Culture &
Resistance

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Culture and Resistance

Edited by Alice Long and Olivia Lipski

Contents

Welcome…

…to the first relaunch issue of the University of Sussex Undergraduate History Journal. Born out of a collective goal from the Gender and Intersectional History Group here at Sussex, the journal has been given the support and space for revival. We are passionate about celebrating and showcasing the work of Sussex history undergraduates, allowing a platform for recognition of the hard work and dedication students commit to their studies. A further aim in relaunching is that the journal will provide an accessible insight into undergraduate work whilst inspiring debate and reflection on innovative ideas from students here at Sussex and the wider world of academia. Lastly, we hope this journal will be a tool for prospective students, providing an example of potential areas of study and reflecting the interests of students here at Sussex. We are grateful for the support we have received from students and university staff, and hope the journal will retain its reestablishment whilst remaining a viable outlet for innovative ideas at Sussex.

In this issue we have chosen to focus on the topics of culture and resistance, aiming to explore cultures and their spaces whilst understanding the ways in which certain cultural groups have utilised and reshaped or challenged conventional notions of resistance. Whilst exploring what it means to resist in different cultures, we aim to showcase works which uncover and discuss areas of resistance which in the dominant historical narrative would be overlooked. The work in this journal endeavours to unveil a variety of different means of resistance through areas such as unionisation, solidarity, collaboration, music and fiction, providing a variety of unique perspectives across a vast time period.

Organised in chronological order, our first piece in the issue is **Tania Shew's** work on female slave resistance in America. Utilising the diary of Fanny Kemble, Shew dissects Kemble's diary presenting it as a unique record of resistance and agency in a period of institutional racism. Insightfully exploring what constitutes resistance, Shew dissects the Marxist schools versus 'new labour history' alongside other historiographical debates. The analysis of Kemble's diary proves an insightful read into how we understand resistance whilst shedding light on an arena where sources reflecting the intricacies of women's lives remain limited.

Kieran Campbell-Johnston's work on the unionisation of domestic service between 1850 and 1914 focuses on whether this changed the public perception of the 'private sphere'. Through focusing on the gender and class dynamics involved in the domestic service industry, Campbell-Johnston showcases how the private and public spheres were constructed whilst exploring domestic servant's challenges to this construction and societal expectations, placing a particular focus on notions of gender and societal assumptions around this. Highlighting the complex relationship between domestic servants, their employers, and British society, Campbell-Johnston presents an insightful read which uncovers and explores an unexpected area of resistance.

Travelling further into the twentieth century, next we have **Olivia Lipski's** piece centred on analysis of the Organisation of Women of Asian and African Descent (OWAAD) in the 1970s onwards. Unravelling the strengths and weaknesses of this diverse group's unification, Lipski highlights the sense of support felt in OWAAD in its initial formation, citing unity of experiences of both racism and exclusion. Challenging many areas of British society through this movement and its ethnic diversity, Lipski studies in detail how internal differences of race, class and sexuality led to the movement's demise in 1983. This competition for space in a multiracial, disparate agenda is explored tactfully by Lipski, allowing for a thought-provoking study of successful resistance in practice, in an area often overshadowed by the more often historically cited Women's Liberation Movement.

The last of our topical essays belongs to **Wesley Knowler**, who explores the use of music and sound-systems as a tool and outlet for resistance to the Thatcher government. Knowler's piece reflects the diversity of resistance, encapsulating the unique way in which it can be manifested in the youth culture of certain periods. Focusing in this case on the two groups of 'Roots' and 'Rave', intertwined with new drug cultures embedded in the resistance, it explores the intersection of race, youth and music. Eloquent in its presentation, this piece presents an alternative resistance of the 1980s, rather than focusing on the dominant narrative of trade unions and the Miner's Strike.

A final edition, unique to this journal relaunch, is a review of the fictional work's *Midnight's Children'* and '*Shame* by author Salman Rushdie. Reviewed by **William Crona**, this work explores the idea of utilising fiction as a tool of resistance. Contesting the dominant and official narrative of Indian and Pakistani governments in both pieces, Crona presents an insightful presentation of an alternative mode of resistance, highlighting ultimately their successes as counter-narrative novels.

We really hope you enjoy this edition, and any comments on any of the articles published in this edition will be gratefully received; please email them to us at ol43@sussex.ac.uk or ahl24@sussex.ac.uk.

Best wishes,

Alice Long and Olivia Lipski

The USUHJ Editors

What can Fanny Kemble's journal tell us about female slave resistance in the 19th Century Antebellum South?

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Abstract: This essay analyses the usefulness of the diary of Fanny Kemble- often cited as one of the premier historical sources on female slaves – as an insight into female slave resistance. It looks at the fundamental limits of a white perspective on slavery and an outsider perspective in history more broadly. This essay also attempts to tackle the question of what constitutes resistance, weighing up Marxist schools against 'new labour history' and other alternative approaches. It concludes that the usefulness of Kemble's diary is essentially reliant on which definition of resistance and agency is taken but that if the 'new labour history' school is roughly accepted, Kemble's diary forms an inherently restricted yet useful source in a historiographical climate where sources detailing the lives of women remain scarce.

Keywords: Abolition of Slavery, Women, Resistance, Race, Gender

Darlene Clark Hine argues that studying female slave resistance is important for the same reasons as studying slave rebellions; both are not significant due to the frequency with which they occurred but due to the fact they happened at all.[1]

Frances Kemble was an English actress who, in 1834, married American plantation owner Pierce Butler.[2] While spending time visiting her husband's plantation and feeling disgusted at what she witnessed, she wrote a journal documenting her experiences, in particular her relationships with female slaves, which she later published as abolitionist material.[3] A number of historians have agreed that this resource forms a valuable, and even unique, part of the historical record. Catherine Clinton observes that it "has become one of the most frequently cited nineteenth-century descriptions of American slavery".[4] Even contemporaneously, many could tell that Kemble's writing provided an important, new incite. One 19th century newspaper described Kemble's journal as "the most…remarkable picture of the interior social life of the slave holding section of this country that has

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1 D.C. Hine, *Hine Sight: Black Women and the Re-Construction of American History* (Carlson Publishing Inc, 1995), p. 36

2 M.D. Cate, 'Mistakes in Fanny Kemble's Georgia Journal', *The Georgia Historical Quarterly, 1 March 1960, Vol.44,* p.1

3 W. Dusinberre, *Them Dark Days: Slavery In The American Rice Swamps* (The University of Georgia Press, 1996)*,* p.223

4 C. Clinton, 'Fanny Kemble's Journal: A Woman Confronts Slavery on a Georgia Plantation', *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies, 1 January 1987, Vol.9,* p.74

ever been published".[5] Given the relative lack of primary source material on female slave resistance,[6] Kemble's one-off account of the life of female slaves should be explored for potential evidence of resistance. Yet whilst it does form a useful record, documenting a wide variety of female slave activities, it is also severely limited by the fact that it is written from the perspective of a slave-holder's wife.

As Kemble's diary does not document any substantial violence or attempt at rebellion, for it to be a useful record we need to determine whether everyday acts aimed at accessing agency constituted a type of resistance. The role of agency in history has been contested since Marx famously wrote "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please…but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past."[7]

Herbert Gutman, a major proponent of the significance of agency in history, argued that it was the "antidote to oppression[8]" and that everyday actions were a "resource for resistance".[9] This school became popular in historiography from the 1960s onwards,[10] but has been challenged by Marxists like Eugene Genovese who critiqued the emphasis on agency (and social history in general) for deviating from structural factors and underplaying the role of class struggle.[11] He argued that slaves of the antebellum South only resorted to everyday resistance because the dominant Creole demographic in the US enabled masters to establish a paternalistic authority which broke down slave unity and made revolts almost impossible. This, in turn, enhanced masters' hegemony over their slaves.[12] Genovese maintained that whilst agency diminished the extremes of exploitation, everyday actions did not pose a real threat to the hegemonic system as a whole.[13] For this essay, the key question at the centre of this debate is what purpose did resistance serve? If it was, as Genovese suggests, to overturn the system, then Kemble's diary does not document much substantial resistance at all.

Yet if the objective of slavery was to subjugate people to the point where they were worth no more than the price over their head,[14] then we can agree that resistance also encompassed those actions that allowed enslaved people to consciously gain agency *within* this system, rendering Fanny's diary a very useful source. In 1855, fugitive slave, Frederick Douglas, expressed the view that to be free wasn't just about abolition; it was also about expressing self-respect, confidence and free will.[15]

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[5] Advertisement in Independent, July 16, 1863, quoted by Mildred E. Lombard in her 'Contemporary Opinions of Mrs. Kemble's Journal of a Residence on a Georgia Plantation' in *The Georgia Historical Quarterly, XIV (December, 1930),* pp.335-43

[6] A. Chakrabarti-Myers, 'Sisters in Arms: Slave Women's Resistance to Slavery in the United States', *University of Alberta Journal Vol 5 (1996),* .p.141

[7] R. Follett, E. Foner, W. Johnson, *Slavery's Ghost: The Problem of Freedom in the Age of Emancipation*, (The John Hopkins University Press, 2011), p.8

[8] *Ibid.,* p.28

[9] *Ibid.,* p.21

[10] *Ibid,,* p.9

[11] R. Follett, E. Foner, W. Johnson, *Slavery's Ghost: The Problem of Freedom in the Age of Emancipation*, (The John Hopkins University Press, 2011), p.20

[12] R. Follett, E. Foner, W. Johnson, *Slavery's Ghost: The Problem of Freedom in the Age of Emancipation*, (The John Hopkins University Press, 2011), p.18

[13] *Ibid.,,* p.18

14 *Ibid.,* pp.84-85

[15] *Ibid.,* p.1

If we accept Douglas's characterisation then any expression of agency becomes elevated. However, it is important not to fall into the trap that Gutman and other proponents of agency have done. In recent years historians have begun to question the over-emphasis on agency in historiography,[16] arguing that the structures that defined agency were becoming subsumed.[17] William Johnson aptly proposes a middle ground where historians recognise that agency was shaped by relevant structures but also that everyday resistance *could* be productive of new cultures and solidarities.[18]

<u>Resistance explored by Kemble:</u>

The predominant genre of agency explored by Kemble involved female slaves requesting favours from her, ranging from summer clothing,[19] to not being sold separately from family members,[20] to reduced workload during pregnancy,[21][22] to food[23], to medicines.[24] The presence of such actions as a potential form of resistance are also alluded to in the Butler Plantation Papers (although slightly before Kemble's time)[25]: "the people here complain very much this wet weather".[26] Although these Papers don't specifically mention women's involvement, they corroborate Fanny's account of this type of agency in general. This links to a key debate surrounding female slave resistance; whether slave women were trying to perform political acts or whether they were simply seeking to improve conditions within the status quo.[27] Essentially, the debate concerns whether the women were conscious of resisting when they were accessing agency[28]. This, in turn, highlights the fundamental limit of Kemble's diary: as it was not written from the perspective of a slave we cannot be certain of the enslaved women's intentions. However, using other sources, we can make inferences. There is evidence to suggest that Butler was the type of paternalistic master that Genovese characterised.

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[16] *Ibid.,* p.28

[17] *Ibid.,* p.28

[18] R. Follett, E. Foner, W. Johnson, *Slavery's Ghost: The Problem of Freedom in the Age of Emancipation*, (The John Hopkins University Press, 2011), p.28

[19] F. Kemble, *Journal of a residence on a Georgian plantation in 1838-1839*, (Harper and Brothers, 1864, Afro-Am Press, 1969), p.52

[20] *Ibid*, p.100

[21] W. Dusinberre, *Them Dark Days: Slavery In The American Rice Swamps* (The University of Georgia Press, 1996)*,* p.247

[22] F. Kemble, *Journal of a residence on a Georgian plantation in 1838-1839*, (Harper and Brothers, 1864, Afro-Am Press, 1969), p.135

[23] *Ibid.,* p.168

[24] *Ibid.,* p. 205

[25] These specific papers were taken from the era of Pierce Butler Senior. Therefore, whilst they predate Kemble's arrival, they still provide evidence of the general climate on the plantation.

[26] Roswell King to Pierce Butler Sr, 17th September 1803, Pierce Butler Plantation Papers, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, accessed via the microfilm copy University of Sussex libraries.

