

“KEYWORDS” FOR POST-IMPERIAL BRITAIN:  
(AFRICAN-)AMERICAN ROUTES TO BLACK BRITISH CULTURAL STUDIES

by

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## Abstract

### “KEYWORDS” FOR POST-IMPERIAL BRITAIN: (AFRICAN-)AMERICAN ROUTES TO BLACK BRITISH CULTURAL STUDIES by

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Over the past three decades, Black British theorists Stuart Hall, Hazel Carby, and Paul Gilroy have made major contributions to the field of African-American Studies. Their readings of the intersection of race, culture, power, and identity were extremely important. This intellectual dialogue has flowed mostly from Britain to the United States. My dissertation reverses the trajectory and explores how the United States and the African-American experience has shaped Black British Cultural Studies, a term coined in a collection of essays by these figures. I locate the field in the 1970's and 1980's with the rise of Thatcherism. This moment is important because it marks the twilight of British imperialism, as defined by direct colonial rule, and the rise of American Empire, as exemplified through its global dominance in the economic, political, and cultural spheres. As the world order shifted from Britain to America after World War II, the structure of British society transformed from one focused on a rooted way of life to a new identity in this changing global order. British society with its localized culture and working-class camaraderie was replaced by an individualistic, winner-takes-all system embodied in neoliberal ideology. When immigrants from Britain's colonies arrived after the Second World War demanding their own stake in British society, this shift would go on to shape how ideas of identity and belonging that had seemed fixed would now have to be rethought. For these Black British Cultural Studies scholars, the experience of the immigrants from the colonies and their offspring needed a completely new understanding of terms such as empire, nation, culture, migration, and multiculturalism. The narrative of people arriving from the Africa, South Asia, and particularly the Caribbean could not be defined as traditionally British. In each chapter, I explore how the United States and the African-American experience have shaped the development of these concepts in the writings of Hall, Carby, and Gilroy. These figures have challenged the definitions of seemingly definitive terms like nation, culture, and society and have called for new models and narratives to reconceive them and apply them to the contemporary conditions.

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Laura, just one word “finished!!!”

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## Introduction

In his introduction to *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies*, Kobena Mercer positions the Black British experience of the eighties within a series of global struggles, ideological forces, and moments of liberation from oppression:

From Tiananmen Square and the fall of the Berlin Wall, to the collapse of the Soviet union and the end of the Cold War; from insurgent Islamic fundamentalism and the Gulf War, to the savage ethnic neonationalism of Eastern Europe—this was hardly your standard-case, “best of times, worst of times” scenario. Yet I would argue that it is in relation to such global forces of dislocation in the world system as a whole, that Britain too has been massively reconfigured as a local, even parochial, site in which questions of “race,” nation and ethnicity have brought us to a point where “the possibility and necessity of creating a new culture”—that is, new identities—is slowly being recognized as *the* democratic task of our time. [his italics] (3)

Although the social and cultural response of the Black British community to a hostile political, economic, and social landscape took place on a local level, this quotation points to the importance of understanding Black Britain within a world order where questions of power, identity, and culture play a central role in understanding this contemporary moment. My dissertation, “Keywords for post-Imperial Britain: (African-)American Routes to Black British Cultural Studies,” explores one aspect of this global relationship by focusing on the way the themes and ideas of Black British Cultural Studies encompass a critical dialogue on

race and identity between Great Britain and the United States. I will focus on the work of Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, Hazel Carby, Isaac Julien, and Kobena Mercer. Their background in British Cultural Studies and their link to African-American intellectual history and cultural production captures this trans-Atlantic relationship. This project will explore how when faced with the limitations of a Britishness defined by mainstream society and the academy, the scholars looked to the United States for models and ideas to frame new narratives of racial and national identity.

My dissertation presents Black British Cultural Studies as the construction of a counter-narrative of nation or at least a challenge to the definitions of British identity espoused by popular discourse of the seventies and the eighties. The election of the Tories to Parliament under the leadership of Thatcher was the rejection of two decades of Keynesian economic policy and the call for a new British identity in a post-Imperial world. Whiteness and a sense of the local replaced the multicultural globalism of Empire. Now defined as outsiders in the popular political discourse of the era, the Black community looked to other places for models and connections to their own cultural forms of expression. African America was one source of inspiration, as exemplified by the reception of the Civil Rights Movement (Phillips and Phillips 232) and the influence of the Black Power Movement (Dawson 20-21). In addition to these African-American groups that fought white supremacy, the globalization of American popular culture and the technology through which it traveled across the Atlantic Ocean disseminated the African-American experience not only to a Black British, but to a White British audience. The dialogic

relationship between Black Britain and the United States incorporates questions of (traditional) national and Diasporic identities, the localized and the globalized, mainstream popular culture and subversive racial expression, the dawn of the British imperial project and the rise of American Empire (as defined by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri), a conservative sense of nation and a multicultural society.

Black British Cultural Studies also questions the national narratives constructed by British Cultural Studies. Throughout their work, Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart, and E.P. Thompson reconstruct a working-class way of life that has been lost to the post-Industrial British society. These studies and analyses are important because they challenged the preconceived notions of culture being limited to the upper and middle classes. By opening up the definition of culture to include the working-class, they expanded the notion of a British identity. Before, only high cultural forms exemplified by the work of the great artists, writers, and thinkers were used to represent the pinnacle of achievement as a nation. Now, the historical narrative recognized how the labor of the lower classes has helped shape British society. A recurring theme in their writing is a sense of history. Although the definition of culture has been missing in the societal imagination, working-class culture is tied to the land and had been so for centuries. However, this connection between land and identity does not exist in the same way for the Black British community. As children of empire, their historical and philosophical trajectory is different. Their labor took place mostly in the far-flung regions of the globe where the Union Jack was deposited and the rewards were brought home to the imperial motherland. When many of these individuals

arrived in Britain after World War II, they were greeted as aliens invading the country rather than as figures whose ancestral dues were paid. The basic premise of popular culture as an antithesis to high Culture was applicable to the Black British community. However, the theoretical foundations on which popular culture must be defined are distinct. By contextualizing Black British Cultural Studies in relation to the United States as well as Britain, the dissertation introduces a different perspective on the field and how it must be situated within a specific set of historical/geopolitical conditions.

I focus on the writings of Hall, Gilroy, Carby, Julien, and Mercer as defined by the 1996 collection of essays *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader* edited by Houston A. Baker Jr, Manthia Diawara, and Ruth H. Lindeborg because their work began during the historic juncture that I am exploring. They developed their ideas and analyses of the intersection of culture, identity, and power as a response to the Tories that were implementing their economic and social policies and the police force that were hunkering down against the outbreaks of racial tensions within the cities. When the British academy read their harsh critique of the racial conditions in British society, their careers were effectively stymied in the United Kingdom and they made their way to American universities.<sup>1</sup> Their ability to translate their training in the Birmingham school of British Cultural Studies into the African-American context points to the deep-rooted/routed trans-Atlantic connections. They developed a definition of culture that originated in the working-class studies of Williams and Hoggart and brought it to the study of the African-American experience and its cultural

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<sup>1</sup> . Carby anecdotally recounted this fact during the symposium “Reconstructing Womanhood: A Future Beyond Empire.”

production. Until now the focus has remained on the movement of ideas from Britain to the United States. In this dissertation, I focus on Black British Cultural Studies from the opposite direction, looking at how the United States has shaped the ideas of this perceived indigenously created discipline of Black British Cultural Studies and its precursor British Cultural Studies.

In the last few decades, African-American Studies has been mining the rich cultural, political, and intellectual connections that have existed between communities from throughout the African Diaspora. The writings of Hall, Carby, and Gilroy have depicted the Black British experience and made important contributions to our understanding of race in our own country. However, the work on how these scholars' writing on Black Britain has been shaped by African-American thought has not been extensive. Several texts have explored this relationship. The introduction to the *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader* begins to outline the theoretical parallels and difference between the African-American intellectual tradition and the work of Black British writers. In recent years, this connection has begun to be explored more extensively. Ashley Dawson's 2007 book *Mongrel Nation: Diasporic Culture and the Making of Postcolonial Britain* highlights the connections between the Black Power movements in the United States and Great Britain. In 2009, the journal of *Atlantic Studies* put out a special issue exploring the relationship between Black Britain and African America. Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s 2010 book *Tradition and the Black Atlantic: Critical Theory in the African Diaspora* presents the roots of Black British Cultural Studies in African-American writers like Richard Wright and connects these definitions of culture into the context of postcolonial struggles and the

contemporary moment. This dissertation contributes to this body of work by focusing on one element of the African-American-Black British dialogue. I analyze Black British Cultural Studies as a challenge to contemporary dominant narratives of British identity at a particular historical and intellectual junction at the end of the twentieth century. The rise of American hegemony and the decline of the British Empire shaped Black British Cultural Studies. The different forces embedded within this moment include the assertion of neoliberal economic policies and ideology, the global predominance of American popular culture and the embedding of the African-American experience within it, and the notion of a multicultural society.

During my senior year at Yale, Dr. Maurice Wallace introduced me to Black British Cultural Studies. He taught a seminar called “The Black Atlantic” exploring the intellectual and cultural connections found in various texts from throughout the African Diaspora such as Gloria Naylor’s *Mama Day*, Ishmael Reed’s *Mumbo Jumbo*, J. Nozipo Maraire’s *Zenzele: A Letter for My Daughter*, George Elliott Clarke’s *Whylah Falls*, and Isaac Julien’s *Looking for Langston*. Paul Gilroy’s now-classic *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* became the foundational text for this course. One of the recommended readings was a collection of essays called *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*. It was a revelation. I had never realized the existence of a vibrant Black British community nor the struggles that it had faced when it began to arrive in Britain en masse after World War II. I also became fascinated with Black British Cultural Studies as a field because it brought together so many different academic and theoretical interests. It combines Marxism and post-Marxist theory

with Structuralism and Poststructuralism; racial, class, gender, and sexual identity with questions of power and representation; and a localized history of English-class consciousness with the contemporary forces of globalization. All of these strains manifest themselves in popular culture, including film, television, music, art and the print media. The writings of figures like Hall, Carby, Kobena Mercer, and of course, Gilroy allowed me to take elements of their thought and apply them to different contexts as I continued my studies in the Cultural Studies Department of Goldsmiths College, University of London, and in the English Department at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. I wanted to continue to tackle the ideas of Black British Cultural Studies in my dissertation.

The origins of Black British Cultural Studies are found in the work of Williams, Hoggart, and E.P. Thompson. The original British Cultural Studies examines the transition from a working class culture during the Industrial Revolution to one grounded in mass media during the post-Industrial era (Turner 40). Although its foundations lay in English Studies, the forefathers of British Cultural Studies Williams and Hoggart have taken their ideas about the study of culture and methodological approaches to it from numerous disciplines. These include history, sociology, anthropology, linguistics, and media studies. As a result, critics have accused British Cultural Studies of lacking any consistent methodology or structure through which it could perform its analysis (Turner 1). The same questions could be raised about Black British Cultural Studies. The interdisciplinary possibilities of these figures' writing that worked well when I explored my intellectual pursuits during graduate school have become a challenge while working on this project. The disparate

methodologies and diverse subjects make it difficult to tease out the different threads in a linear analysis.

Another problem that arises with British Cultural Studies and Black British Cultural Studies is the geographic spaces which they examine. Although Cultural Studies has been adapted to other historical moments and localities, the focus of figures such as Williams, Hoggart, and Thompson is particularly British (Grossberg 136). On the other hand, Black British Cultural Studies is far more elusive, problematizing space on local and global levels. The field challenges the monoracial depiction of a white Britain. It also considers the cultural and familial ties between those living in Britain and their place of origin—Caribbean, Africa, and South Asia (depending on how you define “Black” in the British context.)<sup>2</sup>. Black British Cultural Studies is also a part of an intellectual dialogue that takes place across the African Diaspora. There are many different lenses through which one could analyze Black British Cultural Studies. The dissertation focuses on a specific temporal and spatial moment—Black British Cultural Studies at the intersection of British and American Empires and its repercussions on questions of race, culture, identity, and power.

Black British Cultural Studies built on the definition of culture developed by Williams, Hoggart, and less directly by Thompson. Their writing shifted an understanding of culture from its “high” forms to its more popular ones. Traditionally, intellectuals and critics

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<sup>2</sup>. Until the 1980’s, “Black” referred to members of both the African, Caribbean, and South Asian communities. By the 1990’s a certain individualism replaced the feelings of community and resistance that had existed before (Hall, “Frontlines” 127). A. Sivanandan believes, however, that despite the political fissure, all “Black” peoples could recreate the political alliances that had existed before (Owusu 12).

had focused on Culture (emphasizing the capital “c”) in terms of artistic expression and intellectual pursuits (*Keywords* 89). British Cultural Studies upended the cultural hierarchy by expounding the values of popular culture or mass culture. These forms are manifestations of the working class “way of life,” to use Williams’s term. This new focus allowed scholars to understand how the Industrial Revolution transformed all parts of British society, including the working class. This emphasis on working-class culture was important because it challenged conventional Marxist theory. The traditional base-superstructure model that focused exclusively on economic production and labor did not consider the role of “ideology, language, and the symbolic” in the relationship between the working-class and the bourgeoisie (Baker, Best, Lindeborg 3). Culture now became a medium through which one could explain the dynamic between the two groups. Contemporary Continental philosophy (i.e. Structuralism, Poststructuralism, and Postmodernism) enhanced the development of British Cultural Studies by providing new ways to understand questions of power and culture.

Black British Cultural Studies drew upon this overturning of the cultural hierarchy and expanding definition of culture to explore the Black British experience. In 1969, Hoggart founded the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham and in 1974, Hall took over as head. During this period, Carby, Gilroy, and Dick Hebdige, some of the most prominent authors included in *The Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*, developed their ideas and wrote essays that would lay the foundations for their later work. During this time in the late seventies, British society underwent a

transformation. The 1979 electoral victory of the Conservative Party resulted in the dismantling of the Welfare State, the mainstreaming of racist ideology, and an increase in police brutality against the Black community (Dawson 21). The race riots at the end of the Notting Hill Carnival in 1976, Brixton in 1981, and Handsworth in 1985 highlight the difficult tension that existed between the Black and White communities in British society at the time.<sup>3</sup> These conditions pushed the scholars at CCCS to rethink the work on working-class culture by their Cultural Studies predecessors and reflect how race, ethnicity, and nation have transformed the relationship between culture and British society. This “Race and Politics Group” published their findings in 1982 in a volume titled *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and racism in 70s Britain*. With a greater body of writing on the Afro-Caribbean and African-American experience, Black British Cultural Studies looked to these intellectual histories and methodologies to explore their communities’ experience. The centrality of music in Black life and the rise of television in British society further transformed the British focus of the original field by shifting away from the print culture that was explored throughout the work of Williams.<sup>4</sup> These changes internationalized Cultural Studies. It

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<sup>3</sup> . Despite the contemporary depictions of London as a multicultural capital, the racial tensions between the government/law enforcement and the Black community continues to exist. The racial uprisings of August 2011 display the continued economic inequality and the language of Prime Minister David Cameron’s response in terms of responsibility, culture, and law and order rehashes Thatcher’s rhetoric (BBC Newshour 11 Aug 2011).

<sup>4</sup> . It is important to remember that although British Cultural Studies has drawn on many disciplines for its methodology, its roots are in English Studies. Throughout his career, Raymond Williams focused on literature and literary criticism. His work includes *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot*, *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence*, *Marxism and Literature*, and *Modern Tragedy*. He also wrote novels.

established concrete material links between the culture and experiences of Black communities in Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States. In essence, Black British Cultural Studies remapped a Black British way of life onto a global, Diasporic space.

Over the last fifteen years, different narratives of Black British Cultural Studies have been constructed and presented in distinct ways. In 1996, the University of Chicago Press published *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*, an anthology of important theoretical essays by scholars who began their careers at Birmingham and had made their mark on American academia. Carby had been teaching in the United States for fourteen years (first at Wesleyan University since 1982 and then at Yale University from 1989 to the present). Essays by Hall like “New Ethnicities” and “Minimal Selves” were widely read and discussed in African-American courses (Baker, Best, Lindeborg 1). Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic*, a seminal text on conceptualizing the African Diaspora, came out three years earlier. This reader was important because it introduced the work of these figures as a collective body of knowledge. The editors Baker, Diawara, and Lindeborg recognized Black British Cultural Studies as “an established and productive field of work” in the American academy even though “[i]t has existed as a serious intellectual field for almost two decades” in Britain (Baker, Best, Lindeborg 1). The chosen essays highlight the theoretical differences between African-American perspectives on race and Black British ones.

Other readers present different perspectives on Black British Cultural Studies. For example, Onyekachi Wambu’s anthology *Windrush: Fifty Years Of Writing About Black British* includes essays by Stuart Hall. Its selection of poetry and prose reconstructs the immigration

narrative of the Windrush generation or the West Indian community that came to Great Britain after World War II. *The Black British Feminist Reader* also includes Hazel Carby's essay "White Woman Listen!" However, its definition of Black includes members of the South Asian Diaspora. In 2000, Routledge published a reader titled *Black British Culture And Society: A Text Reader* edited by Kwesi Owusu. In "Introduction: Charting the genealogy of Black British cultural studies," Owusu charts his own history of the field. Although he places Hall as the central figure in the discipline, he moves away from the more purely theoretical writing. He extends beyond the work of Carby, Gilroy, and Hall and describes the work of Black avant-garde filmmakers and curators like Julien, Mercer, the Black Audio Collective and the Sankofa Film Collective (4). Their artistic production was directly influenced by and in dialogue with the questions and analyses of power and representation developed by the members of the "race relations" group at the CCCS. His definition of Black British Cultural Studies also includes organizations that fought racism, artists that brought their Diasporic background to their representations of life in Britain, and the establishment of interdisciplinary programs and departments that incorporated the study of race. These trends are extremely important in understanding how race became a major part of British social, educational, and artistic discourse (6-8). Although Owusu's reader *Black British Culture and Society* covers many of the same themes and some of the same essays as the earlier *Black British Cultural Studies*, their foci are distinct. Owusu's compilation includes essays that analyze the Black British community in concrete terms such as the social situation, the economic conditions and artistic production. It also connects this experience to the African

Diaspora. While the essays in the University of Chicago Press publication take up the concept of Diaspora, the editors stress the development of a particular theoretical lens established in Britain.

My dissertation teases out several major concepts and narrativizes the transformation of these intellectuals that make up part of Black British Cultural Studies as they moved from the localized focus of British Cultural Studies to something more globalized and Diasporic. I locate the field at the intersection of British and American Empires, the Black British experience and the African-American one. The structure of the project takes its inspiration from Williams's 1976 text *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. *Keywords* is different from a dictionary because it accepts the elusiveness of language and the multiple ways it could be understood. No definition could ever capture every single meaning or nuance (Williams 15). Both the dictionary and *Keywords* record words that are used in everyday speech for posterity. The dictionary presents a widely accepted definition of a word. This process shifts the power from the public to the intellectuals who decide on its meaning (20-21). Williams's project aims to excavate and display the original popular meaning and different uses of important words. The history of a specific term should not only reflect the tastes of the arbiters of Culture, but its organic development by the public. "*Keywords* was premised on a longer-term empowerment of a popular readership with an expanded vocabulary of possible meanings and imagines alternative futures" (Jones 1210). This project reflects Williams's oeuvre of revealing a working-class way of life that has been suppressed

by epistemological bias. A similar statement could be made for Black British Cultural Studies.

If not necessarily pointing to alternative futures, Black British Cultural Studies certainly creates other potential geographies and genealogies. By breaking down the dissertation into five different keywords, I attempt to construct an overarching narrative of how the ideas of race and culture in the Black British context could be understood. I begin with the term within the context of Williams and Hoggart's writings, as they contextualize it within the British working-class. When the term could no longer be contained within the geographical and historical constraints of the narrative of nation embedded in their work, I show how Black British Cultural Studies explodes the term and remaps it onto a different temporal and spatial plane rooted and routed in the African Diaspora. These genealogies or new narratives of meaning could be constructed in many different ways. The basic premise of Black British Cultural Studies is the impossibility of ever achieving closure in the construction of identity. All narratives of nation, race, gender, and sexuality never allow the spectator to fully comprehend the complexity of identity. The old adage form follows function could be applied to the field. Even though numerous books have been written by figures such as Gilroy and Carby, the short academic essay is the most prominent genre in which these figures wrote. The structure of CCCS as working groups and Hall's later work at Open University made the format ideal to collaborate, publish and then distribute to an academic readership. They might be theoretically dense, but their length allows the reader to digest the difficult material, make connections between the different essays, and most

importantly, construct their own narrative alternatives. As I explore Black British Cultural Studies under the conditions I have set out in this introduction, I present one possible reading. The dissertation is broken down into five keywords “Empire,” “Nation,” “Culture,” “Migration,” and “Multiculture.”

The first chapter “Empire” presents the overarching context of how Black British Cultural Studies fits within the geopolitical situation of the post-World War II years. Great Britain underwent seismic changes when most of its imperial possessions were declaring independence. The process of decolonization had begun before the war, but by the end of the century the Empire that once spanned the globe was reduced to a scattering of minor outposts. On the local level, Britain was rebuilding from the devastation of six years of war. The reconstruction led to a socialization of the housing and health systems and the building of a contemporary consumer culture that flattened the class system. These two trends led to a search for a new British identity in a world now headed by a new global superpower, the United States, whose domination was not defined through its territorial control, but a system of military, economic, and cultural power that transcended geographical borders. A new sense of Britishness grew that focused on the historical connections to its localized past. In her discourse and her party’s legislation, Margaret Thatcher defined this identity strictly in terms of direct genetic links. The founders of British Cultural Studies, Williams, Hoggart, and Thompson developed a cultural narrative that grounds the development of the working class to a British identity. The scholars of Black British Cultural Studies were influenced by these figures’ work on culture, but their predecessors’ conceptualization of identity was

limiting. Despite their problems with American hegemony, the global circulation of American ideas and culture gave them the opportunity to look at the African-American experience and adapt it to the British context. This new global order provided the theoretical framework in which they could challenge the unity of British identity. The rise of the postmodern figure in this world of fragmentation and global flows would underpin the creation of a Black British subject that simultaneously looks to Britain and to other traditions of the African Diaspora.

Moving from the global to the local, the second chapter “Nation” focuses on how the construction of a national identity in British Cultural Studies fails to encompass the Black British experience by using working-class culture to shape the narrative. This presentation of a history tied to the local culture erases the possibilities of other models of Britishness to develop. One template that explores the relationship between culture and identity is found in the work of African-American writer Richard Wright, whose Diasporic analysis of culture shapes Black British Cultural Studies. I analyze this development using Williams’s *Culture and Society: 1785-1950*, Wright’s series of lectures *White Man Listen*, and Hazel Carby’s essay “White Woman Listen.” Williams’s text presents a historical overview of the development of the relationship between culture and society. Intellectuals privileged the artistic achievement of its best poets, musicians, and artists because high culture was viewed as the ultimate manifestation of a society’s intellectual achievement. For Williams, the working-class way of life or culture (more in the anthropological sense) needs to be included in the historical trajectory of British society. *Culture and Society* becomes a narrative of British identity that

upends the traditional dichotomy of high and low cultural forms. However, the text focuses on a particular narrative of Britishness centered on the Industrial Revolution. As important as Williams's work is in rethinking the hierarchical assumptions of culture, his analysis retains a linear narrative structure that now brings in the working class. In *White Man Listen*, Wright connects African-American culture to the mid-twentieth century processes of decolonization. A simple genealogy cannot be created to capture a Black Diasporic identity because the narrative is fragmented geographically (exemplified by his discussion of the Gold Coast and the United States) by the historical fault lines created by slavery and reinforced by racist structures. Black cultural forms express the yearning for liberation that for so long has been confined by oppression. Adapting Wright's Diasporic model, Carby looks at constructions of Black female sexuality and the ideological parallels found throughout the colonial and postcolonial worlds. Through this analysis, Carby superimposes the Black British experience onto a global network of power, oppression, and race that ultimately transcends the linear narrative of a British working-class way of life shaped by the Industrial Revolution.

While taking on a prominent role within the narrative of nation, culture itself becomes a site where identity is articulated and contested by various groups. The third chapter "Culture" will explore how the definitions of a localized popular culture found in Black British Cultural Studies are tied to a global network prominently controlled by the United States. In *The Uses of Literacy*, Hoggart sees the loss of a working-class culture as a result of the onslaught of popular culture streaming in the United States. In contrast, Hall

provides a more complex view of the United States' place within popular culture. While displaying its own global dominance, popular culture transformed the relationship between high and low, inscribing it with other racial, ethnic, gendered, and sexualized narratives previously obscured by the privileging of high forms. This transformation rendered popular culture a site of distinct and at times conflicting ideologies. While incorporating the capitalist values of Empire, these cultural forms allow the struggles of minorities to surface. This model became important in their analysis of Black British popular forms as a response to Conservative Member of Parliament Enoch Powell and Thatcher's framing of black culture as a threat to law and order beginning in the late sixties and continuing into the eighties. The cultural dialogue between African American and Black Britain helped the community to challenge the political discourse and develop new multiracial definitions of Britishness. I explore this dynamic in Gilroy's analysis on Black British popular culture in *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*. I also show how this concept of popular culture also enables Black British Cultural Studies to resonate with African-American culture, as exemplified in Carby's work on African-American nineteenth-century novels *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*. This trans-Atlantic dialogue defines popular culture as an important technology of the African Diaspora.

Beyond popular culture, the connection between African America and Black Britain extends to parallel narratives of migration from the country to the city. In the Great Migrations of the first half of the twentieth century, African-Americans moved from the rural South to the urban North. After World War II, West Indians began moving in greater

numbers from the Caribbean (rural or at least less urban) to Britain (urban.) These narratives have presented simplistic definitions of race that reinforce grand narratives rather than challenge them. The fourth chapter “Migration” will focus on how Black British Cultural Studies deconstructs these migration narratives and create new relationships between the Black subject and his/her space. Although the focus is on migration, I begin with the idea of the city because it has held an important place in the British imagination. In *The Country and the City*, Williams describes how the country has remained a symbol of Britishness that is historic, untainted, and irretrievable. The city, in contrast, denotes something new and constantly changing. When the ship *The Windrush* docked in Tilbury in November 1948, the Jamaican immigrants started the process of transforming the city into a multiracial, multicultural space. This immigrant story became the dominant migration narrative of post-World War II and named the Windrush generation. The narrative also laid the foundations of a contemporary multicultural Britain. Black British Cultural Studies challenges this simplistic representation by thinking about what is the relationship between identity and nation when black subjects move from rural to urban space. While analyzing African-American popular culture of the early twentieth century, Carby’s work on this period becomes a de facto critique of Black migration narratives that privilege the idyllic country over the city. She rails against the admiration of Zora Neale Hurston’s conception of “folk” over Wright’s Marxist framing of African-Americans as proletariat, because the black figures never transcend the representations of the past. Her act of deconstruction becomes a call to tear down the grand narratives that stifle identity and to create new, dynamic relationships

between the black subject and space. Isaac Julien's film *Looking for Langston* takes on Carby's challenge by presenting Black subjectivity against an urban landscape that shifts across history (time) and the Atlantic (space). The individual is no longer constricted by the space around him, but is able to shape it according to his desires.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, the potential for new narratives of racial identity could only come to fruition in fictional forms such as Julien's film. Williams's definition of culture as a way of life responds to the specific conditions in which it is produced. The foundational texts of Black British Cultural Studies spoke to a very particular moment, a post-imperial Britain that was searching for its identity. In the nineties, Labour Party Tony Blair remade it by severing it from its working-class roots. With Labour's landslide victory in 1997, it seemed that Britain finally found its post-imperial identity. This "new Britannia" finally shed its class and racial baggage and became a multicultural consumer society. As the uprisings of the summer 2011 in Black neighborhoods throughout Britain showed, the economic structural problems remain. David Cameron's response to this urban unrest in terms of "personal responsibility" mirrors Thatcher's language of "law and order." It appears not much has changed. The conclusion "Multiculture" considers the legacy of Black British Cultural Studies in terms of this continuation of Empire. Even though Hall, Gilroy, and Carby dismiss multiculturalism as lip-service, their work still remains pertinent today. I briefly look at the trajectory of Black cultural production in the post-9/11 moment and its role in opposing the contemporary narratives of Empire. In honor of the twentieth anniversary of the publication of Carby's

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<sup>5</sup>. I only use "him," the objective form of the pronoun "he" and not "her" because there are no women in *Looking for Langston*.

first book *Reconstructing Womanhood*, Anne McClintock described the significance of Carby's work as exposing the global circuits of power and its effects on the individual. This summary is applicable to Black British Cultural Studies as a whole.

## Chapter 1: Empire

If you've no world of your own, it's rather pleasant to regret the passing of someone else's. I must be getting sentimental. But I must say it's pretty dreary living in the American Age— unless you're an American of course.

– Jimmy from John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*

The first chapter “Empire” lays the foundation on which one could understand Black British Cultural Studies. The rise of American power and the processes of globalization which includes the flow of information, ideas, cultures, and peoples would go on to challenge the perceived unity of the modern “subject” and to theorize how race could be incorporated into new permutations of Britishness. I analyze Black British Cultural Studies as shaped by the geopolitical conditions during which it originated and I discuss how the theoretical repercussions of this situation would go on to define the field's ideas about identity and culture. The second half of the twentieth century marks a shift away from a more direct system of government control in the form of traditional empires run by European powers and towards a more indirect and diffuse power structure in the form of global hegemony headed by the United States. This change in global power is important because it forced Great Britain to redefine its national identity in terms of its immediate history and culture rather than through its declining imperial project. British Cultural Studies is one response to this dilemma. The work of Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart searches for a British working-class culture that is not contaminated by outside culture, particularly that of the United States. These geopolitical conditions also introduced

narratives of identity that were no longer contained by national boundaries or linear national histories. This postmodern global model set the stage for Black British Cultural Studies to build on and to challenge previous definitions of British nation and culture. The clearest expression of this space is Paul Gilroy's "Black Atlantic," where racial identity remains simultaneously tied to nation and outside of it.

I begin the dissertation with the quotation from John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* because it so perfectly captures the moment from which Black British Cultural Studies grew: the decline of the British Empire, the rise of American hegemony, and the search for a national identity. In 1956, audiences were stunned when they first saw the play. Barely a decade after the end of World War II, the protagonist Jimmy captured a feeling of stagnation and hopelessness that lingered in the rebuilding of Britain. The character became the epitome of "the angry young man" that rails against the conditions of society (Bhatia). Jimmy's sentiments were reproduced throughout the culture of the 1950's and 1960's by writers like Alan Sillitoe (*The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*) and filmmakers like Lindsay Anderson (*If . . .*). No one captures the feelings of the era so eloquently and as precisely as Osborne does with the character of Jimmy:

I hate to admit it, but I think I can understand how her Daddy must have felt when he came back from India, after all those years away. The old Edwardian brigade do make their brief little world look pretty tempting. All homemade cake and croquet, bright ideas, bright uniforms. Always the same picture: high summer, the long days in the sun, slim volumes of verse, crisp linen, the smell

of starch. What a romantic picture. Phoney too, of course. It must have rained sometimes. Still, even I regret it somehow, phoney or not. If you've no world of your own, it's rather pleasant to regret the passing of someone else's. I must be getting sentimental. But I must say it's pretty dreary living in the American Age—unless you're an American of course. (17)

This quotation gives the audience the feeling that the character's world has been upended. Lacking a vision of or grounding in his contemporary condition, Jimmy looks to the past for solace. The Edwardian sphere presented here is structured on two levels. The first harks to the unseen realm of Empire. It is a space that allows men in particular to go abroad to build careers and make fortunes. Eventually, they return home and settle down. While fighting across the world where the racial Other threatens to undermine the mission of Empire, the imperial figure dreams of an English home idealistically presented in this passage. The second level is the immediacy of home. Jimmy uses the five senses: taste, sound, sight, touch, and smell to describe everyday objects and a calm setting. The simplicity of the scene captures the idealism of the space of return. England here appears cozy and safe. Although Jimmy recognizes that this scene is illusory, he understands the importance of maintaining an imaginary sense of what it means to be British. When one does not have this image to hold on to, the individual becomes unhinged and can no longer find his/her place in this world. The exception cheekily mentioned is that of the American because he/she does not have the same ties to a land or history. The new world order dominated by the United States is structured differently from the one led by Britain.

