of accommodations and compromises which exacerbate the material and ideological inequalities they meet in the economy, state and society. I demonstrate how these accommodations, negotiations or zones of powerlessness move through three sites, the socio-sexual union, the family, the economy/state.

Marriage/Socio-Sexual Unions and Appropriation of Women's Sexual Resources

Given that both Jónasdóttir and I view Jónasdóttir socio-sexual unions as a link between the private and the public, we need to examine these relations. At first blush, existing research seem to indicate that motherhood and then marriage are the primary sources of identity for Caribbean women. The seminal Women in the Caribbean Project, WICP, also found that working class women who were in long-term unions with men postponed decisions about marriage if getting married did not mean a change in their material level of comfort (Anderson 1986; Senior 1991).

According to this survey conducted in the late 1970s to early 1980s, for many working-class women, marriage should mean an observable change in their standard of living. However, these findings need to be contextualized. Rates of marriages/legal unions have been historically low and continue to be so, but with Trinidad and Guyana having higher ratios than the rest of the region. For example, for a similar period as the survey, in Barbados, the illegitimacy ratio, calculated as total births out of wedlock as a percentage of total live births, climbed steadily from 62.0 % in 1961 to 74.2% in 1974¹⁸, meaning that in 1974 nearly 75% of all children were born to unmarried parents (Barriteau 1994: 151). The marriage ratio, calculated as total marriages per 1,000 population as a percentage of total population, declined from 4.2 % to 3.8% for the same period (Barriteau 1994, 151).

Caribbean family structures come in multiple variations, running from extended families of several generations occupying one dwelling space, through to the nuclear family (Smith 1996) and encompassing what Rosina Brodber classified as the transnational family (Brodber 1986). The latter has key members located in several different countries and diasporic communities with several, especially women, who are very mobile and living in what Carol Boyce Davis terms a state of in-between-ness (Boyce-Davies 2007). The sexual relations Caribbean women have and their attendant complications are threaded through these family forms. Without further probing, it is difficult to determine whether Caribbean women truly do not desire formal marriage over motherhood¹⁹ or the ranking they give is a form of adaptation, an adjustment to the realities of the instability or sense of powerlessness surrounding marital and other forms of sexual unions²⁰.

I maintain that conventional marriage is still a dominant ideological force and regulatory norm in Caribbean women's lives. As Tracy Robinson observes, and I agree "Caribbean women generally begin their reproductive life without marriage, but that reality cannot deny the considerable force that marriage still has an ideal for women. Being able to define oneself socially and legally by reference to a man through marriage, provides a distinct form of legitimacy and acceptance for women in the eyes of the community that should not be underestimated" (Robinson 2003: 248).

Sexual Unions as a Source of Sexual Powerlessness

Danielle Toppin's work with young women in Jamaica underscores economic vulnerability intersected with sexual relations as well as the early start to reproduction for many working-class young women. She presents information on the sexual relations of three teenagers, one of whom is 14 years old, five months pregnant and living with a man ten years older (Toppin 2007a). Another is 15 and also lives with an older man. She moved out from her mother's home to avoid sexual molestation by her stepfather. The third is still at home, has a

teenage boyfriend, a good relationship with her mother, and has discussed with her mother her decision to be sexually active.

Toppin submits that these young women are grappling with the feelings and consequences of their early entry into sexual relationships. She reports that the pregnant young woman attends an organization that allows teenage mothers to complete their education and to receive developmental counselling, with one of the core areas of concern being delaying unwanted pregnancies. Despite this, the young woman states she doubts that she would use condoms with her partner. She states, he will not use them, and she would not push him to, because he might think she has another man even though she suspects he is sexually active with other people (Toppin 2007a). Toppin also notes that according to a report by the Statistical Institute of Jamaica, one in every ten Jamaican women is married or in a common law union before her eighteenth birthday, with approximately one per cent doing so before the age of fifteen. Toppin continues, "Although ideas regarding men's right to ownership over 'their' women in intimate relationships can be found across communities, the practice of cohabitation between under-aged females and older men is predominantly found in communities marked by poverty. In many instances, young girls become bargaining tools for economic improvement, placing them in relationships in which the power imbalances affect them negatively" (Toppin 2008).