[27] A. Chakrabarti-Myers, 'Sisters in Arms: Slave Women's Resistance to Slavery in the United States', *University of Alberta Journal Vol 5 (1996),*p.145 F. Kemble, *Journal of a residence on a Georgian plantation in 1838-1839*, (Afro-Am Press, 1969), p.52

[27] *Ibid*, p.100

[27] W. Dusinberre, *Them Dark Days: Slavery In The American Rice Swamps* (The University of Georgia Press, 1996)*,* p.247

[27] F. Kemble, *Journal of a residence on a Georgian plantation in 1838-1839*, (Harper and Brothers, 1864, Afro-Am Press, 1969), p.135

[27] *Ibid.,* p.168

[27] A. Chakrabarti-Myers, 'Sisters in Arms: Slave Women's Resistance to Slavery

[28] *Ibid.,,*p.145

William Dusinberre wrote "Kemble's husband was capable of impulsive generosity to the slaves[29]". This raises the question whether the slaves' requests, which Kemble records, might simply have been compliance within a paternalistic hegemony, rather than conscious acts of resistance. However, there is precedent for arguing that conscious and unconscious agency were not mutually exclusive. Mary Ellison argues: "They (slave women) often succeeded in making an intolerable institution more bearable and they evolved subversive techniques…to make a mockery of the system itself[30]".

Impertinence and slow work could also be employed as expressions of agency. Ellison argues that this type of resistance was constantly performed by women,[31] which is supported by Kemble. She wrote "Mary…is so intolerably offensive… I wait upon myself more than I have ever done in my life[32]". She also recorded that lying was a natural human tendency that was fostered by slavery[33]. This suggests that Kemble perceived lying as an inevitable outcome of life under the slavery structure, rather than as an example of agency. However Amrita Chakrabarti-Meyers argues that there is evidence from other primary source accounts that slave women lied and participated in work slow-downs as deliberate forms of resistance.[34] Assuming Kemble's implication that lying was 'inevitable,' is also apt to a degree, we can conclude, in concordance with Johnson's approach, that lying and slow-downs were probably deliberate forms of resistance influenced by the structure of slavery.

Resistance expressed through clothing is a phenomenon that Kemble alludes to but does not explore. She wrote: "Their Sabbath toilet…presents the most ludicrous combination of incongruities…– frill, flounces, ribbons".[35] Here, whilst intending to disparage the slaves, Kemble unwittingly documented a form of their resistance. Stephanie M. H. Camp claims that "women's style allowed them…to deny that they were only… worth the prices their owners placed on them".[36] Camp further maintains that clothing was of more concern to female slaves than males,[37] suggesting that this reclaiming of their bodies may have been linked to the way enslaved women's bodies were sexually owned . There is also evidence to suggest that resistance via clothing was about expressing individual personalities,[38] forming group identities[39] and reclaiming African heritage.[40] Therefore, whilst enslaved women's clothing choices did not have any fundamental effect on the slavery system (and therefore would probably not be seen as substantial resistance by Genovese), they clearly formed

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[29] R. Follett, E. Foner, W. Johnson, *Slavery's Ghost: The Problem of Freedom in the Age of Emancipation*, (The John Hopkins University Press, 2011),p.253

[30] M. Ellison, 'Resistance to oppression: Black Women's Response to Slavery in the United States',
Slavery & Abolition, 1983, Vol.4(1), p.56

[31] *Ibid.,* p.58

[32] F. Kemble, *Journal of a residence on a Georgian plantation in 1838-1839*, (Harper and Brothers, 1864, Afro-Am Press, 1969), p.23

[33] *Ibid.,,*p.283

[34] A. Chakrabarti-Myers, 'Sisters in Arms: Slave Women's Resistance to Slavery in the United States', *University of Alberta Journal Vol 5 (1996),*p.147

[35] F. Kemble, *Journal of a residence on a Georgian plantation in 1838-1839*, (Harper and Brothers, 1864, Afro-Am Press, 1969), p.93

[36] S.M.H. Camp, *Closer to freedom : enslaved women and everyday resistance in the plantation South*, (University of North Carolina Press) 2004, pp.84-85

[37] *Ibid.,* p.78

[38] *Ibid.,* p.78

[39] P.K. Hunt 'The Struggle to Achieve Individual Expression through Clothing and Adornment: African American Women Under and After Slavery', in P. Morton, *Discovering the women in slavery : emancipating perspectives on the America,* (University of Georgia Press 1996), pp.227-228

[40] *Ibid.,* p.231

a key role in expressing individuality, solidarity and culture. The very fact that enslaved women were able to make a choice at all, one which Fanny's disparaging description illustrates was clearly not entirely determined by hegemonic white culture, allowed them to question the principle behind their status. However, once again, the fact that something as simple as choosing clothing could be deemed an act of resistance, demonstrates that what constituted agency for slaves was redefined by the oppressive structure of slavery itself.

Turning to faith, Chakrabarti-Meyers writes: "Religion was the foundation of resistance, and slave women played a crucial role".[41] Elizabeth Fox-Genovese observes that whilst male religious resistance was more overt, and subsequently better documented, women more covertly maintained subversive religious practises within the family and community churches.[42] Cynthia Lynn Lyerly argues that Christianity produced damaging stereotypes of enslaved women such as 'Jezebel' and 'Mammy'[43] but most historians agree that female slaves rejected the negative identities that whites gave them.[44] Enslaved women reclaimed Christianity and used it to create positive gender identities for themselves; they denied ownership of their souls and, in doing so, reclaimed some ownership of their bodies.[45] Although this was not her apparent intention, Kemble's journal reveals the agency some slaves demonstrated through religion. She recounts how every other Sunday the slaves gathered in the cabin of a fellow slave. These meetings seem to have been unattended by overseers or masters, with Fanny expressing trepidation at trying to attend one.[46] She additionally described slave prayer as an "everlasting covenant of freedom".[47]

Lyerly argues that the concept of heaven held a particular significance for slave women as it was seen as a release from slavery where families were reunited.[48] Upon the death of an enslaved child, Fanny commented "I left…rejoicing for them at the deliverance out of slavery of their…child".[49] Although this is Fanny's observation, given the time she spent with enslaved women it is not improbable that she was influenced towards this view by the female slave community. If female religious resistance, therefore, helped enslaved women to cope with the tragedies induced by their condition and reclaim some identity, it should be classed as a form of resistance against a system that attempted to instil an oppressive hegemony, regardless of whether women's worship tangibly affected the system itself. Dusinberre wrote "were these not some of the most admirable dissidents

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[41] A. Chakrabarti-Myers, 'Sisters in Arms: Slave Women's Resistance to Slavery in the United States', *University of Alberta Journal Vol 5 (1996),*p.150

[42] *Ibid.,* p.150

[43] C.L. Lyerly, 'Religion, Gender and Identity: Black Methodist Women in a Slave Society 1770-1810', in P. Morton, *Discovering the women in slavery : emancipating perspectives on the America,* (University of Georgia Press 1996),p.203

[44] *Ibid.,,*p.203

[45] C.L. Lyerly, 'Religion, Gender and Identity: Black Methodist Women in a Slave Society 1770-1810', in P. Morton, *Discovering the women in slavery : emancipating perspectives on the America,* (University of Georgia Press 1996), p.203

[46] F. Kemble, *Journal of a residence on a Georgian plantation in 1838-1839* (Harper and Brothers, 1864, kindle edition),p.32

[47] F. Kemble, *Journal of a residence on a Georgian plantation in 1838-1839*, (Harper and Brothers, 1864, Afro-Am Press, 1969), p.113

[48] C.L. Lyerly, 'Religion, Gender and Identity: Black Methodist Women in a Slave Society 1770-1810', in P. Morton, *Discovering the women in slavery : emancipating perspectives on the America,* (University of Georgia Press 1996),p.208

[49] F. Kemble*, Journal of a residence on a Georgian plantation in 1838-1839* (Harper and Brothers, 1864, kindle edition), p.56

against slavery – people who dissented not by futile insurrection… but by combating slavery's assault upon the slaves' morale?"[50]

Chakrabarti-Meyers utilises the phrase "female-only resistance" to describe acts of agency such as faking pregnancy and using birth control.[51] Whilst this reflected a desire to improve conditions within the status quo, Fox-Genovese (who was of her husband's school) argues that it was also a direct challenge to the master, symbolising the view "You want me to reproduce as woman, treat me as woman".[52] This, again, illustrates that conscious and unconscious agency were not necessarily mutually exclusive. Kemble provides examples of 'female-only' resistance, remarking that women had the power to choose when they revealed to the overseer they were pregnant[53] and recording a "pseudo-pregnancy… to reap increased rations".[54] Ellison argues that simply by loving family members women expressed resistance; although owners could separate families physically, they could not break emotional bonds.[55] Kemble provides evidence of the deep love many slaves felt for each other, even in the face of physical separation.[56]

Rape is directly explored by Kemble who provides us with insights into both resistance and compliance by female slaves. Camp argues that perceptions of the black female body were central to slaveholding.[57] By the antebellum period slave owners had so completely conflated enslaved people with their bodies that they often referred to them as simply 'hands' or 'heads'.[58] The Butler Papers illustrate this mind-set amongst the whites on the Butler plantation: "Gibbs…told me that … you gave him…hands to Mr Coupers".[59] On the definition explored above, any act of agency aimed at questioning this mind-set would count as resistance. The question then becomes to what extent did enslaved women perceive resisting rape as resistance? Ellison argues "(slave women) were…forced into sexual roles that threatened to undermine their self-respect and their emotional autonomy. It is a tribute to the strength and resilience of black women that, in most cases, their spirits remained uncrushed by such extraordinary stress".[60] Chakrabarti-Meyers similarly argues that defending oneself against rape constituted deliberate resistance in many instances.[61]

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[50] R. Follett, E. Foner, W. Johnson, *Slavery's Ghost: The Problem of Freedom in the Age of Emancipation*, (The John Hopkins University Press, 2011),p.281

[51] A. Chakrabarti-Myers, 'Sisters in Arms: Slave Women's Resistance to Slavery in the United States', *University of Alberta Journal Vol 5 (1996),*p.154

[52] *Ibid.,*p.154

[53] F. Kemble*, Journal of a residence on a Georgian plantation in 1838-1839*, (Harper and Brothers, 1864, Afro-Am Press, 1969) p. 60

[54] *Ibid.,*p. 235

[55] M. Ellison, 'Resistance to oppression: Black Women's Response to Slavery in the United States', *Slavery & Abolition, 1983, Vol.4(1),* p.57

[56] F. Kemble, *Journal of a residence on a Georgian plantation in 1838-1839*, (Harper and Brothers, 1864, Afro-Am Press, 1969) p.100

[57] S.M.H. Camp, *Closer to freedom : enslaved women and everyday resistance in the plantation South*, (University of North Carolina Press 2004),p.63

[58] M. Ellison, 'Resistance to oppression: Black Women's Response to Slavery in the United States', *Slavery & Abolition, 1983, Vol.4(1)*, p.64

[59] Pierce Butler Sr to Roswell King, 27th May 1821, Pierce Butler Plantation Papers, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, accessed via the microfilm copy University of Sussex libraries.

[60] M. Ellison, 'Resistance to oppression: Black Women's Response to Slavery in the United States', *Slavery & Abolition, 1983, Vol.4(1),* p. 56

[61] A. Chakrabarti-Myers, 'Sisters in Arms: Slave Women's Resistance to Slavery in the United States', *University*

Ellison asserts that "When black women resisted rape they brought down on themselves terrible…physical abuse".[62] Kemble presents a clear example of this in her journal "Mr K… forced her, flogged her severely for having resisted him".[63] However she also provides contrary evidence; writing of another woman who didn't resist rape because "we do anything to get… some rest from de whip."[64] Therefore, whilst we can realistically assume that many of the women on the Butler plantation who resisted rape were deliberately accessing agency and reclaiming their bodies, the fact that their bodies were usually then subjected to physical abuse as a result, is evidence of Genovese's hegemony.

