

**“YOU SPUN GOLD OUT OF THIS HARD LIFE”:
FEMINIST WORLDMAKING PRACTICES IN THE TRANSMEDIA STORYWORLD
OF BEYONCÉ’S *LEMONADE***

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the ways in which Beyoncé Knowles-Carter's 2016 album *Lemonade* works as a culturally significant text in the realm of popular media. Situated within Black feminist theoretical concepts of freedom practices and Black Feminist Love Politics, the thesis argues that *Lemonade* mobilizes stylistic and strategic intertextual references to develop a transmedia storyworld within a paradigm of resistance to and healing from white supremacist histories. Such intertextual information exists within the musical, lyrical, visual, poetic, and transmedia domains of *Lemonade*. The transmedia extensions include interviews, live performances, speeches, social media posts, merchandise, and photoshoots. Combined with theories from Black feminist thought of freedom practices—which include talking back (bell hooks 1989), dark sousveillance (Simone Browne 2015), and interruptions to whiteness (DiAngelo 2011)—and Black Feminist Love Politics (Jennifer Nash 2013), the intertextual data present in *Lemonade* can be analyzed using methodologies from the field of popular musicology (intertextuality and medi-ality).

RESUMÉ

Cette thèse examine la façon dont l'album *Lemonade* de Beyoncé Knowles-Carter 2016 fonctionne comme un texte culturellement significatif dans le domaine des médias populaires. Située dans les concepts théoriques féministes Noirs, des pratiques de liberté, et de la politique d'amour féministe Noire, la thèse soutient que *Lemonade* mobilise des références intertextuelles stylistiques et stratégiques pour développer un monde transmedia dans un paradigme de résistance et de guérison des histoires suprématistes blanches. L'information intertextuelle existe dans les domaines musical, lyrique, visuel, poétique et transmédia de *Lemonade*. Les extensions transmédia comprennent des entretiens, des performances en direct, des discours, des publications sur des médias sociaux, des articles, et des photographes. Combiné avec les théories de la pensée féministe Noire sur les pratiques de liberté - qui incluent le retour (bell hooks 1989), la sousveillance sombre (Simone Browne 2015) et les interruptions de la blancheur (DiAngelo 2011) - et la politique d'amour féministe Noire (Jennifer Nash 2013), les données intertextuelles présentes dans *Lemonade* peuvent être analysées en utilisant des méthodologies du domaine de la musicologie populaire (intertextualité et médialité).

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INTRODUCTION

A Brief Biography of Beyoncé

Beyoncé Giselle Knowles-Carter was born on September 4, 198, in Houston, Texas. Her parents, Tina Beyoncé [sic] and Matthew Knowles, separated shortly after Beyoncé's birth. Tina recalls Beyoncé singing with precocious talent from the age of six; after her first performance, Beyoncé recalls feeling: "...at home on that stage, more so than anywhere else [...] From that moment on, I decided that the world would be a stage" (Taraborrelli 2015, 31-2). At this point in Beyoncé's childhood, Matthew became an active, if not the primary, figure in shaping Beyoncé's musical career. Beyoncé won a number of pageants throughout her childhood, eventually performing in the group Girls Tyme at ten years old (see Figure 0.1).

Figure 0.1. Screenshot of Beyoncé in Girls Tyme. *YouTube Video*, published by "Beyonce Slayys," September 21, 2017.



After losing a competition called *Star Search* in 1993, Girls Tyme rebranded as Somethin' Fresh (116). The group went through a number of member, administrative, and name changes between 1993-1995 (called The Dolls and Destiny), before settling with the name Destiny's Child in 1995. That same year, Destiny's Child signed a deal with Columbia/Sony for seven albums (158). Their contract with Columbia/Sony was rather restricted: for example, the members would

be allowed “consultation” rights on album work, but not “approval” (158). Destiny’s Child recorded and toured until 2006, performing primarily within the genre of R&B. While still a member of Destiny’s Child, Beyoncé released her first solo album *Dangerously in Love* (2003). With this album, Beyoncé exerted a higher amount of creative control than possible as a member of Destiny’s Child: J. Randy Taraborrelli writes that Beyoncé spent two full days interviewing writers and producers from across the United States (322). The rapper Sean Carter, who goes by the stage-name Jay-Z, collaborated with Beyoncé on two of the songs in *Dangerously in Love*. Despite the producers’ hesitation about releasing the album, it was enormously successful: Beyoncé recalls that, “They [the producers] told me I didn’t have one hit on the album. I guess they were kind of right. *I had five*” (qtd. in Taraborrelli, 323). Destiny’s Child dissolved in 2006, and since then, Beyoncé has been releasing studio albums, lives albums, and extended plays regularly (see Table 0.1). Her most recent album was a collaboration with her husband Jay-Z, titled *Everything is Love* (2018).

Table 0.1: A Discography of Beyoncé’s Albums

| <i>Title</i> | <i>Year</i> | <i>Type</i> |
|---|-------------|---------------------|
| <i>Dangerously in Love</i> | 2003 | Studio album |
| <i>B’Day</i> | 2006 | Studio album |
| <i>I Am... Sasha Fierce</i> | 2008 | Studio album |
| <i>4</i> | 2011 | Studio album |
| <i>Beyoncé</i> | 2013 | Studio album |
| <i>Lemonade</i> | 2016 | Studio album |
| <i>Everything is Love (with Jay-Z as The Carters)</i> | 2018 | Collaborative album |
| <i>Live at Wembley</i> | 2004 | Live album |

| | | |
|---|------|-------------------|
| <i>The Beyoncé Live Experience</i> | 2007 | Live album |
| <i>I Am... Yours: An Intimate Performance at Wynn Las Vegas</i> | 2009 | Live album |
| <i>I Am... World Tour</i> | 2010 | Live album |
| <i>Dangerously in Love / Live at Wembley</i> | 2008 | Compilation album |
| <i>Above ad Beyoncé: Video Collection & Dance Mixes</i> | 2009 | Compilation album |
| <i>Beyoncé: Platinum Edition</i> | 2014 | Compilation album |
| <i>Dreamgirls</i> | 2006 | Soundtrack album |
| <i>Beyoncé Karaoke Hits, Vol. 1</i> | 2008 | Karaoke album |
| <i>Live in Vegas Instrumentals</i> | 2010 | Karaoke album |
| <i>True Star: A Private Performance</i> | 2004 | Extended plays |
| <i>Irremplazable</i> | 2007 | Extended plays |
| <i>Heat</i> | 2011 | Extended plays |
| <i>4: The Remix</i> | 2012 | Extended plays |
| <i>More Only</i> | 2014 | Extended plays |

An Introduction to *Lemonade*

Beyoncé Giselle Knowles-Carter released her sixth studio album, *Lemonade*, on April 23, 2016. *Lemonade* explores the legacy of slavery in America, with commentary on Black Lives Matter, black feminism, generational trauma, birth and miscarriage, generational marital infidelity, police brutality, institutionalized racism, and histories of protest. Through the exploration of these themes, *Lemonade* assumes a culturally weighty and transformative purpose. The eleven “chapters” of the album are woven together through the use of Warsan Shire’s evocative poetry. The entire visual album spans an hour and six minutes, and the full-length film-as-album marks a

paradigmatic shift in Beyoncé's work as well as in the world of popular music video. *Lemonade*, in its redefining of Beyoncé's musical output, of genre-bending and blending, of album release techniques, and in its formatting of the visual album, has demanded the attention of scholars in the fields of musicology, popular music studies, media studies, gender and feminist studies, critical race studies, and in both the critical and popular press.

Lemonade was released in a complex gathering of publicity materials. A trailer for “a world premier event” was released on HBO and Facebook on April 16, 2016—a twenty-one second clip of Beyoncé's profile as she raises her head in a eerily-lit parking garage, her voice ghostly: “What am I gonna do, love, what am I gonna do?” A second teaser was released the following day: a one-minute video comprised of Beyoncé in various scenes from the visual album—but the teaser did not identify what exactly it was advertising. In the second teaser, snippets of Beyoncé's voice reading poetry from the album are played. Six days later on April 23rd, *Lemonade* was premiered on HBO, drawing 787,000 viewers (Porter 2016). As of April 2017, *Lemonade* has sold over 2.5 million copies and ranked number one for most sales in the global top ten albums of 2016 (IFPI 2017). Prior to the teaser releases was the release of single and music video “Formation” on music streaming service Tidal.¹

Members of the press identified in “Formation” issues of celebrity feminism, black female economic mobility, sociopolitical issues, and Black Lives Matter activism. The single drew analysis from *The New York Times*, with writers such as Jon Caramanica (2016) commenting on Beyoncé's technique of communicating politics: “What's fascinating about this song and video is how Beyoncé renders her politics both literally and colloquially. Her radicalism is both overt and

¹ Tidal is co-owned by Beyoncé and her husband Jay-Z.

implicit—she knows that creatively drawn statements of black identity and pride are as powerful as any direct social-political statement.” Caramancia speaks to Beyoncé’s use of intertextual references, the information within which forms the basis of my analysis throughout the thesis chapters.

The day after the release of “Formation,” Beyoncé performed the song at the Super Bowl halftime show, supported by a group of Black women dancers, all of whom were dressed in outfits reminiscent of The Black Panthers.² The Super Bowl performance incited exclamations of celebration as well as criticism; Jenna Wortham remarked that it is “not insignificant that she’s electing to parade her substantial wealth and ability to out-earn most men in the music industry (including her husband, Jay Z) during the Super Bowl—the flagship event of male virility and violence in this country” (Caramancia 2016). Taking a more negative stance, former mayor of New York Rudy Giuliani made now-infamous comments about Beyoncé’s performance during a Fox News interview,

I thought that it was really outrageous that she used it as a platform to attack police officers who are the people who protect her and protect us and keep us alive. [...] You’re talking to middle [class] America when you have the Super Bowl, so if you have entertainment, let’s have decent, wholesome entertainment and not use it as a platform to attack the people who put their lives at risk to save us (Rosenthal 2016).

Some made similar comments to Giuliani’s while others were quick to critique his remarks. Debates raged on *YouTube*, with some vloggers calling Beyoncé a “racist” (toward white people), while other arguments took place on popular television shows such as *The View* and *Wendy*

² The Black Panther Party (colloquially referred to as the Black Panthers) was a political party formed in the 1960s by Black Americans. The party was intended as a means of self-defence during the Civil Rights Movement. The Black Panthers armed themselves with guns to protect themselves against violent directed toward them from police officers.

Williams, respectively.³ In reference to Beyoncé’s Super Bowl performance, specifically the choreography that included Beyoncé and the back-up dancers raising their hands in a fist, Wendy Williams commented that “The fist has been my people’s sign of strength since the 50s.”⁴ Rosenthal tried to explain Giuliani’s comments, writing that “he may have been referring to some of Beyoncé’s backup singers, who did a separate video after the performance in which they paid tribute to Mario Woods, who was shot and killed in San Francisco by police officers...” (Rosenthal 2016). Indeed, Beyoncé’s Super Bowl performance clearly aligned itself with the Black Lives Matter movement, angering and confusing many white Americans.

Objectives

In this thesis, the object of inquiry—Beyoncé’s *Lemonade*—can be considered as not just the visual album itself, but as the materials surrounding the album. It is a transmedia phenomenon, within which various textual layers are at work to inscribe *Lemonade* as culturally significant. My objective through this thesis is to uncover how Beyoncé mobilizes *Lemonade* and its transmedia extensions to explore social and cultural messages. For a popular figure like Beyoncé to release an album featuring such politically and socially powerful themes is noteworthy: what she offers with this album has socially transformative potential.

The overarching question I ask in my thesis is this: how does *Lemonade* function in the popular music sphere as a transformative text? And more specifically, how does Beyoncé use the transmedia layers of her work to convey particular Black feminist messages? I seek to tease apart layers of a complex, resistant narrative. These layers will include poetry, lyrics, iconic visuals,

³ Vloggers refers to video bloggers.

⁴ This television segment can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W3cEZml5SBs>.

original music, social media, interviews and speeches, and live performances. As I will elaborate in my literature review, I draw from the work of scholars in the field of race and feminist studies to ground a theoretical framework in which I conduct analyses using methodologies in the field of popular music studies.

Organization of Thesis

The chapter division in this thesis is driven by the major themes that emerged when analyzing *Lemonade* within this theoretical collection. I want to avoid separating the theoretical perspectives because the arrangement is at its richest when the concepts overlap, intertwine, and formulate to help me point out subversive political messages embedded in the multiple textual layers of *Lemonade*. The chapter divisions are driven by the major themes that emerged when analyzing *Lemonade* in the context of my theoretical framework (see Chapter One).

The first chapter, “Literature Review, Theoretical Framework, and Analytic Methodology” traces literature from critical race and feminist studies before an explanation of terms from freedom practices and Black Feminist Love Politics. I then examine literature on analytic musicological methodologies, such as intertextuality and mediality. The second chapter “Intertexts to Women’s Formations in ‘Love Drought,’” investigates the concept of “getting into formation” as it presents itself in the multimodal contexts of the song “Love Drought.” I identify a history of Beyoncé forwarding a message of women’s collective organizing (or, “formations”), and demonstrate how her feminist message in *Lemonade* falls in line with intersectional feminism. In the third chapter, “Goddess Imagery and Matriarchal Lineage in *Lemonade*” I trace a rich web of strategic and stylistic intertextual references to the Yoruba goddess Oshun, Marian deities, and the divine triad of the Mother-Maiden-Crone from Celtic traditions. These references are present

across Beyoncé's work, but come to the forefront in her 2017 Grammy performance of the song "Hold Up," and select examples of Warsan Shire's poetry that Beyoncé's voice reads throughout the chapters of *Lemonade*. Chapter Four, "Sociocultural Genre Disruption through 'Daddy Lessons,'" examines Beyoncé's and the Dixie Chicks' collaboration at the 50th annual Country Music Awards Ceremony. Stylistic musical references within "Daddy Lessons" to the New Orleans second-line musical style, as well as to DeFord Bailey's harmonica playing, shape up commentary on country music, space, and place. Country music as a deeply political and contested genre is examined in a literature review of genre considerations. Finally, I consider the significance of audiences' receptions of the CMA performance as expressed on Twitter and blogs. In Chapter Five, "Conclusion—Disruption from Within the Neoliberal Capitalism" I examine the effectiveness of activism when instigated by a billionaire such as Beyoncé, and take into consideration critiques of *Lemonade* by feminist writer bell hooks.

CHAPTER ONE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Beyoncé Scholarship

Beyoncé's work in popular music has inspired a growing body of scholarly writing that explores a vast array of topics. Because there was minimal literature written on Beyoncé during the time that she was a member of Destiny's Child, I have instead chosen to focus on writing following the release of her first solo album. This writing spans the past ten years, 2008-2018. The year 2008 marks a moment when a handful of scholars began paving the way for Beyoncé-focused scholarship, and I refer to this era (2008-2016) as Pre-*Lemonade* Literature. As this literature explores, a fundamental shift in the reception and interpretation of Beyoncé's media output occurred following the release of *Lemonade*. In particular, discussions of feminism relating to Beyoncé, which really took off in 2013 after the release of her self-titled album, were brought to the forefront in 2016 and onward with analyses that drew out themes of intersectional feminism, neoliberal capitalism, and a contested debate over the commercialization of Black women's bodies.

Literature on Beyoncé spans a massive range of fields and disciplines from which the authors conduct their research: feminist studies, musicology, African American studies, celebrity studies, queer theory, digital media studies, sociology, cultural studies, anthropology, visual art, to film theory and even psychology. This wide range of interest across the genres of scholarship reveals that interest in Beyoncé is not confined to the feminist or music-specific spaces of discussion. Indeed, Beyoncé's contributions in the popular sphere provide scholars with a huge array of questions, contradictions, and possibilities to uncover, theorize, and mobilize in their writing. Because *Lemonade* was released only two years following the publication of this thesis, I

have admittedly struggled to keep up with the stream of articles published after the album's release. While I feel I am somewhat up-to-date as of September 2018, I do realize that I may be leaving out some important or soon-to-become-valuable scholarship. Such is the nature of writing on media as it is released!

Pre-Lemonade Literature

Daphne Brooks article “‘All That You Can't Leave Behind’: Black Female Soul Singing and the Politics of Surrogation in the Age of Catastrophe” (2008) was one of the first pieces of scholarly writing that positioned Beyoncé as a celebrity-activist. While other accounts of Beyoncé's pre-*Lemonade* oeuvre are largely disparaging (e.g., Cashmore 2010), Brooks (2008) mobilizes the concepts of rock memory as well as black feminist theories to read themes of dissent following Hurricane Katrina in Beyoncé's album *B-Day*. Brooks writes that, “...there are ways to listen to *B-Day* on another frequency so as to hear the register of post-Katrina, [Mary Jane] Blige-esque discontent in music culture...Listen closely and one can hear the sounds and words of Knowles the artist imaging ways for her character in the album to transcend despair” (Brooks 2008, 392). While Brooks analyzes vocal strategies, live performance, and visuals, Barbara Read used the figure of Beyoncé in her interviews with young girls. Read's article “Beyoncé, Britney, and Me” (2009) examines the ways in which celebrities such as Britney Spears and Beyoncé act as role models for young girls who aspire to conform to the image of the “popular girl.” Read links Britney and Beyoncé to the rise of eating disorders and instances of self-harm amongst girls, and concludes that most feminists would not be comfortable endorsing the challenge to “traditional femininity” posed by Bey and Brit (Read 2009, 11).

In a similar vein to Read, Ellis Cashmore's article "Buying Beyoncé" highlights the ways in which he thinks that Beyoncé is a damaging figure to feminism. From the starting points of neoliberalism, celebrity cultural theories, and within the context of post-9/11 America, Cashmore writes that Beyoncé embodies the height of American consumerism where materialism has "become a substitute for equality" (Cashmore 2010, 1939). Due to what he describes as Beyoncé's "ethnic ambiguity," her "narrative has no theme of black history or distinct identity: only a wish-fulfillment fantasy that portrays the hard-earned success of a black woman in a culture largely purged of historical iniquities" (Cashmore 2010, 146). Whereas Brooks read specifically Black female discontent in Beyoncé's work from the same time period, he sees no evidence of this, and describes her essay as "rhapsodic," despite her situatedness in the theories of Black feminist scholarship, which allows for such subversive readings of mainstream cultural media.

Aisha Durham's 2012 article "'Check On It': Beyoncé, Southern Booty, and Black Femininities in Music Video" explores hegemonic Southern discourse to understand racialized sexuality in the music video for Beyoncé's "Check On It." After a textual analysis, drawing out some specific intertexts (Durham 2012, 41), she writes that Beyoncé's exploration of class represents Black femininity economically and symbolically. Durham speaks to the then-lack of scholars who took seriously Beyoncé's media output: "While much is said in the entertainment media about Beyoncé's mass appeal, there remains virtual silence in the academy concerning her cultural significance for women and girls today" (36). Similarly to Cashmore, Durham reads Beyoncé's self-positioning as a form of exoticism: "Beyoncé performs classed Black femininities in the hip hop dreamworld while fulfilling her ultimate role as the exotic ethnic other in US popular culture" (Durham 2012, 44; Cashmore 2008, 1939).

