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MASTER'S THESIS

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Abstract

Beyoncé's visual album *Lemonade* has been faulted by radical feminist theorist bell hooks for its lack of intersectionality and for stereotypically victimising Black women. This thesis will counter this by arguing that Beyoncé stages a complex image of Black womanhood that rejects controlling images and racist/sexist stereotypes of the Black family. The thesis contains a formal analysis of the visual album that addresses the visual images, the lyrics, and the spoken-word poetry. It further stages a dialogue with hooks' critical essay "Moving Beyond Pain", and examines how Beyoncé mixes fiction and biographical references in order to create authenticity and credibility.

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Introduction

Beyoncé Giselle Knowles-Carter has become a phenomenon in popular music. She is currently one of the most influential and highest earning women in music (Greenberg, *Forbes*). Beyoncé started her career as a child performer at the age of eight in the girl group Girl's Tyme, which later became known as Destiny's Child. The group was managed by Beyoncé's father, Mathew Knowles, and is one of the most popular girl groups of all time, with hits such as "Independent Women", "Say My Name", and "Survivor". Beyoncé's feminist sensibilities started during her time in the group and were evident in the lyrics. When the group split in 2006 and Beyoncé went solo, her music became even more concerned with female empowerment. American music critic Ann Powers has deemed Beyoncé "the biggest star carrying forward the musical legacy of her race" (*NPR*). She is able to reach a global audience with her African-American inspired music and dance performances and her politics that promote racial pride and gender equality. Her visual album, *Lemonade* (2016), was streamed over 115 million times during the first week of its release, and was the bestselling album of 2016 with 2,5 million copies sold globally (Caulfield; McIntyre).

Beyoncé married her husband, hip-hop mogul Jay-Z (Shawn Carter), in 2008. They are notoriously private about their relationship and personal life, barely giving any public interviews. They are one of the most powerful couples in the industry with a combined estimated fortune of $1.255 billion (Greenberg, *Forbes*). Their first daughter, Blue Ivy, was born in 2012. They later became parents to twins, Rumi and Sir, in 2017. Their marriage has been fuelled by infidelity rumours for years, and when a surveillance tape showing a physical altercation between Beyoncé's sister, Solange, and Jay-Z in an elevator after the 2014 MET Gala was leaked, the media interpreted it as confirmation of these rumours. In the video, Solange is seen charging at her brother-in-law, trying to hit and kick him while she is held back by security. Beyoncé appears calm and collected standing next to her husband, not intervening. The media argued that the altercation was the result of Solange finding out about Jay-Z's infidelity. This is the tape that forms the backdrop of *Lemonade*.

Although frequently hailed a feminist icon to the younger generation, Beyoncé's line of feminism often leads to polarising reception among scholars. Her politics are accused of being superficial and promoting what Andi Zeisler calls 'marketplace feminism', a depoliticised, identity-badge feminism that excludes systemic critique and only focuses on individual experience. However, her supporters emphasise the significance of Beyoncé as an

African-American woman representing a historically white movement. She is able to use her platform to present intersectional feminism, reject politics of respectability, and offer positive representations of the Black female body and sexuality that challenge negative controlling images of Black womanhood that permeate popular media. She theorises and identifies issues particular to Black women, expanding the movement from white middle-class women's problems to also include those historically excluded.

After its release in 2016, *Lemonade* received predominantly positive reviews and critique in scholarly circles. *Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education* even dedicated an entire issue to the film and album, resulting in a wide and interdisciplinary selection of academic articles offering diverse readings. The visual album was celebrated for initiating conversations about Black feminism and the particularity of the Black female experience. Specifically, scholars have emphasised the Black feminist aspects of intersectionality and intergenerationality found in the visual album. Scholar Cienna Davis uses the term *diasporic melancholia* in relation to Beyoncé to describe "embodied individual and collective psychic practice with the political potential to transform grief into the articulation of grievance that traverse continents and cross time" (Kaplan, cited in Davis, 19). It refers to her connection of African-American women's shared past and the present, the passing down of knowledge, stories, traditions and life lessons that have ensured the survival of Black communities during times of institutional oppression. As Harris-Perry argues, *Lemonade* is a "call for women to stay prepared, to rise above the fray and to remember that they will ultimately triumph" (*Time Magazine*). It is a call to arms that emphasises Black women's political potential.

The visual album is also praised for its citing of pressing African-American political issues, such as Hurricane Katrina and Black Lives Matter movement, and placing them in a larger context that illustrate how the Black community continuously face trauma and violence. Beyoncé vocalises the devastation and outrage in the community over the innocent killings of their young members. At the time of *Lemonade*'s release, the U.S. had seen three years of videos shot on mobile phones showcasing fatal interactions between young African-Americans and the police force. It was and is a sensitive subject, and all comments on the situation were seen as picking sides. Scholar Melissa Harris-Perry praised Beyoncé for embracing "explicitly feminist blackness at a politically risky moment" (*The Messenger*). She applauds her clear political stance and conviction, even during times when her art was accused of being anti-law enforcement.

Only a few scholars and journalists have offered negative reviews of *Lemonade*. The main argument centres on how the project seems more like one of capitalism than true radical

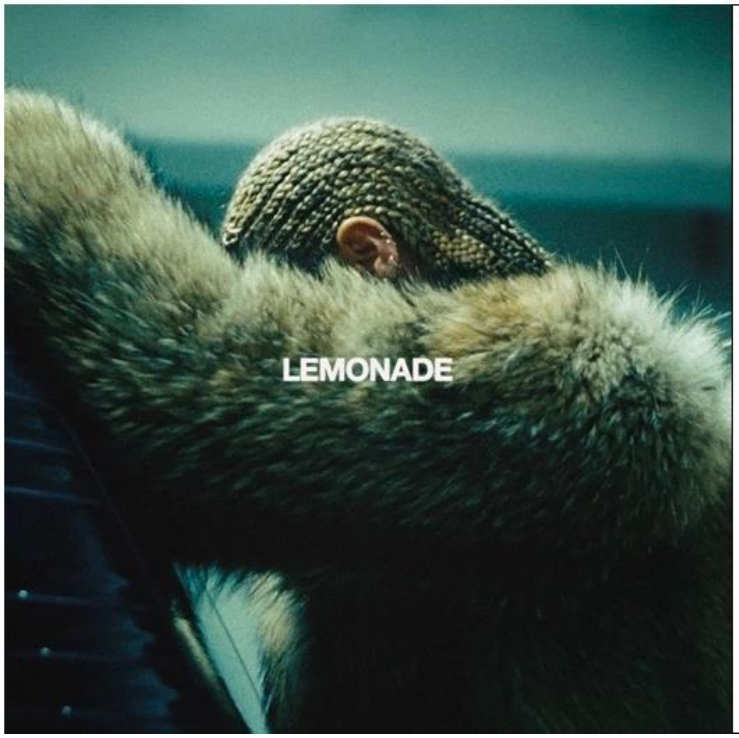
critique, like the Black Panthers she alludes to (hooks, Szetela, Lewis, Jones). Scholar Adam Szetela calls Beyoncé's politics "boutique activism", a form of activism devoid of capitalist critique or questioning, the very system enabling the incredible wealth Beyoncé has accumulated and maintaining the economic and racial inequality present in U. S. society. Other scholars and documentary filmmakers, such as Maris Jones and Shantrelle Lewis, have accused Beyoncé of appropriating the trauma of those affected by Hurricane Katrina, profiting from their tragedy.

This thesis seeks to do a formal analysis in chapter one that addresses the album track by track and examines all three levels of the visual album: the visual images, the lyrics, and the spoken-word poetry. The poetry was written by British-Somali poet Warsan Shire. Her first poetry pamphlet, *Teaching My Mother How to Give Birth*, was published in 2011. She followed up with *Her Blue Body* in 2015. Her poetry often concerns the female body, belonging, migration, motherhood, and love. She transforms pain into poetry, an ability that resonates with *Lemonade*'s message. The first chapter also aims to show what the visual narrative adds to the lyrical narrative of the musical album, how the personal is extended to represent larger political issues.

In the second chapter, the thesis will counter bell hooks' argument that *Lemonade* is first and foremost "the business of capitalist money making at its best" and that the feminism presented in the visual album is untrustworthy ("Moving Beyond Pain"). Moreover, it will demonstrate how the Black female body and its societal signification can be subverted by looking at Serena Williams' performance in the music video for "Sorry". *Lemonade*'s challenging of controlling images of Black womanhood and the Black family will also be discussed in chapter two.

In the final chapter, the thesis will examine how the Danish concept of 'performative biographism' can be applied to *Lemonade* and show how it can be employed as a tool in identity negotiation. This chapter places the visual album in the larger tradition of African-American slave narratives and Hip-hop feminist autobiographies. It also explores how autobiographical references can stage authenticity and intimacy, and how this helps Beyoncé gain credibility among her intended audience of African-American women.

1. Formal analysis of *Lemonade*



Structure of *Lemonade* (Chapters and Tracks):

1. *Intuition*
   a. "Pray You Catch Me"
2. *Denial*
   a. "Hold Up"
3. *Anger*
   a. "Don't Hurt Yourself"
4. *Apathy*
   a. "Sorry"
5. *Emptiness* & 6. *Loss*
   a. "6 Inch"
7. *Accountability*
   a. "Daddy Lessons"
8. *Reformation*
   a. "Love Drought"
9. *Forgiveness*
   a. "Sandcastles"
10. *Resurrection*
    a. "Forward"
11. *Hope*
    a. "Freedom"
12. *Redemption*
    a. "All Night"
13. –
    a. "Formation"

Fig. 1 The album cover of *Lemonade* and the structure of the visual album with chapters and tracks.