Two of these young women are living with older men because of issues of economic deprivation and, for one, the additional grief of sexual harassment at her home²¹. The information on cohabitation between older men and girls in poor communities underscores the troubling dynamics of developments in political economy affecting women's sexual lives. Here the life chances of girls are being shaped in a context that breeds powerlessness, despair and lack of sexual and social autonomy.

Sexualized Violence/Economic Violence

Another way of examining politicized sexuality is to link the economic violence done to women and men in the workplace with the sexualized violence which occur in privatized spaces and sites such as the home and intimate relations. There is ample evidence that when men suffer economic hardship, loss of jobs or reduced income, the incidence of violence against women rises. What has not been adequately tracked is how women's experiences of that same form of economic violence in their working lives increase their vulnerability in their sexual unions, in the absence of (or sometimes in spite of) any state-sponsored protective mechanisms. Economic hardship reduces women's economic autonomy and leaves them more susceptible to abuses in their sexual unions because of their dependence on men for financial support (Pargass and Clarke 2003, 43). Gaitrey Pargass and Roberta Clarke reviewed studies on violence against women in the Caribbean, and examined some of the beliefs as to what causes violence against women, as well as revealed some of the continuities between domestic violence as a form of sexualised violence (Pargass and Clarke 2003, 39-72; Barriteau 2003d, 213). For example, they found that a key factor emerging in a study of violence in Suriname is that when women made the first report of violence, their partners had been violent for many years before (Pargass and Clarke 2003, 43).

Sexuality and Work

Joycelin Massiah reminds us that Caribbean women have always worked; in fact I argue they have not stopped working since the Columbian intrusion over six centuries ago. Along with Caribbean men, Caribbean women have worked through conquest, colonisation, slavery, indentureship, emancipation, crown colony rule and independence, every permutation of political and economic systems of control and governance. Yet varying gendered ideologies and material conditions of inequalities persist in labour force participation and the work place, as if to suggest women are newcomers to the world of work. Labour

force statistics reveal a consistent pattern of higher female unemployment and skewed levels of earnings.

Let us examine some data from the United Nations Human Development Reports for 1998 and 2008. In 1998 of the ten Caribbean countries reporting men's share of earned income was 60% or greater. In Barbados, the Bahamas and Jamaica women had the highest share of earned income, yet in none of these three countries recording the highest percentages were women able to achieve a 40% share of earned income. Women's share of earned income were lowest for women in Belize at 18.5%, followed by the Dominican Republic 24%, Trinidad and Tobago 26% and Guyana 26.9%. This reveals on average for every dollar earned in Belize in 1998, women earned 18.5 cents and men, 81.5 cents. We can hypothesize about the state of women's intimate relations there.

Economic vulnerability is usually a good indicator of women's status within sexual relationships. Ten years later in 2007/2008, women's share of earned income has improved in six of the twelve Caribbean countries reporting, and happily in Belize, women's share of earned income as moved from 18.5% to 28.4%. Women's earned income share in the Bahamas, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Suriname and the Dominican Republic also improved with the Bahamas recording the highest percentage at 41.4%. So one country has broken the 40% barrier. However, in no Caribbean country in 2008 was women share of earned income greater than 41%. Of the twelve countries reporting in 2008, men received 61% or greater of earned income share in eleven countries.

Quarterly statistics on the Barbados labour market at December 2007 reveal the following. Participation rates for males and females were 73% and 60.7 % respectively. The sexual composition of the labour force was 52% male and 48% female. Women accounted for 61.8% of persons who were not in the labour force, and women between the ages of 25 and 64 represented 71.5% of the total inactive population. The unemployment rate was 6.7% overall with women's unemployment being 6.9% and men's 6.6%, one of the closest the ratios have ever been. Of the 11% of the unemployed seeking jobs for over one

year, 70% were female. Those seeking employment between 3 months to a year were 18% of the unemployed of which 63.% were female (Barbados 2007). These are snapshots that bear greater analysis. Yet they do indicate gender asymmetries in labour force participation rates with implications for resource distribution.

Conclusion

Kathleen Jones advises that, “the test of Jónasdóttir’s theory should not be the degree of generality, but whether its account of the construction of women as loving caretakers “for” men, instead of as desiring subjects in reciprocally erotic relations, is persuasive” (Jones 1994: xii-xiii). I believe it is. Yet to fully test the applicability of Jónasdóttir’s theory, I would like to conduct research on the organisation of sexual unions I need to know more of the organisation of sexual unions and how love power operates in women’s lives. The situation with the young girls is more stark, they are indeed powerless, but what of the situation for women with considerable economic resources and social capital whose sexual unions seem as problematic?

