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Editors: **Dalea Bean** and **Raquel Sukhu**

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Editorial

Signs of the Future of Feminist Praxis and Practise: IGDS Graduate Students and the Evolution of Caribbean Gender Theorising

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The Institute for Gender and Development Studies (IGDS) is an autonomous interdisciplinary entity of The University of the West Indies, which aims, through its programme of teaching, research, outreach and activism, to question historically accepted theories and explanations about society, sexuality and human behaviour, as well as to critically examine the origins of power differences between and among men, women and transgender persons and the range of factors which account for these differences. In its 23 years of existence, the IGDS has developed an integrated, interdisciplinary programme of feminist studies within the University, at both undergraduate and graduate levels. This includes facilitating the incorporation of gender analysis in all disciplines. The Institute has also produced and disseminated knowledge, based on the generation and analysis of research data on gender-related issues in the Caribbean and has established and maintained linkages with national, regional and international institutions concerned with gender and development. It has also provided advisory services, influenced policy directions and assisted with capacity-building in these institutions.

Located on all three campuses of the University, and with established links with the Open Campus, the impact of the work of the Institute is wide-ranging and far-reaching as it enjoys long established relationships and collaborations with local, regional and international development agencies. While the Centre for Gender and Development Studies (CGDS) was officially institutionalised at The UWI in 1993, consciousness-raising, teaching and research guided by feminist and gender and development theories, principles and methodologies were being undertaken from as early as the 1970s with the establishment of the Women and Development Unit (WAND) in Barbados, through the Women in the Caribbean Project (WICP) and the formation of Women and Development Studies Groups (WDS). Since 1993, the Regional Coordinating Office, Mona Campus Unit (both in Jamaica), St Augustine Unit (Trinidad and Tobago) and Nita Barrow Unit (Barbados) have offered academic courses and programmes that respond to emerging gender and development issues in the Caribbean. In addition to traditional degrees, the units have also been involved with offering

short courses, summer institutes and various training fora. In 2008 the CGDS achieved another milestone by being upgraded to an Institute, with the ability to grant its own undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. Since then, the IGDS has graduated scores of candidates from the BSc Gender and Development (Mona Unit) MSc and MPhil programmes, and no less than eight PhDs, many with High Commendation.

Professors of the IGDS and faculty, visiting scholars and research fellows are world-renowned and widely respected practitioners of Gender and Development Studies. The Institute has benefitted from the genius of Lucille Mathurin Mair, Elsa Leo-Rhynie, Rhoda Reddock, Verene Shepherd, Patricia Mohammed, Sir Hilary Beckles, Barbara Bailey, Eudine Barriteau, Joycelyn Massiah and countless other scholar-activists. Perhaps the most impressive legacy of these stalwarts is their collective mission to ensure that the future of the IGDS and Caribbean gender studies remains a beacon in the region. To this end, much effort has been spent on honing the skills of a new generation of intellectuals. Indeed, the IGDS has excelled in producing graduates who have revolutionised the landscape of gender policy and praxis regionally and internationally, and it is to this great achievement that this issue is dedicated.

This tenth issue of the Caribbean Review of Gender Studies aptly highlights student research, some of which may not have otherwise been read outside of the university, and also provides a niche for current students and recent graduates to begin publishing their work in scholarly publications. The majority of pieces in this issue represent the research of current students and graduates of the IGDS units across the three campus units that offer a graduate programme. The issue exemplifies the rich tapestry of scholarly work and diverse research interests investigated though traditional and non-traditional modalities by students of the IGDS. It also includes work by postgraduate students who have been influenced by the work and tradition of Caribbean feminist theorising. The issue includes four peer reviewed papers, three gender dialogues, a photo essay, poetry, research in action and book review. The variety of entries not only

speaks to the diversity in the output of the IGDS, but also to the range of issues still relevant to Caribbean gender and development studies. While grounded in the solid foundation of Caribbean feminist tradition, the entries challenge existing epistemologies, tease out critical ideas relating to gender identity, construct innovative dimensions for investigating 21st century challenges and force us to reckon with the future of gender studies as an ever-evolving space of discursive criticism.

Sue-Ann Barratt utilises multi-level Feminist Post-Structural Discourse Analysis (FPDA) to demonstrate the ways in which a sample of young Trinidadian female university students trouble their feminine identifications, and how they experience their gender identity as a place of ambivalence. The young women's rejection of hyperfemininity is analysed in relation to the beauty-versus-brains binary, and their understanding of the girlie girl feminine identity. Through meticulous interrogation of the women's discourse she reveals the ways in which these women are able to "temper the disempowering effect of hyperfemininity" by claiming a "measure of masculinity as part of their atypical feminine identity" to achieve a greater sense of agency and resist the sense of powerlessness produced by gender polarisation and patriarchal power relations.

In juxtaposition to Barratt's focus on the re-imagining of the young Caribbean woman's construction of the feminine identity, Ellie McDonald's research on Caribbean feminist movements and the experiences of four Anglophone Caribbean activists draws on oral history interviews of stalwarts in the movement. One of the particularly enriching aspects of the research is the diverse positionalities of her interviewees – Peggy Antrobus, activist and scholar, who served as Director, Women's Bureau in Jamaica and a member of the Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) network; Andaiye, grassroots activist who is co-founder and organizer of Red Thread in Guyana; Alissa Trotz, also from Guyana and a member of Red Thread, Assistant Professor in Women and Gender Studies, and Director of the undergraduate Caribbean Studies Program at New College, University of Toronto; and Patricia Mohammed,

scholar and activist who disseminated the work of Caribbean activists and academics through her role as the Regional Course Director of Women and Development Studies, and is currently Professor of Gender and Cultural Studies and Campus Co-ordinator, School for Graduate Studies and Research at The University of the West Indies, St Augustine, Trinidad. Acknowledging that the women selected for the research do not represent the entirety of the feminist movement and face of activism for the region, McDonald skilfully weaves their insights and experiences with their larger bodies of work to create a lens through which the reader sees and situates their perspectives on and involvement in Caribbean feminism as it has developed through the last half century.

Drawing on her doctoral dissertation, Debra Providence reads Nalo Hopkinson's The Salt Roads through a rhizo-nomadic lens and demonstrates the way in which this transforms the deity Erzulie into a source of knowledge that "gives the reader privileged access to the consciousness of a historically marginalized [Caribbean] woman" connecting Jeanne Duval, mistress of French poet Charles Baudelaire, with women from other historical eras – St Mary of Egypt the Dusky Saint and Mer, a slave on St Domingue just prior to the Makandal uprising. She appraises Hopkinson's use of science fictional elements, combining them with Haitian spirituality, as an effective means through which these women are radically re-visioned. She highlights thus the way in which Hopkinson as a Caribbean female author counters the way in which Eurocentric scholarship, and official historical records have marginalised and obscured Caribbean subjects, and in particular, Caribbean women.

In the final piece in this section, Aleah Ranjitsingh gives us a glimpse into her doctoral research which she conducted in Venezuela, looking at the ways in which then President Hugo Chávez employed feminism as a tool and integral element in his model of socialist government; and in so doing, broadens the scope of this issue outside the Anglophone Caribbean region. Her qualitative study launches from Chávez's own words: "True socialism is feminist" while occupying "an androcentric and heteronormative world." She demonstrates

the ways in which the state facilitated gains for women, particularly for poorer women, through mechanisms such as constitutional reform coming out of his recognition of the importance, and elevation of the distinction and complementarity of women and gender equality.

The Gender Dialogues are situated in a space to explore conversations on critical issues of import to the authors. While generally at the conceptualisation stage, the Dialogues offer a glimpse into the musings of a new generation of budding scholars grappling with conventional and unorthodox forms of expression while still maintaining the rigour associated with the CRGS. Lisa Allen-Agostini proffers a re-examination of young black women's sexual agency and conceptions of black female criminality in the music video for the soca song "Party Done" by Angela Hunte and Machel Montano. Allen-Agostini situates her work in black feminist tradition, which contends with the intersectionality of modern expressions of culture with ideals of femininity. Using film analysis techniques, she deconstructs the video's underlying narrative: black working class women as capable of being "carefree".

Tameka Hill, who has twinned her academic interests with activism against human trafficking in Jamaica, offers a piece on the state of human trafficking with particular focus on the evolution of the Jamaican Government's response to this critical issue. With the realisation that deafening silence can stymie efforts against this criminal activity, Hill aims to not only bring clarity to the issue, but also encourages continued conversation to facilitate a deeper understanding of the power and gender dynamics at play in this modern day slavery that disproportionately affects women worldwide.

The issue also includes an insightful and thought provoking photo essay by Angélica Rodríguez Bencosme. She carefully crafts a narrative punctuated by images, which invites the reader to consider the influence domestic furniture and common household items on those who reside in the space and those who

visit. Focussing on the Dominican Republic, Rodríquez Bencosme shares her sentiments relating to cultural norms and gender power relations in the home as expressed through furniture use (and even misuse) as well as placement. The nuanced approach facilitates a consideration of the notions of the author, while creating the space for one to draw personal conclusions about the images and the ways in which inanimate objects can reflect our own gendered understandings.

Amilcar Sanatan's unique perspective as socialist feminist man, IGDS graduate student and activist involved in the depatriarchal struggle for gender justice is evident in his piece which juxtaposes Caribbean feminism with younger Caribbean women and men. Using his experience in the classroom, particularly with the course Introduction to Women's Studies offered in the St Augustine Unit of the IGDS, Sanatan captures the essence of this issue by interrogating the limits and potential of the student experience with modern day feminism in all its evolving forms. Sanatan's fascinating submission argues for a greater emphasis on a critique of neoliberal discourse by Caribbean feminist theorising in order to productively engage the trajectories of Caribbean youth.

The potential of gendered cultural activist research is aptly explored in Ellen O'Malley-Camps' interpretation on her Research in Action at Trinidad's Maximum Security Men's Prison. The paper explores the usefulness of Carnival Theatre as an empowerment and transformative process for long-term male inmates in Trinidad's Maximum Security Prison. The ground-breaking research includes techniques of carnival and theatre as well as the insights of restorative justice, mediation and transpersonal psychology and may unlock key understandings related to the empowerment of vulnerable Caribbean masculinities. The applicability of these techniques is not only presented as a method to evaluate notions of justice, power and identity, but offers a critique of, and alternative to, the Restorative Justice Policy which the author presents as inadequate for the particular needs of long-term and lifer inmates.

The issue closes with poetry by Lisa Allen-Agostini and Nicholas Gilbert and a book review by IGDS Professor Patricia Mohammed. The pieces of poetry reveal the potential of a literary exploration of the intersection of race, gender identity, sexuality, empowerment and the limitations of traditional understandings of masculinities and femininities.

It is hoped that you, the reader, will not only enjoy the pieces included in this issue, but also be challenged to reimagine the loci of feminist theorising and gender activism in the region. While building on the solid foundation of numerous foremothers and fathers of the IGDS and wider network of feminist scholar/activists, these and other students and graduates of the IGDS are charting their own course and meanings of a feminism and gender de/ construction. The message of this issue is clear and encouraging: Caribbean feminist theorising is alive and well and the future of gender activism is in good hands.


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"I Am Not A *Girlie Girl*!": Young Women's Negotiation of Feminine Powerlessness

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Abstract

"I Am Not A *Girlie Girl*", an emphatic rejection of one feminine prototype conceptualised by a group of 29 female emerging adults (18-25) participating in my larger PhD investigation into the relevance of perceptions of gender identity to experiences of interpersonal communication conflict. Using feminist post structuralist discourse analysis, these young women's talk was examined, in depth, in an effort to understand their perceptions of femininity. They identified seven feminine identities evident in Trinidad society but it is the "*girlie girl*" which became a prototype for rejection. This prototype, these Trinidadian young women defined as a form of extreme femininity, preoccupied with the production and maintenance of physical appearance and beauty and inherently stupid or ignorant. Their conversation during focus groups revealed an expressed negative attitude, overt rejection and emphatic and emotive negation of the "*girlie girl*" with careful rationalisation of a more acceptable idiosyncratic, neutral or masculine typical gender identity for self. For these tertiary level students, the physically beautiful "*girlie girl*" has power but that which makes her powerful also makes her powerless. The beautiful woman is ideal and prestigious but is also considered a threat to be controlled. The "*girlie girl*" is denied self-actualisation and accomplishment because while she is expected to be beautiful, once she is deemed to be such she is made passive, weak and dependent. As one respondent concluded "women can't have it all you can't be pretty and you can't be smart… something have to be wrong with you".

Keywords: femininity, *Girlie Girl*, gender identity, Trinidad and Tobago, feminist post structuralist feminist discourse analysis, emerging adults

How to cite

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Introduction

"Women can't have it all", a sentiment expressed by a group of young women who emphatically reject the *girlie girl* feminine identity or, in general terms, hyperfemininity. These 18–25 year-old emerging adult[1] women, enrolled at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus at the time, gathered to discuss their perceptions of gender identity as part of a set of focus group discussions on the relevance of perceptions of gender identity to experiences of interpersonal communication conflict. These young women were not at the time negotiating the ongoing work/life/family balance conundrum[2] which usually invokes the question, can women have it all? Instead they were grappling with a binary that has consistently mediated femininity – beauty versus brains. These young Trinidadians assert the position that the pretty, hyperfeminine woman occupies a contentious space, at once idealised and granted privilege because of her appearance while, for the same reason, being denied self-actualisation and accomplishment. For them, a woman who is both intelligent and committed to maintaining beauty presents an anomaly; as one put it, "something [has] to be wrong with you". Therefore they attempt to circumvent this through emphatic rejection or negation of the *girlie girl* feminine identity, tempered acceptance of *girlie girl* habits as part of their own femininity, or conditional claims to masculine-marked behaviour.

Thus this paper describes how, through conversation, these women trouble their feminine identifications. It demonstrates how they experience gender identity as a place of ambivalence as they contend with the inescapable influence of hyperfemininity and wanting "to have it all". Representation of their perceptions is facilitated through multi-level – micro, meso and macro[3] – Feminist Post-Structuralist Discourse Analysis (FPDA). Therefore the young women's positioning of self and other is viewed as constantly renegotiated during the process of interaction and their talk is interpreted through a self-reflexive deconstructive process that focuses on uncovering the multiple gendered knowledges/ discourses, ideologies, subjective positions, identities and relationships

negotiated (Baxter 2003; Sunderland 2006; Cameron 2001; Van Dijk 1997). Questioned is how normative discourses and other competing yet interwoven discourses complicate perceptions of self and other and discussed are the relevant linguistic features, speech activities and patterns of verbal interaction which facilitated the detection of these discourses. This analysis follows a brief overview of the concepts and discourses which serve as the lens through which the young women's assertions are read.

Hyperfemininity and the Beauty versus Brains Binary

According to Paecther (2010) the *girlie girl* is "a particular embodiment of hyper-femininity" (4) or, in Reay's (2001) words, it is an "emphasised femininity" which features a heavy involvement in the gender work that inscribes hyperfemininity and subjects it to discourses of denigration such as the perception of "girlies" as "stupid and dumb". Hyperfemininity is an exaggerated adherence to a stereotypic feminine gender role which makes especially salient sexual appeal and heterosexual relationships (Matschiner and Murnen 1999; McKelvie and Gold 1994; Maybach and Gold 1994), and is often constructed as feminine typical. To be feminine typical is to be gender typical, which, as a discourse, emerged from developmental psychology and accounts for ideas and practices that inform an individual's perception of self as similar or compatible to members of their claimed sex/gender category (Bussey 2011). Therefore the individual is able to assess whether or not they fit in with others of their sex/gender in-group, whether they enjoy doing and excel at the same things done by their in-group members, and ultimately whether their gender performance represents a valid prototype of their in-group (Newman and Newman 2009).

The prototype of relevance is femininity[4]. However, in the case of hyperfemininity as it is invoked by the *girlie girl* feminine identity, a very specific prototype is made salient. Its embodiment and behaviour are defined similarly in the

literature (Holland and Harpin 2015; Kester 2015; Thompson 2012; Paechter 2010; Geneve et al. 2008; Wagner 2007; Reay 2001) as it is by the young Trinidadian women in this study, that is, as preoccupied with the production and maintenance of physical appearance, stupid or unaware, and unable, at times, to communicate effectively with males. This definition invokes the beauty versus brains binary which constructs hyperfemininity as oppositional. For example, Murnen and Seabrook (2012) explain that "while achieving a sexy body might gain women a sense of control and some attention from others, it will lead to little real respect or power…although women are supposed to focus on appearance, they are ridiculed for doing so" (439). Others explain the relationship similarly, such as Gonsalves (2012) in her study of discourses of gender and competence in physics, Barnard et al. (2012) in their study of engineering and gender in higher education, and Toor (2009) in her examination of teacher attitudes to the relationship between intelligence and looks.

The beauty versus brains binary is reproduced and reinforced in popular culture and as a result is often the focus of evaluations within media. For example, *The Economist* suggests that attractive women should not include a photo with a job application because the "dumb blonde hypothesis[5]" is often applied to them with people assuming their stupidity (2012). Ciapponi (2014) testifies to this in a narrative written for *The Huffington Post* expressing the sentiment "I was pretty; therefore my main talent in life seemed to be sexually exciting strange men…I may as well write 'please tell me I'm smart' on my forehead". *Elite Daily*, in its examination of the relationship status of smart women, cites Dr. Eileen Pollack's assertion that there is a cultural paradigm that maintains that "you can't be smart and sexy" (2014). *Psychology Today* explains the "more attractive = less intelligent" intuition, which runs counter to the halo effect (attractive people are perceived as more sincere and intelligent) and imposes an attractiveness penalty on women especially, makes them feel that they are not taken as seriously as they should because of their attractiveness (Raghunathan, 2011). The BBC Future online magazine discusses this penalty further stating that while beauty may pay in most circumstances "implicit sexist prejudices can work

against attractive women making them less likely to be hired for high-level jobs that require authority" (Robson 2015).

This dichotomy which contrasts beauty and brains is grounded in gender polarisation as a structure that organises social life around gender/sex difference and foregrounds the patriarchal power relations and inequalities which mediate this organisation (McIlvenny 2002; Bing and Bergvall 1998). It is through the concept of gender polarisation that the expected powerlessness for women and girls becomes visible, making salient the limits placed on opportunities and access to many spheres of social life and revealing the reliance on the discourse of biological determinism to justify such limits (Bing and Bergvall 1998). It is this powerlessness that the young Trinidadian women resist in their talk.

The Women: "I Am Not A *Girlie Girl*"

The explanations and illustrations[6] shared by this selection of four women from two focus groups work together to demonstrate how consistently the *girlie girl* feminine identity troubles and leaves them in a state of ambivalence. They at once accept *girlie girl* characteristics as outward markers which signal their legitimacy as feminine but reject these characteristics as typical signs of powerlessness and objectification. Their internal characteristics and some external behaviour are decidedly masculine, as far as they are concerned, and distinguish them from hyperfemininity which they see as typical.

Denise[7]: "I do not take that long…I drink manly drinks"

In Fragment One below Denise defines the *girlie girl* as marked by her dedication to maintaining her physical appearance. In lines 4 to 10, 15 and 16, Denise characterises the *girlie girl* using an example of the ritual undertaken by her group of friends in preparation for a night out. Denise perceives the *girlie girl*

as one who "takes forever to get ready" (line 4), "puts on a million different types of cream" (line 15) and has to "do her hair" (line 16). Fundamental is her construction of the *girlie girl* feminine identity as extreme. This reflects Holland and Harpin's (2015) conclusion that the *girlie girl* is "contrived to be a marker of the worst excesses of hegemonic 'femininity'" (293). In the context of the young women's discussion, hyperfemininity becomes hegemonic because it is perceived as feminine typical.

Denise's construction of the *girlie girl* as extreme lies in her use of hyperbole in both lines 4 and 15 – she "takes forever" and "puts on a million" – to describe the behaviour which marks her friend as a *girlie girl*. The use of hyperbole by a speaker indicates an intentional or unintentional exaggeration of the quality of its referent or a positive or negative evaluation of that referent and it intensifies interest in what is being said, grabs the listener's attention and makes the speaker's argument more convincing (Claridge 2011; Mora and Macarro 2004).

Fragment One		
Denise:	Well (.) °yeah my friends are real° girlie girls=	**1**
Sue Ann:	=What's a girlie girl?	**2**
Denise:	Ughhhhhhhh (.) alright like the same one who takes- who left me (.) °the bitch°	**3**
	(group laughs loudly)) she takes forever to get ready like oh my God	**4**
Cindy:	[Yes I kno::::::w]	**5**
Denise:	when we have to go out we tell her yeah we coming for you eight when we're	**6**
	really coming for her like ten just- and then (.) we'd call her at eight and you	**7**
	know we'd be like ok are you ready you coming down and she'd be like ↑oh	**8**
	Go::::d I now coming out the showe::::r↑ ((said in high pitched wining voice))	**9**
	well yeah we knew that >we'll be there in 15 minutes eh hurry up< this time	**10**
	we re- like I no::::w I lying down watching TV cause I know we really going for	**11**
	ten but she's the wo::::rse so (.) what was the question? ((group laughs))	**12**
Sue Ann:	The question is what's a girlie girl?=	**13**
Gina:	=What's a girlie girl?=	**14**
Denise:	=Oh right so she takes really lo::::ng cause she has to put on a million	**15**
	different types of cream and a ho- like do her hai::::r and I like yeah ((pauses	**16**
	and looks around pointedly, thumps desk decisively but gently)) I do not take	**17**
	that long=	**18**
Several:	=Yes yeah	**19**
Denise:	to get ready at all	**20**

Denise's explicit negation complemented by her non-verbal gestures and her use of interjections convey, more powerfully, her rejection of the *girlie girl*. But the second part of the phrase "that long" (line 18) introduces a counteracting idea. Indeed, Denise's stress on the demonstrative determiner "that" conveys her rejection of the length of time taken by the *girlie girl* because, according to Swan (1995), speakers use "that" in this way to show dislike or rejection. And her non-verbal language in lines 16 and 17 of Fragment One above complements this rejection. Her pause and slow surveillance of the group gives them time to grasp her prior description of the *girlie girl*. Then her quick sharp striking of the table, an emphasising gesture according to Sharma and Mohan (2011), alerts the group to her response and affirms the decisiveness of the statement that follows. At the same time Denise's phrase "that long" also functions like an indefinite quantifier indirectly indicating the length of time she actually takes (Downing and Locke 2006). With this emphasis – she stresses "that" – she does not exclude herself entirely from the *girlie girl* practice. Denise may not take as long as her *girlie girl* friend to get ready but she constructs herself as spending some time engaging in the grooming behaviour done by the *girlie girl*. Indirectly, Denise attributes *girlie girl* behaviour to self. Whether this is intentional or not is unclear but this short phrase tempers Denise's rejection of *girlie girl* behaviour.

Her indirect attribution of some degree of *girlie girl* behaviour to herself does not completely overturn her negative attitude to this feminine identity. Denise's use of the interjections "ugh" (line 3) and "oh my God" (line 5) reinforce her negative attitude. Interjections function as an index of the speaker's emotional state, indicating intensity of feeling and attitude toward the referent (Aijmer 2004). "Ugh" is an expression of disgust, the sound imitating the noise of retching (Stange 2009). The breathiness added to Denise's utterance of "ugh" intensifies the retching sound and emphasises her emotive display of disgust. "Oh my God" is an exclamation which conveys annoyance or surprise and is used as mild swearing by speakers (Swan 1995; Aijmer 2004). In the context of Denise's narrative its use as an expression of annoyance is more relevant.

Throughout Fragment One above Denise's peers support her assertions. Cindy engages in collaborative overlap in line 5, confirming that the *girlie girl* "takes forever" – "yes I know", she agrees that this knowledge is shared. Then everyone agrees with Denise's rejection of the *girlie girl* and the length of time she takes to get ready; "yes yeah" they all reply in line 18. Denise's talk also conveys not only her negative attitude and evaluation of the *girlie girl* but, importantly, it conveys how Denise would like the other members of the focus group to interpret the nature of the *girlie girl* as well as her perception of that nature. I read these meta-messages from her repair[8] in line 3 and her seemingly clarifying question in line 12.

In line 3, after her emotive display "ugh", Denise pauses and then inserts the discourse marker "alright" which can signal a change of subject (Swan 1995), but in this case it signals her yielding to the change I initiated (Downing and Locke 2006). Having sent this signal, Denise then proceeds to describe the *girlie girl* by using a friend she mentioned in previous conversation as a prototype – "like the same one". It is the rephrasing that follows that is significant. Denise begins to clarify which friend she is referring to, "the same one who takes", but then stops abruptly and says "who left me". She then labels this friend using the impolite, "the bitch[9]", which draws loud laughter from the group. Her rephrasing here changes the focus from a description of the *girlie girl*, which would have answered my question directly, to a reintroduction of the offensive behaviour – her friend left her waiting at a night club to spend more time with a strange man – which she said caused an incident of conflict between her and her friend.

Denise's redesign of her message in line 3 of Fragment One suggests a change of focus with the function of a contextualisation convention, which, especially in its place at the beginning of Denise's description of the *girlie girl*, works as a signal that orients the group to the complexity of the attitude and identity in play in the conversation (Gumperz 1982; Auer 2002). Denise primes the group to interpret the *girlie girl* as even more unacceptable because of how the gender-

marked insult "bitch" is layered onto Denise's subsequent characterisation and evaluation of the *girlie girl*.

Denise in Fragment Two below also constructs herself as feminine atypical and masculine. Denise constructs herself as masculine in terms of her physical appearance, the role she performs in her peer group and her preference for certain alcoholic drinks. In terms of appearance, Denise perceives herself as masculine because she is tall – "the "giant lady" – in comparison to her diminutive friends who are "cute", "little", and "*fru fru*[10]" (line 1). Denise also perceives herself as masculine because she takes on "the protector" role, preventing unsuitable men – "grimy fellas" (line 4), "yucky people" (line 16) – from pursuing her *girlie girl* friends.

Fragment Two		
Denise:	Hhhhhh ok so we go out and they are like- they cute they little and they	**1**
	and thing ((group laughs)) all of that *fru fru* thing right (.) I'm the giant lady	**2**
	when we go out so I wear heels too so they are like little and then these kinda	**3**
	grimy fellas	**4**
Sue Ann:	[shhhew]	**5**
Cindy:	[grimy?]	**6**
Denise:	does wanna come on them and then I's just be like ((folds arms, leans back and	**7**
	looks stern)) and then they go- they watch me an' then they like just like £turn	**8**
	and walk off£ so yea::h they actually told me that the other night like *horse*	**9**
	you's real *cock block* I was like I'm protecting you all and they are like well (.)	**10**
	>is ok< and then we have another friend who's with us a lot, a guy, a::nd I's like	**11**
	well ↑*?????* don't do anything↑ he's like you all are big women if all you want	**12**
	to go and ***palance*** yourself go an pala- an I's like but no::::: you supposed to	**13**
	protect them from these (.)=	**14**
Cindy:	=Goons	**15**
Denise:	yucky people ((group snickers)) that wanna come over and be all on them and	**16**
	just like protect them a lot=	**17**
Sue Ann:	=Yeah yeah	**18**
Denise:	and I drink "manly" ((makes quotes with fingers)) drinks cause I like Scotch=	**19**
Sue Ann:	[What's a manly drink?]	**20**
Gina:	=What's a manly drink?	**21**
Denise:	like I like Scotch and they like Vodka	**22**
Lauren:	[Hard liquor]	**23**

It is evident that Denise perceives her hyperfeminine friends in line with one traditional and stereotypical perception of femininity, i.e. a woman who cannot protect herself from men. In her role as protector, her friends accuse her of intercepting their establishment of relations with men – "*horse*[11] you's real *cock block*" (line 10, Fragment Two). Thus, as "*cock blocker*" she can be said to function similarly to the traditional chaperone who is, stereotypically, an older female; or her actions may be interpreted as those of a male competing for the attentions of a female which is more in keeping with the modern slang meaning of "*cock block*", which in Trinidad is used in the context of a bar, night club or party to refer to a man who stands in the way of another man's sexual advances on a woman.

Savannah: "I'm not the type…I'm pretty hardcore on the inside"

Savannah, in Fragment Three below, also shifts between rejection and acceptance of the *girlie girl* feminine identity, conveying a sense of 'I am but I'm not'. In lines 1, 2, 6, 10, and 12 Savannah distinguishes herself from the *girlie girl* through the use of negation. The first part of each phrase contains a complete or contracted negative verb form – "I'm not the type" (repeated twice in lines 1 & 2), "I do not like" (line 6), "I don't like" (line 10), "I don't need" (repeated three times in lines 10 & 12). These encode Savannah's negation and convey her perception of herself as distinct from that which characterises the *girlie girl* – "the nails" and "the hairstyles" (line 2), "primping and prepping" (line 6), "shopping" (lines 7 & 10), needing "nice things" and "fancy things" (lines 10 & 12), "threading in the latest fashion" (line 14). Her complete phrase in each of these lines functions as a negative declarative which has the force of rejection (Downing and Locke 2006).

Fragment Three		
Savannah:	in terms of femininity I would say (0.2) hmm (.) well I'm not the type	**1**
	to do up the nails (.) I'm not the type to have the hairstyles even	**2**
	though people say my hairstyle change every time they see me but is	**3**
	just that I (.) I can't have something for too long (.) I like change	**4**
Sue Ann:	Right	**5**
Savannah:	But I'm not into primping and prepping myself as a typical girl (.) I do	**6**
	not like shopping	**7**
Sue Ann:	Oh dear ((group laughs))	**8**
Madison:	[Hear hear]	**9**
Savannah:	I don't (.) I don't like shopping and I don't need the nice things I don't	**10**
Madison:	[I need	**11**
Savannah:	need the fancy things or whatever whatever I don't need to be	**12**
Madison:	the nice things I just don't want to shop for them]	**13**
Savannah:	threading in the latest fashion and all of those I just want to be	**14**
	comfortable and I'm comfortable with the simplest stuff	**15**

Savannah does not articulate any particular feminine identity as representative of self. In fact she seems to still be thinking about this as she stalls in line 5 of the fragment, "in terms of femininity I would say, hmm, well", her tentativeness evident in her use of the vocal filler "hmm", hedge "well" and long pause as she takes time to decide what she "would say" about her femininity. When she describes herself she constructs her preferences as idiosyncratic and gender neutral – "I can't have something for too long", "I like change", "I just want to be comfortable" – the "just" in the last phrase indicates that nothing more than personal taste constitutes her. She does not use the word "type" as she did when characterising the *girlie girl* and thus does not invoke the relevance of a particular prototypical or stereotypical social identity.

But even as she does not articulate the substance of her femininity, Savannah makes it clear that she is not the *girlie girl* since she neither "likes" nor "needs" the things associated with *girlie girls*. Her rejection of the *girlie girl* appears just as emphatic though not as emotive as Denise's rejection because the repeated pattern of her phrases, e.g. "I'm not the type" or "I don't need", in each of the above lines and the repetition of the negative verb forms, e.g. "I do not, I don't", intensifies the import of her negative statements. At the same time, like Denise, Savannah's exclusion of *girlie girl* femininity from her gender identity is not quite complete. In lines 3 and 4 of Fragment Three above she acknowledges how she may embody one stereotypical marker of *girlie girl* femininity. Savannah says "though people say my hairstyle change every time they see me", which indicates that even though she is "not the type to have the hairstyles" her hairstyle choices are significant enough to be noticed and possibly cast her as the type. "Though" in Savannah's statement is a conjunction which conveys concession or emphasises contrast (Downing and Locke 2006; Swan 1995). Therefore, here Savannah's language indicates that she concedes that the *girlie girl* feminine identity is relevant to her own identity, at least as far as it is perceived by others. In addition, her use of the distributive determiner "every" quantifies the number of times her hairstyle changes and, in its usage here, conveys the notion of generality or totality (Swan 1995; Downing and Locke 2006). What this does in the statement is to generalise hairstyle change as part of her performance of self thus making her "the type" to "have the hairstyles".

Savannah's citation of how she may be perceived by others acknowledges the relevance of *girlie girl* femininity to her gender identity but does not constitute her acceptance of this femininity. Indeed, Savannah attempts to overturn the apparent relevance of the *girlie girl* to self by asserting a counteracting construction. She says "but" (a conjunction which introduces a contradictory idea) "is just that" or it is only a matter of personal taste – she "can't have something for too long", she "likes change". However, her rejection of the *girlie girl* remains incomplete because her citation of how others may perceive her

sends a meta-message that her performance of self is not entirely unmarked by *girlie girl* characteristics, however stereotypical these may be.

Incidentally, Madison's talk in Fragment Two above also reflects some contradiction as she shifts between acceptance of one stereotypically *girlie girl* feature "liking nice things" and rejection of the equally stereotypical *girlie girl* practice – "shopping[12]" which tends to facilitate the acquisition of "nice things". Madison's talk draws attention to the instability of the stereotypical characterisation of femininity. Madison can quite comfortably admit that she is "the type" to like nice things but she emphatically agrees with Savannah's dislike for shopping, cheering "hear hear".

In Fragment Four below, Savannah mirrors Denise's speech act observed earlier by also constructing herself as masculine while reminding the group that she is still quite feminine. In this fragment Savannah explains an earlier assertion that she was more masculine than feminine. She claims – "I like" – what she perceives and believes the other group members perceive as normative masculine behaviour – "that hardcore what you know normally associated with guys" (line 1). The discourse marker "you know" conveys her assumption of shared knowledge and the adverb "normally" denotes "hardcore" – "playing video games" – as typical masculine behaviour.

Fragment Four		
Savannah:	I like all that (.) that hardcore what you know normally associated with guys	**1**
	(.) I will play video games °£and whup their ass£° ((group laughs)) so::::::: I	**2**
	guess that's what's masculine about me am I'm not afraid (.) to (.) romp (.)	**3**
	with a guy (.) ((shrugs)) I'm just <u>not</u> (.) I mean (.) I look I look quite feminine	**4**
	like (.) you know (.) but I I I'm pretty hardcore on the on the inside	**5**

Savannah also adds to her characterisation of self as masculine by citing her ability to compete with males and be triumphant – "and whup their ass" (line 2) – as well as her disregard for feminine containment when interacting with males – "I'm not afraid" (line 3). In line 3 of Fragment Four Savannah states that "she's not afraid to romp with a guy", she is "just not" (line 4). Here Savannah attempts to qualify her assertion that "she is not afraid…" but she does not introduce any new information, rather she adds emphasis through repetition of an ellipsis of her original statement. Her use of "just" quantifies her lack of fear as absolute, she is nothing more than fearless. Her shrug indicates her inability to determine any alternative explanation as relevant.