Traditionally, analyses of the play have focused on the anti-establishment sentiment of “the angry young men,” but these characters also feel a sentimental and uncritical nostalgia for the British Empire (Bhatia). The twentieth century saw a steady decrease in Britain’s overseas territories. In the thirties and the forties, Iraq, Egypt, Israel, Sri Lanka, Burma, and the two crown jewels India and Pakistan become independent countries. The fifties saw Singapore and Malaya leave the direct protection of the crown. The 1957 declaration of independence by the Gold Coast (now Ghana) began the decolonization process in British-run Africa. Finally, Hong Kong returned to China in 1997. The turning point of imperial consciousness was the Suez Crisis of 1956-1957. A couple of months after *Look Back in Anger* opened in the West End, General Gamal Abdel Nasser decided to take away international control of the Suez Canal and nationalize it. Threatened by the repercussions of a single non-Western, Soviet affiliated country controlling such an important military outpost and trade route, Israel attacked Egypt and a few days later Britain and France joined the offensive. The ultimate withdrawal of Britain from Egypt and its inability to overthrow the Nasser government became the ultimate manifestation of Britain’s decline as a global superpower and the realization of the end of the British Empire (McDermott 147). Even though the play was finalized before the Suez Crisis, the parallels between Jimmy’s sentimentality toward the British Empire and the psychological blow of the events occurring in Egypt are unmistakable.

This trajectory of decolonization had a profound effect on British identity in the decades after World War II. Before, Britishness incorporated Empire in its definition as seen

in the legal manifestations. The British subject never held any intrinsic rights like those spelled out in a document like the U.S. Constitution. For nine hundred years, British identity has been based on *ius soli*, tied to “the law of the soil.” British subjecthood was conferred to anybody that was born on British land, in the motherland or in the colonies (Baucom 8). This does not mean that all British subjects were treated equally. Imperial economic, political, and social structures incorporated racial discrimination, privileging the white population over the native ones. However, this relationship between territory and subjecthood created a large “imaginary” population as defined by Benedict Anderson of British subjects that were at least theoretically equal regardless of race. At the same time, there was a distinction between Britishness and Englishness. While the former connoted a global collective that fell under the umbrella of Empire, the latter signified an identity tied to the specific historical and cultural signifiers grounded within the physical borders of England. The global played off the local creating a sense of identity that simultaneously promoted uniformity and highlighted difference (Baucom 10). The twentieth century marked a reassessment of what it means to be British moving from an expansive definition to a narrower one. It still includes the historical events and the cultural production that took place on the physical land known as England. It also incorporates the Empire within its construction. However, the imperial history holds a marginal place in the imagination rather than a central focus. The 1981 British Nationality Act broke from the tradition of *ius soli* and conferred citizenship rights only to those individuals whose parents were born in Britain or had legally settled there. The racial implications were clear. These new rules privileged

many whites from the former colonies whose parents and grandparents had moved from Britain and excluded many individuals of colors whose families came from the colonies themselves (Baucom 13).<sup>6</sup>

This historical revision of Britishness is important because it reflects the post-World War II search for a new national identity divorced from the looming presence of the British Empire. The sense of pride in its imperial past is still a part of a late twentieth century Britishness. The emphasis on the white imperialists represented a deracialization of Britishness as a projection of something more local and more white. In the same period that the 1981 Act passed Parliament, the public was caught up with imperial nostalgia in film and television shows like *The Jewel in the Crown* and *A Passage to India* (Baucom 7). This also appeared in Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's rhetoric during the Falklands War. She depicted the threat to the local islanders as an existential threat against their own fellow white Englishman. It was a projection of this post-imperial Englishness abroad (Anderson 192). Despite taking place on the global stage, these emotional links to the past captured a different construction of identity that was more rooted on the local level rather than characterized by the world stage. Ian Baucom makes a distinction between Britishness and Englishness, where all English are British, but not all British are English. This new identity focuses far more on the geographical confines of the island-nation. By focusing on

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<sup>6</sup> . Baucom is abundantly clear in his historical overview of legal definitions of Britishness. A subject is not the same thing as citizen. The problematic nature of Thatcher's 1981 British Nationality Act and Edward Heath's Immigration Bill, which Thatcher drew upon, is the disregard for a tradition of *ius soli* that lasted nine hundred years and the underlying racism in this new genealogical definition.

genealogy rather than land, Thatcher created a direct uninterrupted sanguineous link that extends back in history. In contrast, the older model of Britishness was based on the territorial connections between colonies and former colonies. There is an overarching history of exploration and exploitation, but the similarities end there. Thatcher's conception of British identity emphasizes a disruption in time and space. The racial composition of the different nations, their economic and political development, and their cultural heritage are different. The location of these imperial holdings scattered around the world came to symbolize the racial and cultural differences between the nations rather than impart their historical connections. This language of Thatcherism and nation tries to escape the chaos and reconfigure Britishness, preserving a sense of history and unity but using more constricted ideas of what could be incorporated into this definition and what could not.

This definition of Britishness presented by Thatcher is not simply an act of racial exclusion. Its insidiousness goes far deeper by not allowing the many (former) imperial subjects the right to a coherent identity or to a narrative that would allow them to make sense of that identity. Thatcher's portrayal of Britishness is about creating the illusion of an unbroken historical lineage. This continuity resonates in the contemporary era because the products of this narrative would go on to shape Britain in the future. There is a sense of totality or even closure. At the same time, it easily classifies certain individuals as belonging to British society and certain ones as not. This system of classification has an effect on "the children of empire," those whose life could not be easily defined through a pure bloodline. In her keynote address during the 2007 conference *Reconstructing Womanhood – A Future*

*Beyond Empire*, Hazel Carby describes the cultural differences between her Welsh mother and Jamaican father as “volcanic fault lines, or fissures” (“Translation” 27). Carby is referring to the emotional toll that facing racism on a daily basis had on her parents’ relationship and on her and her brother. The psychological instability of her parents made them turn on her and brother who were left to “lick our wounds alone: wounds of childhood, scabbed over, toughened but unhealed” (39). Here is not the place for a detailed psychoanalytic analysis of Carby’s childhood. This depiction is not unique. For Carby, all children of empire face the traumatic effects of never belonging to the original society. It makes no difference whether the children are the products of Dr. John Prentice and Joey Drayton in the film *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner* that suggests a Hollywood ending or Carby’s own parents whose relationship was always fraught.<sup>7</sup> The postcolonial individual, whether he/she lives in the former colonies or in Britain itself, could never easily construct a simple history or a narrative of identity without taking into consideration the way native communities were destroyed in the imperial project (Bhabha 42-43). If nationalism is about eliding difference to construct a cohesive narrative that the public supports (Chatterjee 9), then Carby challenges this ideology by highlighting her own personal story. Her biography represents the most important question that Black British Cultural Studies asks: how does one construct a British identity that challenges the linearity of a national narrative and at the same times captures the

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<sup>7</sup>. In her lecture/essay, Carby uses *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner* as the contrasting narrative of racial romance to her parents’ own multiracial relationship. Although the film depicts an interracial engagement in the United States, the story was inspired by the real-life romance of Peggy Cripps, the daughter of a Labour Party leader Sir Stafford Cripps, to Joseph Emmanuel Appiah, a law student in the United Kingdom and a political leader from the Gold Coast. One of their children is philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah.

historical complexity of the Black subject? The answer directly confronts the language and ideology of Britishness that Thatcher posited in the seventies and eighties.

This search for a new British identity after World War II is not only about finding a global identity, but making sense of what was happening in British society on a local level. I have already described how the character of Jimmy from Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* mourns the loss of Empire and its shaping of a sense of home. Underlying this nostalgic depiction, Jimmy depicts an inability to comprehend the world around him, whose cultural markers have shifted, and feels alienated from a society that seems to have broken from the past. World War II forced Britain to expend all of its energy and resources fighting the Nazi threat. After Germany's defeat in 1945, Britain faced the great task of rebuilding the physical infrastructure that had been bombed, and reconfiguring the economic and social structure that was geared toward war. Recent events in the European Union have linked the term austerity with a lack of economic growth and a life of poverty and scarcity of material good. For several years, the British population endured the rationing of goods. In the late forties, Britain also saw a radical reorganization of its society that would not only rebuild the economy of Britain but revolutionize its social systems. After winning the election of 1945, the Labour government under the leadership of Clement Atlee put in place the major elements of the welfare state, including the National Health Services, the building of estate housing, and the opening up of the education system (Kynaston 143-170). The socialization of British society resulted in a social safety net that allowed many Britons to prosper. Between 1952 and 1959, the unemployment rate barely rose above 2% (Laing 22). With their

disposable income, many of the working class made major consumer purchases like refrigerators, automobiles, washing machines, and televisions. These items went on to transform everyday experience. Appliances made household chores such as washing and cleaning easier and more efficient. Television changed how the public spent its leisure hours. This new, contemporary lifestyle becomes representative of a “New England” where everyone had access to it regardless of class (Laing 20).

This perceived newly formed classless society became the foundation for British Cultural Studies. “The New Left,” an active group of intellectuals that included Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart, E.P. Thompson, and Stuart Hall, wondered how these economic and social changes would affect their reading of society, which had been grounded in Marxist theory. They believed that there could be a middle way between communism and capitalism (MacCabe 19). The shift to a seemingly classless society and the accompanying material changes in everyday life led to a series of questions about the nature of British society at this particular moment:

The ‘settlement’—defined by the revival of capitalist production, the founding of the welfare state and the ‘Cold War’ – appeared to bring economic, political and cultural forces into new kinds of relation, into a new equilibrium. But what sort of qualitative break with the past did this constitute? Had there been a decisive rupture with the determining historical forces which had shaped Britain’s ‘peculiar’ route through the earlier phases of industrial capitalist development, or merely their recomposition into new continuities? Was

Britain still a capitalist civilization or a 'post-capitalist' one? Did welfare capitalism represent a fundamental or merely superficial ordering of society?

(Hall, *Culture, Media, Language* 17)

To answer these questions, Williams, Hoggart, Thompson, and Hall looked at the material evidence or culture to find answers to these series of questions. Growing up in working class households before World War II, these figures mined their own experiences and lives to examine the difference between the past and the present. As instructors in adult education courses at universities such as Oxford and Leeds, these figures found an important source of material and inspiration to study the contemporary moment in Britain. Working-class culture had never been studied before with such a serious and sympathetic lens. This historical juncture also marks a moment of anxiety. Now that the working-class has found more equality in British institutions, what exactly does this mean for the survival of a particular way of life that has offered so much to a British sense of identity? These figures were looking for a narrative that could build a more equitable society. The problem here was that the development of British society and a working-class culture were being held back by a consumer culture that was particularly American.

The arrival of American culture began to threaten the economic, social, and political gains that were being achieved by the working class in British society. American consumer culture builds on Fordism, the belief expressed by Henry Ford that every single one of his workers should be able to afford the automobiles they build in the factories (De Grazia 4). Ford transformed his workers into consumers opening up the markets to everyone

regardless of class. The public had greater access to goods and services. The corporate structures also allowed greater mobility as workers rose through the ranks to positions of greater authority and greater salaries. Class was no longer a barrier to a greater position in life. As tempting as this fluid form of social stratification was to many individuals, the members of the New Left saw this as a threat to the working-class life that has shaped British society and created the political base of the Labour Party and its ideals. This new system also began to undermine the institutions of the welfare state (MacCabe 19-20). If class no longer mattered, then was it necessary to maintain a government sponsored system of housing, health, etc.? This question foreshadows the debate that would take place two decades later with the election of the Conservative Party headed by Thatcher in 1979. She replaced John Maynard Keynes' economic philosophy of high government spending with Milton Friedman's faith in policies that promoted the free market. This resulted in the reorientation of British society away from socialism and towards neoliberalism as embodied in the weakening of the trade unions, the privatization of council estate housing, and the selling of the national assets such as British Telecom (Dobek 25-38). With the policies of Thatcher so closely paralleling those of President Ronald Reagan, it appears that the greatest fears of the British Cultural Studies scholars, the reversal of the post-War socialization of British society, came true.

These social and economic transformations occurring in British society were only one small part of a larger world order that came to fruition in the second half of the twentieth century. As the British Empire declined in territory and in prominence, the United States

became the global hegemon. The move from a British-centered imperial system to an American one marks a shift to a power structure that becomes far more elusive and indirect in its domination. The imperial project was focused on direct governing for the opening of colonial markets for the benefit of the profit of its corporations and for cultural supremacy through its “civilizing” mission. The imperial model and its language are reflected in the military intervention that took place in Vietnam in the 1960’s and 1970’s and Iraq in the 2000’s. Its power extends globally without that same direct control. Empire, without any articles like the British Empire, indicates the diffuse nature of power in this contemporary model. Direct rule has been replaced by a system of ideals of justice and right. Even though these terms proclaim a certain universal quality, the definitions of such terms are exclusively rendered by the United States and therefore always function in its own interests (Hardt and Negri 9-10). The clearest example of this dynamic is the language used to justify American military intervention in Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq, and Libya. The universal values are also reproduced in the global economic system as defined and governed by the United States. With the Bretton Woods Accords of 1944, the United States pegged the American dollar to gold (of which it owned a third of the world’s supply); it made the American dollar the de facto global currency, guaranteeing the price of its exports to other countries that were redeveloping; and finally, it imposed economic development in Europe, Japan, and Third World countries according to its own ideological model through organizations like the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization (Hardt and Negri 264-267). The opening of foreign markets through free-trade treaties enables the flow of goods,

workers, and capital unencumbered by national sovereignty to ultimately benefit American corporations' bottom line (Hardt and Negri 31). The new imperial system provides the same economic benefits as the old one without necessitating the same manpower and expense as that of direct colonization.

The establishment of an economic system with the United States at its center also led to a dominant position shaping the cultural sphere. The terms cultural imperialism and "Market Empire" capture these changes. The rebuilding of Europe after World War II opened up markets for American corporations to sell their products. The influence of these companies on European society was not a passive one. They were transforming the social space and values system which had for so long defined European culture. National identities linked for so long to a sense of history and the production of a cultural past have been replaced by a consumer culture that focuses on the new, the modern, and the material (De Grazia 5). The selling of an American way of life transformed the social relationships and the values underlying them. This is the "McDonaldization" of culture. The fast-food chain provides the metaphoric model where everyone becomes a part of the system of production and consumption. Each person has his/her role within this chain providing the most efficient labor cost and the maximum profit. The metaphor extends into car-dealerships, ad agencies, chain stores, supermarkets, etc. (Featherstone 7-8) The reproduction of American corporate structure and the creation of a standard model of consumption has grounded the American framing of the free market throughout the globe. Giving oneself to American products such as seeing a Hollywood movie, wearing Levi's jeans, or listening to American

rock music binds people together into an imaginary community, akin to Benedict Anderson's definition (De Grazia 7). Millions of consumers around the world have absorbed American values and definitions of ideas such as beauty, success, lifestyle (Featherstone 8). In addition, they perpetuate the perception of the success of the American system as a whole. Seemingly democratic, this consumer culture is available to anyone with the money. The individuals are no longer bound by class stratification to gain a foothold in this new economy. Anybody with an entrepreneurial spirit could become a success (De Grazia 9). However, when Hardt and Negri mention that corporations create subjectivities, they are not referring to individual thinking subjects that are able to challenge the domination of free market discourse (Hardt and Negri 33). These figures become complicit in the perpetuation of (Market) Empire.

The cultural imperial model presented by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Victoira de Grazia, and Michael Featherstone represent the worst fears of figures such as Williams, Hoggart, and Hall. On a certain level, American consumer culture has some similarities with the working-class culture that British Cultural Studies examines. Both forms differentiate themselves from the high cultural forms created and disseminated by the artists and intellectuals. Working-class culture or popular culture, as defined by Williams, was organically developed by the lower classes over a period of centuries. This stood in contrast to mass culture that had no foundation in local values and identity. In this case, it was imposed by the American government and corporations in order to gain the largest profit and market share. Their affiliations are also distinct. Whereas popular culture contains close ties between a sense of national identity, mass culture renders the individual ahistorical and

rootless. These definitions of culture will be developed in the second chapter Nation. For the discussions on Empire, this distinction is important because it raises a central methodological question for British Cultural Studies. What are the ideological underpinnings through which these scholars should study culture? American sociology held a certain potential. However, like the values embodied in American culture, sociology contained certain ideological conclusions that countered the development of a working-class way of life. Hall explains:

It responded to the question posed earlier – what sort of society was this now? – by giving a highly specific historical answer: all post-capitalist, post-industrial societies were tending to the model of the American dream – as one representative work put it, to the ‘first new nation’. It celebrated the triumph of ‘pluralist society’, constantly counterposed to ‘totalitarian society,’ a highly ideological couplet which was advanced as a concluded scientific fact. (Hall, *Cultural Studies and the Centre* 20)

British Cultural Studies finds the American academy’s definition of sociology hypocritical. While proclaiming its scientific status or objectivity, it contains the ideological biases that promote an American definition of society. British society developed under its own historical and ideological formation and therefore needs its own particular methodology to understand how it evolved.

Although British Cultural Studies dismisses the ideological baggage of American sociology, its ultimate methodology consisted of a variety of foreign sources. The literary was

one medium that allows the scholars to examine the changes in culture on a localized level. Hall praises Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* for providing insight to working-class culture (Hall, *Cultural Studies and the Centre* 21). It does not have to be purely objective because it allows the reader to understand how individuals' feelings have changed over time. These subjective qualities are extremely important for the development of culture. The inclusion of the literary highlights the impossibility of ever creating a protracted scientific or objective system through which culture could be analyzed. Other disciplines have attempted to study culture as an object that could be described and explained. Culture was an artifact that would be produced from a specific set of historic and social circumstances that went on to shape the object/artifact. Traditional anthropology defined culture this way, studying it from afar using a scientific lens. In contrast, Cultural Studies viewed culture as a living thing that was an object of study and a catalyst for societal transformation. The challenge became how to construct a theoretical foundation that would be able to place culture at the very center of the analysis rather than as a simple byproduct. Structuralism-functionalism, through the work of French intellectuals such as Ferdinand Saussure and Claude Levi-Strauss, shaped the field by providing a language that holds particular meanings dependent on the social order that creates it. The cultural artifact has now become cultural *practices*. These practices always shift and change as a function of the economic, the political, and the social forces. And at the same time, they too could also act as a catalyst for change (Hall, *Cultural Studies and the Centre* 27). This also forces a reconsideration of the base/superstructure model first presented by Marx. Before, culture was considered secondary to the forces of economic

production, which affected everything in society, including the political, social, and cultural realms (Millner 52). In their writing, Thompson and Williams present a new base/superstructure model that considers culture as an indispensable part of ideologies that battle for supremacy (Hall *Cultural Studies and the Centre* 28). The work of Antonio Gramsci, which is discussed in the third chapter “Culture,” becomes indispensable in the redefining of culture and its relationship to ideology. The placement of culture at the very center of the discipline distinguishes Cultural Studies from other disciplines.

Here, British Cultural Studies functions on two distinct levels. First, it responds to the exertion of American power on post-World War II British society. The politics of the Cold War and the position of the United States as head of the First World came to a head in the anti-nuclear protests of the New Left. In terms of soft power, economic prosperity led to the ability for more of the public to buy the consumer goods and obtain the lifestyle promoted by corporations. An American-style consumer culture that leveled class distinctions threatened to overtake a way of life that developed locally (Williams *The Year 2000* x). Despite the improvement in the living conditions of the working class, the working-class values that Williams and Hoggart tout in their writing could no longer be sustained. At the same time, British Cultural Studies challenges American hegemony disciplinarily, where American sociology wants to superimpose its value system on the analytic lens. Williams frames the intellectual discourse as a battle between American democracy and British socialism. The United States is infringing on the development of a British sense of culture and society by promoting its own definition of these terms as superior and universal (*The*

*Year 2000* xi). Despite the electoral rise of Margaret Thatcher's Tories and its close parallels to the ideology and political domination of Ronald Reagan's Republican Party, Williams sees that Britain wants to retain the socialist structures that have been put in place since the post-war years. The Conservative Party only received 42 percent of the vote in the 1979 election, hardly a landslide. As a continuation of his argument in *Culture and Society* and *The Long Revolution*, the British people will continue to struggle for and ultimately obtain a truly democratic, socialist society.

The redefinition of the Labour Party under Tony Blair fifteen years later and its overwhelming electoral victories proves that Williams's vision will not come to fruition any time soon. Blair discarded the party's historic platform on working-class issues and adapted economic policies from Margaret Thatcher (Heffernan 166-167). Williams's vision of British society also has its problems, in that it simultaneously recognizes and overlooks the changing world around him. Oddly enough, Williams dismisses nationalism. In his addendum to *The Year 2000*, he describes how societal institutions like churches and schools indoctrinate the population from a young age to believe that they are a part of this national entity called the United Kingdom or mockingly called "the Yookay" by Williams. The selective narratives of nation instilled in the public gloss over the differences found among individuals. Anybody that threatens to challenge this status quo is repressed (*The Year 2000* 182-183). This system of nationalist indoctrination is especially true of the United States. Imposed by the government onto the people, the civic virtues of American society are not rooted on the local level. True socialism replaces this mainstream propaganda with "lived and formed

identities either of a settled kind . . . or of a possible kind, where dislocation and relocation require new formation” (196). Williams’s vision is very idealistic and honorable. A national identity should be built from the ground up, organically sprouting from the communities that all together make up this entity called the nation-state. Much of his writing positions the working class and its way of life as the main foundation for a socialist British national identity. However, this privileging of the working-class excludes other groups from contributing to the construction of British society. Although he recognizes the cultural particularities of ethnic groups like the Welsh, Scots, and West Indians, he never explains how their histories and ways of life could contribute to his socialist mission. The only critique he presents is their erasure from “The Yookay.”

In some ways *The Year 2000* is a reassessment of British Cultural Studies. In these final few pages, Williams recognizes the diversity of the United Kingdom in the early eighties, an era when racial tensions placed it center stage in various media outlets. He calls for a reconsideration of national identity and urges the development of one that takes into consideration notions of home, exile, and dislocation. At the same time, this statement remains disingenuous because it runs contrary to the Cultural Studies project. Considering his political leanings and appeals for a socialist society, the English working class would take on a central role in the construction and administration of the economic and political values that Williams advocates. In this sense, his analyses of the working class found throughout his writings become a justification for the group to take on this role. Their historical ties to the local communities and their contributions to the development of British society, especially

through the Industrial Revolution, have been indispensable. The same continuous line that exists for the White English working class does not exist for ethnic groups such as West Indians. Yet, their place within the imperial order and their indirect relationship to the English manufacturing boom of the nineteenth century is just as important. One of the major critiques of his work is the almost complete absence of imperialism from his writing. If the past is so crucial for the development of an organic identity, one wonders whether the same right to become a part of Britain could be given to other ethnicities. In the end, will West Indians have the same role as the White English working class in his long revolution or does the English working class's historical connection to the development of British society reaffirm more rights over other groups?

The difference between the working class and the West Indian community highlights the limitations of British Cultural Studies. By studying popular culture, Williams foregrounds the working-class as a feeling and thinking subject. Rather than considering culture as an artifact for examination, Williams in particular sees it as a living text that stands in for the very persons that created it. This is emphasized in the definition of culture as practice. As a result, this subject who created these sets of cultural practices interacts in a hierarchy where everyone vies for power and control. These individuals and collective groups are not passive objects that accept the status quo, but struggle to ascend in the social order (Hall, *Cultural Studies and the Centre* 27). Despite the changes from earlier Marxist models, the subject remains whole. In other words, The British Cultural Studies project rewrites the relationship between base and superstructure or economics and culture. It still retains a master narrative

where the subject is written into a continuous link to history, to the land, and to the community. This becomes a privilege that is available to groups such as the English working class but not to others like the West Indians. The historical and epistemological narratives marked by dislocation, exile, and rupture are squarely located in the realm of the postmodern. A qualification here is necessary. First, there is no single definition of postmodernism. There are many different permutations where the subject could be liberated from traditional power structures (Gianni Vattimo) or imprisoned within them (Michel Foucault) or even new ones (Jacques Derrida). This could also denote a new moment for the subjective experience (Theodor Adorno and Jean Baudrillard) or simply a continuation of the past (Frederic Jameson). Nonetheless, however one defines this epistemic position, the contrast between modernist narrative of Marxism/post-Marxism and the postmodernist lack of a cohesive model parallels that between the English working-class community and the West Indian one, as depicted by Raymond Williams in *The Year 2000*.

To develop its particular strand of Marxism, British Cultural Studies was strongly influenced by the work of structuralists and post-structuralists that would become seminal figures in postmodern thought. For example, Louis Althusser's ideas on "the ideological state apparatuses" allowed Williams and Hall to reconceive the role of culture within Marx's model. Derrida's notion of *différance* influenced Hall's later ideas on racial and ethnic identity. The relationship between Marxism and postmodernism had its limits. In the 1990 conference at the University of Illinois "Cultural Studies Now and the Future," Stuart Hall describes feminism, postcolonialism, and structuralism as interruptions in the greater Marxist

model Cultural Studies went on to reform (Heslop 376). When describing the intellectual trajectories of Birmingham's CCCS, Hall describes how all of these different versions and permutations of Marxism and post-Marxism, structuralism and post-structuralism, modernism and postmodernism have shaped the developments of different strands of Cultural Studies. In each instance, it took the ideas to a certain limit and then stopped from potentially rejecting the grand narrative on labor (Hall, *Cultural Studies and the Centre* 37). Working at the Centre, Hall and the other scholars integrated questions of identity throughout their analysis of power, culture, history, etc. Yet, he still retained the language and general formulations of the working class found in the work of his predecessors Williams and Hoggart.

Although Hall's theorization of identity could be seen as a continuation of the work of earlier British Cultural Studies scholars, Gilroy breaks away from many of the field's assumptions of identity, narrative, and modernity, especially in his now seminal text *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. By creating a model that challenges the traditional framing of national identity, *The Black Atlantic* becomes the ultimate expression of a body of ideas on Black Britain that had begun a couple of decades before at Birmingham. From the introduction, Gilroy slams British Cultural Studies for failing to broaden its conception of nation. Despite the enthusiasm for Black Communist CLR James, figures such as Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm dismiss the black experience in their intellectual struggle for the socialist cause. "[In their writing] England ceaselessly gives birth to itself, seemingly from Britannia's head" (Gilroy 14). Their sense of how to define Englishness is

ted to the geographical and historical boundaries of Britain itself. Underneath this seemingly precise and accurate drawing of British identity lies a harsher reality. One could not avoid finding imperialism and slavery within the public discourse and culture in Britain itself throughout the nineteenth century. When Williams constructed his cultural history in *Culture and Society*, he overlooked how the philosophical discussions of the subject are closely tied to the debates surrounding the Black individual. These issues are erased in his overviews of major figures such as Edmund Burke, Thomas Carlyle, and John Ruskin (Gilroy 11). The ultimate example of this double standard is the artist J. M. W. Turner's depiction of a slave ship throwing dead bodies overboard into the Atlantic Ocean. Turner's artistic production has come to represent the pinnacle of artistic achievement and more particularly "the essence of English civilization" (Gilroy 13). At the same time, the painting exposes how that very same civilization allows slavery, the dehumanizing system to flourish. High Culture as defined by Raymond Williams is also embedded by its dark underbelly.

The challenge of the Black intellectual has been to attempt to bridge the gap between the obtaining of full rights as citizens (subjects) of a nation and the realities of entering Western history as something else (the Other). Gilroy asks

How has this doubleness . . . which follows being both inside and outside the West, affected the conduct of political movements against racial oppression and towards black autonomy? . . . How would these struggles be periodised in relation to modernity: the fatal intermediation of capitalism, industrialization, and a new conception of political democracy? (30)

These questions have taken a central place in the writings of important African-American intellectuals WEB DuBois and Richard Wright. After spending time in Europe (Germany and France, respectively,) these two figures looked at European modernity as defined through the nationalist impulse to create a narrative of the Black experience. High modernism refers to the period of history that begins with the Renaissance and continues straight to World War II. In the most basic terms, the epistemological aim of the intellectuals of this period is to understand man as an Enlightened being that encompasses knowledge and ultimate freedom. These thinkers analyzed how world events have allowed human beings to develop and exemplify these qualities. The goal of the work of some of the most prolific and influential figures of the nineteenth century like Marx, Max Weber, and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel was to narrativize this evolution of the subject (Best and Kellner 2). Nationalism took on a central role in these narratives because it became a repository for collective identity and collective achievement. The nation became the imagined body through which all Europeans could define themselves as sovereign beings able to create and manage a civic society (Smith 9). For Black intellectuals, it is impossible to simply copy the European definition of nation unless they fall into the trap of essentializing Black identity.<sup>8</sup> They would have to create their own narrative structures that built upon and responded to European modernity.

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<sup>8</sup> . Gilroy critiques Afrocentric philosophy for disregarding double consciousness and adapting a simplistic model of nation. It uses tradition to establish continuity between those who are the product of the African Diaspora and the original Africans (Gilroy 188).

The Black Atlantic becomes the ultimate response to Enlightenment tradition because it posits a separate set of geographical, temporal, linguistic, and cultural parameters that do not strictly fit within an easy framework. The terrors of slavery undercut the very propositions and ethics the Enlightenment Project attempted to convey. The debates over freedom, reason, and subjectivity coincided with the terror and brutality propagated by the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The work of Black intellectuals like DuBois and Wright insisted that “the history of blacks in the new world, particularly the experiences of the slave trade and the plantation, were a legitimate part of the moral history of the West as whole” (Gilroy 70). To achieve this, these figures confronted European modernity to build their arguments. Using the perceptions of African contribution to history and culture in German thought, DuBois inserted the Black subject into Hegel’s historical trajectory and afforded the same access to freedom as other races. Before, the Black figure was located outside of history; and now, he/she has a place within modernity (Gilroy 134). Wright too places the Black subject at the very center. He/she becomes the figure par excellence that captures the contradictions of the modern world: the primitive with the modern, America with Europe, the Black experience with existentialism (Gilroy 165, 171). Gilroy continues the work of DuBois and Wright by formulating his own response to modernity as captured by British Cultural Studies. If the work of Williams and Thompson aimed to demarcate popular culture within the physical and historical borders of an English nation, then Gilroy’s response is to formulate a completely different space that brings together Black intellectual and cultural production. Using the template of the triangular slave trade between Africa, Europe, and the

Americas, Gilroy demarcates a space called the Black Atlantic. This construction allows Gilroy to unify the Black experience, to mark the historical events important to the Black Subject, and to unravel the intellectual and cultural dialogues that took place across it.

Over the course of the book, Gilroy positions this Black Atlantic space as a direct response to European modernity, but simultaneously within the overall epistemological project that goes by the same name. All of these scholars do not dismiss the historical trajectory set up by their predecessors. Instead, they build on it to include and incorporate the Black experience within this understanding of the world. In other ways, Gilroy's Black Atlantic is a postmodern space. One of the most important theoretical figures shaping Gilroy's perspective on the Black subject and his/her relationship to history is Jürgen Habermas, the German philosopher. Unlike other postmodernist theorists who wanted to break from the values of Freedom and Reason strived for by earlier Enlightenment thinkers, Habermas insisted the continued value of working towards them. This tradition needs to be reconsidered and critiqued because the historical and cultural narrative that had been constructed in the twentieth century fails to live up to its possibilities (Gilroy 43, Best and Kellner 236-237). While trying to sustain the unity of this later modernity, Gilroy acknowledges and embraces the fractures and disjunctions found in the Black Atlantic. "[Gilroy] ha[s] suggested that the critiques of modernity articulated by successive generations of black intellectuals had their rhizomorphic systems of propagation anchored in a continued proximity to the unspeakable terrors of the slave experience" (Edwards 72-73). The connection found in this quote between the slave ship and the rhizome is important. The

slave ship becomes the atomized entity within this greater space. As it touches down and it deposits its cargo, new lifeworlds are created, mixing African, European, and American cultures and ideas in new and uncategorized ways. Concepts such as mestizaje, hybridity, and creolité become the new standard cultural formulations, depending on which part of the Americas one chooses to focus – the Spanish, English, or French-speaking one.