A final, more overt act of female resistance explored by Kemble was running away. Kemble wrote: "she had only lately been forgiven…for an attempt to run away"[65] and "Judy…had been married to one of the men…who…left her because she went mad…She escaped into the jungle…but was finally…caught".[66]

Women's work was generally limited to a more confined space than men's which made it more difficult for women to abscond.[67] Hine's statement that female resistance is important, not due to its frequency, but due to the fact it happened at all, is perhaps especially true of this form of resistance. As men were allowed to leave the plantation on occasion, it gave them a plausible excuse if they were questioned and provided them with greater knowledge of local geography.[68] Family responsibilities were key to shaping women's patterns for escaping;[69] obligations to family members on the home plantation were a deterrent, explaining why fewer women ran away than men,[70] but visiting loved ones on other plantations was a major pull factor for women as well.[71] This is illustrated in Fanny's account of Judy, who escaped due to her husband leaving. Women's lack of geographical knowledge is also alluded to by Kemble who reports a slave woman's comment: "What use n****r run away? – de swamp all round; dey get in dar an' dey starve to def".[72] One of the main debates surrounding female runaways concerns their motivation. Camp argues that women more typically escaped as a form or truancy, rather than with the intention of permanently fleeing,[73] whereas Ellison maintains that what slave women sought was "freedom itself".[74] On this debate Kemble's journal is

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of Alberta Journal Vol 5 (1996), p.153

[62] M. Ellison, 'Resistance to oppression: Black Women's Response to Slavery in the United States', *Slavery & Abolition, 1983, Vol.4(1),* p.58

[63] F. Kemble, *Journal of a residence on a Georgian plantation in 1838-1839* (Harper and Brothers, 1864, Kindle edition), p.122

[64] F. Kemble, *Journal of a residence on a Georgian plantation in 1838-1839*, (Harper and Brothers, 1864, Afro-Am Press, 1969), p.228

[65] *Ibid.,* pp. 139-140

[66] *Ibid.,* p.198

[67] S.M.H. Camp, *Closer to freedom : enslaved women and everyday resistance in the plantation South*, (University of North Carolina Press 2004), p. 28

[68] *Ibid.,* p.38

[69] S.M.H. Camp, *Closer to freedom : enslaved women and everyday resistance in the plantation South*, (University of North Carolina Press 2004), p.38

[70] *Ibid.,* p.38

[71] S.M.H. Camp, *Closer to freedom : enslaved women and everyday resistance in the plantation South*, (University of North Carolina Press 2004), p.40

[72] F. Kemble, *Journal of a residence on a Georgian plantation in 1838-1839*, (Harper and Brothers, 1864, Afro-Am Press, 1969). p.140

[73] S.M.H. Camp, *Closer to freedom : enslaved women and everyday resistance in the plantation South*, (University of North Carolina Press 2004), p.39

[74] M. Ellison, 'Resistance to oppression: Black Women's Response to Slavery in the United States',

unclear; she records that Judy was caught rather than returning voluntarily, making it impossible to know whether she intended to escape permanently. Either way, these types of resistance were clearly acts of agency in a structure where lack of freedom was the ultimate defining feature.

Resistance unexplored by Kemble

There are, however, a number of significant forms of resistance which Kemble does not cover. One omission was resistance via the cabin which Kemble appeared to completely misunderstand. The decoration of cabins, in which women were very involved, was about the reclaiming of space.[75] In his memoirs, enslaved man T.H. Jones, wrote that his parents "tried to make it a happy place for their dear children" and that they would work extra hours to make furniture.[76] From the 1830s onwards some slaves were even able to acquire abolitionist material to display in their homes.[77]

Kemble's account, however, presents a very different picture. She wrote "Such of these dwellings…were filthy and wretched… and exhibited…the inability of the inhabitants to… improve even such pitiful comfort as might yet be achieved by them".[78] When the slaves made improvements to their homes, she cites herself- not their own agency- as the cause: "They had taken my hint about nailing wooden slats across the windows".[79] Far from using their homes as a means of self-expression, Kemble argues that the slaves' cabins represented their internalisation of racial stereotypes. Fanny quotes a slave as saying "Misses no 'spect to find colored folks' house clean as white folks",[80] with Fanny commenting "The mode in which they have learned to accept the idea of their own degradation…is the most serious impediment…in the way of their progress".[81] If Kemble's depiction here is apt then it serves as evidence of Genovese's hegemony; evidence that enslaved people were even ideologically controlled by their masters. Kemble's characterisation has been supported by Dusinberre who argued that slavery left a permanent psychological mark and that Kemble's depiction of this psychology is her most important legacy.[82] However Kemble's outsider perspective clearly limited her ability to both view and discern many aspects of slaves' lives, rendering invisible the possibility that the Butler slaves deliberately altered their cabins as an act of conscious agency.

Another omission of Kemble's was illicit slave parties.[83] Here slaves would sneak away in the middle of night to dance, drink alcohol, play music and court one another.[84] Slaves would keep these

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Slavery & Abolition, 1983, Vol.4(1), p.59

[75] S.M.H. Camp, *Closer to freedom : enslaved women and everyday resistance in the plantation South*, (North Carolina Press 2004), p.94

[76] T.H. Jones, *The Experience of Rev. Thomas H. Jones, Who Was a Slave for Forty-Three Years: Written by a Friend, as Related to Him by Brother Jones*, (Anthony & Sons, Printers, 1885), p.7

[77] S.M.H. Camp, *Closer to freedom : enslaved women and everyday resistance in the plantation South*, (University of North Carolina Press 2004), pp.94-95

[78] F. Kemble, *Journal of a residence on a Georgian plantation in 1838-1839,* (Harper and Brothers, 1864, Afro-Am Press, 1969), p.30

[79] *Ibid.,* p.271

[80] F. Kemble, *Journal of a residence on a Georgian plantation in 1838-1839,* (Harper and Brothers, 1864, Afro-Am Press, 1969), p.255

[81] *Ibid.,* pp.255-256

[82] W. Dusinberre, *Them Dark Days: Slavery In The American Rice Swamps* (The University of Georgia Press, 1996), p.264

[83] S.M.H. Camp, *Closer to freedom : enslaved women and everyday resistance in the plantation South*, (University of North Carolina Press 2004), p.60

[84] *Ibid.,,* p.60

parties a close secret, organised via codes.[85] This, again, illustrates the limits to Kemble's portrayal. Even though she lived on the plantation and presented herself as an ally to the slave women, she would not have been privy to much of their lives; slaves would undoubtedly have kept secrets from her, itself a form of agency.

The most fundamental gaps in Kemble's record, however, are of the violent forms of resistance practised by women. Murder was a particularly female form of resistance. Approximately 43.2 percent of all slave women confronted murder charges, compared to only 35.5 percent of men.[86] Glenn Mcnair comments that "Slave women…were more reluctant to victimize fellow slaves…. but chose whites as their victims as frequently as the supposedly more dangerous slave men did"[87] Chakrabarti-Meyers also cites murdering their owners as a key form of female slave resistance.[88] Similarly, there is historical debate about the extent to which women were involved in slave rebellions.[89] Some historians have argued that females were excluded from such violent upheavals due to their perceived psychological make-up,[90] whilst Ellison has asserted that although women did participate in rebellions, they were never leaders.[91] Chakrabarti-Meyers, however, maintains that "Black women played significant roles".[92] The importance of this omission hangs, once again, on the debate about what constitutes resistance. The Genovese school would argue that direct rebellion was the only substantial form of resistance, making Kemble's omission a significant one. However if everyday resistance is deemed just as significant, then the importance of this omission decreases.

Conclusion:

If, as I advocate, slave resistance is defined to embrace the importance of agency (whilst still taking into account the determining potential of social structure on types of resistance, as Johnson outlines) then Kemble's journal provides a variety of insights that can usefully contribute to the existing historical record. However the fundamental flaw in Kemble's work is her outsider perspective which makes it difficult to ascertain whether the female slaves she documented intended their everyday actions to be expressions of agency. Fanny Kemble's journal, therefore, provides a valuable, but inherently limited, source for analysing female slave resistance.

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[85] *Ibid.,* p.60-61

[86] G. Mcnair, 'Slave Women, Capital Crime, and Criminal Justice in Georgia', *The Georgia Historical Quarterly, Vol. 93, No. 2 (Summer 2009),* p.140

[87] *Ibid.,* pp.144-145

[88] A. Chakrabarti-Myers, 'Sisters in Arms: Slave Women's Resistance to Slavery in the United States', *University of Alberta Journal Vol 5 (1996),* p.142

[89] R. Follett, E. Foner, W. Johnson, *Slavery's Ghost: The Problem of Freedom in the Age of Emancipation*, (The John Hopkins University Press, 2011), p.168

[90] *Ibid.,* p.168

[91] *Ibid.,* p. 159

[92] *Ibid.,* p.159

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Service and labour: Domestic servants, unionisation and the 'private sphere' 1850-1914.

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Abstract: This article explores the degree to which attempts of domestic servants unionising challenged perceptions of the 'private sphere' from 1850-1914. It seeks to place domestic service as an occupation within the broader context of work and labour history, by challenging the Marxist historical framework that has predominantly defined it. In doing so it highlights the inter-relationship between class and gender, or gender defined work as it was for many women in this period. It argues that through protesting their actions in the 'public sphere', domestic servants attempting to unionize sought to redefine, negotiate and challenge the nature of 'public sphere' work, by which it was socially conceptualized.

Keywords: Domestic Service, Unionisation, Private Sphere, Women's Labour History, Gender and Work.

'The home is the crystal of society- the nucleus of national character; and from that source, be it pure or tainted, issue the habits, principles, and maxims which govern public and well as private life'.[1] This statement by author and reformer Samuel Smiles, encapsulates the profound importance of the home in 19th century Britain. Indeed, as will be explored below, the central importance and significance of this statement's ideals are a foundation of class and gender structures that became socially entrenched in the later Victorian mind-set. Historian's writings on the 'home', and the residing domestic servants, have typically portrayed them as emblems of social status, crucial to the maintenance of the middle class ideal of the perfect lady.[2] In the wider context of working class histories, the exclusion of domestic servants is attributed to the relative isolation of their work, and the perception that they tended to identify with the interests of their 'paternalistic employers'.[3] Thus whilst generally being ignored historically, domestic servants have also been given a passive victim status in relation to their masters/ mistresses.[4] This article will analyse three instances of domestic servants attempts to unionize, between 1850-1914. These attempts challenge much of the social and historical perspectives that have defined domestic servants, and give insight into a wider understanding of class, gender and work. This article argues that through protesting in the 'public sphere', domestic servants sought to redefine, negotiate or challenge the assumptions of 'private sphere' work, that were gender-defined and class based.

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[1] Samuel Smiles quoted in May, Trevor, '*An economic and social history of Britain, 1760-1990',* (Harlow: Longman, 1996). P.229.

[2] Higgs, Edward, 'Domestic servants and households in Victorian England'. In *Social History*, 8(2), (1983), pp.201-210. And May, 'An economic and social history of Britain'. p.296.

[3] Schwartz, Laura, "'What we think is needed is a union of domestics such as the miners have': The Domestic Workers' Union of Great Britain and Ireland 1908-14". *Twentieth Century British History*, 25(2), (2013). p.174.

[4] Schwartz, "'What we think is needed is a union of domestics such as the miners have': The Domestic Workers' Union of Great Britain and Ireland 1908-14". P.175

Who were domestic servants? Before seeking to define domestic workers it is important to assess the scale of domestic service. In the epoch covered in this article, domestic service formed a substantial part of the labour body. The 1851 census categorized over 750,000 women as domestic servants, the second largest employer after agriculture across all English workers. By 1891 domestic service had peaked as one third of the total female labour force, and by 1911 there were around 170 domestic servants per 1000 families in England.[5]Even so as Higgs has argued the scale of domestic workers will have been grossly underestimated in the censuses, due to the classification and nature of domestic occupations.[6] Domestic servants themselves have been defined as 'waged domestic workers', expected to live in the household they worked, whose duties were at the discretion of the employer.[7] Indeed this discretion, and the relative isolation of domestic workers gives insight into the vulnerability they faced, not simply from wage discrimination, but powerlessness from physical and sexual abuse from employers or fellow servants.[8]

When discussing domestic servants, it is important to place them in the social context in which they operated. The 19th century saw the emergence of distinct 'public' and 'private spheres'. The 'spheres' were ideological constructs that became defined by gender, linked also to notions of class. The 'public sphere' was the masculine world of 'work'.[9] The Victorian ideal of manliness was the embodiment of individualism, essentially being free from dependence on others, but having a private domestic home dependent on them.[10] Juxtaposed to this was the concept of the 'private sphere', which was defined as the place of femininity and the family. The feminine 'private sphere' of the home was meant to be free from work, and the cash-nexus taint.[11] The home therefore became a way where specific gender roles would be learnt.[12] Thus the importance of the home for understanding class and gender divisions is pivotal, as Smiles rightly stated, its habits governed public as well as private life.