What is important is that Savannah's insistence that she is "not afraid to romp with guys" conveys the idea that she is brave enough to breach a prohibition cast against women and girls, i.e. "romping with guys" is not gender appropriate. Not being afraid to "romp", not being afraid to engage in aggressive play with guys can only be extraordinary because she holds this attitude as a member of the female/feminine in-group and not a member of the male/masculine in-group. Though there has been much criticism of the idea, male bonding through aggression, e.g. coordinated fighting and hunting, hostility and displays of masculine strength, remains a stereotypical representation of exclusively male/masculine behaviour (Kimmel and Aronson 2004).

Savannah's dual construction of self is also clear in lines 4 and 5 of Fragment Four above where she sets up an inside/outside contrast, admitting to an embodied femininity – "I look quite feminine" – but claiming a masculinity that is internal – "I'm pretty hardcore on the inside". Also through the use of the discourse marker "I mean" at the beginning of her phrase, Savannah indicates that she is clarifying the actual meaning she wants the group to interpret (Swan 1995, 156) – that she still recognises the stereotypical markers of feminine on self. Uncertainty is also a feature of Savannah's talk and this indicates her ambivalence about her gender identity. From lines 1 to 5 Savannah pauses

frequently, she uses tentative language such as "I guess" (line 2), she hesitates (for example her lengthening of "so" in line 2) and her speech is not fluent because she appears to stammer – repeating "that" (line 1) "I look" (line 4) and "I" (line 5) – and hedges "you know" and "like" (lines 1 & 4).

Farah: "I have my 'dumb blonde' moments but I don't think I'm a *girlie girl*"

Farah in Fragment Five below expresses a different type of rejection of the *girlie girl*. Unlike Denise and Savannah, Farah has claimed the *girlie girl* feminine identity as representative of her feminine identity. I encourage her to take the floor in line 1 because she is the only respondent who makes such a claim. But even as Farah claims to be a *girlie girl* she rejects that part of the *girlie girl* identity that all female participants are particularly wary of, the *girlie girl's* supposed stupidity.

Fragment Five		
Sue Ann:	So let's hear from the girlie girl or the self acclaimed-	**1**
Farah:	I have <u>many</u> dumb blonde moments ((group laughs)) but I don't I don't-	**2**
Madison:	[You see]	**3**
Farah:	no pause (.) but I don't think that's because I'm a girlie girl I just think is	**4**
	because I'm silly and I'm a clown and if you say something sometimes I	**5**
	will just like be silly and not on purpose but sometimes (.) li::ke (.) u:::::h	**6**
	what? (.) and it will come across as dumb blonde but is just I just think I	**7**
	am clownish an' silly	**8**

In earlier conversation the speakers used the nominalisation "the dumb blonde" to define the *girlie girl* prototype. Denotatively, "the dumb blonde" is a stereotype which constructs an exclusive ethnic in-group. According to Kuhn and Radstone (1990) "dumb blondes" are white women with blonde hair who are characterised by "overt 'natural' sexuality (of which they may or may not be aware) with a profound ignorance and innocence manifest in an inability to understand even the most elementary facts of everyday life" (47). They are historically stereotyped as attractive flirts, less intelligent and competent, dim-witted, and "reduced to another stereotypic subtype of female: the attractive, if lobotomised, nymphomaniac" because she might "otherwise pose a powerful sexual or emotional threat" (Greenwood and Isbell 2002, 342; Thomas 2003; Beddow et al. 2011).

That these respondents find "the dumb blonde" stereotype relevant to them as non-white, non-North American/European females is not just the effect of the ubiquity of this stereotype but because of the way the "dumb blonde" character has been dehumanised and has been used to describe abstract ideas such as the universal subordination of Western women or a feminine syndrome with the main symptom being inherent stupidity (Barrat 1986; Hatfield and Sprecher 1986). Farah and her colleagues invoke the "dumb blonde" as a concept which connotes a generalised and subordinate femininity and ignore the ethnic/racial/national identities associated with the "dumb blonde".

Farah rejects in Fragment Five above the stability of stupidity or "profound ignorance" as a marker of her feminine identity. Farah insists that her "many dumb blonde moments" are distinct from her gender identity – "I don't think that's because I'm a *girlie girl*" (line 4). Though Farah constructs her "dumb blonde moments" as frequent, she stresses "many", she also constructs it as fleeting or not sustained as part of her everyday performance of self. The noun "moments" in this phrase indicates that while she appears as a "dumb blonde" often this is only apparent at particular instances in time. Farah prefers to construct her "dumb blonde moments" as play – "I just think is because I'm silly

and I'm a clown" (lines 4 and 5), a notion she reinforces in line 7 – "is just I just think I am clownish an' silly". Her repeated insertion of "just" in these statements that explain the cause of her behaviour fulfils the function of a focusing adverb which conveys a restriction of the scope of the referent (Downing and Locke 2006). It also diminishes the import of her statements. Farah also constructs her "dumb blonde" behaviour as unintentional or just play rather than a case of ignorance. As she explains it, her tendency to need clarification – "like uh what?" – is "not on purpose" (line 6), it is trivial – "I will just like be silly" (line 6).

Like her peers, Farah is committed to her rejection. Her repetition of the restrictive "just" emphasises how irrelevant the "dumb blonde" stereotype is to her *girlie girl* feminine identity. In addition, Farah silences Madison's confirmation of her admission of the relevance of the "dumb blonde" as she tells Madison "no pause" in line 4, cutting Madison's collaborative overlap and preventing the conversation from following the direction indicated by Madison's comment. Farah retains control of the floor to assert her particular position, i.e. while she is a *girlie girl* she is not the persistently "profoundly ignorant" "dumb blonde".

Sandy: "So I wouldn't say I'm completely *girlie girlie*…sometimes I act like a *fella*[13]". Sandy, in Fragment Six below, is able to blur the boundaries of hyperfemininity and achieve a greater sense of agency for herself. Before giving any details of her perception of herself, Sandy declares "I can't really define which category I fall into" (line 1), then shifts between constructing her gender identity as feminine typical (citing how her femininity is embodied) and constructing herself as feminine atypical (citing her lack of dedication to cultivating an attractive appearance and her tendency to engage in male heterosexual mating behaviour).

Fragment Six		
Sandy:	I can't really define (.) which category I fall un- into <by just looking at me	**1**
	you might think yeah she's a *girlie girl* most of the time cause I's mostly	**2**
	always have on skirts or dresses or something like that but I wouldn't	**3**
	really see myself as being *girlie girlie* cause sometimes I just (.) I don't	**4**
	feel to:::: (.) I don't know dress up put on makeup or stuff like that and	**5**
	a::m I- to me sometimes I's act I's act (.) °like° (.) ((questioning	**6**
	expression)) like a a fella sometimes in terms of things I may sa:::y a::m	**7**
	<just off of wildness sake I will stand up with other fellas and be	**8**
	pretending like I watching girls or something like that just off of kicks	**9**
	((Stacy, Lauren, Cindy and Kelsey exchange questioning looks)) so I	**10**
	wouldn't say I'm completely *girlie girlie* although I look like it	**11**

Sandy states that she "would not really see myself as being *girlie girlie*" (lines 3, 4) because she does not always engage in stereotypical *girlie girl* behaviour – "sometimes I just don't feel to dress up, put on makeup or stuff like that" – and sometimes she joins "fellas" in "watching girls" (line 9) which, for her, constitutes "acting like a fella" (lines 6 and 7). At the same time, she also declares that she "looks" like the *girlie girl* – "by just looking at me you might think yeah she's a *girlie girl*…cause I's mostly always have on skirts or dresses" (line 2 and 3). Sandy evaluates her perception of her gender identity as wavering in lines 10 and 11 – "I wouldn't say I'm completely *girlie girlie* although I look like it". The conjunction "although" conveys the contrast between her perception of her gendered performance and her actual performance. Her use of these declarative phrases asserts a perception of her gender identity as dual; she acts masculine but her everyday gender performance – dress in particular – is feminine.

Sandy's use of the modal auxiliary "would" in its negative form – "wouldn't" lines 3 and 4 of Fragment Six above – "I wouldn't really see myself as being *girlie girlie*" and "so I wouldn't say I'm completely *girlie girlie*" – conveys her assertion as a condition based on lived experience (Declerck 2011). It suggests the normativity of what Sandy expects but it produces this as a tentative or counterfactual interpretation (Declerck 2011; Downing and Locke, 2006). By using the negative form Sandy distances herself from the *girlie girl* but since it is conditional this rejection is not constructed as something that is, but rather something that is uncertain; her "not saying" or "not seeing" indicates only her conclusion, encoded in "so" in the second phrase, about her possible actions (Declerck 2011). Sandy's phrasing tempers her rejection of the *girlie girl* feminine identity.

Sandy's use of time and frequency adverbs in lines 2 and 4 to 6 of Fragment Six above is the second telling linguistic feature that complements her explicit statements. These adverbs (Downing and Locke 2006) set up a contrast between her habitual behaviour and her occasional behaviour. What she constructs as habitual in effect does more than temper her rejection of the *girlie girl* feminine identity; it counteracts this rejection. When Sandy describes her feminine typical gender performance that is visible for perception by others she emphasises the habitual nature of this performance through the combined use of the frequency adverbs "mostly" and "always" – she "mostly always have on skirts or dresses" (line 2,3, Fragment Six). "Mostly" indicates that wearing normatively feminine dress is her main behaviour and "always" indicates that this behaviour is done without exception. Her use of the adjective "most" in the preceding phrase "most of the time" also conveys this meaning. But when Sandy describes her feminine atypical gender performance she emphasises the indefinite and transient nature of this performance through the repeated use of the adverb of time "sometimes" – "sometimes I don't feel to…" (line 4) "sometimes I's act…" (line 6), "…like a fella sometimes" (line 7). Sandy's language reinforces stereotypical femininity as normative and masculinity as a deviation from this norm.

Sandy, as female, resists the confines of her normative gender category by claiming masculinity but she is in turn subject to the counter-resistance posed by traces of dominant discourses that impinge upon her ability to be resistant. As Baxter (2003) explains, individuals are shaped by the possibility of multiple (although not limitless) subject positions within and across different and competing discourses. In lines 6 to 11 of Fragment Six above Sandy explains that she sometimes "acts like a fella" by "pretending like I watching girls". "Watching", when used in Trinidad in this context means more than just the act of looking but extends to looking with desire. "Watching" invokes scopophilia as a decidedly masculine act. Scopophilia or the scopophilic gaze was first asserted by feminist theorist Laura Mulvey to describe, in part, the sexual pleasure that heterosexual men take in looking at women, usually those that are deemed beautiful (O'Brien 2009). Both Sandy and her peers perceive the sexual connotations that lie in the verb "watching" and are discomforted by it even though she constructs her "watching" as a pretense.

Sandy's statement makes her perceivable as gay and so she hastily rejects any such perception by mitigating it. First Sandy introduces her action tentatively – "I may say am" (line 7) – with the modal auxiliary verb "may" making her act appear less persistent and more of a matter of chance or only a possibility (Swan 1995) and her lengthening of "say" and "am" indicating that she is stalling, taking time to construct her statement. Then she hurriedly qualifies her statement "just off of wildness sake" and repeats this qualification in line 8 "just off of kicks". "Just" in these phrases restricts her action as play, a meaning conveyed by the combined use of "wildness" and "kicks". In Trinidad Creole these words carry unique meanings and refer to non-serious acts such as joking, teasing or foolish or silly behaviour; as Winer (2009) defines, to "not take seriously; fool around…thrill; excitement" (494). "Sake" in the first phrase reinforces that the reason for her action is only in the interest of play. Sandy sends a meta-message to counteract her basic message, i.e. I am not seriously looking with desire even though my statement implies this. But her peers are not quite convinced as they express their confusion and discomfort by directing

questioning looks at each other (wide eyes, raised eyebrows followed by frowns and pouts[14]).

Sandy's mitigation and her peers' reaction call attention to the influence of the discourse of heteronormativity as a precursor for gender typicality. Though precise definers escape her, Sandy does not wish to assert herself as feminine typical, and she prefers to claim masculinity even though she constructs her masculinity as transient. At the same time, Sandy is unable to accept atypical sexuality. She is determined to locate herself within the heteronormative framework. Her peers are clearly unable to understand any alternative to the prescriptions of this framework as they non-verbally question and disapprove of her implied homosexuality. Homosexuality, as atypical according to dominant ideology, is troubling for these respondents. Therefore there are clearly restrictions on how atypically these speakers may construct themselves.

Discussion and Conclusion: "Women Can't Have It All"

The emphatic and at times emotive rejection of the behaviour and characteristics which mark the *girlie girl* is significant but not surprising. It reveals how these young women contend with the discourse of powerlessness that is embedded in discourses of femininity. Power, as it informs my analysis, is not viewed solely as a repressive force. Rather, in keeping with a feminist poststructuralist perspective, it is understood in Foucauldian terms as "a 'net-like organisation' which weaves itself discursively through social organisations, meanings, relations and construction of speakers' subjectivities or identities, with individuals always simultaneously undergoing and exercising power" (Baxter 2003, 8). These women are also contending with a discourse of successful femininity which prescribes for women higher intelligence, feminine agency through education and the independent woman. Therefore contemporary women, especially young women like these students, are expected to be

flexible, individualised, self-driven and self-made, confident, resilient and empowered to achieve a successful femininity or a "carefully balanced and closely self-monitored blend of intelligence, independence, groomed attractiveness and sexiness" (Jackson and Lyons 2013, 228; Budgeon 2011; Pomerantz et al. 2013).

Achieving this careful balance, this "Supergirl" femininity (according to Pomerantz et al. (2013)), this state of "having it all", is clearly not easy as far as the young Trinidadian women are concerned. For them the physically beautiful *girlie girl* has power but that which makes her powerful also makes her powerless; she is caught in a 'Catch22' paradox. This is because the beautiful woman is ideal, she is prestigious because she is considered a natural manifestation of human perfection, and she has privilege because she can seduce and fascinate men (Carbonera 1994) and, I would add, women. However, a beautiful woman is also considered a threat to masculine freedom and autonomy and, therefore, must be controlled. A female, like the *girlie girl*, dedicated to cultivating a beautiful appearance/body is denied self-actualisation and accomplishment because, though she is expected to be beautiful, once determined to be such, she must be, according to Callaghan (1994), "neutralized or made passive, weak and dependent" (ix).

Naomi explains in Fragment Seven below, "women can't have it all you can't be pretty and you can't be smart" (line 1) and if you are, society as the unnamed other – the "they" – are "like no…something have to be wrong with you" (line 4). Naomi is not alone in her view; Mia and Farah support her – "yeah" (line 3).

Fragment Seven		
Naomi:	Because women can't have it all you can't be pretty and you can't be smart=	**1**
Mia:	=Yeah smart at the same time	**2**
Farah:	Yeah	**3**
Naomi:	So they like **no** you have to be- something have to be wrong with you	**4**

I suggest that these young women, having set their sights on the opportunities for agency afforded by tertiary education, want to "have it all" though they recognise the persistence of ideas that constrain women especially if they are significantly beautiful. Naomi and her peers were registered full-time students at The University of the West Indies (St. Augustine Campus), and as such they are expected to articulate their intelligence and to use their education to further their professional goals. Expectations may vary depending on the age, class, religion, ethnicity of the woman and the members of her social groups, but cultivating intelligence is crucial to a woman being truly independent. This is part of a larger belief in Caribbean societies that education enhances opportunities for employment and social mobility (Ellis 2003). Therefore it follows that the female focus group respondents would reject any association with lesser intelligence or stupidity even though they acknowledge some participation in the practices that mark the *girlie girl*.

To temper the disempowering effect of hyperfemininity these young women claim a measure of masculinity as part of their atypical feminine identity which follows because, as explained earlier, if the effects of gender polarisation are applied, masculine power is taken for granted. Their understanding of themselves and others is mediated by the power structures and power relations that pervade society. Their awareness of social and biological differences as well as differences in terms of prestige, agency and ultimately power is acute. This may not allow them to "have it all" but they are able to blur the boundaries

of hyperfemininity and achieve a greater sense of agency as women. They pursue this agency constantly hence their rejection of beauty and physical attractiveness, passivity, expressiveness, emotionality and feminine containment, and their claim to masculinity as an alternative source of power.

[1] The creator of the concept, American developmental psychologist, Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, describes the 'emerging adult' as someone who has more freedom from parental control than an adolescent and thus has greater opportunity for independent exploration (Arnett 2004). This 'emerging adult' may be an individual from 18 to 25 and up to age 30 who engages in identity explorations, experiences instability, is focused on self, experiences a feeling of being between developmental stages (neither adolescent or adult) and has a great belief in possibilities (Arnett 2004, Konstam 2007).

[2] Milestone and Meyer (2012), discuss the "diversification of femininity", particularly the interplay of competing notions of femininity, i.e. a "conventional femininity" – domesticity, marriage and children – and a "freer femininity" – equal rights, opportunities and pleasure seeking as well as more options of identity. But these additional options do not come without challenges, as Brewis (2011) explains, women's actions challenge the "motherhood mandate" and the associated domesticity through decisions to delay children or to remain childless and through insistence on more egalitarian gender ideologies relevant to contraception, abortion, divorce and occupational and educational opportunities. But Brewis (2011) observes, like Milestone and Meyer (2012), that women still "struggle to manage the demands of work, personal relationships of all kinds, motherhood and other life activities" (148).

[3] Analysis at the micro level involves detailed examination of language in use; at the meso level the analyst examines how this language, as it is connected to broader social and cultural contexts, influences ways of talking; and at the macro level the analyst examines the connection between language and ideology, uncovering how ideas become normative or not and deconstructing these normative assumptions. (Shaw and Bailey 2009)

[4] Femininity is characterised as communal or interpersonally oriented (Alcock et al. 2007, Zemore et al. 2000). Femininity, according to Alcock et al. (2007) and Zemore (2000), is also shaped by the persistence of the "marriage mandate" and the "motherhood mandate", as well as by the view of women as ambivalent about sexuality, capable enough to juggle different types of work inside and outside the home and susceptible to aggression. With specific reference to the Caribbean, of which Trinidad is a part, conceptions of femininity continue to be influenced by stereotypes and beliefs based on biology (Ellis 2003), but histories of slavery, indentureship and colonisation and the continued relevance of Euro-American cultural products influence and complicate perceptions of gender identity (Ellis 2003, Smith 2006, Baksh 2011, Niranjana 2011). Franco (2010) suggests that femininity is signaled by dominant notions of sexual responsibility, motherliness, virtuousness and containment as well as, from the perspective of women especially, by the notions of independence, freedom and self-actualisation. Hosein (2004), while focusing only on Indo-Trinidadian females, describes notions of femininity in similar terms. She concludes that femininity for such females is marked by the ideals of respectability and purity along with the notions of independence, responsibility and achievement (Hosein 2004).

[5] "The dumb blonde" is a stereotype which constructs an exclusive ethnic in-group. According to Kuhn and Radstone (1990) dumb blondes are white women with blonde hair who are characterised by "overt 'natural' sexuality (of which they may or may not be aware) with a profound ignorance and innocence manifest in an inability to understand even the most elementary facts of everyday life" (47).

[6] The details of talk upon which this study relied were made accessible through the use of Gail Jefferson's conventions for transcribing data. Her conventions reflect the standard that has emerged for transcription and accounts well for the nuances of spoken conversation (McIlvenny 2002). These transcription conventions are especially useful because as Jefferson (2004) explains they allow the researcher to prepare talk for analysis and theorising.

[7] Pseudonyms were created for all respondents to protect their anonymity.

[8] Repair in conversation analysis refers to a turn-taking or conversation management strategy where a speaker simply corrects something they have said or are in the course of saying, or a speaker or listener may use it as a mitigation strategy to attend to possible trouble in speaking, hearing or understanding, trouble being misarticulations, malapropisms, use of a wrong word, unavailability of a needed word, and difficulty hearing or being heard and understanding. (Kitzinger 2013, Drew et al. 2013).

[9] "Bitch" is impolite because it is often used to insult women and to convey strong feelings of hatred, anger, envy or contempt (Swan 1995). In some female peer groups it may be used positively to express affection or affilitation. However, its meaning is most often infused with negative connotations that have the effect of cursing the addressee.

[10] In Trinidad *fru fru* refers to excessively detailed decoration, e.g. in terms of dress, it refers to multiple colourful and outstanding accessories worn to enhance an outfit.

[11] *Horse* is a Trinidadian slang word used to refer to a close friend. From my exposure, it is a slang used more often by young male speakers to refer to close male friends in particular.

[12] According to Miller et al. (1998), "in everyday language, 'shopping' is usually restricted to the purchase of food and clothing, stereotypically regarded as women's work" (198).

[13] *Fella* is a Trinidad Creole word for fellow or man.

[14] In Trinidad this pout is a significant facial expression referred to as *cuya/cooyah mouth*. In my experience *cuya/cooyah mouth* is used to express a multitude of feelings, common among these are vexation, disagreement or dismissal. Winer (2009) describes it under the synonym *coupiya mouth* as "a disrespectful or impolite gesture made by pushing out the lower lip, sometimes both lips. Also to turn mouth to one side and partially open the mouth as if to speak, but hold the position without speaking" (253).

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CARIBBEAN REVIEW OF GENDER STUDIES
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"What is this t'ing t'en about Caribbean Feminisms?": Feminism in the Anglophone Caribbean, circa 1980-2000

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Abstract

This paper explores the complex history of Caribbean feminist activism in the late twentieth-century, based on interviews with Peggy Antrobus of Barbados, Andaiye and Alissa Trotz of Guyana and Patricia Mohammed of Trinidad. It attempts to create a hitherto absent archive of these figures while interpreting their ideological and political positions. It is divided into three sections. The first explores the individual trajectories that gave these women a political consciousness. The second explores the regional and global linkages of Caribbean women's/feminist activism. The third discusses the long crisis of the 1980s and 1990s, including the decline of 'Left' projects and the impact of growth-oriented economic policies, and their role in engendering a Caribbean feminism which was not subordinated to larger nationalist or revolutionary projects. The paper ends by comparing how these persons have positioned themselves and reflect on the contemporary feminist movement.

Keywords: feminism, Caribbean women, intersectionality, gender and development, oral history

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Introduction

> *'By the time we came to the late 1990s where it was more and more obvious that in practice addressing all forms of oppression is not what we were doing, no I didn't call myself a feminist anymore… First of all I really don't like the hyphenated feminism… I was happy when feminism by itself was about all of those things. So I stopped referring to myself as a feminist sometime in the late 1990s'* – (Andaiye 2015)

In this short quote Andaiye describes why, in the late 1990s, she chose to no longer identify as a feminist. Why, at the start of a research project about the flowering of Caribbean feminist movements, have I begun with its decline in the eyes of one activist? I have done so because I think Andaiye's reasoning demonstrates the degree to which Caribbean feminists in this period attempted to understand the intersections between different power structures and relationships of class, race/ethnicity/ colour, nation, gender, sexuality, colonialism, and more. When Andaiye felt that Caribbean feminism(s) no longer foregrounded an analysis of these different power relationships – indeed, that feminism only paid attention to these hierarchies through hyphenated feminisms – she no longer identified as a feminist. In the period of the 1980s, individual women and women's groups in the region, such as DAWN[1] and CAFRA[2], set out to address these collusive hierarchies within the context of the Caribbean and the Global South. Yet the quote above alludes to how changing contexts throughout the late 1980s and 1990s contributed to shifting Andaiye's perspective.

My research centres on how four Anglophone Caribbean activists came to identify with feminism and took part in feminist activism throughout the period of the 1980s and 90s. This paper is based on oral history interviews with Peggy Antrobus of Barbados, Andaiye and Alissa Trotz of Guyana and Patricia Mohammed of Trinidad. These interviews are understood in the context of a

large body of published sources, including interviews, articles, books and speeches. It is the positioning of these women within varying geographical, institutional and ideological locations which excited and interested me. Peggy Antrobus came to feminism through her work as Director of the Women's Bureau in Jamaica. Since 1985, as a member of the DAWN network, she has been a major link between the transnational feminist movement and women in the Caribbean. By contrast, Andaiye's pathway into feminism was grounded in radical politics and in the idea of 'praxis… a social critique of the concrete' evident through her work with Red Thread in Guyana[3] (Scott 2002). Alissa Trotz, who is an academic and also a member of Red Thread in Guyana, questioned why I chose to include her, given that she does not consider herself as an activist (an ambivalence structured by her institutional affiliation as an academic living out of the region) and has not 'really been involved in the women's movement, even though I am involved with Red Thread and at times get picked up in that way' (Trotz 2015). The end of this quote alludes to why I had wanted to include her, due to her positioning at the intersections of academic/activist, international/diasporic Caribbean communities. Through her role as the Regional Course Director of Women and Development Studies, Patricia Mohammed has disseminated the work of Caribbean activists and academics. One of her most interesting insertions in the historiography has been in deconstructing the idea of difference among women, particularly investigating why Indo-Caribbean feminism remains 'subtext and subterranean' (Mohammed 2015). While this is an eclectic mix of activists with different perspectives on feminist politics and practice, for the most part they are brought together through a shared experience of the postcolonial period. Alissa Trotz, by contrast, identifies as a 'child of the post-colonial disillusion' (Trotz 2015).

Methodologically, oral history sources present both difficulties and advantages. Oral history sources are not only filtered through the 'fragility of memory' (Scott 2010) but through the subjectivity of the subject and the interviewer. In conducting my interviews, I began by considering the different positions of my interviewees and I as academics/activists/students, Caribbean/Caribbean

diasporic/English citizens and as black/white/brown, older/younger women. I am grateful to have been given the opportunity to take part in these conversations and to access their perspectives. I came to this research topic with an interest in answering certain questions, including whether intersectionality in Caribbean feminisms prefigured Western thinking on intersectionality? And how does one come to identify as a feminist? My subjectivity, and that of my supervisor, also informed the selection of the women I interviewed. The choice to interview Peggy Antrobus, Andaiye, Patricia Mohammed and Alissa Trotz represents an uneven and limited selection. It should be stated that by no means does my research of these four individuals qualify as a coherent history of feminist activism in the region. Rather, it provides an insight into a small selection of the activism that took place in this period. I seek to counter this unevenness through placing these interviews within the context of these activists' larger bodies of work, seeking to establish continuities and developments in their thinking.

Oral sources have important strengths, constantly reminding the historian to engage with the subjectivity of their materials and with the accuracy of their interpretation, as the presence of living subjects 'constrains us in our interpretations, allows us, indeed obliges us, to test them against the opinion of those who will always, in essential ways, know more than ourselves' (Thompson 1978). This has been the case in my paper, as discussions with these four women following our initial interviews increased my understanding of their positions and interventions. The use of oral history also accounts for the absence of certain topics in this paper, such as sexuality, as this was not discussed at length in most of my interviews. The lack of attention to sexuality during my period of study reflects the context in which these activists were organising, where feminisms originated from and/ or linked with anti-colonial, leftist and radical movements, globalisation and development discourse, respectively. Another major advantage of these oral tesitmonies is in their reflective nature, demonstrating the changing ways in which these activists have narrated the history of Caribbean feminisms and positioned themselves within this history. Part of my

research will centre on how their 2015, contemporary oral reflections represent the developing logic of their arguments.

Structurally, my work will be divided into three sections. The first, *'The Personal is Political and the Role of Non-feminist Politics'*, discusses how these women's early everyday experiences led them to focus on gender. It examines how through their personal trajectories within non-feminist politics, each of these women gained a political consciousness which intersected with feminism. In the second section, *'Local, Regional and International Links'*, I discuss how these Caribbean activists related their appeals to the activism of other regional and international activists, such as Selma James and the Global Women's Strike[4] and women from the Global South through the DAWN network. I consider how different local, regional and international feminist currents stimulated one another. The third section will examine *'The Crisis of the 1980s and 1990s'*, the period of declining left-wing movements and economic restructuring programmes implemented throughout the region. In this historical moment, Caribbean feminists forged a distinctive critique of the growth-oriented, IMF-inspired economic policies. To conclude, I consider how my interviews with these activists represent their continuing dialogue with Caribbean feminism, as each made new insights and adjusted their perspectives. In addition, I consider what research is still needed to understand 'what is this t'ing t'en about Caribbean feminisms?' (Mohammed 2015).

The 'Personal is Political' and the Role of Non-feminist Politics

> *'Well, it was a U.S. slogan but in my own experience I guess the political became personal'* – (Antrobus 2015).

For many of these activists 'the personal is political' was present in their early understandings of feminism. The idea that 'the personal is political' first gained

prominence in the U.S. in the 1960s. Central to this idea was 'the conviction that the private was of very public concern' (Whelehan 1995). Yet, as was articulated by black and Chicana feminist critiques in the U.S. in the 1960s and 70s, the 'personal is political' was a disjunctive term to many who were subject to consistent state intervention in their domestic lives (Mohanty 2003). Nevertheless, I would argue that 'the personal is political' was present in their understandings of feminism as a principle of understanding 'structured power experientially.' Moreover, this experiential knowledge, the 'moment-to-moment meaning of being a woman in a society that men dominate' developed as a form of consciousness-raising, a 'method of analysis, mode of organising, form of practice and technique of political intervention' (Hosein n.d.). Crucially, while they benefitted from this U.S. articulation, the way in which they understood the 'personal is political' was grounded in their particular locations, as black/ Indo/ mixed race, working/ middle class, Caribbean women. Describing how she understood the 'personal is political', Peggy Antrobus said 'I didn't get that from slogans – anymore than I got my feminism from U.S. perspectives' (Antrobus 2015).

For these activists, an understanding of the 'personal is political' emerged through their lived experiences. Andaiye described how 'watching my aunt who raised me, hit the pot hard against the edge of the sink and wondering 'why she angry?' constituted her 'version of the personal is political' (Andaiye 2015). Both Mohammed and Antrobus equally traced this recognition to their domestic relationships. Crucially, this recognition of gender oppression in their familial and domestic relationships fed into their academic concerns and attempts at consciousness-raising. For Antrobus, this experiential learning and reflection on gender-based oppression allowed for a 'deeper understanding of other forms of oppression based on class, race, ethnicity, culture and international relations' (Antrobus 2004). This is reflected by Andaiye who noted coming to understand how the private injustices experienced by her aunt and mother formed part of the 'subordination of the whole group' (Andaiye 2015). For Antrobus, Mohammed and Trotz this examination of the collusion of different

power structures was also generated by their academic research. Mohammed noted how considering the status of her mother in the family provoked a 'major reaction to the confines of patriarchy and privilege within the Islamic church' (Mohammed 2015) and caused her preoccupation with understanding how gender was negotiated in the Indo-Caribbean context.

For some, gender was a secondary point of analysis following their engagement with non-feminist politics. Andaiye came first to challenging racial oppression through her work with radical left-formations in Guyana and at the fringes of the Black Power movement in New York. Her feminist consciousness came as she recognised the limitations of these movements in their understanding of sex/ gender oppression. Andaiye turned to the work of Selma James and the International Wages for Housework Campaign. Within this movement she found the insertion of gender, sex and, critically, race within a Marxist framework. She noted how 'that made total sense to me… that if you did the analysis of capitalism, you did not leave out women' (Andaiye 2015). For both Peggy Antrobus and Andaiye, the intersection of different power structures came as a product of their geographical and political locations – 'because of the nature of the Caribbean' (Scott 2002). For both, gender provided a new and interesting way of assessing other questions. Through her work with DAWN from 1984 onwards, Antrobus foregrounded the experience of the poor, Third World woman as in her 'we find the conjecture of race, class, gender and nationality which symbolises underdevelopment' (Hill 2003). The need to attend to the intersections of different power relationships was crucial to their work. Michelle Rowley has extended this analysis, arguing that in the case of Peggy Antrobus, the foregrounding of this class and race consciousness 'as *the means* of describing her feminist consciousness prefigures mainstream thought on the intersections of race, class, and gender' (Rowley 2010).

But there is debate over the degree to which non-feminist political movements (nationalist, left-wing and Black Power movements) enabled feminist organising. The difficulty of securing women's participation, and countering their

marginalisation, within other social movements was addressed by these activists. Caren Grown and Gita Sen noted the difficulties of women organising within political parties 'for fear of being labelled divisive to the struggles of workers or the poor' (Grown and Sen 1987). Even organising within women's groups and parties can be problematic if they avoid a 'clear assignment of responsibilities or delegation of authority for fear of mirroring existing hierarchies or established power structures' (Grown and Sen 1987). Patricia Mohammed has argued that nationalist movements in the region failed to pay 'any systematic attention to or analysis of gendered subjectivities' (Barnes 2006); this perspective is shared by Alissa Trotz. Referring to the power disparities among those within the WPA, Andaiye noted how the male leadership would too often 'pose an issue in terms that you couldn't enter', leading her to question the capacity of radical, leftist formations in the region to 'effectively deal with questions of gender' (Andaiye 2015). Added to which, the implosion of the Grenada revolution had a catalytic impact. The realisation that the 5,000-strong women's arm of the New Jewel Movement 'had so little autonomy and so little power that they could exercise no independent kind of influence on the kind of madness that was developing there' provoked a 'despair about our capacity in the region for radical transformation'. Emerging from this, Andaiye noted how feminism provided 'a political home in the face of the loss of that political home' (Andaiye 2015). These insights demonstrate the differences in how these activists have viewed the trajectory of Caribbean feminisms and its origins. While Andaiye's analysis demonstrates the need for feminists to break from other forms of political organising, others have chartered a more progressive relationship between non-feminist and feminist organising.

By comparison, Peggy Antrobus places a greater emphasis on the progressive impact of left-wing politics. In the context of Jamaica, Antrobus argued that 'the national politics I would say was extremely important in putting gender on the agenda' (Antrobus 2015). Alissa Trotz moderates her assessment, noting that while organised party politics 'obscured the significant contributions of women to the anti-dictatorial struggles in Guyana' (Trotz 2007), through their

involvement in left-wing movements, feminist activists 'inherited a radical sort of critique which they subsequently brought into feminist organising' (Trotz 2015). I would emphasise the positive impact of left-wing politics in enabling these activists to produce intersectional, feminist critiques. But this is not necessarily at odds with Andaiye's perspective. Andaiye's understanding of the limitations of left-wing politics in addressing questions of gender oppression enabled her to co-found Red Thread, introducing the gender/sex analysis. Patricia Mohammed also charted a progressive relationship between her work with socialist movements, groups such as the Concerned Women for Progress (CWP)[5], and her entry into feminist politics and activism. While nationalist and radical left movements in the region did not necessarily deal with questions of sex and gender sufficiently, they were of vital importance in aiding these women to produce intersectional feminist critiques.