Gilroy embraces these different types of fragmentation in narrative, identity, and time to construct his definition of the Black Atlantic. Although he tries to create a model that appears contiguous historically and epistemologically, postmodern formulations remain in his depiction of this space (Chivallon 377). The construction of histories of the Black experience does not take the perceived total form presented by European philosophers and historians. It is quite apparent when one considers the role of existentialism in Wright's analysis of Black identities (173). Even though DuBois aspired to the German high modernism of figures such as Hegel and Otto von Bismark, the historical narrative and cultural descriptions presented in his seminal text *The Souls of Black Folk* is "part of the more general, discontinuous, and sharply differentiated processes that contribute to a diaspora" (Gilroy 124). The goals of these Black intellectuals might have been to place Black culture within European Enlightenment and the ideals that it encompassed. However the formulations of these figures are defined as postmodern. The prefix "post" in the postmodern marks a specific moment in the historical record – after the Renaissance, after the Reformation, and after the Enlightenment. The slave trade was contemporaneous with these earlier historical moments, yet the lens through which these figures looked back at

them exposed the epistemological shortcomings of these eras. There is a difference between the historical moment as it happens and the reflection back on it. Like postmodernism, Black intellectuals responded to certain properties of European modernism. These include “its obsession with power and knowledge, its constraint of language to primarily symbolic function, its ethic of winning, its categorical and dualistic modes of definition, its belief in the quantitative and objective, its linear time and individual subject, and above all its common media of exchange (time, space, money) . . .” (Ermath 50). Gilroy’s *Black Atlantic* challenges these foundational qualities of modernism and creates new ways to posit Black culture and the underlying critiques it makes. As much as Gilroy rebuffs the never-ending possibilities of postmodernity, his conceptualization of the Black Atlantic fits these definitions rather than those of European modernity.

This inability to ultimately reconcile these two distinct constructions of self is most apparent in “What’s the Time? Nation Time!” the short subsection of the final chapter. The Black Atlantic community is built on a sense of connected historical experience that comes from a shared Black experience. However, this is not communicable by a concrete historical narrative. The example he gives is James Brown’s response to hearing a performance by Fela Kuti at his club in Lagos, Nigeria. Brown and his companions “dug” the combination of African beats and American funk being developed in West Africa at the time. He recognized the historical relationship between his own work and that of Fela Kuti (Gilroy 199). This description is powerful because it highlights the centrality of music within his Diasporic project. The genre captures a long history of oppression that is able to be communicated

across space and time. Originating from Africa and formed among the slave communities, musicians created a language that gave them and their community a certain agency (76). Excluded from society as full members, this form of communication allowed these musicians the medium through which they could articulate their own humanity – the Freedom and Reason that had been held in the highest esteem by the Enlightenment. The language goes beyond simply words; it incorporates the body fully and as movements, gestures, and beats become the units for expression (75). This form of communication is important because it bridges the gap “between the writing elite and the masses of people who exist outside literacy” or, to rephrase Gilroy’s dichotomy, between those in power and the oppressed (77). The traditional privileging of writing over the oral, which includes all of the different verbal and bodily forms of expression that Black music uses, is a postmodern construction. In his most famous lecture “Différance” Derrida explores how the written word has hidden from the reader the ambiguities of language. With the term *différance*, the poststructuralist theorist shows us the continual possibilities of language to postpone and play with meaning in such a way that one could never be sure of a particular definition (62-63). So, terms like Freedom and Reason that everyone took for granted under Enlightenment thought are now in doubt. The musical forms in which the Black experience is articulated contest writing in a similar way to Derrida’s notion of *différance*. Gilroy dismisses the postmodern potential of his description by using the same criticism that others have made of deconstruction. The potential endgame is an inexhaustible play of words that empties everything from ever having meaning. He fears that Black subjectivity could never

be achieved if one could not find agency within the text (77). Other postcolonial and feminist theorists like Gayatri Spivak and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick have found the potential for liberation through the process of deconstruction. The seemingly definitive terms and identities of the past are now open for questioning.

In his development of the Black Atlantic space, Gilroy's model does not fit into the modern conceptualization of nation. His geographical framing runs counter to the very concept of nation. According to Benedict Anderson, the creation of nations during the nineteenth century in Europe and during the mid-twentieth century in the post-colonial world was closely tied to the narrativizing of a specific community. On the most basic level, these communities had to be finite and sovereign. They had to be explicitly defined in terms of language and space, and be considered to have the inherent right to govern themselves (Anderson 7). Neither one has been historically true in the Black Atlantic space. National borders have been imposed through wars and international treaties by the heavy-handed world powers. There was little if any regard to the way linguistic and cultural groups existed within these artificially drawn spaces.<sup>9</sup> From the independence of Haiti in the late eighteenth century to present day, Black communities have fought for their independence. The West never believed that these individuals could govern themselves.<sup>10</sup> The presence of a print

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<sup>9</sup> . The major example is the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, when the colonial powers divided up Africa and created the borders which are mostly in place to this day.

<sup>10</sup> . Throughout history there was great disdain for black independence and sovereign rights. For example, many politicians and intellectuals in the United States dismissed Haiti's legitimacy. These powerful figures believed that a nation governed by former slaves was destined to fail. Their self-fulfilling prophecy came into play with the West's continual

culture, best exemplified by the newspaper, was crucial to the development of an imagined identity. When a newspaper was sold to the public within a particular twelve or twenty-four hour period, all of these readers were partaking in the same exact action and reading the same exact content. The ritual condensed time, space, and language, allowing people to construct a complete and continuous idea of who is included in this national community and how it has developed (Anderson 34-35). Music as the central medium for communication across the Black Atlantic highlights the fractured nature of the narrative available to the Diasporic community. The cultural materials salvaged from the horrors of slavery are snippets that are able to be pieced together to mark a distinct but incomplete striving for the Black Subject's inclusion into modernity (196-198). Although Gilroy's goal is to give the Black Subject the same sense of closure as the European Subject, the construction of a national identity using the same elements available to European and postcolonial nations are not available to the peoples of the Black Atlantic. Their history and geography do not fit as neatly into the physical borders of the contemporary world.

This incompatibility between traditional definitions of nation and the historical realities of the Black Subject is important because it makes it impossible for Black British Cultural Studies to retain the definitions of nation, culture, and identity set forth by British Cultural Studies. The original project was about excavating and tying the cultural achievements of the working-class to this greater national entity called Great Britain. By

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economic and political interference in the country's affair throughout its more than two-hundred year history. The same rhetoric is also present in the excuses politicians like Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher gave for the continuation of apartheid in South Africa in the 1980's.

eliminating the line between high and low culture, scholars like Williams, Hoggart, and Thompson were able to present new narratives of national belonging that now incorporate the lower classes—a group that has for so long been sidelined in history. As I describe in detail in the next chapter “Nation,” Williams’s seminal text *Culture and Society* is a narrative of the intellectual and cultural legacy of the British nation that integrates the working-class. When Williams compares the historically continuous working-class experience to that of the fragmented, (mostly) recently arrived West Indian community in *The Year 2000*, he confuses what is at stake in a similar way that Gilroy does. The creation of a national identity is not the same for these two communities. While the working-class has had the luxury of modernity to construct its narrative, West Indians can not rely on the same assumptions. Postmodernity is one possibility because it accommodates far more open and elusive conceptions of history, culture, time, etc. With the decline of the British Empire in the second half of the twentieth century, the expansive global definition of Britishness that evolved over the previous four hundred years with colonization had been replaced with a more restrictive definition of national identity. By the sixties, the loss of Empire depicted in Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger* made its way into the public consciousness and the political sphere (MacKenzie 32). The ideology and rhetoric of the Conservative Party as represented by M.P. Enoch Powell and Thatcher marked a distinct retreat from the global possibilities of Britishness into a more traditional definition of national identity. This perspective is not particular to the Tories. In his earlier book *There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation*, Gilroy accuses Williams’s myopic definition of nation as containing

similar elements as that of Powell and Thatcher (49). This modern conception of nation, represented by a wide ideological spectrum, was battling potential postmodern ones, manifested by the West Indians and other immigrant communities' identities and histories.

If this characterization of British society could not fully capture the fragmented identity created by the Black Atlantic, another way of understanding the narratives of this space is necessary. The Black Atlantic became inexorably tied to the United States and its contemporary imperial model. The major criticism of *The Black Atlantic* has been the focus on the relationship between Europe and African America. Although Gilroy presents the Black Atlantic as a Diasporic space, the Caribbean and Africa are missing (Piot 155-156). The real goal of the book is to rethink Black British identity outside of the geographic and ideological boundaries of modern Britishness (Edwards 61). In this dissertation, I take this argument one step further. Gilroy's understanding of the Black Atlantic could not exist without the African-American experience and the way it is linked to Empire, as defined by the contemporary age of globalization. As Gilroy points out, the Black British community has been able to make its mark on the international cultural scene. The music of Soul II Soul is the clearest example combining the technology, the language (or musical forms), and the historic experience of Britain, the Caribbean, and the United States. This success exemplifies a challenge to the dominance of the African-American experience as the ultimate representation of the Black Atlantic (Gilroy 15-16). From even a cursory view of his text, the centrality of figures like DuBois, Wright, Frederick Douglass, and Martin Delaney in his analysis point to the supremacy of African-American intellectuals in Black Atlantic letters. In

addition, Black Atlantic culture has been reliant on the economic, political, and cultural dominance of the United States. Even though Soul II Soul was signed to Virgin Records, a British corporation, their music had to be distributed in the United States through the channels controlled by Warner Music Group, an American corporation. Soul II Soul would also not be able to have reached such a wide audience without MTV, an American channel that was launched in Europe a couple of years before “Back to Life” was released. When one references American popular culture, especially music, it is impossible to untangle the global predominance of American corporations in its structures to disseminate music and the place of the Black experience in the development of the different formats. Empire and consumerism are symbiotically linked to the cultural production that results from slavery and its aftermath.

Both British Cultural Studies and Black British Cultural Studies fear the hegemony of American Empire. While threatening to transform British society irreversibly for the scholars of British Cultural Studies, the United States simultaneously encapsulates a powerful and contrasting possibility for those of Black British Cultural Studies to shape its own perspective of a contemporary nation. At least in terms of constructing a national identity or understanding their community’s own cultural production, the United States has created a new template for Black British Cultural Studies. The community’s experience is the product of the first stage of globalization (the era of the British Empire) and is adapting to a society during the second stage of globalization (the era of American Empire.) At the intersection of these two Empires, I locate Black British Cultural Studies. When the British Empire was

shrinking, figures of British Cultural Studies like Williams, Hoggart, and Thompson looked to popular culture to retract British identity into a traditionally framed nation. The particular spatial and temporal limits of this notion of Britishness closed off Black Britons from finding their own place within this society. The place of the United States at the center of this system of mass cultural exchange and its embedded African-American narrative has allowed the intellectuals of Black British Cultural Studies to develop their own ideas about what it means to be Black and British at this post-imperial moment. Despite the historic and continued oppression by those in power, this globalized world, exemplified by the multiculturalism of the United States, is marked by an increased awareness and expression of the diversity of groups that live within it. The new societies are not the monolithically ethnic and racial entities of nineteenth century Europe, but the multicultural societies that result from the continual flows of peoples throughout the world. This framework will go on to shape the work of intellectuals such as Gilroy, Carby, Hall, and Julien. This overarching idea of Empire also shapes the rest of the dissertation. Every subsequent chapter explores various elements of how the field of Black British Cultural Studies grew from this dissolution of Britishness presented by the forefathers of British Cultural Studies and the society at the time. The next chapter zeroes in on the particular narrative of nation presented by Williams in his seminal text *Culture and Society* and displays the shortcomings of its construction of British identity. Although the link between popular culture and the national identity influenced Black British Cultural Studies, new conceptualizations of culture and society were needed. One of the clearest examples of this connection is that between African-American

writer Wright and Black British scholar Carby. By looking to African America, Carby was able to redefine culture and to challenge the narrative of society.

## Chapter 2: Nation

Many black American intellectuals were very suspicious of “outsiders” writing and speaking about what they perceived as a very particular African *American* [her emphasis] experience . . . whereas I took for granted the importance of the concept of the black Diaspora . . .

- Hazel Carby in *Cultures in Babylon: Black Britain and African America*

This chapter, “Nation,” explores the way culture and society have shaped the construction of a narrative of nation in British Cultural Studies and Black British Cultural Studies. These two fields had distinct responses to the shifts occurring in geopolitical power after World War II. The reconstruction of British society after its destruction by the Nazis opened up the possibilities for new social structures. Figures such as Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart, the founders of British Cultural Studies, believed that the organic rise of the English working class would have led to a greater participation and voice in society. By upending the traditional high/low culture dichotomy, these scholars rewrote the national narrative to highlight the contributions of the working class to Britain. This lays the foundation for Raymond Williams’s seminal text *Culture and Society: 1780-1950*, which is discussed in this chapter. The rise of the United States as a superpower and its influence on a global(ized) culture threatened the relationship between a local popular culture and a particular sense of Britishness. American popular culture such as music and film made it around the world. American products and their accompanying way of life invaded British high streets. Williams and Hoggart saw popular culture that had been so closely defined with a British rootedness replaced with mass culture that came in from outside Britain. For the

scholars of Black British Cultural Studies, the United States opened up possibilities to challenge the linear and racially homogenous narratives of Britishness found in British Cultural Studies. Although Stuart Hall, Hazel Carby, and Paul Gilroy adopted their predecessors' analysis of popular culture, they constructed their own narratives of belonging. These figures looked to African-American intellectuals to develop a relationship between culture and society that placed Black Britons within the African Diaspora, since their history and culture seemed incompatible with that presented by Williams. This dynamic is explored in the writings of Hazel Carby with specific attention to her essay "White Woman Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood." This text is important because it is an early work in the field that explicitly connects the Black British (female) experience with that of other groups throughout the African Diaspora. Building from Richard Wright's *White Man Listen*, Carby's essay represents the shortcoming of the narrative of culture and society presented by British Cultural Studies and the place of the African-American experience to shape new notions of national identity.

While writing her first book *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* when she arrived in the United States in the early eighties, Hazel Carby received a chilly response from African-American scholars. She explains that "Many black American intellectuals . . . were very suspicious of 'outsiders' writing and speaking about what they perceived as a very particular and peculiar African *American* experience [her emphasis]. I found that whereas I took for granted the importance of the concept of the

black diaspora . . .”<sup>11</sup> (1-2). Despite the reluctance of members of the academy to accept a Black Briton writing about African-American culture, Carby has been able to become a prominent figure in the discipline— as professor and chair of the African-American Studies Department at Yale University and as an important black feminist theorist. Her work on the relationship between power, culture, race, gender, and sexuality, developed at the University of Birmingham would become extremely influential in African-American scholarship, not only through the publication of her work but her role as teacher and mentor to numerous younger scholars in the field. This tension points to distinct visions of the relationship between race and nation. Carby’s criticism stems from the African-American intellectuals’ inability to think about blackness beyond the traditional notions of national identity. They defined the African-American experience through the physical boundaries of the United States. For them, Carby was incapable of fully understanding African-American culture and writing about it, because she did not grow up in the United States. But Carby believes that her blackness, even if confined geographically within Britain itself, has been shaped by the African-American experience through influences and exchanges. These give her the authority to study and to participate in the dialogues on the African-American experience taking place in the academy. Black Britain and African America are bound together by a common historical experience that has shaped black cultural expression in both places. These connections extend beyond the physical borders of the traditional nation-state and the

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<sup>11</sup> . Although written at different points in her career, all of Carby’s writings referenced in this chapter are essays found in the collection of her work *Cultures in Babylon: Black Britain and African America*.

strict definitions of a national identity. In the first chapter “Empire,” I discussed how in the nineteenth century, the nation-state encompassed the Historical and Cultural production<sup>12</sup> of a group of people. According to European intellectuals, the linear history and the high cultural forms were only applicable to those who were White. As Gilroy presented in *The Black Atlantic*, another model that challenges high modernism is needed for the Black experience - a conceptual space called Diaspora.

This chapter will explore the transition from British Cultural Studies to Black British Cultural Studies by looking at the limitations of the narrative of Britishness presented in the original field. Through a detailed analysis of Raymond Williams’s *Culture and Society 1780-1950*, one of the original texts of the discipline, I will set to explore the relationship between nation and popular culture that have shaped and continue to shape a particular strand of British Cultural Studies. However, its foundations in and focus on the working class way of life would make it impossible to adapt it whole-scale to the Black population. Carby looked to Wright, specifically his work *White Man Listen*. The speeches, essays, and dramatic piece compiled in this one text connect African-American cultural forms with the experience of colonized people throughout the world and the slave past with the present as captured with the Bandung Conference of 1955, the historical moment when the colonies of Asia and Africa were about to achieve independence from Europe. For Carby, this intersection between culture and historical narrative is important because it gives her a template to

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<sup>12</sup> . I purposely capitalized Historical and Cultural to mark the critical value that philosophers have placed on these entities. They came to represent the ultimate manifestation of a people. History and Culture were idealized and made sacred in the conceiving of national identities.

contextualize the Black British experience within a global system of white supremacy and to join Black Britain to the experience of other peoples of colors throughout the world. These connections allowed her to extend her study of Black culture beyond the boundaries of Britain, looking at African-American literature, film, and music. Her work on nineteenth century print culture and the cultural production of the Harlem Renaissance have brought her widespread praise and admiration among fellow scholars. When one reads this work, the critical lens she brings to popular culture originates in the overturning of the high culture/low culture dichotomy by Williams. On the surface, Carby provides a clear analysis of African-American cultural production, but the questions she raises about the nature of popular culture and the narratives that it shapes are just as applicable to the Black British experience. When she writes about one of these two spaces, the other one always seeps in, methodologically and culturally.

Before I get to Carby's work, it is necessary to step back and understand the institutional and intellectual roots of British Cultural Studies. The field grew out of the attempt to increase members of the working class access to education and to incorporate their experience within the curriculum. British Cultural Studies originates in the programs of the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), a national charity that was and is still funded by the government. Founded in 1903, the organization sought to bring university education to the working class through programs established in a number of universities and colleges. From the outset of these efforts, a debate raged about the goals of working-class education and the kind of material taught in these programs. Some believed that the WEA should

provide an introduction to English national culture, or in other words, the greatest literary and cultural accomplishments of British civilization. This type of education would expose high cultural forms to the working classes. Others wanted to emphasize the class elements of this new student body. They believed that the WEA should foster a working-class consciousness that could eventually revolutionize British society (Goldman 281-282). Only six years from the launch of the WEA, these views came to a head in the 1909 strike at Oxford's Ruskin College. The students believed that the curriculum was not socialist enough (Quinney 56-57). This tension between the government and more radical proponents of adult education would continue to shape the working-class education movement in the decades to come, especially after the Second World War with the election of the Labour Party. Many saw the Labour victory as the end of Britain's rigid class structure and the beginnings of a socialist revolutionary movement.

When the Labour government fell in 1951, the WEA wanted to shift their emphasis from a working-class education to one defined as simply adult education. Universities wanted to expand these programs, but the more radical figures running them insisted on retaining the intellectual foundations in class struggle. The perceived objectivity and neutrality of the government-funded organization came into conflict with proponents and heads of the extramural departments at various universities like Hull, Leeds, and particularly Oxford, where its adult-education department, the University Delegacy, included prominent voices of working-class education like heads Roger Hodgkin and G.D.H. Cole. These figures believed in an education that fulfilled the needs of the working-class in a changing post-war

society (Steele 1-4). As Stuart Hall writes, “[cultural studies] set about registering the impact of the new forms of affluence and consumer society on the very hierarchical and pyramidal structure of British society” (“Emergence” 12). The founding fathers of British Cultural Studies began their academic careers in these extramural departments: Raymond Williams at Oxford, Richard Hoggart at Hull, and E.P. Thompson at Leeds.

The effect of these education programs on the academy’s rethinking of the place of the working class in British society was important not only institutionally but intellectually too. With the Soviet invasion of Hungary and the Suez Crisis of 1956, members of the adult education programs left the British Communist Party to form the New Left (Anderson 14). Although they broke with official Party doctrine, the group which included Williams, Thompson, and Hall attempted to fight for working-class struggle but without the strict focus on economic issues. This shift would go on to transform British Marxism and lay the groundwork for British Cultural Studies. With many former party members leaving the British Communist Party, British Marxism and Socialism moved away from the base-structure model and focused more on the culture of the working class. Although Karl Marx referred to culture throughout his works, he dismissed culture outside of the realm of economic production. He believed that the conditions for production were the most important factor in shaping the legal and political structures in society. Simultaneously, there was always a struggle of ideology taking place among the different groups. Many groups vied for power proposing their own ideology reflecting their interests. Ultimately, those who controlled the material production of society also created the dominant ideology of a

particular society (Millner 51-52). In the 1930's British Communist literary critics such as Christopher Caudwell followed a doctrinaire view of literature promoting social realism and reading class consciousness in every single work. However, the economic prosperity of the post-war years did not allow for strict readings of capitalism in crisis (Millner 57-59).

By shifting from economic production to cultural production, Williams and Hoggart were inspired by an unlikely source, the work of critics F.R. Leavis, his wife Q.D. Leavis, Denys Thompson, and other members of the Cambridge University-based Scrutiny group. Although they were politically against Communist ideology and anti-proletariat in their view of culture, they were integral in the development of British Cultural Studies (Dworkin 91). On one level, Leavis and his peers attempted to move away from the sociological and historical readings of literature New Criticism was providing in the 1930's. They believed the intrinsic value of the written word as a form of spontaneous, creative expression. At the same time, literature also became a representation of the society in which it was created. One must consider the totality of the cultural production at a particular moment (Millner 29-30). The line between high literary forms and popular texts were blurred. They brought the same intellectual rigor to contemporary, popular texts as one would bring to high literary forms (Steele 6). Cultural analysis should include the material itself, the medium through which it is presented, and its context in the greater society. However, the Leavises and other Scrutiny members continued to consider popular texts as aesthetically inferior to classical works of literature. Nonetheless, this inclusion of the popular in academia opened the possibility of British Cultural Studies to move beyond the traditional canon of literary study and look at

working-class culture through a critical lens. The clearest example is one of earliest works of British Cultural Studies, *The Uses of Literacy*, where Hoggart used his own working-class childhood to analyze popular forms. Working-class culture contained a certain intimacy and familiarity that came to represent not only Hoggart's upbringing, but the group's consciousness as a whole (Gibson 14).

Despite the continued critical biases of popular culture, the Leavises opened up the possibility for the working class to be considered a constitutive part of society. They believed that an organic culture rooted in the pre-Industrial life was the panacea to recoup society from a highly technical, mechanized culture that had taken over Britain since the Industrial Revolution began in the nineteenth century. Communism and Capitalism were systems that created too many class divisions. Society would only be able to flourish if it returned to a curriculum of proper literary study that broke down these class barriers rather than constructed them (Millner 31-32). With the publication of *Culture and Society 1780-1950* a couple of decades later, Williams shifts the historical trajectory to focus on working-class culture and to find its place in society as an equal standard bearer of British identity. The privileging of popular cultural forms is different from that presented by members of the Scrutiny group, yet the role of culture in asserting a historical British identity is the same. For all of these intellectuals, culture became the driving force for the development of Britishness. Originating in the local communities, culture stood in for the nation as a whole. This connection ultimately closes out any possible outside group from ever gaining a place within this specific national narrative. As a member of the Black Diaspora, whose material culture is

ted neither to the land nor to the historical trajectory of Britain, Carby must look elsewhere to create her own definitions of culture and society.

From the beginning, British Cultural Studies presented a particular understanding of Britishness. In *The Uses of Literacy*, Hoggart mourns the loss of working-class culture to the rise in popularity of American culture. By setting up the contrast between and organic culture and a foreign one, Hoggart equates his working-class identity to an English one. The connection between popular culture or “low” culture and an English identity would become the central thesis the next year in Williams’s *Culture and Society*. Originally intended as a reader for his adult education courses, the text weaves through the ideas and writings of some of the most influential (mostly English) intellectuals of the last two centuries. These include thinkers, philosophers, and writers like Edmund Burke, Samuel Coleridge, Matthew Arnold, Karl Marx, T.S. Eliot, and the members of *Scrutiny*. Williams focuses on the intellectual response to the rise of the working class as a political and social force during the Industrial Revolution and its subsequent transformation. In his introduction, he writes “The idea of *culture* would be simpler if it had been a response to industrialism alone, but it was also quite evidently, a response to the new political and social developments, to *Democracy*” ([my emphases] xviii). In other words, working class culture is not simply a physical manifestation of the economic transformation of the nineteenth century. Instead it needs to find a place in the shaping of English society as a modern democracy. In exploring the shifts and revolutions in the relationship between culture and society, Williams presents a new narrative of English national identity. No longer focused on the major historical figures or the cultural

production of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, Williams writes the working-class into the story of nation. Scholars outside of Britain who have adopted the ideas of Cultural Studies have complained of the discipline's specificity to the English context (Grossberg 136).

Williams begins *Culture and Society* with Edmund Burke, the conservative eighteenth century politician, because his notion of a strong State and the individual's relationship to it would shape the way culture and society would be defined in England for the next two centuries. Contemporaneous with the French Revolution, Burke feared that the chaotic events across the Channel could possibly spill over and threaten the social structure of his nation. Burke opposed the democratic values of the Revolution because it challenged the dominance of the State. The expression of individual desires threatened the progression of "society" as a whole. He explains that:

Society is indeed a contract . . . It is to be looked on with other reverence . . . It is a partnership in all science; a partnership in all art; a partnership in every virtue, and in all perfection. As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are dead, and those who are to be born. (qtd. from Williams 9-10)

The State and society are one in the same. It became necessary for all citizens to give up their expression of their individual identities in order to work together to live up to what Britain could stand for in terms of power and prestige. Democracy was a form of tyranny that threatened this ultimate goal.

If the State were to fulfill its historical potential, there had to be a comparable cultural tradition that would capture this idealized notion of the State. Williams partners Burke's conception of the State with the idea of culture developed by Romantic writers such as Samuel Coleridge, Percy Shelley, William Wordsworth, and John Keats. These figures redefined the idea of the artist and the production of culture. Deriving from the lowly terms artisan and craftsman, the artist took on higher connotations. While continuing to be skillful in his craft, the Romantic artist was endowed with a genius or intellect that originated from divine inspiration (Williams 44). Through these artists, Williams relocates culture from the quotidian to the transcendental. Describing his role as a Poet, Keats writes "I have not the slightest feel of humility towards the public, or to anything in existence, – but the eternal Being, the Principal of Beauty, and the Memory of Great Men" (qtd. in Williams 45). The connection between Burke and Keats is clear. The Artist and the State are placed within a greater historical trajectory of human intellect. The production of culture is the striving for perfection, a level of achievement that separates the individual from the masses according to Keats, and England from the rest of the nations according to Burke. For Williams, the goals of the Romantic Artist are enveloped by Burke's project for the creation of a national culture. This production of the ideal or high cultural forms is limited to the very few artists who have the talent to create and the very few intellectuals who are able to understand the implications of this culture. With the rise of the working-class and the bourgeoisie as a result of the Industrial Revolution, the growth of an individualized consumer culture and the opening up of the government to these classes challenged the relationship between a

monolithic society and a singular definition of culture. These different definitions of culture converged in Matthew Arnold's influential treatise *Culture and Anarchy*.

Arnold had comparable ideas of culture to those developed by Edmund Burke and the Romantics. Arnold explained "culture, which is the study of perfection, lead us . . . to conceive of true human perfection as a *harmonious* perfection, developing all sides of our humanity; and as a *general* perfection, developing all parts of society" (Arnold, qtd. in [my emphases] Williams 115). Culture here is endowed with a sense of idealism, a feeling that it represents the best of human achievement. But while writing about it with the same transcendental qualities as Burke and the Romantics, Arnold also believed that the ideals found in these high cultural forms must be inserted and grounded in their everyday material existence. This culture has been fractured by the Industrial Revolution. The new economic and political structures of industrialization and the accompanying establishment of a consumer society have led each class to focus on furthering its own interests. While the aristocracy defended the status quo, the middle class became wealthier and gained greater political influence. And when not striving to middle class materialist values, the working-class continued to be mired in poverty (Williams 120). With this emphasis on the individual, members of society did not work together to produce a cultural legacy that fulfilled Arnold and his predecessors' goal of a national culture. When the population concentrated on the accumulation of material wealth, they sacrificed high culture. Arnold feared that "spiritual anarchy" would take over society.

Notwithstanding his idealization of culture, Arnold never fully explained the term. He used it however it suited his arguments and defined it in terms of what it was not (Williams 126). If the accumulation of wealth was external civilization, then the production of true culture should consist of a spiritual depth outside of the material world. Arnold described the way culture has been used by the middle class to promote itself as cultured, “Culture says: Consider these people then . . . observe the literature they read . . . the words which come forth out of their mouths . . . would any amount of wealth be worth having with the condition that one was to become just like these people by having it” (Arnold, qtd from Williams 116). Culture instead was for the very few members of society who were able to transcend their class interests and study culture as the manifestation of “perfection” or “best self,” to use Arnold’s term. This would be accomplished through education, poetry, and criticism (Williams 121). Despite our present association of “high culture” with social standing, Arnold believed that culture had no specific relation to class structure. Only a privileged few, including constituents from the working class, would be able to partake in cultural production and the study of it. In the end, culture was defined through its opposition to the value system the Industrial Revolution instilled in English society at the time.

Williams considers *Culture and Anarchy* an important text because it mapped a conception of culture in the age of Industrialism that would lay the foundations for discussions on culture among English intellectual circles for the next century. Throughout his genealogy, Williams constantly refers to and compares other discussions on culture to

Arnold's. Arnold's idealization of culture and its inaccessibility to the public developed into the mistake of looking at Arnold's culture as the domain of the upper echelons of society. Despite this misunderstanding, his definition of culture was never grounded in reality. According to Williams, Burke found his medium for cultural expression through the State and the Romantics found it within specific individuals. But Arnold believed that culture could never fully manifest itself in society. Williams writes that for Arnold, "Culture was a process, but he could not find the material of that process, either, with any confidence, in the society of his own day, or fully, in a recognition of an order that transcended human society" (127). Culture is disconnected from greater society because the high standard Arnold bestowed on it could never be fulfilled due to the limits of human reason. Even with these unattainable standards, Arnoldian culture was adapted by institutions such as the government and the education systems (Williams 128). Ironically, the very classes who controlled these institutions and whom Arnold critiqued as philistines would become the gatekeepers of high culture.

The genealogy present in *Culture and Society* is far broader as it weaves through the ideas of many more intellectuals. This direct line from Burke and the Romantics through Arnold represents the crux of this narrative. With Industrialization's mechanized forms of production, conceptions of community and their material representation underwent transformation. Burke's mistrust of the popular gave way to Arnold's emphasis on the local community, and then to William's inclusion of the working-class or masses into Britain's democratic society. Notions of culture/art followed a similar trajectory. The pre-industrial

period focused on culture within the everyday lived experience of the common folk. The rise of the bourgeoisie created a focus on individualized expression and talent or “high art.” Finally, democracy brought these two definitions of culture together (296). The contrasting titles between Williams’s *Culture and Society* and Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy* point to the distinctions of the relationship between culture and society. Arnold emphasized the disconnection between high culture and the various groups, while Williams called for the embrace of popular forms in the creation of a well-functioning society. He believed that Arnold was limited by the misconception that the working class could erupt into violence and anarchy. Its members would never be able to acquire the mental demands required in the “pursuit of perfection” (125). One could not dismiss the lower classes because they are seen as a threat to high culture. A society cannot cohere when its foundations are based on culture that excludes the majority of its members. Williams calls Britain to view culture sociologically rather than aesthetically. In other words, culture should remain neutral. It is “a whole way of life” (325-327). Although popular forms run counter to the analysis and the enjoyment of high culture, they still represent a part of the social fabric and need to be accepted as such.