Following the release of the self-titled visual album *BEYONCE* (2013), the question of whether or not Beyoncé was a feminist, and if so what kind of feminist, came to the forefront. The “question” of feminism(s) was explored by Dayna Chatman, who wrote about Beyoncé, motherhood, and celebrity pregnancy within the context of post-feminism. Chatman argues that Beyoncé’s feminism is superficial, writing, that, “[Her] music communicates a post-feminist sensibility because it lacks any complex awareness of continuing systemic struggle; instead, they provide an accessible, yet superficially ‘empowering’ vision of feminism” (Chatman 2015, 931). She that her feminism is apolitical, a “bootylicious feminism” that does not take into consideration women’s struggles such as “recent legislative attempts to redefine rape, disparities in women’s salary’s compared to men, and the battle over providing women with access to contraceptives” (932). In critiques of Beyoncé such as this, the writers seem to expect Beyoncé to single-handedly dismantle patriarchy, seeming to forget that she has to work within pop music culture (not to say that popular music is not politically powerful—it can be—but it has rarely been legislatively powerful). Chatman concludes that Beyoncé contributes to turning the clock “backward” on feminism (937). Nathalie Weidhase explores reactions to Beyoncé proclaiming feminism, which had by then been branded as “Beyoncé feminism,” and points out that her actual body is being contested and argued over by feminists and others (Weidhase 2015). Marquita Smith, dissimilarly to Chatman, understands “Bey feminism” as “hip hop feminism,” and takes issue with writers who discredit Beyoncé’s feminist messages. Smith writes, “The insistence of disregarding the (hip hop) feminist sentiment of the album and dismissing ‘Bey feminism’ as not feminist enough is an unproductive and alienating act....*BEYONCE* represents a break with Beyoncé’s past and an embrace of feminism that is unequivocal in a contemporary moment of post-

feminist ambivalence” (239). Lori Burns and Marc Lafrance, in their close reading of the music, lyrics, and images for “Video Phone” (feat. Lady Gaga), explore the nuances of how the music video’s content both interrupts and reflects politics of patriarchal looking and complicates heteronormative visibility (Burns and Lafrance 2017). Another musicologist, Kai Arne Hansen, examines audiovisual aesthetics in the music video for “Partition.” He draws aesthetic connections between mainstream pornography and the music video and grapples with the question of whether Beyoncé presents an empowered or objectified narrative. While Hansen explores gender and sexualization convincingly, he does not engage with theories relating specifically to race, and as such, his critique of Beyoncé’s “perceived engagement with feminism” (Hansen 2017, 177) misses out on alternative interpretations that consider the intersections between all aspects of her identity.

Perhaps one of the most significant contributions to writing on Beyoncé during this time period was the publication of the first academic collection dedicated to Beyoncé. *The Beyoncé Effect: Essays on Sexuality, Race, and Feminism*, edited by Adrienne Trier-Bieniek, is a compilation of short chapters covering a wide range of topics. Melissa Avdeef examines Beyoncé’s use of Instagram as a tool for creating reciprocal relationships with her fans (the BeyHive and beyond) while heightening the “authenticity” of her star persona (91). Elizabeth Whittington Cooper looks at the much-contested “Bey feminism” and how that type of feminism helps Beyoncé place herself alongside other feminists. Jamila Cupi and Nicole Files-Thompson extend the discussion of digital media by looking at how Beyoncé communicates feminism on digital platforms. They refer to Beyoncé as a “gateway drug” to feminism for users who may not be familiar with popular feminist discourse (81). Noel Siqui Duan delves into critiques of Beyoncé’s body

and situates these critiques into the historical context of politics around Black women's bodies. Janell Hobson's article forwards a beautifully nuanced interpretation of Beyoncé and the adoption of whiteness. Similarly to Duan, Hobson looks at feminists' debate over Beyoncé, particularly those critiques which label her as an unacceptable feminist. She writes, "Is there a space for a commercially mass-marketed feminism that could co-exist alongside radical feminism? Is Beyoncé really the problem here, or is it the confining space of commercial media that silence more radical feminist discourses?" (21) While many media feminists critique Beyoncé for whitewashing herself (literally and symbolically), Hobson interprets Beyoncé's "whiteness" as a mechanism of survival: "Beyoncé found ways to survive and thrive to a point where she could champion the feminist cause, which should not be summarily dismissed by other feminists" (21). Hobson argues that Beyoncé's adopting of white beauty standards "complicates" how black women are represented and "resists racially essentialist meanings ascribed to the black female body. While she perpetuates images reifying whiteness through her appropriation of long blond hair and lightened complexion, she nonetheless utilizes this visibility to incorporate black women's vernacular dance and music expressions, as well as to include a multiracial cast of supporting women routinely population her concerts and music videos" (21). As will become clear in my theoretical framework, Hobson's interpretation has a deep connection to Simone Browne's concept of dark sousveillance, a freedom practice in which Black people adopt whiteness to survive and resist surveillance in the white settler state. Hobson's concludes that Beyoncé's embrace of feminism has created even more of a space for Black women to "unhesitatingly embrace the feminist label and bring to the table all of their sexiness and contradictory selves" (23). Tia Tyree and Melvin Williams summarize debates over Beyoncé's contested feminist status and proceed to

determine whether or not her music “supports notions of empowerment” by conducting an analysis of her five albums to see how they interact with hip hop feminist texts and stereotypes about Black women (96).

Returning to the topic of Beyoncé’s pregnancy, Natalie Jolly sees Beyoncé’s affirmation that she had an unmedicated vaginal delivery in 2012 indicated a “watershed moment” for celebrity birth culture and popular culture in general (111). Beyoncé challenged the medicalized birth discourse in the media that celebrities were either incapable of or somewhat “above” having a natural, non-surgical birth. Jolly’s interpretation of Beyoncé’s pregnancy differs from Chatman’s dramatically, and her interpretation shows an oft-understudied aspect of Beyoncé’s very public-private life. Taking up a different vein, Anne Mitchell mobilizes queer theories to read Beyoncé’s persona as both an aggressive and submissive femme (a feminine lesbian or feminine queer woman) and demonstrates how Beyoncé critiques submissive femininity in her music video while also performing that same femininity.

Post-Lemonade Literature

Immediately after *Lemonade*’s release, a number of feminist figures and scholars published think-pieces and blog posts which scraped the surface of themes and intertexts in *Lemonade*. These writers helped to direct more traditionally academic publications that followed the immediate onslaught of media grappling with the complex text that is *Lemonade*.

One of the most-discussed posts was bell hooks essay titled “Moving Beyond Pain,” which she posted on her personal blog. In it, she writes that *Lemonade* represents the height of capitalism. While hooks appreciates aspects of black women’s representation in *Lemonade*, she

largely finds fault with it as a product of capitalist society and argues that the album works to reify black women as objects to be commodified and sold.

It's all about the body, and the body as commodity. This is certainly not radical or revolutionary. From slavery to the present day, black female bodies, clothes and unclothes, have been bought and sold. What makes this commodification different in *Lemonade* is its intent: its purpose is to seduce, celebrate, and delight—to challenge the ongoing present day devaluation and dehumanization of the black female body (2).

hooks takes issue with the rage and violence Beyoncé enacts in “Hold Up.” Many critiques of hooks’ post took issue with this particular point, writing that she was ignoring the clear intertexts in “Hold Up” and elsewhere.

Lori Adelman directed a roundtable-style discussion, posted on Feministing, in which a generationally-diverse group of feminists contended with hooks’ poorly-received critique of *Lemonade*. Joy-Ann Reid’s comment in particular stands out: “Beyoncé is performing a very specific type of feminism in my view; one that insists that black women are, first and foremost, women—deserving of and belatedly claiming the right to the kind of adoration and admiration of the feminine that white women have always taken for granted” (Reid in Adelman 2016). In a similar style to this roundtable, Lisa Perrot, Holly Rogers, and Carol Vernallis published a musical interpretation and discussion of some of the musical, poetic, lyrical, and visual content in *Lemonade*, as well as the visual album’s filmic techniques. They too, have a difficult time understanding hooks’ critique of *Lemonade*.

hooks posted another blog post the month after *Lemonade* was released, responding to the criticisms of her article. She argues that feminism cannot progress without politically paradigmatic shifts in Black women’s representation. While others have interpreted Beyoncé adopting whiteness as a survival strategy, hooks sees it only as oppressive.

Inna Arzumanova was one of the first academics to have an article on *Lemonade* published, it came out in *Celebrity Studies* the same year as *Lemonade*'s release. Arzumanova reviews and critiques writing that emerged after *Lemonade* and points out the influence of pop music as a political tool. She writes that "...to view the performance as nothing more than" the commodification of blackness "asks us to first disregard the power of pop and then assume that protest music and a politics of radical liberation cannot live side by side, cannot dialogue" (422). Arzumanova points out the cultural significance of the intertextual content in the song and video "Formation" from *Lemonade*:

The videos regimes of black representation are not just dizzyingly heterogenous; they are also specific. Present-day black cowboys, Victorians, and bounce music stars. The kind of specific that does not often appear in popular culture's circuits of visibility. Neither the video nor the song care to explain, weaving together a referential fabric deep rooted in the specificities of Southern blackness and the diversity of its lived experiences, its traumas, its joys, and its legacies. The refusal to explain is what protects 'Formation.' There are no strategies of abstraction here. (423).

Perhaps because of this "refusal to explain," audiences took measures to interpret the text into their own hands. Amanda Edgar and Ashton Toone published an articles drawing from data that they collected during interviews with 35 participants. One reaction that participants had to *Lemonade* was to conduct research so they could better understand the references embedded in the album (Edgar and Toone 2017, 9). When analyzing comments by Black women participants who said that the album made them feel empowered, the authors write, "These comments support [the] contention that Black women audiences often advocate for media that give them pleasure and make them feel empowered, even against academics' and pundits' arguments about these texts' imperfections" (Edgar and Toone 2017, 7). Additionally, the albums' situatedness in Southern locales assisted non-Black participants in their discussion of race, particularly those

people who may not have experience talking about racial issues. Their data shows that audiences use the album as a mechanism to “[imagine] what new spaces of justice might look, sound, and feel like in their own communities across the country and around the world” (12). In another article that draws from participant interview data, Toone, Edgar, and Ford mobilize the concept of the “Two-Way Mirror” to understand racial and gendered identities that are represented in the album. White audiences instead used the album to understand Black femininity—for some it invoked empathy for Black women, while for other white participants, their understanding risked one-dimensionality (Toone et al. 2017, 203). These two studies are, to date, the only that take into account interview data from audiences as a means of understanding *Lemonade*’s cultural significance.

BEYONCE, at the time, was the first “visual album” (as described by Beyoncé), and it generated a small amount of interest regarding the actual formal characteristics of a visual album. Cara Harrison’s 2014 Master’s thesis looked at the technical and formal characteristics of the visual album and how it borrows techniques from film and music video, resulting in a hybrid form. Extending the conversation to *Lemonade*, Ciara Barrett argues that for Black artists, the visual album is a “radical expression of female authorship” (Barrett 2016, 41). She engages traditional feminist film theory and music video aesthetic theory and does not look at the content of the music and images, but rather the filmic techniques of the long form visual album. The format itself represents “...important—and as yet still relatively rare—instances of women taking authorship over their own audio-visual representation” (42). Barrett argues that the format of the visual album requires Beyoncé to be viewed “holistically,” “...to necessitate consumers’ purchase of either format in its entirety, thus satisfying a theoretical feminist requirement” that

women be considered as such (Barrett 2016, 44). Jennifer O'Meara makes a similar argument; in her critique of the Bechdel test, she uses Beyoncé's *Lemonade* as an example of how voice-over strategies represent women's vocal empowerment (O'Meara 2016, 1122).

The majority of the other articles currently published on *Lemonade* focus on intertextual content. Aisha Durham's reflective piece on cultural criticism written about Beyoncé between 2006-2016 connects the shift in Beyoncé's representation with the development of hip hop feminism. Durham draws out intertexts to magic realism and Julie Dash, for example, as strategic connections to Black womanhood. Johanna Hartmaan describes *Lemonade* as an "intermedial collage," the nexus of which is in Beyoncé's "embodied performance" (Hartmaan 2017, 2). Janell Hobson positions lyrics such as "I can do whatever I want" as both "weapons of resistance" as well as "survival strategies," which act in opposition to the "dominant discourse of racism and misogyny" that "exists to discipline, punish, and condemn black women's sexualities" (Hobson 2018, 116).

Kim et al. theorize and describe Twitter as a site for people-of-colour organizing and discussion, and connect the conversation of 21st-century Black feminism on Twitter to Beyoncé's own control over her social media platforms. Platform control is a type of Black women's organizing (Kim et al. 2018, 153). Similarly, Keleta-Mae writes that "In 'Formation, black women's bodies are literally choreographed into lines and borders that permit them to physically be both inside and outside of a multitude of vantage points. And what that choreography reveals is the embodiment of a particular kind of 21st-century black feminist freedom in the United States of America; one that is ambitious, spiritual, decisive, sexual, capitalist, loving and communal" (Keleta-Mae 2016, n.p.). Stephanie Patrick also considers Twitter and looks at what

she calls “aca-fandom,” in other words, academic fandom surrounding pop culture on Twitter. Using an auto-ethnographic approach, she describes her experience of learning to interpret *Lemonade* by reading Tweets in the sphere of “aca-fandom.”

Alicia Wallace performs a close reading of lyrics in “Formation” to forward her critique of the song’s messages. Following a similar line of critique as the one set of by bell hooks, Wallace writes that,

It is unfortunate that people are so starved for relatable and aspirational content that they are prepared to buy in, literally, to capitalist brands of social justice. In our desperate search for empowerment and solace, we are fading things that are not there, prepared to see leadership where instead there is just another way to make a profit. *Lemonade* has certainly been a salve for black women everywhere, and “Formation” has made black people feel powerful and called to act, but it is important to investigate the possibility that this was not the primary goal. Beyoncé is a master of her art form, and the BeyHive continues to consider itself her primary interpreter, always portraying her in the most positive light. In a perfect world, Beyoncé would endeavour and be the person and brand the world needs so badly, but in fact, she is just making “her paper” (Wallace 2017, 196).

At the heart of all of the literature reviewed here is an anxiety over whether or not Beyoncé can be feminist if she is a product of capitalism. Though my thesis’ primary goal is to uncover the rich web of meanings in the intertextual and intermedial content of *Lemonade*, the fifth chapter of my thesis delves into this tension head-first. Additionally, the literature on Beyoncé does not contain very many close-readings of the content in *Lemonade* across all of its medial domains. Thankfully, the format of a thesis allows for such in-depth exploration, and I realize that the authors summarized above would simply not have had the space to look into the myriad of referential subjects in the album. My work aims to fill the need for a close reading grounded in the theoretical starting points of Black feminist thought and Black Feminist Love Politics. Additionally, tools from musicology allow for a bi-disciplinary approach that takes seriously the

musical content of *Lemonade*; very often, feminist writers do not have the “jargon” to write about music and instead have to focus on images and text. As more literature on Beyoncé is published, we will develop a broader sense of the state of research on this iconic figure in popular culture.

Theoretical Concepts from Critical Race and Feminist Studies

During a seminar at the Women and Gender Studies Institute at the University of Ottawa, Dr. Gulzar Charania posed the question: “What happens when we place the slave ship at the centre of our theorizing?” Her question inspires me to ask: what happens when I place not only the slave ship, but settler colonialism and racialized bodies at the centre of my theorizing? How do these three starting points—slave ship, settler colonialism, and racialized bodies—work together when interpreting a text like *Lemonade*? This literature review focuses on the concepts of racialized bodies, the slave ship, and settler colonialism as points of departure before explaining my theoretical framework of freedom practices.

In her article “Unmapping Canada: Starting with Bodies and Repressed Truths,” Sherene Razack writes that critical inquiry must “start with bodies” including an understanding that the commodification of black bodies structures white settler states (Razack 2013, 198-204). Razack writes that we must unpack the violence directed at differently racialized bodies, and consider how this violence constructs white settler society (204). She writes, “the commodification of human existence that was so unprecedented until the transatlantic slave trade means that the Black slave lost not his land or even his community but in fact his very existence as human” (204). Kaila Adia Story similarly begins her critical inquiry by starting with racialized bodies in her chapter “Racing Sex—Sexing Race: The Invention of the Black Female Body.”

Story describes a process by which Occidental societies value certain bodies and suppress others (2010, 25). She traces this value placed on bodies back to European contact with people of the African continent. Story writes that “Enslavement, which was characterized by the visual, ideological, and physical alteration of African bodies and European bodies, gave Europe a catalyst to begin focusing their interest in trade almost exclusively on the body—physically and ideologically (26). Prior even to European contact, slavery, and colonization, a “lens of polarization” had been established by white European’s who imagined blackness as a base and evil opposition to whiteness (26-27). Attending to this singularity of dehumanization is one starting point from which I begin to build my theoretical framework for interpreting *Lemonade* (205).

Returning to Charania’s suggestion to ground feminist analyses in the slave ship, authors such as Simone Browne can be found who take this approach. In her book *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*, she asks, “What acts of subversion and resistance do these structures allow for?” (Browne 2015, 24). Here, Browne refers to institutional structures of surveillance such as the slave ship, slavery, prisons, and surveillance of racialized people at airports. Browne’s question can aid in guiding the reading of a popular music text as subversive. Venetria K. Patton’s chapter “Embodying the Scars of Slavery” takes a different approach, instead pointing to how non-fiction authors who draw from the legacy of slavery in their writing offer a model of healing. Patton writes, “authors of contemporary novels of slavery do not return to the site of slavery in order to emphasize its devastating effects, but instead use their writing as a means to heal the wounds of slavery” (Patton 2010, 60). Patton considers how generational trauma can begin to be healed through non-fiction works of art in its bearing witness to what has been done

to the author and their ancestors (69). Healing through non-fiction literary works of art has parallels to healing through musical works of art, a useful concept to consider alongside *Lemonade*.

The final point in my critical foundation is settler colonialism. As Robin DiAngelo writes in “White Fragility,” “The direction of power between whites and people of colour is historic, traditional, normalized, and deeply embedded in the fabric of U.S. society” (2011, 56). This *direction of power* is rooted in and informed by settler colonialism. In her book, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*, bell hooks understands the world to be in crisis, as seen in the “systematic dehumanization” of people whose lives have been implicated through legacies of slavery and colonialism (1989, 19).

I chose these three starting points—racialized bodies, the slave ship, and settler colonialism—not only because they are fundamental considerations of where structural violence existed and persists; they are also themes in *Lemonade*. In order to identify healing, we must also understand these sites where pain has been inflicted, and by whom. Now that I have grounded my analyses in these three places I will provide a survey on literature that engages in the broader concepts of resistance to oppression and methods of healing from historical trauma.

Beyoncé’s *Lemonade* explores themes consistent with the current theoretical concerns of freedom practices and Black Feminist Love Politics, which function simultaneously to de-center whiteness, and in doing so, call into question white supremacy. *Lemonade* undermines white comfort by invoking black female power to subvert white complacency and guilt. Freedom practices and Black Feminist Love Politics form a theoretical arrangement through which to interpret *Lemonade*.

Freedom Practices

In using the term “freedom practices” I refer to Simone Browne’s use of the concept. Freedom practices are acts of anti-surveillance, counter-surveillance, and critiques of surveillance, carried out or performed by Black people in the context of America during, and after, slavery. She writes,

These oral histories of ex-slaves, slave narratives, and runaway notices, in revealing a sociology of slavery, escape, and freedom, recall the brutalities of slavery (instruments of punishment, plantation regulation, slave patrols) and detail how black performative practices and creative acts (fiddling, songs, and dancing) also functioned as surveillance acts and were employed by people as a way to escape and resist enslavement, and in so being were freedom acts (Browne 2015, 22).

Though freedom acts are rooted in historical accounts where slaves opposed their being surveilled, Browne extends the notion of freedom practices to modern-day examples. She recalls the story of how Solange Knowles (Beyoncé’s sister) had her hair searched by a TSA agent when going through an airport security checkpoint in 2012 (Browne 2015, 132). Solange’s response to this act of racialized surveillance was to create a game on Twitter which she called “What did the TSA find in Solange’s fro”? Browne theorizes Solange’s response as an act “of resistance” and creativity which counters the surveilling practices imposed on people of colour at airports (132).

I am gathering together here three types of freedom practices that operate in a coherent way to convey Beyoncé’s emergent messages in *Lemonade: interruptions to whiteness, talking back*, and *dark sousveillance*. I have not uncovered a scholarly reference in which these concepts are put into dialogue. These three concepts constitute a generative theoretical framework for the analysis of *Lemonade*.

Interruptions to Whiteness

Robin DiAngelo in her article “White Fragility” uses the words “white” and “whiteness” to describe social processes inextricable from structures of injustice (2011, 56). She claims that these social processes include “basic rights, values, beliefs, perspectives and experiences purported to be commonly shared by all but which are actually only consistently afforded to white people” (56). Uneven access to these social processes based on race can be understood as white domination. DiAngelo outlines a list of interruptions that challenge white dominance, triggering what she terms “white fragility.” White fragility is in essence a defensive response to assertions of Black personhood or power. These challenges to white dominance include: people of colour talking, or choosing not to talk, about their racial perspectives, challenging white racial comfort, proposing the importance of group membership instead of individualism, challenging meritocracy, a person of colour occupying a leadership position, and the challenge to white centrality (particularly through media representations that centre blackness) (57). Each of these interruptions can trigger white fragility and as a result challenge white authority. Though DiAngelo does not explicitly term her list of interruptions to whiteness as a freedom practice, I understand these interruptions in line with Browne’s description of freedom practices. By disrupting whiteness and invoking black power, *Lemonade* can be understood through DiAngelo’s interruptions; DiAngelo’s theoretical concepts provide a frame for identifying and interpreting acts of resistance to structures of white power.