I return to the issues of dominance and control of power relations in the public demarcating the contours, scope and sites that are perceived as private and intimate, and therefore off limits. I would also like to pose additional questions arising from Jónasdóttir’s basic assumptions. Can our societies perceive of women in terms of intimate relationships as other than loving caretakers for men? Can women be understood as desiring subjects in reciprocally erotic relations that move beyond constructions as temptresses, conniving schemers, Delilahs or nymphomaniacs? I suggest that the recent public discourse on women’s sexuality in Barbados is symptomatic of intense anxieties being stirred up and major moves geared to protect existing constructions of women as loving caretakers for men.

The widespread coverage in the print media of a rabid spread of lesbianism among women and school girls with headlines which include, “Schoolgirls look to each other for love: Counsellor worried about the rising practice of lesbianism” (Harewood 2010, 14A), “Girls gone wild” (Harewood 2010, 5A), “Nothing funny about sexuality.” (Goddard 2010, 9A), “Parents must speak to girls.” (Harewood 2010, 15A), “God will not tolerate same-sex unions.” (Macdonald 2010, 10A), underscore the power struggles and

contestations over how women's sexuality and intimate relations should be perceived. The was sensational with media coverage featuring 'reformed lesbians repackaged as born-again Christians, repenting for their lives of sin and debauchery, and thanking God and the Church for saving them.' Is this evidence that the unconscious fear that basic ways of organizing social life is being disrupted?

Is there a fear that women and girls are internalizing a sense of sexual autonomy and reproductive freedom and that this claiming of the power of the erotic or love power is deeply disruptive of societal expectations of how women should experience their sexual lives? Traditionally, an effective way to police women's lives was to accuse them of lesbianism, especially if the women were or are feminists. The charge of homosexuality was to induce silencing in our region notorious for its homophobia. The policing of women's gender identities has now shifted to the ultimate terrain in heterosexist discourses, women's sexuality. What happens if women subvert this attempt, and remove the power of social death and silencing by claiming a lesbian sexual identity²², precisely at the point when the impression is being created that there is a lesbian menace threatening and overtaking heteronormative social life? Davina Goddard starts her letter to the press, "I am a Lesbian, well, at least politically I am" (Goddard 2010, 9A).

I have tried to demonstrate that the nexus of political sexuality and political economy is dynamic and sometimes contested. For many women who may appear powerful in the public, in social, political and economic relations, there are continuous attempts to force them into powerless positions in their sexual relations with men. I recognize that the power of love - 'love power', care and erotic ecstasy is an un-theorized, epistemological frontier in Caribbean feminist studies. Women's experiences of relations of domination emanate from many sources. One of them is the relationship between women and men as socio-sexual beings, and at the core of that union, love power. I would like to know more about how care and erotic ecstasy shape women's private and public lives. Jónasdóttir's theory of love power underscores the need for an in-depth

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study of women's sexual relations with men towards revealing the love practices around power and sexuality in Caribbean's women's lives.

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¹ Or for that matter homosexual women?

² In reaction to Sigmund Freud's point that bisexuality is the decisive factor in human sexuality, Jane Flax states she prefers the term, polysexual. "Polysexual conveys the sense of a complex, usable range of possibilities, of sites with varying attributes in multiple mixtures and forms." See Jane Flax 2004.

³ I am aware of the symbiotic relationship between heterosexism and homophobia and believe patriarchal relations of power reproduce these exclusions and inequalities. In this project I focus on heterosexuality and heterosexism.

⁴ I cannot help but think that in the Caribbean now, it seems almost reactionary, backward and passé to say that one is interested in maintaining a research focus on women. Both within the academy and popular culture, there is a sense that the cutting edge work is on men and masculinity and/or 'alternative' sexualities, which are of course, of incredible importance. I remain intrigued that research on heterosexual women seems to be out of style, when hetero-normativity and patriarchal relations continue to be most dominant. I am also mindful of Hollingbaugh and Moraga's observation that there is heterosexuality outside of heterosexism, see Hollingbaugh and Moraga 1983, 395.