These notions of gender dictated the social function of domestic service. The steady decline of male domestic servants in this period is related to this concept of Victorian manliness. A male domestic servant was deemed as 'dependent' on his employers, and thus did not conform to this notion of male individualism. Male domestic workers were therefore excluded from the franchise extensions of 1867 and 1884.[13] As opposed to male servants, domestic service for young working class girls was deemed as essential preparation for married domestic duties of their later

[5] Dussart, Fae, '*The servant/employer relationship in nineteenth century England and India'*. (London: University of London, 2005). Pp.41-42.

[6] Higgs, Edward, Making sense of the census revisited, (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2005) Also see Baines, Dudley, and Higgs, Edward, "Making Sense of the Census: The Manuscript Returns for England and Wales, 1801-1901.", *The Economic History Review*, vol. 43, no. 4, p. 745, 1990.

[7] Steedman, Caroline, '*Labours lost'*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). P.31

[8] Barber, Jill, 'Stolen Goods': The Sexual Harassment of Female Servants in West Wales during the Nineteenth Century. *Rural History*, 4(02), (1993). Pp.123-133.

[9] Davidoff, Leonore and Hall, Catherine, '*Family fortunes'*. 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002)

For a critique of 'separate spheres' and there gendered connection to the middle class see Amanda Vickery 'Historiographical Review. Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History, *Historical Journal,* 36 (1993).

[10] Dussart, '*The servant/employer relationship in nineteenth century England and India'.* P.35.

[11] Dussart, '*The servant/employer relationship in nineteenth century England and India'.* P.120.

[12] May, '*An economic and social history of Britain, 1760-1990'.* P.289.

[13] Dussart, *The servant/employer relationship in nineteenth century England and India'.* Pp.173-174. This is why this article will focus solely on female domestic servants, partly because they comprised the majority of servants, but also because of that class and gender assumptions that defined their work.

life. Furthermore, Middle class thinkers condemned work undertaken by women outside the domestic setting. Factory work for example was criticized firstly because it gave girl's no training for future domestic duties, and secondly because work gave girls freedom from the patriarchal structure of the household, and thus was seen to subvert the natural social order.[14] Women's social position in the 19th century was therefore not simply defined by gender, but by 'gender defined work'.[15] Domestic servants have therefore occupied an ambiguous status as neither family members, nor being viewed as part of the paid workforce, as their work transcends both 'spheres'.[16] This therefore sets the context for how certain domestic workers sought to redefine, negotiate and eventually challenge this ambiguous household position.

Early attempts at unionization by domestic servants sought to redefine their position with mistresses/ employers. A perceived shortage of good servants in the period covered gave rise to middle-class discussions of the 'servant problem'.[17] In April 1872 domestic servants in Dundee met with the view of establishing a union.[18] The nature of domestic service however made such meetings both rare and difficult. The large amount of hours worked and the paternalistic and patriarchal nature of service left little time for organization. Indeed, the group that met in Dundee read numerous letters conveying regret, from more servants unable to come. The main grievances of the group centred on their personal vulnerability, lack of free time, the unreasonable hours they were expected to work, and the uniforms they were required to pay for and wear at their mistresses bidding. By challenging the issue of dress, the servants were protesting at the 'totality of control mistresses attempted to exert over them'.[19] The language used by the group to articulate their desires publically was one of personal rights, the charwomen having compared the hardship of service to slavery. The group invoked the language of sabbatarianism, arguing it was inappropriate to preform domestic labour on Sundays. The modes by which these protest were resented was through the *Dundee Advertiser;* demonstrating how the women attempted to publicly construct to the wider society that domestic service be considered and valued as 'work'. Thinking more broadly about workers movements, the Dundee union cannot be excluded from the wider context of the 1870s. A strong expansion of trade unions activity from previously unorganized workers, following legal recognition of trades unions and protection of their funds under the Friendly Societies Act.[20] Thus in seeking to negotiate their working position domestic servants joined a larger working movement also seeking recognition for their labour and its economic value.

Before moving on to the other case studies of unionization, a brief analysis of some of the issues raised by the Dundee example is worthwhile. Firstly public reactions to the Dundee servants was mixed. Some reactions evoked a chivalrous attitude, implying the servants could only succeed with manly support of unionized men. Alternatively the *Daily News* suggested that the numbers of servants could force change if they wished.[21] This raises the point that although social perception of domestic service was that it was a duty, the continuous control exerted by mistresses and employers shows a great personal dependency on those servants, further evidenced in the whole panicked notion of the 'servant problem' when mistresses needs were jeopardized.

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[14] Jordan, Ellen, '*The women's movement and women's employment in nineteenth century Britain'*, (London: Routledge, 1999). P.63.

[15] Higgs, 'Domestic servants and households in Victorian England'. P210.

[16] Dussart, '*The servant/employer relationship in nineteenth century England and India'*. P.20.

[17] Schwartz, "'What we think is needed is a union of domestics such as the miners have': The Domestic Workers' Union of Great Britain and Ireland 1908-14". P.176.

[18] Dussart, '*The servant/employer relationship in nineteenth century England and India'*. P.176.

[19] Dussart, '*The servant/employer relationship in nineteenth century England and India'*. P.177.

[20] May, '*An economic and social history of Britain, 1760-1990'*. P.267.

[21] Dussart, '*The servant/employer relationship in nineteenth century England and India'*. P.179.

Similarly, to the Dundee servants, washerwomen in Norbiton and Kensington articulated protest against their employers. Reacting against the low pay, relative to the affluence of their employers, the washerwomen of Norbiton went on strike, and then combined with those from Kensington in two open-air protests in June 1872. Although they did not form a union, throughout the year they publically complained in the *Surry Comet* about their working conditions and threatened to unionize.[22] Parallels can be drawn between their demands and those made by the servants from Dundee. Issues revolved around freedom of choice, personal independence and wages for work. Again the language employed here is important, the connotations surrounding the word of 'work' as opposed to 'service', and so demanding recognition for their labour as work as opposed to a social duty. Their argument was based around the mutual benefits for both employer and servants. Thus whilst this cannot be clearly seen as a challenge to the class and gendered foundations on which their labour was constructed, this does demonstrate a demand for their labour being recognized as work. Furthermore, this clearly indicates that servants were not entirely passive recipients of the household structures they were engaged in.

The spread of education broadened ideas of the 'public sphere'. Both the examples of Dundee and the washerwomen of Kensington and Norbiton were facilitated through public newspaper correspondence. Public engagement was made possible by the steady spread of education; the 1870 Education Act and the declining notion of 'Taxes on Knowledge' with an increasingly free press had made Britain a more literate population.[23] Managing servants became a large topic for middle-class readers, for the proper exercise of authority over them, again demonstrating the dependency of mistresses on their servants.[24] Anxieties also fixed on what was deemed acceptable for domestic servants to read; as for many, reading was a sign of the 'collapse of domestic authority and the proper hierarchies of the home'.[25] This reflects as Beetham argues, that the controlling of servants reading was itself a 'knot or tangle in the webs of power and resistance which characterized domestic authority' in this period.[26] This example of the greater consumption of literature by domestic servants stretched the boundaries and notions of the 'private sphere'. Education therefore had been a means for servants to negotiate their positions, eventually it became a way of challenging social assumptions in which they were based, and to this we must turn.

The Domestic Workers Unions of Great Britain and Ireland demanded their labour in the 'private sphere' be defined as work. Formed in 1909 in response to correspondence in the *Women's Worker*- the socialist feminist newspaper of the National Federation of Women Workers, the union challenged assumptions of work, both public and private and women's relationship to both. As Schwartz argues, unlike the earlier attempts at unionization that had sought simply to set limits on the relationship between mistress and servants, the new union tried to define the relationship as a formal contract between employer and employee. The necessity for a union, the members argued, was not simply a threat to gain leverage over mistresses, as the Norbiton washerwomen had, but to establish their 'rights not privileges'.[27] Public struggle therefore was deemed the most appropriate

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[22] Dussart, '*The servant/employer relationship in nineteenth century England and India'.* P.184.

[23] Beetham, Margaret, 'Domestic servants as poachers of print: Reading, authority and resistance in late Victorian Britain' in *The Politics of Domestic Authority in Britain Since 1800.* Edited by Lucy Delap, Ben Griffin and Abigail Wills. *Twentieth Century British History*, 21(3), (2010). P.186

[24] For a good primary source of a mistress's dependency on her servants refer to Jane Carlyle's diaries. See J.A Froude, (ed.) Letters and Memorials o fJane Welsh Carlyle, 3 vols (London, 1883)

[25] Beetham, Domestic servants as poachers of print: Reading, authority and resistance in late Victorian Britain'. P.186.

[26] Beetham, Domestic servants as poachers of print: Reading, authority and resistance in late Victorian Britain'. P.185.

[27] Schwartz, "'What we think is needed is a union of domestics such as the miners have': The Domestic Workers' Union of Great Britain and Ireland 1908-14". P.192.

way to challenge gendered assumptions of work in the 'private sphere'. This group contextually can be seen as drawing on feminism and trade unionism of the early 20th century. Interestingly they faced hostility from these movements, in particular the feminist movements, which could not reconcile their own arguments for emancipation through work outside the home with domestic servants complaints.[28] This hostility reflects the prevalent nature of middle-class assumptions of the home, gendered dutiful work and class status.

All these examples of unionization sought in someway to change the structures of domestic service they were bound by. However, it would be wrong to assume that this represents all domestic servants in this period. Indeed, these movements were all small and short lived. The Domestic Servants Union of Great Britain and Ireland did not survive past the First World War, and it's membership only reached 400 full members, with 2000 more affiliated.[29] However whilst small, these examples allow us to think more broadly about perspectives on work and class. Historical writings on work and its relation to class have been based upon conceptualizations informed by Adam Smith and later Karl Marx. Labour is realized through the crystallization of an object, a physical thing that can be sold. [30] Therefore domestic service has not been, in this historical understanding seen as 'work' because the 'work' does not amount to a physical product. However what these attempts at unionization demonstrate, is that notions of 'work' were realized, that servants demanded recognition via the 'private sphere', and at times certain domestic servants actively responded to, and mobilized through wider class movements.

In conclusion this article has argued that domestic servants were not ubiquitously passive recipients to the class based gender-defined work they undertook. Through active engagement in the 'private sphere' and the threat of unionization, they sought to negotiate their positions with their mistress/ employer. The demands they articulated used the language of workers' rights and tried to gain recognition for their labour to be considered as 'work'. Such expressions conceptually challenged social assumptions of the 'public' and 'private sphere'. Employer's reaction highlights the level of dependency they had on their domestic servants, and again challenges assumptions that domestic service was a duty, meant to educate working class girls on domestic responsibility. Secondly these movements cannot be seen removed from a wider contextual understanding. Ideas from working class trade unionism and feminist movements converged in the early 20th century in the Domestic Workers Union to challenge entrenched notions of work based on gender. Indeed, by challenging the concept of what was 'work' these domestic servants were conceptually attacking social assumptions that were meant to underpin the 'stability' of society.

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[28] Schwartz, "'What we think is needed is a union of domestics such as the miners have': The Domestic Workers' Union of Great Britain and Ireland 1908-14". P.176.

[29] Schwartz, "'What we think is needed is a union of domestics such as the miners have': The Domestic Workers' Union of Great Britain and Ireland 1908-14". Pp.186-197.

[30] Steedman, Caroline, '*Master and servant*'. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Pp.72-73.

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To what extent was the solidarity of the British Black women's movement undermined by ethnic divisions?

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Abstract: In 1970's Britain, women of varying ethnic backgrounds united in Black solidarity as a means of resistance to an oppressive society as well as a response to exclusions felt from the [white dominated] Women's Liberation and [male dominated] Black Power Movement. What this essay seeks to address is the Intersectional ways in which the British Black women's movement was solidified and strengthened through its varying identities, and yet was also undermined through their differing priorities and aims, consequentially leading to its demise and the formation of sub-groups as better means of resistance.