Talking Back

A number of feminist scholars have been inspired by bell hooks’ notion of “talking back” as a means of subverting and resisting domination. She writes about the process of coming to voice and true speaking, which is an “act of resistance, a political gesture that challenges politics

of domination that would render us nameless and voiceless” (1989, 8). As Beyoncé said in her 2017 Grammy speech, “often we become inaudible” (qtd. in Gajanan 2017). Talking back allows for radical, paradigmatic shifts in politics and society (16). hooks writes,

Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible. It is that act of speech, of ‘talking back,’ that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject—the liberated voice (1989, 9).

hooks’ concept of talking back has been adopted by a number of feminist academics within their interdisciplinary work. For example, Simone Browne identifies talking back as a freedom practice in her book *Dark Matters*, calling it one measure that can be taken to challenge imposed racial and colonial norms as well as defying the surveillance of blackness (Browne 2015, 62-72). Kate Fitch et al. adopt the concept in their article “Talking Back: Reflecting on Feminism, Public Relations and Research,” exploring the feminist agenda for public relations (Fitch et al. 2016, 279). Fitch et al. attest that this resistant speech has the power to challenge hegemonic gendered discourse within public relations and within feminist scholarship at large (285). Fitch et al. and Browne are among the many feminist writers who mobilize the concept of talking back. Judith Butler in particular frames her friend Joan W. Scott as a writer who advocated “speaking back” and “speaking out” as practices that drive the struggle for political equality and for “creating something new” within politics (Butler 2011, 25).

A specific example of talking back can be seen in Black feminist poetry. bell hooks describes poetry as magic, as a transformative power that has the ability to “carry the mind and heart to a new dimension” (hooks 1989, 11). Similarly, Amy De’Ath’s “Decolonize or Destroy:

New Feminist Poetry in the United States and Canada” interprets the work of black poets Mary Anharte Baker and Dawn Lundy Martin as mediating transformative power through antagonism (2015, 285). Poetry, understood in this way, can be considered within the concept of freedom practices, particularly in the case of Warsan Shire’s poetry, spoken by Beyoncé throughout *Lemonade*; for example, the phrase “The past and future merge to meet us here. What luck. What a fucking curse,” explores Black women’s experience within the temporal past and present.

Dark Sousveillance

Another freedom practice explored in the critical literature, Simone Browne identifies “dark sousveillance,” which are acts that co-opt tactics of oppression. In Browne’s words, dark sousveillance describes,

...tactics employed to render one’s self out of sight, and strategies used in the flight to freedom from slavery as necessarily ones of oversight... I plot dark sousveillance as an imaginative place from which to mobilize a critique of racializing surveillance, a critique that takes form in antisurveillance, countersurveillance, and other freedom practices. Dark sousveillance, then, plots imaginaries that are oppositional and that are hopeful for another way of being. Dark sousveillance is a site of critique, as it speaks to black epistemologies of contending with antiblack surveillance, where the tools of social control in plantation surveillance or lantern laws in city spaces and beyond were appropriated, co-opted, repurposed, and challenged in order to facilitate survival and escape (2015, 21).

To put it simply, dark sousveillance can be understood as any creative and critical practice carried out by a person of colour that undermines domination imposed by white people. Institutional surveillance polices racialized bodies, whereas dark sousveillance acts in opposition to surveillance. Acts of dark sousveillance were necessary to survival in historic systems of oppression and are necessary to furthering Civil Rights ideologies in the face of systems like militarized police and hateful anti-immigration rhetoric in present-day politics. A specific act of dark sousveil-

lance is “performing whiteness.” Browne explains performing whiteness through the example of a runaway slave girl who painted her face white to evade being captured by white slave catchers; In this case, performing whiteness is considered a freedom practice in order to avoid surveillance (54).

An example of dark sousveillance in *Lemonade* is in the opening song of the visual album, “Pray You Catch Me.” Beyoncé wears a hoodie, long a symbol of clothing that when worn by Black people has been surveilled by white authority. In this way, “Pray You Catch Me” critiques white surveillance practices, surveillance practices that are long-rooted in historical systems of domination, through the reclaiming of the hoodie and its meaning when worn by a racialized person.

Black Feminist Love Politics

While freedom practices show means of resistance, it is also appropriate to consider *Lemonade* through a paradigm of healing. Black Feminist Love Politics is a model of generative healing through visionary, utopian world imaginaries. Jennifer C. Nash outlines Black Feminist Love Politics as a tradition in Black feminism that has been overlooked due to what she considers the “interdisciplinary fetishization” of intersectionality (2011, 3-8). Her article “Practicing Love: Black Feminism, Love-Politics, and Post-Intersectionality” traces the advocacy of love in early Black feminist movements, particularly in Alice Walker’s call for womanism as an alternative to [white] feminism (7-10). Nash identifies love politics as central to the work of Audre Lorde and June Jordan in addition to Walker, writing that these three women “share a fundamental conception that love is a labour of actively reorienting the self, pushing the self to be configured in new ways that might be challenging or difficult” (11). This is not in reference to romantic

love, but a love that transforms the self (12). Nash proposes Black Feminist Love Politics as an alternative to the trauma-driven narratives often present in identity politics (15). Instead of forwarding a conception only of trauma and injury, Nash calls for identifying shared and hopeful visions for the future through the lens of Black Feminist Love Politics; this politics is “staunchly utopian” (15-17). She writes,

Love-politics practitioners dream of a yet unwritten future; they imagine a world ordered by love, by a radical embrace of difference, by a set of subjects who work on/against themselves to work for each other...[Love politics] is a critical response to the violence of the ordinary and the persistence of inequality that insist on a politics of the visionary (Nash 2011, 18).

Visionary, utopian imaginaries shape the work of love-politics practitioners. Love politics includes the work of self-recovery, self-work, and self-love. Love politics denies the capitalistic individualism of neoliberal politics and instead advocates for collectivism. Love politics, in short, imagines political and social alternatives by beginning with self-love.

Prior to the coining of the term Black Feminist Love Politics, bell hooks advocated for imagined futures, writing that “true politicization...demands that we give up set ways of thinking and being, that we shift our paradigms, that we open ourselves to the unknown, the unfamiliar” (1989, 25). In this way, opening ourselves to unknown futures is a departure from politics embedded in colonialism, racism, and sexism. hooks calls for and explains black love in many of her texts. She writes, “The choice to love has always been a gesture of resistance for African-Americans” (hooks 1993, 131). hooks explains the difficulty to love starting in the context of slavery (131-134). Love is one of the “secrets to healing” from the context of brutality and hatred historically directed toward black communities (190). Nash draws from this tradition,

particularly in reference to self-love, that “is the only love that must *always* exist...self-love allows for the pleasures the womanist subject enjoys—the pleasure in the Folk, in the moon, in roundness, in music and dance” (Nash 2011, 10). Love-politics practitioners imagine worlds free from oppression. Black Feminist Love Politics is a wisdom that draws strength from the collectivism of Black women’s experience, from their relatedness, to move beyond pain toward healing. The political stance of Black Feminist Love Politics has space to facilitate revolutionary imaginaries that depart from oppressive ways of being in the world. In *Lemonade*, Beyoncé presents visual examples of what this utopia might look like: Black women sitting in trees on plantation-like settings, reclaiming space where their bodies were once subject to horrifying violence. Textually, Shire’s poetry reinforces this healing from historical trauma, occupying a creative space of imagined futures where women draw from their collective strength: “If we’re gonna heal, let it be glorious. One-thousand girls raise their arms.”

Theoretical Framework: Worldmaking, Intertextuality, and Mediality

The theoretical tools presented thus far allow for a nuanced understanding of cultural representations of black bodies, slavery and settler colonialism, and to consider the theoretical strategies within talking back and Black Feminist Love Politics. Many scholars and analysts of cultural forms address the importance of cultural codes and references in the creation of artistic works, and from the field of popular musicology, I will rely upon a gathering of theoretical approaches and analytic methods that will serve to illuminate Beyoncé’s emergent messages. These tools include the frameworks of intertextuality, transmediality and mediality. Respectively, these tools allow me to consider the cultural references that Beyoncé invokes, the levels of storytelling

and storyworld creation, and the processes that are used to integrate the visual, lyrical and musical media.

Worldmaking

The theory of worldmaking has roots in literary theory but has been extended to the study of other cultural products; namely, music. For the sake of space, I have chosen to forgo a historiography of the theoretical concept and instead focus in on those authors who apply notions of worldmaking specifically to music. My use of the term worldmaking aligns primarily with Tia DeNora's explanation of a role of music: "music may serve as a resource for utopian imaginations, for alternative worlds and institutions, and it may be used strategically to presage new worlds (2000, 159). This is particularly true in the case of music video, where worlds of sound are simplified by visual content that works in tandem with the music to form a world of alternatives and imaginaries. Jodie Taylor extends DeNora's work, theorizing *queer* world-making practices in her book *Playing It Queer* (2012). Taylor writes that,

The tactics of queer world-making involve transformation of the self and the social in a way that makes queer pleasures possible and desirable. Queer scenes area attempts to make worlds within which queerness in legible. Music is a strategic resource that both aides self-fashioning and sustains world-making attempts (63).

Though my reading of *Lemonade* does not engage queer theories, the concept of world-making through music as Taylor conceptualizes it maps onto musical world-making as a Black feminist practice. Through music and music video a transformation of the subject makes that subject understandable, or in Taylor's words, "legible." This links up with the concept of utopian imaginaries inherent in Black Feminist Love Politics.

Férdia Stone-Davis explores the concept of musical worldmaking, and argues that music has literal and virtual means of forming environments. She writes, “In both real and virtual terms, music has the capacity to create an environment into which the subject steps and explores and in which she dwells” (2016, 136). Drawing from the work of Caputo, Stone-Davis argues that meaning is assembled in space, place, and environment, as well as over time:

Just as human identity emerges through a relational process, one that requires the constant transcendence of physical and imaginative limits, so music does the same. It sensuously constructs time and space, facilitating the production and renewal of relations and enabling different constructions of subjectivity (125-6).

In “Love Drought,” the musical environment can be analyzed by an exploration of genre. Music production and autobiography can be seen to have parallels; Stone-Davis writes, “...there is some kind of analogy to be made between autobiographical self-making and musical self-making. The music event provides an immersive environment, wherein each participating subject, each ‘I’, is situated, moving in a stream of occurrences that happens to ‘me’” (137). When reading Stone-Davis’ work, I imagine myself at a concert, listening to a band perform on-stage; these immersive experiences can indeed feel like microcosmic “worlds” where not only is my identity informed by the event, but so too is the identity of the performers and other listeners. The sensuous construction of a musical world has been explored by other writers such as Sarah Cohen (1995). She undertook a case study that illuminated one man’s experience with his childhood music and its intimate relation to childhood place, memory, and space. These connections between music and space are tied up in sensory experience: Cohen writes that,

Music plays a unique and often hidden role in the social and cultural production of place and, through its peculiar nature, it foregrounds the dynamic, sensual aspects of this process emphasizing, for example, the creation and performance of place through human bodies in action and motion” (445).

Intertextuality

One of the most prevalent analytic tools for the analysis of cultural codes is the framework of intertextuality. With this approach, the analyst can work with a musical text to unearth the myriad of cultural references that emerge within the artistic work. In this regard, a musical work is seen not to function independently, but rather to respond to other works that circulate in the cultural sphere.

Serge Lacasse builds on the work of literary theorist Gérard Genette to develop a model of *transphonography*, more commonly referred to as *transtextuality*. Transtextuality is the term for the entire network of interrelations that are connected to one another across various categorical distinctions (Lacasse 2000, 35-58). Lacasse identifies five of Genette's levels within transtextuality: intertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, hypertextuality, and architextuality (Lacasse 2008, 9). Lacasse then adds three other theoretical levels within transtextuality: polytextuality, cotextuality, and transfictionality. For the purposes of my thesis, I will use the theory and method of intertextuality.

Genette's definition of intertextuality is "a relationship of copresence between two texts or among several texts: that is to say, eidetically and typically as the actual presence of one text within another" (1997, 1-2). In Burns, Woods, and Lafrance's extension of Lacasse's work to an analysis of Lady Gaga, they succinctly define intertextuality to "comprise the web of interrelated creative elements that link a text to other texts" as well as "elements or materials that suggest a connection to or borrowing from another work" (2009, 4). In his article, "Strategic Intertextuality in Three of John Lennon's Late Beatles' Songs," Mark Spicer defines intertextuality as "compo-

sitions [that] acquire meaning not in and of themselves, but through their relationship to a potentially infinite universe of other works” (2009, 351). Spicer writes that the advantages of using an intertextual approach in music analysis “allows us to step beyond the formalist ideal of analyzing pieces entirely from within” (351). In the case of popular music studies, a divergence from an internal analysis of a work is basically necessitated by the inherent network of intertextual references in pop music—musical, visual, and textual. Spicer goes on to mobilize Robert Hatten’s suggestion that musical intertexts have binary functions: *stylistic* and *strategic* (353).

Stylistic intertextuality is the adoption of general characteristics of a style. Spicer describes it as a reference to “distinctive features of a pre-existing style without reference to any specific works in that style” (Spicer 2009, 353). “Daddy Lessons” is an instance of stylistic intertextuality in *Lemonade*: it is a country-tune that adopts a New Orleans jazz style without referring to a specific New Orleans song. Strategic intertextuality on the other hand “is more pointed, occurring only when a composer makes a deliberate reference to a *particular* earlier work or works, and this can involve a variety of techniques such as quotation, structural modelling, variation, or paraphrase” (354). In *Lemonade*, a strategic intertext would be the direct insertion of a recording of Malcolm X delivering a speech in which he says: “The most disrespected person in America is the Black woman” (Malcolm X 1962). A strategic intertext refers to the entire body of referred work: to people who can identify the intertext, the album takes on an additional meaning. With the Malcolm X quote, Beyoncé points to a specific historical moment in the African-American Civil Rights Movement, whereas the musical style of New Orleans jazz does not explicitly suggest an ideological intertext. By identifying intertexts as either strategic or styl-

istic in *Lemonade*, I can more accurately assess their function, their relevance, and their potential meaning for audiences.

Mediality

In his introduction to *Convergence Culture*, Henry Jenkins writes that, “[t]ransmedia storytelling is the art of world making” (2006, 21). To engage in a fictitious world, consumers adept the role of what Jenkins calls “hunting and gathering,” collectively working together for a “richer entertainment experience” (21). A transmedia story “unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole” (Jenkins 2006, 95-96). Media platforms can include an album, music video, websites, social media, fan creations, autobiographies, interviews, journalism, blog posts, covers songs, and so on. Lori Burns, in her article “The Concept Album as Visual-Sonic-Textual Spectacle: The Transmedial Storyworld of Coldplay’s *Mylo Xyloto*” adopts the concept of a transmedia storyworld and applies it to the Coldplay work, exploring the role of the concept album and its ability “to spectacularize its cultural reach and to oil its audience-media engine” (Burns 2016, 111). Burns writes that through the transmedia storyworld “a larger narrative is developed *within* and *across* a range of media texts” (91).

Following three mysterious Instagram posts featuring lemons and lemonade in September 2015, the release of “Formation” is one of the clearest initial textual levels of *Lemonade* that can be understood as part of a transmedial storyworld. “Formation” was released as a single and a music video on February 6 2016 on Tidal. The song channels themes from Southern black history, alongside visual commentary on the dispossession of black communities in New Orleans, as these transpire both during and following Hurricane Katrina. One image specifically defines the

album as commentary on the political and emergency responder dealing of Hurricane Katrina: Beyoncé sitting on the roof of a New Orleans police car that is slowly sinking into the flooded city. This scene invokes reflection on how local, state, and federal level officials abandoned poor people-of-colour populations during and after Hurricane Katrina.⁵

On February 2 2017 Beyoncé and Jay-Z announced their pregnancy on beyonce.com and on Instagram. I include Beyoncé’s pregnancy photoshoot as a level of transmediality because of its incorporation of poetry; the pregnancy photoshoot and its accompanying poems were written by Warsan Shire—the same woman who wrote the poetry in *Lemonade*. The entire poem, “I Have Three Hearts,” is dispersed on Beyoncé’s website between photos of Beyoncé. In these photos, she evokes female deities and powerful women: Venus, Frida Khalo, Paolina Borghese (Napolean Bonaparte’s sister), and Nefertiti (Campbell 2017). Beyoncé’s aligning of herself with goddesses (who are often goddesses of fertility) can be considered an act of worldmaking, as it departs from historical Western representations of the imagined black female body.

Another layer of transmediality can be seen in the 2017 Grammy Awards during which Beyoncé was awarded Best Urban Contemporary Album. Her acceptance speech for the award was incredibly deliberate: Beyoncé read the speech, signifying her intent to convey precise messages to a massive worldwide audience (O’Connell 2017). In her own words, Beyoncé extends themes present in *Lemonade* to her Grammy speech: Southern culture, religion, marriage, moth-

⁵ The failure of state officials to adequately provide for Black and people of colour populations in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina has been much discussed in academia. For example, Troy D. Allen writes that, “...the failure of the levee system, along with the incompetent response by local, state, and federal officials, have brought to the centre of our national consciousness issues that have long been on the periphery—namely, the enduring legacy of systematic and structural racism that has resulted in a disproportionate number of African Americans mired in poverty for generations (2007, 466). Beyoncé sinking into the water on top of a police car shows that local level officials, such as the police, who did not respond in a timely matter to flooding in New Orleans resulted in the deaths of Black people across the city. 93% of fatalities during and after Hurricane Katrina were Black people (Heldman 2011).

erhood, blackness and the history of blackness as painful (generational trauma), black beauty, interruptions to whiteness, politics, and healing. The full transcript of her 2017 Grammy speech is included here:

Thank you to the Grammy voters for this incredible honour. Thank you to everyone who worked so hard to beautifully capture the profundity of deep Southern culture. I thank God for my family, my wonderful husband, my beautiful daughter, my fans for bringing me so much happiness and support. We all experience pain and loss, and often we become inaudible. My intention for the film and album was to create a body of work that would give a voice to our pain, our struggles, our darkness and our history. To confront issues that make us uncomfortable. It's important to me to show images to my children that reflect their beauty so they can grow up in a world where they look in the mirror—first through their own families, as well as the news, the Super Bowl, the Olympics, the White House and the Grammys—and see themselves. And have no doubt that they're beautiful, intelligent and capable. This is something I want for every child of every race, and I feel it's vital that we learn from the past and recognize our tendencies to repeat our mistakes (qtd. in Gajanan 2017).

With these comments, Beyoncé shapes an image of a black family that has overcome a challenging past, and a vision for the future in which children are fully empowered in society and culture. Her acceptance speech was accompanied by a groundbreaking performance that made use of incredibly visually realistic holograms. Her performance conjured at least four female deities and goddesses from disparate spiritual, religious, and cultural traditions. In her donning of elaborate yellow and golden clothing and jewelry and celebration of her pregnancy with twins, Beyoncé referred to the goddess Oshun of the Yoruba people, a water deity of love, fertility, luxury, and sexuality (Murrell 2010). Other references include the West African deity Mami Wata, a water deity, the Hindu goddess Parvati who honours fertility and love, and the Christian Virgin Mary, honoured for piety, devotion, and holiness (Martin 2017).

The theoretical perspectives from critical race theory (freedom practices and Black Feminist Love Politics) form the social and political contexts for the analysis, and the theoretical concepts from musicology (intertextuality, transmediaity, and mediality) will form the analytic vehicles through which the critical perspectives will be revealed in words, music, and images.

Method: Data Collection

To analyze such a work as a film-length visual album within the parameters of transmedia phenomena, it is necessary to consider the album at the levels of music, lyrics, images, poetry, and transmedia contexts. To undertake this approach, I draw from Hutten & Burns (forthcoming) methodology in which we proposed “multimodal intertextuality” as a comprehensive method for collecting and analyzing music video data. A multimodal work is one in which multiple modes of medial communication exist simultaneously. Within these medial modes exist intertextual references. A breakdown of how the method can be put into action is outlined in Table 1. This approach is largely phenomenological, in that it relies on personal observations and experience with the subject matter.