⁵ As my friend and colleague, Pat Mohammed reminded me, sex and love, "is reflected all around us in the music, which, out of fear of emotional entanglements, the capacity/incapacity for Caribbean men and women to profess to, admit to, speak of love, equates and embeds love and desire in material things - like I love me care, I love me money and most of all, mi love mi browning." Email correspondence Mohammed - Barriteau, April 16th 2008. I must thank Pat for this wonderful insight.

⁶ The Mighty Sparrow sings, "you can't make love without money." Reggae artist Buju Banton, declares, "mi love mi car, mi love mi money, but most of all mi love mi browning (brown skin, black woman). In another calypso by Sparrow, Melda visits an obeah man to try to get her man to marry her, (an attempt at guaranteed status and respectability even if emotional stability is not assured), while drinks popularly regarded as promoting sexual stamina include Bois bandé in Grenada, Baba Roots in Jamaica and Seamoss in Barbados.

⁷ Or prop

⁸ Women's sexuality has been addressed by Caribbean women writers such as Edwidge Danticat, Oona Kempadoo, and Shani Mootoo. Dorian Powell, a researcher on the Women in the Caribbean Project, looked at women's sexuality through family planning and fertility and in fact the closest one comes to getting information about women's sexual lives is through population, reproductive health, and fertility studies. Patricia Mohammed also examined women's sexuality in Dominica and St. Lucia through family planning. See Mohammed and Perkins 1991. In her doctoral dissertation Mohammed theorized the way early Indo-Trinidadian women negotiated sexual relations, expanding their personal and sexual power in the context of migration, indenture-ship and the comparatively smaller number of Indian women in Trinidad during the early period of indentureship. Roseanne Kanhai in *Matikor* also looks at the sexuality of Indo-Trinidadian women. I am indebted to my colleague Patricia Mohammed for the foregoing information. Email correspondence, Mohammed-Barriteau April 21, 2008. However, none of the existing works have made women's sexual relations the central focus of analysis in the ways we have examined work in Caribbean women's lives.

⁹ I have condensed a lot of the theoretical discussion for the lecture. Jónasdóttir builds a theory of love power as parallel to Marx's theory of labour power, so she uses similar terminology, which I don't always accept.

¹⁰ I see this research as vital.

¹¹ At the level of informing policy there is a great deal of convergence between liberal and socialist feminist theories. Both emphasized women in the public sphere, but from differing theoretical positions. Liberal feminists wanted to increase women's participation in the state and the economy. Socialist feminists did valuable work on showing how women were exploited as workers and as housewives, while emphasizing how women's household work were un-remunerated even as it underwrote capitalist production, see Barriteau 1994, 1995 on Socialist Feminist theory and Caribbean women.

¹² I do not deny that there are women engaged in sex work who will enjoy sexual satisfaction from this.

¹³ Perhaps without even recognising that in the pursuit of the erotic, they also want to be cared for by their men.

¹⁴ Even for nurturing the scholarly discourse on men and masculinity, see Marlene Hamilton, 1999.

¹⁵ In many political and social organizations women are the fund raisers, the secretaries, the organisers of social activities, key organizers of constituencies, rank and file members of parent-teachers' associations, but not the presidents, For some of these dynamics in political organizations, see Roberta Clarke, 1986; Barriteau 1992.

¹⁶ This assumption I would like to prove in a proposed study of women's sexual relations.

¹⁷ Except in the state or governmental sector.

¹⁸ Legislation in the 1980s removed the legal discrimination and social stigma between legitimate and illegitimate children.

¹⁹ I can almost hear the strong condemnation of this point by some feminists in the region given our heavy investment in mythologizing Caribbean women as mothers, above all else. This is not to suggest Caribbean women do not make incredible sacrifices for their children and even their men. The point I am questioning is the suggestion that they actively choose this over marriage rather than they come to that position as a residual of the tenuous state of many sexual relations, see R T. Smith 1996, Michael Leiber, 1981.

²⁰ There are conflicting perspectives from North American anthropologists who have done research in the region, see Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow , 1981, and Leiber 1981.

²¹ I have learnt from social workers attending CGDS's gender training programmes that many mothers deny their teenage daughters claims that they are being sexually assaulted by their stepfathers, many out of fear of losing the relationship and/or economic support the man provides. There are court cases with stepfathers being charged for rapes, or girls running away from home because of this.

²² That is women pursue what I call the Taliban model. They remove the power of being labeled lesbian, and deviant and the almost guaranteed 'social death' by claiming the status themselves, emptying the labeling of its policing and regulatory power.