The musical album *Lemonade* contains twelve tracks. Along with poetry recitation, these tracks are placed in the visual album/long-form music video within twelve chapters modelled on the Kübler-Ross model of grief. The Kübler-Ross model has five stages; Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance. These are adapted into twelve stages, ranging from Intuition, Denial, Anger, Apathy, Emptiness, Loss, Accountability, Reformation, Forgiveness, Resurrection, Hope, to Redemption. I have chosen to group the twelve tracks into four larger categories according to the main affect and state of mind Beyoncé expresses. The opening track "Pray You Catch Me" and the spoken word section of the chapter *Denial* are grouped together because they are characterised by introspection – self-examination and self-blame. The track "Hold Up" marks a transition from introspection to extrospection. Beyoncé has realised that she was not the source of blame, and externalises her anger. She grows more confident and stresses her independence in the four tracks "Hold Up", "Don't Hurt Yourself", "Sorry", and "6 Inch. The category "Reconciliation and Forgiveness" contains the four tracks "Daddy Lessons", "Love Drought", "Sandcastles", and "All Night". They all communicate Beyoncé's desire to resolve her relationship with her husband despite hesitation and warnings.

The final category, "Mobilization", is reserved for the three tracks that are explicitly political and that do not directly thematise the infidelity narrative, "Forward", "Freedom" and "Formation". Although "Forward" isolated can be read as thematising the infidelity, the images of the visual album amplify the inherent political message.

Lemonade follows the narrative arch of a woman whose husband has been unfaithful, and the emotional journey from suspecting it to condemning it and leaving him, before finally forgiving him and deciding to give their marriage another try. Beyoncé centres love, both through the lens of affection and adoration, but also betrayal, contempt, and heartbreak. Black womanhood and Black female sexuality are two of the most prominent themes explored in the production, alongside misogynoir, the historical impact of slavery, police brutality, and federal mismanagement. It contains both the personal and the political, often framing the personal as political.

Visually *Lemonade* is characterised by its temporal play, which it achieves by alternating between moments of synchronised audiovisuals and non-sync. According to media scholars Lisa Perrott et. al. this is meant to shift our focus from what we see and hear to reflect and create our own connections and stories. The temporal play is also achieved through the stark silence often marking the end of chapters. The music videos and the spoken-word sections are linked by images of motionless bodies, keeping perfectly still as if they were living photographs. The constant oscillating movement in the narrative forces the viewers to consider both the past, present, and future when interpreting what they see and what they hear. It is not structured chronologically, but episodically and atemporally. It is a non-linear narrative that heavily employs retrospection and dream sequences.

According to Perrott et al. the bridges between songs are made up of three elements. First, there is the fairly still visual tableaux, which they liken to the works of Andre Tarkovsky and Ingmar Bergman. Secondly, the "poetic, intensely personal spoken-word poetry" written by Shire (6). Lastly, we have the ample/diverse sound-design consisting of sighs, breaths, rain, flickering lights, footsteps, etc. The movement from noise to music is used to connect the narrative and the songs.

The film was made possible by the help of 129 credited musicians, producers and composers. In addition, six directors were hired for the music videos along with Beyoncé herself. Their work appears seamlessly edited together to form a cohesive visual narrative characterised by beautiful natural scenery, intimate voiceover narration, and non-linearity. The production context of *Lemonade* consists both of it financing and its producers. There are 20 listed producers in total, with seven of them being executive producers. Beyoncé, along

with Ed Burke, Ryan Heiferman, Steve Pamon, Todd Tourso, Melissa Vargas, and Erinn Williams make up the executive producers. Beyoncé had previous experience of working with the majority of them on either previous music videos, her documentary, *Life is But a Dream* (2013), or Destiny's Child's tour documentary, *Destiny's Child: World Tour* (2003). According to one of the directors, Melina Matsoukas, *Lemonade* was self-funded, "allowing for a kind of artistic control that few black artists have experienced" (cited in Alexis Okeowo, *New Yorker*). This is important in terms of Beyoncé being in control of the project, not being influenced by outside funders. 6 directors were hired, in addition to Beyoncé herself. These consist of both very current filmmakers and music video directors, such as Khalil Joseph, Dikayl Rimmasch, Todd Tourso, and Melina Matsoukas, and the veterans, Mark Romanek and Jonas Åkerlund. It becomes evident that we have a mixture of financial and artistic interests that creates a more complex, collaborative rhetorical structure, which present an entirely different communicational situation than a book written by an author.

Throughout the thesis I will be referring to Beyoncé as creator and persona. She self-manages but is influenced by her many collaborators. References to "Beyoncé" and her intentions with *Lemonade* are therefore a combination of her as a manager of her public persona as an artist and the collaborator, not her as a private person. All referenced lyrics have been retrieved from *genius.com* and the transcriptions of Shire's poetry from Michelle Toglia's article in *Bustle* with some minor corrections and additions. The more technical music details have been rendered from *musicnotes.com*.

1.1 Introspection

Intuition opens with a sideways close-up slow-motion shot of Beyoncé leaning against a black SUV in an underground carpark - the same image that was used as the cover image of the musical album. Her face is obstructed by her fur-clad arm but we see her blonde cornrows. It is nearly silent as it cuts to an eerie shot of the deserted Fort Macomb in Louisiana. We hear the wind, birds chirping and the rustling of straw in the fields surrounding the Fort. Nearly 30 seconds into the film the first song of the album starts playing, the R&B downtempo piano-based ballad "Pray You Catch Me". This is a minor key song with 4/4 and 4/5 time. The infidelity narrative is established in the first lines: "You can taste the dishonesty/it's all over your breath". Beyoncé is addressing Jay-Z, and simultaneously interpellating the audience into his position. The camera pans slowly in a downward motion, showcasing the grandeur of the Fort, before cutting to a red stage curtain and Beyoncé kneeling on the stage with her fingers interlocked in a praying position. She is wearing all black; a black hoodie, black headwrap, and a black skirt, and close to no makeup. The visual scenes move between her kneeling on stage and her walking through the tall straw field surrounding Fort Macomb; staring directly into the camera.

The chapter title flashes across the screen in white against black-and-white images of an empty plantation house and its grounds, the Destrehan Plantation House in Louisiana. In the middle of the song, Beyoncé pauses to recite one of Warsan Shire's poems. The poem aligns with the chapter title thematically; the narrator recognises certain behaviours in her partner from her childhood when her father cheated on her mother, in particular the lying and the evading silence:

> You remind me of my father; a magician, able to exist in two places at once. In the tradition of men in my blood, you come home at 3 a. m. and lie to me. What are you hiding?

The poem states that her intuition and previous experience have led her to believe that her partner is most likely being unfaithful; spending his nights with other women and lying to her about it. Already in the opening chapter the line is drawn between her father and her partner to illustrate the intergenerational problem of infidelity in the Black community. As she recites Shire, we are shown a stage presumed to be in the grounds of the plantation home. A group of African American women are seen standing on and sitting along the edge of it. They are posed as if they were mannequins; they do not move a muscle as the camera moves in on and

among them. They all look straight ahead with stern expressions on their faces; looking as if they were inanimate objects on display. This creates connotations to African-Americans' history of slavery and slave auctions. The women are all wearing white Antebellum-style dresses, a nod to the era of slavery through attire belonging to the slave owners.

The visuals cut from the women on stage to close-ups of a few African-American women before cutting to a close-up of Beyoncé sitting in a wooden bathtub inside what appears to be Fort Macomb, wearing a light swimming costume and a tignon. The tignon, or head wrap, references Beyoncé's Creole ancestry because it was historically worn by African-descendant Creoles in Louisiana. The camera pans out from Beyoncé's face to reveal her holding on to the sides of the bath, trying to contain her tears. The scene has an intimate atmosphere both due to the close-up of Beyoncé crying and the only light source being lit candles in the background. This scene is alternated with the previous scenes of her walking through the straw field and her kneeling on the stage, all scenes highlighting her solitude. The brick interior and arches of Fort Macomb resemble the interior of Ghanaian castles, such as the Cape Coast Castle or the Elmina Castle, where slaves where brought and kept until transported and sold to the Americas.

As we return to Beyoncé visually, she is heard reciting the final part of Shire's poem: "The past and the future merge to meet us here. What luck. What a fucking curse." The combination of the visuals and the poetry signal both the personal and the bigger dimension of *Lemonade*. The same destructive behaviour Beyoncé witnessed in her childhood when her father cheated on her mother, she is now confronted with in her own romantic relationship. On an allegorical level, these elements signal the denigration and devaluing of Black women historically and contemporarily. The shared past of Black women contains pain in all forms and their prospective future seems to contain it as well. The past and present merge here because she is forced to make a decision; forgiveness or leaving him. Beyoncé's decision is symbolically significant due to her role as a representative for Black women in the film. Artists from marginalised communities are often made delegates, constructed as a "privileged interlocutor, speaking for a whole African-American population" (Sharon Willis, "A Theater of Interruptions", 778). Beyoncé's life is not seen is isolation, but is extended into the bigger female African-American community. Although this position is sometimes rejected, Beyoncé actively positions herself as a representative of the Black female community. Their future depends on how they handle and resolve their difficult and brutal past. Denying what happened is not an option. The 'curse' must be addressed and dealt with in order to move forward together.

The concluding scenes of the opening chapter show Beyoncé standing on the top of a tall building in an urban landscape at night. Her eyes are filled with tears. She removes her hoodie for the first time, revealing her blonde curls, and proceeds to walk to the edge of the building. She slowly lifts her arms until they are horizontal, making the shape of the cross, a crucified pose. She leans forward off the building, makes several flips in the air until she reaches the pavement. Just as she is about to hit the ground, it cuts to an underwater scene; as if she dove through water rather than asphalt. This scene can be seen in relation to the title of the song playing simultaneously and its lyrics; "I'm praying you catch me listening" and "I'm prayin' you catch me". She not only hopes her partner will catch her eavesdropping so that he will know that she suspects him of cheating, but she also hopes that he will physically catch her as she feels as if she is currently in free fall. What she believed was solid, their relationship and mutual trust, has been destroyed, and she wishes her partner could provide answers and confirm or deny her suspicions. She desires solid ground again.