Table 1.1 Analytic Framework: Multimodal Intertextuality, from Hutten & Burns

| | Stylistic Intertexts | Strategic Intertexts |
|---------------|---|---|
| Music | 1) Genre | 2) Subgenre (heightened specificity) |
| Images | 3) General place (e.g., the American south; a parking garage) | 4) People featured in the video 5) Specific places (e.g., a plantation in Louisiana) |
| Lyrics | 6) Hip hop euphemisms | 7) Quoting lyrics from other songs 8) Naming people and places |
| Poetry | 9) Genre | 10) Referring to people, places, moments |

| | | |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| Transmedia Extensions | 11) Social media posts (e.g., straightening and lightning hair as a reference to colourist debates) | 12) Performances (e.g., the CMAs performance of “Daddy Lessons”) 13) Interviews (e.g., interview with <i>Elle</i> where Beyoncé discusses the album) |
|------------------------------|---|---|

When mobilizing this chart, I begin by collecting data from a specific music video. For example, when analyzing “Sorry” in Hutten & Burns (forthcoming), we collected screenshots of images in the music video, observed the musical content in detail, and examined the lyrics within the context of our cross-cutting parameters (which were cultural references, bodies & identities, place & space, and so on). The cross-cutting parameters I include in my *adapted* method are stylistic intertexts and strategic intertexts. These parameters allow for the collected data to be comprehensively read within my theoretical framework of freedom practices and Black Feminist Love Politics.

Conclusion

Chapter One has presented a short biography of Beyoncé’s life to date, as well as a comprehensive literature review on both pre-*Lemonade* and post-*Lemonade* scholarship. This literature review justifies the need for my study, particularly the need for a close reading of *Lemonade* that considers collectively the domains of music, image, lyrics, poetry, and transmedia extensions, as well as Beyoncé’s role within the neoliberal capitalist society in which she thrives (and survives).

Additionally, this chapter has outlined the basis of my theoretical frameworks, explaining concepts from critical race studies (freedom practices and Black Feminist Love Politics) as well

as concepts from literary theory that have been extended to media, feminist, and music studies (worldmaking, intertextuality, and mediality).

CHAPTER TWO: INTERTEXTS TO WOMEN'S FORMATIONS IN "LOVE DROUGHT"

Throughout *Lemonade* and across its textual layers, Beyoncé forwards a political message of women organizing collectively. These examples of women's alliances are self-proclaimed "formations," with her song "Formation" as the most obvious example. In the album, these "formations" feature Black women in highly political contexts: alongside riot-armed police officers, Black mothers holding images of their murdered sons (Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, and Michael Brown are some of the young men pictured [Griffiths 2016]), or Black women wearing upper-class Victorian-era dresses in slave housing on southern American plantations. In this chapter, my use of the term "formation" refers to the message of women's unity, organization, and alignment, which is represented in *Lemonade* visually, musically, lyrically, and poetically. Women in formation as visual resistance to social inequalities is not a new tactic of Beyoncé's, but in *Lemonade*, it comes to the forefront. By examining the intertextual references in the music video and transmedia domains, this chapter contextualizes these references to group formations using the song "Love Drought" as its case study.

Beyoncé's Chronology of Women in Formation: 2000-2016

Destiny's Child was a girl group that existed from 1997-2006, with Beyoncé as the lead singer. Their song "Independent Women Pt. I," first released in 2000 in the movie *Charlie's Angels*, introduced the concept of women in formation to Beyoncé fans. The authenticity of Destiny's Child's feminism has been widely disputed, given the girl group's overt sexualization of nearly every song they perform (Thrift 2002). "Independent Women Pt. I," nonetheless, has themes of female autonomy separate from paternalism. Images in the music video to the song

feature Beyoncé, Kelly Rowland, and Michelle Williams sitting around a conference table in a meeting with other women, then later [faux-]fighting men as a trio, and flying through the air in superhero-style costumes. The independence that Destiny's Child sing about is primarily economic; the lyrics centre around the idea that relationships should be equal in terms of spending, and conflate material wealth with women's independence. For example, they sing: "The rock I'm rocking / I bought it / Cause I depend on me / If I want it."¹ Combined with the visuals in the music video, the lyrics of "Independent Women Pt. I" are an anthem celebrating women's economic and material autonomy from men. After Destiny's Child broke up and Beyoncé continued as a solo artist, the concept of women in formation reappeared with songs such as "Single Ladies (Put a Ring On It)" (2008), "Run the World (Girls)" (2011), "Pretty Hurts" (2013), and "***Flawless" (2013). I will take a moment here to review some of the contexts of these songs, in order to establish some of the ways in which Beyoncé has built upon the theme of formation in her solo career.

"Single Ladies (Put a Ring On It)" (2008) is song and music video featuring Beyoncé and two backup dancers, Ebony Williams and Ashley Everett. The trio evokes images of Beyoncé's past association with Destiny's Child; lyrically, the song has reference to "Independent Women Pt. I." In the beginning of "Independent Women Pt. I," Destiny's Child sings, "Throw your hands up at me," and in the beginning of "Single Ladies (Put a Ring On It)," Beyoncé sings, "Now put your hands up!"² The similarity between these two opening lyrics exemplifies Beyoncé's tech-

¹ See <https://genius.com/Destynys-child-independent-women-part-1-lyrics> for a transcription of the lyrics to "Independent Women Pt. 1."

² See <https://genius.com/Beyonce-single-ladies-put-a-ring-on-it-lyrics> for a transcription of the lyrics to "Single Ladies (Put a Ring On It)."

nique of developing a network of intertextual references within her own musical history, and conveys a consistent narrative promoting women's independence. However, the type of independence conveyed is not independence from men. The lyrics promote a message that heterosexual romantic relationships are a primary goal for women. The song does not challenge patriarchal domination, and in fact, supports the idea that only men should propose marriage. In "Single Ladies," the women are not in control of their relationships.

"Run the World (Girls)" (2011) draws more consistently from feminine power than "Independent Women Pt. I" and "Single Ladies," visually and lyrically focusing on goddess themes in opposition to masculine police brutality. "I'm repping for the girls who taking over the world / Help me raise a glass for the college grads" shows Beyoncé's commitment to advocating for women and girls, referring to the feminist efforts to break the glass ceiling.³ The music video for "Run the World (Girls)" is situated in a post-apocalyptic desert-like landscape in which a group of male riot police officers encounter Beyoncé and her primarily female entourage. Beyoncé, dressed like a goddess, adorned in gold, challenges these men, intimidating them with an aggressive dance. The line of women, with Beyoncé in the centre, run arm-in-arm toward the men who recoil fearfully. The music video ends with a massive group of women dancing, led by Beyoncé, who face the group of men and salute them, mocking the militarization of the riot police. "Run the World (Girls)" injects a small amount of political commentary on police brutality in its depiction of women bravely facing the group of men in riot gear. Additionally, Beyoncé refers to the black power salute near the end of the music video, when she leads the women in raising their fists into the air in an act of solidarity and unity.

³ See <https://genius.com/Beyonce-run-the-world-girls-lyrics> for a transcription of the the lyrics to "Run the World (Girls)."

“Pretty Hurts” (2013) continues to emphasize the concept of women in formation by critiquing a specific type of women’s organizing: that of beauty pageants and mainstream beauty culture. “Pretty Hurts” offers a more complex conception of formation in Beyoncé’s artistic output in its critique of how society is affected by the “disease” of pressuring women to look a certain way. The song assumes a political position that asserts that women do not need to be conventionally beautiful to be accepted. For example, in the chorus Beyoncé sings: “Pretty hurts / We shine the light on whatever’s worst / Perfection is the disease of a nation / Pretty hurts, pretty hurts.”⁴ The physical and emotional pain of fitting into mainstream ideals of beauty are critiqued, but so too are racially-driven standards for beauty. In the music video, Beyoncé is shown among other beauty pageant contestants, almost all of whom are white. Her hair is lightened blonde, and she wears a form-fitting sequin gown. The contestants are shown in the dressing room, preparing to compete on stage. They squeeze into tiny dresses, and one woman’s bones are visible through her nearly transparent skin; Beyoncé herself steps on to a scale, her smile fading from her face as she reads her weight. By the end of the song, the lyrics encourage embracing one’s “true” self. Thus, this group of women in the beauty pageant becomes a past-tense occurrence: “You stripped away the masquerade / The illusion has been shed / Are you happy with yourself? / Yes.” The listener deduces that the character—and by extension, the other women featured—can be happy and fulfilled without subscribing to societal beauty codes.

Before *Lemonade*’s release, “***Flawless” (2013) was Beyoncé’s most pronouncedly feminist song. Quotes from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie are woven among lyrics in which Bey-

⁴ See <https://genius.com/Beyonce-pretty-hurts-lyrics> for a transcription of the lyrics to “Pretty Hurts.”

oncé asserts that she is not “just his little wife,” and “I woke up like this / We flawless.”⁵ Adichie’s voice can be heard reciting her well-known Ted Talk speech: “We raise girls to see each other as competitors, not for jobs or for accomplishments...we teach girls that they cannot be sexual beings in the way that boys are” (qtd. in Adichie 2012). In the music video for “***Flawless,” both men and women are shown dancing in a rave-like setting, a disorganized mass of people moving against and beside one another. The only organized formation of people is seen when Beyoncé and a group of female back up dancers begin a choreographed dance, thus promoting a visual message of female unity. The combined visuals, lyrics, and quoted speech hail what can now be described as a new era for Beyoncé in which she mobilizes intertextual references to promote women departing from patriarchal control and inter-competition.

Beginning with her time performing as the lead singer of Destiny’s Child, Beyoncé has aligned herself with the concept of women in formation as an act of feminism. Her projection of the purpose of women “in formation” has evolved from Destiny’s Child to *Lemonade*. The first examples (“Single Ladies,” “Run the World (Girls),” “Pretty Hurts,” and “***Flawless”) focused on women achieving equality with, or rebelling against, men in the workplace and in romantic relationships. In *Lemonade*, by contrast, Beyoncé uses the concept of women in formation to address systemic issues of racism and sexism, drawing from themes present in Black feminist thought, such as intersectional feminism. As Cheryl Thomsson (2016) writes,

Beyoncé’s previous albums were about feminism, singular. However, *Lemonade* is specifically about Black feminism... Beyoncé’s music might be mere artistic expression to some, but her message is personal and political, the very definition of feminism.

⁵ See <https://genius.com/Beyonce-flawless-lyrics> for a transcription of the lyrics to “***Flawless.”

As the above images depict, visual representations of women in formation, particularly Black women in formation, is an established narrative in Beyoncé's work. Nearly twenty years in the making, Beyoncé has shaped her role within these formations as instigator and leader. In *Lemonade*, we see women in formation as a focal point appearing throughout the entire visual album in nearly every song and chapter. While the concept of women in formation did not previously focus on issues specific to Black women, Beyoncé herself has come to voice the need for intersectional feminism. Her career has been a process—indeed, a formative act—of identifying the reality that Black women face both sexism and racism.

Analysis of Formations in “Love Drought”

“Love Drought” appears in the part of the album titled “Reformation.” Reformation means to reform an institution or a state of affairs (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2018)—in *Lemonade*, the institution is not explicitly named, but the plantation settings and other references to slavery make the object of reformation clear. When considering my theoretical starting points, it can be argued that in this part of the album, Beyoncé is exploring ways in which legacies of the institution of slavery and colonialism might be addressed. The gold paint on Beyoncé's body foreshadows a line from Shire's poetry that appears toward the end of *Lemonade*: “Grandmother, the alchemist, you spun gold out of this hard life.” The adornment of gold in “Love Drought” and the metaphoric spinning of gold in the poetry can be considered within Black Feminist Love Politics as an act of worldmaking based on a utopian vision for the future of Black women.

Throughout the music video Beyoncé is centred within formations of women. In one scene she lies on her back on an overturned chair, her legs folded. She seems to be bound, immobile. In a later scene, Beyoncé appears sitting with her legs drawn up to her chest, her skin

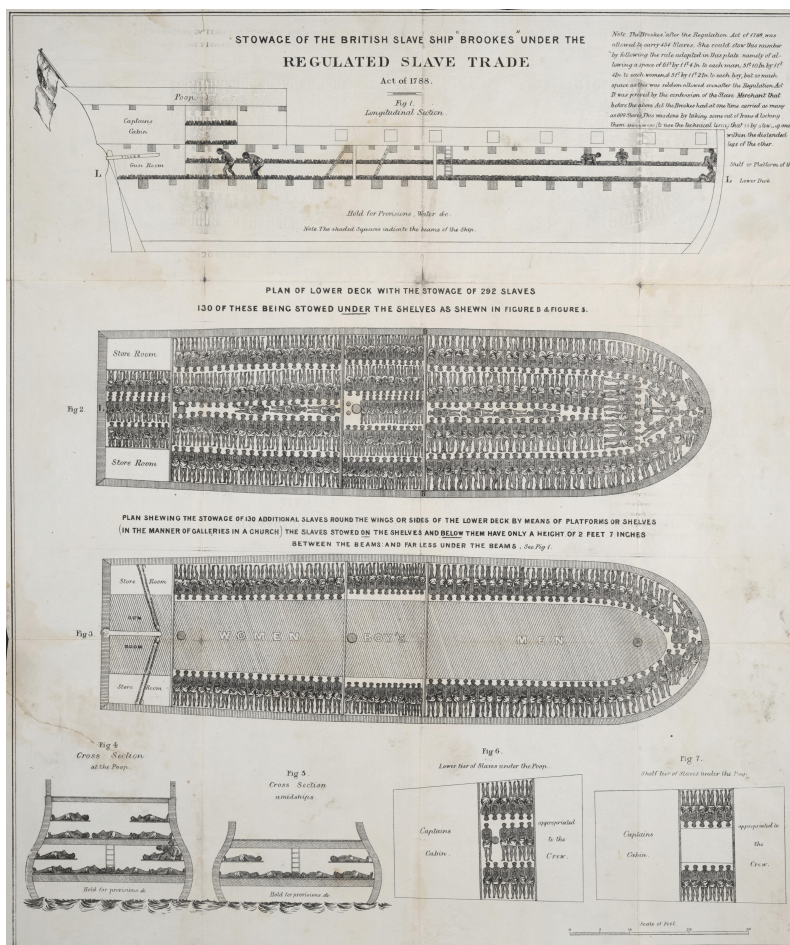
painted in gold, in front of women who are lying backward on chairs. What could this position mean? It is difficult to conduct research on the contexts for the chair position: I did find answers in blog posts by Black women, whose interpretations are deeply personal and political. The blogger “melanatedmoney,” in particular, provides the following interpretation of the chair position, understanding it to be a symbol of the slave trade ships:

Who can forget the visuals of the turned over chairs? Bey is bound to an overturned wooden chair on top of a picnic table. The wood. Her body positioned unnaturally. This image immediately struck me as ‘the middle passage’. Almost simultaneously it was an eerie reminder that women were on those ships that crossed oceans too, flying in the face of the often male-centered enslavement discussion. But as more women were bound to the wooden chairs in the video, flowers bloomed – and Bey got free! Again the strength in Black femme unity flies in our faces and the beauty from our pain emerges in the form of the colorful flowers. It speaks to the ways in which we as black femmes must learn from our ancestors. They struggled so that we could sit upright, proud, liberated. The flowers on their graves become the [petals] that line our paths to love and forgiveness – the next chapter in the visual album (2016).

The slave trade route referenced by this blogger is commonly referred to as the Middle Passage. This was a triangular route by which Europeans sailed to Africa to kidnap, purchase, or trade items in exchange for African peoples; they then transported the slaves by boat to America for sale or trade, and completed the triangle by sailing back to Europe with the profits or items gleaned. The Middle Passage was a point of travel that treated African peoples as cargo, in which slave traders would pack their bodies as “efficiently” as possible, sometimes stacked. Figure 2.1 is a historic plan of a slave ship; the description of the stowage reads: “Plan shewing the stowage of the additional slaves round the winds or sides o the lower deck by means of platforms or shelves (in the manner of galleries in a church). The slaves stowed on the shelves and below have only a height of 2 feet 7 inches between the beams and far less under the beams.” These

horrific practices resulted in terrible sanitation conditions and a high number of deaths: between 1664-1864, 11% of slaves died, per voyage (Haines et al. 2001, 506).

Figure 2.1. The slave ship *Brookes* plan (1789). Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Washington D.C.



Visual cues to magic, such as in the scene described above, are abundant in “Love-Drought,” and indeed, within *Lemonade* as a whole. The blooming of flowers in “Love Drought”—magically—is, as melanatedmoney describes, a metaphor for black feminine strength rooted in the collective struggle of slavery. She writes that, “They struggled so that we could sit upright, proud, liberated.” Her interpretation articulates how the legacy of Black women’s strength is a framework for loving and forgiving. The growing of flowers underneath and around

the chairs symbolizes honouring the legacy of Black women ancestors, as well as expressing hope for new life. By new life I refer to a departure from legacies of white violence, but also new life that is rooted in women's fertility and ability to *birth* life. Beyoncé as fertility goddess is a major theme in *Lemonade* and across its textual layers (see Chapter Three).

I place the visual aesthetic—and some aspects of the poetry—of “Love Drought” within the literary genre of magic realism, a style of writing made famous by Latin-American writers such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Texts considered within the genre of magic realism use literary devices such as the inclusion of magical or mythical elements into otherwise realistic storylines or settings; the genre is specific to Latin America, and has often been considered within a paradigm of resistance to colonization and colonial efforts to assimilate their subjects (Slemon 1988, 10). Specific to Black culture, Nesrin Yavas furthers this concept and argues that the genre of magic realism allows African American women to re-historicize their experiences as a “black mythical, matrilineal history and cultural lore with which Black women can constantly write themselves and their experiences into the gaps, silences of history” (Yavas 2014, 253). Magic realism allows for the deconstructing of:

Western systems of knowledge and representation, replacing them with a matrilineal, mythical/magical system of signification, with which Black women can rehistoricize and articulate their communal histories by drawing upon myths, legends, orality, folklore, and other non-Western practices (247).

The intertext to magic realism in “Love Drought” points to a tradition of Black women re-historicizing their experiences.

In considering the theory that magic realism is a result of postcolonial writing, it becomes evident how both the colonized (or the enslaved) and the colonizer (or the enslaver) are given

consideration in “Love Drought.” The strategic intertext of the chairs, that signifies the Middle Passage, celebrates the resilience of the colonized/enslaved, and by doing so, raises awareness of the colonizer/enslaver. This interpretation is solidified by the absence of white people in the video. Magic realist elements, such as Beyoncé’s body painted in gold, or in white Yoruba paint, position her as goddess, and thus, leader of this formation.

Throughout the music video, a single-file line of women are led by Beyoncé into calm, twilight-lit water, wearing gauzy floor-length dresses. Their bodies are reflected in the purple-pink water, distorted by a ripple effect. Michael Owunna identifies one interpretation of this visual reference. On his blog *Owning My Truth*, Owunna draws parallels between the visual content of “Love Drought” with African-American artistic renderings and folkloric oral story accounts of Igbo Landing (or Ibo Landing), a historical event that occurred at Dunbar Creek on St. Simons Island, Georgia, in 1803 (Owunna 2016). Though accounts of the incident vary due to the story’s oral passing-down, it is generally agreed upon that a group of approximately seventy-five Igbo peoples who had been captured as slaves by white American slave merchants rebelled, gaining control of the ship; the slave traders jumped overboard and into the water at some point after this revolt. Some accounts of the event suggest that upon arriving in Georgia, all seventy-five Igbo committed suicide; other accounts claim that approximately a dozen people chose suicide, and the remaining were forced into slavery. While there is a fair amount of mythology and confusion surrounding what actually took place at Dunbar Creek over two hundred years ago, it is undisputed that some sort of Igbo rebellion did take place. The Igbo, in this case, chose death over slavery, a freedom practice demonstrating the tenacity of human nature when faced with horrific oppression (Owunna 2016).