In this section I have made three main claims. I have argued that the idea that the 'personal is political' was representative of an enduring, Caribbean local theory, emerging experientially for many of these activists. It is crucial to challenge the view of Caribbean feminist theory and action as a derivative of Anglo-American feminisms. These testimonies demonstrate how, in their early lives and political activism, the idea that the 'personal is political' was already present as a guiding principle. Yet it was the extension of this principle into a form of consciousness-raising or 'praxis' that allowed them to form intersectional feminist critiques and to address, to some extent, the disparities among women in its organising. Thirdly, I argue that the attention these activists paid to the intersection of different power hierarchies was a product of their involvement in other forms of non-feminist politics, while emphasising that this does not indicate an inherently progressive relationship between left-wing/nationalist politics and feminist movements.

Local, Regional and International Links

> *'Where do we place Caribbean feminism and the Caribbean feminist voice in that sense, because it becomes almost a marginal voice… is it that we have really had nothing to say? Is it just that we haven't published in the right places?'* – (Mohammed 2015).

> *'What I tried to do was to create a space, even though it was within the bureaucracy, where women, especially grassroots women, could speak for themselves and indicate what they wanted of the bureau'* – (Antrobus 2007)

Throughout the Anglophone Caribbean, institutional and informal, international, regional and local connections have contributed to the circulation of feminist ideas and literature. In the words of Patricia Mohammed, Caribbean feminists have sought to create a 'discourse – an intersection with other discourses' (Mohammed 2015). The UN Decade for Women (1975-85) was of great importance in promoting the generation of new knowledge about women's lives and in creating spaces for women to mobilise. Regional groups like DAWN, WAND, the Women and Development Studies Project and CAFRA were aided by the machinery of the UN Decade. But Caribbean feminists also benefitted from informal networks with Anglo-American, transnational and 'Third World' feminists. Beginning by positioning these activists in relation to the international feminist movement, I will then investigate the role of institutional bodies in linking different local, regional and international projects. Comparing this to criticisms of how regional/international connections have alienated The UWI from its grassroots communities. I finish by examining the germinal role of DAWN activists within the Caribbean.

The debate over the use of the 'wave' metaphor to describe feminist activism is useful in showing the extent to which these activists connect the Caribbean to the international feminist movement. Patricia Mohammed employs the idea of

waves insofar as 'each wave is not just a chronology of events; it is continually engaged in a polemic with history, thought and action' (Mohammed 2007). There is a blurring of linearity, chronology and concepts within Mohammed's definition as she broadens the traditional 'wave' narrative in order to 'situate feminism in the Caribbean as part of a tradition of western intellectual thought and activism' (Mohammed 1998). Peggy Antrobus's use of the metaphor reflects her similar interest in placing the Caribbean within the international movement. But for Andaiye and Alissa Trotz, the 'wave' metaphor homogenises Caribbean feminisms through tying them to Anglo-American narratives, insulating them from important events including the upsurge in anti-colonial uprisings. For Trotz, 'wave' narratives are 'profoundly disjunctive given that [in] the Caribbean/ Guyanese context I was working in, difference, not similarity, was the point of departure' (Mohammed 2003). This debate demonstrates key differences in the way these activists understand feminism in the Caribbean and position themselves in relation to a universalised feminist movement.

Both the UN Decade and The UWI have served as important media for different local, regional and international efforts to generate knowledge of women's lives and feminist activism. Two regional programmes, the 'Women in the Caribbean Project' (WICP, 1979- 1982) headed by Jocelyn Massiah and the Women and Development Unit (WAND, 1978), formed in the context of the UN Decade, were central in mobilising activists, leaders and educationalists in community-based and regional projects. Both WICP and WAND, through creating and disseminating knowledge in the formal academic context, 'enhanced the credibility and legitimacy of feminist activism within both the academy and the wider society' (Barriteau 2003). The quote from Peggy Antrobus at the start of this section addresses the significance of WAND in integrating the voices of grassroots women into a regional framework. It served as a catalyst for several new initiatives, including CAFRA and the Women and Development Studies programme. With the institutionalisation of Gender and Development Studies, there has been a continued effort to stimulate community, regional and international links. One more recent example of this is the 'Making of Caribbean

Feminisms' research project and its offshoot, the *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies*, initiated by Patricia Mohammed, which succeeded in generating new knowledge while developing 'an organ that wasn't processed through readers of the North necessarily' (Mohammed 2007).

But for many of these activists, there are doubts about The UWI's ability as an institution to generate activist-research networks with its local communities. While acknowledging that the academy does important work, particularly around knowledge-creation and publications, Antrobus argues that 'the links with women's activism still needs strengthening' (Reddock 2006). In establishing WAND, The UWI provided a space that facilitated and supported feminist activism; but Antrobus notes how it failed to make the link between the teaching and research on campus, and the sites of WAND's community-based work, thereby missing the opportunity to stimulate a multi-directional relationship between grassroots, local activism, UWI regional scholarship and research. Perhaps, then, the most important work in terms of stimulating a focus on women's' lives and activism has been generated by individual activists within The UWI, sometimes in conflict with the University. Rhoda Reddock is unparalleled for her commitment and served as a catalyst in the formation of both the National Union of Domestic Employees (NUDE) and Working Women in Trinidad and Tobago and CAFRA at a regional level. The UWI was therefore useful in legitimising some of these projects and in providing spaces for these activists to mobilise.

Andaiye has staged a different critique, challenging the very assumption of activism and academia as aligned interests. Linnette Vassell has made a similar intervention, arguing that in the triad of feminism, gender studies and activism, 'activism is subordinated in the hierarchy of the triad. Its place reflects the distancing of brain and brawn; of the academy and the community/ NGOs; of theory and action' (Vassell 2004). The critique of Andaiye and Vassell is distinctive in questioning the very ability of The UWI – and perhaps any academic facility – to reconcile academic and activist objectives. By

comparison, for Antrobus the question is not whether Caribbean feminists can bridge the divide between the institutionalised, academic setting and the grassroots, but rather, 'how do you nurture feminism in the academy?' (Rowley 2007). While indicating the difficulties and constraints imposed by the academic setting, Antrobus recognises the value of teaching (and research) as a mode of consciousness-raising (Rowley 2007). Alissa Trotz is an interesting addition to this study. While she notes her structured ambivalence to the Caribbean feminist movement, she is interestingly part of a new generation of younger activists who are using new media, through her column in the Stabroek News, to translate academic knowledge in publicly accessible formats.

DAWN's critique of the ways in which growth-oriented economic policies, political conservatism, religious fundamentalism and militarism originate in the same sexist ideology is arguably the most original intervention to the body of feminist knowledge to which Caribbean feminists have contributed. DAWN combined the institutional framework provided by the UN Decade with the experiences of local women throughout the Caribbean and the Global South. Antrobus emphasised the importance of meetings in 1984 and 1985 in the lead-up to the UN Conference in providing the medium for women throughout the Global South to mobilise. Antrobus contributed to developing the platform document for DAWN presented at the NGO Forum of the UN Conference of Women held in Nairobi in 1985. The DAWN platform considered 'the interlinked crises of debt, deteriorating social services, environmental degradation, militarism, religious fundamentalism and political conservatism – as consequences of growth-oriented economic policies and programmes' (Antrobus 2015), an analysis which prefigured both economists' and left-wing critiques of the impact of SAPs. Not only did this framework of advocacy represent a vital intervention throughout the Global South, but it was also adapted within local contexts by Caribbean activists to challenge their governments' policy frameworks of structural adjustment. Mohammed, Trotz and Andaiye have all recognised the success of DAWN in placing Caribbean data

within comparative feminist theory. I will discuss this further in *'The Crisis of the 1980s and 1990s'*.

In all of these cases, institutions, regional networks, feminist groups and activists have engaged in valuable exchanges of knowledge. The success of this was evident in the different local projects which contributed to the establishment of Women and Development Studies units at The UWI and which worked to legitimise the links between gender studies and feminist activism. But there are also criticisms, including of how institutionalisation has served to alienate research (and teaching) from activism and community-based projects. Furthering this critique, Andaiye and Vassell challenged the very capacity of academia to stimulate activism, questioning 'is there a disconnection of Gender Studies from its feminist and activist roots' (Vassell 2004)? I will return to these historiographical differences in my conclusion.

The Crisis of the 1980s and 1990s

> *'I've had small 'Aha!' moments from the work of other women but the big 'Aha!' moment was from the work of what became the Global Women's Strike'* – (Andaiye 2015)

> *'What have we had to say about global feminism or international feminism that has made a difference on the world landscape? DAWN for instance, maybe'* – (Mohammed 2015)

By 'crisis' I am referring to the wave of IMF/World Bank-inspired monetarist, neo-liberal restructuring programmes adopted by Caribbean governments. My research centres on the impact of these crises on feminist organising and activism. I argue that in the apex of this economic moment, feminist activists' made new insights to the body of feminist knowledge. As demonstrated in the

quote above from Mohammed, the DAWN critique was perhaps the key intervention of Caribbean feminists which 'made a difference on the world landscape' (Mohammed 2015). DAWN activists criticised SAPs as part of a broader sexist ideology which de-monetised women's time and labour and undermined their significance as economic actors. While noting the success of these Caribbean critiques, it is important to assert a significant caveat into the debate. In the new millennium, Antrobus analysed how from the '95 Beijing Conference onwards there was a push back, reflected in the retreat from the DAWN analysis and the exclusion of violence against women and sexual and reproductive health and rights from the first iteration of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). I examine the critiques forged by Caribbean women, while also considering how changing political contexts in the mid to late 1990s de-radicalised the movement.

Through applying local examples within the DAWN advocacy framework, Peggy Antrobus and other figures within the DAWN network made a distinctive critique of neoliberal, growth-oriented economic policies. A statement made by Caribbean women at a CARICOM regional meeting held in Bridgetown, Barbados in 1985 in preparation for the UN End-of-Decade conference scheduled for Nairobi, emphasised how, under the present economic crisis, 'women are again being expected to take on more of their governments' responsibility for the health, education and social well-being of the society' (Reddock 1998). They challenged CARICOM governments to review this policy framework. The Bridgetown Statement applied the DAWN critique in noting how 'social tensions, dislocations and economic disparities' were the consequence of monetarist, neo-liberal development models (Reddock 1998). Peggy Antrobus summarised the DAWN critique as 'triple jeopardy: cutting jobs (in the health and education sectors) in which women predominate, cutting services (on which women depended in their role in social reproduction), and then increasing pressures on women's time as they were expected to fill the gaps created by those cuts in services' (Antrobus 2015). Her crucial role in regional and international forms of feminist movement-building was evident in

her Letter on 'The Debt' which made the Caribbean example central to the DAWN analysis (Antrobus 1989).

For Andaiye, this period of economic crisis in the region was also central to her linking of gender oppression and economic theory. She noted how Clotil Walcott (the trade unionist and organiser of NUDE), on meeting Selma James and hearing about the International Wages for Housework Campaign 'made the connection that people often have difficulty making between the unwaged housework and the waged housework' (Andaiye 2015). Through developing a framework of advocacy, Walcott, alongside Trinidad and Tobago Senator Diana Mahabir-Wyatt, were central in making Trinidad and Tobago the only Caribbean state to pass legislation relating to the recognition of unwaged caring work. The 1996 Act to Count Unremunerated Work required the maintenance of statistics and a "mechanism for quantifying and recording the monetary value of such [unwaged caring] work" (Ministry of Legal Affairs, Trinidad and Tobago 2014); added to which, in 1994-1995, CARICOM government ministers responsible for women's affairs adopted the analysis of the centrality of women's unwaged work during their preparations for the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. They argued inside the conference for a language that would recognise unwaged caring work, while activists from the International Wages for Housework Campaign, including Clotil Walcott, lobbied delegates outside the official conference (Trotz 2015). Through their interventions, these activists showed the importance of recognising 'women's role in social formation and the economy' (Mohammed 1998) during this period of economic crisis.

It was during this period that activists from the Global Women's Strike incorporated theories of unwaged caring work within a Marxist framework. My interview with Andaiye demonstrated the importance of Selma James' ideas for her, as she came into contact with the International Wages for Housework Campaign after it launched the Global Women' Strike (GWS) in 2000. For Andaiye, James' perspective represented the insertion of women's experience

within a Marxist framework. It emphasised how '*all* women, whether or not they do waged work, do *unwaged* caring work', thus the 'question of gender turns on locating the distinctiveness of women's *caring* work with the enlarging framework of productive labour' (Scott 2002). This is the point at which the theories of Marxism and feminism intersect, as James inserts the experience of women as unwaged carers within the Marxist framework of commodity-producing labour. Andaiye also notes that anti-racism was central for both the Wages for Housework Campaign (later GWS) and Red Thread, the latter of which has worked consistently to organise with Indo-, Afro-, Indigenous and grassroots women across their differences. Returning to the idea posed in '*The Personal is Political*', I argue that these activists adopted an intersectional feminist critique in this period of interconnecting political and economic crises. Red Thread is one key example of how Caribbean feminists incorporated local examples within a broader structural analysis.

Yet the interconnecting economic and political crises in the region can be considered to have de-radicalised Caribbean feminism(s) from the mid to the late 1990s onwards. While the crisis period of the 1980s had a crucial role in radicalising Caribbean feminisms, increasingly throughout the 1990s and particularly following the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, as Peggy Antrobus has identified, post-Beijing exhaustion on the part of women activists, the changing leadership within the feminist movement and the emergence of mainstreaming projects and 'gender experts' served to detach the movement from its radical, transformative roots. Part of this analysis was also made by Alissa Trotz and Andaiye. The major difference in their perspectives was that, for Andaiye, the cumulative weight of these factors led her to no longer identify as a feminist. In my interview with Alissa Trotz she identified how 'we see the mainstreaming of feminism that is led particularly by… supra national organisations like the United Nations, the ILO [International Labour Organization], [and] the World Bank.' Trotz identified how within this mainstreaming, organisations such as the World Bank co-opted the language of feminist activists (Trotz 2015). In a similar vein, David Scott has argued that feminist politics was

increasingly marked by 'mainstreaming women into economic plans designed by the IMF' (Scott 2002). These perspectives question whether we should view Caribbean feminisms in this period in linear terms. The testimonies of these women point towards a regression in the late 1990s as feminist groups became increasingly tied to the specifications of funding agencies and reduced to gender mainstreaming projects.

In sum, I have demonstrated how Caribbean activists substantiated the ideas of DAWN and the International Wages for Housework Campaign/Global Women's Strike through applying and transforming these frameworks within their national contexts. In the work of both individual women and women's groups in the Caribbean, this structural critique has endured. Yet the consequences of the economic crisis, accompanied by the decline in left-wing movements, negatively impacted on feminist organising in the region. As a result of these changing contexts, 'perhaps the most important challenge now facing feminism in the region in this context is to be a transformative, rather than a reformist project' (Trotz 2015).

Conclusion and contemporary reflections

> *'I stopped referring to myself as a feminist sometime in the late 1990s'* – (Andaiye 2015)

Perhaps the persistent, underlying question of my research has been in underlining how these women's perspectives on feminism and their involvement in the movement have shifted over time. This was evident in the question of the links between activism, academia, transnational capital and NGOs. In our interview, Andaiye remarked on the similarities between her work and the work of Linnette Vassell, having previously considered herself at odds with the work of other activists. While Vassell argued that feminist organising in the 1980s allowed

'women with more power (however derived) to dominate or exclude – consciously or not, deliberately or not' (Vassell 2004), Andaiye has addressed the limitations of CAFRA in addressing the hierarchies among women within its organising. My research demonstrates how these activists have made their own, slightly nuanced claims on the difficulty of forging a radical, transformative project in the context of institutionalisation. Andaiye and Trotz have criticised the increasingly paradoxical and limiting relationship between radical groups and transnational capital and NGOs as a means of funding. Antrobus, Trotz and Andaiye have all lamented that feminist organising in the 1990s increasingly moved away from the critique of neo-liberal policies and their increased exploitation of women's caring work. Trotz has pointed to what appears to be an increasing and often resigned acceptance that 'capitalism is permanent and unchangeable and so your job is not to confront it' (Trotz 2015). The challenge for Caribbean feminisms then is ensuring it does not 'domesticate itself… losing sight of the wider critique of imperialism' (Trotz 2015). One of the key insights of my research has been in demonstrating the scope of criticism and self-criticism in the Caribbean women's movement.

How, then, have these women positioned their definitions of feminism in relation to one another? Through qualitative interviews, my study represents the developing logic and nuances which distinguish these activists' understandings of feminism. Both Andaiye and Peggy Antrobus have developed their definitions of feminism in response to the way Patricia Mohammed defined feminism as an 'expression of sexual equality' (Antrobus 2004). Antrobus makes the 'distinction between feminism as an expression of sexual equality and feminism as a critical politics that goes beyond sexual equality, using critical Third World feminist theory to question the whole system of production and reproduction' (Antrobus 2004). Andaiye notes that 'if you're using the definition of feminism, that it's an expression of gender equality and therefore including all women who are doing any work with women as feminists, yes you could say that the feminist movement includes more than a handful of Indian women, but that's not my definition' (Andaiye 2015). I would argue that Andaiye's definition of feminism as

a radical, transformative project has implications for the way she defines its origins and who she defines as feminists. Reflecting this, she comments that feminism was 'never, in my mind, not dominated by black or brown Afro women with a very small percentage of Indian women' (Andaiye 2015). Comparatively, Mohammed speaks of feminism as amorphous and plural, present in multiple spaces and among women who are not normally active in explicitly 'feminist' groups, such as Indo-Caribbean women in groups like the Hindu Women's Organisation. Mohammed points to the impossibility in defining feminism when some women's movements do not actively view their objectives in terms of feminism, stating 'who was the first feminist and who will be the last?' (Mohammed 2008). While Mohammed continues to identify with feminism as a plural and shifting project, Andaiye chooses to no longer identify with a feminism that defines itself as an 'expression of gender equality' (Antrobus 2004).

What, then, is needed to further understand 'this t'ing t'en about Caribbean feminism' (Mohammed 2015)? One crucial aspect missing in this research is an analysis of sexuality, reflecting that it has been recognised as 'one of the blindsides of the Caribbean feminist movement' (Mohammed 2015). There should be further consideration of the ways in which sexuality related to the assessment of other power relationships and oppressions within the activism of the 1980s and 90s. What would the activists of the 1980s and early 1990s contribute to this question? How was heteronormativity centred within the feminist organising of this period? Indeed, the 'third-wave' Caribbean activists to which Mohammed (2003) refers to in 'Like Sugar in Coffee…' are working to ground sexuality within the contemporary feminist movement. Finally, I would argue that this research has gone some small way towards demonstrating the continued importance of oral history reflections. Oral testimonies provide an exciting way of investigating historical questions and of 'assessing long-term meaning in history' (Thompson 1978). They equally serve present-day purposes, aiding past and present generations of feminist activists to engage in a progressive, critical relationship with each other. Antrobus highlighted the

importance of this in these words: 'don't waste your time reinventing wheels: build on what we've done, but don't be limited by it…' (Reddock 2006).

[1] DAWN was established at a meeting in Bangalore in 1984 in the lead-up to the 1985 UN Third World Conference of Women in Nairobi.

[2] Founded in 1985, CAFRA is a regional network of feminists, individual researchers, activists and women's organisations which spans all cultural and linguistic areas of the Caribbean.

[3] Red Thread was formed in 1986 in Guyana by seven women who were members of the Working People's Alliance led by Walter Rodney.

[4] Andaiye noted in our interview that Red Thread is no longer part of the Global Women's Strike.

[5] CWP was formed in 1981 to educate men and women on the origins and manifestations of female oppression in society and to combat violence against women.

List of Abbreviations

CAFRA	Caribbean Association of Feminist Research and Action
CARICOM	Caribbean Community and Common Market
DAWN	Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
UN	United Nations
UWI	The University of the West Indies
WAND	Women and Development Unit
WICP	Women in the Caribbean Project
WPA	Working People's Alliance

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Other Ways of Seeing and Knowing: Historical Re-Vision in *The Salt Roads*

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Abstract

Caribbean writers have had extensive, creative engagement with ideas of history and historiography. They have confronted andro/Eurocentric scholarship that has marginalised the experiences of the Caribbean subjects; relegating their culture and spirituality to caricatures and footnotes. Caribbean women writers have also had to confront instances where Caribbean womanhood was both marginalised by and erased from official historical records, their contribution to national development relegated to the dark spaces of history. In this paper I examine the recuperative strategies employed by Nalo Hopkinson, a later generational woman writer of Caribbean affiliation, in her text *The Salt Roads*. Hopkinson employs science fictional elements, combining them with Haitian spirituality to present her readers with a radical re-vision of three women; Jeanne Duval, the enigmatic mistress of famed French poet Charles Baudelaire, St. Mary of Egypt the Dusky Saint and Mer, a slave on St. Domingue just prior to the Makandal uprising. Reading *The Salt Roads* through rhizomatic lenses reveals the ways in which Hopkinson's text journeys into the dark areas of history to present her readers with alternative ways of seeing and knowing maligned and marginalised historical figures.

Keywords: history, Hopkinson, feminism, rhizome, revision

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Introduction

The Salt Roads stands out as Nalo Hopkinson's most experimental novel to date. In its structure and content it diverges from its antecedents which are set in distant dystopian/utopian futures. Its engagement with significant historical personalities and events distinguishes it from Hopkinson's subsequent works that mark a return to subject matter readily categorised as science fiction. *The Salt Roads* is of particular import when examined from a Caribbean critical perspective for the ways in which it engages ideas of historical reclamation. Its narrative experiments with the fantastic and the supernatural achieves what Leif Sorensen describes as functioning as a "dub mix, producing links between seemingly discrete compositional elements and historical moments" (Sorensen 2014, 267). Of particular interest to this paper is the impact of Hopkinson's experimentation with ways of viewing history and her consequent challenge to ideas of historical authority and the particular historical representation of Jeanne Duval and St. Mary of Egypt. Additionally, through centering the perspective of a fictional character Mer, Hopkinson's novel presents a feminine perspective of the events leading up to and during the initial slave unrests on the island of Saint Domingue and the figure of Makandal. *The Salt Roads*, when read from the perspective of an Anglophone Caribbean literary tradition, participates in a larger practice of interrogating official historical narratives – a preoccupation of literary predecessors such as Wilson Harris, Derek Walcott and Caryl Philips. Moreover, Hopkinson's work centres women characters that have been maligned in Euro/androcentric historical discourse, a feat that places her work in discursive dialogue with Caribbean feminist historians and her literary mothers about the importance of alternative sources of knowledge and feminine perspectives on history.

The impact of slavery and colonialism on Caribbean historiography remains a preoccupation of many Caribbean writers. As Simon Gikandi states, "African slaves in the New World were denied their history as a precondition for enslavement; to claim subjectivity they had to struggle for their essential

historicity" (Gikandi 1992, 6). Often, this preoccupation is with the absence of marginalised peoples from dominant historical discourses and there is discursive engagement with these absences and erasures in an attempt at recovery.

Strategies for historical reclamation have taken many forms. Notably, where women are concerned, these strategies have involved feminist re-visions of historical narratives to account for these absences, and the focalisation of alternative histories that emerge from this shift in historical scrutiny. For example, Shepherd et al. describe methods of correcting discursive historical imbalances, as including: "cataloguing historical areas of neglect and female oppression", writing "biographies of outstanding women", narrating "histories of women's contribution to political struggles like slave resistance", and adopting "a more descriptive and compensatory approach in this reconstruction of historical knowledge" (Shepherd et al. 1995, xii). Furthermore, some writers of women's histories "went a step further and began to look for ways to include a type of analysis which had been omitted from historical discourse which would produce a feminist standpoint and therefore a better picture of reality" (Shepherd et al. 1995, xii).

From a Caribbean perspective this call for the discursive deconstruction of history and for alternative sources is of critical import especially when we consider the fact that many of the historical sources on Caribbean women "utilised justificatory language, written as they were in a period when European colonisation efforts were at their zenith" (Shepherd et al. 1995, xiii). Further, "[t]hose written in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were often couched in the language of pro-slavery ideologues and were aimed at impeding the emancipation struggles on both sides of the Atlantic" (Shepherd et al. 1995, xiii). It is this apparent "complicity of academic forms of knowledge with institutions of power" (Hall 1995, 50) and its implied consequence of the historical misrepresentation of Caribbean women that underscores the need for alternative ways of perceiving and reckoning the past.

It is precisely this type of feminist re-evaluation that *The Salt Roads* offers, providing alternative ways of seeing and knowing characters such as François Makandal, Jeanne Duval, and St. Mary of Egypt. Hopkinson adopts a three-pronged approach in her re-evaluation. Firstly, she employs a non-linear narrative structure that transports the reader at random from pre-revolutionary St. Domingue to 19th century France, as well as to Egypt and Jerusalem around the fifth century. This strategy works to disrupt the fixed linearity associated with traditional historiography. Hopkinson is thus able to privilege multiple feminine perspectives that disrupt the projections of official narratives, and present readers with alternative experiences.

Secondly, her central narrator is the burgeoning consciousness of the polymorphous voudon deity Erzulie, who is drawn spontaneously to Duval in Paris, Meri in Egypt, and Mer on St. Domingue. Erzulie is an innocent often disoriented spirit and when she merges with the minds of the women in Hopkinson's narrative, she provides intimate insight into their experiences and centres their perspectives on significant moments and experiences that challenge and subvert the authority of official records.

Thirdly, Hopkinson's genre of choice is speculative fiction/fantasy, or SF, and this allows for a further layering of textual experimentation with ideas of history and historiography. Hopkinson's use of supernatural elements, imagining Erzulie as journeying through spiritual streams, means that her work enters into this discussion of historical representation of real historical figures from a discursive position of fantasy. It undoubtedly raises questions as to the suitability and relevance of *The Salt Roads* to a discussion of Caribbean history or historiography. Indeed as Lewis Call suggests, "if literature operates at the margins of history, then speculative fiction surely represents the margin of that margin" (Call 2005, 277), since realism/the realist novel retains a place of prominence within literary academia while speculative fiction has only recently started to gain academic legitimacy.

I submit that what Hopkinson achieves, from within the margins of history and within the margins of literature is, is a blurring of lines of demarcation between two categories of representation that are still considered discrete, despite works on postmodern historiography from scholars such as Hayden White, Linda Hutcheon and Amy Elias. Furthermore, as Shepherd et al. (1995) have indicated, privileging traditional colonialists' historical discourse may well mean ontological oblivion for Caribbean women subjects, thus it becomes the imperative of Caribbean women writers to engage with a range of recuperative strategies. Hopkinson is able to achieve this through the figure of Erzulie, whose random journeys in and out of the realm of spirits and the realm of official historical record, blur these spaces. Additionally, I borrow the concepts of the rhizome and line of flight, offered by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), and I contend that Hopkinson's use of Erzulie recalls the rhizomatic line of flight that acts as an exit route from a restrictive territorial or intellectual domain. Thus, Erzulie's ability to journey at random into the lives of these marginal women figures provides readers with the opportunity to journey into "dark spaces" of history, and to engage with Hopkinson's recuperative strategies as she trains our gaze towards other ways of seeing and knowing.

Theoretical framework

My theoretical approach is informed by the discussion of the rhizomatic line of flight offered by Deleuze and Guattari (1987).[1] In their theory of the rhizome, Deleuze and Guattari (D&G) offer an alternative to what they describe as the arborescent structuring of knowledge. They contend that a rhizome, a tuber that can randomly sprout shoots along an even plane and create unlikely linkages and associations, breaks free from arborescent boundaries through lines of flight. A line of flight is random, and establishes new and unlikely connections of thought and knowledge. It facilitates deterritorialisation and the possibility of multidimensional connectivity in contrast to the "tree or root which

plots point, fixes an order" (D&G, 7). Furthermore, for D&G a rhizome "ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles" (D&G, 7). Additionally, every rhizome "contains lines of segmentarity according to which it is stratified, territorialized, organized, signified, attributed, etc., as well as lines of deterritorialization down which it constantly flees" (D&G, 9). Lines of flight are routes for escape from restrictive modes of knowing to unexpected locations of knowledge. Lines of flight are also routes for hetero-connectivity between disparate sources of knowledge. To journey along these lines of flight is to embark on a form of nomadic travel through in-between spaces, to be in a persistent metamorphosis which empowers the subject with the capacity to deterritorialise stratified and/or binary spaces.

The ideas offered by Deleuze and Guattairi allow for a reading of Hopkinson's Erzulie that sees her acting as a deterritorialising agent in *The Salt Roads*. Her journeys are *ad hoc* and take us into moments that coincide with the official recording of these events and moments. However, her genesis from within the spiritual plane and the minds of a scattered and dispossessed African peoples and her polymorphous nature, means that she, in her being, is the antithesis of restrictive ideas of reading history. Indeed, as Dayan (1994) suggests, Erzulie seems especially suited as vessel for interrogating history since her associated rituals "store and re-interpret the past" and "articulate and embody a memory of slavery, intimacy, and revenge. She survives as the record of and habitation for women's experiences in the New World…[a] motive…for a specific kind of Caribbean history" (Dayan 1994, 10-11). Erzulie's polymorphous capabilities, her ability to transcend dichotomies, time, space and other boundaries, her capacity within the larger spiritual belief system of Voudun as a vessel for ignored local histories, provide Hopkinson with an effective vehicle for presenting alternative historical perspectives on figures named above. As a textual strategy, Erzulie becomes the line of flight from restrictive and exclusionary historical modes of seeing and knowing the past.

My reading of *The Salt Roads* will thus be informed by concepts of line of flight and journeying into what McHale (1987) describes the 'dark areas' of history. Dark areas, according to McHale, are "those aspects about which 'official' record has nothing to report", and it is within these dark areas that the traditional "historical novelist is permitted a relatively free hand…the 'dark areas' are normally the times and places where real-world and purely fictional characters interact in 'classic' historical fiction" (McHale, 87). An example of how this works is where "[s]ome historical novels treat the interior life of the historical figures as dark areas – logically enough since the 'official' historical record cannot report what went on *inside* a historical figure without fictionalizing to some extent" (McHale, 87). In my use of the terms 'official historical records' and 'line of flight' I am treating official historical records as the stratified space. Official historical records construct specific types of knowledge of the lives of Caribbean subjects from positions of discursive power within Western scholarship, which often lead to omissions and erasures of Caribbean subjects and their perspectives. I am also arguing that my analysis of *The Salt Roads* will demonstrate that Hopkinson's strategic use of Erzulie serves as a line of flight from restrictive modes of knowing and that takes us into the dark spaces of history. In critiquing *The Salt Roads*, I will demonstrate how Hopkinson employs creative strategies that feminist historians have advocated, the effect of which is to provide us with other ways of seeing and knowing significant historical figures.

Jeanne Duval

As stated earlier Hopkinson's text centres the lives of three women, Jeanne Duval, St. Mary of Egypt or Meri, and Mer, and each of these women has experienced varying degrees of historical erasures. In Duval's case, her erasure occurs through Baudelaire's poetry, his letters and Western scholarship. Firstly, although the inspiration for the group of poems designated "The Duval Cycle" in *Les Fleurs du Mal*, Duval is objectified and exoticised in Baudelaire's poetic

language. Examples of these works include "Le Serpent qui danse", where Duval is described as "indolent", having "eyes where nothing is revealed" and a walk that is "[b]eautifully dissolute", in which Baudelaire sees "a serpent dance before a wand and flute." She is also described as having a "lithe body", which "bends and stretches/Like a splendid barque/ That rolls from side to side and wets/ With seas its tipping yards" (Baudelaire 1998, 56, 59).[2] The animal imagery of the dancing serpent is echoed in "Le Chat", which opens as the poet's homage to his beloved feline companion: "Come my fine cat, to my amorous heart;/ Please let our claws be concealed./ And let me plunge into your beautiful eyes,/ Coalescence of agate and steel" (71), and seamlessly shifts to an analogous description of Duval, who is described as having a cold regard, much like the cat,s that "splits like a spear" (71). Further, in "Parfum exotique" Baudelaire is transported by the warm scent of Duval's breast to "inviting shorelines" of an "idle isle", where there are "charming shores" and "verdant tamarind's enchanting scent", that fill his nostrils and swirls to his brain, where "[m]en who are lean and vigorous and free", and the women's "frank eyes are astonishing,"(Baudelaire, 49). In "La Chevelure, the sight and scent of Duval's long tresses conjure images for the poet of "Languorous Asia and scorching Africa", of a "whole world distant, vacant, nearly dead" (Baudelaire, 51). Duval inspires a slew of powerful images in "Sed non satiate."[3] She is the "[s]ingular goddess, brown as night, and wild," the "[w]ork of some Faust, some wizard of the dusk/ Ebony sorceress, black midnight's child," a "heartless demon!" and his "Megaera"[4] whose nerve he cannot break nor bring to her knees (Baudelaire, 55).

Having read these poems, the reader is left with a grotesque montage of goddesses and furies, demons and sorcerers, temptresses and concubines, tamed, exotic and dangerous animals, faraway places with strong olfactory appeal, a shape-shifting incongruity, a morally ambivalent construct that is anything but human – all intertwined with Baudelaire's beautifully eloquent poetic language. Indeed, as Munford (2004, 6) states: "Baudelaire's is an aesthetic of exclusion that, grounded in the *metaphorisation* of femininity, exiles the female subject from history and being".

Most accounts of the Duval/Baudelaire relationship reach us through letters written by Baudelaire to his mother. They detail a complex and often abusive love affair – a cycle of disagreements and tenuous reconciliation. In one letter dated March 27 1852, Baudelaire describes Duval as being a "creature who shows no gratitude…who frustrates every effort with her continual negligence or malevolence…with whom it is impossible to talk politics or literature, a creature who wishes to learn nothing…a creature who does not admire [him], who even shows no interest in [his] studies" (Pichois and Ziegler 1991, 198-199). Duval, although the inspiration for his poetry, is paradoxically presented as a sterile influence in the life of the poet, and is also depicted as an evil presence, sub-human in her incapacity to discuss politics and literature and in her apparent unwillingness to learn. The letters underscore the ahistorical treatment that Duval has received. Her anti-intellectual attitude consistently pits her against Baudelaire's superior intellect, being a man of letters, and she is seen as a space void of any significant knowledge of her own.