The powerful opening sets the scene both narratively in terms of infidelity and geographically through visuals of Fort Macomb and the Destrehan plantation in Louisiana. The personal narrative set in a historical setting convey that we are meant to consider the betrayal and maltreatment African-American women have been subjected to on a personal and collective level since the era of slavery. The visuals, the lyrics and the poetry all follow a downward, depressive trajectory, which culminates in her seemingly plunging to her death. The uncertainty and betrayal has led her to consider suicide. The emotional pain is unbearable. It is an affective expression of her mental state - the loneliness and despair that followed her suspicion. This continues into the spoken poetry section of the following chapter, *Denial*, which we are seamlessly brought into via the underwater scene. Beyoncé removes her black clothes, revealing a golden sequin top, whilst starting to recite another poem by Shire. This poem marks a turn towards self-blame. The focus is shifted from "What are you hiding?" to was I complicit in the infidelity? She turns to religion and religious practices for answers:

> I tried to change. Closed my mouth more, tried to be softer, prettier, less awake. Fasted for 60 days, wore white, abstained from mirrors, abstained from sex, slowly did not speak another word. In that time, my hair, I grew past my ankles. I slept on a mat on the floor. I swallowed a sword. I levitated. Went to the basement, confessed my sins, and was baptized in a river. I got on my knees and said 'amen' and said 'I mean'.

She is floating underwater, now in a grand bedroom. We see a doubling of Beyoncé as she recites "abstained from mirrors, abstained from sex"; she is watching herself sleep alone in a double bed. She slowly starts to float upwards towards a light; she "levitated". We see her go through a physical transformation, something resembling a contortionist performance. These underwater scenes are reminiscent of a scene in Charles Laughton's film *Night of the Hunter* (1955) where the main character's wife is seen sitting in her car underwater. It has the same eerie and peaceful atmosphere, and the feeling that someone is watching from above. This could be argued to illustrate Beyoncé's 'double consciousness'. W. E. B. Du Bois' argues in *The Souls of Black Folk* that African-Americans are defined by having a 'double consciousness', a split identity where they are "always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (846). As a result of African-Americans' history of oppression and Othering, they are always aware of how their skin colour functions as a 'veil' that denies or restricts their access to the dominant group's world and the opportunities available to them. The colour line created by racism makes it difficult for the white community to recognise African-Americans as true Americans, and for African-Americans to see themselves outside the racist images constructed by the dominant group. Regarding Black women, the later discussed concept of 'controlling images' illustrates how difficult it is to escape negative stereotypes. African-Americans desire to transcend these images and achieve 'true self-consciousness' –a merging of the African and the American aspects of their identities. Beyoncé doubling herself shows her entering the position of the dominant group and trying to locate her own complicity in the transgression. Just like African-American women have done historically, she is trying to self-examine and self-monitor in an effort to explain and rectify the tragedy.

Beyoncé returns to her regular form and resumes the same kneeling position as on the stage in *Intuition*, only now on the bed and with her hands in a traditional palms-together prayer pose whilst reciting "I got on my knees and said 'amen' and said 'I mean'". The physical transformations illustrate how she is trying to conform to what she believes her partner feels she is lacking that has made him look to other women. Beyoncé resorts to traditional religious practices, much like the ascetic practice of nuns. Her confessing her sins also seems to signal that she believes that her partner cheating is a form of punishment for something she has done, something she has to rectify. It is as if she is trying to gain clarity by abstaining from all mortal pleasures.

From the prayer position, we suddenly see her screaming at the camera in an extreme close-up and physically transforming through more contortionist movements. This scene

resonates as a woman undergoing exorcism. This is happening whilst she is orally describing through heavy religious imagery how she punished herself and gave herself to God, but nothing was enough to distract her from the underlying question she wants answered: "Are you cheating on me?". She details the corporal punishment she subjected herself to:

> "I whipped my own back and asked for dominion at your feet. I threw myself in a volcano. I drank the blood and drank the wine. I sat alone and begged and bent at the waist of a God … I bathed in bleach, and plugged my menses with pages from the holy book".

The self-flagellation is another reference to ascetic practice of convents. It is, like her fasting and abstinence, a way to mortify her sinful nature, to rid herself of sinful behaviour that might have led to her being punished by God. But despite her efforts of cleansing her spirit, the one who has to answer for his actions is ultimately her partner. Beyoncé swims through the bedroom and into the hallway of the submerged manor. The entire scene can be read to illustrate how she feels as though she is drowning in her own thoughts and suspicions, and how she is doing everything in her power to gain answers. Not only does she feel as though her previous solid ground has deteriorated, but she also feels as though she is drowning. She wants to escape her own mind and self-torture and confront her husband.

Symbolically, these scenes illustrate the generational pain Black women have endured from the era of slavery until present day. When Beyoncé leaps from the tall building and the ground transforms from asphalt to water, it shows how Black women have adapted and survived what was meant to break them. They have turned painful situations into opportunities for growth and development. They have seen themselves from the perspective of the dominant society that constantly underestimates and devalues them, posits them as problems, leading them to self-blame and self-examine. The answers they seek are not found in holy texts or by confessing their sins. They must exit the destructive thought patterns and assign blame within the larger structures that have oppressed and exploited them for centuries.

1.2 Extrospection

The underwater scene that connects the chapters *Intuition* and *Denial* marks a shift in Beyoncé's attitude and mindset, a shift from depression and self-blame to a heightened focus on her self-worth and independence that characterise the tracks from "Hold Up" to "6 Inch". The underwater scenes cut to Beyoncé opening and exiting what looks like a courthouse with

Greek-style columns and wide steps leading up to it. As she opens the doors, water flushes out from behind her and fills the stairs. This has been likened to a Kubrickian style opening (Perrott et. al., 4). The song "Hold Up" starts playing as she walks down the stairs now looking like a water fountain. She is wearing a yellow ruffled Roberto Cavalli dress and gold jewellery, which many have likened to the Yoruba goddess Oshun. Oshun is often associated with "water, purity, fertility, love, and sensuality" but also the human qualities of "vanity, jealousy, and spite" (Jeffries, *Britannica*). She is sweet but dangerous when crossed. Beneath Oshun's charming demeanour there is sadness and loneliness because she loves so intensely but is never able to find someone who can return such love to her. This ties in well with the overall affect connoted in the music video for the upbeat reggae-like song "Hold Up", a C major 4/4 time moderate tempo. It is also an instance of Signifyin(g) in the meaning of the image having a denotative and a figurative meaning available to those who share the same cultural background. The same signifier, or image in this instance, will convey different concepts or what is signified according to the white community and the Black community. In the case of Oshun, a substantial portion of Beyoncé's audience will not recognise that her yellow dress, gold jewellery and being surrounded by water are meant to signify the Yoruban goddess. Henry Louis Gates Jr. argues that "Repetition, with signal difference, is fundamental to the nature of Signifyin(g) (…)" (*The Signifying Monkey*, 51). Signifyin(g) is a central element in African-American literature. Black vernacular tends to favour figurative language and ambiguity rather than literal or determinate meanings. The dress and jewellery would not signify much else to the White community other than designer items fit for a celebrity. She is repeating the expectations for her role as international celebrity, but there is a signal difference to those familiar with Yoruba culture. Beyoncé obscures the apparent meaning of the sign and plays on its associative relations through its intertextual reference to Yoruba culture. Signifyin(g) can also be applied to *Lemonade* as a whole. The visual album is not intended to only be read literally as a story about Beyoncé and Jay-Z's personal tragedy of infidelity, but also functioning as an allegory depicting Black women's history and position in U.S. culture and society.

Beyoncé's lyrics are directed at Jay-Z when she sings: "they don't love you like I love/ Can't you see there's no other man above you? / What a wicked way to treat the girl that loves you". The blame has now shifted from the inward gaze to her partner. He is wrong for having betrayed someone who loves him deeper than any of the other superficial affairs. The love they offer is not real; he needs to realise that they are only with him for his money and his fame. This is alluded to in the lyrics when she prompts Jay-Z to:

> imagine for a moment that you never made a name for yourself
> Or mastered what they had you labelled as a king
> Never made it out the cage, still out there movin' in them streets
> Never had the baddest woman in the game up in your sheets
> Would they be down to ride?
> No, they used to hide from you, lie to you
> But y'all know we were made for each other

She reminds him that she is the only one who truly loves him, not blinded by his status or wealth. He must not be fooled to think that these women he is cheating on her with would have been interested in him had he still been selling drugs on the streets of New York or if he were not known as Beyoncé's husband. She is asserting the value she has added to him. He would be delusional to consider these other women's affection as genuine. She has come to realise, after isolating herself and abstaining from worldly pleasures, that she is not to blame for his actions. He is the one that "let this good love go to waste", betraying his wife and jeopardizing their marriage.

As these lyrics are playing, Beyoncé is seen strutting down an urban street with fruit vendors, various shops, cars, and predominantly other African-Americans. This is the first introduction of male characters in the film, although their only function is as bystanders, part of the scenery. She passes a child wearing a catcher's mitt and a baseball bat with the words "HotSauce" on it. Beyoncé grabs the bat and continues down the street, wielding it before she starts smashing car windows and a fire hydrant. She is beaming, celebrating her rage. As she is telling Jay-Z that the other women would not have slept with him without his celebrity status, she is holding the bat along her shoulders, looking directly into the lens in an aggressive and traditionally male pose. She is addressing her husband visually and lyrically. The scenes of smashing car windows in slow motion as she struts down the street is also paying homage to Swiss visual artist Pipilotti Rist's audio video installation "Ever Is Over All" from 1997. This art piece also showcased a young woman in a dress and high-heels, smiling as she is walking down an urban street, smashing car windows. Unlike Beyoncé, this woman does not have a baseball bat, but a long-stemmed flower. Both Rist's installation and Beyoncé's music video communicate female power when the protagonists cheerfully wreak havoc and destroy traditionally male symbols. It is also an interesting mixture of African and European culture, Yoruban mythology and Swiss feminist visual art. Rather than promoting an ethno-nationalist line of thinking, Beyoncé shows how she is influenced by both the Western and the African part of her identity.