Many folkloric renderings of the event at Igbo Landing claim that the Igbo chief who led the group into the water also led them in song, singing, “The water spirit Omambala brought us, the water spirit Omambala will take us home” (Madufofo 2012). As Beyoncé leads a group of Black women into the water, her voice can be heard in a non-diegetic presentation: “Are you aware / You’re my lifeline, are you tryna kill me? / If I wasn’t me, would you still feel me?”⁶ Though Beyoncé is singing to a romantic lover in this lyric, additional interpretations are possible. When considering slavery as a theoretical starting point, as well as a visual intertext across multiple levels of interpretation, the narrative of her lyrics takes on nuanced meaning. The “you” she is addressing could feasibly be understood as the nation of America. Though America gives her sustenance, *life*, she wonders whether the nation is “out to get” her. This is not an unprecedented statement, given extremely high rates of police brutality toward Black people in the United States, as well as the country’s history as a colonial nation built on slavery. If Beyoncé were not the undisputed commercial and celebrity success, would the same country still support her? Statistics on wealth distribution in America certainly suggest otherwise.⁷ Her lyrical musings adopt a more political statement within the framework of critical race studies, particularly when taking the lyrics alongside visual images, which have parallels to Igbo Landing. The women in formation are both a reference to the past but also a nod to the future. The women in the water raise their arms, their hands held, and lower them, as if about to take a bow. United they look out

⁶ See <https://genius.com/Beyonce-love-drought-lyrics> for a transcription of the lyrics to “Love Drought.”

⁷ According to inequality.org, wealth disparity in the United States is greater than in any other developed nation. The divide between the top 1% wealthiest people, Black Americans, and Latin-Americans is staggering: the top 400 Forbes billionaires in the United States “have as much wealth as all African-American households, plus one-third of America’s Latino population, combined. In other words, just 400 extremely wealthy individuals have as much wealth as 16 million African-American households and 5 million Latino households” ([Inequality.org](http://inequality.org)). The aggregate net worth of the top 400 billionaires as of 2016 was \$2.4 trillion.

over the water, perhaps honouring their past, and choosing not to wade any further. Including visual references to Igbo Landing interrupts whiteness by injecting a painful history of Black experience into the popular music video format. In line with Di Angelo's list of types of interruptions to whiteness, the strategic visual intertext is also "proposing the importance of group membership instead of individualism" (a formation of women, moving each as parts of a whole), "a person of colour occupying a leadership position" (Beyoncé leading the women), and a "challenge to white centrality" (Beyoncé choosing not to include any white people in this music video) (2011).

Lyrics in "Love Drought"

The lyrics are the next aesthetic domain I will analyze for the intertextual content that suggests the theme of formation. At its most surface-level interpretation, the lyrics to "Love Drought" are widely accepted as a description of Beyoncé and Jay-Z's relationship. The lyrics, with lines such as "Ten times out of nine I know you're lying," outline a relationship fraught with mistrust and confusion. However, the chorus to the song shows the narrator forgiving her partner, and moving on: the line, "You and me could make it rain now" signifies an end to the veritable "love drought" between this couple.

A complicated romantic relationship is not the only thing that the lyrics describe. Ingrid Burley, the writer of the song, explicitly states in an interview with Genius.com that she wrote the song out of her frustration with Parkwood Entertainment (Genius 2016). After being told that Beyoncé was not considering any new songs, Burley discovered the opposite, and penned the lyrics as an ode to the confusing relationship writers can have with their record labels. Beyoncé's choice to include Burley's song on *Lemonade* can be viewed as an act of "formation" in and of

itself. Burley is a Black American woman who depends on artists' singing her songs for her income. Beyoncé choosing this song undermines the actions of the employees at Parkwood who told Burley that her song would not be considered by Beyoncé. Additionally, Burley states that she wrote, "Love Drought" as a metaphor for music's social impact. In the interview, Burley says,

["Love Drought"] turns into a metaphor about music... I thought about the fact that back in the day, infamously, you know, James Brown was able to be brought in to literally stop a riot and all this other shit so I'm like, what other artists? Obviously, I'm in a Beyoncé writing camp so at that point the writing became a little more focused, like, who can get away with singing this [song]? (Genius 2016)

Burley references James Brown's performance on April 5, 1968 at the Boston Garden the night after Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. After King's assassination, riots broke out across the United States. Brown's performance helped to avert the riots in Boston, and has been considered a unifying event that aided in healing the pain experienced by African Americans and their allies after King's murder (Claus 2017). Lyrics such as "You and me can move a mountain / You and me can make it rain now / You and me can stop this love drought" in the chorus are not representative of only a romantic partnership, but of the power artists can wield in their use of music. Burley identified James Brown as one example and situated Beyoncé in Brown's lineage of doing social good through music. The lyrics to "Love Drought" contain strategic intertexts to a history of artists, such as James Brown, who mobilized their music to literally and figuratively "calm a war down," "make it rain," and to "move mountains."

The romantic language in "Love Drought" undergirds the metaphor of music's potential for enacting social power: Beyoncé and Jay-Z, individually as well as a couple, have enormous cultural influence. With a combined net worth of over one-billion US dollars (Greenburg 2017

n.p.) and lengthy, established careers, the couple has initiated humanitarian campaigns (such as BeyGood), have donated large amounts of money to social initiatives, and are each well-respected and widely recognized as leaders in the hip hop, R&B, and pop music industries (*Look to the Stars* n.d.). Their donations to charities and foundations (such as United Way, Artists for Peace and Justice, Global Poverty Project, Music for Relief, Red Cross, Oxfam, Music Rising, American Foundation for AIDS Research, Women’s Fund for Scotland, MusiCares, and more) help to ease global suffering, and are tangible examples of “getting into formation” (*Look to the Stars* n.d.).

Poetry in “Love Drought”

As with the rest of *Lemonade*, “Love Drought” is preceded and followed by a poetic interlude. The poetry preceding “Love Drought” makes reference to baptism. Beyoncé’s voice is played over images of a parking garage, and then moves to a football stadium with her lying in the fetal position on the turf. She reads,

He bathes me until I forget their names and their faces. I ask him to look me in the eye when I come... home. Why do you deny yourself heaven? Why do you consider yourself undeserving? Why are you afraid of love? You think it’s not possible for someone like you. But you are the love of my life... the love of my life, love of my life, the *love* of my life.

This passage can be understood as a dialogue. “He” is god and baptizes her, until she is healed from an unidentified trauma. When the questions begin, the dialogue switches: now, it is the god speaking to her. The god asks why she denies herself heaven, why she considers herself undeserving, why she is afraid of love. “Someone like you” could be considered as a reference to her identity as a Black woman in a country that has historically made it very difficult for Black peo-

ple to love without condition; bell hooks, for example, writes in her book *Salvation: Black People and Love*, that,

In the racist mindset the enslaved African was incapable of deep feeling and fine emotions. Since love was considered to be the finer sentiment, black folks were seen as lacking the capacity to love (hooks 2001, xix).

Considering the poetry before “Love Drought” with slavery at the centre of my theorizing changes the interpretation from romantic to political. Continuing on, the god then reassures —“you are the love of my life.” This sentence is consistent with the message of God’s love made possible through Christ in the Christian religion; for example, biblical passages such as “For God so loved the world” (John 3:16), and “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1 John 4:11). My interpretation is reinforced by the religious symbolism in “Love Drought.” The line of women wading through the shallow body of water are pictured wearing white robes that have black crosses across the front, symbolizing the ultimate religious sacrifice: Jesus’ death on the cross. Additionally, the poetry following the song begins with,

Baptize me, now that reconciliation is possible. If we’re gonna heal, let it be glorious. One thousand girls raise their arms. Do you remember being born? Are you thankful of the hips that cracked... the deep velvet of your mother... and her mother... and her mother? There is a curse that will be broken.

This phrase could be referring to any number of curses: patriarchy, racism, infidelity, and so on. The antidote to the curse is a “glorious” healing in the act of women moving in unity: “One thousand girls raise their arms.” The poetry here also speaks to women’s ability to give birth as if it is a magical attribute. In *Lemonade* and beyond, Beyoncé celebrates pregnancy and birth—this is a major theme in her work. In the song “Don’t Hurt Yourself” (*Lemonade* 2016), she says, “You know I give you life,” and on The Carters most recent album, *Everything is Love*, Beyoncé sings,

“I give you life,” on the song “Nice” (2018). In the act of imagining the breaking of a curse, of girls raising their arms in unison, and of collective healing, Beyoncé invokes Black Feminist Love Politics.

Musical Narratives

What type of musical environments are created by “Love Drought?” Including the coda to the song, we hear two drastically different musical styles in the same song, which constructs a musical landscape that allows the subject to reflect on how they inhabit this musical world. The primary genre is a combination of synth-pop and R&B. The opening of “Love Drought” can be seen in Figure 1.2 (my transcription). We hear a synthesizer bass playing harmonic octaves, supporting a 16th-note passage saturated with reverb. The 16th-note passage comprises a repeated one-bar pattern that incorporates rising seconds and thirds with falling fourths. The reverb creates a luxuriant texture, blending together the tones from the 16th-note passage, giving an effect reminiscent of using the pedal on a piano. The coda to the song offers a strikingly abrupt musical and visual departure from the rest of the music video. The coda interrupts the synth pop aural landscape at 3:02: a musical and visual interruption to whiteness. Synth pop is hijacked, replaced by ritualistic-sounding drums. What sounds like a drum ensemble or drum circle takes over the music, playing in a different tempo, while a visual of Beyoncé’s face, painted in the Yoruba tradition, is the focal point of the camera (Tan 2016). Additionally, the visuals representing Christianity, such as the crosses on the women’s shirts as they walk through the water, are replaced by a traditional Yoruba practice.

Transmedia Extensions

Turning now to the transmedia storyworld of *Lemonade*, a number of examples that relate to “Love Drought” stand out as significant. First, I will take up Beyoncé’s performance of “Love Drought” at 2017 Grammy Awards as a notable continuation of the theme of women in formation. Second, I analyze photos from Beyoncé’s humanitarian campaign in Houston following Hurricane Harvey in August 2017. These two layers become part of the transmedia storyworld, in which the main narrative proposed is to *get in formation*.

Beyoncé’s 2017 Grammy performance was ground-breaking in a number of ways. The performance included holographic images of Beyoncé, her mother, and her daughter Blue Ivy. These images were so realistic that it was difficult to tell that they were holographic until the images took on magical-looking properties. Before “Love Drought” begins, images of a pregnant Beyoncé adorned in yellow move across the screen, with Blue Ivy running around her legs, and a group of women move in various positions around her. When the performance begins, Beyoncé is shown rising onto the stage, the holographic images of women still dancing around her at first, and then replaced by actual backup dancers who become noticeable as the light makes them visible on stage. Beyoncé is covered from head to toe in a glittery gold dress, wearing a gold crown and gold jewelry. She is pregnant with twins, and often cups her belly. The backup singers dance on a long table surrounded by chairs, and eventually begin to make use of the chairs, as Beyoncé moves into the chair position in which she also appeared in the music video to “Love Drought.” In this performance, the chair position as representative of the Middle Passage is reinforced, as the shape of table is thin and long, like that of a boat. Flowers cover areas of the stage, acting as another reference to the music video. Some white women are included in the performance, an interesting decision that breaks tradition with the music video. Images of women in formation in

both the holographic and “real” performance extend narratives present in the music video for “Love Drought.” The Grammy performance juxtaposes the visual metaphor for the slave ship (the chairs and table), with Beyoncé as a pregnant goddess, covered in gold from head to toe, surrounded by flowers. The holographic images increase the number of women on stage and to include real bodies as well as digital. This performance is an extension of the narrative of utopian imaginaries, consistent with Black Feminist Love Politics, and aids in shaping a transmedia storyworld around the concept of women’s formations.

I now examine Beyoncé’s humanitarian campaign, BeyGOOD. Hurricane Harvey landed in Corpus Christi and Houston, Texas, in August 2017, devastating the city and some surrounding communities. Anna Hartnell writes that media depictions of Texas in the face of Hurricane Harvey depict the state as gritty and able to withstand anything, ignoring fundamental discussions of race and class that arise during natural disasters. Hartnell (2017) writes,

30% of Houston’s population live below the poverty line and more than 40% do not own their own homes. As the lessons of Katrina have shown, it is renters and those living in public housing who are most vulnerable to homelessness and displacement following a disaster of this kind. And just as poor Black Americans in New Orleans were more likely to inhabit lower-lying and thus flood-prone land, communities of colour in Houston are similarly exposed to risk, living in close proximity to the oil refineries and chemical plants that in the wake of the storm are leaking dangerous levels of pollutants into the atmosphere.

Because of how disproportionately Black Americans are affected by natural disasters, Beyoncé’s choice to aid in a campaign to raise money for post-Harvey-Houston relief efforts is a statement through which she aligns herself politically against mainstream media depictions of Harvey. A photo series shot in black and white accompanying the BeyGOOD Houston campaign pictures her serving food to Black Americans, her celebrity-status seemingly ignored by the people she

serves. According to Beyoncé's website, the campaign encourages people to donate to BeyGOOD Houston:

The BeyGOOD team heads to Houston to continue our relief efforts on the ground. We have teamed up with Bread of Life, Greater Houston Community Foundation, and Texas Southern University, all of whom have been working with the displaced from the start of Hurricane Harvey's landfall" (qtd. in Beyoncé.com).

The donations go towards "long-term revitalization," as well as "immediate needs." Though her endorsement of the cause is substantial in and of itself, her presence among people immediately displaced by the hurricane suggests an alternate way of celebrities giving of themselves. Beyond her wealth, Beyoncé is engaging in on-the-ground work as a part of the BeyGOOD team. The photo of Beyoncé serving food to Black Americans interrupts the notion that people are equally affected by natural disasters.

Two other photos from the series on Houston tie into messages espoused throughout "Love Drought." The photos each feature text, the first reading "Dear Children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth," and the second reading "Truth is derived from love." The first is the Bible verse John 3:18, supporting the concept of action and "getting into formation." Community outreach and charitable giving are fundamental beliefs in Christianity; the picture of this Bible verse brings to mind the symbolism of baptism as welcoming new life. The second photo's text is a thoughtful statement proclaiming that love leads to truth. Though "truth" as a theme is not overtly present in "Love Drought," love as a theme most certainly is. The inclusion of these two photos links Beyoncé's activism with truth and love, moving *beyond* her activism that exists in music. Beyoncé is taking seriously the statement "Let us not

love with words or speech” when she takes her message of getting into formation off the screen and off of the stage.

Throughout “Love Drought,” Beyoncé strategically engineers her intertextual references to promote the action of women “getting into formation.” She mobilizes elements from musical and literary genres, lyrics, poetry, live performance, and humanitarian efforts as statements of black resilience in the face of white violence and state dispossession. The act of getting into formation is both a freedom practice (that engages challenging whiteness and talking back), as well as an act that is congruent with the utopian characteristics of Black Feminist Love Politics.

Lemonade is a vital stage in Beyoncé’s transformation into an artist who represents intersectional feminism in the fight against patriarchy and racism. Images of women in various formations offer instructions for activism: a manageable but effective way in which women of colour, and indeed all people dedicated to anti-oppression, can fight racism, sexism, and modern-day legacies of white-inflicted violence. Audre Lorde (1981), in her speech on the uses of Black women’s anger, proclaimed:

Women of Color in america [sic] have grown up within a symphony of anger at being silenced at being unchosen, at knowing that when we survive, it is in spite of a world that takes for granted our lack of humanness, and which hates our very existence outside of its service. And I say *symphony* rather than *cacophony* because we have had to learn to orchestrate those furies so that they do not tear us apart. We have had to learn to move through them and use them for strength and force and insight within our daily lives. Those of us who did not learn this difficult lesson did not survive. And part of my anger is always libation for my fallen sisters.

Taking heed of Audre Lorde’s call to orchestrate anger into strength, Beyoncé sings to her audiences: “O.K. ladies, now let’s get in formation.”

Conclusion

This chapter has theorized the notion of women's visual formations in *Lemonade*, and has drawn connections between Beyoncé's self-fashioning within Black women's formations since her time performing as the lead member of Destiny's Child. Using the song "Love Drought" as my case study, I examined women's political formations in the lyrical, visual, poetic, and trans-media extensions of the media text. I place "Love Drought" within the literary genre of magic realism, a genre which has been theorized to act in opposition to colonial culture.

CHAPTER THREE: GODDESS IMAGERY AND MATRIARCHAL IMAGE IN *LEMONADE*

There are seemingly infinite possibilities of components within a transmedia world, and for each individual consumer, these components will construct a different story depending on their level of engagement to or exposure with the artist. This chapter examines elements of *Lemonade* and its transmedia storyworld which contain intertextual references to goddesses and matriarchy. These intertextual contexts have striking similarities with concepts from the theory of Black Feminist Love Politics, and so too function as an act of visual and textual worldmaking. In this chapter, the elements of the album and its transmedia extensions that I have chosen to analyze include Beyoncé's 2016 Grammy Awards performance and speech, the song "Hold Up," selections of Warsan Shire's poetry, and her 2016 pregnancy photo shoot.

Intertextuality was originally a literary theory, but has transferred with success to musical analyses by a number of musicologists and cultural theorists. To understand the metaphoric and symbolic meanings in *Lemonade*, intertextuality presents itself as a useful analytic tool in the act of interpretation. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault explains how a text functions "within a larger discursive context" (Burns et. al 2015). He writes that books are "caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences; it is a node within a network" (Foucault 1972, qtd. in Burns et al. 2015). Just as a literary text is embedded in a network of references to other literary texts, *Lemonade* too is a "node within a network" (Foucault 1972). These meanings are interpretive, never static, and can align with or depart from Beyoncé's actual intention. As such, my analysis is interpretive, and I cannot claim authority or objectivity

in my understanding of *Lemonade*. My interpretation is a secondary document, adding to the body of literature on intertextuality in popular music.

Goddess Imagery in *Lemonade*

In the visual album and transmedia storyworld of *Lemonade*, Beyoncé repeatedly aligns herself visually and textually with characteristics that are consistent with various goddesses and deities from disparate cultures around the world. The resultant message is that mother is sacred, and should be treated as such. In this section, I first trace scholarly work on the significance and history of female deities. I then explore the specific goddesses referenced by Beyoncé. Finally, I argue that *Lemonade*'s depiction of goddesses has perceptible parallels with concepts from Black Feminist Love Politics.

Cultural Significance of Goddesses & Female Deities

In her article exploring the provocative meaning of the divine feminine, Kristy Coleman quotes the feminist-Neopagan and writer Starhawk, compiling a comprehensive definition of characteristics that female deities may embody:

Sometimes She is “the world: moon, sun, earth, star, stone seed, flowing river, wind, wave, leaf and branch, bud and blossom, fang and claw, woman and man... Elsewhere She is described as an ‘*internal* presence’... And sometimes Goddess is ‘a kind of open and flexible inner knowing of the divine presence that arises through the body, experience, relationship, community and reflection’” (Starhawk 1979, qtd. in Coleman 2005, 118).

This definition situates goddesses as the embodiment of nature or as a type of inner “spirit.” Coleman outlines both her personal and academic experience with reactions people have to her suggestion of God as “She” rather than “He.” She described reactions to the concept of woman as god as a “process of rupture” in which hostility and panic are incited in some, and excited awe

and curiosity in others (2005, 120). These reactions are important to consider because they demonstrate both a rejection of the notion that religious deities can have female characteristics, as well as a desire to connect with a god who embodies not only male [and patriarchal] qualities. In her book *Enchanted Feminism*, Jone Salomonsen writes that, “[Goddess-followers] invent new symbolic universes” (Salomonsen 2002, 215). If, as Salomonsen writes, the power of symbols are integral to the process of creating inventing something new, then *Lemonade*’s strategic intertexts to goddesses are cultural ruptures that constitute worldmaking.

Carol Christ’s landmark keynote address “Why Women Need the Goddess” in the 1970s helped spark international conversations about the role of the divine feminine. Thirty-five years after that speech, Christ wrote an article reflecting on her process of questioning god as male. In it, Christ (2012, 244) writes,

[A]s feminist aware of the power of cultural symbols, language and stereotypes, I was increasingly sensitive to the image of God as male. I found it deeply unsettling to realize that the God to whom I prayed—whether symbolized as loving or judgmental or some combination of the two—was always imaged as a male who presided over traditions in which I, as a woman, was deemed unfit for leadership and thought to be less rational and more bodily than men. I was convinced that God must be imaged as “Mother” as well as “Father” and as “She” as well as “He.” However, I found very little support for this view—even among feminists in religion.