The key to a democratic society is a dialogue between all groups. Williams writes, “[Democracy] lies, in terms of communication, in adopting a different attitude to transmission, one which will ensure that its origins are genuinely multiple, that all the sources have access to the common channels” (316). This relationship between popular forms and their communication throughout society laid the foundation for contemporary cultural and

media studies. In his definition of the relationship between culture and communication, Williams challenges the notion of media presented by Theodor Adorno and the Frankfurt School. Shaped by their experiences with the Nazis, these scholars believed that the media was only for transmission, a one-way outlet for the continual flow of propaganda. In contrast, Williams believed that mass communication came from below as much as it did from above, the bourgeoisie or the government. Culture is formed by the particular distinctions that constitute a group, such as its interests, values, and interior dynamics. It constantly shifts, making connections and forming networks. The constant interaction of culture becomes the building blocks of society (295). These foundational ideas of the nature of culture would lay the foundation for not only his work, but the discipline as a whole. As relationships are built and even compete, questions of power and identity become central to the study of popular culture and the media.

When attempting to expand past definitions of culture, Williams continues to perpetuate the distinction between high and low cultural forms. According to Williams, media communication has created popular culture that is worthy of study and examination, but it must be considered on its own terms. The popular must not be compared to high art, but instead it must be compared to forms that are comparable to them. When observing beer advertisements and detective novels, “. . . it is not exactly that they are good, but they are the good of their (possibly bad) kind; they have the merits of being bright, attractive, popular” (306). Despite this distinction, Williams never renounces the presumably aesthetic judgments that distinguish high and low. There still exist some cultural forms that retain the

value of high art and will end up foreign to most of the masses. Since the opening up of the school system with the Education Act of 1870, only a certain few would be able to comprehend the merits of high cultural forms (125). For Williams, this was acceptable. He even praises Arnold for his work as a school inspector who promoted the establishment of a national education system (119). Ultimately, his issue with Arnold was his predecessor's idealism. Since only a few could strive to understand much less partake in the "pursuit of perfection," the relationship between culture and society must open up its boundaries to include popular culture as well as high art. This dissolution of the privileging of high culture over low culture would eventually lead to a communal identity.

In the end, Williams never fulfills the promise of cultural studies. The question he left was whether a true democracy could ever be achieved while the distinction between high and low remained. As a matter of fact, what exactly does democracy or equality actually mean? Where are the realistic cultural policies that could deliver equality in the government and public institutions? He never defines any of these terms. What he fails to deliver in theory, he attempts to bring to his practice. As an English teacher in the Adult Education System, he taught the classics to working-class students, or, at the very least, introduced them to the potential transformative power of culture, and particularly their own culture into a democratic society. One should not forget that *Culture and Society* was a textbook used in his actual courses. As they weaved through the intellectual legacy of (mostly) British thinkers, the students must have felt empowered as they realized that their own lives and experiences are part of this national narrative. Although many struggles would remain for the English

working class, as his subsequent work *The Long Revolution* points out, there remains a sense of hopefulness at the end of *Culture and Society*. He writes “There are ideas, and ways of thinking, with the seeds of life in them . . . Our measure of success in recognizing these kinds, and in naming them making possible their common recognition, may be literally the measure of our future” (338). The communication of ideas, whether it is on a national level through writing or teaching, holds the potential for a democratic post-Industrial British society.

The inclusion of popular culture or the working-class way of life in educational institutions and therefore public consciousness is extremely important because it gave the working class a greater stake in society. I have already briefly described in the first chapter “Empire,” this paralleled the transformations occurring in Britain after World War II such as the socialization of housing, health services and education. For immigrant groups that began to arrive in Britain en masse around this time found a different response to their respective culture. In her 1981 essay “Schooling in Babylon,” Carby relates the reaction by the English school system to the cultural particularities of West Indian and South Asian newcomers. In the early sixties, governmental committees and departments promoted an assimilationist policy that forced immigrant children to adapt to the English education system. Immigrant students were apportioned to various schools, but never in large enough numbers for fear of interfering with the white students’ education (“Schooling” 192). The failure of these students to adapt to the education system as determined with low test scores were explained with a number of racist assumptions. The National Foundation for Educational Research

blamed these shortcomings on their cultural origins. In 1966, this foundation considered their inability to function easily in “standard” English as a sign of their intellectual backwardness and inability to fully integrate into English society. Creole was seen as a form of resistance threatening the teachers’ authority (“Schooling” 193-194). The 1968-1969 Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration laid the blame for the students’ poor academic achievement on their parents. South Asian women’s repression led to their passivity and their lack of control over their children, while Afro-Caribbean parents deserted their children because they were constantly working (“Schooling” 197). Finally in 1971, Barnard Coard’s research *How the West Indian Child is Made Educationally Subnormal in the British School System* exposed the effects of this discourse of cultural pathology as a way to keep the black students in “special” schools and training programs as to eventually take on menial and low-paying jobs (“Schooling” 207-210). Despite the multicultural material inserted into the curriculum and some lip-service to racism in the system, emphasis and resources were placed in the policing of black youth without tackling the institutional racism that has led to the students’ disruptive behavior.

“Schooling in Babylon” aims to do more than simply describe the racist attitudes in the educational structure. Carby connects the government’s discourses on race and culture to its need to create a cheap and productive labor force. The British programs intended to “help” black students adapt to the English community were really a way to teach these students the tenets of capitalist production and direct them to their eventual place at the very bottom of the system. This class-based analysis has its foundations in the Marxist strain of

thought found within the work of British Cultural Studies. This article is a good representation of Carby's early work at Birmingham, bringing up the same questions as those found in Williams's *Culture and Society*. The high culture/low culture debate became a central issue in the working class' relationship to education. If given access to proper schooling, would the lower classes be able to understand and appreciate Culture or would they pollute institutions with their own low cultural forms? As with Williams's text, culture and society collide with one another in Carby's work. "Schooling in Babylon" explores how the black immigrants' forms of cultural expression are received and perceived by those in the education system and in the government as they attempt to incorporate them into British society. While Williams sees the acceptance of working class culture by dominant society necessary for an English democracy to flourish, Carby questions whether such an easy connection could be established for the Black British community.

When reading the work of Williams and Carby side by side, one sees how the relationship between education and social mobility is connected to how the class/ethnic group is located within the structures of power. Williams believes that a reconceptualization of the English curriculum could raise the working class out of its inferior status. By focusing on a purely intellectual trajectory, the narrative presented in *Culture and Society* appears to gloss over the concrete struggles that the labor movement and the working class in general faced during the Industrial Revolution. In contrast, Carby places the nature of capitalism central to the reading of Black culture by dominant British society. She does not shy away from connecting the foreign, racialized way of life of Black and South Asian immigrants as a

discursive move to promote and buttress a system of exploitation that is a historical extension of imperialism and colonialism. The colonial “Other” found in the far-reaches of the British Empire has now morphed into the post-colonial “Other” working in the former motherland. One of the major shortcomings of Williams’s work is the general absence of race and empire in most of his work. There is a brief section on imperialism in *The Country and the City*. In the first edition of *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, published in 1976, Williams includes an explanation of race within the entry for nation. This editorial choice makes race a secondary issue within the definition of nation (Nonini 158).<sup>13</sup> If the relationship between culture and society is the building block for a national identity, then how does race fit within these terms? This question is the most basic issue that Black British Cultural Studies explores throughout its work on the Black British experience. The development of this idea was not developed in their predecessors’s work and therefore had to look elsewhere. In the Centre’s 1982 collection of essays on race *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and racism in 70’s Britain*, Errol Lawrence acknowledges that the sociological tools used to study race in the United States and Caribbean became a model for the group’s own explorations of race in Great Britain (103-104). African America provided more than simply a model – it allowed figures like to Carby to challenge the narrative of nation and rethink the language of British Cultural Studies in order to encompass the Black British way of life. The

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<sup>13</sup> . In the second edition published in 1983, Williams took out “racial” from “nation” and created a separate entry. The definition is very similar to that found in the first edition. This change took place the same year as the publication of *The Year 2000*, which I briefly discussed in the first chapter “Empire.” Both of these choices highlight Williams’s inability to fully comprehend the links between nation and race.

most direct influence is apparent in how Carby's riffs on Richard Wright's *White Man, Listen!* in her essay "White Woman Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood."

Published only three years before Williams's *Culture and Society*, Wright's *White Man, Listen!* provided Carby a critical foundation to develop her own narrative of culture and society. Originating as a series of lectures given throughout Europe, *White Man, Listen!* is a collection of four shorter pieces exploring the effects of imperialism and racist discourse on the post-colonial mind. The first essay, "The Psychological Reactions of Oppressed People," deals with the continued racial inferiority complex begun under imperialism and continued through to the moment of independence for the colonies. The next essay, "Tradition and Industrialization," gives a brief historical trajectory of racist thought that has shaped the foundation of Western thought, Western superiority over the Third World. The third essay, "The Literature of the Negroes in the United States," explores African-American poetics as the manifestation of the group's alienation. The section, "The Miracle of Nationalism in the African Gold Coast," is more of a sketch, looking at the future possibilities for the soon-to-be independent state of Ghana. This collection of writings acts as a guide for Africans and Asians as their colonies became independent. It presents the historical foundations of colonialism and imperialism from which they were about the escape and the pitfalls as they move forward to reverse the effects of these systems on the society and their consciousness. At the same time, it responds to liberal whites who despite their sympathy towards colonial independence, do not understand how their European values and core beliefs have been and

continue to be a destructive force for people of color (31). Williams would probably be included in this audience.

*White Man, Listen!* also provides the critical foundation for Carby to develop her model through which she contextualizes Black British culture. Although published about twenty-five years apart, Wright and Carby were writing during two different time periods. Originally published in 1957, Wright's book captures the optimism present at the Bandung Conference of Asian and African states that took place only two years earlier. With various former and soon-to-be former colonies asserting their independence on the world stage, new possibilities were opening up for economic prosperity and political autonomy. According to Wright, the educated elite would be finally able to find their own routes to industrialization and modernization. It would not be in the democratic mold that Enlightenment thought had dictated, but on a path that splits capitalism from imperialism (101). By the time Carby published "White Woman Listen!" in 1982, the Bandung moment had passed. These postcolonial nations became pawns in the greater fight between Cold War superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. In countries such as Indonesia and Zaire, the promise of freedom and prosperity was replaced with oppressive dictatorships propped up by American organizations like the CIA. Their economies and modes of production became subject to the policies of international organizations like the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. The continued repression by the neo-imperialist global order was reflected in Britain with the economic and social policies of the Conservative Party in the late

seventies and early eighties. These supposed reforms of the British welfare state contained a racial subtext, as Carby explains throughout her writing.

Wright picks up several themes that could be found in Williams's *Culture and Society*. At the center of *White Man, Listen!*, Wright interrogates the same relationship between culture and society. He explores the way greater economic, political, and ideological structures have shaped Black cultural expression. The way he defines culture is not compatible with that presented in Williams's text. Wright defines culture as "a way of life," but it refers specifically to the value system of a total society rather than a specific group. Wright's culture is closer to Williams's society, but both link the development of these terms to the Industrial Revolution (106-107). Wright describes pre-Industrial society as "a feudal culture," where members of towns and villages worked together to eke a living from the land. The term "feudal" presently has negative connotations, but Wright uses it to delineate an era when everyone worked for the collective good under a unified church and state. It contains some of the idealism present in Williams's depiction of working class life in the village before the advent of Industrialization. Wright encountered such a society while spending time in French Catholic Quebec. The Industrial Revolution transformed this feudal culture into one dominated by individualism or the Protestant Ethic (107-108). Although Wright never fully develops the term, Weber's ethic laid the groundwork for slavery. The individualism found in capitalist society mutated in form as a pure desire for power and wealth. American society exemplifies this value system.

While using similar terminology to Williams, Wright presents his own context of culture and society. Instead of structuring it around class struggle, he connects it to an ideology of imperialism and its construction of race that has made its way through time and space. He states that “imperial power dominates the values of culture and life” (66). From its beginnings in the fifteenth century, imperialism has been defined through the dichotomy of civilization and barbarianism marking Europeans and non-Europeans. Religion and Enlightenment thought became the justifications for Europeans to take over Asia and Africa (91-92). Western thought has presented itself as the ultimate manifestation of human achievement. Whether one describes it through religious terms or philosophical ones, the narrative of conquest and Empire could not be justified through these idealistic motivations. “Irrationalism met irrationalism . . . Europe called her adventure imperialism, the spread of civilization, missions of glory, of service, of destiny even. Asians and Africans called it colonization, blood-sucking, murder, butchery, slavery” (92). Ultimately a narrative of history is constructed on perspective, depending on which side of history individuals and groups find themselves. Imperialism and capitalism are the two major forces that have transformed the historical narratives of people of color throughout the world. Even though *White Man, Listen!* does not develop them as symbiotic entities, these ideologies and their economic, political, and social structures feed off of one another.

This development of the “isms” like capitalism and imperialism could easily be analyzed in economic terms. However, like Williams, Wright is interested in the way these ideological and economic systems have shaped poetic production and for Wright,

particularly that of African Americans. Imperialism and capitalism are systems that have affected peoples around the world, but “the history of the Negro in America is the history of America written in vivid and bloody terms; it is the history of Western Man writ small. It is the history of men who tried to adjust themselves to a world whose laws, customs, and instruments of force were leveled against them” (109). Through the institution of slavery, Blacks were not able to become a part of any society. On the one hand, they were wrenched from tribal society in Africa and on the other hand, they were forbidden from becoming full participants in American society, despite their contributions through their labor (Wright 116). The African-American condition was lost within a struggle between the values encapsulated in African and American society respectively. Wright describes this contrast as “entity vs. identity; pre-individualism vs. individualism; the determined vs. the free” (110). This struggle manifests itself in the Black poetic production, but it is not found in cultural forms that attempt to kowtow to mainstream society or dominant White values. According to Wright, Alexander Dumas, Alexander Pushkin, and Phyllis Wheatley were entrenched in the society in which they lived and as a result, have no trace of “Negro” experience in their writings (112). Other figures in the African-American community attempted to accomplish what figures like Wheatley did in order to be accepted by American society. Wright categorizes this desire as The Narcissistic Level. It describes the psychological state of the African-American middle class that rejected their experience and claimed the style of dominant white culture as its own. The work of some of the most famous African-American figures of that time like W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington were invested in this

state of mind. In creating schools, hospitals, and other “Negro” institutions, the African-American middle class only further alienated the community from its historical realities and promoted a form of Jim Crowism (124-125). Wright considers only forms of expression that grew organically from the concrete experiences of the community as a form of authentic African-American expression. This parallels Williams’s grounding of popular culture within the British working class.

African-American poetics conveys the pain and suffering of lives shaped by slavery and poverty. The Negro spirituals and the blues are the ultimate manifestation of this collective cultural expression. Wright names them “Forms of Things Unknown.” He explains how they are “this formless folk utterance [that] accounts for the great majority of the Negro people in the United States . . .” (126). Themes of escape from the material world and the desire to become part of another world are constantly repeated in these songs. In spirituals, these sentiments are presented with religious motifs (127). While in the blues, the sacred is replaced by the profane. Escape is found in the expression of the anger and rage that is usually repressed by society seen in the lines from “Dink’s Blues”: “I wish to God that east-bound train would wreck/ Kill the engineer, break the fireman’s neck . . .” (130). These types of cultural expression represent a move away from dominant society. If Wheatley was grounded in American society, then the millions of African Americans to whom the spirituals and the blues speak must be placed outside of it. For Wright, the Negro spirituals “remain the single most significant contribution of folk and religious songs to our national culture” (127-128). Although religious imagery is invoked in the songs, Wright does not

consider them to be metaphysical. “They are simply and directly wish fulfillments, projections of his longings to escape his chains and blows” (128). Wright equates culture (or Williams’s society) with experience rather than as tied to a specific physical community or land. Slavery consisted of the forced migration to work the land in which African Americans had no claim. The longing for freedom tied the community together. The blues achieved a similar expression for longing and escape. The beginning of the twentieth century saw the mass migration of African Americans from the country to the city and from the South to the North. Like the spirituals, the blues express African Americans’ alienation from American society (129). It is also an extension of the landlessness that has become a part of the African-American experience. Unlike the organic bonds of community and land that were represented in a feudal society, an African-American national identity becomes imagined through a collective historical experience of displacement and its emotional toll.

Wright’s conception of nation here is not confined to a specific experience. Instead it encompasses an otherness that no white man or woman could ever understand. African-American cultural forms are tied neither to a specific land nor to a linear narrative that extends back in time. The privilege of geographic and historical continuity is only applicable to white nations. Although forms such as Negro spirituals and the blues denote a particular trajectory of slavery and racism in the United States, these same qualities could be extended to other peoples of color from around the world. They are all united by the same experience of oppression and lack of narrative that imperialism and capitalism has brought them. Wright explains that “practically the whole of the non-Westerner’s conception of historic

'time' is charged with a sense of hot urgency deriving from . . . the date of European occupation . . ." (32) The history of all Asians and Africans had been defined in terms of the West. What exactly does it mean to be Asian, African, or even African American? How does history change when looking from the bottom up rather than from the top down? One of the biggest shortcomings of the bourgeois elite that had taken over the colonies was that their own history is based on the West's notions of it, learned while studying at institutions in the West. Wright frames history as a "hole" in the heart or a lack of a psychological language to overcome the effects of imperialism (32). This specific moment during which Wright was writing was an attempt to understand the imperial past and to overcome it materially and psychologically. He warns the white man to beware of "the quicksands of cataclysmic historical changes" (16).

Carby renames this hole "herstory." She writes "white feminist researchers should try to uncover the gender-specific mechanisms of racism amongst white women. This, more than any other factor, disrupts the recognition of common interests of sisterhood" (88). The construction of Otherness and its place within history is the central theme in Carby's essay "White Woman Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood." She demands that the reader think about the place of black women's narratives within the women's liberation movement. The imperative in the title calls for white women to consider the differences between what defines their own struggles and what particular structures of power frame have impinged on black women. Although her argument is directed at white feminist criticism, this statement rebukes an overarching white historiography. As in Wright, herstory

is portrayed as the undercurrent of an imperial history and, at the same time, as a disruption in the seemingly coherent white narrative. This disruption extends beyond the temporal and enters the spatial. Wright and Carby posit this narrative globally. In *White Man, Listen!*, the struggles for independence united Africans and Asians. In “White Woman Listen!,” black peoples throughout the world face the same structures of domination. Both cultural narratives could not be confined within the borders of a traditional nation-state and must be reconsidered Diasporically.

While trying to claim themselves as victims of oppression and create a unified front against patriarchy, white feminists have failed to recognize how racial discourse has privileged white women over black women (69). Carby begins “White Woman Listen!”:

The black women’s critique of *history* has not only invoked us in coming to terms with “absences”; we have also been outraged by the ways in which it has made us visible, when it has chosen to see us. *History* has constructed our sexuality and our femininity as deviating from those qualities with which white women . . . have been endowed. We have also been defined in less than human terms. (67)

With the play on history and his story, Carby states that since history has been written by white men, it has de facto privileged white women. Despite their secondary status as women, this narrative has framed white women differently from black women. While white women had been considered as prized objects, whose femininity had to be protected, black women were defined through their lack of any such value. Within the language of colonialism and

slavery, black women were defined as sub-human or were rendered non-existent. White women have held a higher place in the hierarchy than black women, therefore reinforcing the white patriarchal status quo rather than challenging it. The essay is a call for a more honest feminist criticism that would be able to depict history more accurately and to consider the shortcomings of the language of the women's liberation movement.

Over the course of the essay, Carby uses a wide range of the materials and examples to explain the conditions of women of color around the world. Examples include the writings of African-American feminists, the social structure of the Igbo in Nigeria and how their culture was destroyed by British colonial policies, and the prostitution of women in Asian countries. Despite the geographical and historical span of her examples, Carby's central concern is an exploration of how Black British women have been affected by the systems of power such as capitalism and imperialism. As in Wright's text, Carby challenges the reader to take into consideration how these forces of power mutate and reproduce their ideology in new contexts. One example that Carby highlights is the Igbo people of Nigeria and the destruction of their social structures by the colonial administration in the 1920's. Although not fully equal to men, Igbo women held important roles of authority. While the *umuada* or daughters of a lineage resolved disputes over familiar ties and bonds allowing men to marry, the *inyemedi* or wives of a lineage would come together as a *mikri* or a village-wide meeting to protect the economic interest of women in the tribe. They had the authority to mete out punishment to men that violated this system. The British razed this system as they refused to give authority to women in the native courts (80-81). Imperial/colonial ideology

assumed that only through capitalism could women be freed from the restraints of perceived injustices like arranged marriages, traditional roles of housewives, or conceptions of the docile woman. These misunderstood “Third World” cultural practices were associated with a regressive, pre-feudal society that was considered destructive to women, even though they were ultimately more progressive than the economic structures that were available to women under Western law.

This framing of cultural and racial superiority hidden under accusations of misogyny has surfaced in Britain itself, shifting from the colonial past to the post-colonial present. For example, Asian women were perceived to be imprisoned in arranged marriages and unwanted motherhood, while British girls were seen as having the freedom to do whatever they wanted (68). At the same time, society regarded the forward-looking, liberal Western lifestyle superior to the rigid, conservative traditions of the East (72). One Asian girl challenged these conventions by rhetorically asking whether adolescent problems, ego formation, and the difficult interactions with teenage boys were in fact liberatory or oppressive (71). A similar racial stereotyping occurred with the public’s perception of Black mothers. The economic boom of the post-War years opened up many new career opportunities for women such as industrial workers, secretaries, child providers, and domestic servants. The possibilities for success were not the same for White and Black women. Many white women had the economic ability to choose to forego a career to raise their children and take care of their husbands. In contrast, only the most menial positions were open to women of color. Due to their economic conditions since most had just arrived

from the colonies, black women had to take on the role of both mothers and providers. When this balancing act for Black women failed, the state described them as pathologically incapable of being good mothers. They were seen as an example of the Black population's inability to adapt to life in the United Kingdom ("White Women" 71). Through these various examples, Carby insists that these racial discourses did not arrive in Britain alongside the immigrants. The intersection of gender and race must be placed on a historical trajectory that runs straight "[from] slavery, period of colonialism [to] the present authoritarian state (69)."

This view of how history, geography, and culture are intertwined is influenced by Wright. Although Carby inserts gender and feminism into the depiction of oppression, the continuum of imperialism and capitalism across time and space that Wright explores is clearly present in Carby's essay. Despite the changes in categories, whether slaves, colonial subjects or independent citizens, the relationship between Europeans and Others remain in place. The binaries that marked imperialist/colonialist ideology – civilized/barbarian or metropole/colony or peripheries – have been replaced with another one First World/Third World (79). Although the descriptive terms have changed, the racist assumptions underneath them have remained without any pretensions of imperialist/colonialist guilt. Despite the decline of the British Empire after World War II, the same racist constructions, structural and discursive, continue to frame Carby's black cultural model within the physical borders of the United Kingdom as well as those located outside in the former imperial ones. This shift from the global to the local is important. "Patriarchy," "Family" and "Reproduction,"

keywords prominent in Carby's feminist text, were molded by the same capitalist forces found in the imperial/colonialist project. However, the lack of distance and perspective does not allow for a critical lens on the societal and institutional structures that have shaped and destroyed the lives of Black British women. High unemployment among black men has forced black women in many households to take on the role as the breadwinner and unable to become fulltime mothers. When the family unit suffers from the economic pressures, the government blames it on the "pathology" of the Black family, a term that defines these failures as innately biological rather than systemic. These issues are not particular to Black Britain, but could be linked to the colonial era when women of color were forced through slavery or economic pressure to become domestic workers and nannies in white households rather than take care of their own families. This practice continues to the present not only in Britain and the former colonies, but in the United States, where West Indian women take on these roles. Throughout the Diaspora, motherhood has been enveloped within a system of colonialism and capitalism rather than tied genetic bonds (71).

All of these examples Carby points out in the essay depict a hostile relationship between culture and society. The seemingly easy development Williams depicts in *Culture and Society* is not found in "White Woman Listen!" For Williams, the Industrial Revolution has led to the rise of the working-class as an economic, a political, and most importantly a social force. Over the past two hundred years, this group has been able to make its way into society. In contrast, Carby presents a tense situation between the two. The dichotomy between high culture/low culture is not a dialectic whose synthesis results in a greater

democratic society. It is rooted instead in a more than five-hundred year old system of white supremacy that includes imperialism and capitalism. For Carby, Black culture is the material manifestation of this system. The living conditions of women of color were always the result of concrete ways these ideologies manifested themselves in the economic, political, and social practices. Williams's notion of culture did not have the same constraints. Of course, the working class faced its own struggles. Yet, the narrative that Williams creates depicts a virtual inevitability of the place of the working class within a national identity. Although its cultural production might not necessarily hold the same aesthetic value as high cultural forms, the organic connection between the working-class way of life and its historical ties to the land provide an argument for the place in society. Black culture can not make such claims, because the geographical span of her example exhibits the rootlessness of this way of life. Whether one describes tribal women in early twentieth-century Nigeria, Black domestic workers in 1950's Britain, or contemporary prostitutes in Asia, all of these cultures that capture the intersection of race, class, gender, and sexuality would inevitably be shaped by greater ideological forces.

This model of culture and society is invisible in Williams's narrative. As *Culture and Society* unfolds, the working class has gained prominence intellectually and institutionally. The integration of the working class into the government and universities, and a growing appreciation of working-class tradition have become crucial in the flourishing of a British democracy. His one caveat is that if this sense of community across social strata does not continue, the dissatisfaction of the working class could cause tensions (327). In contrast,

Carby never provides such a neat reading to her sense of history. Describing Britain as an “authoritarian state,” she believes that Britain will perpetually use its repressive methods and structures of domination to preserve the status quo. Black Britons will never be able to become full members of mainstream British society. By adapting the rhetorical mode of Wright’s title *White Man, Listen!*, Carby challenges the theoretical models offered by white intellectuals like Williams. Obviously he is not a white woman, but his main narrative thrust in *Culture and Society* fails to recognize the way imperialism and colonialism has shaped the Industrial Revolution and by extension the working class way of life. He describes this relationship in his later book *The Country and The City*, which I will summarize in the fourth chapter “Migration.” However, by leaving this idea outside of *Culture and Society*, the intellectual narrative of Britishness he presents becomes bounded by a limited definition of nation that is tied through very specific geographic borders and a linear sense of history.

Carby maps out a conceptual geography that unifies the Black experience not only on a national scale, but on a global one. The narratives that have shaped Black culture began with the earliest days of European exploration and conquest in the fifteenth century and were reiterated over and over again in African, Asia and the Americas. Unlike Gilroy who attempted to mold the Black experience into the traditional nation-state in *The Black Atlantic*, Carby dropped this model. Diaspora does not necessarily refer to a specific historical and geographical trajectory that comes from the dispersal of Africans under slavery. Instead, it speaks to a shared experience of oppression that has rendered women of color invisible. Although she moves around the globe for examples and theoretic frameworks, African-

American feminists take on a central role in “White Women Listen!” because they had been making the connections between patriarchy, racism, and identity since at least the nineteenth century. When Sojourner Truth described her invisibility, she expressed how capitalism through the institution of slavery has rendered her invisible (70). This continues to the present with the work of scholars such as members of the Combahee River Collective or bell hooks who continue to unravel the ways patriarchy and capitalism have shaped the Black female experience. By looking at these figures’ writing, Carby was able to challenge the near-sightedness of the narrative of culture and society presented by the original British Cultural Studies and to transform the particularities of the Black British experience into something far more universal.

As I moved from the first chapter “Empire” to the second one “Nation,” I shifted focus on the conception of Britishness on a geopolitical level to a more localized level. The foundations of British Cultural Studies lie in a working class that originates in pre-Industrial Britain. As British society evolved with industrialization, the working class developed into a potent social and political force that was able to enter government and social institutions that had not been accessible before. The post-War years opened the possibility for the further empowerment of the working class with the implementation of the welfare state and the first full-on victory in Parliament. In this historical context, Williams’s classic text *Culture and Society* became a narrative which captured the rise of the working class. It constructed an intellectual trajectory of Britishness that placed the working class at the center. For this narrative of nation to succeed, Williams reconsidered the transcendental quality of high

artistic forms and placed popular culture on an equal footing. The study of popular cultural forms became a useful lens to study the Black experience, since for so long its different forms of expression have been considered inferior to European artistic endeavors. At the same time, the particular historical narrative woven through this form of popular culture was not applicable to the Black British experience. Williams's notion of popular culture captured the intricacies of class struggle, rather than the racism and oppression that this other community had historically faced. Although Gilroy is credited with popularizing the term "The Black Atlantic" and the proliferation of a Diasporic lens on the African-American experience, the influence of Wright on Carby indicates the importance of African American ideas on Black British Cultural Studies. Williams and Carby both envision culture as important building blocks for identity. But for the scholars of Black British Cultural Studies, culture was not about national belonging, but a way to construct a Black identity when nothing else concrete like history or land exists. This relationship between nation and culture has remained theoretical. In the next chapter "Culture" I look at the way these two terms come to a head. At the time Black British Cultural Studies was developing as a field in Birmingham, mainstream society accepted a shift in the rhetoric of nation during the rise of the Conservative Party under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher. Britishness became embodied in the idea of Little England, a term that connotes geographic insularity and a racial whiteness. Through their theoretical development of popular culture, Black British Cultural Studies explores how these different forms when viewed Diasporically could potentially challenge mainstream discourses of nation.

### Chapter 3: Culture

I have grown gradually more and more weary of having to deal with the effects of striving to analyse culture within neat, homogenous units reflecting the 'lived relations' involved; with the invisibility of 'race' within the field and, most importantly, with the forms of nationalism endorsed by a discipline which, in spite of itself, tends towards a morbid celebration of England and Englishness from which blacks are systematically excluded.

– Paul Gilroy in *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*

This chapter “Culture” focuses on how Black British Cultural Studies, using the writings of Paul Gilroy, with a specific focus on his first major book *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation*, and those of Stuart Hall, analyzed popular culture and its role in the construction of national identities. In the previous chapter “Nation,” I looked at the role of culture in narrativizing a national identity. The analysis focused on the role of culture within the narrative rather than as concrete modes of expression. I limited my readings to how these Black “ways of life” responded to the construction of identity conceptually rather than materially. The Cultural Studies project is about studying ways that social relations manifest themselves in specific cultural artifacts. To perform a specific cultural studies reading of a song, style, etc., one must look at how ideas of power and ideology are embedded in its physical forms and how it transforms the relationship between a particular group and other ones. I explore how this shift from culture as concept to culture as discrete mode of analysis occurred theoretically in the work of Black British Cultural Studies. In the seventies, the difficult economic situation Britain was facing led to the

development of a Conservative ideology that tied free market values with a localized English national identity. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher incorporated the racist, anti-immigrant ideas of MP Enoch Powell. Building upon the definitions of culture as ideological sites of struggle, Black British Cultural Studies viewed Black popular culture as a potent response to Thatcherism and as an assertion of a new British identity that includes the Black community. The struggle between a nationalist popular culture and a Black popular culture was not simply a battle between White Britain and a multicultural Britain. It also encompassed a battle of forces within Empire, where neoliberal ideologies fought the proliferation of Blackness around the world.

The previous chapter “Nation” analyzed how a Diasporic sense of identity and its manifestation in a Black “way of life” confronted a national narrative of “culture and society.” Hazel Carby’s earliest work on the Black British experience challenged and revised the implications of these terms to encompass a broader racial spectrum. She looked to African America for source material, as exemplified in her development of Richard Wright’s *White Man, Listen!* Despite the Anglocentric limitations of the writings of Williams and Richard Hoggart, Black British Cultural Studies still found elements in their work to develop a definition of popular culture that worked within the framework of Diaspora. Popular culture as a materialization of power relations would continue to be developed by Hall, Gilroy, and Carby. For Carby, the relationship between Black experience and nation could never be fully realized. Diaspora is a condition that would always render the Black Subject at the very edge, if not outside of the traditional nation-state. One important manifestation of

this figure is the Blues woman as embodied in singers like Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey, and Ethel Waters. They came to represent Black female identities struggling not only against patriarchal structures but against the conservative framing of female sexuality by black middle-class women writers (“The Sexual Politics of Women’s Blues” 10-11). Although they moved from the South to the North to escape racial oppression, “[the blues woman] could speak the desires of rural women to migrate and voice the nostalgic desires of urban women for home which was both a recognition and a warning that the city was not, in fact, the ‘promised land.’” (14) This uncomfortable relationship between space and belonging extends transnationally too. For example, unable to find a niche in either the pop market or the black one, Tina Turner went to London to record her album *Private Dancer* (“Black Women’s Blues” 49). To achieve popular success, Turner had to disregard her national ties for Europe where she still resides.