Key Words: Intersectionality, Solidarity, Gender, Race, Sexuality, Politically Black, Organisation

The British Black women's movement was born out of feelings of exclusion from both the [white dominated] Women's Liberation movement and the [male dominated] Black Power movement. These British Black women began to organise and find their own voice to address their needs. Solidarity was shaped by ethnic *diversity*, yet undermined by ethnic *divisions*. The rise and fall of the Organisation of Women of Asian and African Descent (OWAAD) must be looked at in its relation to gender oppression, race oppression and class oppression and the movement's precursors and aftermath. This 'triple oppression' experienced by British Black women shaped and yet undermined the movement. Moreover, the lack of acknowledgment of sexuality within the movement, specifically on queer women of colour, further caused a disintegration of unity.[1]

An extensive oral history archive at the British Library called *Sisterhood and After* is a recent project that reflects on the 1970's and 1980's feminist movement. Through this we are able to experience and understand the British Black women's movement in a wider context and through the personal and shared histories of those involved. Stella Dadzie formed OWAAD in 1978 and in her oral reflection

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[1] Carby, Hazel V., *White Woman Listen! Black feminism and the boundaries of sisterhood,* cited in Heidi Safia Mirza, *Black British Feminism,* [Routledge: 1997] page 45

expresses that 'diversity was our strength and our Achilles heel'.[2] It began with the inclusion of people from different ethnic backgrounds, and while their issues were similar due to a shared experience of racism, 'major differences about priorities and political strategies to deal with them' was their weakness.[3]

'Diversity was our strength.' British Black women were made up of many ethnic backgrounds; of African, Asian and Caribbean descent. Through a shared experience of imperialism and racism they felt unheard within the [white] Women's Liberation Movement that upheld the idea of a global sisterhood without recognising the cultural differences that these Black women experienced in British society.[4] White feminism as understood by Aziz Razia is 'feminism which comes from a white perspective, *and* universalises it.[5] This essentialist feminism encouraged an Afro-Asian unity to challenge this. In the *Feminist Review* No. 17 from 1984 Valerie Amos and Pratibha Parmar's collaborative essay discusses their challenge to this Imperial Feminism, addressing the oppressive ways in which White Feminism harms Black women. Specifically in its ethno and euro-centrism, the exclusion of their needs and the racist treatment of Black women as anthropological 'subjects for interesting and exotic comparison', the collective experience of women of colour helped produce feelings of solidarity.[6]

The Organisation of Women of Asian and African Descent was originally 'of Women of Africa and African Descent.' The change to include Asian women, only six months into its formation, was a watershed moment in the Black women's solidarity movement. It was made up of women from a number of existing Black women's groups across the nation. In spite of differences in cultures and possible contradictions, Black women organising aimed at supporting each other. As a clear example of this, unified support was shown during an attack ensued on Asian women's bodies at Heathrow Airport in 1979 where they were subject to invasive and inappropriate virginity testing on arrival to ensure they were entering the country to meet their fiancés. This abuse caused outrage over the Black women's community and created a sense of Afro-Asian unity, whereby OWAAD gave support through communal protest (see Appendix).

'Political Blackness' was a term utilised in the movement for solidarity.[7] 'It defines our situation here in Britain. We're here as a result of British imperialism, and our continued oppression in Britain is the result of British racism.'[8] The organisation of national conferences and the newsletters also provide evidence for the initial development of their solidarity. In the first national conference in March 1979, 300 African, Caribbean and South Asian women attended to discuss employment, housing, education and health that affected the Black communities.

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[2] Dadzie, Stella, *Sisterhood and After; OWAAD, Organisation of Women of Asian and African Descent,* [British Library, www.bl.uk: 2012]

[3] Brah, Aviar, *Difference, Diversity, Differentiation,* [International Review of Sociology: 2010] page 65

[4] Sudbury, Julia, *Other Kinds of Dreams: Black Women's Organisation and the Politics of Transformation,* [University of Warwick, Dep. Of Sociology: 1997] page 209

[5] Aziz, Razia, *Feminism and the Challenge of Racism; Deviance or difference?* Cited in Heidi Safia Mirza, *Black British Feminism,* [Routledge: 1997] page 70

[6] Amos, Valerie & Parmar, Pratibha, *Challenging Imperial Feminism,* [Feminist Review, No. 17: 1984] pages 1-19

[7] Sivanandan, Ambalavaner, *RAT and the degradation of black struggle,* [Race and Class Vol. 26, No. 4: 1985]

[8] Bryan, Beverley; Dadzie, Stella; Scafe, Suzanne, *The Heart of the Race, Black women's lives in Britain,* [Virago Press: 1985] page 170

Despite the encouragement of labour migration by the British government in the post-war years, Black women faced much sexist and racist discrimination in the workplace against a historical backdrop of slavery and colonial 'exploitation in the interests of capital' that resonated in contemporary society.[9] In 1982 the first Theatre of Black Women was formed in response to their exclusion from the white male theatre culture. Bernadine Evaristo highlights that the female roles for Black women of African and Caribbean descent in the mainstream theatre industry 'were limited to the reductive stereotypes of nurse, cleaner, prostitute.'[10] This somewhat reflects their economic limitations within British employment to particular industries such as nursing and cleaning due to the institutionalised oppressions that reproduces class-based structures for women of colour.[11] Furthermore, Asian women's experience of mistreatment in their employment limited them to a sub-class of working class jobs. Specifically in the case at Grunwick where management 'made use of the poverty of Asians' by using them for cheap labour.[12] Asian women organised a strike from 1976-78, and this organisation created a sense of solidarity within the Asian community that itself was made up of many different ethnicities. This solidarity was brought to the OWAAD conferences, finding strength in difference, relating their struggles to the racist institutions that were a part of white British society.

Education was also a unifying subject for these women of diverse ethnicities, whereby children of all different backgrounds suffered from an 'inward looking, Eurocentric curriculum'[13] that 'confirmed that Black people had no valid contribution to make to society.'[14] Not only did this clearly racist institution privilege white children, mothers were also blamed for their children's failings and many of their children were sent to educationally subnormal schools (ESN) further impairing their agency and internalising their failure as inherent. OWAAD's national conference gave mothers of different ethnicities a platform to express their outrage and produce a space for resistance. Women unified in setting up 'Saturday and Supplementary Schools up and down the country.'[15]

Further ways in which their ethnic diversity helped strengthen the movement was through the battle against the state's racist attack on women's bodies. While the [white dominated] Women's Liberation Movement was fighting for abortion and contraception, Black women were subject to serious attacks on their reproductive rights by being readily given abortions and untested contraception such as Depo Provera, that unknowingly had lasting effects of infertility; echoing the eugenic practices of the early 20th century that were advocated by white middle-class First-wave feminists in Britain. Rowena Arshad on *Sisterhood and After* explains this was a 'population control mechanism' for Black people's alleged 'sexual

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[9] Mama, Amina, *Black Women, the Economic Crisis and the British State,* [Feminist Review Vol. 17: 1984]

[10] Evaristo, Bernadine, *Unfinished Stories,* http://www.unfinishedhistories.com/history/companies/theatre-of-black-women/bernardine-evaristo-talk/ [date accessed: 23/04/2015]

[11] Amina Mama, *Black Women, the Economic Crisis and the British State* cited in Heidi Safia Mirza, *Black British Feminism,* [Routledge: 1997] page 37

[12] Wilson, Amrit, *Finding a Voice, Asian women in Britain,* cited in Heidi Safia Mirza, *Black British Feminism,* [Routledge: 1997] page 33

[13] Bryan, Beverley; Dadzie, Stella; Scafe, Suzanne, *The Heart of the Race, Black women's lives in Britain,* [Virago Press: 1985] page 59

[14] Ibid, page 66

[15] Ibid, page 71

promiscuity.'[16] Black women across the country from different ethnicities felt this was an attack on all their bodies, bringing together a shared experience of racism and sexism thus understanding the serious need for solidarity, to unify against the British state.

We can see how ethnic diversity, excluded from white British society, really unified Black women across the country through their shared history of oppression from European colonialism and their contemporary experience of the institutionalised racism and sexism in daily life, in employment, education and their bodies.

Nevertheless, as the movement progressed, this celebration of ethnic diversity transgressed into ethnic divisions, their 'Achilles heel', resulting in OWAAD's demise by 1983.[17] The whole idea of 'Political Blackness' was fundamentally problematic, despite its early solidarity between women of African, Caribbean and Asian descent. Their 'multi-textured identities' meant the organisation was jeopardised as the priorities varied across ethnicities.[18] Specifically many Asian women felt their voices weren't heard and in an interview with the Brixton Black Women's Group by Alice Henry in 1984 they claimed 'there were still problems' in the national conferences such as 'questions about posters with not enough images of Asian women.'[19] Additionally, in the significant narrative *The Heart of the Race* that describes the Black women's experience in 1970/80's Britain, Asian women's contributions are 'largely absent'.[20] Their exclusion from much of the discourse from the time conveys a disparity and inevitably a breakdown of solidarity. While 'Political Blackness' had encouraging aims, ethnic divisiveness is apparent in the absence of Asian women's. In an interview with Judith Lockhart in 2009 she recalls many debates in OWAAD of 'who is black and who isn't black.' Additionally, a woman of mixed-heritage reported in the 1984 newsletter *We Are Here! Black Feminist Newsletter* expressed the frustrating experience of a Black Feminist conference describing a 'hierarchy of oppression' within the movement.[21]

The ethnic divisions that undermined the Black women's solidarity were the racialised class differences. Initially the Black community was thought of as a universal 'underclass' that experienced a common disenfranchisement from the institutionally racist state, yet a realisation over the course of OWAAD found that different groups were located in different socio-economic positions. Depending on what cultural background they had resulted in an impact on their education and employment and therefore class position and therefore tensions within the organisation of the Black women's movement.

Culturally, many women of Afro-Caribbean descent were seen as heads of the household, and therefore many went into employment to provide for their families. Under the NHS, unlike the white

[16] Arshad, Rowena, *Sisterhood and After, Contraception and controlling poor women's bodies, Sisterhood and After, Organisation of Women of Asian and African Descent (OWAAD),* [British Library, www.bl.uk: 2012]

[17] Dadzie, Stella, *Sisterhood and After: OWAAD,* [British Library, www.bl.uk: 2012]

[18] Modood, Tariq, *Political Blackness and British Asians,* [Sociology, Vol. 28, No. 4: 1994] pages 53-73

[19] Henry, Alice & Brixton Black Women's Group, *Black Politics = Black Feminism: Brixton Black Women's Group talks about its part in British Black feminism…* [Off Our Backs, Vol. 14, No. 11: 1984] page 15

[20] Sudbury, Julia, *Other Kinds of Dreams: Black Women's Organisation and the Politics of Transformation,* [University of Warwick, Dep. Of Sociology: 1997] page 22

[21] Swaby, Nydia A., '*disparate in voice, sympathetic in direction': gendered political blackness and the politics of solidarity,* [Feminist Review 108: 2014] page 21

British women who were employed as State Registered Nurses, they were employed as State Enrolled Nurses (SEN) and this allowed for economic exploitation due to the general lower status of the SEN.[22] Despite their poor treatment in British employment, Afro-Caribbean made up approximately 67% of the formal labour force, one of the highest participation rates due to the cultural expectations of women as household providers.[23]

While many Afro-Caribbean women were generally employed in low-waged jobs, Asian women had a variety of other class issues that arose due to the internal dynamics with the Asian community that depended mainly on religious differences. Asian women tended to come to Britain as dependents, horrifying the white (and sometimes black) women of their culture that encouraged arranged marriages.[24] Within the Asian community, Pakistani and Bangladeshi were mostly from traditional Islamist backgrounds and were unlikely to work outside the domestic private sphere of the home. Therefore, there was a very low rate of economic activity, whereas the Punjabi and Gujarati women were able to take up jobs outside of the home.[25] This constituted a difficult task in how to organise the movement as employment and education varied across the different ethnicities, therefore priorities varied. Furthermore, with the constraints of many women to the private sphere meant that some women were unable to attend meetings. A hierarchy of oppression arose due to the different needs of the women, where different ethnicities saw their needs higher up on the agenda, while many voices went unheard. Resulting in a rise in tensions within the movement.