For some, such as Christ, God-as-male upholds patriarchal domination. Christ concludes her article by writing that despite the academic work of nearly half a century, there is much work to be done before there will be widespread cultural acceptance of a divine feminine: “In other words, we still have a long way to go before we can fully accept female power as a beneficent and independent power” (255). Beyoncé’s contribution to the body of work advocating for women as divine, and for female power as independent from male power, is a significant addition to the cul-

tural sphere because of her relevance. Where academics can develop theories and explain cultural phenomena, Beyoncé has a much wider cultural reach than any academic could imagine.

The transmedia storyworld of *Lemonade* contains a myriad of intertextual references to various goddesses. Dozens of bloggers and fans have posted pictures connecting Beyoncé's self-fashioning to representations of goddesses on social media, websites, and online magazines, and I am indebted to their observational work. My analysis is organized as a list of the goddesses and deities referenced in *Lemonade* and its transmedia extensions: the Yoruba goddess Oshun/Osun, Marian deities (the Virgin Mary, La Virgen de Guadalupe, the Black Madonna), the Roman goddess Venus, and The Triple Goddess (Mother-Maiden-Crone). Though Beyoncé also invokes Yemoja and Nefertiti, I have chosen to narrow my focus to Oshun, Marian deities, and the Triple Goddess because these goddesses were the most oft-referenced by bloggers and feminist writers following *Lemonade*'s release (e.g., Adelman 2016).

Drawing inspiration from many culturally diverse goddesses can be read as a commentary on diasporic culture. If one does not know their precise ancestral origins, it follows that one could find meaning in disparate cultural traditions. Because the slave trade displaced families, it would be difficult if not impossible for African American slaves to have retained connections to their ancestral African homelands.

Oshun / Osun

In her book *Encyclopaedia of Goddesses and Heroines*, Patricia Monaghan describes Oshun as a river goddess associated with family, the fertility of the land, and the spirit world (2014, 15). Oshun is honoured by her followers with yellow copper, brass, and jewels (15). In Yoruba religion, when one is crossing a specific river called Oya (the name of another goddess), they

“must never mention Oshun, or the river will swamp the boat; the same is true of Oshun, who drown anyone who speaks of her rival” (16). Oshun is followed across the world, and each geographic location has idiosyncrasies means of worshipping and depicting her; in Brazil, she is called Oxun and she “rules love, beauty and flirtation”; in Cuba, she is called Our Lady of La Caridad del Cobre, and they depict her in yellow: “honey and gold are her attributes [...] Oshun rules pregnancy and protects women and unborn children” (25). In her book *The Goddess: Power, Sexuality, and the Divine Feminine*, Shahrukh Husain writes that the Nigerian river goddess called Oshun is an Orisha who is “specifically a goddess of women, whom she befriends and blesses with babies. She is also a vain, capricious goddess of love and beauty, who delights in colourful beads and bright metals” (Husain 2003, 48). Beyoncé embodies the mythical and human traits of Oshun throughout *Lemonade* and in its transmedia storyworld. For example, at the 2017 Grammy Awards Beyoncé performed in a flowing yellow gown, wearing a gold crown visually reminiscent of the sun. Her pregnant belly was a focal point of this performance, and taken with the goddess-self-styling, indicated a power over her own fertility (particularly as she was pregnant with twins). In artistic renderings of Oshun, she is depicted wearing gold chains and flowing yellow fabric (see Figure 3.1). In Beyoncé’s pregnancy photo series, she extended the stylistic intertexts to Oshun by emphasizing her fertile state and sensuality in an underwater-setting. The title of the photo shoot is “I Have Three Hearts,” referring to her heart plus her twins’ hearts: when pregnant, she was quite literally supporting the function of three hearts. Symbolically, the photo shoot title could be interpreted as a reference to her own heart, her children’s hearts’ collectively, and her husbands’: ostensibly, the loves of her life. In one such photo, Bey-

oncé appears underwater wearing golden-yellow fabric that twists and flows around her, visually similar to the fins on a beta fish. Flowers are scattered on the floor (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.1. Oshun artwork - artist unknown. Photo found on urbangoddessretreats.com. 2017.



Figure 3.2. “I Have Three Hearts.” Photograph by Daniela Vesco. February 2017. www.Beyoncé.com



In another photo Beyoncé appears threefold. The three images of Beyoncé float gracefully above the water, rather than submerged; on the left, she is upside down, her fingers and her yellow scarf trailing in the water; in the middle she is also upside down, her hair dangling to graze the surface of the water, and on the right, she is dramatically lit up by a white light, upright she floats with

her arms outstretched, water flowing from her mouth, creating the allusion that she can breath water (Figure 3.3). All of this is reflected in the water below. The image recalls the notion of a religious three-in-one trinity: father, son, and holy spirit, or in goddess spirituality, the Triple Goddess, composed of the mother, maiden, and crone (that I discuss in detail near the end of this chapter).

Figure 3.3. “I Have Three Hearts.” Photograph by Daniela Vesco. February 2017.
www.Beyoncé.com



The visual similarities between these photos and the underwater scene in *Lemonade* [4:30] are striking. In the “Denial” chapter of *Lemonade*, there is a scene in which Beyoncé watches herself sleeping in a bedroom that is underwater. These photos (“I Have Three Hearts”) by Daniela Vesco and the underwater scene in *Lemonade* depict Beyoncé as capable of living within and controlling water. In the photo series, the water setting can be interpreted as a metaphoric womb in which Beyoncé herself is changing and growing as her pregnancy progresses. In *Lemonade*, so too is water the place in which she develops; in the “Denial” chapter of *Lemonade*, Beyoncé’s voice-over reads Shire’s poetic text: “Went to the basement, confessed my sins and was baptized

in a river. Got on my knees and said ‘amen’ and said ‘Amin.’ I whipped my own back and asked for dominion at your feet.” This dialogue is superimposed over video of Beyoncé watching herself sleeping underwater. The act of watching oneself seems to reference self-reflexivity and reflection.

Following the poetic chapter “Denial” is the song “Hold Up.” In the music video to this song Beyoncé wears a yellow dress with layers of ruffles, her hair is long and loose, and she carries a baseball bat with which she smashes cars, windows, a fire hydrant, and a security camera. At the beginning of the music video Beyoncé opens two large doors of a massive building out of which a huge gush of water flows; she walks down the wet steps of the building barefoot, joyful. Here, she commands water, and as the water breaks (a clear metaphor to pregnancy), the tension created in the previous “Denial” chapter is released (see Figure 3.4).

A sign pictured in one of these scenes reads “No trespassing,” with a spray-painted wall in the background. Because this scene takes place in a Black neighbourhood, the sign can be read as a reference to surveillance of Black Americans, that Beyoncé completely ignores, laughing in her complete disavowal of surveillance as she smashes a fire hydrant. At the end of the music video for “Hold Up”, the street is shown from the perspective of a surveillance camera; Beyoncé walks up to the camera, staring it down defiantly before smashing it with her baseball bat. This spiteful action, as well as her styling in a yellow dress, foreshadows colours used in the pregnancy photo shoot. In “Hold Up,” Beyoncé summons water: from the first second of the music video when water gushes out of doors that she opens, to when she smashes the fire hydrant and water flows forth. Taken together, the Grammy’s performance, the pregnancy photo shoot, and “Hold Up” function to solidify Beyoncé’s alignment of herself with Oshun.

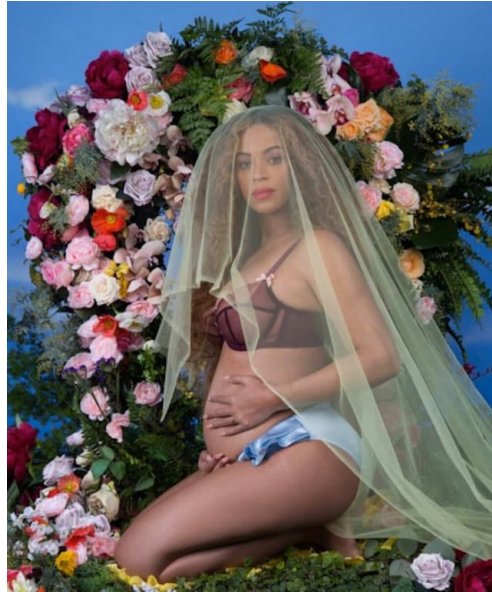
Figure 3.4. Screenshot from “Hold Up” (2016)



Marian Deities

In an Instagram post with over 11 million likes (as of July 2018), Beyoncé sits in front of a flower arch, her hands cupping her pregnant belly, wearing a blue veil that is draped over her face (Figure 3.5). The caption to the photo reads “We would like to share our love and happiness. We have been blessed two times over. We are incredibly grateful that our family will be growing by two, and we thank you for your well wishes.” This Instagram photo has striking similarities with Marian artwork; in particular, the Instagram post invokes paintings of La Virgen de Guadalupe (or Our Lady of Guadalupe), the Virgin Mary, and the Black Madonna (also referred to as Our Lady of Czestochowa).

Figure 3.5. Instagram post. 2017.



La Virgen de Guadalupe is the patron-saint of México. In México,

Catholicism was superimposed upon a pre-existent belief in the Mother Goddess, Tonantzin-Ciuacoatl, who was worshipped on Tepeyac hill... With the arrival of missionaries and then Cortez, the substitution of the Aztec goddess with the Virgin Mary becomes solidified when [Saint] Juan Diego sees the Virgin Mary on his way to worship (Carmichael 2018, 22-3).

Maria Del Socorro Castañeda-Liles describes the legend of Saint Juan Diego's meeting with La Virgen:

According to Mexican Catholic popular tradition, this event took place approximately a decade after the fall of Tenochtitlán [México City]. At early dawn on Saturday, December 9, 1531, Juan Diego, a Nahuatl man who had recently converted to Christianity, was walking to church... What he saw at the top of the hill left him in awe: "A woman with a mantle as blue as the sky, with golden sun rays gently branching out behind her. Her skin was cinnamon brown like his, her hands were together in the indigenous way of offering, and she spoke the Nahuatl language" (Castañeda-Liles 2008, 155, qtd. in Castañeda-Liles 2018, n.p.).

In a painting of La Virgen de Guadalupe by Isidro Escamilla, she is depicted wearing a blue shroud covered in gold stars and a gold crown, with sun-rays emanating behind her. Flowers are painting on either side of her, as well as cherub-like children (Figure 3.6).

Figure 3.6. Virgin of Guadalupe, 1824. Oil on canvas by Isidro Escamilla. Brooklyn Museum.



The [white] Madonna, or Virgin Mary, is similarly depicted in historic paintings wearing blue and surrounded by flowers (See Figure 3.7). In Catholicism, the Madonna / Virgin Mary is sometimes venerated as having supernatural attributes, especially in branches of Roman Catholicism that endorse accounts of Marian apparitions (O'Toole 2005).

Figure 3.7. Flower Garland Around the Virgin and Child, 1618. Oil on canvas by Cardinal Frederico Borromeo. Milan, Italy.



The third Marian reference made by the Instagram photo is to the Black Madonna. Across Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas there are hundreds of Madonna statues and paintings that depict the Virgin Mother and child as Black. Our Lady of Częstochowa is the most commonly referred-to image of the Black Madonna. In one such piece of tile-artwork, the Madonna holds Christ. Both wear golden crowns, and are flanked by two angels and two apostles (see Figure 3.8).

Figure 3.8. Black Madonna mosaic at Jasna Góra monastery



In her doctoral dissertation Anna Carmichael writes that “Mary—identified as Guadalupe, the Black Madonna, Mother of Sorrows, Mother of the Poor, and prophet for revolution and liberation—as a religious symbol confers messages of compassion, love, and struggle, and how she ‘can be an inspiration for radical action for changes of consciousness in people and in the structures of society’” (Coomaraswamy, qtd. in Carmichael 2018, 34). Mary as a religious

icon does not have a static meaning, but rather adopts a multidimensional, and multi-national, quality. Lucia Birnbaum (2000, 3) writes of the Black Madonna,

Differing from white madonnas, who may be said to embody church doctrine of obedience and patience, and differing in shades of dark, what all black madonnas have in common is location on or near archaeological evidence of the prechristian woman divinity... Elusive, they are frequently removed from religious and political implication by art historians, who call them “Byzantine,” and by the church hierarchy, which has “re-touched” several of them as white.

Black Madonnas have a complicated political history. As pointed out by Birnbaum, a number of statues and paintings have been whitewashed by the church. The disavowal of the possibility that Mary and Christ were Black demonstrates deep racial bias within the Catholic church.

Phillip Prodger’s analysis of Beyoncé’s Instagram photograph reveals insight into the technical aspects of the photo. Prodger connects the photo with Martin Schongauer’s painting “Madonna in a Rose Garden.” The floral garland surrounding Beyoncé—composed of roses and poppies—has visual similarities to the rose garden in the background of Madonna and Child in Schongauer’s oil on panel rendering (Figure 3.9). Prodger (qtd. in Laurent 2017) says,

Roses are traditionally symbols of the Madonna, suggesting fertility, purity and chastity. Interestingly, the artist has added a few poppies to the garland as well, which usually symbolize remembrance and loss; I can only imagine this is a response to Beyoncé’s very public acknowledgement that she had a miscarriage in 2013. There is a tradition of showing Madonnas kneeling, but not like this—you sense Beyoncé’s power and determination, of being in control. At the same time, her expression is just ambiguous enough that there is a hint of vulnerability, uncertainty; that despite her fame and strength of will, she understands there is something magical and deeply humbling about birth and motherhood. The way she holds her hands adds to this feeling—with the left hand, exploring, probing—with the right, supporting, comforting.

Figure 3.9. Madonna in the Rose Garden. Martin Schongauer. 1470s. Oil on panel. Colmar, France.



In styling herself in a manner consistent with Marian artwork, Beyoncé aligns herself with the values of positive social action the immaculate conception. She appears to be making a statement that her pregnancy is somewhat of a magical or religious occurrence, and that the twins she is carrying will have saviour-like attributes.

Venus

Venus was the Roman goddess of gardens, cultivated fields, love, beauty, fertility, sex, prostitution, victory, and fertility, as described in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. In her pregnancy photo shoot, Beyoncé regularly invokes artistic renderings of Venus. Figure 3.11 shows Beyoncé standing in a similar pose to the painting *The Birth of Venus*; both are nude, one hand over a breast, the other breast covered by flowing hair; where Venus stands in a shell Beyoncé stands amongst foliage. A bust of Nefertiti is pictured in Beyoncé's rendering of the *Birth of Venus*, referencing the plurality of divine feminine images. Where Nefertiti is surrounded by floating flower blossoms, Beyoncé's legs are painted with flowers.

Figure 3.10. The Birth of Venus. Sandro Botticelli. 1480s. Tempera on canvas. Uffizi, Florence.

Figure 3.11. “I Have Three Hearts.” 2016. Photograph by Awol Erizku.

In another photograph from the pregnancy photo shoot, Beyoncé poses in a similar fashion



to the painting *Venere di Urbino: the Reclining Venus*. *Venere di Urbino* is one of the first known paintings of the reclining nude genre. Reclining nudes have been created “from sixteenth-century Venetian artists painters to modern-day feminist artists,” and are considered a middle ground where fine art and sex meet (Borzello 2002). The female [reclining] nude has been critiqued as a sexist practice, and in the twentieth century, was reclaimed by feminist painters in the form of self-portrait nudes and reclining nudes of men. In their book *Old Mistresses: Women Art and Ideology*, Parker and Pollock write that, “In art the female nude parallels the effects of the feminine stereotype in an art historical discourse. Both confirm male dominance. As female nude, woman is body, is nature opposed to male culture, that in turn, is represented by the very act of transforming nature, that is, the female mode or motif, into the ordered form and colour of



a cultural artefact, a *work of art*” (Parker and Pollock 2013, 119). As such, the nude woman—in this type of art, the human embodiment of nature—is controlled by the masculine figure, who transforms nature into art. While this critique is valuable for pre-20th century art, for feminist artists who have reclaimed the female [reclining] nude, the objectification of the female body becomes more difficult to discern as a continuation of sexism, or as an empowering practice (Parker and Pollock 2013, 126-7). In the photo of Beyoncé as the reclining Venus, her body language is certainly less passive than Titian’s iconic painting. Beyoncé’s right arm props up her head, and her left hand cups her stomach (Figure 3.13). She makes direct eye-contact with the camera, whereas Venus tilts her head to the side prudently. Her left elbow points upward, where the Venus’ arm is completely relaxed (Figure 3.12). Beyoncé wears a bra and is partially covered by a sheer piece of orange fabric, and she lies on a bed of roses, tulips, and tropical leaves. Art historian Adrianna Campbell discusses Erizku’s influences in his photograph of Beyoncé: “Beyoncé’s figure and staging at once evoke another great conveyer of multi-faceted femininity: Frida



Kahlo” (Campbell 2017). The photographs, she writes, are influenced by “tropical and Meso-American touchstones.” Campbell goes so far to say that, “Beyoncé is the Venus of our times,” acting as an inspiration for women and girls to take control of their own image (Campbell 2017).

Figure 3.12. Venere di Urbino (“Reclining Venus”). Oil on canvas. 1530s. Titian (Tiziano Vecellio). Uffizi, Florence.

Figure 3.13. “I Have Three Hearts.” 2016. Photograph by Awol Erizku.

The Triple Goddesses & Matriarchal Lineage

The Triple Goddesses refer to the Mother, Maiden, and Crone trinity found in Paganism. In pre-Christian Celtic, British, and Irish cultures, the divine triad is predominant (Rowley 1997, 1). Sherry Rowley (1997, 1) writes that, “An individual goddess of pre-Christian Irish religion possesses multiple, sometimes contrasting attributes, revealing her to be too complex to be narrowly defined by a single role such as that of a sovereignty goddess, war goddess,” and so on.

Lydia Manning researches the role of Paganism in ageing women; her findings suggest that as Pagan women age, their spirituality is a source of strength, power, and acceptance of their bodies, a tonic to impossible and oppressive societal standards of youthful beauty.

These women, in their rejection of a patriarchal doctrine and dogma, have created a fluid spiritual community that is safe, and are able to accept themselves as perfectly imperfect. They are able to transcend many of the prescribed societal norms that are placed upon aging women by our major societal and cultural institutions. The women in this study are celebrating their aging bodies and selves through ritual in a spiritual community. For example, when she older Pagan women complete menopause they are empowered through ritual to become Crones, reflecting the belief in the Goddess as an old woman (Manning 2010, 205).

Though there are different forms of triads, the divine triad Beyoncé appears to be referencing in her Grammy 2017 performance is the Mother, Maiden, and Crone trinity. In this performance, Beyoncé, her daughter Blue Ivy, and her mother Tina Knowles appear in the holographic images with her on stage. They all wear golden yellow, referencing Oshun, and a gold halo crown reminiscent of Marian paintings. The holographic images show Tina, Beyoncé, and Blue Ivy sitting from oldest to youngest, and duplicated on either side of the screen. In the centre, a third image of Beyoncé dances, her arms digitally manipulated to create a ripple-effect in the air as she moves them. She wears a floor length sparkling golden gown and a crown. This image in particular recalls Shire's poetic text that accompanies Beyoncé's photo shoot: "girl turning into woman / woman turning into mother / mother turning into venus [sic]" (Shire qtd. in *Lemonade* 2016). With this poetry in mind, we can view Beyoncé as having completed the transition from mother to Venus. Shire's text brings a racial lens to the forefront: "mother, black venus / in the dream i am crowning / osun, nefertiti, and yemoja pray around my bed [sic]" (Shire qtd. in *Lemonade* 2016). Beyoncé is depicted not only as Venus, but as Black Venus.