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African-Caribbean Women: Migration, Diaspora, Post-diaspora

Contributors Biographies

[Leith Dunn](#) is Senior Lecturer and Head of the UWI's IGDS, Mona Unit. Her academic and professional career spans over 25 years of teaching, research and publishing and programming on a wide range of social and economic development issues with gender as a cross-cutting human rights theme. These have included studies on: migration and human trafficking; labour, trade and tourism; climate change and disaster risk management; sexual and reproductive health, HIV and AIDS; leadership and governance. Dr. Dunn previously worked with regional and international development agencies including the United Nations. She has served as an Advisor to the Commonwealth Foundation and as a member of four (4) Commonwealth Observer Missions for Tripartite Elections in Zimbabwe (2002) ; Zambia (2006), Rwanda (2010) and Malawi (2014). She completed her BA (honours) in Languages and Social Sciences and her MSc in Sociology and Social Psychology at The UWI and her Ph.D. in Sociology at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

[Suzanne Scafe](#) is a Visiting Professor of Caribbean and Postcolonial Literatures at London South Bank University. Her recent work includes essays on violence in

the spatial imaginary of Kingston fictions (ZAA, 2016, and forthcoming, 2019), and several essays and book chapters on black British women's autobiographical writing, black British fiction and drama, and Caribbean women's writing. Her most recent publications include "Black Women Subjects in Auto/biographical Discourse" in *The Cambridge Companion to Black and Asian Literature* (2016) and "Performing Ellen: Mojisola Adebayo's *Moj of the Antarctic: An African Odyssey*, 2008 and *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom; or, the Escape of William and Ellen Craft from Slavery, 1860*" (*Journal of Commonwealth Literature* forthcoming, 2019). She is the co-editor with Aisha T. Spencer of a Special Issue for the journal *Short Fiction in Theory and Practice* entitled, Caribbean Women's Short Fiction: New Voices, Emerging Perspectives (2016); co-editor of a collection of essays, *I Am Black/White/Yellow: The Black Body in Europe* (2007), and of two Special issues of *Feminist Review*, Creolization and Affect (2013) and Black British Feminisms (2014). Suzanne Scafe was the Principal Investigator (2016-2018) of the Arts and Humanities Research Council (UK) Network grant entitled *African-Caribbean Women's Mobility and Self-Fashioning in Post-Diaspora Contexts*.

<http://www.lsbu.ac.uk/schools/arts-and-creative-industries/research/african-caribbean-women-post-diaspora-network>

[Andrea A. Davis](#) is Associate Professor in Black Cultures of the Americas, Coordinator of the Black Canadian Studies Certificate, and Chair of the Department of Humanities at York University in Toronto. She also holds cross-appointments in the graduate programs in English; Interdisciplinary Studies; and Gender, Feminist and Women's Studies. Her research on Black women's fictional writing and constructions of gender has been published widely in journals such as *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture, and Social Justice*; *Canadian Woman Studies*; *Caribbean Quarterly*; *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies*; *Journal of Canadian Studies*; *Journal of Education and Development in the Caribbean*; and *Topia: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies*. She is currently working on a book manuscript, *Horizon, Sea, Sound: A Post-Diaspora Critique of the Nation* (Northwestern UP) that theorizes the complex ways in which Caribbean and African women in Canada negotiate and contest patriarchal and imperial definitions of the nation.

[Jenny Douglas](#) is passionate about the health and wellbeing of black women as evidenced through her research and public engagement. She has a PhD in Women's Studies and completed her doctoral thesis on cigarette smoking and identity among African-Caribbean young women in contemporary British society. This research brought together two divergent research traditions: medical public health and health promotion approaches with sociological approaches to researching cigarette smoking. This interdisciplinary research approach brings together sociology, public health and women's studies. Her commitment to comparative approaches finds expression not only in working across disciplinary and national boundaries, but also across theoretical and methodological traditions. Her research is both varied and wide ranging spanning 30 years on issues of race, health, gender and ethnicity. The key theme unifying her research and activism is intersectionality – exploring how 'race', class and gender affect particular aspects of African - Caribbean women's health. Jenny Douglas established and chairs the Black Women's Health and Wellbeing Research Network. (www.open.ac.uk/black-womens-health-and-wellbeing) and her ambition is to establish an international research institute on the health and wellbeing of black women. Jenny Douglas is a Senior Lecturer in Health Promotion in the Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies at the Open University. She has a PhD in Women's Studies from the University of York, an MA in Sociological Research in Health Care from the University of Warwick, an MSc in Environmental Pollution Control from the University of Leeds and a BSc (Hons) in Microbiology and Virology from the University of Warwick. She is an honorary member of the Faculty of Public Health and is a director of the UK Public Health Register. Jenny is a Research Affiliate of the Institute for Intersectionality Research and Policy, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada and a Visiting Scholar in the Department of Psychology at The George Washington University, Washington D.C., USA. Member of the International Union of Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE)