Further ways in which ethnic divisions undermined the solidarity of the movement existed in mixed-race women. A sense of 'pigmentation politics' was felt in OWAAD, with the marginalisation of those with lighter skin resulting in feelings of invalid identities. Furthermore, Swaby highlights that mixed-race women and black women 'who had a white partner felt they had to prove or defend their blackness.'[26] Those in mixed-relationships were subject to unease within the Black women's movement, hit with a feeling of 'contradiction and a split' and many experienced a range of responses from 'silent hostility to ostracism'.[27] Thus undermining the unity of Black women.

Not only did ethnic divisions undermine the British Black women's movement, but the solidarity also disintegrated due to the tensions within OWAAD on the subject of sexuality, specifically of Queer women. Dadzie's reflection on diversity being their 'Achilles heel' is certainly true in this respect, as many

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[22] Mama, Amina *Black Women, the Economic Crisis and the British State* cited in Heidi Safia Mirza, *Black British Feminism,* [Routledge: 1997] page 38

[23] Loury, Glenn C; Modood, Tariq; Tele, Steven M, *Ethnicity Social Mobility, and Public Policy: Comparing the USA and UK,* [Cambridge University Press: 2005] page 185

[24] Carby (Mirza) page 47

[25] Loury, Glenn C; Modood, Tariq; Tele, Steven M, *Ethnicity Social Mobility, and Public Policy: Comparing the USA and UK,* [Cambridge University Press: 2005] page 185

[26] Swaby '*disparate in voice, sympathetic in direction': gendered political blackness and the politics of solidarity,* [Feminist Review 108: 2014] page 22

[27] Sudbury, Julia, *Other Kinds of Dreams: Black Women's Organisation and the Politics of Transformation,* [University of Warwick, Dep. Of Sociology: 1997] page 118

Black lesbian and bisexual women felt excluded, ignored and homophobically attacked within the movement.

From the first national conference in 1979 there were women who questioned the absence of a debate on sexuality. As the movement progressed, sexuality was defined on the terms of 'gender relations', in order to focus the politics on to women's oppression by the patriarchal system as a part of the Anti-Imperialist struggle. There was a strong opinion to avoid the area of sexual orientation, fearing this would detract from more 'pressing' issues. They confined lesbianism to the private realm, despite the movement's belief that the 'personal is political'. The Brixton Black Women's Group reflected the year after OWAAD split on how divisive this definition of sexuality became over the course of OWAAD's existence, taking it as a lesson for future organisations.[28]

Homophobia within the movement grew, whereby lesbianism was increasingly considered a 'white woman's disease' that was infected in the Black community and was detrimental to the struggle against British racism. Furthermore, it could be argued that ethnic divisions within OWAAD and their differing religious cultures facilitated the tensions with sexuality. Sudbury highlights that 'both Christian and Muslim women expressed their religious convictions against homosexuality'. Thus a combination of ethnic and sexual divisions helped to undermine the solidarity of the movement.[29]

The culmination of hostility occurred when 40 Black lesbians were attacked for holding their first lesbian workshop at the third national conference in 1981. In an interview with the Brixton Black Women's Group by *Speak Out Magazine*, they stated their attitudes towards lesbianism as not an important issue on the agenda. Apparently the '3rd conference coincided with the uprisings' of 1981 in Brixton, thus many women didn't 'think it was *timely* that lesbians brought up the issue of sexuality'.[30] These 40 lesbians were reportedly verbally attacked. Their alienation became an incredible failing of the Black women's movement. Many lesbian groups were consequently set up as a response to OWAAD's homophobia. They were 'no longer willing to pass as heterosexual or face rejection' in order to create an autonomous voice.[31]

Despite these tensions throughout OWAAD's existence, Black identified lesbians were predominantly absent from one of the most 'important liberating narratives' of the British Black women's movement. *The Heart of the Race* doesn't have 'lesbian' in its index and is therefore absent from this very important book for Black women, conveying the hostile residue in the aftermath of OWAAD's disintegration.

The success and failings of the British Black women's movement was in most part due to the vast array of ethnicities. As a response to the [white dominated] Women's Liberation Movement and the state enforced racism, Black women of all backgrounds came together to put up a united front. They shared a

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[28] Brixton Black Women's Group, *Black Women Organising* [Feminist Review No. 17: 1984] page 87-89

[29] Sudbury, Julia, *Other Kinds of Dreams: Black Women's Organisation and the Politics of Transformation,* [University of Warwick, Dep. Of Sociology: 1997] page 154, 108

[30] Henry, Alice & Brixton Black Women's Group, *Black Politics = Black Feminism: Brixton Black Women's Group talks about its part in British Black feminism…* [Off Our Backs, Vol. 14, No. 11: 1984] page 15

[31] Sudbury, Julia, *Other Kinds of Dreams: Black Women's Organisation and the Politics of Transformation,* [University of Warwick, Dep. Of Sociology: 1997] page 16

common history of oppression yet this solidarity collapsed due to a difficulty in the prioritisation of issues that varied across these different ethnicities. Celebrated ethnic diversity transgressed into ethnic divisions. Not only did ethnicity lead to the demise of OWAAD's organisation, but also the exclusion of sexuality undermined the solidarity. Much has been learnt from this and the whole movement birthed the concept of *Intersectionality*, that moves away from focusing on their 'triple oppression' of black, female and working class, toward an all-inclusive term that enables women of colour who experience a vast range of oppressions to feel a sense of solidarity while organising and resisting within sub-groups.

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APPENDIX

OWAAD poster, 1978

The Guardian front page, Thursday February 9th 1979

"Roots and Rave" as "The Enemy Within": Sound-systems as sites of Resistance and Identification in 1980's Britain

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Abstract: The 1980's saw a period of ideological, political and social restructuring under the Thatcherite Government; the machinations of a new breed of monetarism and individualism. Modes of resistance among youth cultures and racial minorities were broad and diverse - but it was through the particular technological application of the sound-system that two otherwise disparate subcultures, Roots-Dancehall attendees and New Age Travellers, mutually attempted to "resist" - each with differing motivations and eventual outcomes.

Key Words: Sound-systems, Roots, Rave, Subcultures, Resistance, Thatcherism

In this essay I want to engage with two subcultural groups, 'Roots' and 'Rave', who both used the sound-system, in one interpretation as a form of cultural protection and the other as an alternative mode of social organisation, to create sites of resistance and identification throughout the 1980's. The sound-system was utilised in different ways by different groups of people for different reasons, yet both examples represented a fundamental rejection of the socio-economic & political situation, moral-norms & ideological prescriptions of the Thatcherite era. The dissent of these groups was not on the same scale as the activism of the Unions or the labour movement, yet they can be considered a minor "enemy within", *"a presence that did not fit with Thatcherism's conception of Britain"[1]* or the "constituent other", against which Thatcherite Britain coherently defined itself - for example; *"the morally corrupt, potentially insane raver ... against the 'normal', 'sane' society"[2]*. Furthermore, the repressive measures against these subcultural groups - exemplified in the Brixton Riots of 1981 & 1985, and the Battle of Beanfield in 1985 - serves as testament to the potency of their moral and structural affronts to the values of Thatcherite Government.

For the purposes of this essay it is important to stress what a sound-system actually constitutes as, over a simple PA system akin to one found in a club: In its original format, developed in Jamaica during

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[1] Andrew Hill, *"Acid House and Thatcherism: noise, the mob, and the English countryside",* British Journal of Sociology, *53(1),* first published online 15th December 2013*, pp.* 90

[2] Daniel Martin, *"Power Play and Party Politics: The SIgnificance of Raving"* The Journal of Popular Culture, Volume 32, Issue 4, March 2004, pp. 80

the 1940's and 50's, sound-systems are *"an electronic mode of playing for mass entertainment"[3]* - collectively owned and operated amplification "rigs" consisting of a proliferation of bass bins, mids and tops which play amplified music in a variety of outdoor and indoor environments, public and private. While each sound-system may play the same songs as other systems, or particularly popular Roots and Dub tracks of the moment, each sound-system works towards the creation of its own "Sound". This "Sound" was the collective product of a three-plus person team consisting of a Deejay, Selector and Soundman/Engineer, complemented by the ownership of unique, single press "dubplates" - unavailable to any other sound-system - and replete with self-constructed "preamps", which give each sound-system a unique musical texture and overall feel. Distinction must also be made between the Deejay and the Disk Jockey - as it is understood in other genres like Hip Hop: For sound-systems, a Deejay was akin to a frontman who would sing and speak - "Chat", "Spit", or "Toast" - over an instrumental "riddim". The ways in which songs were resultingly mixed, edited and Deejay'd over constitutes as a unique creative product; *"that's your individuality .. cause that's how you sound ... and every sound sound different, no two sounds sound the same"[4].*

This essay focusses on two distinct interpretations of the sound-system format: The first is the network of urban-based African-Caribbean Roots Reggae/Dub sound-systems - which were popular in cities nationwide - but with specific focus on South London systems such as Saxon Studio International, Ghetto-tone Sound System, Aba Shanti-I, and Channel One Sound System. Enduringly popular throughout the decade, and with a venerable history stretching back to the 1950's, these 'Roots-systems' played in a variety of locations; in clubs and community centres, schools and sports-halls, and in public locations such as Notting Hill Carnival. They were attended and run predominantly by working-class Black youth. The second interpretation of the format, which in some ways can be considered an appropriation[5], is the network of both urban and rurally based Rave sound-systems which became increasingly popular throughout the decade, gaining further momentum into the 1990's: The urban group of Rave systems played entirely in "found" and illegal spaces; such as squats or bus depots, while the rural systems assimilated into the New Age Traveller Movement - the transient caravan-communities which travelled extensively across the country and orbited around early free festivals such as Glastonbury, Windsor and Stonehenge. They largely played Acid House, Detroit Techno and, towards the end of the decade, early Drum & Bass - and this distinction includes; The Peace Convoy, Genesis88', Mutoid Waste Sound System and later the Spiral Tribe and DiY Sound Systems.

To analyse the sound-system as a site of resistance, one of the first questions we must ask is *why the sound-system?* What specifically made it the format of choice for these subcultural groups to create spaces wherein they could "resist" the outside world of Thatcherite Britain? Its structural and organisational characteristics were undoubtedly significant: As both highly portable and requiring limited

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[3] Clinton Hutton, *"Forging Identity And Community Through Aestheticism and Entertainment: The Sound System and The Rise Of The DJ",* (Caribbean Quarterly, Vol. 53, No. 4, Pioneering Icons of Jamaican Popular Music, December 2007, University of the West Indies and Caribbean Quarterly Press), pp. 17

[4] Karl Foulke, *Musically Mad* (2008), (Director), [DVD]: Independently released, (6:57 - 7:04) / alternatively available on youtube; WINNIPEGJUNGLE.ca (2014), *"MUSICALLY MAD - UK SOUNDSYSTEM DOCUMENTARY (2010)",* available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NK0vBKsK7fI, (last accessed 11th May 2015)

[5] The social dynamic of white communities appropriating and celebrating elements of Black culture, yet devoid of its culturally essential properties and ethnic essence, is the subject of a wide and rich area of study - yet not overtly relevant to this essay.

time to set-up, sound-systems were ideal for groups that regularly played music in "found-spaces" - in abandoned warehouses, squats, or privately-owned fields and woodland. A three-person team could have a live sound-system underway, playing music, within an hour of arriving at a designated space. This spontaneity made sound-systems unpredictable, and reduced the risk of the Police preemptively shutting them down. Even if they were neutralized, a highly portable system could be up and running at another location a few hours later. The sheer flexibility of the format ensured that the Police were only ever playing a game of cat-and-mouse with subcultures that were resiliently kinetic.

To this end, the sound-system must be understood as a rejection of mainstream channels of leisure and entertainment; such as attending pubs, bars or clubs. Producing spaces for entertainment in disused, reclaimed, or illegal environments - coupled with listening to music which is firmly outside the mainstream, is both a spatial and musical rejection of the established norm. This "do-it-yourself" impetus develops for several reasons: Firstly, normative or mainstream modes of leisure and entertainment reject the individual's presence, due to bigotry or bias - or secondly, the mainstream does not cater to the individual's personal musical or environmental tastes.