Finally, Duval has also suffered at the hands of Eurocentric academic scholarship that has perpetuated Baudelaire's account of their relationship, and has remained on the surface where interrogating the implications of Baudelairean/ European poetic gaze on the body of a black woman is concerned. For example, McGowan's notes on the Duval Cycle describe Duval as a "mulatto actress, and sometime prostitute Baudelaire first mentions in a letter of 1843…[who]… was by no means [his] intellectual equal and cared little for his poetry, but her body and her temperament fascinated the poet" (McGowan 1998, 358). Duval, as McGowan's brief note depicts, is treated as though she has no history prior to 1843, and is uncultured and unlearned in her lack of appreciation for Baudelaire's poetry despite often being its object. Hyslop (1980) describes Duval's presence/absence in these poems as "a mere abstraction, a means to an end, a way of evoking dreams of the distant past" (Hyslop, 168). Richardson (1994) details the many and often contradictory tales that have emerged about Duval's origins, none of which shed any light on her age or her ancestry, which leads to the conclusion made by Carter that

"[n]obody seems to know in what year Jeanne Duval was born, although the year in which she met Charles Baudelaire (1842) is precisely logged" (Carter 1985, 12).

Carter herself would have written about Duval's representation in Baudelaire's poetry. Her short story, "The Black Venus", represents the earliest written feminist satirical critique of the relationship between Baudelaire and Duval and the manner in which she is presented in his poetry. However, while Carter's "Venus" focalises Duval, there is still considerable distance between the reader and Duval, arising from Carter's use of the third person narrative perspective. Additionally, Carter's "Venus" does little to present Duval with any form of historical or cultural background, inverting the gaze only within the parameters of Baudelaire's poetry. As such, at the end of Carter's treatment, Duval remains incomplete in her personhood, even as she is an effective satirical tool for Carter's feminist critique of Baudelaire.

The tri-factor of Baudelaire's poetry, letters and the academic scholarship focused on his life and work, has left Duval devoid of history and heritage. Hopkinson's strategies for retrieving Duval from the ontological abyss include privileging her perspective and voice and merging her with mind and soul with Erzulie. What Hopkinson achieves with her treatment of Duval is an inversion of the historical gaze. She re-presents Duval's story in the first person, and gives the reader access to her experiences as a woman of colour in mid-nineteenth century Paris. Hopkinson also merges Erzulie with Duval at pivotal moments in the text. These moments serve to both further humanise her as well as provide her with a history, a heritage that subverts the anti-intellectual, ahistorical treatment she receives in Baudelaire's poetry, letters and the scholarship spawned by both.

One such occasion, which Hopkinson appropriately introduces with the word "Sister", Erzulie is drawn to Duval in a moment invoked by music:

> I find my way fully into the world! It only takes a minute of Jeanne's inattention. Music is the key, it seems; flowing as rivers do, beating like the wash of her blood in her body. Jeanne is helping me too, unawares; by humming. She doesn't even know what the words of the tune mean. She just tries to say them as she has heard her grandmother hum them. That tune is how her grandmother entreats her gods... It pulls at me, that music. The rhythms take Jeanne's thoughts, drown them for a time in their flood. And suddenly I am finally master of her body... I have Jeanne get to her feet she never once protests. She never once protests. Her floating mind, caught by the rhythm, isn't aware that it is being swept away. Still we hum. That chant! Beat, beat. My feet move in time. I let her throat continue the song. Now there are words coming from her lips. I dance. My torso falls forward, catches and holds the beat, parallel to the floor. Jerks upright again....A pox on all this cloth! I catch at it, tear it away with our hands. By herself, Jeanne is not so strong as to shred heavy silks. I am. The gown pools in rags at my feet. The stays are next, and the pins that hold our hair. Stamp. Sway. Jerk towards the floor. Then up. Again. Feel air on our flesh, cool and sweet as rain. The pounding of blood in our ears comes in waves, crashing against our senses. My hands reach for our breasts, ripe as plums. I hold them, weigh them in my palms, thrust them forth as offerings. To whom, to whom? (*The Salt Roads* 116-117)[5]

This example of intimate merger of subject and deity (or Sisters as Hopkinson's naming may lead us to infer) energised by music from Duval's ancestry, connects her to a heritage shared with the Ginen who are now enslaved on the island of Saint Domingue and with Africa. Erzulie serves to retrieve Duval's lost history and her connection with Duval immerses the reader into a heritage that has not been presented heretofore. Erzulie is acting here as a line of flight, taking Duval out of the domain of Western discourse that has delimited her existence.

The episode develops further and Hopkinson details Duval's/Erzulie's dance as the deity is reeled back into the mind of her original host:

> I stamp out the steps of the dance – yet there is a rug beneath my feet again. Toss my head – and behold once more the somber furnishings of Charles's apartments. Oh, oh; Jeanne is reeling me back in. I am back in her apartments, in her head.
>
> He is watching; the Charles man. I glance at him with Jeanne's eyes, yet she does not perceive him. She is caught up still in her own dance. Charles's face, shocked, is even whiter than its usual pallour. His mouth gapes. Wonder makes his visage ugly, slack.
>
> But I care nothing for that. I wish to be free! Jeanne and I thump with our heels, toss our torso towards the earth, thrust back with our hips. We shake our shoulders. And still I offer our breasts, promise their juices to someone, something, not him. (*The Salt Roads* 123-124)

At the end of this scene, Erzulie is battling to free herself from Jeanne's body to return to the people of Saint Domingue, with whom she wishes to share her knowledge and for whom she wishes to dance. However, she loses this battle and is subsumed as Jeanne emerges from her trance.

Several observations can be made from this excerpt; firstly, as Hopkinson returns the gaze to Duval, the reader observes that she is scarcely aware of Baudelaire's presence – his importance is relegated to the periphery of her consciousness. Additionally, in Duval/Erzulie's eyes, Baudelaire appears grotesque and weak, his pallor and slack visage an unpoetic inversion of the tropical spaces created in poems such as "Parfum exotique" and "Chevelure." Furthermore, the physicality of the dance, a sensuous and vibrant homage to her gods, an expression of worship, parodies and supplants the vacant female body described in "Les Bijoux" and "Le Serpent qui danse". Indeed, we see that Baudelaire, in awe of the dance, immediately reduces the depth and scale of Duval/Erzulie's experience, the intensity of which is shared with the reader, to an

almost mundane simile in his comment: "Such grace. Like a snake. So sinuous." (125) – the birthing of "Le Serpent qui danse".

What Hopkinson achieves in *The Salt Roads,* as this example demonstrates, is an effectual re-vision of Duval that undermines the authority and potency of Baudelaire's poetic gaze. Through the important and effective medium of Erzulie, Hopkinson suggests that Baudelaire's perception of Duval (and by extension, Western scholarship generated by his letters and his poetry) is limited. She presents Duval with a multidimensional personhood, history and heritage that she is denied through Baudelaire's letters and the subsequent scholarship.

St. Mary of Egypt

Hopkinson's treatment of Duval is echoed in her presentation of Saint Mary of Egypt. Like Duval, St. Mary of Egypt, perceived through the male gaze, is an obscure site of moral decadence, living solely for lustful escapades, hence her occupation as a prostitute in Alexandria. The stories surrounding the Dusky Saint detail a miraculous transformation from prostitute to penitent; wandering the deserts of Jordan and being struck down by a vision of the Virgin Mary, (her antithesis on the scale of virtue) inspiring "extraordinary devotion of Catholics over the Mediterranean" (Cruz-Sáenz 1979, 10).

The primary source of information on the life of the Dusky Saint is the account detailed by Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem and dates from the second half of the fifth century. Like Duval, the Dusky Saint's origins are also mired in obscurity. As Cruz-Sáenz states, the legend was composed from three probable sources. The general outline was copied by Sophronius from the life of Saint Paul the hermit written by Saint Jerome. The character of Mary probably came from a story of another Mary, a singer who became an anchoress and survived miraculously for eighteen years in the desert. The tale also appears to have

been adopted from the life of Saint Cyriacus (d. 556) written by Saint Cyril of Scythopolis. A third source, according to Delmas, was another adaptation of the story of Cyril of Scythopolis which is found in chapter 179 of the *Pratum Spirituale* by John Moschus. Long quotations from a developed legend of Saint Mary of Egypt are also included without reference to the sources in the mid-eight century work of Saint John Damascene (Cruz-Sáenz 11-12). What we glean from Cruz-Sáenz's statement, is that there are several existing accounts of the life of the Dusky Saint which have undergone several adaptations and alterations, and that portions of the Saint's life have appeared at various eras in history. What is also notable is that the authors of her story are predominantly men. Seen in this light, Saint Mary of Egypt thus strikes a figure comparable with Jeanne Duval in that the records that reach us about her life are male-authored and are weighted heavily with the patriarchal gaze.

The story of the Dusky Saint, whenever it has been recounted, has focused on three crucial moments. The first focuses on a young monk's (Zozimus) initial encounter with the Dusky Saint where, although the story is named after the Egyptian penitent, it is the young monk's journey and his experiences that take precedence. When he first encounters her she appears ill-defined, "in the likeness of a human" (Skeat 1890, 13), but more akin to a delusion of an evil spirit against whom he must protect himself. The second moment focuses on her life as a child slave in Alexandria and her journey to Jerusalem. As told in Aelfric's life of Saints, St. Mary of Egypt had a family and home in Egypt and, after turning twelve, began despising their love and ran away to Alexandria, where she committed sins of a sexual nature, making herself the "vessel of election by the devil himself" (Skeat, 23). The third feature of the legend of the Saint focuses on her encounter with the Virgin Mary. According to Aelfric, Mary of Egypt was attempting to enter a church but was prevented by the 'divine might' due to her grave sins. She breaks down and weeps and it is at that moment that the Virgin Mary appears, eliciting feelings of repentance, and she crosses the river Jordan and spends 47 years in the wilderness as penance.

Hopkinson's version of St. Mary's life offers an inversion of the original recorded texts. Hopkinson firstly names the penitent Meri (also Thais and Meritet), and in so doing begins to construct her identity independent of the sacred texts. Then, through merging Meri with Erzulie, she connects her with a larger heritage, providing her with a more nuanced origin.

Hopkinson's presentation of Meri's childhood also challenges the way the penitent has been presented in the sacred texts. We learn that she was a slave in the house of Tausiris and was forced into slavery by her Nubian mother. Here, Hopkinson's narrative of a girl sold into prostitution challenges the idea of young Mary being driven by lust. Perhaps the most significant moment in the life of the saint is her encounter with the Virgin Mary in Jerusalem. In Hopkinson's version Erzulie's possession of Meri drives her unconsciously towards the Holy City. Erzulie has detected a susurrus in the spiritual ether and while joined with Meri, reveals intimate detail about the real state of her condition.

Hopkinson's Meri is also driven to Jerusalem through her desire to find the young sailor Antoniou for whom she is pregnant. As with Duval, it is through her merger with Erzulie that we are able to intimately understand Meri's, or Thais's, condition and what happens to her as she attempts to enter the church:

> It felt like hours before we got to the church. A long, long time of walking. I don't remember the journey too clearly any more, just that I hurt and Judah kept asking me if wanted to stop.
>
> But I am determined that we keep going. Something is wrong with this Thais. Something has grown in her that is making her sick. If she dies, if her dying throws me out of her as Jeanne's did, who knows where I'll be tossed to? Then maybe I won't get to find out what that susurrus is in the aether. I nudge Thais to keep walking. She's strong and young, and she wants

> to see Aelia Capitolina badly too. So she keeps on for my sake, for hers. (*The Salt Roads* 299)

Erzulie senses, and thus communicates to the reader, that something is amiss with Meri's pregnancy, but as the deity is dependent on her subject's body, she urges her forward. Things get progressively worse as they approach the Church of the Sepulchre. Meri is struck by pain as she enters the church and collapses: "Something tore loose in my belly and I screamed. I felt hot liquid rush from between my legs" (*The Salt Roads* 301). She passes out from this pain and Erzulie experiences the impact of the miscarriage as well:

> I tear loose from Thais, as the little dot of cells tears away from her too. I'm tumbling, no control. That would have been a child, that thing growing in Thais. As I am a child in this spirit world. I don't learn fast enough. It didn't learn fast enough how to stick in Thais's belly. (*The Salt Roads* 303)

The deity's merger with Meri serves once more to reveal to the reader a story of greater profundity than what is offered in historical records, an alternative history of a woman who, like Jeanne Duval, has had her body and her personhood serve as mere metaphoric abstraction for the purposes of patriarchal discourse. In Hopkinson's account, Meri's desires, drive and her experiences are, like Jeanne Duval's, outside the scope of the sacred texts. Once more Hopkinson's use of Erzulie as an insightful device, a line of flight into these dark areas of history, these areas that have been created by the erasures and obscuring tactics of patriarchal discourses. Reading Hopkinson's text in this manner places it in a polemical discussion with the texts that have been accepted as official historical records, a discussion which reveals the limitations of these records. Hopkinson's use of Erzulie as a device for the exploration of these dark histories links the stories of these women from different eras. Reading this connection as rhizomatic and its consequent re-visioning of historical records, then sees Erzulie

as taking the reader on an exit route, a line of flight from the official accounts of the lives of Duval and the Dusky Saint.

Mer of St. Domingue

Erzulie is also drawn to Mer, a slave woman on the island of Saint Domingue, and the reader is given an up-close view of the life on plantations just prior to the Francois Makandal uprising, the first major anti-slavery movement in the island's history. In Haitian history and folklore, Makandal stands as a formidable figure of resistance. Born in Guinea, Makandal was brought up in an illustrious family who educated him in the ways of Islam and the Arabic language. He was exposed to various arts, and had "acquired a considerable knowledge of tropical medicine" (Fick 1990, 60) – a knowledge that would prove most useful in his plot against the planters on Saint Domingue. He was also a practicing Voudun priest. Makandal persuaded and mobilised hundreds of slaves from different plantations, as well as fellow maroons, to implement his poison plot against the white plantation owners and he was able to do so by convincing "many a slave that it was he whom the Creator had sent to carry out the destruction of the whites and to liberate his people" (Fick, 61).

Makandal's plot represented a concerted effort to overthrow the white regime and elevate the blacks as new masters of Saint Domingue. However, his attempt was unsuccessful and Fick's record of the moment of Makandal's betrayal sees him as being on the one hand "denounced by a slave, (or by several slaves) while attending a calenda on the Dufresne plantation in Limbé" (Fick 1990, 292, note 86). Another account of particular interest sees him being given up by a female slave who, upon torture and despite the threats of eternal damnation by a Jesuit priest who supported the cause of the slaves, provided the means which led to his capture.[6]

The most spectacular account of Makandal's existence remains the story of his death. He had convinced his followers that he was immortal and that it would be impossible for the whites to kill him if they ever captured him since he would transform himself into a mosquito and escape only to return even more formidable.

His ability to assume the shape of animals is featured in Hopkinson's text. This feature of Makandal's personality, combined with his knowledge of tropical remedies, his understanding of the race relations on the island, his position as priest as well as his charisma, cement his place in Haitian history and folk beliefs. His influence is especially evident within the oral folk traditions, as he is remembered long after he had been captured and burned at the stake by the whites.

It is into this pre-revolutionary scenario that Hopkinson inserts Mer, slave woman and healer, a fictional character. This narrative ploy shifts the focus from the dynamic and legendary Makandal to an ordinary slave woman, whose perspective offers a unique view of the hero and the events leading to the failure of the poison plot. Through Mer's eyes, and later through Erzulie's, we see Makandal not as the charismatic leader of folk legend, but rather as a ruthless, merciless leader who would endanger the lives of his fellow Ginen (Hopping John for example) if he felt them a threat to his plot. It is interesting to note the dualities at play between the two characters. Both Mer and Makandal possess knowledge of herbs and other medicines, each putting this knowledge to very different use – the former for healing and the latter for harming. Her role as a healer brings her closer to the Ginen as she is called upon to repair the damage that Makandal has caused. Mer does not trust Makandal and her perspective casts Makandal in an unsympathetic light.

Mer is also presented as Makandal's spiritual superior as she is in contact with the lwas, the gods of the Ginen, in particular La Siren, who instruct her, but refuse to speak to him, undermining his claim to spiritual authority. We learn through Mer's

first person account that Makandal is guilty of hubris, for thinking that "if the Powers didn't act in a way that made sense to him, well then he must make himself one of them and do the job he wanted them to do. Yes, he thought he knew best. That couldn't be right" (*The Salt Roads* 69).

From Mer's perspective we see a diminished Makandal, whose desire to elevate himself has angered the gods and they, as punishment, have distanced themselves from him. The fact that they speak to Mer elevates her as a holder of ancestral knowledge. She is more connected with the Ginen and the lwas than Makandal, and Makandal's hubris, as revealed through Mer, complicates the image of the larger–than-life folk hero as he has been presented in historical records.

Hopkinson's treatment of this aspect of Haitian history merits a closer inspection. She has provided us with a fictional character, a humble woman healer, whose first person perspective she privileges and through whom the reader perceives a real figure of historical import. Thus, instead of adopting the 'great man of history' approach, an approach that often pervades mainstream historical scholarship about the Haitian revolution, Hopkinson centres the ordinary woman citizen.

She also introduces the supernatural element in the retelling of Makandal's rebellion, this time in the form of both Erzulie and Ogu(n). In the Yoruba pantheon and within its Caribbean permutations such as Voudun and Santeria, Ogu(n) is an Orisha of nuanced paradoxes (Curry 1997, 68). He is the "Orisha of Iron", the "embodiment of violence and creativity and yet the soul of complete integrity. He is a hero, an artist and a poet" (Curry, 68). Makandal shares similarities with Ogu, and the scene where Hopkinson invokes a second deity in her historical re-telling of the events surrounding Makandal's demise, sees a contest between Erzulie and Ogu manifesting through Mer and Makandal – a battle of wills between two deities for the destiny of their people:

> He is like me, Makandal's rider…Ogu, they call this one. I call him usurper. Outrage fills me, but no time, no time! This battle is happening in the mortal world of time, and time is flowing away, like water poured on desert sands. Ogu is pitched for battle. Makandal wouldn't listen to Mer my horse, but in the many flowing strands of the Ginen's story, I could see a thing I could do. Mer could warn the slaves in the great house of the fire. She could protect those my people. And she could mislead the whites, send them away from this bush meeting. She could take me to them, and I could beguile them as I had before…I turn Mer's body to run, tumble, flow through the bush to the great house, to save, to save. (*The Salt Roads* 326)

In her depiction of a pivotal moment in Haitian history, Hopkinson demonstrates the contest between two Powers of the Ginen with differing agendas for the future of their people. Erzulie sees the destructive potential of the Ogu/ Makandal pairing and is concerned for the well being of the people. She conceives of a bloodless alternative to Makandal's destructive plot. Makandal, possessed by a warrior god, and his own hubris, would not listen to lowly Mer and would be indiscriminate in executing his plot. Seeking to curb the destructive potential, Erzulie possesses Mer but Mer is subdued by the Ginen, and Makandal/Ogu proceeds to exact revenge on her for "talking Ginen business":

> Ogu in Makandal's body used his good hand to draw my tongue out from my mouth. Then, smiling, he used the arm that was not there and sliced the spirit machète across my tongue. Pain exploded like light in my head. I tried to scream, but with no air in my chest, it came out a gurgle. (*The Salt Roads,* 330)

This act of violence, which leads to Mer becoming mute, may also be read as a symbolic silencing of a woman's version of history, when we consider Mer's

knowledge of the gods, Makandal's hubris and the contesting agendas of Erzulie and Ogu. The violence may also be read as a rejection of a feminine perspective or role in shaping the destiny of a nation.

Through the encounter between Erzulie and Ogu, Hopkinson revises the figure of Makandal. In the same way as when she is paired with Jeanne Duval and Meri, Erzulie takes the reader beyond the official records which, though they acknowledge the importance of Voudun in the life practices of Haitians and their journey from slavery to freedom, are unable to convey its full impact on worshipers.

Conclusion

Reading *The Salt Roads* through a rhizomatic lens, sees Erzulie as a source of knowledge that gives the reader privileged access to the consciousness of historically marginalised women. Erzulie's ability to journey at random (again a trait of the line of flight), from one consciousness to the other through different historical eras, links Jeanne Duval, Mer and Meri to their own ancestral heritage and allows their stories to be told from her perspective, with intimate detail. Hopkinson is thus able, through Erzulie, to delve into the lives of historical figures, such as Makandal, in ways that official historical accounts have not. Hopkinson's use of Erzulie in connecting three women from different historical eras centres their experiences and exemplifies some of the recuperative strategies that feminist historians, Shepherd et al. for instance, have described. Further, Erzulie's journeying through the ether – the smooth space outside the scope of oppressive structures of historical knowledge – connects her with an alternative ontology that is given prescience and presence. In so doing, Hopkinson's work participates in discursive discussions with her literary ancestors on the topic of Caribbean history and brings with it a distinct perspective where the treatment of women in history is concerned. Her work effectively and creatively re-vises

history from a subject position situated within the dark areas of slavery and colonialism.

[1] Deleuze and Guattari's corpus is expansive and continues to draw as many proponents as critics from diverse quarters. Significant criticism from Kaplan, Miller, Jardin, Badiou and Hallward argue that the theories are not very useful for any type of political engagement. On the other hand theorists such as Glissant, Braidotti, Grosz, Conley and Flieger offer routes for feminist and post-colonial engagement with D&G. My particular use of Deleuzeo-Guattarian thought is undertaken with Edward Baugh's (2004) reminder in mind "that all criticisms, and indeed, all theory is partial" and that "no word is ever final or complete." It does not set out to prove or disprove the political applicability of their work. More importantly, this article does not claim to offer an absolute way of reading *The Salt Roads*, but rather utilizes Deleuzeo-Guattarian line of flight in a non-doctrinaire manner.

[2] All references to and translations of Baudelaire poetry are quoted from the Oxford World Classics, *The Flowers of Evil,* translated with notes by James McGowan.

[3] This translates to "'but not satisfied'", a reference to the Roman poet Juvenal's description of the sexual appetite of Valeria Messalina, wife of the Emper

[4] Megaera is "one of the Furies, female divinities who live in the Underworld (Erebus) and punish human transgressors." (McGowan, 359)

[5] Immediately following, Erzulie is transported to a space outdoors, where there are black people everywhere doing varying tasks, wearing scraps of clothing. Where she sees not just African born, but white and mulatto faces, and where she is recognized in her spirit form and named "Ezili, or "the lady". (*The Salt Roads* 118-119). Erzulie recognizes this space as Saint Domingue.

[6] Karol K. Weaver (2006) offers another account of Makandal's capture, which sees the houngan being given up to the whites by a young slave boy and arrested at a kalenda or dance in the parish of Limbé (91).

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Women and Change in Hugo Chavez's Bolivarian Revolution

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Abstract

The election of President Hugo Chávez on December 6, 1998 was of great significance for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela as his victory signalled the end of Venezuela's legacy of exclusionary politics, to be replaced with a participatory and protagonistic democracy of the Bolivarian Revolution and twenty-first century socialism. The revolution, especially through the non-androcentric and inclusionary constitution of 1999, along with the creation of *misiones* (missions or social programmes), has thus created spaces for poor and working class Venezuelans – and in particular, women – to exercise a new sense of citizenship, rights, inclusion and newly politicised social roles. In this way, the revolution has largely benefitted poor and working class women and in return the revolution has been sustained.

The use of feminism as a popular tool of the state has also allowed for not only the creation of this new Bolivarian state but these have also greatly impacted the process of change for Venezuelan women and especially in the relationships of poorer women with the Bolivarian state, Chávez and what appears to be a polarised feminist movement. As such, certain contradictions exist thereby challenging the transformative potential of the revolution on the lives of poorer women.

Keywords: Bolivarian revolution; Chávez; feminism; Venezuela; women.

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Introduction

This article, part of a larger study, examines how poor and working class women were regarded in the political, economic and social processes of the late President Hugo Chávez's Bolivarian revolution and twenty-first century socialism in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. By interrogating the relationships among the Bolivarian state, President Chávez, the feminist movement and poorer women, the following paper is an analysis of the process of change in the lives of women as guided by these aforementioned relationships. This is essential given what appeared to be the institutionalisation of the interests of poor and working class women within the country's enabling legal framework, policies, state institutions and programmes. Furthermore, in the words of Chowdhury (2008, 11), President Chávez, through such institutionalisation, nurtured women as a constituency. Additionally, the use of feminism as a popular tool of the state had increased support of Chávez and the revolution particularly among poorer women.

Therefore an analysis of the lives of poorer women during the time of Chávez and the revolution is guided by an understanding that "gender affects and is affected by revolutionary processes in many ways" (Moghadam 1997, 133-134) and furthermore by Barriteau's (1998) theorising of gender relations. Barriteau (1998, 190) reminds:

> We fail to view economic or political relations between women and men and the state, or women and the state as also relations of gender. Instead discussions of gender are often confined to the private sphere. This reflects a deep seated desire to view relations of gender as outside the scope of state's relations with its citizens.

Such an understanding therefore necessitates an analysis of gender and gender relations and how President Chávez, through a revolutionary process which has championed the cause of the poor and the previously excluded, had also

sought to construct and reconstruct masculinities and femininities, and therefore gender relations, so as to place poor and working class women as central to the Bolivarian revolution. An understanding of the political history of Venezuela prior to the election of President Chávez is also of extreme importance. It must be understood that the Venezuelan people were eager for a new politics, given years of exclusionary politics coupled with the periods of oil boom and oil bust and the period of *Puntofijismo* - a consolidation of political hegemony by major political parties after the signing of the Pact of Punto Fijo on October 31, 1958 - which relied heavily on oil revenues and furthered the country's unequal distribution of wealth - leading to the election of President Chávez in 1998.

The election of Chávez on December 6, 1998 thus signalled a new emergence of left-leaning leaders in Latin America. During his first term in office, he called for constitutional reform and through wide support in a referendum election which was held on July 25, 1999, a new constitution was adopted in December 1999 replacing the country's 1961 constitution. Chavez was re-elected on July 30, 2000 - the first election under the new constitution - and on December 3, 2006 he announced that those parties which had supported him would unite to form one single party - *Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela* (PSUV, United Socialist Party of Venezuela). Chávez would then be re-elected again in 2012, although to a lessening popular vote.

It can be argued that the Bolivarian revolution started in 1999 with the adoption of a new constitution, which, among other things, renamed the nation-state the *Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela* in honour of the great Latin American revolutionary hero Simon Bolívar and also enshrined pivotal rights for Venezuelan women; however, it would be six years into his presidency until Chávez declared his socialist programme for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Thus at the World Social Forum held in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2005, President Chávez explained that this socialism is "a new type of socialism, a humanist one, which puts humans and not machines or the state ahead of everything" (Soto 2005). Termed 'twenty-first century socialism,' according to Chávez it is based on

solidarity, fraternity, love, justice, liberty and equality (Wilpert 2007, 5). It was stressed as a real alternative to state socialism, and more importantly, neo-liberalism due to its promotion of protagonistic and participatory democracy, and a less state-centered political and economic development model which privileges cooperativism, collective property and social equality. As such, the ideals of twenty-first century socialism quickly gained momentum as part of Venezuela's Bolivarian revolution.

President Chávez's Bolivarian revolution and the endogenous development which it promotes put forth a political, economic and social development process which seeks to empower the Venezuelan people through their communities and existing capacities and resources. Wilpert (2007, 69) however admits that while it is "developing in the right direction," there exist certain "internal contradictions" with regard to Chávez's economic and development policy. The Bolivarian state operates within an essentially capitalist global economy especially through its export of petroleum. In this way, it is able to fund the revolution's social programmes.

Also, in aiming to create *una economía social*[1] through the promotion of cooperatives, micro-enterprises and micro-credit programmes and further wealth re-distribution policies and social programmes or *misiones*, poor and working class women have figured greatly in the development process. Within a region with the worst income distribution in the world, differential salaries for men and women in the informal sector and historically high poverty rates of between 50 and 54 percent for female-headed households in Venezuela (Paredes 2005, 19; UN 2010, 161), women's interests have been institutionalised as a means to combat such issues and also to lift women out of poverty. Further, on January 30, 2009 at the World Social Forum in Belém, Brazil, on speaking about his socialist vision, President Chávez announced "true socialism is feminist" (Osava 2009), and in so doing, feminism became a popular tool of the Bolivarian state thereby further including women into the processes of the revolution. The Bolivarian revolution under Chávez therefore presents a moment not only for examining

the process of change in the lives of poorer women, but also the new opportunities which have been made available by the revolution and twenty-first century socialism.

Theoretical Perspective

The question as to the processes of change in the lives of women in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela under President Chávez and the Bolivarian Revolution is intrinsically a study of power relations and the inherent gender relations which exist. Moghadam (1997, 135) reminds that "[a]s revolutions entail constructions of national identity, reorganizations of production, and reformulations of (social) reproduction, class, ethnicity, and [especially] gender all figure prominently". As such, this research advances a theoretical analysis of the gendered nature of the Bolivarian revolution given the context of a masculine, "feminist" political leader, a masculinist state and a gender system organised by patriarchy and which therefore privileges masculinity. Barriteau (2003, 5) theorises that "power relations underwrite and complicate all relations of gender." Thus, because feminist epistemology mediates and constitutes how power relations are negotiated, it then becomes crucial that this study is planted firmly in feminist theorising. In taking a feminist epistemological and methodological approach, feminist theorising is at the core of this study.

Methodological Approach

This article speaks to some of the findings of a larger qualitative research project on gender and the Bolivarian revolution in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela under President Chávez for which the following research methods were used. A mixed methods qualitative approach comprised of textual and discourse analysis, in-depth and semi-structured interviews and participant and non-participant

observation. Field research was conducted during four visits to Venezuela between April 2010 and December 2012. Research was situated in two cities: Caracas - the capital and largest city in Venezuela and Mérida in Mérida State, the principal city of the Venezuelan Andes. A total of seventy interviews were conducted with women in both cities. The selection of interviewees or research participants was done through purposive and convenience sampling. Given that the main research question enquires into the lives of poorer women, the sampling was "based on a specific purpose rather than randomly" (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003, 713). The voices of poor and working class women are thus privileged and the selection of interviewees or research participants was guided by the March 2008 socioeconomic stratification data provided by *Datanálisis*. Quantitative data from *BanMujer*; *Instituto Nacional de Estadística de Venezuela* (INE, National Statistical Office of Venezuela); *Centro de Estudios de la Mujer* (CEM, Centre for Women Studies); and the UN Women field office in Caracas were also utilised. It must be noted, however, that not all the data was disaggregated by sex.

Twenty-First Century Socialism – Gains for Women

"True socialism is feminist." These were the words stated by President Chávez on January 30, 2009 at the World Social Forum in Belém, Brazil. Speaking on his vision of twenty-first century socialism for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, President Chávez sought to emphasise the importance of gender and women's rights in the success of his socialist agenda. However, in determining how poorer women fare in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela given the political, economic and social policies and other reforms which seek to address the inequality and poverty that many marginalised Venezuelans faced before Chávez was elected, I examined the following programmes of the Bolivarian revolution and twenty-first century socialism and their impact on especially poorer women: constitutional reform; cooperatives and micro-credit programmes; and *misiones* or social missions.

Constitutional Reform

In December 1999, the new Bolivarian Constitution was approved in a national vote by an overwhelming majority - 71.78 percent of voters. Several articles in the constitution provide pivotal women's rights provisions. Article 21 for example states:

> All persons are equal before the law, and, consequently:
>
> 1. No discrimination based on race, sex, creed or social standing shall be permitted, nor, in general, any discrimination with the intent or effect of nullifying or encroaching upon the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on equal terms, of the rights and liberties of every individual.
>
> 2. The law shall guarantee legal and administrative conditions such as to make equality before the law real and effective manner; shall adopt affirmative measures for the benefit of any group that is discriminated against, marginalized or vulnerable; shall protect in particular those persons who, because of any of the aforementioned circumstances, are in a manifestly weak position; and shall punish those who abuse or mistreat such persons.

The Venezuelan constitution is also unique in its recognition of women's reproductive work in the household. Article 88 states:

> The State guarantees the equality and equitable treatment of men and women in the exercise of the right to work. The state recognizes work at home as an economic activity that creates added value and produces social welfare and wealth. Housewives are entitled to Social Security in accordance with law.

Misión Madres del Barrio provides poor mothers with a monthly stipend which is equivalent to 80 percent of the minimum wage. Article 75 makes provisions for the "protection to the mother, father or other person acting as head of a household." Also, Article 76 states:

> ...The State guarantees overall assistance and protection for motherhood, in general, from the moment of conception, throughout pregnancy, delivery and the puerperal period, and guarantees full family planning services based on ethical and scientific values...

Motherhood is thus protected from the point of conception and in this way, pre-natal care is guaranteed according to Wilpert (2003). It must be noted, however, that in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, abortion is only legal if it is necessary to preserve the life of the mother. In cases such as rape, incest, economic reasons, the preservation of the mother's mental state or birth defects of the fetus, abortion is illegal as provided in the Criminal Code of June 2, 1964. Conversely, "…the Code of Medical Ethics of 1971 authorizes an abortion to be performed for 'therapeutic purposes,' although it does not define what therapeutic purposes are."[2]

Cooperatives and Microcredit Programmes

Cooperatives and micro-credit programmes go hand in hand. Harnecker (2005) explains that in 1998 there were only 762 cooperatives in Venezuela. However, by August 2005, the *Superintendencia Nacional de Cooperativas* (National Superintendence of Cooperatives- SUNACOOP) had registered a total of 83,769 cooperatives. Wilpert (2007, 77-78) also states that the number of people in cooperatives has also increased - from approximately 200,000 in 1998 to over one million in 2005 (78).[3] Cooperatives have thus been able to promote employment in Venezuela with over 16 percent of formally employed

Venezuelans being employed in a cooperative. The success of cooperatives is due mostly to their promotion and protection by the state and the constitution. While data on cooperatives is not sex-disaggregated, Domínguez (2007) argues, "here again, women have been the chief beneficiaries, because cooperatives provide a flexible source of employment and income, thereby creating the conditions for women's financial autonomy."