Beyoncé continues strutting down the street, hitting more car windows, before reaching a CCTV camera outside a business. At first she is seen posing for it, before her facial expression suddenly turns angry and we see her stepping back to gain momentum to hit the CCTV camera. We see this sequence through the black-and-white CCTV camera recording. After she has hit it, the footage dissolves and the recording is ruined. This is a reference to the leaked surveillance footage from the 2014 MET gala. Hitting the camera and ruining the tape seems to be Beyoncé's way of expressing her reluctance and anger over constantly being watched, monitored. Her every move is documented, and that unfortunately also entails her personal tragedies. The entire project of *Lemonade*; both the album and the film, can be seen as responses to the CCTV footage. After remaining calm during the altercation and refusing to discuss it with the media, *Lemonade* was Beyoncé's chance to handle the personal crisis her way. She is in control of the end product and can frame and shape it however she wishes. She is giving her side of the story through the mediums of music and film. She has previously done another visual album, *Beyoncé* (2013), so she has experience with this form. She is allowed to explain, accuse, blame, yell, and forgive uninterrupted for an hour. She is in all the videos, features on all the songs, sings most of them on her own, and recites all the poetry. She makes a stage for herself to be free to express herself exactly how she wishes. She is sending a loud and clear message to Jay-Z that "If you try this shit again/ You gon' lose your wife" ("Don't Hurt Yourself"). She is in control, she chooses what to include and what to omit. She is not exposed against her will. She smashes the CCTV camera demonstratively to signal her desire to be in control of what aspects of her life is shared and what remains private. In a broader sense, this scene can be read as Black women's wish to control their public image and self-define. They want to talk back and participate in how they are perceived, not having their public signification dictated by others. They want to be seen and heard, not erased or spoken for. They want to become active agents in their identity construction. The destruction of the CCTV camera becomes a symbolic gesture of destroying racist/sexist stereotypes that has and still does justify Black women's intersecting oppressions.

As Beyoncé smashes another shop window, a fire erupts behind her. A couple scenes later, she is hitting the top of a car with her bat, and another fire erupts in a similar manner. This time she is seen throwing her head back whilst laughing. The flames continue to be present behind her as she walks down the street swinging the bat, before hitting the camera violently. The camera falls to the ground and we see Beyoncé drop her bat and go towards a monster truck parked in the background. The young child whose bat she previously stole, returns to reclaim it and looks curiously into the lens of the fallen camera. Whilst this is

shown visually, we hear Beyoncé interpolate Soulja Boy's song "Turn My Swag On": "I hop up out my bed and get my swag on/I look in the mirror, say, "What's up?". She appears elated, almost euphoric, when allowing herself to indulge in her rage. The lyrics mirror her attitude in the video; she is demanding to know what is going on, because "something don't feel right/ because it ain't right". She is trusting her instincts more and more. Beyoncé enters the monster truck and runs over a line of parked cars along the same street she has been walking down, destroying windows and fire hydrants. As this is shown, we hear a wind-up music box playing, creating a huge contrast between the aggressive visuals and the calm and innocent sounding music. The music box is played in A minor, a contrast to "Hold Up"'s C major reggae rhythms. The music box, playing the principal theme of *Swan Lake*, takes us into the chapter ***Anger***. The stark contrast between the visuals and the music emphasises how beneath Black women's calm exterior there resides powerful agency ready to confront and destroy systems of domination. Beyoncé may have appeared calm in the leaked tape, but *Lemonade* reveals how she transformed her repressed anger into a resonating production that voices not only her pain, but a generational pain of being taken for granted and neglected.

As *Anger* appears on the screen, we hear the music box playing, now mixed with marching band drums. We see a marching band and a group of teenage girls performing a dance routine in the middle of a residential street. All members of the band and dancers are African-American. The band consists of all men, and the dancers of all women. This creates a very visible divide that indicates that women march to the beat of men's drums. In terms of civil rights movements, men tend to be credited for their achievements and become poster boys that represent the movements. The women are not seen as the leaders, but rather as followers. This is what Beyoncé wishes to change with *Lemonade*. She both wishes to honour women's contributions to resistance struggle and inspire them to become clear and powerful leaders of social movements.

We move from the residential street to an underground car park in black-and-white where a circular formation of African-American women appears with a very bright light above them. They are all wearing the same white floor-length dress. The dress has excessively long sleeves which have been used to tie the women together. Each woman is tied to the women on her left and right through knotted together sleeves. When one woman moves, the others must follow; they are all connected. This is symbolically powerful, signalling the united and collective community of African-American women. They are all interconnected. The location also draws attention to the sensitive nature of resistance struggle, how it must begin in secrecy because the dominant group will do everything in their power to prevent an

uprising among marginalised groups. The women must first strategize and get coordinated before confronting the oppressive structures.

Beyoncé recites Shire on top of the music box sounds. This poem communicates emotions of jealousy and bitterness. She is accusing her partner of being superficial - the only thing attracting him to the other women is their appearance. The poem also has a violent undertone; almost as if she is threatening to turn his mistress into a costume and wear her as a trophy to signal dominance:

> If it's what you truly want…I can wear her skin over mine. Her hair over mine. Her hands as gloves. Her teeth as confetti. Her scalp, a cap. Her sternum, my bedazzled cane. We can pose for a photograph, all three of us. Immortalized…you and your perfect girl.

Beyoncé is insinuating that her partner's ideal woman would be a combination of Beyoncé's interior and the mistress' exterior. The imagery is barbaric and aggressive, which mirror the chapter title. Her rage has only increased from the previous chapter and is about to be illustrated in its full capacities. But before the music video starts, she continues to recite Shire's poetry. This piece relates her current situation with what she experienced when she was younger: "I don't know when love became elusive. What I know is, no one I know has it. My father's arms around my mother's neck, fruit too ripe to eat. I think of lovers as trees…growing to and from one another. Searching for the same light." The lack of love she is receiving from her partner is familiar, both in relation to her parents and their violent relationship and the community. She extends the absent love to everyone she knows. It is not an isolated problem only affecting her relationship, but seems to be a larger issue affecting the entire community. It speaks to how Black women can try to conform and transform into the 'ideal' fair skinned woman with straight hair, but skin bleaching and hair relaxers only disguise the larger problem of 'misogynoir'. Misogynoir is a term accredited feminist scholar Moya Bailey to describe "the anti-Black racist misogyny that Black women experience" (762). It is a term that illustrates the intersection of racism and sexism. Conforming to the dominant group's standards of beauty provides a mask that may gain false acceptance, but does not resolve the larger underlying societal issue of derogation of women of African descent.

As Beyoncé is reciting the final lines of the poem, "Why can't you see me? Why can't you see me? Why can' you see me? Everyone else can", her voice slows down and becomes breathier. She is seen walking towards the camera in slow motion. This is clearly the scene

the album cover and the opening image of the film is taken from. She is wearing her hair in cornrows, a fur coat, a large ankh necklace, and a grey bralette and high-waisted leggings. The scene is back in colour and is shot at a low angle, making Beyoncé and her female entourage seem more impressive and powerful, more threatening. They are in the underground carpark. There is a black SUV parked next to them with a Black woman laying on top of the bonnet. The walls have graffiti and the scene is darkly lit with fluorescent lights and a blue-grey tint. The entire setting reminds viewers of traditional gangster rap videos, which tend to be male-dominated. In the video of "Don't Hurt Yourself" we find all women. We get intersecting black-and-white shots of flickering lights and the ignition of a fire on another level of the carpark whilst hearing ambient sounds similar to David Lynch's room-tone. We are also shown what looks like a locker room. The lights are off, but the light coming from the camera illuminates two rows of African-American women facing each other on either side of the room, heads leaned back. As drum beats in "Don't Hurt Yourself" is heard, their heads return to normal position and they step forward in unison. This signals how Beyoncé considers herself a leader of Black women; they march to the beat of her drum. The song "Don't Hurt Yourself" is a rock song played in A minor. It samples Led Zeppelin's "When the Levee Breaks", an interesting choice considering her later references to Hurricane Katrina in "Formation".

Beyoncé has adopted a very "masculine" demeanour in this video, a pastiche of traditional gangster rappers. She is walking confidently towards the camera, telling Jay-Z: "Don't Hurt Yourself". Her confidence has grown. The blame and anger are clearly directed at her husband. She has rediscovered her worth, she is asserting her value and reminding him that he "ain't married to no average bitch". He should not take her for granted. She assertively walks towards the camera, looks straight into the lens and asks: "Who the fuck do you think I am?". This is obviously a rhetorical question. This is not the defensive and subdued attitude we saw in earlier chapters, nor the joyful display of rage in "Hold Up", but an aggressive, threatening, and confrontational rage. Regarding the setting and her power-gestures, the scenes set in the carpark can be seen as a parody of male gangster rappers and their use of these gestures to assert their masculinity and power. I argue that this illustrates literary scholar Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s concept of Signifyin(g). Beyoncé is signifyin(g) on the musical genre Hip-hop through troping; poking fun at the musical genre's conventions through parody.

Although Beyoncé now knows that her suspicions were true, her partner still refuses to admit his infidelity. She does not to appear weak and puts on a strong front:

Beautiful man I know you're lying
I am not broken, I'm not crying, I'm not crying
You ain't trying hard enough
You ain't loving hard enough
You don't love me deep enough

Instead of removing herself from the situation to ponder what she has done to deserve this, or which of her actions led to this, the fault is now put on his lack of effort and love. She is trying to come across as if she is no longer suffering and grieving. She wants to seem strong, as if she is doing fine, and that he is the one who needs to change. His love for her is not enough. The visuals during this part of the song is brought back to the black-and-white scene from the opening, depicting African-American women tied together via their long sleeves. Beyoncé appears in the dark, lit up by the camera. She, like the other women, is also wearing a white dress, but hers is strapless. The dress is similar to a wedding dress. The contrast between the black background makes her appear ghost-like when lit up by the camera. The seemingly white dress later turns out to be red when we see her shot in colour, sitting on the ground outside the carpark, surrounded by flames. The cuts between the physically connected women in the carpark and close-ups of Beyoncé emphasises the importance of community and solidarity. The screen goes black for a couple of seconds and white capital letters reading "GOD IS GOD AND I AM NOT" appears on top. Beyoncé is not the royalty her popular title Queen Bey would suggest. She is dethroning and humanising herself in the eyes of her audience. Beyoncé is not excluded from this type of tragedy and pain, and Black women are not as invulnerable as the 'Strong Black Woman' stereotype would suggests.