[Natasha Kay Mortley](#) is a Lecturer and Research Specialist at the Regional Coordinating Office of the Institute for Gender and Development Studies (IGDS) at the University of the West Indies, Jamaica. She lectures in the areas of Development Studies, Gender Analysis for Development Policy and Planning and Research Methods. Her research interests and work include: migration & diaspora studies; migration, health & development; medical tourism; diaspora tourism; sports tourism; gender & leadership; gender & entrepreneurship; gender

& climate change; and contemporary Caribbean masculinities. Natasha Mortley has extensive experience in the field of Development Studies, having been engaged in a multi-disciplinary approach to key developmental challenges of particular relevance to the Caribbean region. Her disciplinary focus over the past fifteen (15) years has been dedicated to integrating a gender perspective to Caribbean social development and policy issues. She therefore considers herself a social developmentalist working in the area of gender and development studies and an advocate for gender equity and social justice. Dr. Mortley is a member of the African-Caribbean Women's Mobility and Self-fashioning in Post-diaspora Contexts Network (Post-diaspora Network), which consists of scholars from the UK, North America and the Caribbean, who investigate how globalization works for African-Caribbean women migrants, even while acknowledging and addressing its exclusions and production of inequalities. She is also currently Expert Advisor to the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Secretariat for the "Migration and Engaging OECS Diaspora Programme".

[Aisha Spencer](#) is a lecturer in Language and Literature Education in the School of Education at the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, in Kingston, Jamaica. Her scholarly writing has largely surrounded the situation of gender and the nation in Caribbean Literature and has recently begun to focus on postcolonial and gender discourses in Caribbean Children's Literature by Caribbean women writers. Dr. Spencer has been teaching language and literature for over twenty (20) years. She lectures and leads workshop sessions for teachers and students in the area of Children's Literature, is a Caribbean Children's Literature advisor for Lantana Publishing and has worked closely with particular Caribbean female Children's Literature authors over the years. She works closely with teachers and students across Jamaica, engaging them in new ways of reading and responding to Literature. She is the co-editor of a recently published anthology of Caribbean poetry, entitled *'Give the Ball to the Poet : A New Anthology of Caribbean Poetry*. Her areas of research interest are predominantly in Literature Education, Gender and Nationalism, Postcolonial Literatures, and Children's Literature.

[Saran Stewart](#) is a senior lecturer of Comparative Higher Education and Deputy Dean for the Faculty of Humanities and Education at the University of the West

Indies, Mona Campus. She was selected as a 2018 African Diaspora Emerging Scholar by the Comparative and International Education Society. She is a Salzburg Global Fellow and recipient of the 2017 and 2018 Principal's Awards for Most Outstanding Researcher and Best Research Publication from The UWI, respectively. At the core of her research, Dr. Stewart's research examines issues in comparative education, decolonizing methodologies, postcolonial theories, critical/inclusive pedagogy and access and equity issues in higher education. She is co-editor of the book, *Race, Equity and the Learning Environment: The Global Relevance of Critical and Inclusive Pedagogies in Higher Education* (Stylus) and editor of the 2019 forthcoming book, *Decolonizing Qualitative Methodologies for and by the Caribbean* (Information Age Publishing). Her research has been published in the Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, Journal of Student Affairs, Postcolonial Directions in Education Journal and the Journal of Negro Education, to name a few. She is also the Coordinator for the M.A. in Higher Educational Management and M.A. in Student Personnel Administration programmes as well as the Chief Editor for the Journal of Education and Development in the Caribbean.

[Shirley Anne Tate](#) is Professor of Race and Education in the Carnegie School of Education, Leeds Beckett University, UK, and Honorary Professor, Chair Critical Studies in Higher Education Transformation at Nelson Mandela University, South Africa. Affiliation: Carnegie School of Education, Leeds Beckett University, UK and Nelson Mandela University, South Africa.