Unlike Carby, Gilroy still insists that the Black identity is an integral part of the nation-state, even though he dismisses traditional formulations of the European nation-state. In the quotation at the beginning of this chapter, Gilroy finds mainstream perceptions of the Black British experience or “way of life,” to use Williams’s terms as framed in opposition to English identity. The title of his book *There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack* makes this sentiment clear. The signs of nation are weighed down by the idea of a historically White English identity. As in Carby’s work, Gilroy insists that in order to understand Black Britain, one must look beyond the geographically defined, racially closed-off national identity to its origins and its relationship to extra-national spaces. Black Britain has taken from the United

States and the Caribbean and has reconfigured their forms to express the particular needs and desires of the local Black British community. In *The Black Atlantic*, Gilroy exemplifies this internationalism with Soul II Soul's hit "Keep On Moving." The song was produced in England by the children of Caribbean immigrants, remixed in Jamaica by Teddy Riley, an African-American, and used samples from other American and Jamaican songs (16). This borrowing and reinterpreting of Caribbean and African-American material does not render Black British culture simply a copy or a pastiche of other Diasporic identities. They are "novel configurations that characterize another particular vernacular culture" (15)—one that is rooted in and routed to Black Britain. This model of Diaspora is different from Carby's. While Carby dismisses the nation-state, Gilroy locates the Black British experience through the Diaspora. Soul II Soul represents a particular national articulation of Black identity in which, even though it is filtered through the Caribbean, African America and even more generally the United States, the British component remains distinct and present.

For Gilroy, the concrete articulations of identity within popular culture become part of a greater struggle over what nation means in the contemporary age. The original formulation of British Cultural Studies contained the definition of nation within the strict confines of geography and history. Although ideologically Williams and Hoggart had consistently disavowed the economic, political, and social policies of Thatcher's government, Gilroy accuses their construction of nation to be complicit in promoting the same racist, regressive ideas of nation and national identity. These simplistic conceptions of nation must be replaced with a more expansive and complex understanding of how nation encompasses a

wide range of experiences and originates now only from within its borders and from outside its border. To challenge the “neat, homogenous units” of culture that the traditional nation-state presents, Black British Cultural Studies complicates the relationship between the two. Through the act of deconstruction, the field presents culture as a struggle between different ideas and entities. For Black Britain, this involves challenging the long-held assumptions of popular culture as representative of an authentic national identity. Popular culture becomes the terrain for struggle that pits White against Black, the national against the Diasporic, the local against the global and a dominant neoliberal ideology against a culture of resistance. As I move from Hoggart, Powell, and Thatcher to Hall and Gilroy, I also explore how the analyses of culture developed by Black British Cultural Studies responded to the notions of nation found in the dominant discourse of the time.

This next strand of Black British Cultural Studies that I look at begins not with Raymond Williams, but with his contemporary Richard Hoggart. Williams’s *Culture and Society* describes popular culture as an amorphous entity. His later work would take on popular culture more directly, in particular his writings on television. Hoggart’s earliest work *The Uses of Literacy* considers the full materiality of popular culture. Published in 1957, only a year before *Culture and Society*, *The Uses of Literacy* also focuses on working-class culture as a “way of life.” The book captures the same processes as Williams’s text—how the Industrial Revolution transformed the working-class. Whereas Williams deals with the ideological transformation of intellectuals in their definitions of culture and society, Hoggart describes the concrete changes in the material culture of the working class. Using observations from

his own upbringing, examples of publications, songs, and other popular forms, Hoggart gives a detailed description of working-class life in the first half of the twentieth century. These different approaches to the analysis of culture lead to divergent conclusions. Williams believes that mass-communication and the media have become powerful tools that brought about greater democratic changes and opened up public institutions to the working-class. Hoggart however sees these changes as the death-knell of a working-class way of life.

*The Uses of Literacy* is divided into two parts. One deals with the “before” of the onslaught of popular culture and its dissemination through the media that came with the growth of the working-class as a socio-economic force; and the other deals with the “after.” “An ‘Older’ Order” describes a traditional way of life. Using sociological generalizations, anthropological observations, and autobiographical memories, Hoggart gives a full description of the traditional values of the English working-class. The areas covered include language patterns, family structure, specific roles of the mother and the father in the household, superstitious beliefs, neighborhood organizations, churches, daily activities, ceremonies and holidays. The different topics are too numerous to summarize here. No matter the subject, the working-class is idealized as an upstanding group that always looks after its own. For instance, in one of the oddest descriptions in the book, Hoggart explains the reaction of the community to a prostitute that worked in his neighborhood as a child:

. . . my particular concern here is to point out that she was not ostracized, except by a few who talked of ‘giving the street a bad name.’ Most nodded to and talked to her as to anyone else, even though they would never have had

recourse to prostitution . . . they understood the pressure of the situation, and could see how some people were led to this solution. (82)

This passage displays the values the working class held. They sympathized with this woman because they understood her struggle to eke out a living, for they were facing a similar situation. Her profession was considered immoral, but they forgave her because they understood the social and economic conditions that led her to make this choice. Without concrete statistical analysis, the assertion that “most” of the working class could make such a distinction ends up implausible.<sup>14</sup> This first part is littered with other non-substantiated generalizations.

The second part, “Yielding Place to New” moves from the past to the contemporary, post-War period when a new urbanism threatened working-class values. Hoggart describes this movement as a shift from the popular arts that are rooted in the community to mass culture or mass communication that comes from outside sources. The popular arts capture the realities of working-class life. These forms are not about finding a deeper meaning or making a grand statement, but simply about representing the group as authentically as possible. Some forms of popular culture transitioned into the new urbanized society. Certain programs on the BBC “‘present[ed] the people to the people’ and are enjoyed for that.”

Contemporary magazines, like *Peg’s Paper*, seized on the style of older ones in their depictions

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<sup>14</sup> . In the original preface to *The Uses of Literacy*, Hoggart writes “. . . this book is based to a large extent on personal experience, and does not purport to have the scientifically-tested character of a sociological survey” (11). This accusation that British Cultural Studies lacks any methodological rigor continues to plague the discipline. One could even question whether the term discipline is applicable to the field.

of working-class traditions (101). The governmental reforms in the opening up of education to the working class have generally resulted in the establishment of a uniform mass culture that is disengaged from its traditional value system. The use of literacy, to refer back to the title of the book, was to create the educational foundation for occupational mobility that would allow the working class to achieve the dream for a better way of life. Hoggart believes that this improvement resulted in a mass-culture that no longer reflected his working-class upbringing. Instead, it conformed to a lifestyle that had been created through mass-production. “Chain-store modernisms, all bad veneer and sprayed-on-varnish-stain, is replacing the old mahogany; multi-coloured plastic and chrome biscuit barrels and bird-cages have come in”(33). The distinctions between classes became harder and harder as the middle and working classes strove for the same material goals. This level of uniformity became symptomatic of mass culture in all of its forms (277). From magazines and books to television programs and music, mass culture, as distinct from Hoggart’s popular arts, came to represent the material and intellectual aspirations of an increasingly economically mobile working class, rather than an authentic representation of it. Only a small minority has held on to the ideals embodied in the “popular” of the past. The rest have entered into a classless society where societal conformity has erased their individuality (282).

Hoggart’s distinction between the terms popular culture and mass culture would eventually meld together under the rubric of “low” culture in British Cultural Studies. Hoggart’s overall goal is the same as Williams’s – to challenge the hierarchical distinction between high and low culture. While Williams aims to blur the line between these two

entities and open up culture to the working class, Hoggart inverts the high/low binary. High culture is seen as a corrupting force. Even though everyone craves to obtain it and understand it, the ideals projected onto it never fulfill their promised meaning. Hoggart writes, “People such as this lean so intensely towards culture, precisely because they over-value it . . . Culture is a sign of disinterested goodness, of brains and imagination used to give liberty and poise . . . This may be a delusion, since it expects more from culture than culture can give . . .” (255). Hoggart then continues to quote one of the custodians of high culture, Matthew Arnold: “But in each class there are born a certain number of natures with a curiosity about their best self, with a bent for seeing things as they are . . . for the pursuit, in a word, of perfection . . . and this bent always tends to take them out of their class and to make their distinguishing characteristic . . . their *humanity*” (255). Hoggart might have some reservations about this generalization, but he uses it nonetheless to capture what he sees as the true essence of the working class. This passage depicts a traditionally Arnoldian connection between high culture and the pursuit of perfection, but Hoggart adopts it to elevate the working class. Foregoing the Romantic notion of the artistic, he decides to emphasize the word humanity and define it as the central value that constitutes working-class culture. In the end, he co-opts Arnold and inverts the binary high/low in his own favor. Hoggart never explicitly connects culture with nation. However, the working class remains the most authentic representation of England as a whole. Describing the events that his own parents saw while this transformation in working-class culture occurred, Hoggart lists: “They were growing up from the time of the Third Reform Act, through the series of

Education Acts, the various Housing Acts, the Factory Acts and Public Health Acts, through the Boer War; and the youngest was just old enough to serve in the First World War” (25). This list also links the transformation of the working class with a greater historical narrative of where the English nation was heading. Tying his way of life to this presumed historical continuum, Hoggart renders this specific working-class way of life an expression of a historically authentic Englishness.

His definition of mass culture is that it is not organically rooted in the condition of the (former) rural lower class. It is foreign, and more specifically, American. One of the more developed examples in the book of the invasion of American mass culture in English society is the milk-bars. Littered across northern England, these were the British equivalent of the soda-fountain shops where the youth congregated to devour milk-shakes and to listen to the jukebox. The boys that went to these shops were dressed in suits and ties, hunched in “an American slouch.” The music that blasted from the jukebox was loud and catchy, and inevitably from the United States. Hoggart explains that:

Compared even with the pub around the corner, this is all a peculiarly thin and pallid form of dissipation, a sort of spiritual dry-rot amid the odour of boiled milk. Many of the customers—their clothes, their hairstyles, their facial expressions all indicate—are living to a large extent in a myth world compounded of a few simple elements which they take to be those of American life. (204)

This new mass-culture—fashion, music, and even the location where these young men entertain themselves—was now adapted from the American context without any regard to how it would influence the local way of life. The meanings found within this material culture had no relevance to the traditions and the grounded realities of the working-class communities. According to Hoggart, they would inevitably transform them to the detriment of a local and therefore, a national identity. The notion of American culture as a moral stain on English popular culture is repeated throughout *The Uses of Literacy*. The violent sex-novels coming from the United States like James Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice* have replaced the gentler romantic novels found in Edwardian England (212-214). Hoggart's description of this cultural invasion is overblown. It shows his inability to understand a world that is changing by the forces of (material) modernity and the beginnings of the contemporary system of globalization. This mourning for a direct link between identity and culture did not end with him. Ironically, a little over a decade later, the trope of a national culture affected by outside forces would be framed in a more insidious way by the conservative ideologies of Powellism and Thatcherism in the 1970's and 1980's.<sup>15</sup>

At this moment, it is important to clarify that British Cultural Studies is not the equivalent of Conservative ideology, even though the line I have drawn here from Hoggart to Thatcher is direct. The way that the two look at class is distinct. While Hoggart valued the working class and their cultural contributions to a national identity, Thatcher viewed the more vocal parts of the group as a drain on Britain's economic resources and a threat to the

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<sup>15</sup> . In a 1991 interview with James Corner, Hoggart completely rejected Thatcher's policies.

free market system to which she was directing the nation. However, both British Cultural Studies and Thatcherism drew lines around their particular vision of nation that excluded anybody who did not fit into the cultural, economic, and historical construction. Hoggart's notion of popular culture focused on a specific "way of life" that seemed to exist in and of itself, unaffected by any foreign influences. Williams's narrative of "culture and society" created a linear history that also disregarded how England's global dominance would shape the ideas that we are exploring. Imperialism and colonialism is missing from most of his work; and when he refers to West Indians in *The Year 2000*, he conflates their particular relationship to Britishness with his own as a working-class Welshman. In the first chapter "Empire," I explained how Thatcherism shifted national identity from a global Britishness that encompassed Empire to a more geographically confined "Little England." This inward move redefined national identity through a narrow definition of history and race. Even though these figures are located at different ends of the ideological spectrum, they envision nations as discrete historical, geographical, and cultural entities, a concept that Gilroy dismisses.

When discussing the origins of Black British Cultural Studies, it is impossible to not look at the Conservative (Party's) ideology that was in the ascendancy when the work of Black British Cultural Studies at Birmingham was first being done. Thatcherism was a political philosophy that responded to the economic crises of the early seventies and came to full fruition in the late seventies when Thatcher finally became Prime Minister. In the essay "Living with the Crisis," Hall and his co-authors mark the administration of Prime Minister

Edward Heath in 1972 as the beginnings of Thatcherism. Fighting against the powerful miner's union, Heath began to fight the positions of the union bosses head-on. With a global recession and Arab oil embargo inhibiting the British economy, Heath and other Conservatives began a campaign to tarnish the positions of union leaders as hindering the development of Britain as an economic force (19-20). This battle marked an important shift in the terms of the social contract. The decline of government spending in social programs and the continued militancy of the unions opened up the Conservatives to assert their ideological vision of a new way forward. They blamed the welfare state for stymieing economic growth and wanted to shift resources to the middle class who would be the key to a thriving British economy after two decades of a failed Keynesian experiment (21-23). Believing in Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman's ideas of a free market where little government intervention would provide the greatest economic benefit for the common good, the Conservatives began dismantling the Welfare State that had been in place since the election of the Labour Party after World War II. This ideological stance did not remain strictly in the economic realm, but spread out and took over all parts of British society, including education, bargaining with unions, etc. (Hall, et al., "The Great Moving Right Show" 46-48). Anything that did not fall within the ideological purview of the free market was seen as a threat to a British way of life. The notion of a collective public that adhered to this philosophy framed anyone who did not as opposed to Britain. This gave rise to the "law and order" state which cracked down not only on the militant unions, but also on the working class and Black immigrants. These groups' lifestyle stereotypically captured as high-

school dropouts and unemployed workers by the mainstream media posed a threat to this dominant view of what it means to make a contribution to British society.

Thatcherism's construction of nation as a simple matter of us vs. them easily draws race into its ideology. According to Gilroy in *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, Thatcher's conception of race could be traced a decade earlier in the ideas and rhetoric of the MP of Wolverhampton South West, Enoch Powell. Powell argued that the immigrants, a term that he associated with people of color, were an alien force that descended on Britain. No matter how long these immigrants had been in the country, their communities would retain their black identity and therefore continue to threaten the British way of life. The most powerful and controversial iteration of this point was his 1968 anti-immigration speech now known as "The Rivers of Blood" speech. He tells the story of an old white landlady who has come under verbal and physical attack by menacing black renters. She tried to file a complaint, but the law with its anti-racist policies ended up siding with the newcomers. The narrative was extremely effective in building sympathy towards the white woman, whom society had let down. For Powell and his followers, this woman represented the anxieties of many Britons who believed that their society was under attack. His rhetoric captured a growing notion within White Britain that the laws and rights that had been in place before the arrival of these immigrants no longer protected those who had a historical right to it (86-89). In 1983, Powell even condemned Queen Elizabeth II's Christmas address for spending too much time on the issues facing other countries in the British Commonwealth. She is "a British monarch to the British nation"(48). Although race was never brought up in the actual

criticism, Powell implied that the queen's authority extended over White British citizens only. She had no inherent right to speak for any other racial community (49). Although "The Rivers of Blood" speech had resulted in the immediate dismissal of Powell from the shadow cabinet, it laid the foundations for an insidious political language that would eventually accompany the Tories to electoral victory in 1979.

The scholars of Black British Cultural Studies see Thatcherism as a less overtly racist version of Powellism. Race was removed from the forefront of the political discourse, but was embedded within the language of national identity. The contemporary emphasis on nationalism and patriotism insinuated that the nation was a racially singular entity that consisted of a shared historical continuity. It also asserted that Britain remained a global superpower even though it faced a crisis of identity with the loss of most of its imperial possessions (53). One of the clearest examples is found in Thatcher's language as she was rallying for public support during the Falklands War. In her speech at Cheltenham on July 3, 1982, Thatcher announced that "We have ceased to be a nation in retreat. We have instead a new-found confidence – born in the economic battles at home and tested and found true 8,000 miles away"(51). At a time of crisis, it is important that the country feel a sense of pride and success in protecting their citizens, especially during an era where Britain's geopolitical position has been on the decline. The language in this statement contains traces of imperial discourse. This patriotic language conjures up images of a non-White force threatening Western civilization. In reality, the war with Argentina was fought over a minor South Atlantic post that contained a small community of White, British citizens. For

Thatcher, the Falklands was part of a greater struggle for English society that included the situation at home. During this era, riots erupted from the struggles between the police, fascists, and Black youth in cities like London and Birmingham. During the 1980 riot in Bristol, even though the looters were both White and Black, the media eventually simplified this incident as a race riot. Blackness became associated with a collective criminality (99-100). The language of war found in Thatcher's cry for the Falklands collapses the "over there" with "over here." Whether one is referring to the Falklands or to the urban centers, Thatcher's Britain ends up victorious. Looking at the case in Bristol, there is an evolution in the relationship between law and order from Powell to Thatcher. One of Powell's major complaints in his "Rivers of Blood" speech was the way the law protected the recent arrivals of color rather than the poor British woman. The law, "[a] symbol of national culture" should represent true Britons rather than those who have no right to it (87). The strong arm of the state as controlled by Thatcher now protects true Britons, most of who happen to be White.

Race is not always constructed in such a straightforward manner – ideologically or politically – in Thatcherism. Gilroy consistently shows the complexity of the discursive framing of race and nation. For example, the case of Rodney and Gail Pereira blurred the lines between race and nation. The South Asian family was going to be deported until White neighbors stepped in on their behalf. The campaign that played out in the newspapers framed the family as assimilated Britons that participated in community-building rituals and events. Gilroy attributes the successful redefinition of the Pereiras' identity from Asian to

British with printed details such as their daughter's role as a mouse in the Sunday school's Noah's Ark pageant (63-64). Culture becomes the foundation for the construction and the reinforcement of national identity, but one can not overlook the concrete effects of racial otherness when delineating who belongs and who does not. Had the Pereiras been Hindu or Muslim, would they have necessarily received the same outpouring of sympathy? The conservative associate editor of *The Times*, Ronald Butt, went so far as to redefine racism from the focus on skin color to the more seemingly benign dislike of people who refuse to assimilate to a British way of life (64). The Pereiras capture the moral, upright "way of life" that Thatcherism promoted. Their British lifestyle contrasted with the seemingly violent actions of Black immigrants and their descendents who were never able to adapt and become productive members of society, as clearly seen by the public in the racial riots of the era. Their inherent culture or pathology was understood as keeping the Black community from ever fully integrating into mainstream society. Even though the rhetoric of Thatcherism might not seem particularly racial and even downright logical, the discourse is inherently constructed between us and them on racial lines.

This sentiment referred to in Gilroy's title *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* is not historically accurate. The realities of history and the contemporary global order render it is impossible to mark England or Englishness as racially or culturally pure. The Industrial Revolution is intricately tied to the extraction of raw materials from the colonies and the production of goods that are then sold around the world to other parts of the Empire or to other nations. Despite his general silence on colonialism and imperialism, Williams briefly

describes this process in a chapter in his 1973 *The Country and the City*. The rise of Britain as an economic powerhouse in the nineteenth century and its place within the development of a British national identity implicitly includes race. When one discusses the establishment of Thatcherism as an ideology in British society, it becomes impossible to untangle it from the political and economic situation in the United States. The victory of Ronald Reagan in the 1980 presidential election marked the beginning of a similar political, economic, and social transformation in the United States. In some ways, Thatcher and Reagan's biographies and ideologies ran parallel to each other. The cross-Atlantic dialogue and friendship had already begun in 1975 when Thatcher was first introduced to Reagan in California. Neither knew at that time that their political destinies would completely alter the global markets (Wapshott). Both of these examples of construction of national identity show that they are a lot more fluid and international than they both claim to be. One of the major challenges for Black British Cultural Studies has been to reconsider nation in a way that encompasses the experiences of the Black community living in Britain, the historical perspectives that have shaped them, and the cultural expressions that simultaneously locates them within the British nation and connects them to other Black communities across the world. Although Carby seems to dismiss the national model, Hall and Gilroy present a new trajectory of Britishness that views culture and society in fluid terms.

To understand Black British Cultural Studies, it is necessary to see the general theoretical path that Hall and Gilroy take to conceptualize the relationship between the Black British community and dominant nationalist discourse. Hall and Gilroy built their

readings of Black Britain on the work of accepted models of class relations developed by Karl Marx and Max Weber and they reworked them to incorporate race into the model. In the beginning of *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, Gilroy looks to these earlier thinkers to begin to unravel the relations of economic power which then extend on into the political and social realms. These early figures' work might have focused on class, but the constructions of race were as much about class as they were about phenotype. Marxists have defined Blacks as a part of the proletariat, placing them within the structure of production. The Weberian line focuses on how market forces have perpetuated the status and material conditions of blacks as an underclass. This relationship is present in the work of Ambalavaner Sivanandan, who sees racism as a tool through which the economically subordinate groups are repressed for the accumulation of greater capital (21-22). On the other hand, the work of Robert Miles presents race as a construction intended to divide the working classes from ever unifying into a coherent force. Racism becomes an ideological formation that is limited to the social sphere and becomes a mode that pits one part of the working class against another (25). One could debate the nuances of how race does not fit in Weberian, Marxist, and post-Marxist models. Regardless, Gilroy does not denounce Marxist ideas, because capital and production have shaped the economic and therefore political and cultural conditions of Black communities around the world. Instead, he rejects in all of these models the rigid link between capital, structure, and superstructure (37-38). At the same time, these class-based framings of society limit the way race has gone to shape class relations. When looking at the shortcomings of Hoggart or the racism of the Thatcherite

ideology, it becomes impossible to dismiss the relationship between class and race where the latter term is subordinate to the former. With the inclusion of race, theoretical analyses need to be understood through more complex economic, political, and social systems and on larger historical, transnational terms.

In his 1980 article “Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance,” Hall comes to a similar conclusion as Gilroy does in his 1987 *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*. The perspective on race is limited if scholars focus exclusively on either the materialist focus of Marxism or the superstructural emphasis of Weberian thought (17-18). Race has been shaped by the capitalist system, yet the structures of capitalism could not fully explain how racial definitions are created and articulated. Hall does not explicitly apply his findings to Black Britain, but instead gives an overview of how various scholars’ work on the intersection of race and class have spanned from South Africa to Latin America. These scholars include John Rex, A. Gunder Frank, and Howard Wolpe. Hall’s overview of the scholarship is too detailed to fully capture here, but the point is clear. Their analysis attempts to come to terms with a Marxist model that does not easily fit into their specific situations. In all of these places, colonialism has created complex relationships between administrators and subjects that can not be limited to the way power has shaped the relationship between labor and capital. For example, according to Wolpe, colonialism kept non-capitalist, tribal economies intact. Since these economic forms were less important to the attainment and growth of capital than other systems installed by the Europeans, these tribal economies became secondary to the ones that were directly controlled by the colonial administrators.

This ended up creating a colonial web of economies, political formations, and social relationships that cannot be summarized by a linear model that connects labor to production. In the end, although Marxist analysis remains important for Hall, its applicability is contingent on two things: “the materialist premise –that the analysis of political and ideological structures must be grounded in their material conditions of existence; and the historical premise—the specific forms of these relations cannot be deduced a priori, from this level but must be made historically specific . . .” (35)

Instead of creating these grand narratives of race and class, Black British Cultural Studies was interested in looking at the circumstances and conditions of a particular moment. To understand the relationship between the Black British community and institutions such as government, police, education, these scholars needed a framework to understand the power relations that were present during the period in which they were writing. Weaving his way through Marxist/Weberian theory in “Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance,” Hall settles on the work of Louis Althusser and his protégé Etienne Balibar. Their writings are useful because they move away from the focus on base, structure, and superstructure. Althusser and Balibar posit that the various elements of production and capital accumulation and the resultant political, social, and ideological forms would combine in different ways depending on the conditions of a specific moment. Each historical moment creates new conditions that affect the way these forces combine and create an “articulation” (39-40). This relationship between these elements, most importantly their discontinuity and rupture, allows us to understand society at a specific time and place.

The notion of articulation begins the theoretical break with the Eurocentrism of Marxist thought. Some critics believe that the term as used by Althusser does not succeed because articulation does not get away from all of the different elements that constitute the Marxist model. The base, structure, and superstructure are still in place, even if the terms do not adhere to their traditional definitions. Hall gives Althusser and Balibar credit for creating possible ways out of the predicament of class. Newly specific formulations of capitalism provide the ability to consider class as a constitutive feature of race without closing off other ways to understand other aspects of its development.

On a theoretical level, all of these models of class have limited Black British Cultural Studies from fully embracing race as a driving force for power relations on the same level as class. The work of Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci has been extremely important in emphasizing culture over economic production. Although Gramsci precedes Althusser by several decades, Hall's trajectory of Marxist thought leads him to his work on the fluid struggle for power, rather than any particular grand narrative that could be simply applied to any situation. The Italian theorist moved away from the strict economic focus of Marxism and positioned the concept of hegemony at the center of his work. Similar to Althusser, Gramsci is interested in the way power struggles have occurred at specific moments in history. He might have been living under Mussolini's Fascist regime, but his framework on hegemony could have been applied to any context where "that state of 'total social authority'" exists (Hall 45). A strict hierarchy exists in Gramsci's model, but the social structure is never static. The dominant forces need to constantly reassert their power over

another group and make sure that their control shifts according to the changing conditions in society. Subordinate groups are always fighting to gain some sort of leverage over the dominant group. The former relies on the social consent of their authority and sometimes coercion to remain in power. The latter uses either a full-on attack (a war of position) or more commonly, indirect actions to undermine the authority of those in power (a war of maneuver.) Although this struggle diverges from a traditional Marxist progression, it remains tied to the goal of one group accumulating more capital than another (Hall 46).

For Hall, Gramsci's model could be used to understand the discourse found in Thatcherism and the way the authority of this discourse imposed on the public through various modes. The goal of those in power is to "reproduce" the tenets of capitalism inherent within the economic structure and to impose them onto the superstructure or political, social, and cultural realms. To quote Gramsci, as Hall does, the State takes on " [an] educative and formative role . . . [where] Its aims are always that of creating new and higher types of civilization; of adapting the 'civilization' and the morality of the broadest popular masses to the necessities of the continuous development of the economic apparatus of production" (qtd. in 46) or what is called the formation of "national-popular will." In the introduction to *The Hard Road to Renewal*, Hall connects Gramsci's description of the authoritarian State to the discourses that Thatcherism propagates. Every citizen is expected to adhere to the dominant moral values that are present in the ideology's idealistic vision of British society. Individuals must maintain the traditional family structure, retain ties to the local community and always act in its best interest, and finally accept the authority of the

State by following its laws and listening to authority figures such as the police. When an individual or group does not conform, they are labeled as a threat to society (“Introduction” 8-9). Thatcherism aims to create a way of life that reinforces a system of individualism and privatization that the ideology instates in its economic reforms of the post-War welfare state.

Gramsci creates a definition that allows the scholars of Black British Cultural Studies to frame Black British culture as an oppositional force against Conservative political discourse, more so than Althusser. Hall distinguishes Althusser’s definition of ideology from Gramsci’s. Both are a site of contestation between those in power and other groups. Althusser sees ideology more as a function of the dominant class, while Gramsci emphasizes its fluidity and mutability as different members of society vie for power. The ideology of subordinate groups could respond to a certain event and change its relationship to the governing social class. The shift in a group’s ideology could become a catalyst for historical change or even be coopted by those in power, not only respond to it (“Structured in Dominance” 48). Neither theorist sees ideology as an amorphous notion embedded in one’s mind. Instead it manifests itself in the groups’ material practices, the very definition of culture. The original British Cultural Studies looked to the work of Althusser and Gramsci and found their analysis pertinent to the relationship between the working class and the State. Hegemony and ideology were important ways to understand how institutions controlled the working class. Williams promotes a socialist revolution by the working class that would take over society. This process is slow and consists of the constant absorption of other groups’ position into the hegemonic. For example, the definition of the nation-state

might appear constant, but it has slowly changed over time according to the particular historical conditions (Stevenson 52-53). The nostalgia persistent in British Cultural Studies keeps culture static rather than making it a dynamic force for change. Hoggart's depiction of his childhood turns working-class culture into an artifact. When reading *Culture and Society*, it appears that the working-class culture has barely changed from the French Revolution through the middle of the twentieth century, only the attitudes towards it had altered.

Gramsci's reformulation of the formula where the cultural is conditional to the economic allows Black British Cultural Studies to allude to the relationship of Black Britons to production but to also take into account different aspects of the Black British experience – economic, political, social, ideological, and even geographical. According to Gilroy, no simple equation, Marxist or otherwise, could contain the intricacies and complexities of the life-world of Black Britons:

The political consciousness of black settlers and their children draws on histories and memories of struggle beyond Britain's borders. They are combined, not only with the effects of insertion into an ailing industrial order at distinctive points but with the experience of banishment from production which has occurred with disproportionate frequency along lines marked by 'race.' (37)

Race and class must be contextualized within the specific parameters of Black Britain. Gilroy here pinpoints the economic conditions as post-Industrial, where the labor demands for a highly productive workforce are no longer a commanding force. Carby's description of the

low-skilled, menial jobs Black women were forced to take in “White Woman Listen!” is symptomatic of this transition to a service-based economy. New forms of surplus labor or labor outside of traditional modes of production such as “housewives’, ‘black youth’, ‘trainees’ . . .” must be considered (35). Race must also be defined outside of the mechanics of English class formation and its decline in the post-War fall of the manufacture sector and the privatization of national industries such as mining and transportation. As I have already stated several times, the Black British experience is historically linked to the Industrial Revolution through colonial enterprise rather than the materialist modes of production. Gilroy moves beyond the economic subjugation of colonialism. Without using the term Diaspora, he adapts it psychically by connecting the reality of the Black British experience with the greater existential one resulting from the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The Diasporic model focuses on a political culture whose “distance from economism . . . has baffled critics who would measure it by European yardsticks and are unable to perceive the sophisticated critique of capitalism . . .” (25) The traditional forms of class struggle have been replaced with new forms of Black popular expression. One example is the themes of the conscious decision to not pursue work in music. While some would read such a sentiment as an inherent laziness among members of the Black community, Gilroy explains how such feelings are a response to the labor force, in which Blacks have been placed at the very bottom of the hierarchy (200-201).

Although this overview of theoretical models of class and race might appear tangential to this discussion of culture, this shift in framing is important to understanding the

definition of popular forms of Black expression in Black British Cultural Studies. When one reads either Hoggart or Williams, it is impossible to extract nation from class. The particular ways of life that they describe in their work is never questioned whether they belong inside or outside the parameters of Britishness. Thatcher railed against the union members whose radical socialist vision contradicted her own policies. Although the Conservative Party broke the power unions during the 1983 coal miner's strike, their class identification was not in and of itself a marker of foreignness. Race transforms the model because economics is not the only aspect in play to understanding the Black British experience. Epistemology, biology, and history have all shaped the way the Black community has been defined through nation. By shedding the strict economism of the Marxian/Weberian models, Black British Cultural Studies was able to rethink popular culture not only as a representation of a group's way of life, but as a discursive challenge to the dominant conceptions of national identity. Structures of labor and production are embedded in the different forms of Black expression. The high culture/low culture dichotomy originally presented by Williams is taken to another level because it overturns the old hierarchies of European culture over Black popular forms and it asserts a new geographical model that is not strictly defined, the Diaspora. In *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, Gilroy takes it one step further and insists on a new formulation of nation-state that incorporates Blackness in its definition. Black popular culture becomes an expression of both Diaspora and Britishness.