Beyoncé is ready to walk away, and reminds her partner to not neglect or take her for granted because she is what makes his life worth living. She is no longer trying to change herself to make him stay and be faithful, but telling him to change his behaviour. He now has to prove that he is worthy of *her* love and time. The scene shown as the concluding lyrics are sung sees Beyoncé drop her fur, point aggressively and charge towards the camera. As the camera tries to get away, she comes after it and ensures her presence when delivering the lines:

Uh, this is your final warning
You know I give you life
If you try this shit again
You gon' lose your wife

As she sings "you gon' lose your wife" she removes her wedding ring and throws it in the

direction of the camera. These are not empty threats; she is showing him that this time she is serious. Her anger is at its peak in the album and she is explicitly stating that her days of turning a blind eye are gone. If she catches him cheating one more time, the wedding ring comes off and she will leave.

As she sings the lyrics "Motivate your ass, call me Malcolm X", we suddenly return to the scene that looked like a locker room but which has now turned into a darkened dance studio. The women are now lined up along the walls, feet hip-width apart. Some appear to be exiting lockers along one of the walls. The song is put to a halt and we hear a sampling of an excerpt from Malcolm X's speech "Who Taught You to Hate Yourself", a speech given at the funeral service of Ronald Stokes. Stokes was one of seven members of the Nation of Islam that was killed by police force following an altercation at their mosque in 1962. The excerpt is not about police brutality, but targets the horrible treatment of Black women in the U. S.:

> The most disrespected person in America is the Black woman. The most unprotected person in America is the Black woman. The most neglected person in America is the Black woman.

As we hear Malcolm X give his speech, we are shown what is meant to look like non-professional footage (archaic recording technology – VHS or 8mm video format) of ordinary Black women of different ages in their everyday environment. These are the type of visual portraits one of the directors of *Lemonade*, Khalik Allah, is known for. The women pose as if for a photograph, the camera staying on them for several seconds. These women function as representations of Black women in America today who are still disrespected, unprotected, and neglected. These are the women who will mobilise against the oppressive structures.

Apathy opens with Beyoncé reciting poetry suggesting what Jay-Z might include in her eulogy now that he has figuratively killed her. It illustrates a movement from explicit rage to a realisation that the message in "Don't Hurt Yourself" has not been received/has not resonated. "Sorry" is not as threateningly aggressive as "Don't Hurt Yourself", but rather expresses a complete absence of passion and pain, a death-like state. In the poem, Beyoncé narrates from her husband's point of view:

> Here lies the body of the love of my life, whose heart I broke without a gun to my head. Here lies the mother of my children, both living and dead. Rest in peace, my true love, who I took for granted. Most bomb pussy who, because of me, sleep evaded. Her God listening. Her heaven will be a love without betrayal. Ashes to ashes, dust to side chicks.

His choice to cheat is emphasised. No one forced him to do it, he is entirely responsible for his actions. The poem highlights what he is sacrificing by betraying her. She is both the love of his life and the mother of his children. What she is alluding to when describing her role as the mother of their "both living and dead" children is the fact that she has suffered several miscarriages. This was also mentioned more explicitly in Jay-Z's response album *4:44* (2017) in the title song of the album: "I've seen the innocence leave your eyes/ I still mourn this death, I apologize for all the stillborns/ 'Cause I wasn't present, your body wouldn't accept it" and "Your eyes leave with the soul your body once housed". This is a deeply personal confession that shows how they have conquered previous trauma and heartbreak. They have stood together and worked as a team before. They have a rich history, they are connected in so many ways, and yet he is ready to risk it all and throw it away. He has taken her for granted and caused her sleepless nights wondering where he is and whom he is with. The only positive about death it that heaven will be free of women competing for her husband's attention and therefore the impossibility of being betrayed. The final lines are recited whilst sitting in a bus, surrounded by other Black women whose faces and bodies have been treated as artworks and been painted by Nigerian-born artist Laolu Senbanjo and what he calls *Sacred Art of the Ori*, a spiritual Yoruba ritual where he translates the women's essence into African mythological patterns.

As the poem finishes and the music box stops to play, we move from the bus to natural scenery and a plantation house. These scenes are all in black-and-white. We move from the exterior of the house to the interior and the A major 4/4 electronic 2000s-style R&B song "Sorry", featuring drum beats, synthesizers and bells, starts to play. African-American women are sitting on chairs in the hallway, and the tennis player Serena Williams is descending down the stairs in a black leotard and matching chiffon robe. She is posing and dancing in different rooms of the house, whilst Beyoncé, wearing box braids and a black bodysuit, is seen sprawling across a throne-like chair with her leg on the armrest. Beyoncé is visually referencing Williams' cover of the 2015 December issue of Sports Illustrated where she was named Sportsperson of the Year. On the cover Williams is seen wearing a black lace bodysuit and high heels, laying across a gold throne. Beyoncé and Serena are both queens of their domains; Queen Bey and Queen of the Court. Their sprawling poses signal a dismissal of all forms of respectability politics of propriety. 'Politics of respectability' was termed by professor Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham in her book *Righteous Discontent*: *The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*, and refers to how the women's movement

in the black Baptist church adopted a strategy that "emphasized reform of individual behavior and attitude both as a goal in itself and as a structural system of American race relations" (187). They promoted behavioural conformity to the dominant society's manners and morals as a way to oppose racist images and structures, and to be taken more seriously and gain respect from the dominant society. Rather than address the dominant society's failure to accept difference, the marginalized community self-monitors and tries to adapt and conform. Beyoncé represents this approach in the previously mentioned underwater scene in *Denial* when she tries to change in an effort to understand why her husband is cheating on her and when she offers to wear his mistress' exterior as a costume. But the rage in "Hold Up" and "Don't Hurt Yourself", and the attitude of "Sorry" symbolise how Beyoncé is now rejecting any external policing of her appearance or behaviour. She is no longer insecure or broken, but confident and self-assured. Black women are encouraged to ignore the dominant society's efforts to make them assimilate, and rather demand respect regardless of their skin colour, hair texture, or body shapes.

The visuals consist of a movement between the women dancing in the plantation house and the women dancing in the bus. Both scenes are characterised by a feeling of sisterhood. After threatening to leave her husband, Beyoncé has sought comfort in her female friends. This is a relationship that brings her strength and support. As she sings "Middle fingers up, put 'em hands high/ Wave it in his face, tell him; boy bye", all the women join her in putting their middle fingers up. They all stand by her and denounce her partner's actions. The lyrics "boy bye" became widely popular since the release of the album. It is an empowering statement because she signals that she will not stand for the kind of behaviour he has subjected her to. She is moving on and having a good time with her friends. The video is intended to show Jay-Z that she has a network of strong, powerful women that will have her back no matter what. She is showing him what he is missing.

Jay-Z's apologies are too late. Beyoncé is ignoring his calls and prioritising herself and the people who love and respect her. She is refusing to be victimised. She wants to be seen as the one controlling the outcome of the situation:

> Now you want to say you're sorry
> Now you want to call me crying
> Now you gotta see me wilding
> Now I'm the one that's lying
> And I don't feel bad about it
> It's exactly what you get
> Stop interrupting my grinding

I ain't thinking 'bout you

'Wilding' refers to her going wild or crazy when she is at the club. She is treating her partner the same way he treated her; staying out late, lying about where and with whom she is with. She feels as though this is justified, she is enjoying the act of returning the pain and frustration he brought her. She is not concerned with him or his opinions; she wants him to let her enjoy herself. It would be hypocritical to claim the right to act this way himself and deny her the right to do the same. It is meant to show him that you reap what you sow; she is treating him in an equally disrespectful way as he treated her.

Despite her threats to leave him and her demonstrations of what he would lose should he continue to be unfaithful, he has not made the changes she demands to see if she is to stay and try to make their relationship work. He is still spending his nights with "Becky with the good hair" instead of his wife, leading Beyoncé to regret marrying him in the first place. The lack of change pushes her to finally leave him: "I left a note in the hallway/ By the time you read it I'll be far away…Me and my baby, we gon' be alright/ We gon' live a good life". Not only is she distancing herself but she is taking their daughter with her as well. She is assuring him that this is not a loss to them - he stands to lose a lot more than they do. As she is calling him out for still seeing other women in their home and telling him to "call Becky with the good hair", we see Beyoncé sitting on the floor wearing only a gold bikini and her hair in a plaited Queen Nefertiti crown. This is both done to pay homage to powerful women who came before her and honour her African ancestry, and to allude to her status and nickname "Queen Bey". 'Becky' in African-American vernacular signifies a 'basic' white woman. The dictionary *Merriam-Webster* argues that the name has become an epithet referring to "a white woman who is ignorant of both her privilege and her prejudice". The term is derogatory; Jay-Z's mistress is beneath Beyoncé. He is betraying his African-American queen with a basic white woman. The reference to "good hair" is a way of bringing attention to the history of denigration of African-American "kinky or very curly hair" and the pressure to conform to European standards of "straight or sleekly wavy hair" (Duan, "Policing Beyoncé's Body", 67). Beyoncé is assuring her husband that she is better off without him and will focus her energy on the people that recognise her value. He can keep his Becky – she would rather surround herself with other African-American women where is seen and heard.