Misiones

Upon his election, President Chávez also introduced *misiones* – poverty alleviation social programmes which also provide social services to Venezuela's poor and marginalised. Hawkins et al. (2011) describes these social missions, which are financed through the country's oil revenues, as "one of the largest social funds implemented in Latin America over the past two decades" and "they thus represent a crucial component of the government's goal to create 'socialism of the twenty-first century'" (190).

Some of the more popular *misiones* deal with the issue of illiteracy and lack of access to education in the Venezuelan state. With the goal of eradicating illiteracy, *Misión Robinson* (literacy training) was founded on May 30, 2003 and decreed in July 2003 and *Misión Robinson II* (remedial primary education) was founded on October 28, 2003. As a result of these missions and according to the Venezuela Information Office, *Misión Robinson I* and *II* have resulted in an estimated 1.5 million Venezuelans becoming literate. Similarly, *Misión Ribas* was founded on November 17, 2003. This social programme provides remedial secondary education to citizens and it has resulted in 450,500 adults completing remedial high school. Notably, in 2005 the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela declared that the country was free from illiteracy (Márquez, 2006).

Misión Sucre was created on July 10, 2003 with the aim of decentralising university education. Administered by the Ministry of Higher Education, *Misión*

Sucre offers monthly need-based scholarships for attendance to a small number of universities. Also, with regard to job training, *Misión Ché Guevara* has resulted in 670,000 citizens receiving job training and business skills, forming 10,000 cooperative businesses.

According to Wilpert (2007, 142) however, one of the most important anti-poverty programmes is *Misión Mercal.* '*Mercal*' or *Mercado de Alimentos* (Food Market) was created on April, 22, 2003. The main objective of the *Misión Mercal* is "to contribute substantially to improving the nutritional status, health and quality of life of the Venezuelan population."[4] Thus, by providing food to the poor at a government-subsidised price through government-owned supermarkets which are placed under the Ministry of Nutrition, the programme has been able to increase the amount of food sold. With food being sold at a 25-50 percent discounted price, it was estimated that as of mid-2005 *Misión Mercal* provided food to 43 percent of the Venezuelan population (Wilpert 2007, 142).

However, Hawkins et al. (2011, 196) state in their study on *Misión Mercal,* that while customers could purchase as many products as needed, there was rationing for certain products such as milk and meat or other products which could be resold at black market prices. For these products which are usually high in demand, long lines of customers persist and these products are sold on a first-come, first-served basis. As of 2006 however, there were over 209 nation-wide supermarkets, 32 *Supermercal* stores, 870 cooperative-owned locales and 12,000 *Mercalitos* or street markets.

On March 6, 2006 President Chávez introduced the *Misión Madres del Barrio* or Mothers of the Barrio. Officially called *Misión Madres del Barrio Josefa Joachina Sánchez* – named after a heroine of the Venezuelan War of Independence who is celebrated as the embroiderer of the first flag of Venezuela – this *misión* offers aid to mothers and female heads of households who live in extreme poverty. In

unveiling the programme, President Chávez stated: "with this mission, we want to give a hand to mothers who are in need, and homemakers without a fixed income" (Baribeau 2006). As such, poor women who have children and no form of income are given a monthly stipend which is equivalent to 80 percent of the minimum wage. (The maximum amount of financial allocation is 960 Bolivares.) Based on Article 88 of the constitution, women's activity in the home is recognised as an economic activity and as such, the programme has been expanded from 100,000 women from its inception to 200,000 women in August 2006 in "selected…neighbourhood communities according to needs-based criteria" (Wilpert, 2007, 143).

In terms of healthcare, *Misión Barrio Adentro* provides free healthcare to the Venezuelan people. Clinics, which now include treatment and state-of-the-art diagnostic centres, can be found throughout Venezuela and especially in the *barrios.* It has thus been reported that at the end of 2005, over 160 million visits had been made since 2003, including 3.7 million optometry visits and 14.5 million dental care visits (Hawkins et al. 2011, 96). *Misión Barrio Adentro* however, has now been extended to include what is now known as *Misión Barrio Adentro I* (primary healthcare inclusive of dentists); *Misión Barrio Adentro II* (secondary or second-level care inclusive of hospitalisation and surgery and comprises of popular clinics, diagnosis and advanced technology centres and rehabilitation facilities); *Misión Barrio Adentro III* (third-level care in general hospitals, that is, care for major illnesses and specialist care); and *Misión Barrio Adentro IV* (fourth-level care such as the treatment of high-risk and high-cost medical-surgical diseases and comprises highly specialised teaching hospitals) (Alvarado et al. 2008, 103-104).

Some of the other *misiones* which have been created by President Chávez are as follows: *Misión Miranda* which allowed for the creation of a citizen military reserve; *Misión Guaicaipuro* which deals with communal land titles and other human rights as they pertain to indigenous groups*; Misión Identidad* provides national identification cards to Venezuelan citizens as well as keeps a record of

those who have been provided with services by the *misiones; Misión Habitat* provides housing; *Misión Piar* serves and provides assistance to miners; *Misión Zamora* seeks to redistribute land and bring about land reform; *Misión Cultura* promotes culture and the arts; *Negra Hipólita* – named after the wet nurse of Simón Bolívar – offers assistance to the indigent and differently-abled population; *Misión Ciencia* promotes scientific research; and *Misión Arbol* provides and promotes environmental education (see Hawkins et al. 2011, 190; Lopez-Maya and Lander 2011, 71).

Consejos Comunales

The Law of Communal Councils (2006) states that *consejos comunales* "represent the means through which the organised masses can take over the direct administration of policies and projects that are created in response to the needs and aspirations of the communities, in the construction of a fair and just society." *Consejos Comunales* are thus "instances of participation, articulation, and integration between various community organizations, social groups, and citizens" where members "directly manage public policy and projects oriented toward responding to the needs and aspirations of communities in the constructions of a society of equity and social justice" (Article 2, Law of Community Councils). Power is therefore vested in the people in their local communities. Every five-person committee which is elected by the *consejo communal* is empowered by Article 11 of the Law of Communal Councils to oversee "programs and projects for public investment budgeted and executed by the national, regional or municipal government." The *consejos comunales* thus provide a powerful check on the municipal, regional and most importantly national government (Ciccariello-Maher 2007). As such, "communal councils are inspiring many Venezuelans to exert their right and duty to participate in local decision-making" (*Journal of the Research Group on Socialism and Democracy Online*, 2011), especially for women in the barrios. Fernandes (2007) thus states that barrio women of Venezuela "have sought to take the initiative at the local level to make decisions regarding their community and the

implementation of local programs." In this way, "these women are agents who are building new spaces of democratic community participation" (122).

INAMUJER and MinMujer

In addition to constitutional provisions specific to women, on October 25, 1999, President Chávez created *Instituto Nacional de la Mujer* (INAMUJER – National Institute for Women) by a presidential mandate in accordance with the Law of Equal Opportunities for Women (Wagner 2005). Women's rights activist María León was appointed as the director and INAMUJER has been successful in promoting anti-domestic violence legislation and has organised educational campaigns on sexual and reproductive rights. INAMUJER has also set up a free telephone hotline for domestic violence victims in addition to shelters for women who are victims of domestic abuse – *Casas de Abrigo* (Wagner 2005). INAMUJER, and by extension the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, has recognised that the perpetuation of domestic violence is not only a form of discrimination against women, but it is also an issue which impedes the country's political, economic and social development. In addition, on March 16, 2007 *Ley Orgánica sobre el Derecho de las Mujeres a una Vida Libre de Violencia* (Organic Law on the Right of Women to a Life Free of Violence) was passed by the government of Venezuela thereby repealing the 1998 *Ley sobre la Violencia contra la Mujer y la Familia* (Law on Violence against Women and the Family).

On March 8, 2008 President Chávez appointed León to head a new Women's Affairs Ministry – an extension of INAMUJER. A year later on March 9, 2009, President Chávez during his weekly radio talk show *Aló Presidente* announced: "the Ministry of Women's Affairs will become a ministry with a budget…what's more, it occurs to me that it should be called the Ministry of Women and Gender Equality, since these are two distinct and complementary things" (Suggett 2009).

The new Ministry for Women was thus renamed *El Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Mujer y la Igualdad de Género* (MinMujer – Ministry of Popular Power for Women and Gender Equality).

BanMujer

Abbreviated *BanMujer, Banco de la Mujer* or the Women's Bank was launched by President Chávez on March 8, 2001 – International Women's Day. The late economist Nora Castañeda was placed at the helm of the bank. A prominent women's right activist and lecturer at Universidad Central de Venezuela (UCV) for over thirty-three years, Castañeda believed in *BanMujer* giving power to poor women. *BanMujer* issues micro-credit loans to small groups of women – normally five to nine women who may be all family members – to enable them to start up small-scale businesses or micro-enterprises such as bakeries, hair salons and cooperative farms etc. Such activities fall under the 'financial services' aspect of the bank. *BanMujer* also offers non-financial services such as training and technical support to women who have received micro credits and who have started business.

Women's Interests, Feminism and State Power

A relationship between women's emancipation and the creation of a socialist state is thus seen in the Venezuelan context. At the World Social Forum in Belém, Brazil on January 30, 2009, President Chávez declared: "now I have declared myself to be feminist. I am a feminist. And I also say, I think, with all respect, I think that a true socialist has to be feminist…if not, there is something missing, there is something missing." In this way, President Chávez thus intimated that without feminism, the socialist project would not succeed. He brought together the struggles against class oppression by socialists, and against women's

oppression by feminists and married them into a popular feminism of twenty-first century socialism which works to meet the goals of the Bolivarian state. In light of such grand statements and the inclusion of women in policies and programmes, there thus exists what appears to be a resurgence of women's political participation and organising in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. This calls into question two important issues regarding feminism and women's organising in the Bolivarian state.

First, given the existence of a socialist feminist women's movement now operating within the scope of twenty-first century socialism, Professor Jessie Blanco (2007) has asked the question: is our socialism feminist? Such a question is further made relevant given what seems to be a polarisation in the movement – one caused by twenty-first century socialism with respect to the privileging of the struggle against capitalism, over the struggle against patriarchy and vice versa. The polarisation is thus an ideological one which has allowed for great discussion and debate by politicians, academics and stalwarts of the women's movement alike.

Second, Fernandes (2007), looking at the history of barrio women's organising beginning especially in the 1970's, concludes that the political organising of barrio women began long before the Bolivarian revolution began and in this way, the revolution itself was not the crucial element which pushed women to organise. She therefore looks at the start of the Bolivarian revolution in Venezuela as a point of "resurgence" of women's political organising and activism. In this way, Fernandes (2007, 122) posits that barrio women created their own local spaces for organising and activism – often in association with state organisations and institutions while still identifying with the policies of, and in support of, President Chávez.

Thus, even though women's political participation and mobilisation increased under President Chávez, the idea of *sin feminismo no hay socialismo*[5] has

created ideological differences which then has allowed for debates about the improvement of women's lives. The political discursive space has indeed shifted under the Bolivarian revolution and twenty-first century socialism, as it now includes the language and understandings of feminism and women's empowerment. In this way, poorer women's understandings of feminism and how it is able to improve their lives has multiple meanings. Therefore, while some feminists may argue that the state's feminism is no feminism at all because it may not be transformative in the lives of poor and working class women, for poorer women feminism means being able to buy food, or being able to see a doctor free of charge or being able to send one's children to school. This feminism, as championed by the state, is equated with the Bolivarian revolution and twenty-first century socialism; therefore, for many women who have benefitted from twenty-first century socialism through satisfied needs and changed lives, there is indeed no feminism without socialism and vice versa. This new knowledge and discursive space has created new political subjectivities. In this way, the female consciousness and the feminist consciousness are very distinct as women's political participation and mobilisation around twenty-first century socialism is not exclusively tied to the feminism as espoused by the woman's movement, but instead to that of the state on the basis of practical needs being met.

Sustainability and Transformation of the Revolution

Through the creation of social programmes and furthermore, women's inclusion in political, social and economic policies and programmes, new political and gendered subjectivities have been created and fostered among women. However, such political and gendered subjectivities and a corresponding revolutionary consciousness still operate within what Blanco (2007) would describe as an "androcentric and heteronormative world." The question is then whether the Bolivarian revolution is truly transformative for men and women and

gender relations. Furthermore, is the Bolivarian revolution truly transformative for the Venezuelan people and if so, is it sustainable?

The power of sustaining the Bolivarian revolution lies with the Venezuelan people. The Bolivarian revolution has created a revolutionary consciousness. According to Cudjoe (1984, 49), such a consciousness "implies an awareness that the social behaviour of an individual is the direct result of the manner in which the state is organised and the values the state promulgates through its collective behaviour." In this way, the relationships among poorer women, President Chávez, the Bolivarian state, and the feminist movement all construct the Bolivarian revolution, but also this *new* consciousness especially among the poor. This revolutionary consciousness and words such as 'revolution,' rights' and 'citizenship' have now formed part of the everyday language. For the poorer woman, her revolutionary consciousness is more than a heightened awareness that life has improved under President Chávez. Though this assessment plays a big role in it, this consciousness is a transformation of self – an ideological one – as she, unlike her pre-Bolivarian revolution self, understands the power she wields not only as a woman and mother, but also as a citizen of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, with rights granted in the constitution through government policies, programmes and institutions.

After the death of Chávez in 2013, President Nicolás Maduro has not only inherited the revolution, but also the economic woes which plague Venezuela. Issues such as inflation, food security and shortages and crime had emerged as major election issues. They have, therefore, not only aided in a lessening support of the revolution but also in the culmination of violent opposition protests and continued strong international anti-Chávez support. However, while a critical and revolutionary consciousness is essential, political life must be one of stability if the revolution is to not only survive but also be deemed credible. The gains of the revolution, especially for poorer women, are therefore made invisible given the economic instability in the nation, and the contradictions are further amplified by the Opposition.

However, given such a test for Maduro and the revolution, Rangel (2014) maintains that "the fact that there's been better service to the poor, with numerous social investments, and that today these people, including the elderly, live better than 10 or 15 years ago explains why the popular neighborhoods have not joined the middle class protests, neither the peaceful majority of them and much less the violent factions." Thus, after many years of political, social and economic exclusion, the Bolivarian Revolution has benefitted especially poorer women, and even in the midst of economic and political instability, for some, their support remains steadfast.

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[1] Translated as: a social economy.

[2] See: www.un.org/esa/population/publications/abortion/doc/venezuela.doc

[3] This figure obtains for cooperatives which were registered with SUNACOOP upon creation.

[4] See: Fundación José María Bengoa Para La Alimentación Y Nutrición's information on Mission Mercal. http://www.fundacionbengoa.org/i_foro_alimentacion_nutricion_informacion/mision_mercal.asp

[5] Translated as 'without feminism, there is no socialism.'

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Young, Black, Female and Carefree: Reading "Party Done"[1]

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Abstract

This paper offers a reading of young black women's sexuality, agency and notions of black female criminality in the music video for the soca song "Party Done" by Angela Hunte and Machel Montano. Given the paucity of active female protagonists in Trinidadian music videos and elsewhere, this video is unique in its use of young, urban, black women as the centre of the work. With reference to positions by Patricia Hill Collins, Rosamond King and others, I deconstruct the video's underlying narrative: black working class women as capable of being "carefree". I make a case that the video is framed as a short film and I read it using film analysis techniques.

Keywords: Trinidad, soca, music video, film, black women, sexuality, agency, criminality, feminist criticism

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> *Perhaps, instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished historical fact, which the new cinematic discourses then represent, we should be thinking, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside representation.*
>
> — Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation."

Introduction

This essay analyses the visual semiotics of the short film/music video "Party Done" from a black Caribbean feminist perspective, addressing the issues of representation of the young, black, female working class body and young, black, working class woman as agentic and sexually autonomous. The essay also seeks to examine how the film/video subverts or plays into stereotypes of black criminality.

The moving image in Anglophone Caribbean film, television and video—as an industry and as an art—is still in its nascent stage, despite the existence of productions recognised as breakthrough works. However, in the Anglophone Caribbean there has been consistent use of the music video, with dozens made and released across the region every year. Many of them conform to a common formula that does not centre the young, black, female body as anything but a sexual object.

One of Trinidad and Tobago's most prolific artistes in releasing music videos has been soca star Machel Montano. In 2015, the videos he made included one for the hit he sang with US-based singer/songwriter Angela Hunte, "Party Done".

He made the "Party Done" video under the imprint Monk Pictures; the name appears at the start of the video. Monk Pictures seems to style this music video as a short film, as the credits rolling at either end of the four-and-a-half-minute production may signify.[2] It was directed by Jerome Guiot, a successful European music video director who has made incursions into Caribbean film as one of the directors of the 2014 feature-length documentary film *PAN! Our Music Odyssey*.

It is partly these factors that lead me to consider the "Party Done" music video as a kind of short film and therefore to use film criticism techniques in discussing it. It is also the film/video itself that leads me to take this position, as it presents a narrative storyline and is filmed with profound artistry and sophistication, reminiscent of the style of the now classic film *City of God*. [3]

Although in most Caribbean music videos the performers are the stars, Montano and Hunte, the singers of "Party Done", only appear in the film/video in cutaway shots of them singing the song's chorus. The three protagonists in the film/video are young, black, working class, city-dwelling women who engage in a variety of sexually and socially transgressive acts. For reasons outlined above, I read this music video as a short film with little relationship to the song's lyrics, while recognising that it is ostensibly a commercial for the song.

Discussion

The film/video is markedly different from the typical music videos produced in the region and is therefore, in my opinion, worthy of comment. The young black woman is rarely portrayed as autonomous and agentic in music videos, if one defines "agency" as "an individual's capacity for action" (McNay 2005, 179) that is independent of the male protagonist's wants and needs.

The "Party Done" film/video subversively portrays the female protagonists as "carefree black girls". The "carefree black girl" is a rarely-seen type of representation that the Internet pop culture and film critic Fanta Sylla calls "a utopian and futuristic project" in which black women have "the ability to transform themselves, to change and circulate as they wish" (Sylla 2014). I say "subversively" because the predominant tropes of black women in international film and music videos remain largely true to the stereotypes of the Jezebel, the Mammy, the angry black woman and the sexual victim (Hall 2013, 251; Hobson 2002, 46).[4] In film, it is often the (white) male protagonist who is allowed to be carefree without consequence—a quintessential such character being portrayed by Matthew Broderick in the 1986 US film *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*. As in that film, "Party Done" uses the common cinematic trope of a devil-may-care young person stealing an expensive car without legal or moral consequence as

a gesture of social defiance and evidence of their insouciance. This can be compared with perhaps the most famous film about female black criminality, the 1996 Hollywood action film *Set it Off*, in which four black women become bank robbers and are violently killed or forced into exile as a penalty. For other representative images of black criminality one need only open a newspaper or turn on a TV, as news and entertainment images of black youth as drug dealers, thugs or guns for hire are commonplace in the region and internationally. Can the viewer cast aside historical and contemporary narratives of black criminality and see three young black women stealing an expensive car as merely an expression of insouciance and fun?

The visual semiotics of the average soca video fit the pervasive gendered power discourse in the global music video industry. The male performer is the primary focus, while others appearing in the video are there to support or enhance his position of dominance and his masculinity—whether or not the song being illustrated is explicitly about masculinity and domination. Soca music videos tend to be non-narrative performances, with the performer lip-synching the lyrics while nubile women in skimpy outfits or Carnival costumes appear as background dancers. For example, in different ways the video for Mr Killer's 2013 soca song "Rolly Polly", Montano's video for "Like a Boss", Benjai's "Phenomenal", Olatunji's "Wining Good", Fadda Fox's "Ducking", Kes the Band's "Million" and many, many others adhere to this formula.[5] The skimpy and/or sexualised outfits of the female dancers who often appear in soca videos illustrate the (male) performer's phallic masculinity: he is so powerful that he has access to multiple, sexually attractive, young female bodies.[6]

In the soca industry—as in pop and other genres—in videos where the main performer is female, she is often fetishised, dressed in sexually provocative clothing as Alison Hinds is in her 2007 soca video for "Roll it Gal", Denise Belfon is in her 2013 soca video "Wining Queen", Patrice Roberts is in the 2009 video for "Tempa Wine" and a cartoon Destra Garcia is in her animated video for 2015's "Lucy". The female performer and the other female bodies in the video are positioned as the object of desire for either the male characters in the video or the very audience itself.

Female bodies are often shown as fragmented in music videos, with close-up shots reducing them to their essential sexual aspects: a pair of buttocks, a

gyrating waist, a flash of breast. In her germinal 1975 essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", Laura Mulvey calls these "moments of erotic contemplation" of the female form that connote "to-be-looked-at-ness". This is accomplished through cinematic techniques of lighting, camera angles and editing that mirror the male gaze and exult in fetishistic scopophilia. In a 2002 commentary on Mulvey's essay, black feminist scholar Janell Hobson additionally notes that the black female body fulfils roles in Anglo-American cinema that are different from white female bodies, and the eroticised black female body may represent "a wildness that signifies the nonwhite, often read in contrast to the 'white,' who is orderly, controlled, neat, virtuous and pure" (48-49). In international cinema as in the generic soca video, the young black female body has been seldom represented as having agency and autonomy, but has been reduced to the representation of its sexual utility. As bell hooks writes in the essay "The Oppositional Gaze," "Conventional representations of black women have done violence to the image" of black women (1992, 120). The "Party Done" film/video has had little to no formal critical response. As a black Caribbean feminist I think it is important to respond to the portrayal in the film/video and to question the representations therein.

The "Party Done" film/video differs from the mainstream soca video. It is a narrative about female empowerment—and not merely female empowerment but *poor, black, young* female empowerment. Rachel Moseley-Wood, in analysing the Jamaican feature film *Dancehall Queen*, argues that the film makes an "attempt to validate" the version of female sexuality of the dancehall (Moseley-Wood 2007, 390), referencing Carolyn Cooper's characterisation of the female sexuality of the dancehall space in Jamaica as liberatory and consciously assertive of women's own sexual representation (388). I think this liberation and assertion of female sexuality is what "Party Done" is trying to portray.

Scene Analysis

In the following paragraphs I give a close reading of the film/video, examining its semiotics and highlighting the class contrasts in the imagery. Through this reading I seek to show the ways in which the protagonists are represented as having agency over their bodies and sexuality. I also discuss the notion of black

criminality and how the heroines of "Party Done" commit criminal acts without penalty.

The first frames of "Party Done" show a working-class apartment in a rundown, urban neighbourhood, the Nelson Street "plannings"[7] on the poor side of Port-of-Spain, where a young woman is getting dressed to go out. She is smoking a cigarette—itself marking her as transgressive, as a woman smoking cigarettes is still considered in Caribbean culture. Her next act is to finish dressing: pulling a pink cheetah print tank top over her bra, and adjusting her tight gold lamé short pants. She sprinkles baby powder on her chest—a signifier of cleanliness in Trinidad working class women's culture but widely ridiculed by other classes. The powder remains visible as part of the performance of girl- or womanhood.[8]

The woman peeps through a doorway in the apartment at a man who is sitting watching television in the next room before she ducks out a bedroom window to climb down a fire escape and join a second woman in the yard below—she is literally transgressing the boundaries of the domestic space to which she has perhaps been restricted. The second woman is wearing hair extensions in thick, multicoloured braids, and sports very short cut-off jeans, visually fitting the same "ghetto" aesthetic as the first woman.

The pair walks to a small roadside shop in the neighbourhood and ask for rum. The shopkeeper hands it to them through a space in the BRC[9] wire grill over the counter that separates the customers from the shopkeeper. This arrangement of space and barriers is typical of a small retail establishment in working class areas and could be contrasted with the open shelves customers are free to browse through in middle class shops on the other—the middle-class—side of the city. The women ask for ice but as soon as the shopkeeper turns his back they run off with the bottle of rum—their first criminal act in the film.

Next we see them laughing, leaning against an old, graffiti-covered city wall. They begin walking and dancing in the street. Significantly, the shots of the women dancing do not focus on their buttocks or waists as most soca videos would; the camera angles used to film their dancing in the street in this video place no extraordinary emphasis on their sexual body parts. In a later scene they sit on a shopfront stoop and eat fried chicken, smoke cigarettes and drink

straight rum by the capful—all of which mark them as the inheritors of the 19th century "jamette" woman who emerged in Trinidad after the end of plantation slavery. Rosamond King (2011) describes the jamette as a black person from the underclass; the jamette woman flaunts her sexuality, flouts the law, and posed a threat to Victorian mores. King describes jamette women as being "engaged in a range of sexual activity disapproved of by the colonial elite" (221). The jamettes, King says, were both disruptive to the colonial elite's standards and empowering to a class of people who had previously been enslaved and made economically and socially powerless.

As they sit beside the road, they spot yet another young woman—also similarly dressed—who is in an old sedan taxi driven by a middle-aged man. Joining her, all three women swig from the stolen bottle of rum and smoke cigarettes in the taxi, even though it is illegal to smoke in a taxi and most taxis in Trinidad discourage eating and drinking while in the vehicle. They even *wine*[10] on top of the car. The driver grows increasingly irate until he throws them out of the taxi. Undeterred, the three of them wine in the streets as passersby watch. Again, the predominant use of medium and long shots rejects the fragmentation and objectification of their bodies that would be caused by close-up shots of their hips, breasts, buttocks or waists.

Next, without paying for entry, they force their way into Aria, a middle-class dance club on Ariapita Avenue, literally at the opposite end of the city of Port-of-Spain from Nelson Street—three modern jamette women discomforting the middle- and upper-class elite as jamette women do. There they continue drinking and wining. The bar at the uptown dance club is strikingly different from the women's home milieu: it is clean and lit in neon colours and there is no wire grill separating the bartender from the customer.

At the club, the women become the centre of attention on the dance floor. Here, although not as strictly as before, the camera work shows them in ways that permit the viewer to see them as whole persons. Although a few shots do emphasise the fragmentation of their bodies into sexual parts, the women's wining performance seems to be for their own pleasure, not for the pleasure of male onlookers. There are no shots of anyone attempting to dance with them until one of the women starts kissing a besotted-looking middle-class young man and stealthily eases his car keys from his pocket. Giggling, the three women run

out into the street and drive off in his car, a Porsche SUV (a type of car that costs about one million TT dollars). Still in high spirits, they drive to the beach.

The overall impression of this part of the film is one of joy, playfulness and youthful irresponsibility that does not cross over into criminality despite the women's literally criminal actions. As the sun comes up over the beach, the music ends and the women sit quietly, contemplatively. Perhaps the first woman is thinking about returning to the restrictive environment of the apartment from which she stole away and the man she left there the night before; or perhaps they are all comparing the dingy, dirty East Port-of-Spain neighbourhood from which they came with the sleekly expensive SUV they have stolen. Whatever their thoughts, there are no telltale wail of sirens, flashing police car lights, gun shots or any other indication of a looming threat of legal or moral consequence for their actions. They seem to get away with stealing the car as easily as they got away with stealing the rum and shoving their way into the nightclub without paying the night before.

Black US feminist scholar Patricia Hill Collins argues in her essay "Learning from the Outsider Within": "The insistence on Black female self-definition reframes the entire dialogue from one of determining the technical accuracy of an image, to one stressing the power dynamics underlying the very process of definition itself. […] Regardless of the actual content of Black women's self-definitions, the act of insisting on Black female self-definition validates Black women's power as human subjects" (1986, S17). I see the "Party Done" video as an attempt to recast the image of female black criminality as agency, and to celebrate black female autonomous sexuality as symbolised by the women's wining.

Having grown up as a working-class black girl in Morvant, a suburb of Port-of-Spain, I am all too familiar with the notion of black criminality. Given that, when I first saw the film/video for "Party Done", I asked myself why on earth would someone make a film in which, as part of their *fun*, three black working-class women steal a million-dollar vehicle. Doesn't that just play into the stereotype of the black criminal? But why *not* have them steal a car? Stealing a car is a popular trope in white Hollywood films as a signifier of youthful rebellion. For example, the IMDB page for the film *Sleepover* says the white teenage girl protagonists "sneak out of the house, steal a car, snatch a cute boy's boxer shorts, crash a high school dance, and torment a security guard with an inflated

ego". As previously indicated, a central act of rebellion in the 1986 film *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* is the title character's stealing a car. In neither of these films are the protagonists labeled as criminal because of the theft of a car.

Conclusion

Cultural theorist Stuart Hall notes it is possible to subvert racist regimes of representation from the inside by "contesting from within", using the "complexities and ambivalences of representation" to un-fix stereotypes (2013, 274). This is what I argue is being done with the image of the playful theft of the Porsche SUV. Importantly, in the film/video itself there are no negative consequences shown: the young women are not penalised for stealing the car or the bottle of rum and there is no moral lesson at the end of the film/video as to the negative price the criminal acts could incur. Within the universe of the film/video itself, the young women are heroic, facing the dawn and all it symbolises: fresh starts, new days and boundless opportunity.

Thus, in the tradition of these jamette women, the women in "Party Done" represent boldness, audacity and self-confidence. These are not women beaten down by the idea of poverty or disenfranchisement implied by the urban ghetto in which they live; they are women who are courageous and confident enough to claim a street or a club as their own. They are not backup dancers or props in someone else's video; they are the stars of the film and the centre of the narrative. And, most importantly, they are having fun and nobody is beating them or taking advantage of them; they are the ones in control of their movement across the city and they ways in which they dance and comport themselves.

Using old tropes in new ways, the "Party Done" video portrays young black "ghetto" women protagonists as having agency and sexual autonomy, unlike the usual portrayal of poor black women in film or soca music videos. Embedded in the portrayal are significations that hark back to the agentic jamette woman, who was a sexually and socially transgressive urban figure. By appropriating the Hollywood trope of a young person stealing a car, the film recasts black criminality in a new light and shows the possibility that young black women can be carefree figures in film.

[1] A previous version of this essay was published in two parts in the *Trinidad Guardian* on February 24 and March 10, 2015. I am grateful to my cohort at IGDS who encouraged me to discuss the video in my column, and to Dr Angelique Nixon who has offered valuable feedback on this present paper.

[2] "Like a Boss" also uses the Monk Pictures imprint at its start, and "On My Way", yet another 2015 Montano video, uses end-roll credits, but no other 2015 video by Montano uses both.

[3] *City of God*, a 2002 Brazilian crime drama film, directed by Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund, was widely praised for its dramatic, groundbreaking cinematography and evocation of the poverty and violence of the Brazilian slums and criminal underworld.

[4] These stereotypes persist in contemporary film; as of April 2016 the last three black women to win Academy Awards in the US played a slovenly, abusive mother, a maid and a slave, respectively, reprising versions of these stereotypes. In Caribbean cinema comparable types might be "the fallen woman", "the village busybody", and "the longsuffering mother". I have not found an analysis of this topic in Caribbean cinema, so perhaps if it has not already been analysed it could be a future project for Caribbean film scholars.

[5] All music videos referenced in this article can be found on the video file-sharing website YouTube.

[6] This formula is not exclusively deployed in the soca video but is standard in contemporary music and is found in reggae, dancehall, hip hop, R&B and pop, ranging from the 1985 Robert Palmer pop video "Addicted to Love", in which identically made-up young women in identical mini-dresses play a musical band behind lead singer Palmer; to the controversial 2013 R&B video "Blurred Lines" by Robin Thicke, Pharrell and TI, in which semi-nude women adopt various sexualised and animalistic poses in interaction with the singers.

[7] Low-cost government housing in multi-storey apartment buildings.

[8] Visual artist Marlon Griffith showed photographs of various people with powder on their chests as part of his 2012 installation The Ballad of Francisco Bobadilla, in a series called The Powder Box Schoolgirl Series. "You wouldn't find a girl in St Joseph's (Convent) with powder around her neck. It comes from your background, class, the kind of people you interact with," Griffith said in a 2012 newspaper article (Drakes 2012). In the "Party Done" video, both the setting and her appearance locate the woman protagonist within an urban, working class milieu—commonly labelled "ghetto".

[9] "BRC" is the common name for welded steel wire mesh used in construction. It is sometimes used for fences or partitions in the Caribbean.

[10] The *wine* is an informal dance commonly practiced in the Caribbean. In a *Caribbean Beat* article on the topic, I defined it as "to move your hips and waist in a 'winding' motion, hence the name" (Allen-Agostini 2006).

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CARIBBEAN REVIEW OF GENDER STUDIES
A Journal of Caribbean Perspectives on Gender and Feminism

An Investigation into the State's Response to the Trafficking of Women and Girls in Jamaica

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Abstract

Human Trafficking is ranked as the second fastest growing international crime, behind the trade of illegal drugs. Human Trafficking impacts social, cultural, economic development. In 2014, Jamaica was recognised as a Tier Two Watch List country by the United States Agency for International Development. Nations that fall in this group are those whose governments do not fully comply with the Trafficking Victims Protection Act's (TVPA) minimum standards but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards. These countries have a significant number of victims of severe forms of trafficking but fail to provide sufficient evidence of increased efforts to combat these severe forms of trafficking in persons.1 (State Report 2012, 51) Jamaica has been classified as a source, transit and destination country 2 (State Report 2012, 197) in the global multibillion-dollar trafficking in person trafficking in persons.

In this paper an analysis of the literature will undertake the state's response to the issue with specific focus on the trafficking of women and young girls is examined by the three pillars of prosecution, prevention and protection, which seek to guide the initiatives implemented by the government in an effort to ensure it is effective. Qualitative and quantitative methods of data collections will be used to speak to this matter. The initiatives that have been put in place by the government is measured against the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, more popularly known as the Palmero Protocol and the data will be analysed by the Theoretical Framework.

Keywords: Human Trafficking, victims, state, government, legislations, policies

How to cite

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Introduction

Despite the absence of slave shackles, it appears that 21st century societies continue to witness a more modern system of slavery in which human beings are exploited sexually, physically and emotionally. Mesmerised by illusions of grandeur of the Global North created by the flickering lights on their television and computer screens, many from the poorer regions of the world vacate their homes and countries in pursuit of an advanced society in which they can actualise and develop.