Referencing the Black Venus textually and visually acts as a strategic intertext to the story of Saartje Baartman. Baartman, referred to during her life as the "Hottentot Venus," was a South African woman whose body, during her life and after her death, was put on display for Europeans to examine and gawk at. The study and mutilation of her body was scientific racism at its height; for example, Georges Cuvier's "studies" of Baartman "concluded that [she] was the embodiment of primitive female sexuality based on her buttocks and sexual organs, and [he] identified her as the 'missing link' between primates and (white) human beings" (Skelly 2006, 11-12). In her thesis on Baartman, Julia Skelly writes that Baartman "was effectively rendered

nameless once she arrived on European soil, as she was reduced from a woman with a name and identity to a body put on display because of her protruding buttocks that were regarded by nineteenth-century naturalists not only ‘abnormal,’ but as reflective of a ‘primitive’ and ‘deviant’ nature” (2006, 1-2). Skelly argues that twentieth-century Black women artists who draw inspiration from Baartman’s life-story mobilize their work to give “Baartman back her name and [provide] her with a voice... And lest we forget, in the racist and sexist drama played out upon Baartman’s body, names did, and always will, matter” (2). Skelly’s insistence on the importance of naming is informed by the work of Carolyn Heilbrun, a feminist literary theorist who writes: “Women have long been nameless. They have not been persons. Handed by a father to another man, the husband, they have been objects of circulation, exchanging one name for another” (2002, 121). Baartman’s namelessness is representative of the dehumanization of women throughout history. In referring to herself as the Black Venus, Beyoncé repurposes a painful history of the subjugation of Black women’s bodies. She represents herself as Black Venus on her own terms, drawing from ancient goddess-traditions rather than the colonial, “Scientific” male-gaze. Beyoncé simultaneously represents herself as Black Venus as well as within the divine female triad (among other goddesses), and in doing so she shows the plurality of traditions that women may identify with in the process of “moving from silence into speech” (hooks 1989, 9). Tina Knowles introduced Beyoncé’s Grammy performance, saying:

I am blessed to have daughters, wonderful daughters, all of whom make me proud with everything they do...I am proud of their accomplishments, their self-confidence, and their desire to make a difference. What makes me most proud, and why I am here tonight to introduce Beyoncé, is the devotion and love I see in her for her daughter, and the way she has always expressed love to all of those around her. (Knowles qtd. in Kahn 2017).

Figure 3.14. Screen grab from Beyoncé’s 2017 Grammy Performance. dailymotion.com.



Knowles’ introduction portrays Beyoncé as loving, compassionate, and generous—traits found in a number of the goddesses outlined in this chapter. Additionally, her introduction identifies her daughters as a source of pride, and indicates that Beyoncé is passing on matriarchal characteristics of self-confidence and a “desire to make a difference” to her own children. The Triple Goddess, too, emphasizes matriarchal knowledge and wisdom. In “I Have Three Hearts,” Shire invokes the Triple Goddess: “you speak to me / from inside me, i have three hearts.”⁸ Not only does this reference Beyoncé’s double pregnancy, but the three-in-one nature of the divine triad. She writes: “i have three hearts / girl turning into woman / woman turning into mother / mother turning into venus.” In the poem, mothers are described as holy: “mother is a cocoon where cells spark, limbs form, mother sweeps and stretches to protect her child / mother has one foot in this world and one foot in the next.” “The next” world invites a series of imaginaries: Is Shire referring to a spiritual world in which life begins? Or the “next world” as a new world, one that is predicated on the belief that women and mothers are divine? Shire writes: “flowers grow wher-

⁸ See <https://www.mixcloud.com/beyondthebreakwater/i-have-three-hearts-by-warsan-shire-2817/> for a full transcript of Shire’s text to “I Have Three Hearts.”

ever love touches her, this is how she is reborn,” reinforcing an interpretation consistent with the feminine divine.

The transmedia storyworld of *Lemonade*, in its images of and words that situate women in positions of power, develops a matriarchal lineage of women. By referring to a feminist past, Beyoncé demonstrates her feminist present and aims to shape a feminist future. The matriarchal lineage begins with ancestors, then grandmothers, mothers, present-day women, their daughters, and granddaughters. In a literal sense Beyoncé informs the viewer about her own matriarchy: some of her ancestors were enslaved women of African descent. Their lineage leads to Beyoncé’s grandmothers. Throughout *Lemonade*, grandmothers are afforded a high-level of respect. Footage from Hattie White’s (Jay-Z’s grandmother) 90th birthday party is featured in the album. She says: “I’ve had my ups and downs, but I’ve always found the inner strength to pull myself up. I was served lemons, but I made lemonade.” This sentiment underpins the entire album. Out of hardship, Hattie shaped beauty. Poetry from Shire is read around this point in the album: “Grandmother, the alchemist. You spun gold out of this hard life.” This quote is similar to something that Beyoncé said in her documentary *Life is But a Dream*: “I am a result of my grandmother’s prayers” (Knowles 2014). Her grandmother’s prayers are ascribed divine-like power: the prayers brought her to life, have kept her safe, and have ensured her success. Reinforcing the importance of her grandmothers across her artistic output secures Beyoncé’s message that female ancestors and grandmothers can be a source of strength, power, and healing.

Shire’s poetry in *Lemonade* interrogates the notion of women being submissive and obedient to their husbands and fathers. Beyoncé reads Shire’s text in the album, saying:

Mother dearest, let me inherit the earth. Teach me how to make him beg. Let me make up

for the years he made you wait. Did he bend your reflection? Did he make you forget your own name? Did he convince you he was a god? Did you get on your knees, daily? Do his eyes close like doors? Are you a slave to the back of his head? Am I talking about your husband, or your father? (Shire qtd. in *Lemonade* 2016).

This text speaks to men controlling women. Women may risk losing their autonomy when in relationships with men, whether it be the relationship between a daughter and a father, or a woman and her husband. But preceding these images of oppression, the narrator asks her mother permission to inherit the earth, establishing a connection between women and nature as sacred, unchanging, and uncontested. She could also have addressed the poem to “Mother Earth” rather than “Mother dearest”; the two seem synonymous in this poetic passage. Shire’s poetry also speaks to the complicated relationships between daughters and mothers. The matriarchal lineage presented in *Lemonade* demonstrates passing down knowledge; the recipe for lemonade itself is handed down:

Take one pint of water, add half pound of sugar, the juice of eight lemons, the zest of half lemon. Pour the water from one jug, then into the other, several times. Strain through a clean napkin. Grandmother, the alchemist, you spun gold out of this hard life, conjured beauty from the things left behind. Found healing where it did not live. Discovered the antidote in your own kitchen. Broke the curse with your own two hands. You passed these instructions down to your daughter, who then passed it down to her daughter (Shire qtd. in *Lemonade* 2016).

During the scene when the above poetry is read, women appear together in various settings. This is Black Feminist Love Politics at work. Recalling Jennifer Nash’s description of love politics that, “love is a labour of actively reorienting the self, pushing the self to be configured in new ways that might be challenging or difficult,” so does *Lemonade* and its transmedia extensions mobilize a multidimensional history of goddess traditions to reorient decisions of Black women in popular media.

In *Lemonade*, Black women gather together on a plantation, harvesting vegetables, preparing food communally, and eating in one another's company at a long outdoor dinner table. These basic chores become a method of bonding.

My grandma said, nothing real can be threatened. True love brought salvation back into me. With every tear came redemption. And my torturer became my remedy. So we're gonna heal, we're gonna start again. You've brought the orchestra, synchronized swimmers, you are the magician. Pull me back together again the way you cut me in half. Make the woman in doubt disappear. Pull the sorrow from between my legs like silk, knot after knot after knot. The audience applauds... but we can't hear them. (Shire qtd. in *Lemonade* 2016).

This quotation is the last passage of poetry read in *Lemonade*. Whereas many viewers interpret the subject of the poem as Beyoncé's husband, I interpret it as her ancestors. "My torturer became my remedy" is not necessarily her unfaithful husband. "The torturer" is her ancestors' history, speaking to both Beyoncé's subjective experience as well as women's histories more generally. These painful histories can torture, because they seep into the modern day. However, just as women ancestors "spun gold out of this hard life," Beyoncé transforms a painful history into a healing method.

CHAPTER FOUR: SOCIOCULTURAL GENRE DISRUPTION THROUGH “DADDY LESSONS”

During the 50th annual Country Music Awards held in Nashville, Tennessee, Beyoncé performed the song “Daddy Lessons” of her album *Lemonade* in collaboration with the Dixie Chicks. Beyoncé is as much from Texas as any other Texan country musician, yet she was subject of condemnation over her supposedly “controversial” performance of “Daddy Lessons” with the Dixie Chicks. In “Daddy Lessons,” Beyoncé portrays a character to which her audiences are not normally exposed, and draws from her Texan identity. Prior to “Daddy Lessons,” Beyoncé operated within the musical genres of pop, R&B, hip hop, and has incorporated elements of soul and funk into these genres. Through the original recorded track, the music video, and the remixed version of the song produced alongside the Dixie Chicks, “Daddy Lessons” simultaneously fits into New Orleans jazz, Cajun, country, and bluegrass genres, showcasing a dramatic thematic departure from the other songs on *Lemonade*.

The song’s text outlines a daughter’s relationship to her father by reflecting on her youth and the lessons he imparted on her. The music video appears highly autobiographical, incorporating home-video footage from Beyoncé’s childhood mixed with scenes in which she occupies different spaces in her hometown of Houston, Texas. The father in the song is a whiskey-loving, motorcycle-driving, classic rock fan, gambler, and gun rights advocate. He teaches his daughter to avoid men like him, and in an ironic play on words, the character quotes her father: “‘When trouble comes in town, and men like me come around,’ Oh, my daddy said shoot, oh my daddy said shoot.”

The negative reactions to Beyoncé’s performance indicate that there is something extremely valuable about the art in question. Beyoncé moved outside of the genres she is “supposed” to perform (namely, R&B, hip hop, and pop), and in effect, she talked back to white audiences and the powerful country music industry, both of whom showed evident discomfort, even rage, at her musical actions. The varied debate, concern, and even anger over whether “Daddy Lessons” is country or not is at the forefront of the so-called “controversy” surrounding the song (Hudak 2016). At its core, the argument concerns genre, and who is “meant” to perform in the country music style. This final chapter asks not why, but *how* “Daddy Lessons” works politically through its musical content. In this chapter, I first trace literature on musical genre. Second, I analyze the musical intertexts within “Daddy Lessons” to situate it within the country genre. Third, I explore how artists’ and audiences reception of the CMA performance rely on colourblind ideological frames to distance themselves from racist-speak while reinforcing racialized ideas of “who can perform” country music. Finally, I consider “Daddy Lessons” as a freedom practice on a threefold level: 1) it interrupts whiteness, 2) it relies on practices consistent with the concept of dark sousveillance, and 3) it functions as a form of musical talking back.

Genre “Worlds”

In adopting genre as the hermeneutic viewpoint to an analysis of “Daddy Lessons,” it is possible to gain insight as to how the song functions politically. Lawrence Kramer defines musical hermeneutics as the act of seeking “meaning in places where meaning is often said not to be found” (1990, 2). While some historical musicologists might argue that musical content has no inherent interpretive potential (Guido Adler for example), others show a variety of methods for uncovering meaning in the musical structure itself (McClary 1990). Kramer writes that, “In tak-

ing up the hermeneutic attitude, we [approach] the text by assuming that it resists fully disclosing itself, that in certain important respects it is mute, and that we ourselves understand it at first in terms we must work to articulate” (1990, 5). In tracing country music alongside the theoretical frame of feminist freedom practices, my interpretations of “Daddy Lessons” can bring out what may otherwise remain mute. “Once that window opens,” writes Kramer, “the text appears, or at least may appear, not as a grid of assertions in which other modes of meaning are embedded but as a field of humanly significant actions” (6). What becomes apparent is that the humanly significant actions of “Daddy Lessons” take the shape of intertextual references.

While genre considerations have a long history of study in the artistic domains of literature and visual art (see Bakhtin 1986; Gledhill 2000; Mittell 2004; Frow 2006), inquiries into genre are relatively unexplored in the scholarly study of music, compared to other academic ventures. As such, considerations of genre in musicology have drawn extensively from the work of literary theorists. In the book *Genre* by one such literary scholar, John Frow, he investigates “how genres actively generate and shape knowledge of the world” and “how generically shaped knowledges are bound up with the exercise of power, where power is understood as being exercised in discourse, as well as elsewhere, but is never simply external to discourse” (2006, introduction). His chapter on the interpretation of genre demonstrates how genre is a hermeneutic window for understanding information within the context of a specific genre. Frow writes that “genre guides interpretation because it is a constraint on semiosis, the production of meaning; it specifies which types of meaning are *relevant and appropriate* in a particular context...” (2006, 110, *my emphasis*). Thus, genre guides our interpretations to be formed within the constraints and possibilities of that genre.

Considerations of genre were not extensively applied to the study of music until 1981 with Franco Fabbri's article "A Theory of Musical Genres: Two Applications" (the article was originally presented in 1980 at the First International Conference on Popular Music Studies in Amsterdam). Fabbri's concepts were developed by Richard Middleton in 1990, and by David Brackett in 1995. Taking genre analyses into the twenty-first century, Fabian Holt's 2007 book *Genre in Popular Music* considers the cultural impact of music genres. Since then, key texts on music genre have been published; included in this is the work of David Brackett, whose recent book, *Categorizing Sound*, provides a comprehensive analysis of genre considerations in music. Intimately tied to considerations of authenticity, the notion of genre crossover in the music industry has been discussed sparsely since the 1950s, but more widely considered in the industry since the 1970s (Brackett 2016, 280-282). Brackett examines the history of crossover in the music industry, from radio programming to MTV, using Michael Jackson as his main case study for an examination of crossover musicians. Implicitly tied up in genre crossover are identity categories of race and gender (295). He explains that:

...this is because the idea of crossover, as movement between musical categories that stand in for categories of people, is a dream, a phantasm, in that to dream of crossover is to imagine oneself as inhabiting a new identity, as appealing to those who identify differently, so that the artist must imagine an identification that is not felt as his or her own, but which may become second nature if assumed repeatedly (316).

Genre crossover enables identity-play, and as Frow explained, genre can be a means of enacting power. Engaging with Philip Tagg's open letter on race and genre, Brackett writes that, "Genres are not static assemblages of empirically verifiable musical characteristics... [genres] bring with them social connotations about race, gender, and so on" (Brackett 2005, 80). Crossover reveals

the instability of musical genres “even as the reinforce and rely on them” (80). Despite the instability of genre, they still provide information to the “intersubjective social imagination” about the “‘proper’ place for different types of music and the social groups most associated with them” (89). The country music genre of “Daddy Lessons,” then, can give us information about who “should” perform within that genre, and what it means for Beyoncé to inhabit that genre, even if momentarily.

Genre can be a powerful tool to convey sociocultural messages, particularly through the medium of music and music video. In musicological literature, place, space, and the environment have been identified as important factors that construct identity in all genres of music, and in particular, these concepts have been applied to analyses of country music. Country music’s origins have been the subject of debate in country music studies since around the 1950s. Patrick Huber writes,

Country music studies relies on the scholarly convention of ‘southern exceptionalism,’ the belief that the American South developed outside the main currents of American history, and therefore its past and its culture are separate and distinct from those of the national experience” (Huber 2017, 34). Southern exceptionalism has undergone criticism in recent years, called a “myth” by some scholars (see Lassiter and Crespino 2009). Indeed, southern exceptionalism excludes histories of country music’s development in the non-American south: Nova Scotia, Alberta, or New England, for example (Huber 2017).

Susan Smith (1994) warns against viewing music as autonomous and transcendent from sociological critiques of culture. Smith quotes Edward Said, who writes that “the closer one looks at the geography of Western culture and at music’s place in it, the more compromised, the more socially involved and active the music seems” (Said 1991, 58). Taking seriously music’s place within geography allows for alternative critiques that fully consider the contexts surrounding the music; not just political or social, but also the geographical influences on the music itself.

In her 2014 article on the Dixie Chick's song "Lubbock or Leave It," Watson emphasizes the importance of place to country music, writing that these concepts are "integral" to country music studies because the genre is so closely linked with "geographic regions, rural landscapes, and domestic values" (2014, 49). Additionally, she writes that beyond describing place, country songs also work to "...articulate the relationship between individuals and their environment and community" (51).

Analysis of "Daddy Lessons" Music Video and CMAs Ceremony Performance

"Daddy Lessons" Music Video

The music video combines home footage with what I call the "music video world." The "music video world" refers to the highly processed, choreographed film that juxtaposes home-video footage or home-video "style" footage films. In the music video world, Beyoncé rides on a horse through residential areas, and appears in an old plantation building singing next to a guitar player. The home-video footage shows images of African American people in urban spaces, with distinct references to poverty; for example, a sign on the door to a business reads "No food stamps." In the scene immediately preceding "Daddy Lessons" in the visual album, there is a young man in a car, filmed in documentary style, explaining how he once met Obama. The man says that since Obama was elected, he now feels like he has a purpose in his life, to live for his children. "He from the hood just like me, from Chiraq. You know I'm from New Orleans... that give me inspiration on I can be whatever I want to be, you know, whatever I want to be" (qtd. in *Lemonade* 2016). The man quoted here links his roots to Obama's, and as this interlude precedes "Daddy Lessons," helps to situate the music video's setting in that city. Following this documen-

tary-style footage, there images of nature mixed with home-video style footage of New Orleans. A brass band enters in with home-video footage of men playing trumpets (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1. Screenshots of home-video (style) footage in “Daddy Lessons”



Not only is there footage of a brass band playing casually in the street, but footage of a marching band playing at a funeral (see Figure 4.2). “Daddy Lessons” can be interpreted as a tribute to the New Orleans second line style of jazz. While New Orleans jazz funerals have been misrepresented in Blaxploitation films, the practice of the second line remains a dynamic and meaningful cultural practice within African American communities in New Orleans (Regis 2001, 753-4). Anthropologist Helen Regis writes that “Public funerals and memorials produced in working-class black communities emphasize communal admiration and respect for men and women who have successfully negotiated lives of integrity in a highly inequitable society” (754). The second line functions as a memorial not only to the individual, but to their capacity to thrive within a society that makes it extremely difficult for them to do so. Regis writes:

In a city where proactive police patrols search young men for crack cocaine, and suspects are arrested for loitering and obstructing the sidewalk, the claims to public space made during neighbour anniversary second-line parades and jazz funerals are particularly dramatic, creating a subtext of resistance to routine ‘zero tolerance’ strategies that out the US Constitutions Fourth Amendment protection against unreasonable search and seizure (757).

“Daddy Lessons” similarly brings attention to the hypocrisy inherent in the US Second Amendment: that self-protection is technically allowed for all, but in the act of potentially arming all citizens, violence is more likely to occur. Gun rights do not protect citizens from violence, and in fact foster a culture in which guns are overused. *Lemonade* as a whole critiques gun culture and police violence, but “Daddy Lessons” stands out as an ironic play on ideologies: “Girl, it’s your Second Amendment,” “with his right hand on his rifle,” “daddy said, ‘shoot’,” and so on. While able to critique gun culture, “Daddy Lessons” also acknowledges the meaningful role that gun rights can play in shaping individual’s experiences of freedom in America. The music video shows scenes from a jazz funeral: people are dancing on the coffin while a brass band plays. These images of joyful Black funereal traditions are juxtaposed against the hypocrisy of the Second Amendment.

Figure 4.2. Screenshots of funeral footage in “Daddy Lessons”: A coffin being carried by dancing pallbearers, with a bass drum to the left; and to the right, a woman dancing on the coffin



CMA Performance

The two recorded versions of “Daddy Lessons” differ in their instrumentation and performance style significantly enough for a distinction to be drawn in terms of genre. While the

original recorded version on *Lemonade* nods to the New Orleans second-line style, the recording featuring the Dixie Chicks is distinctly “more” country. In this version, added to the original instrumentation are a harmonica solo at the start of the song, fiddles, mandolin, “yeehaw” and other shouts, a bass drum on beat one, and clapping on beats 2 and 4. The original version has synthesized bass on the verses but electric bass on the chorus, clapping, acoustic guitar, a brass section, baritone saxophone, a harmonica solo halfway through the song, and shouts.

“Daddy Lessons” is musically situated in multiple places. The opening brass introduction can be heard as a tribute to the New Orleans second line, specifically, the brass procession in a jazz funeral. Following the brass introduction, though, Beyoncé says, “Texas,” and in the version with the Dixie Chicks, so too do the band members Natalie Maines, Martie Maguire, and Emily Robison. The women were not *all* born in Texas: Maguire is from York, Pennsylvania, and Robison Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Their diverse birth places makes a statement that one can be from *anywhere* to write, sing, perform, or enjoy a country song. Their intoning of the word “Texas” also creates a unifying effect between Beyoncé and Maines, who were both born there, and who have now both faced the oppressive politics of the right-wing country music industry.

A reference to country music’s treatment of Black musicians exists as a stylistic internet to DeFord Bailey. In the remixed version, the song begins with a harmonica solo reminiscent of DeFord Bailey’s iconic playing style; Jewly Hight describes the style as “[A] down-home touch that hearkened back to country music’s early, and incidentally African-American, harmonica hero DeFord Bailey” (Hight 2016). Bailey was a country and blues musician who performed between 1920-41. He was one of the first African American musicians to gain notoriety in country music, performing on the Grand Ole Opry and heavily influencing harmonica playing style in country

and blues music (Morton 1993). Bailey moved to Nashville, but due to racial politics was fired from the Opry in 1941. For the most part, he disappeared from the music scene for the remainder of his career. He too was born in Texas, and the musical intertext to his style of playing thus links his influence to Beyoncé's own musical heritage.