Emptiness is explicitly sexual in its opening poem, moving from explicit aggression to self-empowerment. We find the connection of the sexual and the sacred when Beyoncé compares passionate sex to "a form of worship". Whilst this is recited, she is seen sitting in

the same red dress as briefly seen in "Don't Hurt Yourself", still surrounded by flames. She looks like a warrior due to the headgear she is wearing. As she recites "Whenever he pulls out…loss", the screen goes black and we hear a locking sound. The scene shifts to a long, narrow dark corridor, only lit up by red light bulbs. There is an illuminated square at the end of the corridor that we slowly approach. We hear footsteps, breath, dripping water, sounds that indicate movement. This hallway has been argued to illustrate vaginal imagery and visually resemble Stanley Kubrick's style of composition (Perrott et al., 5). The pop/R&B song "6 Inch", a slow-tempo Bb minor 4/4 which features The Weeknd, starts playing and we cut to Beyoncé driving around the city. The entire video is characterised by red hues. We are taken into a shabby living room where Beyoncé is waving a cord with a red light on the end in circles above her head, whilst people are sitting in chairs and sofas around her in different corners of the room. This setting can be interpreted as a brothel due to the rapid cut shots of men entering red-lit bedrooms and shadows depicting the same man moving in to embrace one of the women. The red light could be a reference to the Red Light district in Amsterdam known for brothels and sex shops. The lyrics also connote a sexual interpretation:

> She fights and she sweats those sleepless nights
> But she don't mind, she loves the grind
> She grinds from Monday to Friday
> Works from Friday to Sunday
> (…)
> She works for the money
> From the start to the finish
> And she worth every dollar
> And she worth every minute

Although this at first might seem like an odd link in the album visually and thematically, one can discover a symbolic dimension at closer inspection. It is not only an empowering song for those working in the sex industry, but to all working women. Beyoncé's is referring to herself in the third person and explains how her success is the result of relentless work. Women should not fear flaunting their hard-earned money, ambition, or success, but confidently celebrate it. As a component in the infidelity narrative, it still stands out amongst the others. But it aligns with the overall theme of female empowerment running through *Lemonade.*

We return to the plantation house and the stage from the opening chapter, both now red. Beyoncé is standing on the stage wearing 6 inch heels and a bodysuit, looking ready to perform. Suddenly the chapter title ***Loss*** flashes quickly across the screen. The illuminated square at the end of the hallway now catches on fire and we are shown the streets from

Beyoncé's perspective as she is driving and being driven around the city. All the people seen walking along the streets are men of various ethnicities and ages. We get the feeling that she is constantly being watched by the male gaze, that she is watching herself being looked at (Berger, "Ways of Seeing", 50). It is dark outside, but the men are lit up by what seems to be a red torch, as if they are put in the spotlight. Instead of them only watching her, she is looking back and challenging the male gaze.

These urban visuals reinforce what historian Jacqueline Jones argues in relation to the images of the urban north and the rural south. The urban north is male and characterised by "masculine street culture of drugs, violence, and illicit consumption" and poverty (quoted in Dubey, *Signs and Cities*, 157). In "6 Inch", the men are characterised by poverty and substance abuse, making them appear more threatening and unpredictable. They are the opposite of the resilient and powerful Black female Sisterhood in the visual album. These men do not represent a 'stronger together' imperative, but seem intimidating and dangerous. Many of them seem to be involved in either buying, selling, or being under the influence of drugs or alcohol. This is a symptom of the material oppression African-Americans have been exposed to during the postmodern process, which lead to an economic and class gap. Patricia Hill Collins argues in *Black Feminist Thought*, that African-American poverty is "more concentrated in poor, racially segregated, inner-city neighborhoods than other groups" (134). The urban masculine visuals reference the destructive effects of an infrastructure that promotes racial and class difference. They also function as a contrast to the later shown utopian feminine rural South in the chapter *Hope*.

Towards the end of the music video, the door at the end of the corridor suddenly catches fire. We deduct that Beyoncé has set it on fire when she is seen standing proudly in front of it before walking determined towards the camera positioned at a low angle. We hear the lyrics: "You always come back to me/ Come back, come back" and cut back to Beyoncé in the car with her eyes closed, looking as if she is longing for her partner. The chapter ends with her standing in front of the plantation house, now on fire, wearing a gold suit, surrounded by a group of Black women. The burning of the plantation house can be seen as setting fire to the institution of slavery, burning a symbol of the systematic oppression and exploitation of African-Americans. The all-female group in front of the plantation signals that Black women are the ones who will succeed in bringing institutions such as racism and sexism to an end.

1.3 Forgiveness and Reconciliation

After expressing her anger towards her husband, leaving him, and asserting how much better off she is on her own, we see a shift in tone when we reach the track "Daddy Lessons". Beyoncé misses her husband and is starting to contemplate taking him back, but is reminding herself of the advice given to her by her parents if she were ever to encounter men like her father who cheated on and neglected his wife. ***Accountability*** opens with complete silence as we are shown the exterior and interior of the plantation house, moving between the many rooms. Beyoncé recites Shire's poem "How to Wear Your Mother's Lipstick":

> You look nothing like your mother. You look everything like your mother. Film star beauty. How to wear your mother's lipstick. You go to the bathroom to apply your mother's lipstick. Somewhere no one can find you. You must wear it like she wears disappointment on her face. Your mother is a woman and women like her cannot be contained

Beyoncé and her mother share the experience of being cheated on by their husbands. Beyoncé has a lot to learn from her mother's life lessons, a message emphasised by the visuals showcasing African-American women of all ages interacting, doing each other's hair. These intimate scenes of bonding allow the women to exchange acquired wisdom and provide advice for the younger generations. The older women looking radiant despite lives of hardship and disappointment show the resilience of Black women. They become symbols of inspiration and admiration. We are meant to recognise that the older generation inhabit vital knowledge the later generations need in order to survive in a world filled with misogynoir.

The next scene rapidly cuts to inside a car where a young male African-American is driving while telling the story of when he met Barack Obama and was inspired to make the most of his life. Seeing that a Black man could become president made this man believe his life was worth living. His renewed hope and will to live highlight the importance of positive Black male role models. We are shown footage of him and his wife and kids outside their home in New Orleans whilst we hear heavy rain in the background. We are also shown the beginning of a storm and lightening in the distance of a field. The footage of the man and his family is shot on what is meant to look like archaic recording equipment, like 8mm home-movie footage. It creates a sense of authenticity, contrasting the staged fictional elements of *Lemonade*. The audio is out of sync with the visuals in these scenes, both inside the car and the family shots. The confusion created through audiovisuals here activates us as viewers to make connections between what he mentions briefly (that he is from New Orleans) and the

later explicitly referenced Hurricane Katrina in "Formation". The references to the natural disaster bring attention to human vulnerability. New Orleans is still racially segregated, and the predominantly African-American communities remain among those most affected when natural disasters hit the city.

Beyoncé returns to recite Shire. I read this poem as an exchange between Beyoncé and her mother, the shift in voice marked by a change in verb tense. Beyoncé asks her mother about her experiences with her husband, Beyoncé's father, in the past tense. It is known from popular media that Tina and Matthew Knowles got divorced in 2011 as a result of him fathering a child with a mistress. Beyoncé wants to know how her father made her mother feel when he was being unfaithful:

> 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?

Beyoncé is seeking advice from her mother, exchanging experiences. She wants to know if her father also made her mother feel worthless, invisible, subordinate and as if she was the one who had to beg him to be faithful and stop seeing his mistress. Beyoncé wants to learn how to gain power in such a dominating relationship. Tina speaks in the present tense to learn how Jay-Z is treating Beyoncé. She wants to know if he is being evasive and stonewalling her attempts to communicate with him. This exchange illustrates the strength Black women draw from each other by exchanging experiences and survival strategies/tactics to regain some power in such a powerless position. There lies a huge deposit of power and knowledge in the mother-daughter relationship.

The visuals are shot at a low angle, a position that indicates that we are in the shoes of a young girl. We make eye contact with another young African-American girl through a gate to her house. Two African-American men are sitting behind her on the steps to her house playing trumpets. There is also a scene of us in the role of the little girl playing with a Barbie doll wearing a wedding dress and a veil whilst Beyoncé is reciting the lines "Did he convince you he was a god?". As the word "god" is recited, the scene shifts to a scene where a mother has put a plaster on her child's finger and is now kissing it better. Even though she is made to

feel subordinate, she is the true deity who holds the family together and who is present to take care of the children. The Black mother becomes a figure of admiration and self-less love.

As the country song "Daddy Lessons" starts to play, an A minor moderate tempo with 4/4 time, we are shown several African-American men playing the trumpet, an instrument featured in the song. This music video is dominated by men, often aggressive and violent. They stare threateningly into the camera, and both young and adult men try to punch the lens. Whilst the poem is explaining the lessons Beyoncé was taught by her mother, the song describes the lessons her father taught her:

> He told me when he's gone
> Here's what you do
> When trouble comes to town
> And men like me come around
> Oh, my daddy said shoot

As she is singing these lines, we see shots of what is meant to be interpreted as video of Beyoncé and her father riding a horse together in her childhood and present-day footage of them riding on separate horses. They have moved from a relationship where he took care of her and protected her, to her being independent and managing on her own. He is teaching her to use violence to assert her position. He recognises the traits of betrayal in his son-in-law and knows that the only way to handle such men is to cut them off completely. The imagery of shooting might not be intended to be read literally, but it does illustrate the anger Jay-Z's actions evoke in her father when he sees his own actions externalised. Her father is witnessing how the cheating is affecting his daughter and wants Jay-Z gone; his daughter deserves better than this. It only took for him to see it done to his daughter to realise the pain it causes and how rotten the treatment of his wife was. The expression 'it takes one to know one' echoes in this song. Based on his own experience, he knows that his son-in-law is not likely to change.

The lyrics are quite condemning towards men, but the visuals try to showcase both the violent/aggressive men and the more caring. Despite Beyoncé's father admitting that he was trouble to his wife, he is also represented as a loving and caring father and grandfather in the music video. He is out horse riding with his daughter and playing with Blue Ivy, Beyoncé's daughter. There are home videos of Beyoncé and her father, and Blue Ivy and her grandfather. The former shows the two sitting on a pink sofa and talking about whether Beyoncé misses her grandparents and what she would want to do if they were there. It then cuts to the latter of the two home videos where Beyoncé's father is seen laying on a hotel bed when Blue Ivy

jumps in to play with him. The next scene cuts to a father and daughter dancing, her feet on his. These are positive, affirmative images of African-American fathers that emphasise the importance of forgiveness. Beyoncé has forgiven her father's transgressions in order for her daughter to have a good relationship with her grandfather. The song ends with Blue Ivy saying: "Good job, Bey" and laughing, highlighting how the younger generation benefits from the bridging of strained or painful relationships.