[Paulette A. Ramsay](#) is a Full Professor in the Faculty of Humanities and Education, at The University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica. She is an interdisciplinary academic, an established writer and researcher whose interests include Language Pedagogy, Writing Theories and Afro- Hispanic literature and culture. She has published many scholarly articles, mainly in the area of Afro-Hispanic literature and culture, in international journals such as *The Afro- Hispanic Review*, *PALARA*, *Bulletin of Latin American Review*, *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*, *The Langston Hughes Review*, *Hispania*, *Caribbean Quarterly* and *College Language Association*. Her research draws on broad post- colonial/post- modernist theories, gender studies, feminist studies and cultural studies, especially as they relate to issues of identity, ethnicity and nationhood. She is

regarded as one of the leading researchers in the areas of Afro-Costa Rican and Afro-Mexican literary and cultural production.

She has published a rhetorical reader for Caribbean tertiary students *Blooming with the Pouis* (2009), as well as translations of a novel, poetry and short stories from Spanish into English. She is a writer of fiction and her novel, *Aunt Jen*, has been translated to German and Italian and is enjoying great popularity. She has also published three anthologies of poems entitled, *Under Basil Leaves*(2010), *October Afternoon*, (2012) and *Star Apple Blue and Avocado Green*(2016)respectively. She has been the recipient of several awards including OAS, AECI Fellowships, UWI 60 Under 60 Award for outstanding research, and the UWI Principal's Award,. IN 2014, she received the French National Award: *Chevalier* , Knight in the French Order of Merit , *Ordre du Mérite* from the French Government for her work as former Head of the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures and her collaboration with the French Embassy.

[Nadena Doharty](#) is a sociologist of education working in the School of Education at the University of Sheffield. Nadena read her undergraduate degree in Sociology and Politics and postgraduate degree in International Relations at Goldsmith's College, University of London. After a PGCE specialising in Sociology and Politics, Nadena earned her PhD at the University of Keele for a thesis entitled '*Black History Month and Black History with Key Stage 3 Students in English Secondary Schools: A Critical Race Theory Approach*'. You can find Nadena on twitter @PhD_NDoharty. Nadena's areas of specialisation include: the sociology of education (racialised, gendered and classed inequalities in compulsory schooling); the teaching and learning of Black History/Black History Month in schools; identities and racialised cultural differences through the curriculum; critical (race) methodologies and, critical/anti-racist pedagogy.

[Pauline Muir](#) is a lecturer in Arts Management at Goldsmiths College, and was formerly Course Director on B.A. (Hons) Arts and Festival Management course at London South Bank University. Recently awarded a PhD from Birkbeck College, University of London exploring congregational music in Black Majority Churches in London, she is author of 'Sounds of Blackness ? Struggles for Freedom in 21st Century Congregational Songs in South London' in Ackah, Dodson & Smith (eds) (2017) *Religion, Culture and Spirituality in Africa and the African Diaspora* and 'A Virtuous Woman in the Twenty-First Century' in Aldred, (ed) (2000) *Sisters with*

Power. Pauline is also a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (SFHEA) and Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (FRSA).

Charmaine Crawford is a Lecturer at the Institute for Gender and Development Studies, Nita Barrow Unit, The UWI, Cave Hill Campus. Her work focuses on the diasporic and transnational experiences of Caribbean people on the move. She received her PhD in Women's Studies from York University, Canada, where she also taught part-time in the School of Women's Studies and the Faculty of Humanities. She has also participated in many activities in Toronto, Canada around anti-racist, feminist and human rights issues. Her research interests include gender and sexuality in the Caribbean, transnational motherhood, migration, domestic work and post-colonial/ queer/feminist theorizing. Her involvement as Chair of the National Gender Advisory Committee, the UN Women Civil Society Advisory Group and the Caribbean Policy Development Centre's Project Steering Committee for Domestic Workers and Artisans has been purposeful in centering gender in public policy.