Sound-systems, inevitably caught in the cultural shockwaves of Punk and later Anarcho-Punk's DIY ethos, were a logical reaction to not being accepted or represented by - or not hearing or seeing what you wanted - in mainstream sources of nightlife. Instead, building one's own sound-system by sourcing your own equipment, finding your own environment, and playing your own records was an attempt at producing, *"a space ... that operated purposefully outside of the rules set up by the entertainment industry and outside of the 'slavery' of paid work in a capitalist society"[6].* This space would be relevant to, and imbued with the political affiliation, social norms, and behaviours of your associated subculture - whether Roots or Rave - and catalysed by playing the music, the cultural essence, of that subculture.

To further analyse sound-systems as sites of resistance we have to consider how they ideologically and morally dissented from the prescribed "norms" of the Thatcherite era: Their DIY ethos has already been remarked, but this takes on new significance when we observe sound-systems as largely not-for-profit organisations. Most systems generated only enough capital to keep themselves functioning. To attend a normative nightlife-space; such as a bar, pub or club, was to contribute to the national economy through the taxes paid by the venue and the taxes placed on alcohol sold at that venue. Sound-system gigs, where people regularly paid no admission, brought or sold their own booze, and where most capital made was invested directly back into the maintenance of the system - cash in hand - meant that they effectively existed "off the grid". For a Thatcherite Government which was extolling the virtues *"of hedonistic, amoral consumerism"[7]*, and venerating the act of consumption through the proliferation of spaces *in which to consume; (*such as newly constructed central-London shopping-centres), a space which rejected this materialist line so wholly was an absolute dissent from the norm. Endemic to this economic ideology was the Tory government's ennobling of individualism: To own a consumer product, or attend a space-for-consumption like a shopping-centre - was to worship the material accumulation of the individual. Sound-systems, contrastingly, were entirely collective in their ideology and organisation: The amplification system was collectively owned, it's setting-up and operation required the effort of a team

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[6] Sonia Sabelli "*'Dubbing di diaspora': gender and reggae music inna Babylon",* Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture (17:1), Università La Sapienza, pp. 140

[7] Bella Mackie, *Comment is Free: Margaret Thatcher's Legacy - Our Readers Respond,* The Guardian (2013). Available at http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/apr/09/margaret-thatcher-class-legacy, (Accessed 5th May 2015)

of individuals, and, whether Roots or Rave, the music that was played collectively enjoyed - and in a sense owned - by each sub-cultural group. Rave and Acid House sound-systems further produced sensations of inclusiveness and universal connection via the prevalent ingestion of amphetamines and psychedelics; a space where an individual could *"throw* (themselves) *to the winds of transformation and sow the seeds for a new world - one where the family is together again, where people respect and care for each other as a community - an organism".[8]*

This propensity and relaxed attitude to drug-use was another way in which sound-systems morally dissented from the prescribed norms of the 1980's. The Rave-systems, absorbed in the New Age Travellers legacy of the Love-Era's preoccupation with LSD, embraced Ecstasy as their defining drug of choice. The potency of Methylene-dioxymethamphetamine (MDMA)'s ability to produce sensations of joy and euphoria, especially when combined with exhaustive, rhythmic dancing, are widely documented - and the unbridled positivity of Rave, fueled by this particular means of intoxication, was its key mode of resistance: Rallying against what it saw as the drab and alcohol-centered mainstream of entertainment; such as "going down the pub" after clock-out. This form of resistance constituted a number of "moral-panics" throughout the decade, catalysed by Tory-rag broadsheets such as The Sun; who rabidly published headlines concerning the *"assumed moral deprivation of Britain's youth",* such as "Love Pills Kill a Perfect Son" and "Acid Fiends Spike Page Three Girls Drink"[9].

Roots sound-systems were also involved in drug-consumption culture - through their connection to the tenets and cultural behaviours of Rastafarianism; which in some part involves the entheogenic consumption Cannabis. Alternative religious forms can be seen as a further type of moral-dissent, which were component to both interpretations of the sound-system: Rastafarianism, with its unique prophets such as Marcus Garvey and Haile Selassie I, fundamentally rejected Eurocentric-Christian forms, while amongst the New-Age Traveller movement the annual pilgrimage of "returning to the Stones" during the Stonehenge Free Festival gave rise to small-scale spiritual movements like Neo-Druidism and Pagan-Revivalism. For many Ravers, the spiritual forms they encountered were indefinably liquid and totally incompatible with doctrine; *"raves should influence people metaphysically outside of the religious sphere. In actual effect, this is the creation of a . . . religion without theological foundation or unified expression"[10]* - and both constitute an equally far cry from mainstream Christian Monotheism.

The second fundamental property of Sound systems during the 1980's was their function as sites of identification: While they were not necessarily racially exclusive, Roots sound-systems had long been meaningful hubs for Black, working class youth culture in urban environments throughout the country; most acutely in London and concentrated in the South/South East boroughs of Lewisham, Deptford and Brixton. They created forms of identification in two ways: Firstly, by utilising community spaces such as meeting halls, schools and sports-clubs to set up a gig, and through friendly competition between sound-systems in "Sound-Clashes" - where systems compete for the audience's favour with "the best sound" - the Roots sound-systems produced a network of *micro-territorialities*. These territorial-affiliations, which consisted of anything from a single street to an entire borough, venerated local sound-systems as community products - with each area's native sound-system becoming a flashpoint for local identity and

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[8] Scott R. Hutson, *"The Rave: Spiritual Healing in Modern Western Subcultures"*, Anthropological Quarterly, Vol. 73, No. 1 (Jan., 2000), The George Washington University Institute for Ethnographic Research, pp. 42

[9] Martin, *"Power Play and Party Politics",* pp. 79

[10] Hutson, *"The Rave: Spiritual Healing",* pp. 38

engendering community pride. Members of systems like Saxon Studio International, such as its founder Dennis Rowe, were born in Lewisham, grew up in Lewisham, and the sound systems they went on to establish played extensively throughout Lewisham; each 'Roots-system' was thus inseparable from its local urban heritage. In the cases where the music they produced garnered substantial recognition - in the UK Top Forty, or - in the unprecedented case of Papa Levi's *"Mi God Mi King"* - the Top Ten, these systems became further celebrated; the cultural product of their community had become a high-profile example of African-Caribbean cultural product in Britain. Sound systems thus engendered a sense of community identity that was localised, working class, black, and subject to a host of further specifications based on micro-scale territoriality, yet could transcend this locality and project it's relevant political/social/spiritual messages to a national audience.

Thus the second way in which Roots sound-systems acted as sites of identity was directly to do with the content of the music itself. Firstly through the messages of canonical Roots songs by Jamaican artists, which were played in proliferation - such as Dennis Brown's "Africa": First released in 1973, the track is rich with diasporic messages concerning the indigenous identity of Caribbean migrants;

"Africa we want to go / our fore-parents were born Ethiopians / it's the land of the lion and the tribe of Judah".

More contemporary - and British - artists followed a similar theme; such as Birmingham-based Steel Pulse's "Not King James Version", released in 1985, which eulogized the repressed history of African interpretations of Christianity, as recapitulated throughout the 20th century by the Ethiopianism movement;

"...Cause out of Africa / came the Garden of Eden / hidden from me I was never told / ancient prophets black and bold".

By playing music that was culturally indigenous, and openly reminded audience members of their racial history, sounds-systems thus acted as sites of identification on both a micro and macro scale: At a community level as specific as a street or an estate, and at a deeper racial and historical level - as an African diaspora. Furthermore, the interactional role of the Deejay created a space where attendees identified with the sound system on a personal and a political level - as recipients of the Deejay's frontman-ship: Firstly, through the use of self-referential "call and response" dynamics, such as *"People - are you ready?"* - initiating a reaction in the positive from the audience such as *"We're ready!"*, and *"Rewind!"* - commanding that the opening bars of a record should be played over and over to build anticipation. Secondly, through the use of relevant "toasts" or "chats" about of-the-moment political issues; such as Papa Levi's "In A Mi Yard". Written and performed in the aftermath of the 1981 Brixton Riots, Levi remarks:

"a newsflash come pon mi Philip's T.V / concerning Brixton an the community / mi see the council they take a big liberty / they call up a man with machinery / they tear down the frontline vicinity / but not a word was said to the community / so evening come the yout' get angry".

Thirdly, through the use of "creolised" languages such as patois: This use of non-standard; a language that resists the English-norm and speaks in its own dialect with its own codes and slang, is a fundamental component of African-Caribbean culture and was utilised by the Deejay as the language-style in which to "chat" or "toast". Discourse & communication with audience members - on relevant topics such as unemployment or police brutality - thus became an act of cultural protection; the

embeddedness of patios had the effect of *"furnishing a site for various types of inter/intra-cultural exchanges to take place, enabling* (individuals) *to debate and discuss their own 'problem' status in a language owned and controlled by them"[11].* The sound system, acting as a site of identification, became un-navigable to those who were not of Caribbean descent and unable to associate with its cultural heritage and to the political and social issues that were contemporarily relevant to being Caribbean.

For Rave, Acid House, and the New Age Traveller Movement, sound-systems acted as sites of identification in markedly different ways. Identity was, here, acutely associated with the characteristics of the lifestyle; the act of "raving" to "Rave-music", the nature of their accommodation and social-organisation, and their aesthetic codes (or lack of): Firstly, 'Raving' - wherein an individual dances exhaustively to an unending "mix" of predominantly electronic music, with or without the ingestion of drugs - became a token of identity for 'Ravers' due to the sheer contextual-uniqueness of its auditory mode. While the kinetic practice of exhaustive dancing could most closely be associated with the Northern Soul movement of the late 60's; brought about by the up-tempo and rhythmic-centered releases of Motown, the electronic-focused Rave-genre's; such as House, Acid House, and Detroit Techno, were kindled by the popular release of early drum machines such as the Roland PR 808 and TR 909. Affordable and readily available technological innovations such as this - coupled with the ongoing development of high-quality synthesizers and samplers, produced a sound worlds away from any of the musical forms of previous generations. 'Rave music' was without a cultural or social prerequisite, a new form of musical identification.

Secondly, the practice of living transiently, in squats, yurts, vans, or bender-tents [12], was inseparably linked to a rejection of formal home ownership, wage-basis employment and tax-payment. Living 'off the grid', and outside of the regulatory strictures that a Capitalist state imposes, was a key source of identification for both establishers and attendees of Rave sound-systems, rural and urban alike. A distinction was made between them, who had chosen to *"reject the hassles associated with a conventional way of life"[13]* - and the rest of society, who either actively chose to be involved in, or were subsumed within, it. Thirdly, modes and "norms" of aesthetics and dress was of key importance in the construction of Rave identities: Often, Rave and New Age Travellers are lauded for their rejection of surface-level aestheticism, and the movement's lack of regimented dress-codes the like of which was so evidently displayed in earlier counter-cultures such as the Mods, Rockers, Teddy-Boys and Punks. However, if we consider the Rave and New Age Traveller movements as an aggregate network of sound-systems, distinct aesthetic styles emerge within each group: Mutoid Waste Sound-System, for example, adopted multicoloured dreadlocks and steampunk-esque dress - complimentary to their construction of nightmarish sculptures from reclaimed machinery - which sought to make Rave attendees feel like they

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[11] William 'Lez' Henry, *"Reggae, Rasta and the Role of the Deejay in the Black British Experience",* Contemporary British History, (26:3), Routledge, pp. 355

[12] (A simple shelter constructed from flexible branches such as hazel or willow, bent into an approximate dome-shape, and then covered with makeshift tarpaulin: highly affordable, the materials readily available, and a popular choice amongst New Age Traveller communities).

[13] Tim Guest, *"Fight For the Right to Party"*, The Guardian, (2009). Available at http://www.theguardian.com/music/2009/jul/12/90s-spiral-tribe-free-parties, (accessed 7th May 2015)

"were walking into another reality"[14]. The visual aesthetics and dress codes of each sound-system, while not high-maintenance or immaculately tended to, (like Mods), acted as sources of identification by making micro-distinctions between a plethora of other Rave-systems.