Under the guise of overseas job opportunities and larger-than-life experiences, migration feeds an appetite starved for experience, riddled with aspirations and hopes. The introduction of international travel documents and border controls, however, limits population movement thus creating specialised underworld networks feeding into a ring of human trafficking.

Human Trafficking, the use of threat or force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of positions of power or abuse of positions of vulnerability for the purpose of sexual exploitation, forced labour, or for the involuntary donation of their organs (Crime, 2000), is ranked as the second fastest-growing international crime, behind the trade in illegal drugs. This gender dialogue will seek to explore Jamaica's response to human trafficking and the degree to which women are affected. The discourse will seek to bring clarity, thereby encouraging dialogue and a deeper understanding of an issue that greatly affects women across the globe.

Human Trafficking Tier Ranking

The United States Agency for International Development is the main administrator for tier ranking in the global marketplace. Each country is placed into one of four tiers based on the extent of government action to combat trafficking rather than on the size of the country's problem, as follows:

- Tier 1 is the highest ranking. It does not mean that a country has no human trafficking problem; rather it indicates that a government has acknowledged the existence of human trafficking, made efforts to address the problem and complies with the Trafficking Victim's Prevention Act (TVPA) minimum standards. These standards are outlined by the United States Department's office as to what they believe are adequate efforts in the fight against human trafficking.

- Tier 2 suggests that governments do not fully comply with the TVPA's minimum standards but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards. Tier 2 Watch List indicates the governments that do not fully comply with the TVPA's minimum standards, but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards, and for which: a) the absolute number of victims of severe forms of trafficking is very significant or is significantly increasing; b) there is a failure to provide evidence of increasing efforts to combat severe forms of trafficking in persons from the previous year, including increased investigations, prosecution, and convictions of trafficking crimes, increased assistance to victims, and decreasing evidence of complicity in severe forms of trafficking by government officials; or c) the determination that a country is making significant efforts to bring itself into compliance with minimum standards based on commitments by the country to take additional steps over the next year.

- Tier 3 is for those countries that do not fully comply with the TVPA's minimum standards and are not making significant efforts to do so (State Report 2015, 47).

Jamaica's Tier Ranking

Jamaica has been classified as a source, transit and destination country for adults and children subjected to sex trafficking and forced labour in the global multibillion-dollar (US$32-billion) trafficking in persons industry (State Report 2014, 219). Non-Government Organisations (NGO) reported that the most common form of trafficking in Jamaica is sex trafficking, which allegedly occurs in night clubs, bars, and private homes (US Department States Report 2011, 197). Victims are typically recruited by family members or newspaper advertisements promoting work as spa attendants, masseuses or dancers. After being recruited however, victims are coerced into prostitution (Ricketts and Dunn 2007, 97).

The country's first downgrade to a Tier 3 in 2005 saw the Government of Jamaica implementing several measures to combat the crime. Legislative measures were implemented, including the enactment of the Trafficking in Persons Act (2007) which specifies a penalty of a fine or imprisonment for up to ten years or both, the Child Care and Protection Act, Child Pornography (Prevention) Act and the Sexual Offences Act were also introduced to combat this epidemic. In addition to strengthening the legislative framework to deal with the issue, the government, via the Ministry of Justice and National Security, established a Trafficking in Person (TIP) Unit that operates within the Organized Crime Investigation Unit of the Jamaica Constabulary Force. These measures saw the country's improvement in its ranking to Tier 2 in 2006. In the last two years (2013-2015) the country has amended the Trafficking in Persons Act to increase the maximum sentence for trafficking crimes from 10 to 30 years imprisonment, established a shelter to house victims of the crime, identified a National Trafficking in Persons Rapporteur (the first of its kind in the Caribbean) and has launched a public education programme to raise awareness of the crime. Despite the measures introduced, the country was ranked at a Tier 2 Watch List and has been for the last two years (2013-2015). This is cause for concern and highlights the need for the evaluation, assessment and analysis of how effective these methods have been.

Evaluation of Jamaica's Efforts

Five high level state officials and a member of an NGO that have done extensive research in human trafficking were interviewed, and their responses were assessed based on the facts and existing information.

Reports over the period 2007 – 2012 identified 22 victims of human trafficking. Whilst the majority of responders to this research saw the crime as a cause for concern, 66 percent of participants believed the United States Department of State's (USDOS) report is an inaccurate portrayal of Jamaica's effort, highlighting that questions posed by the Department are limited and therefore unable to perfectly capture the efforts made. Candidates believe the report contains a great deal of errors and their sources, NGOs, are providing them with anecdotal evidence, adding that definitional issues are at play.

A Battle of Definition

The Jamaican Government adheres to the United Nations Palmero Protocol as their guide for what is constituted as human trafficking, while the USDOS has its own definition of the crime. The Protocol and that of the USDOS' report, interviewees stated, limit what falls under the TIP Act, as areas that are akin to trafficking in persons are often dealt with under different acts, for instance the Sexual Offence Act, the Child Pornography Act or the Child Protection Act. Under the TVPA, children below the age of 18 years that have been involved in sexual acts or forced labour are immediately considered as trafficking victims. The Palmero Protocol does not limit human trafficking to a particular age but sees in large part the actions themselves constituting human trafficking. The United States statistics and their recognition of the crime would, therefore, reflect a drastic difference from that of Jamaica's when these elements are considered. It is, therefore, possible that some sex crimes involving minors may

be considered trafficking based on the TVPA; however these may be considered as sexual exploitation under Jamaican law. Between 2007-2012 approximately 16 cases recognised as TIP in relation to the TVPA's definition have been convicted under the Jamaican law; however these cases were not categorised by the Jamaican Government as human trafficking. If the TVPA only examines Jamaica's convictions for Trafficking in Persons, they may underestimate the country's efforts. Therefore for the US Department of State to have a fair analysis of the efforts of each country, they would have to be mindful of that country's legislation and look not just at criminal statistics defined as trafficking offenses, but at other applicable offenses as well. Jamaica's laws need to be interpreted, and not assumed to be equivalent to the laws that exist within the US. If the country is guided by the Protocol they should be measured against this standard so as to determine whether or not the country's efforts should place it on the Tier 2 Watchlist or otherwise.

Missing Children and Human Trafficking

Several NGOs such as "Hear the Children Cry" and "Theodora Project" have identified a link between missing children and human trafficking, but only 33 percent of participants recognised the link between missing children and human trafficking and the remaining 67 percent maintained there was no evidence to support the correlation; however, the statistics that exist are cause for concern. This, however, contradicts the information that was presented by former Health Minister, Rudyard Spencer. In a newspaper article by Nadine Wilson (2011) Spencer said children who are still not found may be victims of human trafficking. With Ministry of Health representatives on the taskforce, one would assume that if there is no anecdotal evidence to prove a relationship between the missing persons and trafficking in persons, it would be communicated to the Minister. In response to the USDOS report, Minister of National Security Peter Bunting asserted that the taskforce reviewed the

response of the relevant governmental agencies when children were reported missing (Jamaica Information Service, 2012). According to the taskforce, however, Jamaica's missing children statistics are not trafficking statistics. These actions suggest there is a lack of either structure or investigation being carried out to arrive at a productive conclusion. During the period under review (2007-2012), approximately 8,600 persons went missing across the island. While 78 percent of these have returned home and another two percent found dead, the remaining 20 percent are still unaccounted for. Eighteen of the 20 percent are women or young girls. (Bureau, 2007) Some participants asserted that many of the cases of missing persons were relational issues between parent and child or those of a more intimate nature. Some feminists believe, however, that these cases are treated with disdain due in part to the fact that a preponderance of the victims are women. The state undervalues women's work and concerns, neglects the role of feelings and attitudes in a focus on institutional and material change, denigrates women in procedure, practice, and everyday life, and in general fails to distinguish itself from any other ideology or group dominated by male interests (Mackinnon 1982, 518).

Human Trafficking and Jamaican Courts

According to the TVPA report, authorities reportedly arrested seven individuals for suspected human trafficking crimes and initiated four prosecutions in 2013, compared with two prosecutions initiated in 2012. The government continued four prosecutions for human trafficking offences carried over from previous reporting periods. No government officials were prosecuted or convicted for alleged complicity in trafficking-related offenses, although allegations persisted from previous reporting periods that some Jamaican police officers were complicit in prostitution rings (State Report 2014, 219). The taskforce has asserted that the country's legislation places the victims' desires for prosecution at the core of whether or not cases are taken to trial. The Protocol guidelines highlight,

however, that in the event that victims are not desirous of taking their offenders to court, countries must make an effort to find other means of prosecuting offenders under the law. The taskforce cannot take the position of victim preference and thereby allow offenders to continue their practices. For prosecution and conviction to take place and the taskforce to comply with the protocol, the taskforce should ensure that other stakeholders – immigration, judicial authorities, labour inspectors, social workers and other relevant officials – are fully sensitised to the laws concerning trafficking, thereby ensuring increased identification of crimes, prevention of those crimes and additional material witnesses.

With the battle of definition, muddy linkages and a low prosecution rate, human trafficking may continue to plague this small island for some time. A proper and clear assessment of the country's measures is needed; clear definitions of the crime must be established. The USDOS will need to determine if it will assess the country's efforts based solely on the TVPA or if consideration will be given to a country's legislation. Jamaica needs to take greater care in highlighting correlations between human trafficking and other crimes, where such correlations exist, so as to ensure that the issue of human trafficking can be addressed from its various fronts and that all the necessary measures and resources are coordinated to yield desirable outcomes.

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CARIBBEAN REVIEW OF GENDER STUDIES
A Journal of Caribbean Perspectives on Gender and Feminism

Sitting on Artifacts of Gender

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Abstract

The purpose of this photographic essay is to outline the questions, research, and methodology for a study on how furniture design aesthetics reinforce power relationships with a particular attention to gender. What homes look like, what they contain, how they are inhabited, and how they are represented are always functions of the totality of social practices that constitute culture at particular times and places (Logan 2002, 299).

Furniture design can be defined as the mental processes that take place before, during and after its manufacturing for this purpose. It is part of a broader field, industrial design which has inadvertently permeated practically every aspect of our lives (i.e. cellphones, iPads, smart watches, etc.) and therefore, brought attention to its significance and transcendence. This increased interest in the sociological and cultural aspects of design has been a fundamental catalyst for the development of design research and its many related fields - from research through, for or about design to constructive design research and a newfound understanding of design's role in propagating and counteracting oppression (Prado de O. Martins 2014, 1, 5).

Keywords: furniture design, aesthetics, power relations, gender

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Introduction

Since domestic furniture refers to common household objects, we overlook its influence over us. The purpose of this photo-essay is to share some thoughts about an on-going research project that explores this influence as it relates to gender power relations. All the pictures shown are of living rooms (or of the areas that their proprietors defined as such) from the Dominican Republic. There — as in the rest of the Western Hemisphere — the idea of "home" without furniture is inconceivable. Furniture sets the stage for the actions that take place in particular areas of our homes and it also has other meanings for us. In my examination of the work of Caribbean theorists, the conflation of home, gender and power is historical. White women were held as symbols of wealth and class status in relation to their performance in given tasks or roles assigned by men and therefore appraised by them and an accomplice society. In this way colonialism drew the blueprint for interwoven relations between the home, race, class and gender that were to reach across to our time and reality. In this regard, products may not contribute to changing gender, race and class relations, but stabilise the existing ones.

The arrangement of different furniture pieces according to areas is common to different cultures; it is what Chevalier (2002) calls the "cultural construction of domestic space". She argues that "basic pieces of furniture characterize [each] room and embody the home" so that "it is the relationships among the elements that create the specificities of every room" (2002, 848-849). This partly explains why these living rooms have certain furniture pieces even if they do not they fit in the space well enough to be used. Their importance surpasses practical use.

Nonetheless, there is a pervasive underlying assumption that the existence of furniture is accounted for because of the practical use given to it. Intermittently, the history of design has tied furniture's value to its function as defined by its practical use (there are other ways in which function could be defined). When

at the apex of the Modernist movement, Le Corbusier called the house "a machine for living", the chair was portrayed as part of its equipment: "a machine for sitting" (1986, 89). However, even if function were the *raison d'être*, furniture is a cultural object. Homes and their chattels are tied to social practices (Logan 2002) and not solely to functional needs. If one considers how the furniture has been laid out in the living rooms pictured below, one can infer that it is not used frequently. The chairs must be pressed against the wall because placed otherwise they would interfere with the entrance or main pathway of the house. In this situation too, furniture shows that its existence is not only accounted for by its function.

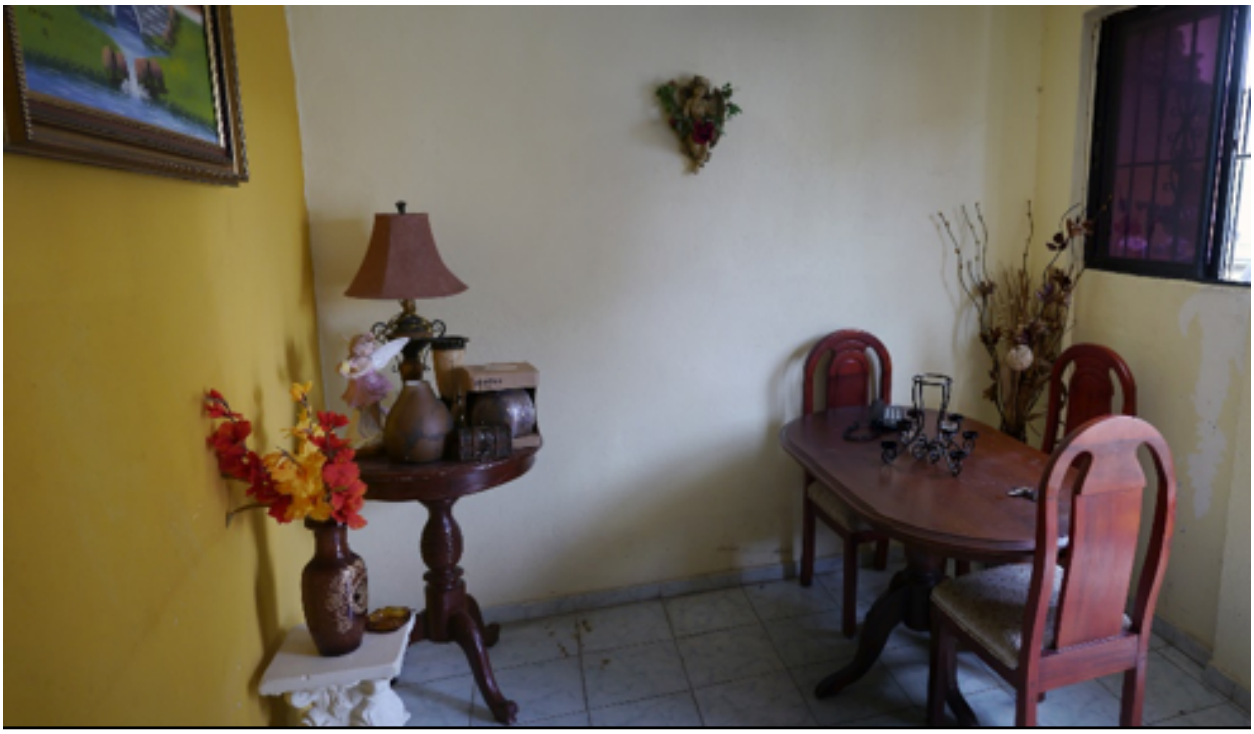


Figure 1

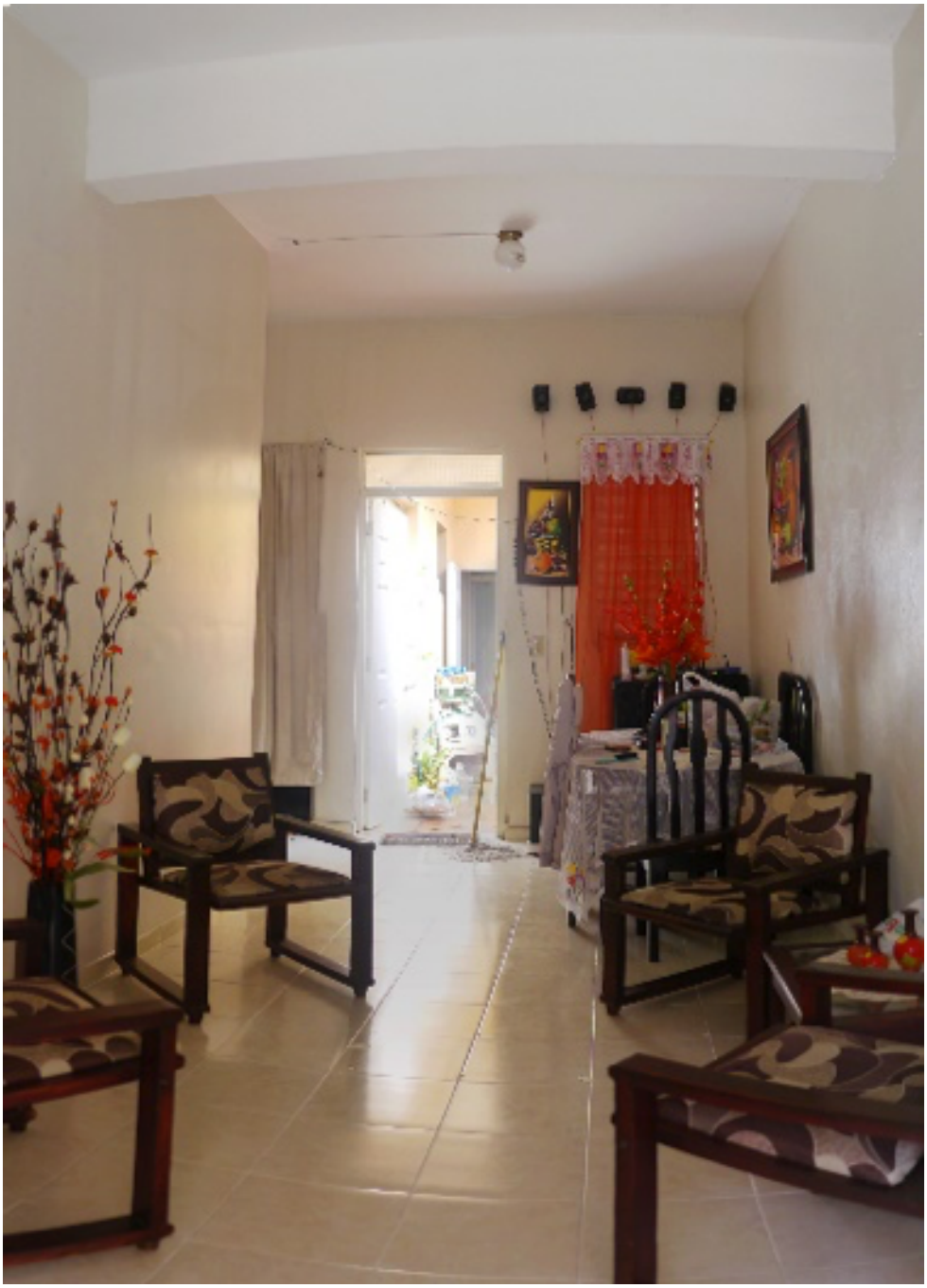


Figure 2

Figure 1 and 2. The dining table chairs in the upper right hand corner of both pictures are pressed between table and wall. Because of the trouble it would take to use them and place them back, I infer that they are not used often. Source: Carlos Juan Mateo (2015).

On the other hand, in the same way as "the relationships among the elements [...] create the specificities of every room" (Chevalier 2002, 848-849), the elements that constitute each particular furniture style determine how the furniture is perceived and what it is regarded as. To extrapolate this concept from elements in a room to elements that condition our perception of furniture may seem far-fetched, but the details of a furniture piece partly determine whether we hold it appropriate for a living room, for a family member, for certain uses, and so on. This idea is not entirely new: the term "affordance" refers to the perceived properties of an object (whether tangible or not) and how these properties condition how we interact with the object (Norman 1998). Moreover, despite its seemingly practical nature, Norman's definition highlights that there are both actual and perceived properties. Decades before, after studying the Ojibwa Indians, Hallowell (1955, 87) coined the term "culturally constituted behavioural environments", acknowledging how objects "must be considered as relevant variables because they can be shown to affect actual behaviour", meaning that the perceived qualities – whether tangible or not – produce an affect.

Domestic furniture "shows" the possible uses and limitations, is then arranged accordingly and becomes a setting whether within the context of Norman's affordance or Hallowell's behavioural environment. In this manner, what we do in a living room is not the same as what we do in our bedrooms; each setting calls for specific actions. This has other implications because "when things tell us how to act, then they too can be considered moral agents" (Kaplan 2004, 171). In our homes, are there designated chairs for members of the family? For example, a rocking chair for grandmother? A reclinable chair for father? When the "message is carried, not by a hectoring voice, but well hidden within the mere substance of apparent silent stuff, we are less likely to sense our disempowerment" (Miller 2010, 82). Throughout his books, Miller has been reiterative of this idea. For him objects "determine what takes place to the extent that we are unconscious of their capacity to do so" (2005, 5); "objects are artful; they hide their power to determine the way you feel" (2008, 163); and

"the cues that tell us how to interpret behaviour are usually unconscious" (2010, 49). If in the Dominican Republic furniture is mainly women's concern, for they are the ones that choose, buy and decide where to place it (Rodriguez Bencosme 2014), what is implied when the "best" furniture has masculine qualities? Moreover, the private sphere is generally women's domain (Brandes, Stich and Wender, 2013) and by extension of lesser importance than the public sphere. Hence, how does furniture reinforce gender power relations? What kinds of gendered subjectivities are produced through relations instantiated by furniture? We think that we, human subjects, are free agents who can do this or that to the material culture we possess but "[t]hings do things to us, and not just the things we want them to do" (Miller 2010, 94). Furniture may not contribute to changing gender relations, but may stabilise the existing ones.

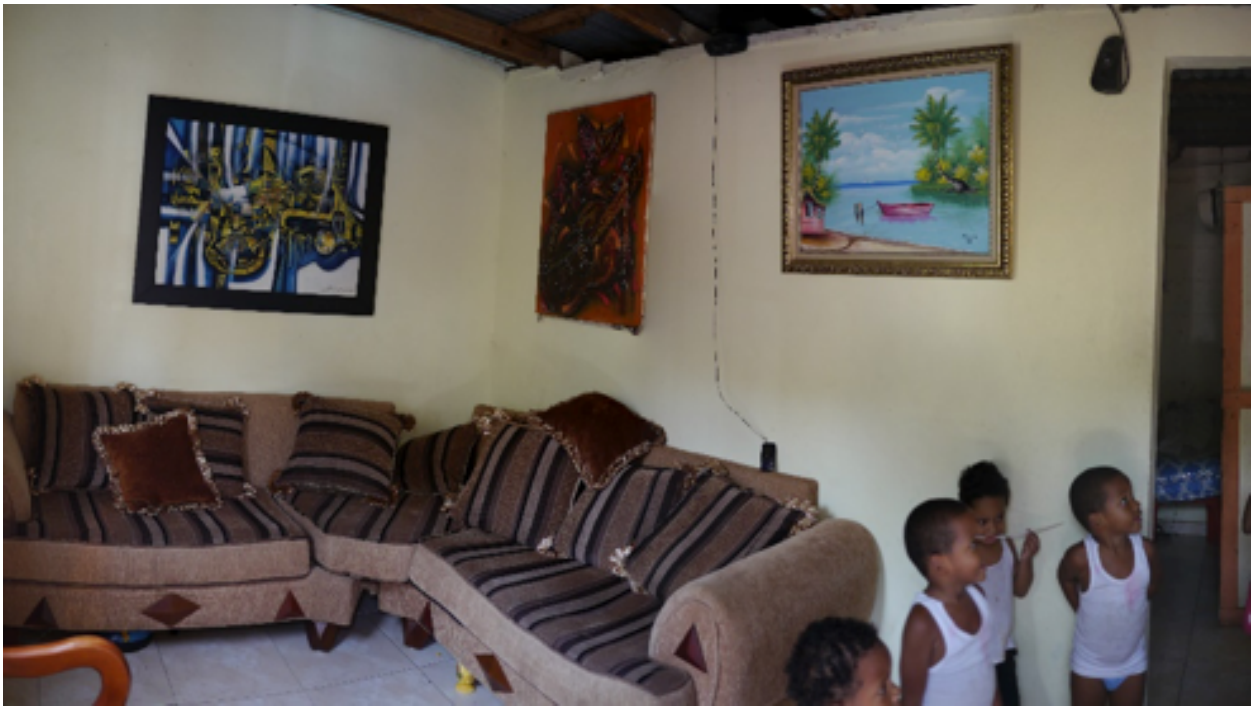


Figure 3

Figure 3. In the Dominican Republic, living rooms are commonly held to be a social area of the house for visitors or adults, in which children are not allowed to play or sit. Source: Carlos Juan Mateo (2015).

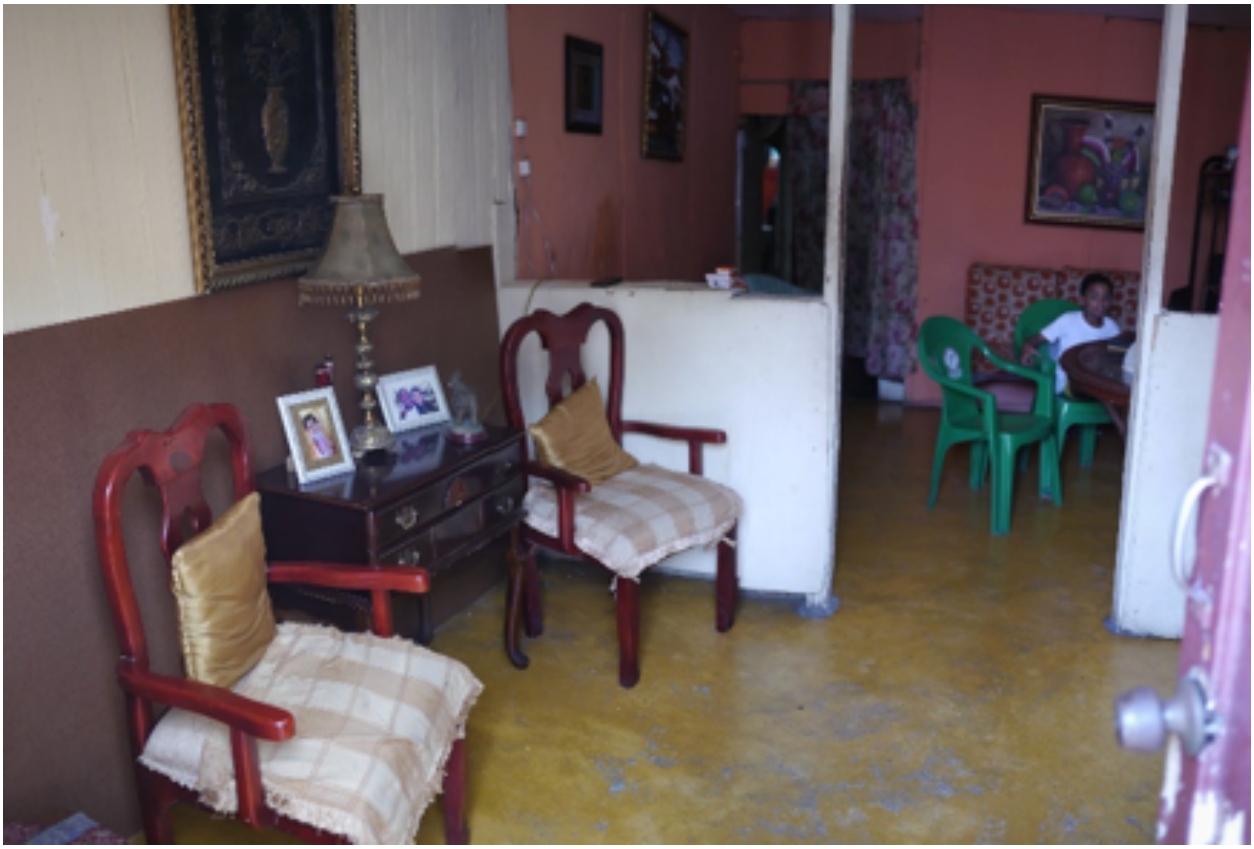
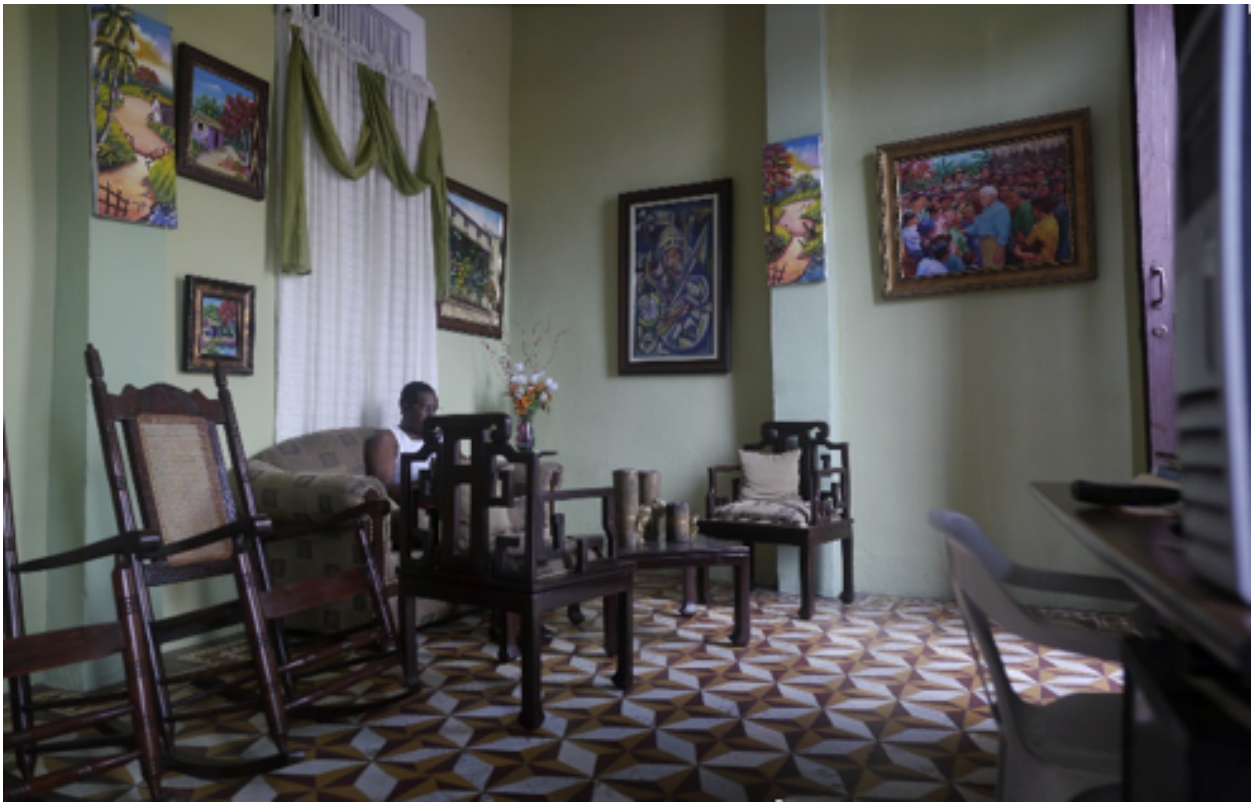


Figure 4

Figure 4. These chairs have arms that would most likely place them at the head at the table, where hierarchy is implied. On the other hand, the seat cushion is of a light colour and has been covered with a patterned cloth. Has anyone ever sat on the light coloured cushion or are they waiting for a special occasion? Source: Carlos Juan Mateo (2015).



Figures 5

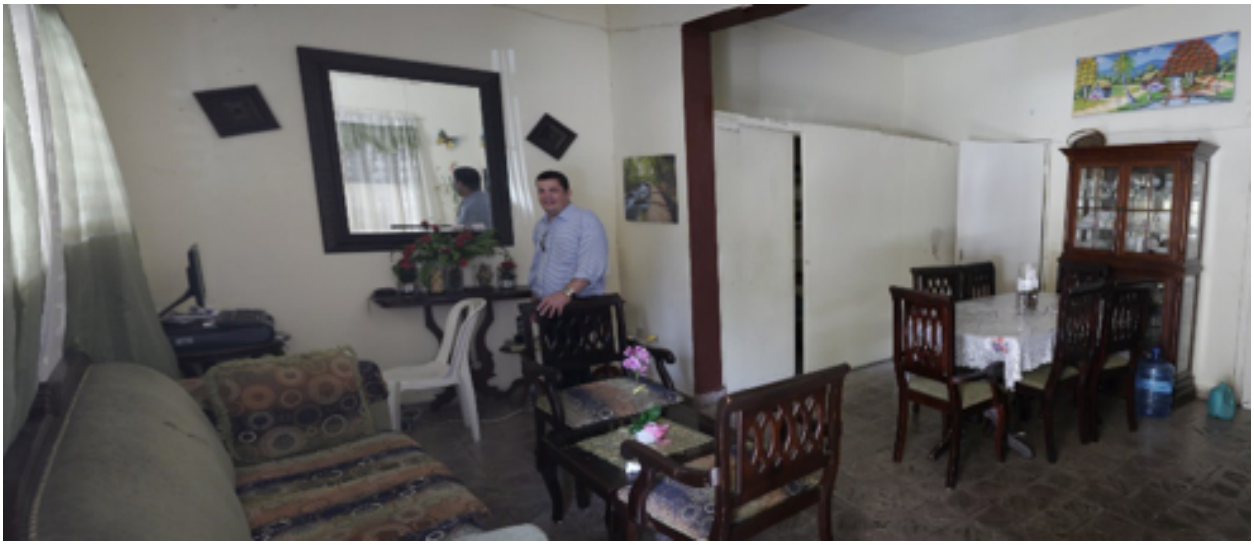


Figure 6

Figures 5 and 6. The white chairs in both pictures are the ones used most often. Are we avoiding treating others like we treat ourselves? Does the undercurrent of this idea hold a relation to the foreign being of more prestige or importance than the local? Source: Carlos Juan Mateo (2015).