The chapter ends with nearly 30 seconds of silence as we are brought back to the underground carpark in the music video for "Don't Hurt Yourself" and then to a nearly empty American football stadium, the Mercedes-Benz Superdome in New Orleans. This stadium was used as a shelter for victims of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, making these visuals allusions to the many displaced survivors. There are a few women standing on one of the levels watching the field where Beyoncé is laying down on her side, crying. It cuts to scenes from the earlier music video "Don't Hurt Yourself"; one black-and-white scene of Beyoncé wearing what looked like a white wedding dress, and most significantly, the scene where she throws her wedding ring at the camera after exclaiming: "If you try this shit again/ You gon' lose your wife", is played in reverse so that the ring returns to her hand. Just like she was willing to reconcile her difficult relationship with her father after her parents' divorce and firing him as her manager, she is now ready and willing to assess and work on her marriage, in part for the sake of her daughter and her relationship with her father.

Reformation opens with Beyoncé describing an exchange between her and her partner. He is now showering her in so much love that his past mistresses seem irrelevant. He is made to stop closing "his eyes like doors" and communicate with her (*Accountability*):

> He bathes me until I forget their names and 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. You are the love of my life. You are the love of my life.

She is no longer confronting him about the hard facts of the affairs, but the emotional aspects of it. She wants to know why he ruins everything good in his life. She believes it must be connected to his past or self-esteem because she has always showed him true love and treated him right. She questions why he would rather spend his time with insignificant women than with her, the one proud to exclaim that he is the love of her life. The final three repeated lines are read out whilst we are shown Beyoncé laying on the grass of the Superdome, alone, and

with all lights on her. The A minor, slow-tempo, 4/4 time R&B song "Love Drought" starts to play and we move to natural scenery. The use of synthesizers creates a sonic link to the earlier song "Sorry".

Beyoncé is seen in the front of a line of African-American women walking along the shallow end of the shore, all wearing the same white dress with a black 'T' pattern across the front, connoting a cross. Moving through water together could be read to illustrate how Black women always move with some resistance, some obstacles/hindrance. Instead of walking freely along the sand, they are walking against the stream. Towards the end, we are shown the women standing side by side, holding hands. The setting could be a visual allusion to Igbo Landing in Georgia, the location where Igbos transported from Nigeria to America to be sold as slaves committed mass suicide as an act of resistance, refusing to submit to slavery (Davis, "From Colorism to Conjurings", 19). Beyoncé and her line of African-American women then become images of defiant and resilient African descendants, rather willing to drown than submit to the oppression offered by U.S. society. The also creates a connection to the opening chapter where Beyoncé leans off the tall building and appears to plunge to her death. Rather than enduring the pain, self-annihilation takes on a symbolic dimension of resistance.

Forgiveness marks that Beyoncé is open to reconciliation, but she has certain conditions. The same image that was used in *Reformation* where the women are holding hands above their heads whilst standing in a line in the water is used here as well, only now in black-and-white. The poetry reads: "If we're gonna heal, let it be glorious. 1,000 girls raise their arms." The healing is as connected to the female community as it is to her partner. It is an empowering visual image of what a supportive Sisterhood is capable of, of the strength residing in female relationships.

The poem recited at the opening of the chapter poses the questions: "Do you remember being born? Are you thankful for the hips that cracked? The deep velvet of your mother and her mother and her mother? There is a curse that will be broken." Nina Simone's song "Look of Love" starts playing softly in the background and we see a woman's feet walking towards us on asphalt. Beyoncé is honouring her foremothers. "The deep velvet of your mother" is read whilst we are shown a bowl that has been repaired using the Japanese kintsugi method where you mix lacquer and powdered gold. It makes the crack hypervisible, making the damage a focal point rather than hiding it. This is a great metaphor for *Lemonade* as a whole; making their marital problems visible to the public and celebrating how they overcame their difficulties rather than denying it and trying to cover them up. It also references how the visual album rejects the stereotype of the Strong Black Woman "who is

independent, resilient, and over-extending in work and nurturance while remaining immune to the psychological toll of abuse, neglect, and abandonment" (Edwards et al., "Does Beyoncé's Lemonade Really Teach Us How to Turn Lemons into Lemonade?", p. 86). Black women are not superhuman or invulnerable, but have developed strategies that allow them to use their pain and abuse in ways that benefit the community. Rather than hiding their pain, *Lemonade* exposes both Beyoncé's personal pain of betrayal and the larger communal pain of Black women stretching back for centuries, making their wounds battle scars and framing them as heroic survivors instead of passive victims.

The slow-tempo piano-based ballad "Sandcastles" starts to play as we move into an airy room where Beyoncé is sitting on a pillow on the floor, playing a keyboard and recording the song. The song is played in Bb major at 12/8 time. It is a very intimate and vulnerable scene. Her lyrics describe how even if she said she would leave her husband, she could not keep her promise. Scenes of Beyoncé singing passionately are intersected by sensual/intimate images of her and Jay-Z. They appear united when standing forehead to forehead and embracing each other. There is no longer any distance between them. Jay-Z is bowing his head in submission and laying at her feet, an image far from his usual hypermasculine and thuggish persona. He is showing his vulnerable side, no longer concerned with saving face or keeping up appearances.

Redemption continues with the black-and-white colour scheme in the opening, where three young African-American girls are running from the plantation house, onto the porch and down to the grounds. Two older women draw a curtain, letting us see into the grounds where African-American women are seen walking. Vocally we hear Beyoncé reciting Shire and her poem about how those women who came before us managed to endure and survive despite the hardships, and how this information has been passed down through generations:

> 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 kit. Broke the curse with your own two hands. You passed these instructions down to your daughter who then passed it down to her daughter.

These intergenerational lessons are connected to the home video that follows of Hattie White's 90th birthday party, Jay-Z's real-life grandmother. She is seen giving a speech in front of a listening audience, her granddaughter, Blue Ivy, also being present. White's speech is about overcoming the obstacles life throws at you. Her speech was the inspiration for the title of the album; "I was served lemons, but I made lemonade". Her ability to find strength during

tough times is the wisdom she is passing down to Blue Ivy and the young generation of African-American women. We are shown how the older generation of Black women pass down their life lessons, an image of matrilinear transmission of knowledge. It communicates the need to listen to those who came before us and their experiences because the struggles we face now are not new, but the same ones as before just in new wrapping.

We return to the rural all-female utopian setting of *Hope*. We see young African-American women gathering vegetables they have grown themselves in an allotment garden. We then see Beyoncé surrounded by other powerful and well-known African-American women, sitting on the steps of a building in the grounds of the plantation property. It is an image of unity, solidarity, community. She recites: "Pull the sorrow from between my legs like silk. Knot after knot after knot". Together, they will remove the pain related to being a Black woman. They will initiate and succeed in garnering change. The background music consists of string instruments, progressively growing stronger before leading into the G# minor, 4/4 love ballad "All Night". "All Night" sees a return to Fort Macomb, but we have progressed from dawn to dusk. Beyoncé is not wearing the black hoodie and no-makeup look she was in *Intuition*, but is now wearing an African-inspired intricately decorated gown. She is walking around the fort, but not in tall straws. She can walk freely and see clearly around her. We are shown footage filmed on a Bolex camera and a camcorder, producing a grainy documentary-type aesthetic, of African-American families.

This music video includes a large number of home videos of Beyoncé and Jay. We see the couple getting matching tattoos of the roman numeral 'IV' when they were younger, cutting the cake at their wedding and feeding each other, and Beyoncé showing her pregnant bump when she was expecting Blue. We are also shown happy scenes from Beyoncé's mother marrying Richard Lawson after divorcing Mathew. These videos are intersected by videos of romantic couples and families being affectionate. The couples are both straight, gay, young, mature, and represent all ethnicities. The visuals and lyrics are all an inclusive representation and celebration of love. The music video ends with home footage of Jay-Z, Beyoncé, and Blue Ivy looking like a happy nuclear family playing in their garden. Jay-Z has been held accountable for his transgressions and accepted responsibility. He has, off-screen, transformed his behaviour and realised how we was hurting himself, his wife, and their daughter. He is no longer absent, but a part of the family. Beyoncé was able to forgive her husband despite the pain and humiliation he caused her. This is meant to function as an inspirational image in terms of forgiving those who hurt us when they have admitted their guilt and proven their ability and commitment to change. We must move forward with love

and community, accept difference, and celebrate how overcoming damage is a sign of strength. We cannot hold on to the generational pain and allow it to continue to split the community, but progress together. Separation is not always the solution, but temporary distance can help make you aware of what you are missing, make you realise what you had all along but took for granted.

1.4 Mobilization

The tracks "Forward", "Freedom", and "Formation" are grouped together because they are more explicitly political than the rest of the album. They evoke a sense of urgency and empathy, and centre inspirational Black women who have taken action against injustice. ***Resurrection*** takes us back to the plantation house and its grounds, now filled with African-American women. Many of them are young women and girls. This chapter starts with an audio recording of a woman talking about how many young women now express a wish to get a husband because they believe men will enrich their lives more than women do. The recorded woman asserts that they as their elders must lead the younger generation with love and look to Jesus when times are tough. This provides a link to the early descriptions of Beyoncé's ascetic practices and self-flagellation in *Denial* when starting to suspect that her husband was cheating on her. The camera pans across haystacks with small black-and-white photographs strewn across. The setting changes to inside Fort Macomb and Beyoncé reciting Shire's lines "You are terrifying and strange and beautiful". This leads into the slow-tempo soul piano ballad "Forward", a G minor at 4/4 time, sung by James Blake. This is the only song on the album that Beyoncé's voice does not foreground.