In conclusion, sound-systems during the 1980's served as sites of resistance and identification for two very different subcultural groups in very different ways. For African Caribbean and West-Indian communities in the urban sprawls of London and other cities, sound-systems were fundamental in fostering a sense of community, reminding individuals of their unique and rich cultural heritage, responding to and commenting on contextually relevant issues, and engendering a political voice amongst the urban black youth. For this subcultural group, *their identity was their resistance*: Sound-systems engendered pride in individuals' local working-class identity and their collective racial identity, whilst simultaneously equipping them with the political voice to resist an environment which, through the police force, the rise of The National Front, the 1981 New Nationality Act, the continued disregard for infrastructurally depressed housing estates, and high levels of black youth unemployment; was institutionally, politically, spatially and economically pitted against them. They dissented from the prescriptions of the Thatcherite Era by harking back to their *own, venerable, culture.* For Rave and New Age Traveller communities, sound-systems were fundamental to accommodating a rejection of mainstream culture; through its suitability for DIY initiatives, the appropriation of "found-space", and a transient lifestyle. For this subcultural group, *their resistance was their identity*: Sound-systems gave them the space to dissent from the prescriptions of the Thatcherite Era by creating a *'new' counter-cultur*e. Individualism, materialism, consumerism, and further social disparity were rejected in favour of a utopian vision of communal unity through dance, collective sharing of resources, and spirituality.

Irregardless of each group's motivation for establishing systems, be it cultural-protectionism or lifestyle-as-dissent, sound-systems can be considered a notable "Enemy Within" throughout the 1980's. The identities which they fostered and the resistance that they advocated existed as direct confrontations with the ideological, political, and social restructuring of Britain under Thatcherism. *"Money can buy neither trust nor racial harmony"*, as the Iron Lady once extolled in response to the 1981 Brixton Riots. Yet, communal trust through collective living, and racial harmony through cultural-veneration, was attempted at being fostered by two 1980's subcultures; through a non-for-profit mode of playing music - the sound-system.

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[14] Alan Lodge, Interview with undisclosed Mutoid-Waste member, *"One Eye On the Road, A Festivals and Traveller History: Mutoid Waste Company"*. Available at http://digitaljournalist.eu/OnTheRoad/mutoid-waste-company/, (accessed 7th May 2015)

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The use and abuse of history in *'Midnight's Children'* and *'Shame'*

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Abstract: *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* are counter-narratives contesting the official histories of the Subcontinent put forth by the Indian and Pakistani governments. By presenting the act of writing history as a subjective, creative process that is ideologically driven, Salman Rushdie undercuts the truth claims of history and presents it instead as a contested space. Through engaging with different philosophies of history and different cultural interpretations of the world, Rushdie encourages the view that there is no one way of viewing the world, no one way of interpreting history. All histories, all truths are subjective and created. Following this premise, Rushdie asserts the natural rivalry between writers and politicians, who both try to make the world in their own images. It is in this capacity that *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* serve as counter-narratives, offering a different, opposing view of history to the ones put forth by the political leaders of the Subcontinent.

In *'Midnight's Children'* (1981) and *'Shame'* (1983), Salman Rushdie's second and third novel, respectively, the author depicts the tensions that exist between various, and competing, versions of history, or versions of the 'truth'. The inverted quotation marks in 'truth' are important as Rushdie's treatment in these novels undercuts the truth claims of history, destabilizes history's claims of objectivity. To borrow some terms from Nietzsche, Saleem's story in *'Midnight's Children'* can be read as a counter-narrative, a 'critical' history, set against the kind of 'monumental' history put forth by Indira Gandhi's government: instead of history being shaped (and written) by great figures such as politicians or generals, history in *'Midnight's Children'* is handcuffed to individuals who inadvertently direct it's course through chance, accident and coincidence.[1] Equally, *'Midnight's Children'* can be read as an exploration of the tension between two historical philosophies: one British, one Indian. The effect produced by Rushdie's treatment of history as an exercise of memory is to sever history from any pretensions of objective truth, presenting history instead as a contested space which is, not merely open to, but requiring interpretation. In both novels Rushdie explores the concept of the nation as a human construct: an idea rather than a physical entity. In

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[1] Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *The Use and Abuse of History.* New York: Liberal Arts, 1957. pg, 12. Print.

these contexts, history is exploited for the ideological end of constructing national identity, and Rushdie draws attention to the "problem of history" one is faced with in doing this: "what to retain, what to dump, how to hold on to what memory insists on relinquishing, how to deal with change."[2] In both novels, Rushdie underscores the way that history is employed to give "shape and form – that is to say, meaning."[3] Through a reading of both novels, readers are persuaded that the act of writing history is not only a creative act – that is to say, an interpretative and subjective one, it is also a political one. "Writers and politicians are natural rivals." Rushdie remarks in *Imaginary Homelands,* "Both groups try to make the world in their own images; they fight for the same territory."[4]

Levi Strauss is quoted by one of Rushdie's critics as having said that, "history is always written for something."[5] In other words, it serves an ideological end. In '*Midnight's Children',* Saleem, the narrator, (who, let us not forget, is "handcuffed to history" and serves as a representation of India)[6] writes his autobiography in a determined effort to give form - "There is no escape from form."[7] – as well as meaning to his life, and therefore also to the modern life of India. In his story he engages with two distinct historical traditions: one, essentially British, linear, chronological – showing cause-and-effect, buttressed by accurate dates, statistics, newspaper reports etc. - the other, essentially Indian, mythical, cosmic[8] – foreshadowing events, "Twelve million votes were coloured red that year, and red is the colour of blood. More blood will flow soon…"[9]; finding connections where none can be said empirically to exist, "Riots proliferated… and to make things worse the weather joined in the melee."[10] In the novel these two strands are embodied in Saleem (India) through his dual parentage: Methwold (British) and Vanita (Indian). Through Saleem's constant analysis of his own narrative, we follow as he struggles to accommodate both perspectives and in the end he cannot help but include both: they are both part of the way in which he views reality. The product is a hybrid history which combines the British cultural philosophy that was originally imposed upon India but which is, for Saleem and the Midnight's Children, a part of their inheritance, and the indigenous Indian philosophy that was born out of its native language and culture. If we accept the premise that any version, or idea, of India is just one among many, then it would seem that Rushdie's India in *'Midnight's Children'* is one in which the nation's dual Anglo-Indian heritage must be accommodated, and where eastern and western influences must be synthesised. If one views it as a

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[2] Rushdie, Salman. *Shame.* London: Vintage, 1995. pg, 87. Print.

[3] Rushdie, Salman. *Midnight's Children*: London: Vintage, 2006. pg. 644Print.

[4] Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981-1991.* London: Vintage, 2010. pg. 14Print.

[5] Grewal, Inderpal. "Salman Rushdie: Marginality, Women, and Shame." *Reading Rushdie: Perspectives on the Fiction of Salman Rushdie.* ed. M. D. Fletcher. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994. pg, 123. Print.

[6] *Midnights Children,* pg. 4

[7] Ibid, pg. 314

[8] Srivastava, Aruna. "The Empire Writes Back": Language and History in 'Shame' and 'Midnight's Children'" Ariel 20.4 (1989) *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature.* Web. 5 Nov. 2015.

[9] *Midnight's Children,* pg. 313

[10] *Midnight's Children,* pg. 310

revisionist history (albeit an unreliable one) then it is offered as "a counter-narrative to the 'official' history of Indira Gandhi's government and the nostalgic histories of apologists for British imperialism."[11]

In *'Shame',* the primary concern of the narrative is a dramatization of the consequences of repression: in terms of history, the past is being repressed in order to give coherence to the narrative of the present. As in '*Midnight's Children',* history in '*Shame*' is viewed in terms of its role in constructing national identity, "To build Pakistan it was necessary to cover up Indian history, to deny that Indian centuries lay just beneath the surface of Pakistani Standard Time."[12] After its foundation in 1947 as 'The Land of the Pure', Pakistan needed to construct the history to match that "highest of ideals!"[13] after which it was named. "Who commandeered the job of rewriting history?" the narrator asks in *'Shame',* "The immigrants, the *mohajirs."[14]* The narrator states further that the "best thing about migrant peoples and seceded nations" is their hopefulness.[15] For these new-born beings, the purity-dream may be easier to entertain. But for those "old inhabitants, who had become accustomed to living in a land older than time, [who had] been given a bad shock by independence, by being told to think of themselves, as well as the country as new," this fantasy that is being imposed on them may seem to be, at best, "a failure of the dreaming mind"[16]. Sabrina Hussamani's opinion that Rushdie is unequivocal in his view that "the purity-dream is an impossibility because it leaves too much out"[17] seems well founded. However, in its attempt to depict this one-sidedness of Pakistani history, Hussamani is of the opinion that Rushdie falls prey to the same limited, one-sided historical perspective as that which he is criticizing. She argues that in presenting the foundation of Pakistan solely in terms of "religious fervour," Rushdie fails to give due representation to the "positive sense of 'nationhood' that inspired millions of Muslims to fight for independence…"[18] As fair as this criticism may be, admittedly part of the purpose of the narrative of *'Shame'* is to portray exclusion, marginality and the shortcomings of histories that omit too much. Thus it is faced with a problem: "What must the text omit, in order that it may represent omission?"[19] Arguably, the aspect that is most highlighted through this partisan history, as well as through Saleem's self-centred history, is the very constructed, subjective, interpretative nature of history.

Rushdie's interaction with history through the fictional mode of the novel is perfectly aligned with Hutcheon's description of postmodern fiction. "Postmodern fiction," she argues, "reveals the past as always ideologically and discursively constructed."[20] Representing history as objective is problematic for

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[11] Price, David. "Salman Rushdie's 'Use and Abuse of History' in 'Midnight's Children'" *Ariel: Review of International English Literature* 25.2 (1994): Pg, 93. Web. 5 Nov. 2015.

[12] *Shame,* pg. 87

[13] *Midnight's Children,* pg. 458

[14] *Shame,* pg. 87

[15] *Shame,* pg. 86

[16] *Shame,* pg. 87

[17] Hassumani, Sabrina. Salman Rushdie: A Postmodern Reading of His Major Works. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2002. pg, 48. Print.

[18] Hussamani, pg. 49

[19] Ibid, pg. 48

[20] Woods, Tim. *Beginning Postmodernism.* Manchester: Manchester UP, 1999. pg. 56. Print.

Rushdie for a number of reasons. As stories, *'Midnight's Children'* and *'Shame'* are both linguistic constructs. "Words, words, words… that's what history is ultimately reduced to in the behemoth-belly of Rushdie's whale."[21] Rooted in language, stories can only at best hope to *represent* reality, and even if they manage to achieve this, they will ultimately only be able to represent a *subjective* reality, one version of the world. Already faced with these two problems in representing *reality*, representing the *past* faces a further problem: the story-telling subject is necessarily separated from its subject matter by both time and space. "I think that what I'm confessing is that, however I choose to write about over-there, I am forced to reflect that world in fragments of broken mirrors… I must reconcile myself to the inevitability of the missing bits."[22] The self-confessed existence of 'missing bits' is arguably the most characteristic feature of Rushdie's history. It can rightfully be categorized under Linda Hutcheon's phrase, 'historiographic metafiction'[23].

Going back to Rushdie's statement that, "Writers and politicians are natural rivals. Both groups try to make the world in their own images; they fight for the same territory."[24] it must be admitted that in serving as counter-narratives, challenging the official histories of Gandhi and Zia's governments, both *'Shame'* and *'Midnight's Children'* have succeeded. If no other evidence is brought to bear on this claim than the fact that both novels encountered legal action from the victims of their satire (Indira Gandhi sued Rushdie; *'Shame'* is still banned in Pakistan) this should nevertheless suffice in demonstrating the poignancy of Rushdie's counter-narratives. Furthermore, Rushdie's authority is all the more legitimized (while remaining problematic) by his (or his narrators') open admission of the fallibility and subjectivity of their account. While neither of these two texts can be said to be optimistic in their tone, their challenging of 'accepted' truths and histories is constructive rather than nihilistic: promoting a widening of discourse by staking a claim to authority and by advocating tolerance of diverse opinions, hybrid influences, heterogeneous beliefs and so on. In the end, under Rushdie's logic, what history and truth boil down to is simply somebodies opinion of 'what is the case'.

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[21]Grewal, pg. 167

[22] *Shame,* pg. 69

[23] Woods, pg. 56

[24] *Imaginary Homelands,* pg. 14

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