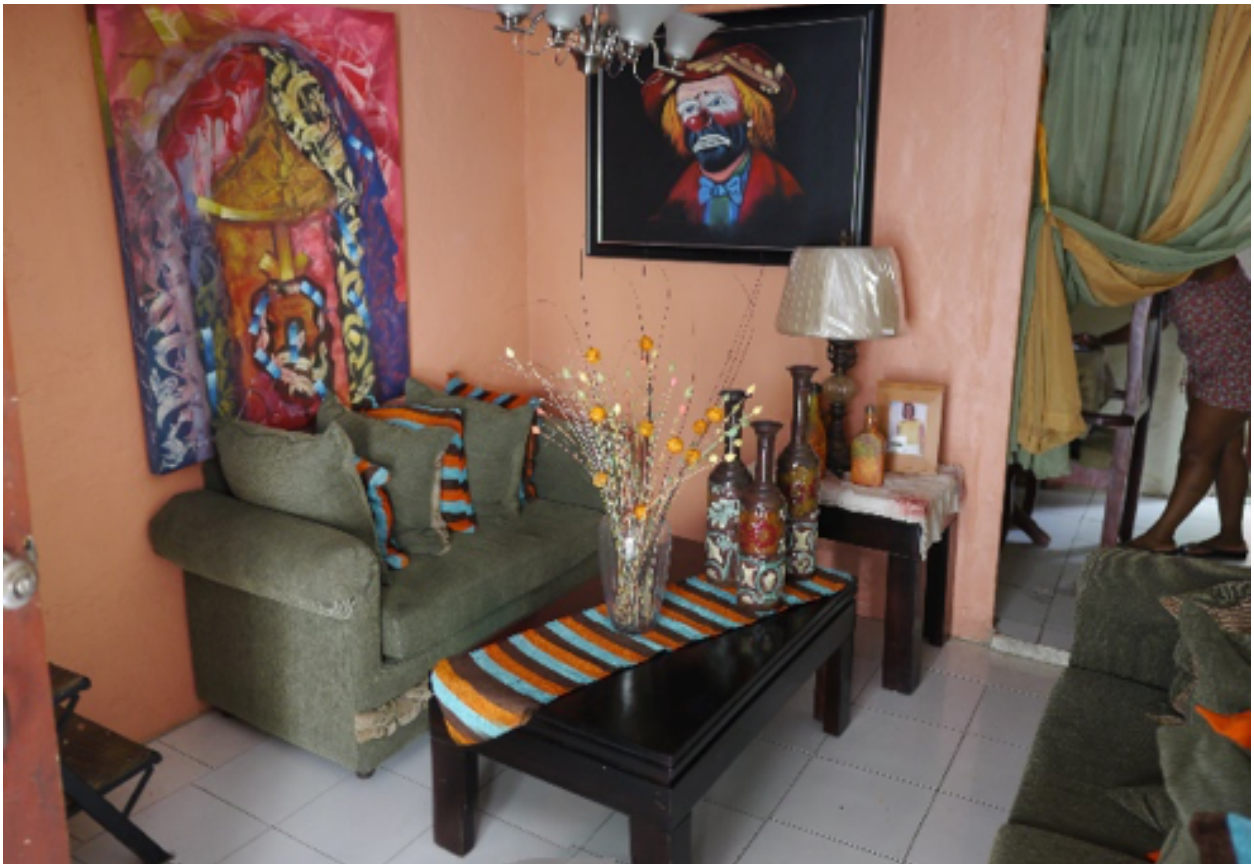


Figure 7

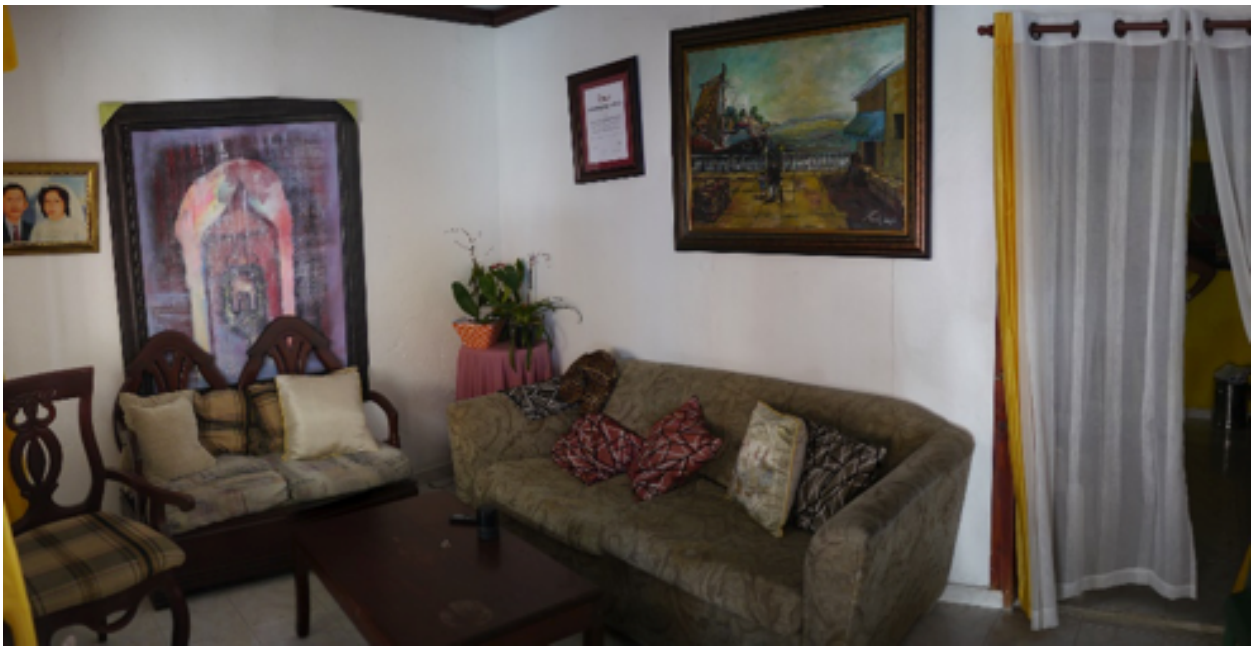


Figure 8

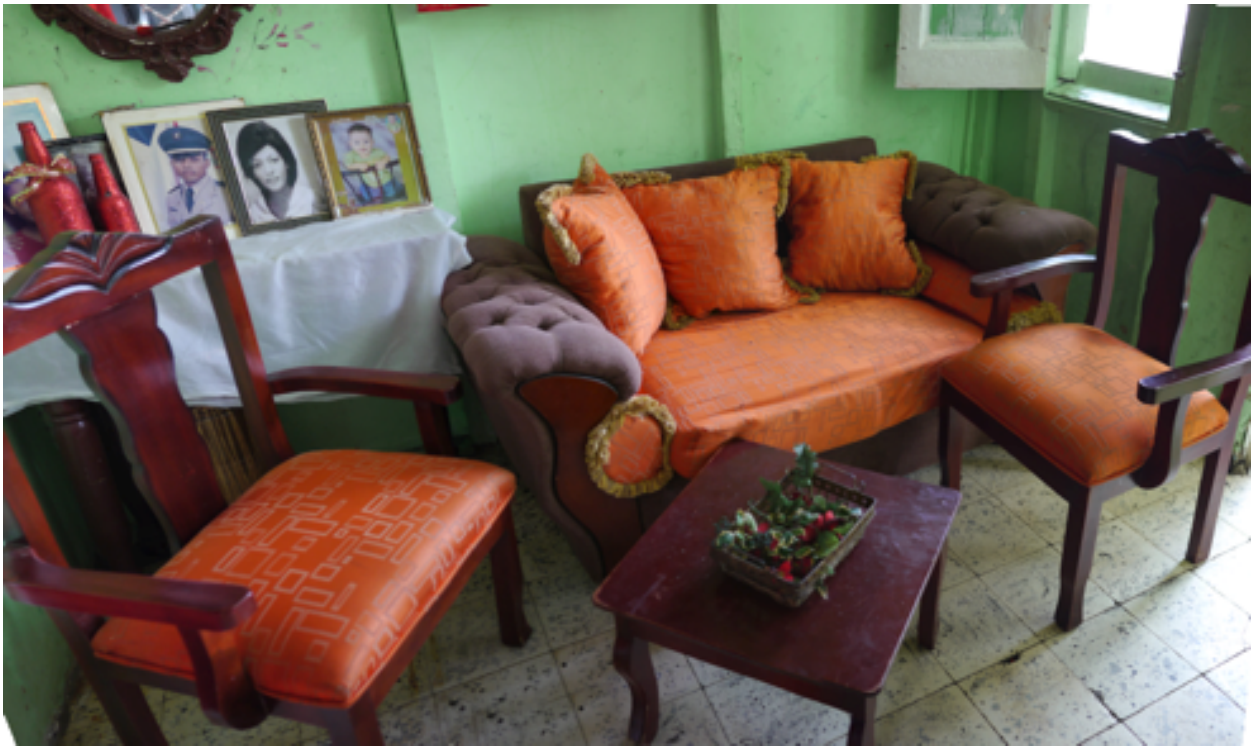


Figure 9

Figures 7, 8 and 9. In these interiors of Dominican houses, note how domestic aesthetics not only show who we are (pictures of family) but how we want to be perceived (successful with diplomas that demonstrate we are professionals, religious, etc.) As women's domain it is valued for formality and respectability, an extension of what is expected of women. Source: Carlos Juan Mateo (2015).

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CARIBBEAN REVIEW OF GENDER STUDIES
A Journal of Caribbean Perspectives on Gender and Feminism

The Internet is Cool, Scholarship is Cold and Beyoncé is a Feminist: Reflections on the Popular Action Assignment in *Introduction to Women's Studies*

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Introduction

In this gender dialogue I write from the standpoint of a socialist feminist man, first as a graduate student and research assistant of the Institute for Gender and Development Studies at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus and then as an activist involved in the *depatriarchal*[1] struggle for gender justice in the Caribbean. From this position I argue for a greater emphasis on a critique of neoliberal discourse by Caribbean feminist theorising in order to productively engage the experiences and trajectories of Caribbean youth today.

In my experience teaching in the classroom, I have observed the disconnect between the course material's concepts and students' application of feminist principles. More and more, there is a clear-cut and unambiguous gap in the ability of the readings to communicate effectively to the women (and men) about gender oppression in their lives as constituted by structural inequalities.

I enter this dialogue by reflecting on Gabrielle Hosein's "Activism in Academia: Twenty-first-Century Caribbean Feminist Dilemmas" (2012) and her evaluation of the popular action assignment in the course, Introduction to Women's Studies. This dialogue is intended to contribute to the creative potential of Caribbean feminism to build bridges with a generation of younger Caribbean women and men, in particular, the female students, who constitute the majority of the class as seen in the table below:

Semester/Academic Year	Number of Female Students	Number of Male Students	Total Number of Students
SI/2013-2014	65	7	72
Summer/2013-2014	11	4	15
SI/2014-2015	61	7	68
SI/2015-2016	45	5	50

Enrollment for GEND1103: Introduction to Women's Studies

Popular Action Assignment in Introduction to Women's Studies

The Popular Action assignment was first introduced by Gabrielle Hosein in 2006 for students to "…engage in consciousness-raising, feel empowered to express their own perspectives and the perspectives of women on a range of issues, challenge male bias in various forms, and reflect on ways that Women's Studies could remain connected to women's movements." (Hosein 2012, 356). While students bemoan the complexities of social dynamics in group work, many of them express a sense of gratification with this project because it involves them in a learning activity external to the classroom as well as an evaluation based on creativity and participation criteria.

Among groups of three to five, students identify a contemporary gender justice issue and its implications for women, then they develop a feminist analysis of the issue with the application of course readings and, finally, conceptualise a creative action to engage the campus community. For example, in 2013, one of the most outstanding popular actions to date was a group's design of "Manopoly", a board game that illustrated the ways in which patriarchy subordinates women and privileges men. The popular action, therefore, is a tool for feminist consciousness-raising that challenges restrictive gender ideologies. Making the case for activist activities and knowledge production in academia, Hosein (2012, 355) argues that women and gender studies are useful tools and sites for feminist consciousness-raising and movement-building in the Caribbean today.

A consistent theme has emerged in the popular actions over the past three years. Overwhelmingly, the gender justice issues of choice have centred on sexual politics – sex-positive messaging, slut walks and beauty – but also a very individualised form of women's liberation through a 'self-empowerment' narrative. Hennessy (2002, 83-84) notes the "retreat from concepts and critical frameworks that explain and combat the ravages of capitalism" in feminist

theory in the late twentieth century for a greater investment in knowledge production around postmodern and identity analyses. For example, students possess an acute awareness of the ways in which gender ideologies define and confine women's sexuality, and they challenge its absoluteness. At the same time, students fail to make connections to women sex workers who are both materially subordinated and denied on multiple levels the ability to express their sexuality. This illustrates the challenge students have in linking both the economic and cultural dimensions of gender, as well as the interactions of these dimensions in shaping women's lives; that is, an analysis that focuses on women from the standpoint of both the category and the individual.

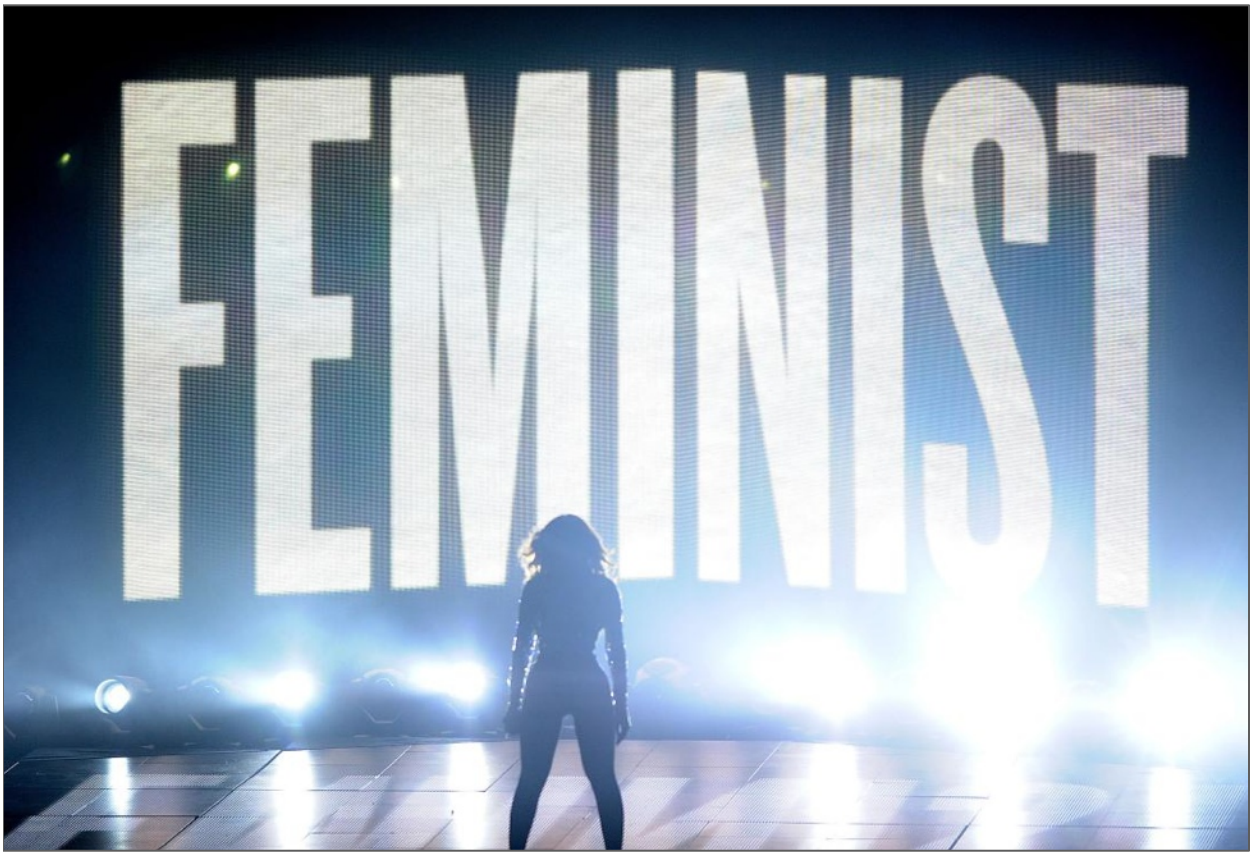
Hosein observes that students showed concerns for political issues on a personal level but generally failed to offer a broader structural analysis of material and power inequalities that come to shape the everyday oppression in women's lives. She articulates, "Students didn't bring a sense of global, institutional or structural analysis to class discussions, and in many ways I failed to explore adequately how food security, human rights, state health care, international trade rules or simply economic inequality were areas for feminist analysis and action" (Hosein 2012, 359). In this observation, Hosein (2012) responsibilises[2] herself and renders the problem as a pedagogical one. While her statement about "failure" may hold true to a certain extent according to her own account, this analysis does not interrogate more exhaustively into the context in which learning takes place in this historical moment. Notably, she does not solely blame herself for the limitation but also offers a criticism of liberal feminism. Hosein (2012, 357) puts forward that the advance of liberal conceptions of feminism over a number of decades has produced discourses and understandings of empowerment in terms of "personal choice and individual freedom", which accounts for young women's sense of not feeling oppressed. While Hosein (2012) explicitly states these are liberal notions, the intervention I suggest that she is touching upon is a veiled emergence of neoliberal impositions on feminism.

Feminists have described the contemporary gender terrain as "post-feminist" (Barriteau 2002; Mc Robbie 2009) or as situated in a "Third Wave" in which students encounter feminism as "an amorphous set of ideas and practices" (Mohammed 2003, 27). Such feminists were at that time speaking of the tendency of women, especially young women, to be reticent about declaring or identifying themselves as feminist. In fact, contrary to young women's fear of self-identifying with feminism (Jowett 2004), lately, there has been an amplified affirmation of the 'feminist' as a label. One asks, what then does identifying as a 'feminist' actually affirm?

Celebrity Brand Feminism

This is where celebrity brand feminism becomes accountable. In this section, I interrogate the representation of Beyoncé and what her 'FEMINIST' politics signify. I discuss her example only as a reference to a discursive practice of a wide number of contemporary female and some male performing artistes who make use of such labels. At the 2014 MTV Video Music Awards, R&B and musical icon Beyoncé portrayed, during her performance, a fully lit stage backdrop that read "FEMINIST" in bold, capitalised font. In 2013, she expressed her ambivalence about the label 'feminist' and considered herself a "modern-day feminist." A year later, she made her unambiguous declaration of feminism to a worldwide audience. Internet debates ensued for weeks after marking a moment, composed by a pattern among prominent female performing artistes today (e.g. Taylor Swift and Lady Gaga), that feminism has found its celebrity moment. Jessica Bennett (2014) posited:

> "No, you don't have to *like* the way Beyoncé writhes around in that leotard – or the slickness with which her image is controlled – but whether you like it or not, she's accomplished what feminists have long struggled to do: She's reached the masses. She has, literally, brought feminism into the living rooms of 12.4 million Americans."



Source: http://time.com/3181644/beyonce-reclaim-feminism-pop-star/ Accessed July 10, 2016.

Throughout the time that celebrities have re-branded feminism and presented it to wide audiences, there have been consequences for its politics. While one must value the multiple origins from which challenges to sexism and the promotion of gender equality emerge; there are two questions that Caribbean feminism must confront today in relation to this celebrity brand feminism: (i) What meanings are created when women's liberation is packaged in hypersexualised symbols that embody the ideals of capitalism? And (ii) what hope is there for the feminism that is not sexy, not on Twitter with millions of followers, and does not have bright lights on the big stage?

Hosein (2014) observes: "Beyonce's brand champions women as flawless and sexy, smart and powerful, economically in control and unanswerable to the politics of respectability. It also sells sex as it sells feminism. Indeed, here, sex sells

feminism, potentially popularising a narrower project [rather] than dismantling the beauty myths still packaging the meanings of female sexuality. What do hypersexual feminisms do for kinds that are not or refuse to be sexy?"

Popularising feminism and introducing some of the language of gender equality to worldwide audiences is worthy of recognition because it provides an accessible entry point in popular media to many young people who may not have come across feminism outside of the academy. Be that as it may, feminism premised on individuated agency and 'sexy' terms as the most visible, reachable and operative form poses severe complications for collective action and solidarity-building in the Caribbean feminist movement.

Calling Neoliberalism Out

Neoliberal governance not only produces an economic model, it also produces a neoliberal rationality. The impact of neoliberal policy and its gender ramifications in Caribbean social and economic development has been well documented (Freeman 2000, Jayasinghe 2001, Trotz 1998). However, there is less literature from the Caribbean on an engagement with neoliberal discourse and neoliberal self-making in the region. Neoliberalism has co-opted language from the feminist movement and associated capitalist accumulation with self-empowerment and freedom in profound ways. Batliwala (2007) explains how words such as 'agency' and 'empowerment' have been co-opted by development agencies and their meanings have deviated from their more radical feminist roots. The meanings of the words themselves have lost their political character.

Cornwall, Gideon and Wilson call for a revised feminist engagement in order to expand the possibilities of social transformation in an age of the dominance of the neoliberal model of development and the 'mainstreaming' of gender. They

posit, "Challenging and potentially transforming existing relations of power involves not only empowerment but also resistance: the two are inextricably intertwined" (Cornwall, Gideon and Wilson 2008, 8).

Critiquing the re-emergence of popular literature on feminism in the context of business leadership and development, Rottenburg marks Sheryl Sandberg's *Lean In: Women, Work and the Will to Lead* (2013) as a shift in political culture from liberal feminism to a more pronounced and unmistakable system of neoliberal governmentality which produces a "new feminist subject." She notes:

> "Individuated in the extreme, this subject is feminist in the sense that she is distinctly aware of current inequalities between men and women. This same subject is, however, simultaneously neoliberal, not only because she disavows the social, cultural and economic forces producing this inequality, but also because she accepts full responsibility for her own well-being and self-care…The neoliberal feminist subject is thus mobilised to convert continued gender inequality from a structural problem into an individual affair" (Rottenburg 2013, 3).

For this reason, we must take notice of the (new) ways in which students in the classroom and Caribbean youth today come to understand feminism. There has been a reinvigoration of public debate and discussion on women's rights and sexism (for example, Amber Rose's slut-shaming campaigns and Beyoncé's 'feminist'-themed concert performances) in popular social media. However, this emergent feminism is fundamentally premised on individualistic expressions of agency and conforms to the impositions of the neoliberal lexicon and not the Caribbean women's movement that advanced collective action for social transformation.

The events and social interactions that students experience in their everyday lives occur in a neoliberal environment. The pervasiveness of neoliberal

rationality on gender ideologies and feminism itself requires further study. Understandably, what manifests in the popular action assignment is that self-empowerment becomes a sufficient means to contribute to social justice within this logic.

"Googling" Caribbean Feminism

Gender courses, while often regarded as some of the more interesting courses in the social sciences and humanities at The UWI, carry a reputation for examining students on a heavy load of required course readings. Students routinely complain about the reading load, they are also unaware of the reduction in course readings twice in the past three years. Many young women and men, search the Internet exclusively for scholarship in preparation for assignments. Without discussing the complexities of education and online participation, I am more interested in asking: (i) What do Caribbean women and men discover when they Google "feminism"? More aptly, (ii) what pages 'pop up' when they command a search engine with the words "Caribbean feminism"?

A Caribbean feminist practice in digital culture is an emerging area of study. Haynes (2016, 3) defines online Caribbean feminisms as "extremely diverse, heterogeneous, and polyvocal." While Caribbean feminist bloggers have produced knowledge for over a decade online and scholars have begun documenting its impact and implications, more than often, blog writing and peer-reviewed journal articles from the North dominate search finds. Since searches rely heavily on 'hits', popular culture debates and celebrity-centred websites are highly visible on the Internet search engines rather than Caribbean writing and narratives. Simply put, what choices will the Caribbean youth make when presented with feminist theory in peer-reviewed journal articles by Antrobus and the catchy headlines of the Beyoncé and Taylor Swift interview? On the surface, one may think that these are two separate fields that are not in

competition; however, what is at stake is the epistemological standpoint from which young Caribbean women and men first come to understand feminism.

In the classroom, I witness the evidence of a gap in the knowledge and literature produced in the Caribbean (what we teach) and what young people access today on the Internet. On one level, the gap relates to access where youth reach information on the Internet more quickly than from a library search. On another level, there is a spacious gap between the language style and expression of Caribbean scholarship and online writing for popular consumption. Online Caribbean feminist resources such as *CODE RED for gender justice!* and blogs hosted by individual Caribbean feminists attempt to bridge these gaps in their own way. Simultaneously, we must understand that online and social media interactions often do not engage in long-term thinking for solutions and analysis. Moreover, it is highly problematic to establish the Internet as the lone site of legitimacy for Caribbean feminist thought and activism (Hosein 2016). Ultimately, for a generation that may have *Beyoncé's dreams but not Beyoncé's means*, 21st century Caribbean feminism is confronted with the task of advancing the feminist struggle on multiple platforms online and offline because it is not only feminism that is at stake but also the identity of Caribbean people.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we need to teach and produce more research that critiques neoliberalism in relation to gender power relations in the Caribbean. Neoliberalism is a structure of hegemony and dominance and our task is to name it explicitly and take it apart. In my opinion, celebrity brand feminism has developed taglines and hashtags out of the scholarship that feminists have produced over decades; they index the unsung labour of sustainable feminist epistemologies without engaging that labour and sacrifice in a committed manner. At the same time, we cannot leave sites of learning and participation in

feminist discourses unengaged; we are called to produce more popular writing and critical perspectives on accessible platforms and in accessible language in order to provide a generation of younger Caribbean readers and scholars with the tools for gender justice. After all is said and done, however, I maintain that pointing to structures, breaking capitalism and neoliberalism down and uncovering the social relations that shape inequalities in the lives of women and men are not always sexy, fun and 'likeable' – it is reality.

[1] *Depatriarchal* refers to theory and praxis that focuses on critiquing and transforming patriarchal system of power and epistemology. (Drayton, Richard. 2016. "Whose Constitution? Law, Justice and History in the Caribbean." Lecture delivered to the Judicial Education Institute of Trinidad and Tobago. Accessed September 18, 2016. http://www.ttlawcourts.org/jeibooks/books/djl2016.pdf)

[2] *Responsibilisation* refers to a discursive practice of neoliberal theory and governance that exclusively focuses on individuals and self-responsibility without an analysis of state accountability and social context. (See: Liebenberg, Linda, Michael Ungar and Janice Ikeda. 2013. "Neo-Liberalism and Responsibilisation in the Discourse of Social Service Workers." *British Journal of Social Work*: 1-16. Accessed September 15, 2016. http://bjsw.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2013/11/10/bjsw.bct172.full.pdf+html)

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Carnival Theatre: An Empowerment and Transformation Model for Long-term and Lifer Inmates at Trinidad's Maximum Security Men's Prison, Arouca

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Abstract

The paper explores the usefulness of Carnival Theatre as an empowerment and transformative process for long-term and lifer inmates in Trinidad's Maximum Security Prison. Carnival Theatre is an umbrella term for a process that includes the techniques of ritual, carnival, and theatre as well as the insights of restorative justice, mediation and transpersonal psychology. It is culturally-based, drawing on Trinidad's J'ouvert Carnival traditions as possible role models for agency and self-determination. Through engagement with traditional moves and speeches which both acknowledge and mock the social order and the status quo of the day, long-term and lifer inmates explore and evaluate notions of justice, identity, empowerment and transformation. The restorative justice, mediation and transpersonal psychology strands facilitate functional intra- and interpersonal relationships. Together the strands become part of a journey towards authenticity and individuation. The Carnival Theatre process exposes and underlines the need for strategies and techniques designed to explicitly address the *fundamental intra-personal base* of the Restorative Justice Policy. Its present application is not adequate for the particular needs of long-term and lifer inmates who, as the offenders, rarely if ever meet with the victims and/or larger community.

Key words: Carnival Theatre, Trinidad, lifer inmates, restorative justice

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Off Stage

During the 70s and 80s my Trinidad Tent Theatre Company gave a free Theatre of Carnival show every Sunday evening during a regular season aimed at children and young adults.

The intention was to preserve the characters and rituals mostly lost from the commercial extravaganzas of Trinidad's modern carnival. I wanted to demonstrate ways in which these same traditions and rituals could be used as tools for empowerment, transformation and authenticity. I also wanted to render our J'ouvert carnival traditions relevant to present experience. I did this through productions which incorporated local and global story lines. These Old Mas' shows paralleled the power struggles, fights, competition, threats, deceits and evasions of the Pierrot Grenade, the Midnight Robber, the Jab Jabs and Jab Molassi, the Dam 'Lorraine, Baby Doll etc.

What emerged, as well as Theatre of Carnival productions for the public, was the realisation that, while putting on a costume and engaging with the traditional moves and speeches which acknowledged and mocked the social order and the status quo of the day, performers could explore and evaluate conceptual frameworks and constructs, i.e. justice, identity, empowerment and transformation.

Eventually, by the late 80s/90s, a process emerged that I call Carnival Theatre. This is an umbrella term for traditions, methods and insights which include:

1. Carnival/Folk Traditions which foster freedom, release in the body, voice, imagination and emotions and which allow the expression of the dark underside of a person (Gross 1986, 127-132).

2. Modern dramaturgical theorists who believe that doing (beginning internally) provides an experience that allows recognition, change and transformation (Buys, Thomas & Roy 1991) off as well as on stage. Stanislavski (1967, 2004) places emphasis on analysis through physical actions (reaching the subconscious through the conscious); Artaud (1993) insists on the primacy of the spoken word over the written; Brecht (2001) focusses on historical stories to illuminate our own social ills in order to attain a critical perspective; Grotowski (1991) demands a method of preparation that actually compels actors to be truthful/ authentic (inmates should play their J'ouvert characters by playing, by exposing themselves); Boal (1992) insists that theatre is conflict, struggle, movement and transformation; Brook (1972) believes that truth emerges from any occupied space.

3. Psychosynthesis, which helps identify blocks and enables the exploration of the unconscious gradually retraining psychological functions so as to produce permanent positive change and transformation. Modern psychology recognises "the will's central position in man's personality and its intimate connection with the core of his being, his very self... (And) the will's function in deciding what is to be done, in applying all the necessary means for its realisation and in persisting in the task in the face of all obstacles and difficulties" (Assagioli, 1984, 6).

4. Mediation which is the putative conflict resolution tool for the transformative process that is Restorative Justice (Bush, Baruch and Folger 1994, Kruk 1997).

5. The Enneagram Personality Inventory and Profile's system of personality types, a psychological typology, and a way of understanding human personality while offering recommendations for improvement (Aspell and Aspell 1997).

6. The DJ Assessment which facilitates the recognition of patterns of functioning particularly in relation to problem solving, to power, choice and interpersonal relationships (Jones, Vinton and Wornick 1999).

Music and Curtain Up

In July 2011 the Commissioner of Prisons, John Rougier, granted me permission to test the Carnival Theatre process as an empowerment and transformative model for a group of long-term/lifer inmates in the Maximum Security Prison in Arouca. We both believed that "In an attempt to facilitate personal transformation (and thus precipitate institutional transformation) we must honour the principles of equality, relationship and justice" (McCormick 1999, 306). He also stressed that "Best practice shows that inmate-run programmes are more effective than consultant programmes. The understanding of inmates by inmates is critical to turning one's life around" (Address at Opening Ceremony of the Carnival Theatre programme at the Women's Prison, Golden Grove, 2009). I believed that the Carnival Theatre process could afford the more institutionalised inmates the opportunity to re-visit and re-evaluate their stories and experiences as possible springboards to empowerment and transformation. I also put forward the possibility that reliance on "outside" facilitators could in time be transferred to the inmates and officers, thereby making the programme self-sustaining.

September-December 2011 saw the completion of the following participant entry points: the Enneagram Personality Profiling; the Don Jones Assessment; and an Initial Entry Questionnaire and a Basic Entry Record - both structured so as to gain facts regarding family, education, and courses completed outside and within the prison as well as the nature of the crime, entry and expected exit dates.

January-June 2012 saw a further development of the techniques, traditions, rituals and insights of the Carnival Theatre process through the compilation of a manual/workbook. The manual covers areas such as personal reflection for insights into self-esteem; offending behaviours; self-improvement; values; transpersonal qualities; the psychological development of caregivers and children; lifelong-learning; goal-setting for re-integration; self-management and self-reliance; nutrition/diet and exercise; hygiene; coping with stress; sexuality; sexually transmitted infections (STIs); drugs; HIV/AIDS; non-verbal communication; verbal communication; image; leadership; team-building; anger management; and dealing with abuse.

During September-December 2012 the programme participants trained in specific practical skills including camera, positioning, lighting, sound, staging, performing, story boards etc., under the direction of theatre and film/video professionals from *Sasi Caribbean*. This company also offered video commercial internships to two of the officer participants.

What began basically as a research project morphed into The Maximum Security Prison Brown Cotton Outreach Film/Theatre Programme (hereafter MSP BCO Film/Theatre Programme). We decided from the onset that I, as producer/ director, along with my assistant Wayne Lee Sing, the assigned prison officers and inmate participants would be the performers and the researcher/subjects of the programme.

Together we worked out a constitution and I brought in the equipment (financed through private donations) for recording and filming, as well as cloth, dyes/glitter for the construction of basic brown cotton costumes, costume bits and pieces, books, light backpacks complete with folders, paper, pens and pencils. We also structured rituals around greeting, eating together (I would bring sandwiches etc. or a birthday cake, or an inmate's family might add to our humble celebration) and parting. We also expanded the experiential work

through interaction with specially invited mentors/facilitators. These experts in their fields facilitated theatre movement, stick fighting and choreography, voice training, composing and extemporising, calypso, patois chants, costume design, construction and embellishment, focusing, performance, filming and editing etc.

As a group we began a collaboration that produced a Theatre of Carnival musical called the *MSPappyshow: The Mas Partnership or the Costume Coalition or Playing Mas with Shakespeare*, rooted in local J'ouvert carnival ritual and folklore with appropriate quotes from Shakespeare for each character. My role was to outline the concept, choose the appropriate traditions, speeches, moves and calypsos while my colleague Wayne Lee Sing, with suggestions from the other officer and inmate participants, completed a satirical rhyming script.