In his 1981 essay "Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular,'" Stuart Hall works through and reformulates many of the notions of popular culture found in *The Uses of*

*Literacy*. Hall mines the same terrain as Hoggart did in *The Uses of Literacy*, exploring the transformation from popular culture to mass culture during and after the Industrial Revolution. However, his analysis of mass culture is different from Hoggart's. He explains that the most interesting period in its historical development was between 1880 and 1920. During these forty years, England saw the expansion of a commercial press or the beginnings of the media, in the form that we have come to know it. Hall finds the roots of mass culture in the same period described by Hoggart, but he does not see the media as a syringe that contaminates the working class. It represents a break from the former social structure. The rise of the commercial press resulted in the reconfiguration of capital and structure, as defined by Marx, or in the creation of new forms of technology and labor. This led to a new relationship between those in power and the working class. The adoption of popular elements into the mass culture by those who controlled the media empowered the working class. They envisioned their place in society as they struggled for greater participation and finally achieved further rights and greater access to social institutions. (445). Hall's narrative contrasts with Hoggart's because it does not make a moral judgment on the effects of mass culture on the working class. The popular arts are reshaped and incorporated into new forms of popular culture that are more efficiently disseminated through the media. While Hoggart held on to the idea of tradition and authenticity of a particular form of cultural expression or experience, Hall denies the perceived purity or authenticity of the term. Tradition is non-existent because popular culture is always

transforming and fulfilling new needs. Even the most traditional of practices serves a different purpose when society has changed (442-443).

Hall's response is to challenge the static model of culture described by Hoggart through the act of deconstruction. Scholars had assumed that culture was a pure entity that must be taken only in its complete form. Once a historic event or a larger trend that would transform society occurred, this original culture would either be replaced by a new form or it would withstand the changes. Popular culture would be framed as either a break from the past, or as a continuation of it (442-443). This singular quality of popular culture can not be confined within these two polarities. Building on the work of Jacques Derrida, Hall deconstructs popular culture or at least, sets up a series of ways to analyze it. He envisions popular culture as always at play. First, the relationship to the dominant forces is articulated materially. Popular culture could only be fully understood within the production of difference or, in other words, that which is not part of the dominant culture (449). Second, popular culture must be regarded not as a "way of life," but as Gramscian "ways of struggles." Historical events are points when a confrontation of the interests of one group butts against the interests of another. The culture of a group must transform to allow for new relationships to build, flourish, or simply survive. Finally, these struggles and relationships must be brought down to the level of language. Signs and symbols remain ambiguous and unstable. Depending on the conditions, the same sign could take multiple meanings that need to be uncovered, discovered, defined, and redefined (451). Hall demands that to fully comprehend popular culture, one needs "to look at it dynamically" (450).

Although Hall never mentions the term “Black” in this earlier essay, the definition of popular culture he sets up enables Black British Cultural Studies to capture the complexity of the relationship between a Black identity and its materialization in popular forms. This sets up Gilroy to challenge the framing of nation found in Thatcherite ideology and to reconfigure the nation-state on new terms that are more racially inclusive. Ten years after “Notes on Deconstructing the Popular,” Hall asked the question in the essay of the same name “What is this ‘Black’ in Black popular Culture?” He extends the idea of popular culture as a site of play, moving between “high and low; resistance versus incorporation; authentic versus inauthentic; experiential versus formal; opposition versus homogenization” (26). However the term “Black” extends beyond a simple Gramscian oppositional structure and adds further possible meanings. For instance, the concrete “way of life” presented in the descriptions of the English working class are replaced by an emphasis on style. Dick Hebdige defines style as the accumulation of signs and meanings onto the outward appearance of cultural forms (17). Since style focuses on surface qualities, it does not appear to hold the same importance as the lived experience. The move away from the logocentric in Black popular culture represents the particular historical record of the Black Diaspora that has combined elements from Africa, Europe and the Americas (28). These traces of the past are just as important as the lived experiences are. The difference is that the Diasporic history is lost, while the palimpsest of European history is intact. The play of high culture/ low culture, historical presence/ historical absence, continuity/fragmentation, lived experience/style within Black popular culture has undercut the epistemological and historical

foundations of European thought and civilization. Kobena Mercer calls this quality “the diasporic aesthetic,” while Hall names it “the global postmodern” (28).

Hall’s term captures the changes that have been happening worldwide with the mixture of cultures. One could just as easily find Indian cuisine in cities such as London and New York as he/she could in Calcutta (22). This simple fact marks a shift in popular culture away from a privileging of high European culture to a *mélange* of forms that could no longer be contained in particular aesthetic, national, racial, or other categories. The rise of popular culture leans “toward popular practices, toward local narratives, toward the decentering of old hierarchies and grand narratives” (23). According to Hall, culture has moved away from the definitions of high culture that have traditionally justified the dominance of Europe on the global stage. Even though society now privileges the individual, the localized, the particular, and the mixture, the global landscape is in effect overseen by an even more powerful force, the United States. As I have already described in the first chapter “Empire,” the post-War years saw the rise of the United States as the major economic power with the installation of international organizations, government support of foreign countries, the establishment of a global finance system, and the expansion of American corporations. In the cultural realm, a similar situation occurred. Linked to corporate profit and the creation of a consumer culture, the United States subjected the world to its products and ideas. European high culture with its modernist assumptions of the Enlightenment subject morphed into an American popular culture that brought forth new “mass-cultural, image-

mediated technologies” (21). The United States was in charge of a global system of cultural production and circulation that allowed its products to be sold around the world.

At the same time, the American culture industry also provided the medium through which the message of the Black experience could be carried around the world. American popular culture is rooted in expressions of Black identity that were shaped by centuries of oppression and resistance, particularly through the institutions of slavery and then through segregation. The importance of Black communities in the creation of American popular culture highlights the tension of this historical legacy and the projection of American democratic values (Hall, “What Is This ‘Black’” 21-22). The global circulation of Black music, like rap and hip-hop, and its articulations of struggle and resistance of African-Americans conflicts with the dominant message of the United States as the ultimate manifestation of democratic values. Despite these oppositional discourses, Black popular culture needs the technological advances of record companies, movie studios, and other entertainment corporations and their infrastructure to be able to get its message across to a global audience. In this system of production, circulation, distribution, creation, and absorption, and response, Hall insinuates that a complex matrix of various power relationships exists. Various values and ideas are not only battling it out, but are also reliant on each other. Mainstream culture and subcultural forms, White and Black, corporations and the avant-garde, cooption and authenticity all struggle within the cultural forms that have ended up on records, cassettes, CD’s, and now iTunes. There is a symbiosis between production and dissemination that occurs between the dominant forces of American Capital

and those who have remained on the fringes for most of history. Within this framework of Diaspora and Empire, Gilroy uses popular culture in *There Ain't No 'Black' in the Union Jack* to challenge the constructions of nation in Thatcherism and to posit a new definition of Britishness that incorporates the term “Black.”

While Thatcherism projected a “way of life” that promoted authority, conformity, and historical contiguity, Black British identity never remained static. Gilroy restates the Gramscian model and applies it to race: “Racial meanings are examined not as an autonomous branch of ideology, but as a salient feature in a general process whereby culture mediates the world of agents and the structures which are created by their social praxis. These meanings are sources of the individual and collective actions which give culture its materiality” (17). Popular culture becomes the medium for transgression. It encompasses the multiple levels through which race is constructed. It expresses the daily concerns of the Black population, such as education, interaction with the police, and employment. It questions the relationship between the Black community and British society as a whole. It connects people from the Black community in Britain to others around the world. It creates consumers of popular culture that are tied to the American corporations and a global economy. It contains the traces of a greater narrative that includes the historical, economic, and epistemological changes occurring in the global order (from European Empires to American Empire.) Black British popular culture becomes a site where all of these different elements come together and play off of each other: White and Black, capitalism and

anticapitalism, and finally Nation, Diaspora, and Empire. The most prominent popular form that becomes this site of play is music.

Throughout Gilroy's writing, the most privileged example of popular culture is music because of its format and accessibility. Other mass cultural forms required entire structures of production to create and to distribute to the public. Cinema needed expensive equipment, funding, and medium to screen movies, while British television was limited to three basic channels until the eighties when Channel 4 was formed. The portability of music enabled many musicians and DJ's to take part in the creation and enjoyment of music. Dance hall sound systems could be transported from club to club and records were easily brought over or sent over from the Caribbean. The technology also enabled DJ's to take over the production and dissemination of music. The technology of the 12-inch record left an indelible mark on Black music, allowing DJ's to present extended and mixed versions of songs depending on the type of gathering they were deejaying. The demands for a DJ in a club and the role of the DJ to support a toaster are distinct. Despite the possibilities for organically created forms of Black British expression, popular culture was reliant on the record companies that produced the technology and distributed the music. In the seventies, when some DJ's experimented with 7-inch records, they showed that when they were played at a slower speed (33 rpm), they could record as much as the more expensive 12-inch records. The record industry decided to stop producing the cheaper size in order to profit. What might seem as a simple song or direct expression of Black identity becomes part of a greater struggle of power. Popular music, like all forms of popular culture becomes

intertwined within the structures of capitalism and its exploitation of the Black Subject (Judy 25). The power relations that Carby summarized in “White Woman Listen!” are exemplified on a smaller scale within music.

Black music is not completely contained within the structures of power described by Carby. The flexibility of music also facilitates the movement of ideas and forms across borders with ease, rendering the form an important technology of the Black Diasporic space. One example Gilroy gives is the motif of work found in Black popular music. The issue of unemployment, the inability to succeed in the workplace, the emotional toll of work on the individual, and the emphasis on leisure and pleasure are replicated in the lyrics of songs from the United States, Caribbean, and Black Britain. This connects the present Black experience in all these spaces to the historical memory of slavery (199). From the beginnings of the arrival of Black immigrants in the post-War years, the Black British community were influenced by these other places in the Black Diaspora and created their own forms of popular culture that captured their experiences living in Britain. Music played a major role in this synthesis. In the fifties, the records and sound systems brought over from Jamaica pointed to the roots of the community (164). During the late sixties, the message of Black Power arrived in Britain with the music of soul singers like James Brown and Aretha Franklin (177-178). In the eighties, hip-hop became a critical voice against the economic policies of the Thatcher government and the continued mistreatment of Black youth by the police. Across the Atlantic, similar themes were presented in hip-hop which fought back against neoliberal economic and social policies and racist sentiments found in Reagan’s

America. Black Britain was greatly influenced through these cultural exchanges, but in the end, it succeeded in remixing these Diasporic forms in order to articulate its own distinct identity, one that is simultaneously Black and British.

One example of popular culture that is able to navigate all these different forces to synthesize a new identity is Smiley Culture's 1984 radio hit "Cockney Translation." Gilroy spends some time analyzing the song in detail. It deals with a Black Briton's introduction to the Cockney dialect. It begins with a brief overview of where and who uses Cockney slang and then continues to list different words and their corresponding terms in Black patois. Seemingly light and playful, the song depicts two linguistic forms that seem alien from one another. While the former is defined through class, the latter is defined through race. The song is able to bridge these two identities. Historically, race had excluded blacks from being defined as Cockney. Black working-class Londoners who lived in these same neighborhoods have had to negotiate both of these identities. The song presents the possibilities for a Black British identity that is no longer tied to the ideological baggage of class and race. Rather than fall victim to the "schizophrenia" of the racial Other, "Cockney Translation" is able to transcend these categories. Gilroy explains:

It is the oppositional core of a black culture based no longer in a wholehearted rejection of Englishness that answered the exclusionary effect of racism, but on an idea of its overcoming and redefinition in the association of black and white urban sub-cultures and their characteristically encoded communications which the toast makes mutually intelligible. (195)

Popular culture here becomes a potent site of resistance that allows Black Britain to respond to their exclusion as framed by Powell and Thatcher. Englishness, at least on the subcultural level, opens up to new permutations of identity that are no longer framed broadly through history and place as presented by Powell or through a very specific lived experience as exemplified through Thatcherism seemingly inclusive multiculturalism of the Pereiras. Instead, it brings together the concrete lived experiences within the English social structures and the connections with the trans-historical and trans-national style of Diaspora.

The way hybridity is captured in the song might appear quaint to some, but Gilroy believes that popular culture holds potential for new definitions of Britishness in more concrete forms. In August 1976, the Socialist Worker's Party created an organization called Rock Against Racism (RAR) to respond to the racist rhetoric expressed by British musicians like Eric Clapton and David Bowie. Using punk style to promote its anti-racist, anti-fascist message in posters and events, RAR successfully brought its message to White and Black youth through punk and reggae (120-121). Although punk has its roots in young members of the disaffected White working-class and is disconnected from the historical and racial weight of Black Diasporic identity, RAR built on feelings and ideas that bridged these two forms of popular culture. Punks understood and sympathized with the anti-authoritarian spirit of the Black uprisings that occurred at the Notting Hill Carnival of 1976. Punk bands were greatly influenced by the language and message of reggae even though they refused to play their songs (125). The success of RAR in pushing back fascist groups like the National Front shows how popular culture could build alliances between groups of distinct histories and

identities. While Thatcherism attempted to homogenize race and culture into a singular community, Gilroy understands that community is based on difference as much as on similarities (235). His outlook does not seem optimistic at the end of *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*. The race riots that had taken place throughout the 1980's stand as a testament that race remains as potent a force for battle as ever. At the very least, Gilroy has shown that through popular culture one could keep tradition and transcend the boundaries of race and nation.

For Black British Cultural Studies, popular culture became the technology of Diaspora. Hoggart believed that the change from an organically developed popular culture gave way to a mediated force that had broken off from the lived experience of the English working class. In the end, these changes were accompanied by global shifts in how the economic, political, social realms functioned. The world that Hoggart had grown up in no longer exists. The conservative ideology of Powellism and Thatcherism responded to these fears by creating a national culture that looked back nostalgically to a society unaffected by the greater arc of history. While its imperial holdings gave Britain global prestige, England could remain untainted by foreign influence, especially by its colonial subjects. Black British Cultural Studies challenged this definition of culture both theoretically and discursively by creating a model that embraced the geopolitical situation, where the European domination was replaced by an American one. Popular culture came to encompass the complex relationships of power that existed within this system. Using the economic and cultural structures of American hegemony, the form was able to transmit Diasporic style providing

the medium for new formulations of Black identity. These constantly shifting elements embedded within popular culture challenged the seemingly stable term of “Nation.” Articulations such as “Cockney Translation” and RAR bridging reggae and punk point to new conceptions of Britishness not based on history or nation. New narratives need to be written. In the next chapter “Migration,” I move from shifting culture to shifting spaces. As with popular culture, British Cultural Studies challenges the narratives of migration that have shaped contemporary British identity. The Windrush narrative, the dominant story of West Indian immigration, became a stand-in for the success of Britain as a destination for immigrants. By looking at the meanings of belonging in African-American migration narratives of the early twentieth century, Black British Cultural called for new conceptualizations of the relationship between space and belonging.

## Chapter 4: Migration

The individual is always living some larger narrative, whether he or she likes it or not.

- Stuart Hall in an interview in *The Observer*

Throughout this dissertation project, I have explored Black British Cultural Studies as a deconstruction of dominant narratives that have come to frame the Black British experience. In the first chapter, I contextualized Black British Cultural Studies in relation to a formerly coherent conceptualization of Britain as an imperial space. Next, I looked at a localized vision of nation established in the post-World War II English academy and how Black British Cultural Studies refracted it through a racial lens. I then continued to consider the development of race in a British cultural identity in response to a dominant one that sparked the rise of Margaret Thatcher as a political force. This fourth chapter looks at the way a communal narrative has limited a more complex understanding of Black Britain. In the British Sunday paper *The Observer*, Stuart Hall says that “The individual is always living some larger narrative, whether he or she likes it or not.” Here, Hall recognizes how an overarching generalized narrative has shaped our individual identities. In the context of this interview intended for a left-leaning readership, the statement seems innocuous. Of course everyone is shaped by their racial/ethnic/class community’s narrative of how they came to being. Right below the surface, Hall’s skepticism of power and particularly dominant discourse, found throughout his writing, forces us to focus on that final clause “whether he or she likes it or not.” Narratives are important in our understanding of self, but at the same time they pave over the distinctive voices and experiences that encompass this greater narrative. This

chapter explores the limitations of the dominant narrative of migration that has come to stand in for Black Britain in the public imagination: the Windrush narrative. This story relates the arrival of West Indians to Great Britain in the post-War years. Although they confronted racism in their daily lives, these immigrants were able to build a home in the former colonial motherland. Black British Cultural theorists contest the simplification of the Black British experience. For them, this migration narrative challenges the presumptions of linear historical and personal space and places Black Britain into a direct relationship with African America. Historically, national identity was tied directly to physical space, whether it was the country or the city. Hall, Hazel Carby, and Isaac Julien use the migration narrative to question the certainties of place and recontextualize Black Britain within a greater Diasporic space.

When the m/v Empire Windrush docked in Tilbury on June 22, 1948, it became an easily recognizable marker for multicultural Britain. The ship contained the first boatload of Jamaican immigrants, symbolizing the starting point of West Indian immigration in the post-World War II years. This Windrush narrative is structurally similar to the American immigrant story where people would migrate en masse to settle in a new land to make a better life for themselves. In this instance, the colonial subjects of the British Empire came to England, the imperial motherland. Although historical studies have shown that Blacks have been present on British soil since Rome ruled Britannia, the Windrush narrative

became the accepted history of multicultural Britain in the popular imagination.<sup>16</sup> On the fiftieth anniversary of the arrival of the ship, the BBC broadcast a four part documentary series entitled *Windrush* depicting the history of Black Britain as an outgrowth of the original event. Prolific television presenter and Civil Rights activist Trevor Phillips and his brother Mike Phillips researched and wrote an accompanying volume. The popularity of Andrea Levy's award-winning novel *Small Island* about a couple making the journey on a Windrush-like vessel and the presence of the West Indian immigrant in the Victoria and Albert Museum's 2004 exhibit *Black British Style* point to the prominence of the Windrush as the foundational marker of the Black British story.

Despite the prevalence of this narrative, the response to it has not been strictly positive. For many, the Windrush depicts a traditional immigrant story that moves from the great economic and social struggles West Indians faced when they first arrived in Britain to their ultimately successful integration into society. The emotional resonance of this multicultural dream is clearly captured in the title of Vivienne Francis' book on the Windrush, *With Hope In Their Eyes*. Others however have perceived this mass migration as a Black "invasion." The notion of these immigrants as a threat to English identity is clearly present in the political discourses of Powellism and Thatcherism. As described in the third chapter "Culture," these ideologies promoted a pure white vision of England that was suddenly stained by the onslaught of Black invaders. Although these two specific poles

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<sup>16</sup> . In his chapter "Diasporicity: Black Britain's Postcolonial Formations," Barnor Hesse describes the artificiality of the 1948 as the starting point of Black Britain. The presence of Blacks in Britain could be dated at least back to the eighteenth century, when Africans were employed on merchant ships (101).

would frame the mainstream debate of how to define a post-imperial England, each of these narratives fails to capture the complexities of a racially changing English society in a globalized world. England was neither an immigrant's paradise with "streets paved with gold" for its Black (post)-colonial subjects nor an Albion untainted by the rise and fall of its imperial power (101).

As a prominent theorist of race in Britain and as a figure whose personal history coincides with the story of the Windrush, it seems appropriate that Stuart Hall "might lay claim to having invented multiculturalism in Britain," as journalist Tim Adams describes him in *The Observer* interview. His arrival from Jamaica in 1950 on a Rhodes scholarship to study at Merton College in Oxford University occurred only two years after the ship m/v Empire Windrush docked in Tilbury carrying the first boatload of Jamaican settlers. With his coincidental history and success as a voice of Black Britain, Hall superficially appears to fit into the mold of the Windrush generation. As I have emphasized throughout this project, one of the major goals of Black British Cultural Studies is to deconstruct and to problematize the overarching Black British narrative. The work of Stuart Hall, Hazel Carby, Paul Gilroy, and Isaac Julien aims to challenge dominant and singular narratives of English identities like that of the Windrush, which singularly depicts how people of color are fully accepted into British society. In reality, this influx of West Indians in English cities marks one of many examples where the migration of peoples from the Global South would alter the traditional centers of power into new vibrant postmodern metropolises. From these urban spaces, new identities and new narratives were constructed. This chapter explores

how Black British Cultural Studies challenges the Windrush narrative by thinking about how Black identity moves beyond the traditional migration narrative in terms of departure and arrival.

The city is an integral part of the Black British narrative. Immigrants from the West Indies, South Asia, and Africa left their countries to settle in British cities such as London, Birmingham, Leeds, and Liverpool. While some immigrants came from urban centers like Mumbai, Delhi, Lagos, and Nairobi, many others moved from rural areas of the colonies to settle in the urban centers of the imperial motherland. Although many came to Britain in search of jobs and opportunities without any prior arrangements, others arrived with the help of organizations such as the hospitals and public transportation authorities that actively recruited workers from as far away as the Caribbean and South Asia. The economic boom of the fifties and the sixties opened up opportunities for many of these immigrants to work in the most menial positions that the English refused to take (Dawson 10-11). By the seventies and the eighties, a stagnant economy and the resulting high unemployment played a role in the growing sense that society was under siege by the trade unions and foreigners. This resulted in more intense monitoring of these groups by the police (Solomos, Findlay, Jones, and Gilroy 27-28). One response from the Black community came in the form of violent uprisings by its youth. They faced down the police in urban neighborhoods like Handsworth in Birmingham and Brixton in London in the eighties. Depending on one's point of view, the city became either a place of violence one should avoid or a vibrant cultural laboratory for the expression of resistance and racial pride. This shift from a predominantly white city

to a more multiracial one is not simply a question of demographics. The city played an active role in the articulation of a Black British identity. It became a space that would inform Black cultural production and be defined by it. A. Adlai Murdoch captures the dynamism of the city as cultural influence and as product when he explains that “Popular culture, then—music, art, writing—quickly drew on its core Caribbeanness as a means of combat(t)ing metropolitan exclusion and in the process gained both vitality and vigor” (588). If England would not open up its urban spaces to its Black population, then that space would be redefined by them.

Throughout history, cities helped define an English identity. For example, William Shakespeare’s plays, the most revered writing in the English language, were created in the artistic explosion of Elizabethan London. The development of the Parliamentary system to its present form, the architectural project in the aftermath of the Great London Fire of 1666, and the rich print culture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have all contributed to a sense of what it means to be English. For some during the Victorian era, the city connoted progress as economic powerhouses for industry and as bureaucratic centers for the British Empire (Ackroyd 573). Although these descriptions held global importance, cities such as London, Birmingham, and Manchester became symbols of British ingenuity, entrepreneurship, and hard work. With the decline of British manufacturing centers in the post-war years, the cities became inundated with unemployed workers and shut down factories. They reflected a general questioning and dissatisfaction with Englishness now that it no longer held the prominent global position it once held. Currently, feelings towards

cities like Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham are again changing from places of post-industrial blight to centers of revitalization and modernization, where ideas and culture are at the forefront (Thorpe and Islam).<sup>17</sup>

For Black British Cultural Studies, such a narrative is problematic because at its center there is a very strict and traditional (i.e. white) definition of English identity. Multiculturalism has become one of the qualities of the modern English city, as seen in Birmingham's bid for 2008 European Capital of Culture.<sup>18</sup> This attribute suggests an internationalism, but in reality, it is more a self-congratulatory perception of Englishness as an identity that embodies openness and largesse. Black British Cultural Studies challenges this narrative of the English city by depicting it as a Diasporic and global space. The new geographic rendering encompasses a broader sense of English identity. Numerous studies have been made of how the English city has been described and transformed in literary texts. Only one recent article "Urbanism and City Spaces in the Work of Stuart Hall," by Michael Keith, has explicitly looked at Black British Cultural Studies' approach to urban space. Keith explains how in Hall's writing "[the] city spaces move from being referents of the empirical . . . to a more productive sense of an urbanism that generates narrative tropes of the spatial" (539). The article continues to provide a sociological analysis of Hall's depiction of the

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<sup>17</sup>. One of the clearest examples of these new perceptions of the city is the 2002-2003 campaign for which British city would hold the title of the 2008 European Capital of Culture.

<sup>18</sup> . On the local Birmingham BBC website, a page dating back to March 2003 looks at the strengths of Birmingham's bid. The third listed is Cultural Diversity. This is ironic considering the history of racial unrest in places like the suburb of Handsworth.

cityscape in three of his most famous essays. For the purposes of this project, I am most interested in exploring the city as a narrative trope. Hall, Carby, Julien, and Gilroy re-evaluate the nature of the English national narrative by opening up the spatial possibilities for new definitions of a Black Britishness. As in previous chapters, I map out an intellectual trajectory of how the narratives of migration have changed. I begin with Williams's *The Country and the City* and moving through writings on the Windrush, Stuart Hall's essay "New Ethnicities," Carby's essays from the section titled "Fictions of the Folk" in *Cultures in Babylon*, Isaac Julien and Kobena Mercer's essay "De Margin and De Center." The chapter culminates in the representation of space in Julien's film *Looking for Langston*. As one moves through these works, the relationship between space and British identity breaks down and reconstitutes itself as something far more fragmentary, elusive, and positively Black.

To understand how this narrative moves from a traditional understanding of British space and narrative to one that considers the Black subject, Raymond Williams provides the natural starting point for this intellectual strain of Black British Cultural Studies. In a remembrance of Williams, Hall writes that Williams "not so much engaged the map of English culture as re-drew it" (*The New Statesman*). The influence of *Culture and Society* cannot be understated. As I have described in the second chapter, this work upended the academy's valuation of culture, transforming what could and should be studied. Popular forms are just as important as a subject of inquiry as high art is. Through the creation of a genealogy that reevaluated the trajectory of British intellectual history, Williams transformed the role class would play in the academic study of culture. His 1973 book *The Country and the*

*City* maps out how each of these spaces has been represented in English literature and how it has affected the formation of a dominant English identity. As in his earlier *Culture and Society*, Williams presents a genealogy of the development of the terms “the country”<sup>19</sup> and “the city.” However, this book is considered a minor part of his oeuvre. Many critics find that *The Country and The City* does not contain the theoretical heft or great influence his other writings have. It has a more traditional approach to literature. In it, Williams does a close reading of numerous literary texts, looking at how literature captures certain definitions of what it means to be English. Culture is defined here more traditionally. Rather than overturning its hierarchical definitions, Williams considers it as a product of its historical situation (Stevenson 45). Williams is also challenging the narratives of Englishness found in the urban and rural landscapes. The very simplistic notions of English identity are on the line. The questions Williams raises in this work become as important and as revolutionary as the ones found in *Culture and Society*. For me, *The Country and the City* goes even further, interrogating the very nature of identity and the individual’s place in the world. While exploring the spatial narrative of Englishness, Williams asks whether such narratives of space fully encompass every individual. If one adds race into the mix, this question becomes a central concern of Black British Cultural Studies.

Williams begins his analysis of the country and the city with a list of the various spaces that have been present in Britain from its colonization by Rome to the contemporary

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<sup>19</sup>. For the sake of clarity, the term “country” in this chapter will only refer to rural space, never to nation.

era. The country includes “hunters, pastoralists, farmers and factory farmers, and its organization has varied from the tribe and the manor to the feudal estate, from small peasantry and tenant farmers to the rural commune, from the latifundia and the plantation to the large capitalist enterprise and the state farm.” A similar variety of space also makes up the city: “state capital, administrative base, religious centre, market-town, port and mercantile depot, military barracks, industrial concentration.” And between these two ends, a number of different types of spaces could be found like “suburb, dormitory town, shanty town, industrial estate” (1). Precise and wide-ranging, this list provides the template for a possible historical analysis of the country and the city. He is very much interested in finding the connections between these spaces, writing “I find the history active and continuous: the relations are not only of ideas and experiences, but of rent and interest, of situation and power; a wider system (1).” As a student of Marx, Williams might be tempted to unravel the greater economic forces that have shaped the forms of the country and the city. Two examples mentioned the latifundia and the feudal estate, showing the distinctive structures of capitalist power that developed in the Roman and medieval periods respectively. A traditional Marxist could have focused on how these systems affected the proletariat. The search for a grand narrative obscures the way these economic, political, and social forces affect the individual. Instead of privileging economic analysis (or structure in Marxist terms,) Williams focuses on culture (or superstructure.)

Rather than providing a sociological or even a traditional literary perspective of the country and the city, Williams focuses in on culture as a history of the emotional ties the

English people have to these spaces. When he arrived as a student at Cambridge, Williams encountered professors that had already placed the country within “a prepared and pervasive cultural history” (6). Although many of these intellectuals never had first-hand experience of country living, they perpetuated certain assumptions of the details of this lifestyle and the moral implications of it. For example, when describing how the land west of Cambridge was badly farmed, William Cobbett declares, “Certainly this village resembles nothing English . . . ” (6). Englishness is tied to a specific notion of prosperity and wealth that finds its origins in the edenic elements of the physical land. Williams’s argument is that literary depictions of the country and the city have been engrained in the collective imagination and shaped the way people define Englishness.

One of the most repeated motifs in the conceptualization of English identity is the contrast between the city as something new and exciting and the country as old and rooted. In their 1932 book *Culture and Environment*, F.R. Leavis and Denys Thompson describe how the “organic community” of “Old England” vanished with the disappearance of the rural way of life. Seventy years earlier, George Eliot made the same assertion in her novels *The Mill on the Floss* and *Felix Holt*. All three authors mourned the loss of rural culture in the same way—as the extinction of an authentic English national identity. The trope of an idealized space in the past that stands in for a pure Englishness is repeated over and over throughout literary history. Williams compares the continued usage of the idealized country to an escalator where to fully reach the end one has to get off at the Biblical Garden of Eden (12). These depictions of the country and the contrasting city ultimately tell more about the way

people think and feel about their own particular era rather than any authentic past (45).

Williams looks at snippets of poetry, novels, and plays to construct a social history of the country and the city in the English imagination. The emphasis is placed on the writers' sentimental attitudes towards these spaces, or to use Williams's term, "the structures of feelings," and the conclusions one could make about the society in which they were written. Nostalgia and childhood memories have shaped the idealized perception of the country for many individuals. As important feelings are as a driving force for culture, they also hide more complex meanings and relations found in society.

In the autobiographical descriptions of his arrival to Cambridge, Williams questions the simplicity of these concepts. Although he himself was born in a small village in Wales right near the English border, he learned how mainstream intellectuals viewed his country life by going to the city, or in this instance Cambridge, a town that is renowned as an intellectual hub. He discovered from his teachers that the country contained "a prepared and pervasive cultural history" (6). This narrative presented by prestigious literary critics is problematic for Williams. What exactly does country life mean? While some intellectuals sacrificed the academic setting for the toil of the farm, other writers have focused on an idealized depiction of their lives out in the country. When Williams considers his own journey between the country and the city, he asks himself, "where do I stand in relation to these writers: in another country[side] or in valuing the city?" (6).

Throughout his long career in the academy moving back and forth between the country and the city, Williams ponders the nature of these two spaces. Could these places

ever be contained in the stereotypes of farms and villages and bustling metropolises?

Williams believes that these two entities could never be separated because they are relational.

The way one space is defined shapes the meanings of the other. Complex systems of economics and politics found in the city have grown out from the grounded culture of the country, or to return to Williams's phrase discussed in the second chapter, "way of life."

While traditional Marxists have focused on these more swooping arcs to explain these dynamics, for Williams, the drive of Marxist structure obscures our understanding of the atomized effects of these forces. Williams uses culture to focus in on a specific point, such as the cultural artifact or the individual, to try to understand how these economic and political dynamics shape the society on a very localized level. As the web of interaction spins out first between individuals and then between communities, both urban and rural, one begins to understand how a collective way of life coheres into a shared notion of Englishness.

Williams calls for the inclusion of the personal into the communal narrative that shapes our understanding of the country and the city. Continuing from the overarching forces, Williams writes "This then is where I am, and as I settle to work I find I have to resolve, step by slow step, experiences and questions that once moved like light. The life of country and city is moving and present: moving in time, through the history of a family and a people; moving in feeling and ideas, through a network of relationships and decisions" (7-8). This passage captures one of Williams's most famous and influential ideas, "structures of feeling." In essence, this term combines the impersonal economic forces that shape the general relationship between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat with the personal feelings

and emotion of everyday life (Turner 53-54). The Marxist sweep of history overpowers the human side of the proletariat. The forces that shape the relationship between the country and the city are not just the story of England, but also the story of Raymond Williams himself. His biography, born in the Welsh countryside, educated in the British University system, working through the various levels of the academy, is a negotiation between these spaces and the meanings that have been placed on them.