The song "Long Time Gone" by the Dixie Chicks is incorporated into the remixed version, the lyrics to which critique the modern country music industry (specifically, Nashville): "Now they sound tired but they don't sound Haggard / They've got money but they don't have Cash / They got Junior but they don't have Hank."⁹ Including this song at the CMA performance was a bold move, because the Dixie Chicks had not been invited to perform since they were blacklisted from country music radio in 2003. In their article "Resisting Exile and Asserting Music Voice," Watson and Burns (2010) explore the musical response of the Dixie Chicks to their exile from country music radio and the oppression they faced as a result of other institutional powers (325). Mobilizing Foucault's theorizations of power, Watson and Burns argue that the oppressive country music industry in fact inspired (perhaps "forced") the Dixie Chicks into creating a new persona for themselves that did not align with the Republican beliefs of their oppressors (326, 348). Their critique of Nashville in "Long Time Gone" takes on a racialized tone when considering the reaction that some audiences had to Beyoncé performing at the CMAs. Combined with the musical intertexts to New Orleans, Nashville, and Texas, "Daddy Lessons" can be interpreted as both an autobiographic statement of Beyoncé's multivalent roots, but also a broader reference to diasporic Black cultural traditions. Additionally, the performance of the song at the CMAs acts as something of a feminist country anthem, in which Beyoncé aligns herself polit-

⁹ See <https://genius.com/Dixie-chicks-long-time-gone-lyrics> for a transcription of the Dixie Chicks' version of "Long Time Gone."

ically with the Dixie Chicks to critique country music's attitude toward non-Republican advocates. Hight points out that "From a historical angle, her country excursion represents something more like reclamation than invasion, since the genre's roots entwine with African-American folk, blues, string band and pop contributions" (2016).

Not only were there abundant musical intertexts, but also a striking visual intertext to Loretta Lynn. Beyoncé, whose hair is lightened blonde and is straightened, performed in a white floor-length gown with puffy sleeves; rhinestones on the dress sparkle from the stage lights. The gown is not completely opaque: through the gauzy white material a black bodysuit can be seen (bodysuits seem to be Beyoncé's go-to performance costume). The dress, despite its transparency, is reminiscent of the dresses that Loretta Lynn would wear while performing, recognizable in the puffy, long sleeves and length of the skirt. In visually aligning herself with Lynn, Beyoncé performs a type of ironic dark sousveillance that adopts "acceptable" feminine country whiteness while performing a song ("Long Time Gone") that criticizes the country music industry.

Figure 4.3. Beyoncé and the Dixie Chicks Performing at the CMAs (2016)



Figure 4.4. Photography of Loretta Lynn. Source unknown.



CMA Performance Reception on Social Media

The social media response to Beyoncé’s performance was swift and critical. Country musician Travis Tritt released a series of tweets lamenting country music’s absorption pop music. Tritt tweeted: “I don’t think there was anything ‘country’ about it. It was a pop song done by pop artists.” He claimed that race had nothing to do with his condemnation of Beyoncé’s performance, invoking colourblind ideology to counter the backlash to his comments that identified him as a racist. Similarly, he granted himself total authority over bridging “racial gaps” in country music: “Race has nothing to do it,” he tweeted. “Nobody in CM [country music] has done more to bridge racial gaps than me.” Though Tritt’s comments appear to be about genre crossover rather than race, the genres about which he speaks are highly raced and politicized in their very nature. Tritt’s comments are interesting because he writes that the song was “done by pop artists”; presumably, this includes the Dixie Chicks, who are widely recognized as country musicians. Additionally, Tritt invokes what critical race scholars refer to as colourblind ideology to distance himself from being perceived as a racist by claiming that “race has nothing to do with

it,” which is at its essence the same sentiment as in the sentence “I don’t see colour” (Jayakumar and Adamian 2017, 920). Not seeing colour allows white people to claim racelessness, and in the process, “defend the racial status quo under the rhetorical guise of equality and same-ness across racial groups” (912).

Other Twitter users also invoked colourblind frames to support their comments that Beyoncé “does not belong” at the Country Music Awards. Twitter user “Med School Fratter” tweeted that, “Beyoncé is not a country artist therefore she doesn’t belong at the CMAs..it has nothing to do with her skin color.” The question of *what* exactly constitutes a country artist arose in the reactions to the CMA performance. Identity and music are closely linked, and the backlash to Beyoncé’s CMA performance reinforces the deep connection both audiences and musicians experience between genre, identity, and place. If a musician writes and produces a country song, does that make them a country artist? Why, or why not?

Some Twitter users were surprised that an organization like the Country Music Awards would allow Beyoncé to perform. Katie Pavlich wrote: “Considering the pro-police, pro-military, pro-US flag stance of the country music audience, surprised Beyoncé is performing.” User Amy Men tweeted: “Shameful the #CMAawards50 allows a cop hating, Anti-American Racist on their stage! When did country music lose its way? #SellOuts.” Finally, user Katie_Karvinen wrote: “Omg what’s this crap about Beyoncé performing at the CMAs? Um no? Go away? Go back to your own genre?”

The polarization created by genre crossover reveals genre’s deeply political and culturally constructed roots that, when disturbed, cause discomfort and anger, reactions that are valuable objects of study. In an interview with *Billboard Magazine*, an unnamed Nashville music manager

said the following of Beyoncé's performance: "I was sitting behind Alan Jackson, and he actually stood up from the front row and walked out in middle of the performance, so I think that spoke volumes for the traditional, real country acts" (qtd. in Willman 2016). Beyoncé was perceived by many not as a "traditional, real country" act. To some country fans, a real/traditional country act is not a Black woman, despite her Texan roots.

Following the CMA performance with the Dixie Chicks Country Music Television contributor and freelance writer Alison Bonaguro wrote an article titled "What's So Country About Beyoncé?" In it she proclaims how the song cannot be country:

Sure, Beyoncé's new album *Lemonade* has a song with some yee-haws, a little harmonica and mentions of classic vinyl, rifles and whiskey. But all of the sudden, everyone's acting like she's moved to Nashville and announced that she's country now. Just because of this song "Daddy Lessons." If you ask me, this song is no more country than her "Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It)" (Bonaguro 2016).

The argument is essentially that Beyoncé cannot write a country song because she has not "moved to Nashville" or because she has not previously written a country song before. In a similar vein, founder of and writer for the website *Saving Country Music* Kyle Coroneos penned a piece on some music writers' praise of "Daddy Lessons":

"Daddy Lessons" is not a country song. This is just the truth of things [...] appreciate that even well-known pop country and celebrity-worshiping pom pom waiver Alison Bonaguro of CMT is behind me on this. And when *Saving Country Music* and CMT's Alison Bonaguro find consensus, you know there's something universal behind it... The fact is, Beyoncé's "Daddy Lessons" isn't country, and there is no indication it's even supposed to be taken as such. Is the song "inspired" by country music, or Beyoncé's upbringing in Houston? (Which trust me, is not a "country" town despite being in Texas.) Well sure it is. But that doesn't make it a country song (Coroneos 2016).

Coroneos has a similar argument to Bonaguro: that because Beyoncé is not part of the country music industry, essentially, she cannot be considered a country artist. Beyond that, their collective reasoning for why “Daddy Lessons” is not country falls flat. There is not any argumentative weight, theorization, or evidence to support their opinions. These two responses exemplify the heated politics of country-crossover songs. They also demonstrate the pervasiveness of southern exceptionalism in Coroneos’ disavowal of Houston as a “country town.” Southern exceptionalists seem to make an exception for white men who are not from “country towns,” however; for example, Hank Snow of Brooklyn, Nova Scotia is a country musician and has achieved commercial success in Nashville.

These less-than-welcoming responses to “Daddy Lessons” are not entirely indicative of journalistic reception. In a piece for *The Guardian*, Mark Guaniri praises the song for its ability to push country music’s boundaries, writing that country music is a perfect genre for established artists to experiment crossing-over into: “The genre is ever expanding, open to adaptation, and a refuge for established artists as they grow up” (Guaniri 2016). Additionally, Jewly Hight’s piece on the lessons we can learn from the CMA collaboration encourages audiences to be proud of cross-over projects: “Interaction with other forms of popular music — as opposed to isolation from them — is a source of pride, not to mention one among many drivers of stylistic evolution, in the mainstream country world” (2016).

The Freedom Practices of “Daddy Lessons”

The stylistic musical intertextual references to the second line, New Orleans, Nashville, Texas, and DeFord Bailey align with the theoretical concepts of dark sousveillance, interruptions to whiteness, and talking back. In line with Di Angelo’s interruptions to whiteness, “Daddy

Lessons” challenges white racial comfort and shows a person of colour occupying a leadership position (DiAngelo 2011, 57). White fragility is triggered by these interruptions, as demonstrated by the social media reception to the CMA performance of the song. The freedom practice of talking back shapes up as a musical resistance in the stylistic intertext to DeFord Bailey and the second line. The musical references to Black cultural practices are situated within a genre dominated by a white male-controlled industry. “Daddy Lessons” demonstrates the “movement from object to subject—the liberated voice” (hooks 1989, 9). Finally, acts of dark sousveillance can be found in the use of the country music genre as “an imaginative place from which to mobilize a critique of racializing surveillance” and can be seen to “[plot] imaginaries that are oppositional and hopeful for another way of being” (Browne 2015, 21). The surveillance of the Dixie Chicks extended to Beyoncé when she chose to have them perform alongside her at the CMAs. So too is country music’s surveillance of Black musicians critiqued in the stylistic intertext to Bailey’s harmonica playing. Not only are these acts of dark sousveillance critical, but hopeful: on the stage at the CMAs, a Black woman was backed up by musicians from disparate geographical regions, demonstrating a desire to overcome racial gaps in the United States. Some may read this as overly sentimental or utopian, but it is these instances of women’s unity that effectively help to overcome racist patriarchal domination.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION—DISRUPTION FROM WITHIN NEOLIBERAL CAPITALISM

In the introduction to Noam Chomsky’s book, *Profit Over People: Neoliberalism and Global Order*, Robert M. Chesney writes that, “Neoliberalism is the defining political economic paradigm of our time—it refers to the policies and processes whereby a relative handful of private interests are permitted to control as much as possible of social life in order to maximize their personal profit” (McChesney 1998, 8). In an evaluation of Beyoncé’s activism and resistance, it is imperative to consider the economic, political, and social context in which she thrives: neoliberal democracy. Though Beyoncé thrives economically within the neoliberal context, she ironically protests some of the issues that arise *from* neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism is a term used to describe the policies, cultural ramifications, and economic impact of politicians such as Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, Bill Clinton, Tony Blair, Augusto Pinochet, Boris Yeltsin, Jiang Zemin, Manmohan Singh, Junichiro Koizumi, John Howard, and George W. Bush. Though no politician has ever actually openly embraced the “title” of neoliberalism, the above politicians among others have consistently had their policies described as such (Steger and Roy 2010).¹

Steger and Roy identify three dimensions of neoliberalism: “(1) an ideology; (2) a mode of governance; (3) a policy package (Steger and Roy 2010). As an ideology, neoliberalism is held as an “accepted truth by significant groups in society,” groups such as leaders of massive corporations, corporate lobbyists, state bureaucrats, public relations specialists, intellectuals and journalists who write for large audiences, celebrities, and politicians (Steger and Roy 2010). As a

¹ Steger and Roy write that *neoliberalisms* in the plural is a more accurate term because neoliberalism comes in different forms depending on contextual influences, such as geographical situatedness (Steger and Roy 2010).

mode of governance, neoliberalism takes the form of self-interest, entrepreneurial competition, and decentralization. This governmentality endorses market-oriented behaviour. As public policies, neoliberalism manifests itself in the deregulation of the economy, the liberalization of industry and trade, and the privatization of state-owned enterprises (Steger and Roy 2010). Socially, these policy measures, governance modes, and ideologies create a citizenry who have faith in consumerism over community. “Instead of citizens, [neoliberal democracy] produces consumers. Instead of communities, it produces shopping malls. The net result is an atomized society of disengaged individuals who feel demoralized and socially powerless” (McChesney 1998).

Political parties across the spectrum have adopted neoliberalism as the ruling economic movement (McChesney 1998). Neoliberalism impacts the lives of early everyone on the globe, but in particular this political system can have negative impacts on women, people of colour, economically-disadvantaged people, and people who live in environmentally-unstable locations. For example, Michael Mascarenhas writes about the prevalence of “neoliberal racism” in Canada, as experienced by Indigenous peoples. Mascarenhas writes that it “...allows the Canadian Government to negotiate an Accord with First Nations to improve the education, employment, and living conditions for all Aboriginal Peoples in Canada, yet in the months follow, for the same government vote against the United Nations Declaration that would grant universal human rights to Aboriginal Peoples worldwide” (Mascarenhas 2012, 15). In relation to gender-based domestic violence, neoliberal approaches to the issue such as the Violence Against Women Act treat domestic violence “as an individual-level problem, with money provided for shelters, law enforcement, and targeted intervention series,” but this policy among others does not consider domestic

violence as “fundamentally linked to patriarchy and/or structural inequality” (Mehrotra et al. 2016, 156).

Neoliberalism takes the form of free market policies, which encourage consumer choice and heightened consumerism, individualism and entrepreneurship, lowering taxes for the wealthy, dismantling environment protection regulations, eliminating social welfare programs, and defunding public education (McChesney 1998).² The corporate free market is prioritized above all else, including the healthy functioning of society, within the neoliberal global order:

Indeed, any activity that might interfere with corporate domination of society is automatically suspect because it would interfere with the workings of the free market, which is advanced as the only rational, fair, and democratic allocator of goods and services. At their most eloquent, proponents of neoliberalism sound as if they are doing poor people, the environment, and everybody else a tremendous service as they enact policies on behalf of the wealthy few (McChesney 1998).

Now that I have laid out this brief description of neoliberalism, Beyoncé’s role within it can be more accurately articulated.

Beyoncé’s wealth is undisputed, and she is not shy about displaying it on social media, song lyrics, or music videos.³ Though not within the top 400 wealthiest earners in America, Beyoncé is on the Forbes list of America’s richest self-made women, with a net-worth of \$355 million dollars as of 2018.⁴ She is number 53 out of 59 on that list, and the fourth youngest (after

² During a graduate feminist theories class in 2016, one of my peers described neoliberalism as “capitalism on speed.”

³ Take, for example, the lyric in “Formation”: “Always stay gracious / best revenge is your paper” in reference to her economic mobility as a form of revenge, or the lyric from the same song, “I might just be a black Bill Gates in the making.”

⁴ Combined with her husband Jay-Z, the couple’s net worth is \$1.16 billion dollars; Jay-Z’s personal net worth is \$810 million, more than double Beyoncé’s net worth, even though his career began in 1995, just two years before Beyoncé’s professional career began in 1997 (Forbes 2017).

Kylie Jenner, Taylor Swift, and Huda Kattan) to be featured on the list (Forbes 2018). Despite messages of resistance in *Lemonade*, Beyoncé benefits from the society that she critiques. bell hooks (2016, n.p.) writes about this unpopular fact in a widely-shared and widely-debated blog post. She writes,

Viewers who like to suggest *Lemonade* was created solely or primarily for black female audiences are missing the point. Commodities, irrespective of their subject matter, are made, produced, and marketed to entice any and all consumers. Beyoncé's audience is the world and that world of business and money-making has no color.

The world of money-making and business certainly markets to any consumer. However, I suggest that consumers can see a distinction between commodity and the subject matter of the commodity. Popular music can be enjoyed while simultaneously undergoing critique of the processes by which that popular music was produced. Consumers of Beyoncé can love the music and its contained messages, while also understanding on how Beyoncé is working within the capitalist industry of popular music.

hooks argues that Beyoncé advocates for equality between men and women but does not argue for the end of patriarchal domination. Beyoncé's brand of activism is what hooks defines as "fantasy feminism":

In the world of fantasy feminism, there are no class, sex, and race hierarchies that breakdown simplified categories of women and men, no call to challenge and change systems of domination, no emphasis on intersectionality. In such a simplified worldview, women gaining the freedom to be like men can be seen as powerful. But it is a false construction of power as so many men, especially Black men, do not possess actual power (2016, n.p.)

While hooks' critique offers a substantive claim for how activism rooted in capitalism is not really activism at all, I am unwilling to agree with her critique entirely. hooks places a lot of expecta-

tions on Beyoncé; she writes: “In this fictive world [of *Lemonade*], black female emotional pain can be exposed and revealed. It can be given voice: this is a vital and essential stage of freedom struggle, but it does not bring exploitation and domination to an end” (2016). Beyoncé cannot be expected to singlehandedly bring an end to exploitation and domination. Beyoncé is but one voice, and as demonstrated in the analyses in this thesis, is resistant *within the context* of mainstream popular music. While *Lemonade* may not be all that academic feminists could have hoped for in the struggle to end patriarchal domination, the album has still been enormously influential, and thus is worthy of consideration as an activist text. The tensions that have arisen from *Lemonade* certainly speak to its relevancy.

In this regard, it is important to identify some of the ways in which Beyoncé develops themes across the album that can be interpreted as feminist, and more specifically, as activist messages within the context of Black feminist thought. The visual album shows loving and caring relationships between women, re-historicizing their experiences within the context of music video. For example, in the chapter “Hope,” women work together in a garden and a kitchen, preparing a meal for themselves; they languish on trees in this plantation-like setting, taking up space. *Lemonade* consistently features Black women in various types of formations as one of its primary tropes. In an effort to challenge the existing systems of domination, Beyoncé’s call for change is rooted in expressions of the divine feminine, matriarchal lineage, women moving into formations, and genre disruption. To me, and to many other viewers, the visual, lyrical, textual, and musical themes of *Lemonade* ought not to be so simply categorized as “fantasy” feminism. *Lemonade*’s position as a commodity does not automatically strip it of all its subversive poten-

tial. The activist potential of *Lemonade* is based on how it is interpreted and mobilized by audiences and consumers.

An exemplary illustration of the public mobilizing Beyoncé's music was at the 2017 Women's March on Washington. The march was held on January 21, 2017 to protest Donald Trump's inauguration and his racist and sexist ideologies, as well as to advocate for changes to human rights policies and legislation (such as LGBTQ+ rights, Black Lives Matter and racial equality, reproductive rights, environmental issues, and other policy avenues). The protest was the largest in United States history to date (Broomfield 2017).⁵ In Sarah Larson's article recounting her experience at the Women's March, she writes how the National Museum of African American History and Culture mobilized Beyoncé's "Formation" as a chant during the protest, describing it as "a Beyoncé's chant-sing: 'O.K. ladies now let's get in formation.' That got people going..." (Larson 2017). Various photos from marches around the world show women holding signs with Beyoncé lyrics, such "O.K. ladies now let's get in formation" and "Run the World (Girls)."

Regarding the potential for disruptive musical practices within capitalism, Burns and LaFrance offer an interpretation that considers how popular culture serves as a tool for understanding:

The articulation of resistance policies is possible through forms mediated by late capitalist patterns of consumption, even if that articulation invariably involves the employment of contaminated resources and the creation of effects both oppositional and hegemonic. Consequently, we account for the subversive potential of certain popular songs without celebrating the economic processes through which they were generated. Applauding the countercultural possibility of a cultural form without applauding the means through which it was produced and made accessible is, of course, something of an

⁵ Over 500,000 people were present at the Women's March on Washington, with somewhere between 3.3-4.6 million people marching in cities across the globe (Broomfield 2017).

argumentative balancing act, but in our view one worth pursuing. To completely refuse to address this music simply because of its ties to capital is to dismiss the media through which most people gain most of their cultural literacy. (Burns and LaFrance 2002)

Taking both hooks' and Burns and LaFrance's understandings of resistance through popular music into account, it is possible to understand *Lemonade* as both disruptive *and* a commodity. Popular music does not have to function as simply one or the other. The struggle to communicate within systems of oppression has long been experienced by women and marginalized groups: as Adrienne Rich famously wrote in one of her poems, "This is the oppressors' language / yet I need to talk to you" (Rich 1971).

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