One inmate used his excellent "extempo" skills to introduce the piece as the J'ouvert Bookman character. An inmate of 30 years, thirteen spent on death row, played our Midnight Robber and introduced himself as follows:

> "I am the dreaded Midnight Robber and I have come to instill horror, plague and devastation into the mind of every mortal animal be he man, woman, child or beast. I come from the direction of the rising sun. Heralding nothing but darkness, death and destruction. I fear no one but all fear I. I am more venomous than the Cobra! More vicious than the panther, fiercer than the tiger and faster than the Toyota! Cool!
>
> And now in de words of de Immortal Bard Shakespeare I declare like Aaron in *Titus Andronicus:* Act 5 Sc. 1 and Sc. 3"
>
> 'Oft have I digg'd up dead men from their graves,
>
> And set them upright at their dear friends' door
>
> Even when their sorrows almost was forgot,
>
> And on their skins, as on the bark of trees,

Have with my knife carved in Roman letters
'Let not your sorrow die though I am dead.'
Tut, I have done a thousand dreadful things
As willing as one would kill a fly;
And nothing grieves me heartily indeed
But that I cannot do ten thousand more.'
As you can see we vex too bad!"

Shifting institutional protocols within the Maximum Security Prison meant that ultimately, the performance never took place. Disappointment precipitated a lively questioning and debate (peppered with 'we told you so' remarks) about the future of the programme. Consequentially we moved on, painfully, from reliance on institutional approval to a consideration of the Carnival Theatre process as a spiritual journey towards empowerment, transformation leading (hopefully) to self-realisation and individuation. A brief video was completed for the ICOPA[1] conference as well as an Independence advertisement for television.

We determined that The MSP BCO Film/Theatre Programme would depict a collaborative (interpersonal), integrated (inner and outer, transpersonal and philosophical, mind and body, emotions/reason and will), radical (gets to the root of power), unconventional (two media) work of what Mi-Jean (Walcott 1970) called 'big knowledge' troubling (interrogating) knowledge itself in the service of restoration, empowerment and transformation. We would trouble established knowledge by 'performing' it. We believed with Freire that "No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption" (Freire 1970, 54). As a collective we set out to use our four hours on a Friday to identify discourses and practices that affect empowerment, restoration and transformation. We set out to demonstrate to the greater prison

population and their families, prison authorities, and hopefully, general audiences throughout the region, how the Carnival Theatre process troubles labelling, stigmatising and gender stereotyping and affects agency, transformation and individuation.

We wove theories, philosophies and methodologies as subtexts (laid out in Acts 1, 2, 3, 4 and their scenes) to the plot, music, lyrics and rituals of rehearsals and performance.

Act 1

We begin by acknowledging our lack of power (Batliwala 2007, 557-65) recognising the ways in which as a result power is sought; how it might be expressed pathologically, explicitly through violence, manipulation or coercion, implicitly through passive aggression and half-heartedness.

Scene I

We identify the phenomena of exclusion, victimisation, alienation, marginalisation, and labelling with the question of 'recognition'. We understand that when an individual does not experience him/herself as a fully recognised (validated, legitimated, accepted) member of society, he/she may then turn to violence; violence expressed in a failure or refusal to adequately harness social and institutional resources to advance her/his own interests and ends; or violence expressed through the development of a psychological identity and public persona of both victim (of the social structure) and aggressor (of those in his/her social word).

Most seriously, we identify this lack, this violence or lack of care with a reduction in both inter-relationship and collective agency.

We understand that the phenomena of exclusion etc. are extenuated, not ameliorated, by experience of the correctional system (Braswell, Fuller and Lozoff 2001, 72-75).

Scene II

We identify the problem within the prison system as one of recognition. Our retributive justice system mostly perpetuates dysfunctional forms of recognition. It gives rise to a 'them' versus 'us' bias and bigotry played out dramatically through power play - power sustained through the domination/subordination matrix within practices, institutions and technologies. We identified the life skills of most of the inmates as those crystallised around survival through street-smart and so-called deviant activities, making the possibility of a better and crime-free life post incarceration nearly impossible. (Howe and Rennie 1981) Inmate stories illuminated the fact that disempowerment precipitates and enables further disempowerment (Foucault 1977).

We assess the implications of the prison's acceptance of Restorative Justice as a philosophy and a process that acknowledges that when a person does harm, it affects the person(s) they hurt, the community and themselves. We examine the usefulness of this philosophy of restoration, this adjunct to the Retributive Justice System, for long-term and lifer inmates. Mediation is its conflict-resolution tool and in its present application is useful as an interpersonal negotiation process between offender and victim. It is not adequate for the particular needs of long-term and lifer inmates who, as the offenders, rarely if ever meet with the victims and/or larger community.

The Carnival Theatre process exposes and underlines the need for strategies and techniques designed to explicitly address the *fundamental intra-personal base* of the Restorative Justice Policy. We see the need for a dialogue between the

various sub-personalities and 'voices' within the individual (Assagioli 1986). By deliberating questions such as "what gives me unity as a person?" we initiate vivid and powerful experiences, which remind us that we are infinitely more than whatever we *think* we are; more than criminal, poet, teacher, mother, father, or insurance salesperson.

Scene III

We set out our methodology, which is *intersectional* in its inter- and multi-disciplinary approach, particularly in describing disempowerment; *individual* in focusing on *intra*personal transformation in the inner life of the individual; and *inductive* in its empirical, bottom-up approach.

Scene IV

We spell out the umbrella term Carnival Theatre as a process which engages with theories and methods already outlined in the Offstage/Introduction i.e. Mediation, Carnival/Folk Traditions, Modern Dramaturgical theorists, Psychosynthesis, The Enneagram Personality Inventory and Profile, The DJ Assessment etc. These methods are 'put into practice' through engagement with our MSP Film/Theatre Manual/Workbook and through interaction with specially invited mentors/facilitators for theatre movement, stick fighting and choreography, voice training, composing extempo and calypso, patois chants, costume design, construction and embellishment, focusing and performance, for example.

Act 2

We define key concepts and critical terms required for an analysis of the Carnival Theatre process and its relationship to personal transformation. We begin with power, "the moving substrate of force relations which…are always local and unstable" (Foucault 1990, 3).

Scene I

We turn to the social sciences looking to power as resource and as a process of inter-relation between parties and not as a simple measure of force (Blalock 1989, Ellis and Anderson 2005). While process theory does not underestimate the challenges in engaging with large established institutions and their accompanying discourses i.e. law, correctional services, education and so on, its *raison d'être* is that all is not lost. Transformation is possible and this transformation is capable of social expression and instantiation. It takes the emphasis off the accumulation of resources onto their skillful deployment.

Since the lived reality of the inmates is almost complete disenfranchisement from authorised forms of power, developing the notion that "I am a powerful, capable and authentic human being" became the important function of the MSP BCO Film/Theatre Programme. We looked to a *process* theory of power, which entails *performance* resulting in *production*. We saw *Performance* as a developmental process that facilitates re-empowerment. *Production* is where the skills emerge that can later be deployed in the market place i.e. specific skills emerged as we developed, wrote and taped educational life skills interactive pieces.

Scene II

We move to the MSP BCO Film/Theatre Programme's engagement with ritual. Rooting everything in the physical, we 'jump up' using elementary ritualistic

sensory-motor experiences such as up and down, in and out and left and right; we use calypsos, which urge us to 'move to the right, move to the left', 'put your hand in the air', 'get something and wave', or 'jump, jump' which become mantras inducing a meditation on the basic experiences of the body. Such meditation Campbell asserts is a persistent feature of human civilisation and Geertz discusses as an interpretative tool for the explanation of human society (Campbell 1976, 135-298, Geertz 1993, 27-29). The Carnival Theatre process deploys and appropriates the symbolic content of ritual critically to facilitate growth, development, transformation and autonomy. Using Rorty (1988, 257-282) who suggested a post-modern liberalism in which autonomy was simply the best argument at the moment, and Ricoeur's (1969, 349-350) emphasis on a place 'beyond' the critical to a 'second naiveté', we argue that our local myths/ stories around a J'ouvert experience can be deployed and engaged in the service of individual autonomy and identity.

Scene III

We move to a transpersonal conception of transformation and acknowledge that human existence consists of multiple layers of reality, the physical, the organic and the symbolic. Our agenda is to use transformation, understood in this way, to search for hypocrisies, double standards, and conscious or unconscious exclusions hidden by ideology. A starting point in interrogating these disguised contradictions is in the area of gender.

Scene IV

We take on board Barriteau's (1998) description of gender as a social construct. We look to the work of Butler (1990) and identify with her insistence on identity through performativity, applying this insight as we perform the J'ouvert characters. Butler also provides an opening for subversive action. The 'inversion'

displayed by the J'ouvert carnival characters depicts one example of how Trinidad's ole' mas' and J'ouvert carnival traditions themselves trouble gender.

Scene V and V1

We remember the subversion of the early J'ouvert characters. We remember, through enactment, the jamettes, the stickfighters, prostitutes, chantuelles, matadors and dustmen who lived in appalling conditions in the barrack yards of East Port of Spain; who played their mas' disrespectful of the mores of polite society and found in Carnival a necessary, empowering release from their daily struggle.

We perform the jamette/J'ouvert characters to challenge entrenched identities of victimhood and postponed responsibility. Performance allows us to occupy a space in which to see ourselves and our situations in a new way that involves choosing and debate. Performance allows the possibility to experience transformative 'moments' as we make conscious and examine the discourses and practices that affect empowerment (Mosedale 2005, 243-257). We look to Gebser (1985, 37) and his insistence that many of the structures of consciousness are made explicit in the process of theatre.

Empowerment and transformation through the Carnival Theatre process mean appropriating our local archetypes as an opportunity to understand how "carnival offers the chance to have a new outlook on the world, to realise the relative nature of all that exists, and to enter a completely new order of things" (Bakhtin 1984, 34) and to see, perhaps, that "A culture, imperceptibly deviating from empirical orders prescribed for it by its primary codes frees itself sufficiently to discover that these orders are perhaps not the only possible ones or the best ones" (Foucault 1989, xxii).

Act 3

Scenes 1 & 2

We examine an intersectional model of personal identity, an integrated account that pays attention to the phylogenetic/collective (Habermas 1997; Rasmussen 1990, 9-12), and the ontogenetic/individual elements of personal identity (Taylor 1991, 32-3). We see a person as an historical being, grounded in and formed by memories, traumas, repressed fears and historical injustices. With Gebser we believe that we are co-authors of our struggles in life, dismissing concepts of 'chance' and 'destiny' (Gebser 1985, 41). We replace them with the idea of manifesting inner intentions (Wilber 1981, 1996, 250).

Act 4

Scene I

We describe the Carnival Theatre process philosophically as post-modern in rejecting foundationalism, natural law, essentialism etc. and Kantian in embracing autonomy and dignity.

Scene II

We draw on Assagioli (1984), Jung (1983, 87) and Wilber (2007, 120-122) to describe the Carnival Theatre process as transpersonal, setting out the relevant aspects of a transpersonal approach in its rejection of reductive materialism, its re-imagining of the role of thinking and its reconsidering forms of logic.

We look to Wilber (2000), Murphy (1992) and Thompson (1981), who make much use of contemplative traditions often referring to Murti (1960, 211-212). Murti, in his classic study of "Middle Path" Buddhism, explains why thinking - intellectual

processing - does not yield full insight into a matter of personal transformation "thought does not exhaust the modes of our cognition" (Murti 1960, 330). There are understandings and ways of knowing that exist beside and complement disciplined thinking i.e. intuition, hunch, and the sub-conscious and dream work.

Scene III

We define authenticity as the quality of relationship to self, other and process (Sartre 1984, 93–94). We see authenticity as being closely linked to transformation, the central theme of our programme, but also distinct from transformation. Although there can be authenticity without transformation, particularly in its outward political expression, there is no healthy transformation without authenticity.

Scene IV

Since the Carnival Theatre process seeks to be politically emancipative we draw on the Frankfurt School and critical theory. We link its Marxist understanding of the collective with Jung's conception of the collective unconscious. We address both believing that by facilitating *intra*personal change à la Jung, *inter*personal change à la Marx occurs.

Scene V

We examine what it means to be epistemologically embodied. The Carnival Theatre process focuses on and is located in the body. We reject a dualism that historically prioritises the "mind" over the "body." We recognise the body as the venue for and conduit of emotional trauma and transformation. We believe that all personal change is embodied change.

Act 5

We move beyond, below and above the theory to the practical, to experiential work. Each session begins ritually with individual greetings until finally we all sit in a circle. This may lead to engagement with a particular section of the manual/ workbook, or to the need for clarification about some theoretical, philosophical or methodological point already presented and discussed i.e. responsibility-taking in spite of life circumstances and problems. (Glasser 1999).

At some point there is physical engagement which will entail learning or rehearsal of movements, chants, calypsos, monologues etc. If some teaching vignettes around perhaps anger, violence, best communication practices, empowerment, authenticity or transformation are worked out they will be filmed/taped. Indeed each session is taped and downloaded onto the programme's computer.

Homework is set out for the next session and we conclude with more informal discussions around national and world news and issues as we eat the sandwiches/snacks provided by me.

In September 2016 we began a new two-year programme. Three inmates and one Officer have moved on to become trainee facilitators. They take participants through the manual, help develop appropriate scripts for performance in venues outside the prison and run necessary rehearsals on Monday and Wednesday. This is the main way in which we can establish the programme as a self-sustaining one for long-term and lifer inmates. The new Superintendent of Prisons is now in the process of allocating specific spaces for storage, filming and class work. Some basic funding has been promised to replace/upgrade our donated equipment. We have also been promised our own compact sound system with six (6) body microphones.

Epilogue

Thus far we conclude that the Carnival Theatre process is uncomfortable with happy endings, resolved outcomes or anything that smacks of easy results. Instead, we recognise that the most authentic life still has ephemeral, fallible and incomplete aspects and elements. We are in good company. T.S. Elliot said that there is no being 'right' about Shakespeare; the best we can hope for is to be wrong about him in a new way. In this sense, the best possible outcome of the Carnival Theatre process is to get things 'wrong' but in a fresh and illuminating fashion. In the same vein, Samuel Beckett enjoined us to 'fail again, fail better'. The Carnival Theatre process attempts just this, trying to fail better than before.

The Carnival Theatre process, like the Trinidad Carnival itself, is characterised by offerings, attempts, initiatives and efforts that, once used, are strewn by the side of the road. There is only looking forward, trying again, showing up. This is perhaps the first reason for focusing the process in the prison system. It is because in prison, the main freedom the incarcerated participants, and indeed the officers and this writer have, is to 'show up', to be present in mind and body, to attend with our senses.

This gives us a second reason that helps explain this focus on some inmates and officers at the Maximum Security Prison. It's here that the Christian-inspired ethos of revenge, punishment, rehabilitation, forgiveness and redemption mates with the modern secular imperative of social order, coercion, predictability and stability. The Carnival Theatre process offers no religious solace or guarantee of safety. It does not hope for an order of things. From this perspective it comes from hell. Jab Jab.

A third reason for deploying the process in the prison setting is that the inmate/ officer/director participants identify with and legitimise the struggle that the process itself experiences for acceptance, integration, inclusion, belonging and

recognition. Obviously the notion that the performance, that the work itself, troubles knowledge must also embrace the fact that it is itself troubled by its plight to be embraced, acknowledged and recognised, while also insisting on its autonomy.

Our conclusion then is no happy ending, just the next thing. No dramatic outcome, just the promise to try to fail better this time. No cure, just radical self-acceptance and unconditional regard of the other. We hope this is enough.

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[1]The YouTube links to: 1) A piece done for the ICOPA Conference held here a few years ago at The UWI https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJEwHTrUO1c and a 50-second short "film" done as an entry to the Trinidad Film Festival's competition for T&T's 50th Anniversary of Independence. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XgIMyWaKVik. These links are not open to the public.

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Susannah/ Lucille
and
Dolores

Excerpts from "Pathology", a series of poems in "Swallowing the Sky"

Cane Arrow Press, 2015

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Susannah/ Lucille

"Susannah" was too hard to say

Her Chinese bosses said "Lucille"

Lucille had a better ring

And got one

Gold

"Susannah Abraham" she shed like old, tight skin

Became

Lucille Gonzales

Baptist

Mother

Beyond reproach

It had been Susannah

Who'd met Rambaran Ramdeen

His father owned the bus she took

Disowned the child she bore

I searched for Susannah

In my grandmother's face

Found only Lucille

When Charlie Abraham put her out

Susannah died

Dolores

Lynn had been

Susannah's nigger child

Bastard born

Doubly disowned

Shuffled from hand to hand

A pack of cards

Marasmic

Hollow eyed

She survived the Convent schooling

That Susannah paid for by waiting tables

In a Chinese restaurant

Charlie Abraham's daughter brought low

Susannah never called her Lynn

She called her Dolores

Woman of Sorrows

Lady of Tears

By her own admission

Dolsie studied boys, not books

Followed in

Susannah's footsteps

Soon enough

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The Soroptimists
and
The Misogynist

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The Soroptimists

His perception twisted
Wrapped
In a patriarchal coil,
So to him It was
A passage of rite to manhood;
So like Winston Spree
Hammering on the oil drums
He clobbered her;
And just when he was about to
Pound to hear the sound
Of her screams once more
His hands became frozen with fear.
And like a shy child he looked up
At her.
All he saw was a capital "S"
Boldly imprinted on the chest
Jeering at him so he hid his face.
Her cape lifted in the wind by her
Economic power
So she no longer depended on men like him.
She wore head gear labelled "E" education,
Which protected her from ignorance
Of subjugation to exploitation.
He tried to get up
To thrash her,
Like he was accustomed to,

But he could not move his hands,
Sudden narcoleptic
Sleep paralytic
By the Soroptimist who stood between them,
Superbly dressed with an "S" on her chest
She was no rookie at this.
She worked assiduously
For many years outfitting women,
So they would not subject themselves to feet
which trampled them abase.
He laid almost helpless,
Because a network of NGOs stood behind her;
An army of Soroptimists,
Like Hazel Brown and Nesta Patrick,
Terminating disenfranchisement,
Reproducing empowerment,
So women and girls would no longer
Be the pleasure of the abuser's hammer.
His alcoholic breath wept,
Because he knew
That he would never batter again.

* Dedicated to Hazel Brown and Nesta Patrick for their hard work towards empowerment of women and girls.

The Misogynist

Bathed in ignorance,

Machismo my fragrance.

Power and control,

Full my dinner bowl.

Abusive exploits I kiss and greet,

Boasting becomes bitumen paving the street.

Misogyny my mask,

Feminist odium my task.

But my true form fragility,

Presented as masculinity.

Strength is weakness

Glowing growing fleetness;

Power through coercion

Defeated by feminist revolution


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Book Review

of

Islam and the Americas

Edited by Aisha Khan

University Press of Florida, 2015

Patricia Mohammed
Professor of Gender and Cultural Studies
Campus Coordinator/Chair, School for Graduate Studies and Research
The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus

How to cite

Mohammed, Patricia. 2016. Review of *Islam and the Americas*, edited by Aisha Khan. *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies* 10: 194–199.

Editor Aisha Khan writes in her introduction, "This is a book about Muslims as they craft Islam in the new world of the Americas". Khan is not interested in Islamic origins and diasporic dispersions as a claim to authenticity but in the multiple ontological states of being Muslim. She is interested in how people in small undocumented communities who have had relatively long histories of Islamic practices live that experience and in so doing participate in the making of those societies.

Apart from the valuable overview introduction and another essay written by the editor that locates Islam at the congruence of the Old and New Worlds, and central in the making of the new world itself, the book has three sections: Part I – Histories: Presence, Absence, Remaking; Part II – Circulation of Identities, Politics of Belonging; and Part III: Spatial Practices and the Trinidadian Landscape.

Each essay transports us into the practice or peculiarity of Muslim practitioners in different geographical locations and each is a gem of a story that reveals something about the way in which people claim and own up to the faith of their ancestors. In Part I for instance, we are introduced to the Oriental hieroglyphics of the priesthood of freemasonry, a uniquely American order known as the Shriners – a sect located in New York and founded in 1878 and practiced differently by white and black adherents. The author of this piece, Jacob Dorman, demonstrates that Americans in the US have not always imagined Muslims and Arabs as enemies and have long been involved in producing romantic forms of orientalism. The essays take us through the US Asiatic association between Asian identity and Islam, to Javanese introduction of this religion in Surinam in the 1920s by the well-known Dutch historian Rosemarijn Hoefte and into a delightful post 9-11 piece about Puerto Ricans who identify themselves through related Muslim and hip pop identities that are synchronous and complementary to their continued defense of their faith.

Yarimar Bonilla's essay in Part II is another exegesis of elements that helped to shape the iconography of terror of Islam as it reverberated in the island of Guadeloupe. A well-known labour activist Michel Madassamy is arrested and cartooned as Ousamma Dassamy – the transference of the US war on terror being revisited in the local politics of Guadeloupe. Essays in this section also deal with Islam in Mexico, The Bahamas and Brazil, finding pockets of these believers in places one would rarely associate with this religion.

Part III hosts four essays in the island of Trinidad as an ethnographic study of Islam on this location. They include Rhoda Reddock's feminist analysis of Muslim women's struggle to reclaim masjid or mosque space in this society; Gabrielle Hosein's examination of the conflict between democracy, gender and Indian Muslim modernity, between political partnerships and spiritual correctness of followers of the *Anjuman Sunnatul Jamaat* in south Trinidad; Jeanne Roach-Baptiste looks at the issues around decriminalising the Jamaat Al Muslimeen and Madressa (the former a group associated with national unrest and a coup in 1990 and persistent association with crime and criminality); and my own essay traces the emergence of a recognisable religious iconography consistent with global Islamic aesthetics that have persisted in the strands of both African and Asian practices of Islam and currently increasing in visibility in this society.

The project of this book is a prescient one. Collectively the essays persuade us to read beyond the dominant scripts that continue to threaten the lives of innocent people who have engaged in their everyday observance of this religion, creating cultural variances that in general have enriched the communities, or states, or groups, or gendered categories. As always Aisha Khan is sensitive to gender nuances in her publications. For the reader interested in this area, the four essays in Part III that deal with Trinidad, however, all focus on different readings of gender within a range of Islamic communities in this island and collectively perhaps provide the most concentrated overview of Islam as it is received and variously practiced in one geographical space over time.

I take away another valuable and profound message from this collection that should be prominent as we continue to handle the messy politics around this religion in the 21st century.

On page 96, Nathaniel Deutsch quotes a 1914 text by historian Lothrop Stoddard whose insightful analysis of the Haitian and French revolutions leads him to conclude: "The world-wide struggle between the primary races of mankind – the 'conflict of color' as it has been happily termed, bids fair to be the problem of the twentieth century". Aisha Khan's culling together of historical, ethnographic and aesthetic analyses in *Islam in the Americas* positioned under the spreading banyan tree that shelters a disparate set of adherents globally, jolts us into another categorisation that has become ineffably fixed as we have moved into the 21st century. She underscores the racialisation of Muslims as the construction of a category based on religion rather than race or colour – reverberating other echoes of the past: orientalism versus Occidentalism, Christianity versus Islam, the Nazi demonisation of Jews in the Second World War, and before this, the justification of the Atlantic slave trade itself on religious grounds. The book is a serious reminder of the dangers of ignoring the variance between political and economic agendas of few, over the real lives of many. In an age where the word Islam echoes with the thunder of crumbling towers and terrorists' beards, the publication of *Islam and the Americas* is a brave and necessary book.


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Research Degrees awarded by IGDS, Nita Barrow Unit, Cave Hill

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Biographies

Lisa Allen-Agostini is a writer and editor from Trinidad and Tobago. She is reading for an MPhil in Interdisciplinary Gender Studies at the Institute for Gender and Development Studies, The University of the West Indies, St Augustine.

Sue-Ann Barratt is a member of the faculty at the Institute for Gender and Development Studies, The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus. She is a graduate of The University of the West Indies, holding a BA in Media and Communication Studies with Political Science, MA Communication Studies, and PhD Interdisciplinary Gender Studies. Her current research areas are interpersonal interaction, social media use, gender and ethnic identities, beauty and body image, and Carnival studies. She is dedicated to gender awareness and sensitivity training through face-to-face sessions and mass media outreach.

Dalea Bean has been a Lecturer and Graduate Coordinator at the Institute for Gender and Development Studies, Regional Coordinating Office at The University of the West Indies since 2008. Before working with the IGDS, she taught in the Department of History at The UWI in the areas of women's history and Caribbean history. She pursued a Bachelor of Arts in African and Caribbean History and Political Science at The UWI, graduating with first class honours in 2002. She then completed her PhD in History on the topic "Jamaican Women and World Wars I and II". Dr. Bean's general research interests include women and gender justice in Caribbean history, women in conflict situations, and gender relations in the hotel industry in Jamaica. She has written book chapters,

journal articles and has presented lectures internationally on these and other topics. She has also conducted gender equity and gender mainstreaming training regionally and has been engaged in research with the IGDS that facilitates gender mainstreaming in education, history writing and Caribbean masculinities.

Nicholas R. Gilbert, also known as AbioyeMunashe (which means 'born into royalty with God') was the first of nine children of his parents. He grew up in a family where history was preserved through an African practice known as storytelling. As a child he heard many stories about his ancestors from his grandparents and parents, and as a result he grew to love story telling and began to write stories from a young age. His passion for story writing evolved into poems as he grew older. Nicholas holds a BSc in Social Work (Hons) and a MSc in Gender and Development Studies both from The University of the West Indies. He was also given an award for "Best All-round Student" in Social Policy while an undergraduate. Nicholas received awards of "Poet of the Month" from Poetic Vibes* in January 2009 and again in January 2011. In February 2010 he was awarded by Caribbean Youth Magazine (Cary'sma) for his contributions in the "Haiti 7.0 Poetry Writing Competition." He currently works with the Ministry of National Security as a Prison Welfare Officer I and is also a part time tutor at the Open Campus in St Augustine. He has a strong passion for community work and wants to work at curbing the impact of violence and crime caused by hypermasculine traits. He is a member of the Rape Crisis Society.

*Poetic Vibes Arts Foundation was founded in 2007 initially as an online platform for the promotion of the arts in the Caribbean region and wider communities

Tameka Hill is a Communications and Gender and Development Specialist and has worked in the Cabinet Office, Office of the Prime Minister and Justice Ministry, Jamaica for most of her career. A former Jamaican Youth Ambassador, she represented the nation's youth at the national and international level speaking on several issues, chief among which was Human Trafficking. Ms Hill

was recently recognized as a Caribbean Youth Expert by the United Nations Envoy on Youths in Baku, Azerbaijan.

Ellie McDonald is a recent graduate of University College London. She wrote her thesis on feminism in the Anglophone Caribbean at King's College London. For her thesis, she undertook qualitative interviews with women activists in the region and worked with materials from the Making of Caribbean Feminisms project. Her research interests include women's activism, the gendered politics of development and the use of oral history. She currently works as a campaigner in London, UK, and plans to continue her postgraduate studies.

Patricia Mohammed is a scholar, writer and filmmaker. She is Professor of Gender and Cultural Studies and Campus Coordinator/Chair, School for Graduate Studies and Research at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, a post she has held variously since 2007. She has headed the Institute for Gender and Development Studies at St Augustine for various periods and from 1994-2002 was appointed as first head of the Mona Unit, Centre for Gender and Development Studies, UWI. For the Fall semester 2007 she was Visiting Professor at State University of New York at Albany and has had visiting fellowships at University of Warwick and Queen's University, Belfast. She was a recipient of the Vice-Chancellor's regional award for Excellence in Research at The UWI in 2015. She is a pioneer in second wave feminism and the development of gender studies at Tertiary level in the Caribbean and has been involved in feminist activism and scholarship for over two decades and increasingly over the last decade in Cultural Studies. She has been the architect of four national gender policies for the Caribbean. Her academic publications include Gender in Caribbean Development (Ed), 1988, Rethinking Caribbean Difference, Special Issue Feminist Review, Routledge Journals, 1998, Caribbean Women at the Crossroads, UWI Press, 1999, Gender Negotiations among Indians in Trinidad, 1917 – 1947, Palgrave UK and The Hague, 2001, and Gendered Realities: Essays in Caribbean Feminist Thought, (ed) University of the West Indies Press, Kingston, 2002, and Imaging the Caribbean: Culture and Visual Translation, Macmillan UK, 2010 along with over

100 essays in journals and books, magazines and newspapers. Her main areas of interest are gender and development studies, history and the study of aesthetics and visual intelligence. She has directed and produced 13 documentary films among Engendering Change: Caribbean Configurations (40) minutes, a six part series entitled A Different Imagination of which "Coolie Pink and Green" 2009 and "City on a Hill: Laventille" (40 mins) co-directed with Michael Mooleedhar are award winning films.

Ellen O'Malley Camps BA, MA, Post Grad. Dip. Mediation, is a counsellor and mediator with a background in teaching, theology and theatre. As a social activist she founded the Housewives Association of Trinidad and Tobago (HATT) working with single women heads of households and further developed the Little Carib Theatre as a theatre space. As an artist activist working as producer/ director/actor/writer with four theatre companies she developed her Carnival Theatre transformative process. In 2003 she began a lifelong commitment to work with long-term and lifer inmates in Trinidad's Maximum Security Prison.

Debra Providence was born in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and is an educator, writer and researcher. Her doctoral thesis focuses on the intersecting literary spaces in the works of Edwidge Danticat, Nalo Hopkinson and Shani Mootoo and their implications for Anglophone Caribbean literary traditions.

Aleah N. Ranjitsingh gained her PhD in the field of Interdisciplinary Gender Studies at the Institute for Gender and Development Studies of The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus, Trinidad and Tobago. Her dissertation is entitled: "Women and Change - Hugo Chávez's Bolivarian Revolution in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela" examines the development, political and social processes of Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution under the late President Hugo Chávez, and seeks to situate women and implicate gender within these processes.

Angélica Rodríguez Bencosme received her BA in Interior Design with a thesis about furniture and went on to the study at the national Dominican polytechnic institute to become a furniture designer. She then completed interdisciplinary studies in furniture in Spain, at the Universidad Politécnica de Cataluña in Barcelona (Diploma) and the Universidad de Nebrija in Madrid (Master's). Once back home, she lectured at Dominican universities and attained a Master's Degree in Education from the Tecnológico de Monterrey. She published the book "El Mueble de Madera Dominicano" (2013) to rediscover design as a tool for social inclusion. Currently lecturing at Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo, Angélica is pursuing a PhD at the Institute for Gender and Development Studiess, St Augustine Campus, Trinidad and Tobago.

Amilcar Sanatan, interdisciplinary artist and writer, is a Research Assistant and MPhil. candidate at the Institute for Gender and Development Studies. Sanatan is also the coordinator of the UWI Socialist Student Conference at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus.

Raquel LM Sukhu is a graduate of the IGDS, UWI, St Augustine Unit, and a Dean's Award recipient. In 2006 she earned an MPhil in Gender and Development Studies, thesis entitled "Why Men Batter: Male V{i}olence, Malevolence, Misogyny". She has worked as a higher education professional for almost twenty years and has developed and taught a broad range of tertiary level courses in sociology, gender studies and research methodology. Raquel has published in the areas of gender violence and masculinities, and is currently a PhD candidate at IGDS, St Augustine.

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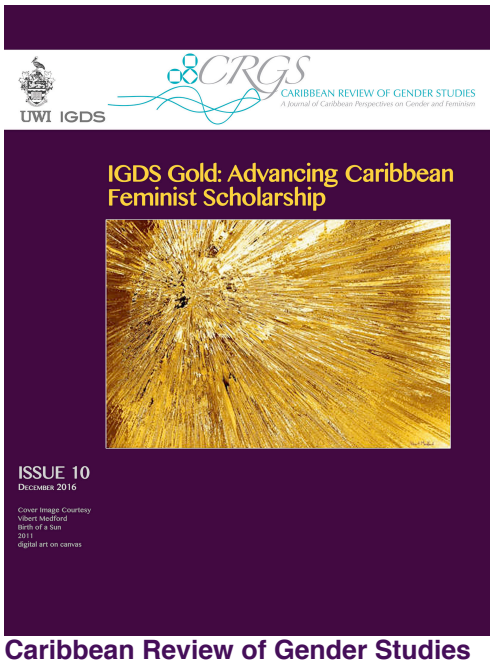

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Dalea Bean is a Lecturer and Graduate Coordinator at the Institute for Gender and Development Studies, Regional Coordinating Office at The University of the West Indies. Before working with the IGDS, she taught in the Department of History at The UWI. She completed her PhD in History on the topic at UWI Mona in 2008 on the topic "Jamaican Women and World Wars I and II". Dr Bean's general research interests include women and gender justice in Caribbean history, women in conflict situations, and gender relations in the hotel industry in Jamaica. She has written book chapters, journal articles and has presented lectures internationally on these and other topics.

Raquel LM Sukhu is a graduate of the IGDS, UWI, St Augustine Unit, and a Dean's Award recipient. In 2006 she earned an MPhil in Gender and Development Studies, thesis entitled "Why Men Batter: Male V{i}olence, Malevolence, Misogyny". She has worked as a higher education professional for almost twenty years and has developed and taught a broad range of tertiary level courses in sociology, gender studies and research methodology. Raquel has published in the areas of gender violence and masculinities, and is currently a PhD candidate at IGDS, St Augustine.

About Issue 10

This tenth issue of the Caribbean Review of Gender Studies aptly highlights student research, some of which may not have otherwise been read outside of the university, and also provides a niche for current students and recent graduates to begin publishing their work in scholarly publications. The majority of pieces in this issue represent the research of current students and graduates of the IGDS units across the three campus units that offer a graduate programme. The issue exemplifies the rich tapestry of scholarly work and diverse research interests investigated though traditional and non-traditional modalities by students of the IGDS. It also includes work by postgraduate students who have been influenced by the work and tradition of Caribbean feminist theorising. The issue includes four peer reviewed papers, three gender dialogues, a photo essay, poetry, research in action and book review. The variety of entries not only speaks to the diversity in the output of the IGDS, but also to the range of issues still relevant to Caribbean gender and development studies. While grounded in the solid foundation of Caribbean feminist tradition, the entries challenge existing epistemologies, tease out critical ideas relating to gender identity, construct innovative dimensions for investigating 21st century challenges and force us to reckon with the future of gender studies as an ever-evolving space of discursive criticism.

Key words
Caribbean Feminism, Academia, Feminist Praxis, IGDS, Feminist Scholarship

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