The autobiographical aspects of British Cultural Studies found in the work of Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart, exemplified in his *Uses of Literacy*, have contributed to their distinctive analysis. Rather than focusing on the theoretical aspects of culture, the personal adds a certain literary sensibility to their writing. The two authors use their family histories and individual stories to re-inscribe the greater historic dialectic presented in Marxist thought. They want to emphasize that their personal narratives are just as important to this reading of English society as the intellectuals, the aristocracy, and the middle-class who had already defined a social or even a national identity on their own terms. *Culture and Society* is an overview of the development of the intellectual and moral values that have formed the foundations of Englishness. By the end of the text, Williams positions the lower-class individual into the narrative of society and nation. When he asks where he fits in within the dichotomy of the country and the city, Williams begins to map out a space for individuals who are left out of the narrative of Englishness that these two spaces have informed. Although the individual is mostly working class in his writing, Williams opens up the possibility for new identities to assert and insert themselves into the spatial narratives of

city and country. Black British Cultural Studies adopts and extends Williams's position and develops its own set of responses to English geography.

The relationship between Black British Cultural Studies and Williams's work appears tenuous at first. Critics have chastised Williams for failing to provide any sort of comprehensive analysis of how imperialism has shaped English identity (Viswanathan 49). The longest stretch of analysis is a short chapter in *The Country and the City* titled "The New Metropolis" that barely reaches ten pages. In it, Williams provides a distinct perspective on how the narrative of the country and the city shifted under the aegis of imperialism.<sup>20</sup> The great distances that were involved in the imperial project transformed the ways that the country and the city were imagined. Novels such as *Wuthering Heights*, *Great Expectations*, and *Alton Brown* portrayed their characters escaping the overcrowded cities to find their fortunes in the colonial hinterlands before returning to the metropolitan centers. The trading post and the plantation were also introduced into the English imagination through the work of Joseph Conrad, Rudyard Kipling, Somerset Maugham, and early George Orwell (281). The notion of home also changed. Members of the imperial bureaucracy made their way to the far-flung corners of the world, finding foreign landscapes and alien lifestyles. The idyllic image of a home in the English countryside became more and more appealing (279-280). Williams is aware that these imaginings of space originate in a particularly English point of view. When

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<sup>20</sup> . He gives a definition of "imperialism" and "colonialism" in *Keywords*. They are simple definitions without an analysis of the relationship between these ideas and the English working class.

looking at these narratives, Williams asks in so many words where are the individuals who were placed on the other side of Empire?

At first, Williams extends the standard Marxist analysis to the workings of Empire. He explains that the Industrial Revolution would have been impossible without the reconfiguration of the country and the city. Slave labor and raw materials provided the necessary ingredients to begin a revolution that would transform the forces of production at an unprecedented rate. The resources of the English country itself could never sustain industrialization on such a scale. This analysis does not introduce anything particularly groundbreaking. The most interesting aspect of Williams's reading is the shift he makes between the country and the city as spaces that feed each other within a national border, but as spaces that would upend our sense of human identity. On one side, the country provided an idealistic, bucolic setting for urban dwellers used to the rumble of the city. On the other side, the country also created a set of power relations that would privilege the city as economic powerhouse over the country as target for pillaging. Under the structures of empire, the domination of the "metropolitan" over the "colonial" was explicit. The profits from the business and trade flowed from the colonies to the imperial centers in England, bypassing not only the indigenous population that was decimated economically and socially, but also the vast number of colonial soldiers and bureaucrats that came from rural Scotland, Wales, and Ireland (283). Both of these groups of victims shifted the relationship of the country and the city in such a way that Englishness extended beyond the physical borders of England. The country and the city must be expanded to think about relations of power

transnationally in terms of colony and metropole; Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England; exploited and exploiter, etc.

By the end of the chapter, Williams shifts from analyzing the system as a whole to an emphasis on the individual stories that are obscured by the imperial power structures. When Williams asks where he fits in the relationship between the country and the city in the introduction to the book, this question poignantly suggests what other voices have been silenced by a larger cycle of domination. Although he does not provide a thorough analysis of any particular book, Williams allows the reader to consider the possibilities of what voices and feelings need to be brought to the surface. The most thorough reading of a postcolonial text Williams provides is Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart*. No longer than a few sentences, his description remains interesting because he contextualizes the novel in terms of the power relations between the country and the city. The novel portrays the arrival of an outside European force into an African village completely upending and reorganizing the society. This transformation could be seen as the shift from a rural society to an urban one, similar to the portrayal of life in Thomas Hardy's novels (286). Literature becomes an important outlet that allows the voices of the marginalized to show how imperialism has altered and even destroyed individuals' lives. If Achebe's novel portrays the first stages of that revolutionary change, other authors like James Ngugi of Kenya and Han Suyin of Malaya depict these processes in other geographic contexts and later in the development of the imperial project. For Williams, the postcolonial novel becomes ensconced in a tradition of English literature and its portrayal of the country and the city.

This, however, is the point at which Williams reaches the limits of his argument. He superimposes Empire onto the traditional perspective of the country and the city therefore transgressing the imaginary and national boundaries that exist. At the same time, he fails to take the argument to the logical endpoint – race. Behind the trade and the plundering of resources, the economic catalysts of the imperial system, there existed an entire philosophical system justifying the racial domination of Europe over the rest of the world. Gilroy calls it the Enlightenment Project in his introduction to *The Black Atlantic*. Alongside this geography of country and city, colony and metropole, there existed an entire psychological geography of race and identity, belonging and dislocation, as clearly described in Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. The demarcation between the country and the town is stark in Fanon. The colonizers who benefit from the imperial system lived in the towns, while the natives lived outside, on the fringes of society. The police and the army marked the boundary between the two spaces, threatening to stop any infringement on the colonizers' space by the natives. The threat on the town stems from the "envy" that the natives feel towards the colonizers (29-30). Fanon inserts a psychological component or a sense of otherness into his geography that distinguishes his description as far more sophisticated than that of Williams.

Despite the absence of race, the presence of Williams in Black British Cultural Studies is unmistakable. When discussing his 2004 video *True North* at the CUNY Graduate Center, Isaac Julien mentioned that Williams's *The Country and The City* was a great influence on this piece. On the surface, this assertion appears strange, because the narrative takes place neither in the country nor in the city. The video depicts a black woman in a fur coat roaming

a polar landscape. A female voiceover narrates a first-person story loosely based on the first expedition to reach the North Pole in 1909. Controversy surrounded the original voyage, because the African-American explorer Matthew Henson, not the leader of the expedition Commander Robert Peary, reached the geographic North Pole first. Despite this accomplishment, Peary received all of the accolades and honors, while Henson was recognized only later in his life. By exploring the erasure from the record, Julien considers the nature of narrative, particularly historical narrative. It appears that Henson was the first Western human being in history to ever reach this geographic point. Racist attitudes of the time would not allow a black man to receive the credit for this accomplishment. The unreliable nature of narrative is explored in *True North* both aurally and visually. Julien captures in the video the sense of disconnection found in the historical record between the accepted story and something closer to the truth. The words spoken in the voiceover are not Henson's own, but instead loosely based on his experience. The female voice recapitulating the events of the expedition is strange since it is obviously not Henson's and at that time a woman would never have been allowed to join such a grueling journey to the Arctic. Furthermore, the figure of a black woman is juxtaposed against the natural whiteness of the polar landscape. This jarring image, one that seems unnatural, harks back to the perceived oddness of the tale of an African-American reaching the North Pole first. It also forces the viewers to really consider the place of an individual within a certain space. If certain meanings are associated with a specific landscape, Julien asks the audience to consider their response to that space when a foreign body is placed in it.

The presence of a black individual in a polar landscape highlights the relationship between the subject and his/her environment at its most acute form. The question of where one situates oneself and the narrative that comes out of it is not that different from the one Williams poses in the introduction of *The Country and the City*. Throughout his professional and personal life, Williams moved between urban and rural spaces and between his homeland and abroad. The relationship between the identities Williams adopted and his location was complicated. He started as an English working class man born in Wales; he later became a major intellectual promoting a particularly English cultural lens; and he ended up as a professor in Cambridge. This cursory biography displays some of the contradictory elements that constitute Williams's identity as he moved between class, ethnic, and national identities. As the space around him changed from the Welsh countryside to the halls of Oxbridge, his shifting identity took on more meanings imposed by the space through which he was physically moving.<sup>21</sup> When Williams asks the question where he is, his dislocation ends up being as incongruent as the black female figure in the frozen tundra. Although *True North* features neither the country nor the city, Julien uses Williams to explore how space shapes individual subjectivity and alters the narrative that accompanies it.

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<sup>21</sup>. In her article "Autobiography and the 'Structure of Feeling' in *Border Country*," Laura de Michele uses Williams's autobiographical novel *Border Country* to describe the theorist's state of mind as one of constant negotiation between England and Wales. As he moves from place to place physically and mentally, he must navigate the social and economic differences between these two spaces. The most important aspect of these spaces is the personal relationships and the belief systems that constitute these communities' way of life. Living on a border becomes the ultimate metaphor to describe Williams's fluid subjectivity (27).

Most of Williams's work focuses on class, but *The Country and The City* is particularly fitting for Julien's work because it marks the only relatively substantial analysis Williams makes of individuals of color. When the viewer experiences Julien's video art, he/she is fully engaged with the writings of theoretical heavyweights who write on race. Video pieces like *The Attendant* and *Black Skin/ White Masks* are two examples that take on the work of Stuart Hall and Frantz Fanon respectively. *The Country and The City* lacks the theoretical complexity on race found in thinkers like these. Yet Williams provides a critique of how dominant narratives have framed notions of national identity to the detriment of minority groups. He raises the question where he personally fits into this strict binary of the country and the city in ways that can be applied to other oppressed communities whose narratives do not conform to a greater notion of Englishness.

The narrative Williams presents is quite powerful. One can not help but be moved by the exploitation of the Anatolian farm pickers in Yashar Kemal's novel *The Wind from the Plain* or the destruction of a society in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Societies are uprooted as the shift from the country to the city occurs. Many struggle to eke out a living in the country that has been drained by capitalist forces in the urban centers or the bustling metropolises of the postcolonial world, where competition has become fierce. This view of this spatial dynamic and the individual place in it is also myopic. The shift certainly occurred, but Williams's depiction glosses over the fact the many did not remain in their own independent countries. Immigrants from these countries moved from their homeland to make a new life in the metropolitan centers of Empire such as London, Paris, and New York. The migration

of peoples between the country and the city did not only happen within established colonial/post-independence borders. It also occurred trans-nationally and trans-continentially. When the *The Country and the City* was published, it was five years after Enoch Powell had given his infamous “River of Blood” speech. The visuals, if not necessarily the demographics, of an ever-changing racial constitution in the English city had made it into the English imagination. This discussion is nowhere to be found in Williams’s analysis. Black British Cultural Studies as a field would take the mantle from Williams and deconstruct the traditional narrative of the country.

If Williams questions the limitations of the cultural narratives of the country and the city, Black British Cultural Studies then transforms the ground on which this narrative is built. When describing the rise of the “global postmodern,” Hall writes:

The only places where one can genuinely experience the postmodern ethnic cuisine are Manhattan and London, not Calcutta. . . . Even if postmodernism is not a new cultural epoch, but only modernism in the streets, that, in itself, represents an important shifting of the terrain of culture toward the popular—toward popular practices, toward everyday practices, toward local narratives, toward the decentering of old hierarchies and the grand narratives. (What Is This “Black” 21-22)

The classification that Hall makes of postmodernism as a popular extension of modernism takes into consideration the seismic shifts that occurred when the populations of the Global South moved to first world nations. At the same time, he appears to be a little too timid

about the importance of this movement from modernism to postmodernism. The point is not whether New York or Calcutta offers an authentic ethnic cuisine, but how an Indian national identity could no longer be statically defined according to a specific location. The global migration of all the different ethnicities transforms the way we need to think about space and identity. The very nature of identity is uprooted and upended. One could now be Indian without ever having stepped foot in India. If the narrative of the country and the city was about finding or even more imagining a sense of home, Hall's conception of "the global postmodern" destroys any possible way to come to any definitive conclusions. The very distinctions that exist between the West and the East, white and black, and even the country and the city are irrecoverably broken. The concrete link between identity and place is no longer present. It now becomes necessary to come up with new narratives that would embrace those individuals who have been invisible from the grand narratives of modernism such as the country and the city. Where is the story of Kemal's Anatolian farmer who could have found his way to a factory in Germany in the 1970's? Could one find the descendent of Achebe's Okonkwo making the treacherous sea crossing of many illegal African migrants between Tunisia and Italy?

In some ways, the *Windrush* narrative sets out to respond to the problem of the global postmodern. Mike and Trevor Phillips state how "The [*Windrush*'s] echoes of migration vibrate everywhere we can name: the USA, Germany, France, Holland, Portugal, Spain, Italy, the Middle East, the Pacific Basin, anywhere in Africa, and in any territory in Europe east of the Oder" (6). The Phillips brothers clearly situate the story of the *Windrush*

within the great migration movements that have taken place in the twentieth century. Any way this narrative is told, the immigrants that arrived in Britain faced racism and hostility. The struggles that they faced as they attempted to carve out a life for themselves were inevitably intense. One of the great strengths of the Phillipses' book was the way they used the source material. In addition to describing the major events of the Black British experience from 1948 to 1998, descriptions of important historical moments and everyday life were interspersed with the words of people who lived through the events and experienced the racism firsthand. This history provides an immediacy to the reader that is quite powerful.

The problem that arises with their depictions of the Windrush is its conclusion. For the Phillipses, the Windrush narrative results in a struggle that basically succeeds. The Windrush generation and their descendants fought not for acceptance over rejection, but for the right to be defined as British citizens. They write "it was about our status as citizens . . . it would be necessary for the whole country to reassess not only its own identity, and its history, but also what it meant to be British" (5). This statement suggests a finality to the very definition of a British identity. Despite all the challenges the Windrush generation and their descendants faced, they were able to find a home in the United Kingdom. This term remains problematic and the scattering of personal experiences in the final subheading "The Irresistible Rise" in the final chapter points to the difficulty of fully equating Britain with home. Cecil Holness says "England is my home." Meanwhile, Ben Bousquet describes the ultimate possibility that Britain could be defined as "home," emphasizing that "[i]f I'm

accepted as a citizen, . . . then Britain is my home.” Even though Rudy Braithwaite<sup>22</sup> still considers the West Indies home, the children have a different perspective: “ They [the original country] haven’t done anything for the child that was born here, that belongs here . . . the children can remain here, confident that they are black British and British subjects” (398-399). It becomes questionable whether home could ever become a point of closure. In each instance there is a sense that the Windrush generation has gone as far as possible to create a space for themselves in the (former) colonial motherland. There are no further places that these Black British inhabitants could travel, the journey is done. This ending could be deemed as a home or retain an ambiguity. Nonetheless, the narrative ends because there is nowhere else to go.

In the same year as the publication of the Phillipses’ volume, a collection of Black British writing titled *Empire Windrush: Fifty Years of Writing about Black Britain* edited by Onyekachi Wambu was published from Phoenix Press. The anthology consists of a wide-ranging collection of essays, poems, and prose pieces from some of the most famous Black British writers and intellectuals, including Sam Selvon, Caryl Phillips, Andrea Levy, E.A. Markham, and even Stuart Hall.<sup>23</sup> The Phillipses break down their volume into chapter headings of important events and specific moments, like the Nottingham and Notting Hill Riots and the Black Power movements. They also provide a short historical introduction

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<sup>22</sup> . Holness, Bousquet, and Braithwaite are three of the numerous immigrants from the West Indies that Trevor and Michael Phillips interviewed for *Windrush*.

<sup>23</sup> . Wambu even inserts a speech by Enoch Powell called “Immigration” to contextualize the anti-immigrant and particular anti-Black immigrant at the time.

contextualizing each subheading. In contrast, Wambu provides a narrative through just a series of headings without any explanations. They are “The Restless Urge,” “The Arrivants,” “The Others,” “Loving, Striving and Pleasure,” “Tension, Crisis and Identity,” “Looking Back in Anger,” “Empire Revisited,” and “The New Britain.” Overall, there are striking parallels with the Phillippses’ version with headlines such as “The Real World: After the War,” “A Happy Ship: A Great Voyage,” “A Mixed Reception: ‘Britain is No Paradise,’” “Remaking Identity,” “War!: 1980-85,” and “The Irresistible Rise.” Both versions of the Windrush narrative include the arrival, the response of the indigenous community, their immigrants’ continual exploration and questioning of their identity, a reconsideration of the past, and an ultimate redefining of the future.

The conclusion of this narrative shifts from the one portrayed by the Phillippses and that depicted by Wambu. This literary collection takes the Windrush moment into a different direction from the Phillippses’s version. Their narrative focuses on the historical moments that could be encompassed into the narrative. It provides an overview of the events that stemmed directly from the arrival of the ship fifty years earlier. On the other hand, Wambu uses the Windrush as a signifier for the narrative of an identity rather than a historical moment. In other words, the Windrush becomes a metaphor for what happens to narrative when the children of Empire arrive at the colonial motherland. Wambu situates Black writing between two major writers who do not write particularly about the historical Windrush, but capture the moment of the end of Empire, or when “the Empire strikes back”: V.S. Naipaul and C.L.R. James. Considered an apologist for the West, Naipaul sees

Empire as the work of all mankind as it works to improve itself. The legacy of Western civilization made its way into the colonial and postcolonial building and slowly improving the cultures and populations that adopted them. Naipaul shunned the general desire by the colonized to overthrow this traditional system of Empire that the British had put in place.<sup>24</sup> From this same world, James found the possibilities for a new type of man that encapsulates colonial independence. This revolutionary sensibility could be found everywhere, from the cricket field as described in *Beyond A Boundary* to the first Black liberation struggle in Haiti as depicted in *The Black Jacobins*. From this struggle, Black peoples from throughout the world understood how the economics, the politics, and the identity of the oppressed have shifted and needed to be rebuilt on new terms (25-27). By explaining this dichotomy between Naipaul and James, Wambu wonders what potential forms the narratives of Black British identity could take:

By the middle of the 1990's the contours of that identity were now more blurred and less black and white. The new generations of writers are increasingly bound to move away from the limitations of the biographical narrative (or what African-American writer Al Murray called the social-science fiction monster) into the varieties of genre fiction in order to capture this new complexity. (28)

The fiftieth anniversary of the Windrush moments here marks the beginning point of new potential narratives.

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<sup>24</sup> . And Naipaul also refused a request to be included in this Wambu's volume *Empire Windrush*.

The limits of Wambu's collection are found in the very naming of the anthology *Empire Windrush*. Some may argue that this title insists on a reconsideration of the very meaning of this narrative. Wambu intersperses writers of West Indian origin with Irish writer Dervla Murphy, African writers Ben Okri and Buchi Emecheta, and Indian writer Salman Rushdie. Clearly none of these writers could lay any claim to being direct descendents of the Windrush generation. This expands the umbrella of what should and could be included within the Black British experience, breaking the connection between the Black British identity and the actual narrative that begins with the docking of the ship in Tilbury. The *Empire Windrush* symbolically marks the arrival of all peoples of the Empire, not just the ones who arrived from Jamaica. However, any narrative, even an all encompassing one, still places all Black peoples into a singular experience of the decline of Empire and the subsequent transformation of Britain into a multicultural society. Hall would challenge Wambu's framing of the narrative questioning whether such an expansive definition of Black experience is even necessary and to what ends one uses it.

In one of his most famous essays, "New Ethnicities," Hall explores the very structure of the Black narrative as found in British society in the middle of the Thatcher years. Although he never uses the term "Windrush" anywhere in the essay, his analysis of the Black experience includes the very issues that are brought up with the narrative of immigration, of Empire, of struggle, and of ultimate assimilation (of course to varying degrees) that has been spotlighted throughout this chapter. Given that the work was originally published in 1987, one must consider that the battle over the definition of race took place at a time when

blackness was a highly charged signifier. The dominant political culture marginalized black identity to further its own depictions of a “normativized” English identity. This is most clearly exemplified by Powellism and Thatcherism. From a space far from mainstream politics, a culture of resistance was born and evolved to challenge the representations of blackness. This is clearly displayed in popular cultural forms like music, literature, and film. As important as this form of resistance was, Hall believes that the defensiveness of many expressions of race remains simply a response to dominant racial discourses. This entailed first “a critique of the degree of fetishization, objectification, and negative figuration which are so much a feature of the representation of the black subject” (164). And second, this evolved into an obsession with “positive” representations of blackness to be transmitted in popular culture.

The traditional conceptualization of race into a simple dichotomy between white and black, positive and negative, limits the possibility for new narratives to be developed. Historically, identity has been so enmeshed in its relationship to the dominant forces in society that it has become difficult to separate it from the very political and social conditions in which its narratives have been created. The terms of the debate are set in stone:

My own view is that events, relations, structures do have conditions of existence and real effects outside the sphere of the discursive; but only within the discursive, and subject to its specific conditions, limits, and modalities, do they have or can they be constructed within meaning . . . how things are represented and the “machineries” and regimes of representation in a culture

do play a *constitutive* [his italics], and not merely a reflexive, after-the-event, role. (165)

Race and ethnicity are shaped by the history, the culture, and the evolution of language by the West that sought to render these terms as essential, universal, and transcendental. These identities were “coded” by a Western philosophical system that takes for granted its position at the very top of the global power structure. As Hall puts it, it is “everywhere and nowhere” (169).

Even as the ground rules for representation are established, there are opportunities for individuals or subjects, an even better term, to take these limitations and reconfigure them to create new stories, new narratives, and new identities. Hall warns against the use of the Master’s tools to destroy the Master’s house. In this case, he is referring to the adoption of theory (i.e. postmodernism, structuralism, and poststructuralism) as a response to the centuries of Western philosophy that constantly reinforced the superiority of whiteness over blackness. At the same time, these questions about power, language, and the discursive found in continental post-war philosophy provide openings for new ways to look at race and ethnicity. Derrida’s notion of *différance*, the differing and deferring of meaning, becomes a model in which ethnicity is no longer simply defined in relation to dominant conceptualizations of “nationalism, imperialism, racism, and state” – all terms that have been tied together into an accepted definition of Englishness. All ethnicities are grounded in a specific historical trajectory and “speak” from a very particular place. Yet, the formation and the articulation of an ethnic identity are also predicated on its relationship with other groups

and other narratives. The difference is, however, these new ethnicities will not be reliant on the subordination of other ethnic groups in the same way that Englishness was discursively created. This reinforces Hall's emphasis on Diaspora where "the process of unsettling, recombination, hybridization, and 'cut-and-mix'" (*New Ethnicities* 168) allow for new articulations of ethnicity where identities come together on similar and equal terms rather than one structured in difference and domination.

Although the methods of Diaspora clearly exemplify opportunities available in the act of deconstructing race, the notion of difference also allows a new multiplicity of narratives to come forward. Hall criticizes "multiculturalism" and "multiethnicity" as simplistic responses to the monolithic perception of whiteness and blackness in Englishness as defined by the dominant political sphere of the seventies and the eighties. In a certain way, Hall also comments on the static notion of identity presented in other articulations of racial identity like Black radical thought. For example, this politics has perpetuated heteronormative notions of masculinity. Class is another entity that has been sidelined in the greater discussion of race (168). The enunciation of these individualized identities and the narratives that stem from them are also an act of deconstruction. These distinct identities display the multiplicity of stories that are able to come out from and chip away at a greater historical arc of domination. The forces of imperialism and racism have historically affected the lives of millions of people. However the ways these forces have affected individuals is different, as captured in Carby's model of the matrix of domination elaborated in her article "White Woman Listen!"

In “New Ethnicities,” Hall’s analysis of representation focuses on popular cultural forms, particularly films such as *Handsworth Songs*, *The Passion of Remembrance*, *My Beautiful Laundrette*, and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*. Hall mentions Paul Gilroy’s *There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack*. Other than that, the examples are exclusively cinematic. When one discusses representation of racial identity, film is the easiest genre to discuss because of the direct impact it has on the viewer. There exists an extensive theoretical grounding of the relationship between the viewer and the image on the screen that corresponds to psychoanalytic readings of race and desire. In other words, it is not a difficult connection to make when discussing Robert Mapplethorpe’s photography. Hall’s discussion on new ethnicities could extend beyond the most obvious narratives of popular culture. When he made that comment in the Observer that we are all a part of greater narratives, he points to greater overarching narratives that are accepted by society at large. The Windrush narrative is one example. Although Hall’s personal history does not correspond to the Phillippses’ version of the Windrush story, for many, Hall personifies the ultimate success of Britain’s multicultural policies. Underlying Hall’s call for new ethnicities is a new way to think about identity and the narratives that are created from them. What are some other ways that one could structure Black narratives? What possibilities are out there to frame the history of Blacks living in Britain? The specificities of the Windrush, as presented by the Phillippses, do not include every Black Briton nor even every West Indian.

One of the most explicit critiques of the Windrush narrative is provided by Hazel Carby. During her keynote speech during the 2007 conference at Barnard “Reconstructing

Womanhood: A Future Beyond Empire,” Carby described the difficult relationship her parents had. Her Jamaican father had come to Britain to fight in World War II for the Royal Air Force and married her Welsh mother. Growing up in Britain was difficult for Carby and her entire family dealing with racism on a daily basis. Although her parents’ marriage survived for decades, Carby warned the audience against coming to the conclusion that their lives resulted in a happy ending. She said:

I now write also to repudiate romance: the romance that US audiences have with the British Isles and the romance that the story of race has become in the United States. I write in defiance of both *Masterpiece Theatre* and the Hallmark hug of comfort that seems necessary to cushion a US readership against the shock of discovering that the British are racist. Romance not only comforts and cushions, it disguises and represses. Black-white sex, while it can still shock and horrify Americans on the street, also serves as a metonym for the history of the unresolved struggle for racial justice in the United States. (38-39)

Over the years, the daily struggles of an interracial couple making a life in post-war Britain ended up taking an emotional and physical toll on the Carby household (39). Like Hall, Carby’s father could possibly fall under the general banner of the Windrush generation. He was among the first to volunteer in the Royal Airforce (RAF) in 1943 and to fight as a British subject. Despite all of the racism they faced, Carby’s parents still believed in the ideological trappings that the British Empire had instilled in its subjects, as represented in her mother’s fond memories of “Empire Day” and her father’s love of traditional English

poetry. It is difficult to summarize Carby's personal history here without pointing out the parallels with Andrea Levy's 2004 best-seller fictional representation of the Windrush narrative *Small Island*. The novel begins with the character of Queenie attending the Empire expedition on a class trip. The character of Gilbert came to Britain after volunteering for the RAF. The two characters have an affair that results in a child. Although they do not end up together, the optimistic ending with Gilbert and his wife Hortense embarking on a life in post-war London contrasts with the pessimistic, almost nihilistic conclusion of Carby's narrative.

This ends up being instructive for the audience of Carby's writings. Taking a good look at the narratives present in Carby's work, one faces the difficulty of ever reaching any possible closure. According to "White Women Listen!," women of color must constantly live within a matrix of domination where the forces of white domination, misogyny, and heteronormativity bombard the individual. It becomes impossible to liberate herself because every aspect of her life from employment and housing to child-rearing and housing is embedded in these structures of power. This creates a claustrophobia that pervades Carby's writing.<sup>25</sup> The best Carby could provide is an analytical framework to understand these structures of power, as in using the work of Gayle Rubin in thinking about patriarchy as a constructed system of repression. As much as sex and gender has been presented as axiomatically biological and genetic, these definitions are filtered through a patriarchal, capitalist lens (79). The idea of a culturally created framework that we live in is ultimately no

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<sup>25</sup> . Robert Reid-Pharr actually made this remark when we read Carby's *Cultures in Babylon* during his seminar on new Afro-American criticism.

different from the “fictional” narratives that are published. In other words, the ideological underpinnings are arbitrarily constructed to privilege certain groups as seen in imperialism and patriarchy and at the same time force the individual to live within its confines.

Throughout her work, Carby illuminates the nature of narratives and the ideologies through which they are created. Sometimes these narratives are found in books and films and could extend into our everyday lives.

Carby’s prominent contribution to African-American Studies is her readings of African-American literature from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She has brought a Cultural Studies lens to writers such as Zora Neale Hurston, Margaret Walker, and Toni Morrison. Her main interests are in the ways cultural production exposes the ideological formations of the society in which the form was first created and later in the ways in which its meanings have changed. For example, in the article “Ideologies of Black Folk: The Historical Novel of Slavery,” Carby describes how Arna Bontemps’ novel *Black Thunder* received a different reception in 1968 from the one when originally published in 1936. The depiction of anger within the slave community was better understood by the reading public in the late Civil Rights Movement when many African-Americans became frustrated with the slowed and stalled pace of societal change. In the thirties, the racial status quo allowed *Gone With the Wind* to be considered the accepted version of slavery (154). This is only a part of the cultural and literary analysis that Carby performs in the essays that make up “Fictions of the Folk,” the third section of her collected writings *Cultures in Babylon*.

The title of the section “Fictions of the Folk” could be read in a couple of ways. First, it could refer to various fictional cultural forms and the way they represent the folk and their way of life. Second, the fictions refer to greater ideological perspectives that authors, academics, and critics bring to the way the folk are depicted. In the introduction to *Cultures in Babylon*, Carby describes the mythologizing and stereotyping of folk and folk culture that has created a specific literary and cultural tradition affecting the way we read Black identity at large. Her most prominent examination of this issue is of Zora Neale Hurston and her place in the literary canon. After describing the problems of depiction of folk in the now canonical *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Carby asks the reader to consider, “Why is there a shared assumption that we should read the novel as a positive, holistic, celebration of black life? Why is it considered necessary that the novel produce cultural meanings of authenticity, and how does cultural authenticity come to be situated so exclusively in the rural folk?” (182). These questions also point to the last way to read the heading “Fictions of the Folk” as looking at narrative as the way we understand the Black experience. In other words, Carby shifts the emphasis from the importance of folk to how the representations of the folk has made its way into the greater narratives that structure our society, not only literary ones. Our understandings of the African-American experience have been blurred with the depictions that we find in works of fiction.

In the first essay of this section, Carby praises the analyses of the work by “materialist-feminist” scholar Susan Willis, particularly her book, *Specifying: Black Women Writing the American Experience*. The most impressive aspect of Willis’ study, according to

Carby, is the active role Willis gives to African-American female writers. Through the process of writing, these authors are actively rebuilding the history of women who sacrificed a lot as migrants and as laborers. These fictional narratives bring to the forefront the capitalist system that engendered the migration of African-Americans from the South in the twenties and thirties discovering racism when they finally settled in the North. At the same time, women's voices or "herstories" that have been relegated outside a greater historical narrative are now brought front and center in the work of writers like Paule Marshall, Toni Morrison, and Alice Walker. Carby especially appreciates Willis' perspective on Zora Neale Hurston. Traditionally, African-American scholarship has privileged Hurston's "romantic" and "mythic" notion of the rural folk and established it as the example par excellence of black authenticity. Willis denies this simplistic reading of Hurston's folk. Although Hurston foregoes the migration narrative in a novel like *Their Eyes Were Watching God* where no one actually leaves, Willis argues that the killing of the protagonist's lover Tea Cake undermines the erasure of women in the migration narrative by providing new possibilities for women in the Florida community (129-131).

The most intriguing statement Carby makes in the essay is the slight quibble she has with Willis' analysis of Hurston's work. She writes:

[Willis] does not discuss in any detail how Hurston's own move from a rural to an urban space and into the position of intellectual participates in the metaphorical construction of the figure of the "folk" which emerges in the work of African American intellectuals during the twenties and thirties. This

is a pity because contemporary African American cultural history and criticism is re-creating a romantic discourse of a rural black folk in which to situate the source of an African American culture. (131)

The problem that Carby here points out is far more of methodology than of content. Carby brings a Cultural Studies lens to the work of Willis, focusing on the greater effects the mythologizing of literary space has on the historical consciousness of the African-American experience. Willis does not recognize how important these narratives are in our (mis-)understanding of the true historical dimensions of the African-American migration of the twenties and thirties. Hurston's anthropological depictions of the folk have played an important role in the creation of an edenic portrayal of the rural in the African-American narrative of that era. Carby's small objection clearly harks back to Raymond Williams's descriptions of how the notions of the country and the city have taken shape in the English imagination. Literature has played an important part in creating and re-creating the public's perceptions of what these spaces mean.