Leigh-Ann Worrell is a Research Assistant at the Institute for Gender and Development Studies, Nita Barrow Unit, The UWI, Cave Hill Campus. Her academic and activist interests focus on sexuality, love and desire at the margins. Leigh-Ann began her career in media, earning a Bachelor of Arts in Media and Communication from The UWI, Mona. After spending three years in active journalism in Barbados, she studied Social Development and Public Policy at Beijing Normal University. There, she investigated strategies for managing state and other third-party discrimination against African-Chinese couples living in Guangzhou. Leigh-Ann received further education at the master's level, pursuing Women's and Gender studies at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. She has worked as a Teaching Assistant in the Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies and held the post of Sexual Assault Outreach Co-ordinator at Carleton University's Graduate Students Association, where she advocated for students on sexual assault policy and provided safer sex education across the campus. Leigh-Ann is the recipient of several awards and scholarships

[Christine Barrow](#) is Professor Emerita and, until retirement, was Professor of Social Development at the Cave Hill Campus, The UWI. She received a BA (Hons) and a DPhil in Social Anthropology at the University of Sussex. She has over forty years of experience as an academic researcher, lecturer and administrator at The UWI where she served as Head of Department, Deputy Dean and Deputy Principal. She was also Coordinator of the Women and Development Studies Group and Chair of the campus HIV & AIDS Response Programme (UWIHARP). Her publications include **11** authored and edited books and monographs, over 30 articles in peer reviewed journals and several reports. They focus on poverty and social exclusion, gender and family with specific reference to child rights and development, HIV & AIDS, sexual and reproductive rights and gender-based violence. She has conducted consultancies for several regional and international agencies and served on many public service organizations, local and regional. She was a Director of the International Planned Parenthood Federation/Western Hemisphere Region (IPPF/WHR) (2014-17).

[Verene Shepherd](#) is Professor of Social History (The UWI, Mona Campus) and the former University Director of the Institute for Gender and Development Studies. She is currently the Director of the Institute for Reparations Research at The University of the West Indies. Professor Shepherd has published widely on Jamaican economic history during slavery, the Indian experience in Jamaica, migration and diasporas **and** Caribbean women's history. A prolific author, Prof. Shepherd is editor/compiler, author, co-author and co-editor of 16 important books, among them, *Transients to Settlers: The Experiences of Indians in Jamaica*; *Women in Caribbean History*; *Maharani's Misery: Narratives of a Passage from India to the Caribbean*; *Engendering Caribbean History: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*; *Livestock, Sugar & Slavery: Contested Terrain in Colonial Jamaica*; *Working Slavery, Pricing Freedom: Perspectives from the Caribbean, Africa and the African Diaspora*; *Slavery without Sugar* and *I Want to Disturb My Neighbour: Lectures on Slavery, Emancipation and Post-Colonial Jamaica*. As a scholar activist, Professor Shepherd is a member of several international organisations. In 2014, Professor Shepherd guided UN committees into the General Assembly's declaring 2015-2024 the *Decade for People of African Descent*. In 2015, she was elected to the United Nations Committee on the

Elimination of Racial Discrimination. She is the first national of the Caribbean Community to serve on the CERD. Professor Shepherd has been the recipient of several awards, among them the Order of Distinction, Commander Class from the Govt of Jamaica for her work in History and Gender Studies; the Jamaica National Heritage Trust Award for her work in History and Heritage and the Africana Studies distinguished African Award from Florida International University.

[Violet Eudine Barriteau](#) is a Grenadian-born Caribbean feminist, scholar and activist with considerable experience in research, senior administration and coordination of regional projects. She has been awarded many academic scholarships, awards and recognitions from universities and organizations, both regional and overseas. Professor Barriteau holds a PhD in Political Science from Howard University and an MPA in Public Sector Financial Management from New York University. She has written over thirty book chapters and peer-reviewed journal articles. Professor Barriteau was the first Head of the Centre for Gender and Development Studies at The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, a position which she held for fifteen years. She was also the first woman at The University of the West Indies to be appointed Campus Coordinator, School for Graduate Studies and Research. In 2016 she advised that The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus should establish a Faculty of Sport. In July 2017, the University established the regional Faculty of Sport. As Pro Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the Cave Hill Campus, Professor Barriteau has spearheaded a number of initiatives to advance the internationalization of the Cave Hill Campus. In 2017 Professor Barriteau launched The Smart Campus Initiative which is designed to reconceptualise the model of the delivery of higher education goods and services in Barbados and the Caribbean by the harnessing of ICT technology. The Smart Campus Initiative transforms all services, facilities, administrative procedures and pedagogical strategies to support national and regional development. Her research interests encompass transformational educational leadership, feminist theorizing, gender and public policy and investigation.



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