In another essay in this section "The Politics of Fiction, Anthropology and the Folk: Zora Neale Hurston," Carby explores the way Hurston has taken up the anthropological depiction of the folk, idealizing their culture and reworking it to become the dominant representation of the African-American migration narrative. Instead of looking at the folk in her most famous work *Their Eyes Were Watching God* as an unmediated, anthropological lens on the community of Eatonville, the novel presents the tensions between the intellectual and the folk, woman and community, Hurston and her roots in a Florida town (172). The

protagonist Janie, alienated from the rest of the community by the way she acts and dresses, ultimately killing Tea Cake (in self-defense), becomes a metaphor for Hurston's own relationship to her place of birth (177). The most interesting aspect of Hurston's analysis is not necessarily in the details, but in the potential to provide new possibilities for the grand narratives that we have taken for granted. For example, as crucial as race is to the discussion, Carby points out that class is an important underlying issue. One should not forget that Janie speaks from a certain middle-class position, owning the house in which she lives (179). Although the novel is considered a canonical text in the context of this period of migration, the characters did not move from the South to the North, but from the South to Florida, even further South. The group moving in a Northern direction is the Barbadians. This reflects Hurston's anthropological and personal interest in Jamaica and Haiti to be published in her travelogue *Tell My Horse* (181).

These specific aspects of Carby's analysis of Hurston display her interest in overturning the perceived aspects, or even biased privileging of certain aspects of the African-American experience. In the case of the African-American migration narrative, the folk and the rural are seen as authentic Black American culture overshadowing a more nuanced reading of power and subjectivity. Throughout this section, the figure of Richard Wright looms large. As I described in the second chapter, Wright was a major influence on her seminal essay "White Woman Listen!" Wright continues to hold sway acting as a counterpoint to Hurston. At the very end of the essay "The Politics of Fiction, Anthropology and the Folk: Zora Neale Hurston," Carby describes the reason that Wright

has fallen out of favor is that his novels are seen as too belligerent or “created in the conditions of aggression and antagonism” (182). This very quality is what endears Wright to Carby. His characters display a complex understanding of the effects of societal forces, or in Carby’s terminology the matrix of domination, on individuals. Alienation, resulting from geographical displacement, class, and race come together to create a proletarian literature that fully captures the Black subject. Hurston represents the folk as an indistinguishable mass. Her romanticized descriptions have become the way scholars and the public have consciously understood the folk. The challenge now becomes for women writers and cultural producers to find that same level of insight as Wright’s *Native Son*. Carby concludes “. . . it is time that we should question the extent of our dependence upon the romantic imagination of Zora Neale Hurston to produce cultural meanings of ourselves as native daughters” (182).

This mythologizing of Hurston’s South contrasts with the concrete materiality of Richard Wright’s movement from the South to the North. Although her statements on Wright are limited in these essays, Carby values the way Wright capture the concrete experiences of the urban underclass that tried to escape the South only to find their Blackness has remained. While Hurston’s depiction of folk represents a static entity remaining in the South, Wright’s characters undertake the physical journey from the rural to the urban and undergo a very difficult psychic struggle facing new structural modes of racism in housing, employment, and harassment. For Carby, characters such as Bigger Thomas in (*Native Son*) and Richard Wright (in *Black Boy*) become more profound signifiers

for the Black experience. If not a direct representation per se, they capture the psychological contradictions that take place when one leaves home and needs to create a life somewhere else. Carby suggests that Hurston's emphasis on the middle-class intellectual obscures the more difficult exploration of what the folk feel within the matrix of oppression. The difference between Hurston and Wright is even more basic in terms of a narrative. While Hurston's folk is contained within the community it built, Wright's proletariat underwent the journey from the country to the city. These individuals embody the African-American migration narrative, the movement from the South to the North by actually going through with it. And in the end, the Black man/woman does not find peace, but a continuation of racism and oppression enveloped in new structural forms. The effects on the individual are painful and downright traumatic. For Carby, Wright becomes the best fictional example of the representation of the African-American migration narrative.

This connection between Carby and Wright also reflects the structural similarity between the African-American migration narrative and that of the Windrush. According to Farah Jasmine Griffin, the African-American migration narrative is constituted by four critical markers: the event that leads to the departure from the country, the first point of contact with the city, attempts to acculturate to the new urban life, and possibilities and/or disillusion with the urban space (1). These elements are also prominently present in the Windrush narrative. Like the African-American migration from the South to the North, particularly the rural to the urban, the Windrush mirrors the same the migration pattern for the West Indians from the Caribbean to England, particularly the island to the metropole.

Revisiting the Phillipses' chapter breakdown, the Windrush story begins with the departure from the West Indies due to the economic and social transformation of the society after World War II. It moves to the arrival of the ship and adjustment to their new surroundings. Then their narrative describes the struggles they faced on an everyday level. As discussed before, the younger generation ultimately considers Britain its home, while the older generation thinks about the finality of their journey in far more ambivalent terms.

These striking parallels demand a greater examination than what is briefly discussed here. It would be interesting to see whether there ever was a conscious reading of African-American writers while constructing cultural and literary representations of the Windrush history. Carby's important work on the Harlem Renaissance and twentieth-century African-American literature is also an analysis of her own story and a critique of the Windrush narrative. These studies are a reiteration of the one she makes about her own parents. Readers of her upcoming autobiography or listeners to her lectures might be tempted to conclude that her parents' interracial marriage ended well. Like the individuals in Wright's work, Carby's parents were bombarded by racism. This is clear when she mentions how the perception of their interracial relationship by British society could stand in for an entire history of violence against African-Americans. Sexual relationships and even perceived ones between Black men and white women in the American society led to many lynchings. This threat became a prominent excuse for the continued violence against African-American men from the beginnings of slavery through the twentieth century. Her writing exposes the fissures and lacunae of a cultural history that has pervaded the memory and understanding of

the African-American experience. The voice of women, the erasure of class, and the structural complexity of power in society has created a mythologizing of the migration story from the South to the North that has focused on the rural and dismissed the urban. Through her Diasporic lens, Carby has suggested that these problematic narratives are repeated over and over throughout the world to the detriment of the oppressed. As a racially mixed Black Briton whose father preceded the Windrush by arriving in Britain several years earlier, Carby's writing can be seen as an indictment of this dominant narrative that has become the stand-in for Black Britain.

The issues in Carby's biography force the reader to ask—what kind of narrative could provide an alternative to the Black narratives that have entered the public's consciousness? Never providing any escape from the power structures she examines means that the work of writers like Wright simply illuminates the Black condition rather than provide any other possibilities. Science fiction is one genre that displays new ways of thinking through racial, gender, and sexual identities.<sup>26</sup> Film is another way that could provide alternative narratives. This question comes to center stage with the public disagreement between Stuart Hall and Salman Rushdie over the Black Audio Film Collective's film *Handsworth Songs*. This documentary film depicts the racial tensions between the Black inhabitants and the Metropolitan Police in the Handsworth neighborhood of Birmingham in 1985, which erupted into all-out violence. Rushdie believes that the film does not do anything to dispel

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<sup>26</sup> . For Carby, Samuel Delany is one science fiction writer that uses the genre to push the boundaries of racial, gender, and sexual identities (*Race Men 3*).

any stereotypes of Black Britons. The images are simply a depiction of black individuals destroying the community of Handsworth. The film fails to create a language that could encapsulate the Black British experience in any complex or positive way. Beyond the film itself, Rushdie argues that the praise for “correct” images, ones that simplistically portray Black Britons in a positive light, have disregarded a critical eye that values what makes a film or work of art “good.” Art, especially Black art, fails to accomplish anything if the artists and critics simply focus on representation rather than artistic or aesthetic quality. Hall responded first by letter and then expanded his argument at the end of “New Ethnicities.” He calls for a new language that takes into consideration the complexity of identity. Films must be made and appreciated for the way they challenge the binaries of either/or that society has constructed around race, gender, ethnicity, etc. (Julien and Mercer 199). This argument is contextualized within the greater issue of race and filmic representation that Isaac Julien and Kobena Mercer have considered in their essay “Da Margin and De Center.” They give an overview of how theoretical interventions into film and representation have limited the way we think about film. They consider the writings of numerous major thinkers and scholars including Richard Dyer, Judith Williamson, Manthia Diawara, and Laura Mulvey. The common thread found in their work is that all of these theorists and film critics focus on films that contain a traditional narrative. Without challenging the relationship between audience and screen, most traditional narrative cinema simply reinforces the social constructs of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality (205). Third Cinema<sup>27</sup> successfully reworks this

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<sup>27</sup> . Third Cinema refers to a tradition of moviemaking that dismisses the conventions of

relationship with the audience establishing a new discursive realm from which identity can be defined. Julien and Mercer dismiss the European avant-garde because the conventions simply adhere to the same conventions of race and ethnicity for its own aesthetic and ideological goals. It could be used as a theme to get the director's ideas across, but never fully challenges the definitions of ethnicity.

In terms of narrative, the critical hit *Looking for Langston* directed by Isaac Julien provides an alternative to conventional representations of Blackness and to the Windrush, the dominant narrative of Black British migration. The film is an exploration of Black male sexuality. Without any traditional narrative, the film moves from scene to scene. The film begins with images of Harlem and moves to the funeral of Isaac Julien himself. The scene shifts first to a recreated jazz club with the Langston Hughes character wandering through men in tuxedos all glancing furtively at each other. Catching the eye of one of the patrons of the bar, the film transports the viewer to a field where the two men are running around naked and end up in each others' arms laying in bed. Slowly the camera moves across images of James Baldwin projected on scrim and ends up in a dark park where men are cruising. In the very end, the jazz club is transformed into a disco. The men, still tuxedoed, are dancing under a disco ball with eighties singer Jimmy Sommerville wearing angel wings overlooking the dance floor, as bobbies break into the space where supposedly illicit sexual interactions occurred. All they find is an empty space. Throughout the film, various literary texts are

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mainstream cinema in favor of one that ideologically and aesthetically takes up the concerns of populations living in the Third World or minority groups living in the West. This term originated in the 1960's by Argentinian filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino (Shohat and Stam 27-28).

overlaid from Hughes, Baldwin, Richard Bruce Nugent, and Essex Hemphill. During this “dreamscape,” as scene moves into scene, the sound markedly shifts from one source to another, and from jazz to techno. The nonlinearity of the film posits not only an alternative history of the Black experience, where homosexuality is brought to the surface, but one in which “history—like desire—is dynamic and unfixed” (Vogel 398).

Film becomes a powerful medium through which Julien could explore the Black subject. By creating a dreamscape, the film allows the viewer to peek into gay desire that has been denied for so long in depictions of the Black experience. The presence of Robert Mapplethorpe’s black male nudes also acts as a counterpoint to his film (Deitcher 17). The Black male as the object of the white gaze has now transformed into a full subject who is able to act out his fantasies. The ending where these figures escape the concrete punishment of the officers and the psychical expurgation from history suggests a liberatory stance that is missing from the work of other Black British Cultural thinkers. The dreamlike quality of his work denies the viewer from ever feeling any closure. Were the images presented real or simply a figment of someone’s imagination? One could never make sense of the sequences that remain temporally and linearly fragmented. This representation even made its way to the presentation of the film at the 1989 New York Film Festival. Threatened by a lawsuit for copyright infringement by Hughes’ estate, the poet’s voice was silenced in the American version of the film. The absence of Hughes and the unmistakable presence of Essex Hemphill’s in-your-face poems only further reinforced the treatment of Black gay males in the historical record and the changes that have occurred from the 1920’s to the 1980’s

(Deitcher 12). On many different levels, Julien uses avant-garde forms to create a powerful depiction of the Black subject with a great complexity – thinking, dreaming, and loving. The power of the film lies in its ability to never fall into the easy stereotypes and the persistent silences that have existed for the Black male. The Black subject is fragmented by the very nature of his multiple identities. At least Julien attempts to create a cohesive identity that moves against the grain of a traditional narrative.

Simultaneously, Julien also creates a spatial dynamic that runs counter to conventional narratives of migration, like the Windrush. Whether one explores the African-American Migration, from the rural South to the urban North, or the Windrush narrative, from the Caribbean to Great Britain, the conceptualization of space is the same. The movement is occurring between two spaces – the country and the city, or the colony and the metropole. All the intellectuals discussed in this chapter follow this model with the spaces meaning various things for different people. Some believed that the rural held an idealized past that is lost forever, while others found the racism too oppressive to bear. Some saw the urban as a site of opportunity and an escape from the past, while others were disenchanted with the life they found in the city. Julien's *Looking for Langston* provides a different model for a migration narrative. While most scholars see this film as a clear meditation on desire, I see it as a unique exploration of space. Without a distinct narrative structure, the film fluidly moves from space to space and from time to time. As the spatial and the temporal collapse, Julien forces the audience to think through the trajectory of the Black (gay male) subject. The voiceovers of Langston Hughes, Bruce Nugent's, James Baldwin's, and Essex

Hemphill's writing become markers of the time during which these authors lived and wrote – from the 1920's straight through to the 1980's. The final transmutation of the nightclub into a contemporary discotheque makes a trans-Atlantic leap. Details like the bobbies' hats and the presence of Jimmy Sommerville mark the space not as Harlem, but most likely London. By the end of the film, the audience realizes that they have undergone a journey of their own from African-America to Black Britain.

Unlike the physical movement of African-Americans in the first half of the twentieth century and Black Britons in the second half, Julien proclaims the psychological connections of the Black Diasporic experience. He clearly demarcates the similarities between the oppression and ultimate survival of the Black gay male subject on both sides of the Atlantic. The portrayal of the Black individual in *Looking for Langston* is a powerful response to many of the issues that Stuart Hall, Hazel Carby, and Raymond Williams have all brought up in their work. These include the framing of the rural and the urban, the relationships of power between subjects and dominant narratives, and the representation of individuals within these spaces. Julien creates a narrative that situates the Black subject within a space that is neither the United States nor the United Kingdom and within a time that is neither the twenties nor the eighties. Despite this uncertainty in setting, these individuals are empowered to act out their own desires on their own terms. These gay men are threatened by a society that wants them to stop from enacting their fantasies. Punishment could occur in a concrete authoritarian form like the presence of the police at the end of the film or on the level of the discursive like the censorship of Langston Hughes' poetry by his estate. In the end, the

characters escape and Julien provides the audience with a historically hidden narrative in addition to some visual pleasure. Although Julien's rewriting of the past challenges dominant narratives, its effectiveness in changing the public's mind is limited. The audience of *Looking for Langston* is still mostly made up of individuals drawn by independent cinema and academics interested in Julien's theoretical lens. The public as a whole still responds to more clearly delineated narratives that are easy to comprehend.

Julien's depiction of space provides the possibilities of imagining identity beyond the spaces that we all know. After having collapsed New York and London into the movie screen, the only thing that remains is the Black Subject. Whether situated in the United States or in the United Kingdom, the figures of the film are in control of their fate or at least of the cinematic representation of it. This mastery of space is a big shift from Williams's *The Country and The City* where the different spaces shape the narratives through which individuals construct their lives. The Windrush narrative represents a continuation of this tradition. The movement from the country to the city stood in for the West Indian migration from the colony to the metropole. But for Black British Cultural Studies, this dominant narrative simply reaffirmed the superiority of the West as the land of opportunity and success. By looking to African-American migration stories in popular culture and literature, Carby uncovered the limitations of racial stereotypes in the construction of these narratives as exemplified in Hurston's portrayal of the folk. She called for a more realistic depiction of displacement and alienation that the Black Subject feels when undergoing these physical and psychic journeys as captured in Wright's writing of the late thirties and early forties. The

migration narrative takes on the most avant-garde form in Julien's *Looking for Langston*, where through Julien himself, as director and subject deconstructs it and explodes the space in which it takes place. Although this cinematic representation could never be realized, it fantasizes ways that Blackness could be imagined beyond nation. Oddly enough, Julien would go on to become a model success story for multiculturalism in British society. Soon after *Looking for Langston*, Julien became the first Black British director to oversee a film with a budget of more than a million pounds. In 2001, he was shortlisted for the Tate Gallery's Turner Prize honoring a British artist under 50 years old. Such honors and exposure fed into Prime Minister Tony Blair's "Cool Britannia," a rebranding of Britain as a modern, multicultural society. Despite this shift from Thatcher's definition of national culture, the racism present in the seventies and eighties never seems to have left. The analysis of race, culture, and nation developed by Hall, Carby, Gilroy, and Julien seems as vital as ever. In the conclusion "Multiculture," I briefly consider the legacy of Black British Cultural Studies in the post-Thatcher years.

## Conclusion: Multiculture

We've been talking about poverty, and one of the worst forms of poverty that's shaped our situation is poverty of the *imagination*. When we feel the impact of our poverty of the imagination, we reach for what we think is the future, and that's *always* the United States of America.

– Paul Gilroy on the UK Riots of 2011

In the conclusion “Multiculture,” I briefly consider the legacy of Black British Cultural Studies and the way its questions about national identity apply to our present time. While the language of race and nation has changed, the inequalities are still present. The previous chapter “Migration” looked at how the Windrush narrative has been used as a stand-in for a multicultural Britain and an example of British society as welcoming of immigrants and filled with opportunities. For figures like Hall and Carby, the migration narrative of Black Britain is far more complex. The Windrush narrative has now become a part of a greater project in the post-Thatcher years to reconfigure Britain as a hip and modern country. Multiculturalism became one of the platforms that would enable Britain under the leadership of Prime Minister Tony Blair to shed the perceptions of British stodginess. Despite these attempts at rebranding, news items like the murder of Black teenager Stephen Lawrence and the Metropolitan police’s response, and the recent riots of 2011 point to the continued structural injustices present in British society. Through a reading of these events, I show that Diaspora and Empire are just as relevant today for Britishness as they were when Thatcher governed.

Throughout the dissertation, I have defined Black British Cultural Studies as the response to a specific definition of nation that developed in the post-War years. With the rise of the working class as an economic, political, and social force, Britain took on many aspects of the European welfare state such as the socialization of medicine and the establishment of council estates. In the universities, the work of figures such as Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart, and E.P. Thompson captured this era. Established as both a theoretical framework to analyze popular culture in the academy and as a political force for the working class that tried to make inroads outside the academy, British Cultural Studies attempted to launch a particular vision of society that incorporated many of the voices and experiences of the working class that have been historically dismissed. When scholars at Birmingham University's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies tried to use these perspectives and apply them to the experience of Black Britons, the vocabulary of terms such as culture, society, subject, and identity were weighed down by a historical and ideological background that was different from those that framed the work on the working class done by the founders. For example, while Industrialization was an important process for the working class, it was farther removed for the Black subjects in the colonies that provided the raw materials. Their experience was directly shaped by colonial rule and the ideological constructions of race that justified it. They took elements of the original British Cultural Studies (like the idea of popular culture, the relationship between groups, theories of identity) as their own. For a fuller understanding of the Black British experience and its relationship to the dominant economic, political, and social structures, scholars such as

Stuart Hall, Hazel Carby, and Paul Gilroy drew on the United States and particularly the African-American experience.

As I have unraveled several concepts of Black British Cultural Studies such as Nation, Culture, Migration, and now Multiculture in this project, the question of Empire has loomed over the entire analysis. One of the most important lessons that Cultural Studies teaches is the fluid nature of power. Different groups, which could be based on race, class, gender, sexuality, or any combination of identities, continually struggle for greater dominance in society. In my dissertation, the site of contestation was the idea of nation. One of the major goals of this work was to push back against the closing of nation theoretically and discursively. It not only challenges the specific historical narrative of Britishness presented in the work of Williams and Hoggart, but it also challenges other more insidious permutations of national identity injected into society by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in the 1970's and 1980's. Although both of these formulations of nation have closed off Britain from outside historical trajectories, races, cultures, etc., Black British Cultural Studies challenged them to consider the multiple ways these narrow analytic and ideological frameworks do not work. The Black experience, in all of its Diasporic forms, has questioned the seemingly conclusive idea of what constitutes a nation. Even though the Black Subject is an oppositional force, Black British Cultural Studies locates him/her within a greater matrix of power that is more complex than a simple tug-of-war. The postmodern conception of Empire, exemplified by American hegemony, played a major role in shaping the landscape on which this struggle for Britishness has taken place. On the one hand, American power

transformed the economic landscape that manifested itself in the neoliberal policies of Thatcher's Conservative Party. On the other hand, the cultural dominance of the United States enabled the global circulation of Black popular forms such as music, literature, and film. Ideas about race and society that reinforced the status quo and/or challenged it traveled around the world. Empire was a more complex force than what it seems to be.

In 1997, when the Labour Party won a parliamentary majority after four successive electoral defeats, it appeared that Britain had moved on from the Thatcher years. A young new politician named Tony Blair seemed to represent a break from the old political system. Previous Labour governments took on issues that most affected the working class, but New Labour, a term taken from its 1996 Party Platform, believed that it was necessary for the party to expand this narrow base out to middle class voters. While adhering to the historic tenets of the Party such as the continued government support of social programs, New Labour shifted gear and focused on taking on economic issues that spoke to the workers of the post-Industrial age (i.e. service industry, technology). Formerly the domain of Conservatives, Blair oversaw a decade of sustained economic growth (Giddens). When a *Newsweek* article in 1996 described the transformation of London into “the coolest city in the world,” it happened to coincide with the transition from Conservative rule to this new political era (McGuire). The term “Cool Britannia” became a branding tool that New Labour used to capture its rise to power (Klein 70). One of the major elements of this campaign was the presentation of Britain as a multicultural society. The election of Labour was only one year shy of the fifty year anniversary of the Empire Windrush's arrival in Tilbury. Authors

and filmmakers reinforced this portrayal of British society in books like Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*<sup>28</sup> and films such as *East is East*.

Although Britain projected this ideal image of its multicultural status around the globe, the realities of racism on the localized level continued to be played out. In 1993, five white boys attacked Stephen Lawrence and Duwayne Brooks while they were waiting for a bus. Stephen Lawrence was stabbed in the chest and died. Despite evidence to the contrary, it was not treated as a racial attack. The murderers were picked up by the police, but they were shortly let go for insubstantial evidence. Sir William MacPherson studied the police response six years later and he concluded that this was a result of “pernicious and persistent institutional racism” (Hall, “Stephen Lawrence” 187). The racial and class inequalities have continued from the Thatcher years to the present. Almost twenty years earlier, Lord Leslie George Scarman oversaw an inquiry into the causes of the 1980-1981 riots that broke out throughout the cities like London, Manchester, Bristol, and Birmingham. Instead of blaming the criminality of the Black youth, Scarman admitted that this deep-seated resentment and violent outburst were the result of the continued economic and social inequalities of British society (Hall, “Stephen Lawrence” 189). Despite the rhetoric of multiculturalism, the structural conditions that foster poverty continued to be in place. New Labour was supposed to solve these issues. It tried to combine the social justice agenda of Old Labour's support for the welfare state and the neoliberal belief that the unfettered markets would enable continual economic growth and prosperity, a holdover from Thatcher's regime (Heffernan

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<sup>28</sup> . Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* was the second best-selling book worldwide in 2000. The first was *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (Sommer).

165). Labour greatly expanded social programs that had been cut by the previous Conservatives in power, but it did relatively little to tackle many of these social problems. By the time the Labour Party left office, Britain had the widest income inequality gap in forty years .

In some ways, Black British Cultural Studies was a product of its times. As Hall reflects on the similarities between the Scarman Report of 1981 and the McPherson Inquiry of 1999, the state of race in Britain has barely changed and the structural inequalities have remained in place from Thatcher to the present. One could come to similar conclusions when looking at Carby's writing. In her 1980 essay "Multiculture," Carby describes the continued invisibility of the black woman in the classroom as teacher and topic of study, despite the rhetoric of diversity (225-226). Ten years later, she continues to "question the marginalization of the concept of race in the phrase 'women of color'" (250). Considering the methodology of Black British Cultural Studies, Kobena Mercer asks in *Welcome to the Jungle* whether one should finally move on beyond the repeated list of race, class, gender, and sexuality? The legacy of the field lies in its ability to interrogate the structures of power that have continued to shape identity in our present era. When discussing the importance of Carby's first book *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Novelist*, Anne McClintock described how Carby uncovered the circuits of power that have gone to shape our definitions of racial identity. Her paper dealt with the construction of the racialized Other in the photographs of Abu Ghraib prisoners and Guantanamo detainees, in some ways a far cry from the portrayal of Black women in nineteenth century popular novels.

McClintock's point is that the methodology for analyzing articulations of power remains the same no matter which time period or cultural form one studies.

The affinity of Anne McClintock with Carby's work also reinforces the importance of American Empire in the current construction of race developed in Black British Cultural Studies. Throughout this dissertation, I have explored how race has been an integral part in the construction of a modern Britishness. British Cultural Studies and Thatcherism saw the mostly recently arrived Black community as a threat to its organic identity. Although its cultural forms might have been defined on very particular, localized terms, the issues that it raised had to be explored on a larger geopolitical landscape. As the shift from Thatcher to Blair occurred, the permutation of race, nation, and Empire also had to change. Black British Cultural Studies responds to them effectively. When discussing race in the contemporary United States, Gilroy writes that "Race thinking has proliferated, but in order to maintain its grip on the world it has had to change. The simple *hatreds* [his emphasis] forged in more innocent days now coexist with complex, proteophobic, and ambivalent patterns" (*Postcolonial Melancholia* 37). With its diverse population and global reach, it is impossible for the United States to ever claim a pure racial identity. However, multiculturalism becomes a part of the rhetoric, even though the economic, political, and social policies perpetuate racial hierarchies. This does not only apply to the United States, but to Britain too. When the war with Iraq became a possibility in 2003, Blair jumped at the opportunity to assert his nation in the new imperial order as an ally and partner to the United States. Britain had finally discarded the Empire of the past for the Empire of the present (*Postcolonial Melancholia* 95).

The language of race and nation closely paralleled its trans-Atlantic partner. Similar questions surrounding the assimilation of Muslims after 9/11 occurred in both places.

The relationship of American Empire and British society extends beyond the Iraqi War, a simulacrum of the imperial battles of the past. New Labour marked the beginning of a particular Americanization of British government and society. It might have proclaimed the social trappings of a long progressive history, but its complete embrace of the free-market reflected the neoliberal shifts that were occurring in the United States with Bill Clinton. Historically, the Democratic Party held the social justice mantle, but one of the most infamous legacies of the Clinton administration was the passing of the Welfare Reform Act of 1996. These parallels are important because they represent the similarities in language and ideas that were happening in both countries. It marked the victory of neoliberalism over the creation of a strong social contract between government and its people. In the United States, the safety net established between Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal and Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society gave way to the individualistic market-driven ethos of Reagan's "shining city on a hill." A similar transformation occurred in Britain, where the welfare state morphed into Thatcher's "law-and-order society." New Labour took British society beyond the Tories' mixture of neoliberalism and nationalism. The idea of "Cool Britannia" became a slick advertising slogan, but it was devoid of any connection to nation and the lived experience of the common Briton. In 2010, David Cameron called for the end of the term as a tourist campaign and wanted to return to the idea of selling Britain's "heritage" (*BBC* 12 Aug. 2010). In an effort to become part of the new global order as I

defined in the first chapter “Empire,” Britain discarded the idea of “nation.” Accompanying keywords like “race,” “culture,” and “society” have become empty signifiers. The riots of August 2011 could be read as representative of how Empire has been incorporated in British society.

On August 4, 2011, Mark Duggan, a young Black man, was killed by the police after a shootout. Angered by the police’s non-responsiveness to a peaceful protest, the event erupted into riots. Mass looting and burning of buildings and cars occurred not only in Tottenham where the shooting originally took place, but throughout Britain, including other London boroughs, Bristol, Manchester, Liverpool, and Birmingham. The event mirrors the riots that had taken over Britain throughout the seventies and the eighties. One of the most obvious similarities is the rhetoric surrounding the events. Each time, the politicians claimed that the rioters had broken their social contract by acting in such a destructive manner. After an emergency committee meeting in the Cabinet Office Briefing Room (COBRA) on August 9, Cameron called a press conference where he called the looters’ actions as “criminality pure and simple.” Like Thatcher, Cameron emphasized the idea of law and order as an absolute and classified society as “law abiding” and “thugs” (Guardian). By detaching criminality from any underlying social issues, the reason behind the riots becomes a pathological state that does not require any analysis. One must follow the law because it is the law. The language of law and order does not have the explicit racial overtones that existed in the riots that were squelched by Thatcher. Race is definitely present in the coverage, but it is more implicit than before. The proliferation of images of Black youth firebombing stores and stealing goods

makes certain allusions to the past riots. The politicians' raising issues of morality, pathology, and broken families<sup>29</sup> conjures up language to identify Blackness with criminality that Carby describes in her early work. Most of the news analysis focused on the economic and social inequalities that have led to the riots. Stafford Scott, a community organizer in Tottenham, described that the residents sympathized with the rioters, but did not condone the destruction ("UK Riots").

Beyond the localized events and the immediate reactions of the politicians and the public, the UK Riots of 2011 represent the end point of a process of globalization in Britain that began in the post-War years. When American products began to infiltrate into the high streets and ordinary lives of Britons, figures such as Williams and Hoggart saw the end of a particularly British way of life. The looting became the ultimate manifestation of this consumerist spirit. One of the qualities of the riots that surprised many onlookers was how the looters were not randomly attacking stores, but were also trying on articles of clothing in the store. The focus was not on getting necessities that these individuals could not afford, but to filch items that they desired. Guardian columnist Zoe Williams called this the "shopping riots." The craving for non-essential items was greater than the emotional bonds to community. In other words, there was a breakdown of culture and society, realizing the ultimate fears of Williams and Hoggart that British society would forego its cultural roots. This sentiment was captured in a speech given by Gilroy a week and half after the riots

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<sup>29</sup> . David Cameron describes the "broken society" he feels he needs to repair in a speech he gave a little over a week after the riots broke out. He believes that this is due to "Irresponsibility. Selfishness. Behaving as if your choices have no consequences. Children without fathers. Schools without discipline. Reward without effort" (Stratton).

began, “We've been talking about poverty, and one of the worst forms of poverty that's shaped our situation is poverty of the *imagination*. [the blogger's italics] When we feel the impact of our poverty of the imagination, we reach for what we think is the future, and that's *always* [the blogger's italics] the United States of America.” Throughout the speech, Gilroy comments on various ways that power constitutes itself in society, especially ones that have been shaped by Empire. These include the domination of media exemplified by Rupert Murdoch's holdings, the surveillance culture that has been propagated with George W. Bush's “War on Terror,” and the income inequalities resultant from American-influenced economic policies and alluded to in his quotation. The most harmful effect of Empire is the breakdown of the relationship between culture and society that has been molded by economic values. Privatization has created a rift between institutions and individuals that no longer fosters community, safety, and peace.

The shape of power, the institutions of society, and the racial and ethnic demographics might have changed, but the basic terms of the debate have stayed the same. In the seventies and eighties, the struggle for what culture and society meant took place against a backdrop of postcolonial migration to Britain. In our present day, it is the disaffected youth that have lost faith in a system that disavowed them economically, while seducing them culturally. Race continues to seep into society as immigration from Africa and the increasing presence of other Europeans has transformed the daily lives of Britons. Originally, Black British Cultural Studies might have captured a particular moment whose narrative seemed to speak to those studying the African-American experience. The battle for

a place in British society had parallels to the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements of the sixties and seventies. As one understands the reach of Empire, it becomes even more important to see how connections could continue to be made. The discourse of race is present in even the most seemingly local of incidents. For example, the hoodie has the same potent association with Black criminality here as it does across the pond. In the recent Trayvon Martin case, the hoodie represented the menace posed by the murdered teenager. It was later reclaimed by the people who wore it in solidarity with the victim. In Britain, this article of clothing became the fashion statement of the UK Riots.<sup>30</sup> This simple article of clothing shows that relations of power continue to be embedded in our material forms. The dynamics might have changed, but they still need to be excavated and exposed. The most basic lesson of Black British Cultural Studies transcends the particular era in which it began and developed—culture still matters.

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<sup>30</sup> . In Britain, the hoodie is a symbol of general criminality, not necessarily associated with race. However, the images of the 2011 riots correlate the hoodie with Black youth. My personal favorite reference to the hoodie is “hug-a-hoodie.” The term refers to a policy speech by Cameron where he explained the need to uncover the reasons behind the criminal actions of Britain’s youth. A Labour press release mocked his soft approach to crime as “hug-a-hoodie” and it has since stuck to him, even though he never said the term.

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