During the song we are shown an array of African-American women holding up photographs of men, all looking downcast. When we see Trayvon Martin's mother, Sabrina Fulton, Eric Garner's mother, Gwen Carr, and Michael Brown's mother, Lesley McSpadden, we understand that all the photographs strewn across the haystacks depict men who have been killed, most likely by systemic, institutionalised violence. These men's deaths awoke the nation to the issue of police brutality and sparked the movement known as Black Lives Matter. Brown's portrait is his graduation picture; communicating the bright future he was robbed of. His mother is seen shaking her head and pursing her lips, a tear falling down her cheek. She is the most visibly upset and effectively communicates the affect of grief and suppressed rage.

One of the young women holding up a portrait is dressed in a Native American Mardi Gras costume. Her shot is in black-and-white and the portrait appears to be from several centuries ago. This illustrates the tragic fatal fate of American-Americans since they were first forcibly brought over from Africa. The girl holding the portrait later appears in colour when she is seen walking around two empty but set dinner tables in what is presumed to be the plantation house whilst rustling a tambourine. The song is put to a temporary halt. The single word "Magic" is spoken and we are taken back to the scene in "Sorry" where Beyoncé is surrounded by her female friends with their essence painted on their faces and bodies according to Senbajo's 'Sacred Art of the Ori', communicating Black female spirituality.

The lyrics sung whilst showing the grieving relatives exclaim that "it's time to listen, it's time to fight". The fatal treatment and vilifying of African-American men, framing them as violent and aggressive threats, must come to an end. Without the visuals, the lyrics could be interpreted to signify how Beyoncé and Jay-Z must listen to each other and fight for their marriage, a typical love ballad. With the provided visuals, the song becomes political, making police killings explicit and demanding a change. They cannot remain silent on this issue, and must take collective action in order to secure a better future for the younger generation. Not only must the societal signification and negative stereotypes of Black women change, but so must those leading to the death of innocent young Black men. It is a symptom of a larger cultural problem that must be addressed and overcome. The different parties must communicate and resolve it together in order to move forward.

Hope opens with visuals connoting an all-female utopia and a return to the South. The women are all wearing Antebellum dresses. We see them entering former slave quarters in the grounds of the Destrehan Plantation. The building consists of one large room; a kitchen. The women are all working together, preparing a meal based on a wide variety of vegetables they have grown themselves. They all have specific tasks; some clean the vegetables, some chop them, others mash or stir them together. They are all working as a team. These visuals are complementary to the masculine street culture previously depicted in "6 Inch". This is the female rural South. Literary scholar Madhu Dubey argues that "the rural South remained a repository of cultural values that are traditionally identified with women – home, racial origin, maternal ancestry and familial stability, rootedness in place, and cultural continuity" in African American fiction (*Signs and Cities*, 157). These values are clearly communicated in *Hope* and function as the opposite of the unhealthy culture of the urban North depicted in "6 Inch". These women signify community, quite the opposite of the fractured and fragmented life of the postmodern cities. These scenes are some of the most serene and harmonious of the

entire visual album. All outside threats are obliterated, and the women are given time and space to heal together. The different generations of women are learning from each other, exchanging important life lessons and survival strategies, ensuring the continuation of African-American culture. The different generations and the Antebellum clothing create a connection to maternal ancestry that stretch back to the era of slavery.

We return to a long-shot of the stage we saw in the opening chapter *Intuition,* showcasing all sixteen women either sitting on the edge of the stage or standing on it or next to it. This is shown whilst Beyoncé is heard reciting Shire's poem "The Nail Technician as Palm Reader":

> That night in a dream, the first girl emerges from a slit in my stomach. The scar heals into a smile. The man I love pulls the stiches out with his fingernails. We leave black sutures curling on the side of the bath. I wake as the second girl crawls headfirst up my throat, a flower blossoming out of the hole in my face.

The slit is represented in the visuals as a slit in the wall of Fort Macomb and the scar mentioned is illustrated by a woman having undergone a mastectomy and what looks like an appendix scar, wearing something reminiscent of battle armour. When she mentions the second girl crawling, we move from Fort Macomb to the grounds of the plantation property. The poetry can be interpreted less literally and come to be interpreted as signs of battle wounds the later generation are a result of. African-American women today are born from the torment and abuse their ancestors faced. They are descendants of true war heroes; the most resilient soldiers. The woman in battle armour is a physical representation of the kintsugi method in *Forgiveness*. She is proudly exhibiting her scars as evidence of her position as a survivor. She is not a victim of her experiences and refuses to let them inhibit her. She communicates a much tougher exterior than the hypermasculine conventions Beyoncé parodies in "Don't Hurt Yourself". Unlike male Hip-hop artists, this woman's perceived strength and power are not shallow acts meant to impress anyone, but the result of a life of hardship.

Beyoncé begins singing an acapella version of the blues/gospel song "Freedom", a D minor with 4/4 time. This is done in black-and-white. She is on the same stage as the women earlier in the chapter. There is now an audience watching, which has been lacking whenever the stage has previously been shown. In the audience we see the Mothers of the Movement (now also including the mother of Oscar Grant), celebrities and the other African-American women who were in the grounds and the kitchen. We slowly move from a birds eye view of

the audience, to eye level with the audience (as if we are sitting there with them), until we are raised to Beyoncé's level on stage. As we get so close to Beyoncé that the audience is no longer seen, the acapella version turns into the studio version for the chorus:

> Freedom! Freedom! I can't move
> Freedom, cut me loose
> Freedom! Freedom! Where are you?
> Cause I need freedom too!
> I break chains all by myself
> Won't let my freedom rot in hell

The shift to the studio version adds a lot of power, emphasising the message. She is stood in a white floor-length dress and with her hands behind her back, as if her hands have been tied together. This is a visualisation of the metaphor in the lyrics; as an African-American woman, she is not free. The final two lines indicate how she is part of the change, no longer passively surveying. Words are no longer enough; the chains of oppression must be broken. They cannot continue to watch as their sons, husbands, and fathers are innocently killed. The women are framed as the leaders of change, active agents in the fight for justice. The now present audience shows how the nation's interest was captured after the recorded killings of men like Martin, Brown, and Garner. The message is reaching beyond the affected families and causing a national outcry. Individual stories personalise and humanise systemic issues and have the power to initiate powerful social movements.

The lines "I'ma riot, I'ma riot through your borders/ Call me bulletproof" are sung on top of images of African-American women of different ages sitting along a communal table in the grounds of the plantation property, about to enjoy the meal they cooked together in the beginning of the chapter. We briefly see a shot of the girl in the dining room now sitting at the table, alone, in the plantation house. The scene is implemented in the sense that it is meant to be seen as a flashback. The same table they were denied access to inside has now been moved outside and is exclusively made up of African-American women. They are not the servants, they now have seats at the table. As the lines "Lord forgive me, I've been runnin'/ Runnin' blind in truth/" are sung, the light goes out in the outdoor communal table scene. She is singing this to the women who have lost loved ones, she has seen what has been happening but has not known what to do about it or been afraid of how speaking out about these issues would affect her commercial appeal and public persona. But she has had her awakening and will not let her or her people's "freedom rot in hell".

At the end of the music video, we hear Kendrick Lamar's outro. The visual album omits his verse, which is odd because it is also deeply political. I believe it has been cut because it speaks more about the reality of African-American men, and Beyoncé wanted to keep the visual album as woman-focused as possible. His included outro goes:

> What you want from me?
> Is it truth you seek? Oh father can you hear me?
> Hear me out

This is played on top of images of African-American women standing next to and sitting on the branches of huge trees in the grounds of the plantation property. We move from a mid-close shot of Beyoncé sitting on a branch, zoom out and see the Mothers of the Movement, Blue Ivy, and a whole array of young Black girls. These women are the source of truth and need to be listened to. Their realities deserve to be recognised and acknowledged. The imagery also brings up connotations to lynchings done in trees. They are repurposing horrific scenes and imagery, making it the source of hope and new beginnings.

The final music video for "Formation" is not assigned a chapter, but appears after the film has seemingly ended. We see "parental advisory/explicit lyrics" appear on the screen before it cuts to Beyoncé on top of a sinking New Orleans police car. The New Orleans bounce rapper and comedian Messy Mya is sampled and opens the music video by posing the question: "What happened at the New Wil'ins?" (heard as New Orleans). The sampling both marks the explicitly political character of "Formation" and situates it in post-Katrina New Orleans. The artist was also a victim of gun violence, shot and killed at the age of 22. His presence therefore also draws attention to the Black Lives Matter movement. The sinking police car in the Hurricane Katrina floodwaters signals the government's failure to protect the residents of New Orleans during the natural disaster in 2005, which in many ways mark a new era of activism in the African-American community that targets systemic oppression. The video is encircled by references to Katrina, with the outro sounding: "Girl, I hear some thunder/ Golly, look at that water! Oh, Lord!". The outro was appropriated from the 2008 documentary *Trouble the Water* depicting a couple who survived Hurricane Katrina and addressing the intersections of class, race, and government in New Orleans.

"Formation" is an F minor 4/4 hip-hop song that mixes the personal and the political, an empowering anthem celebrating African-Americans, their culture, features, and their political potential if they unite. The visuals are characterised by quick cuts, moving from visuals of submerged houses, trees, and cars to New Orleans night life, police, twerking,

residential streets, and Beyoncé in front of and inside a plantation house. The lyrics contain a lot of biographical references, one of the first being a reference to the leaked surveillance tape that sparked *Lemonade*: "I'm so reckless when I rock my Givenchy dress". Beyoncé has worn Givenchy dresses to the Met Gala since 2012.

The South's history of slavery is evoked through the visuals from inside and outside a plantation house. As Beyoncé celebrates her ancestry: "My daddy Alabama, Momma Louisiana/ You mix that negro with that Creole make a Texas bama", we see French Renaissance-style portraits hung on the walls of the plantation parlour. Unlike typical films about slavery where the white plantation owners' ancestors would be hung on the walls, the portraits in "Formation" depict Black subjects. When referencing her father's heritage, we are shown a portrait of an African man surrounded by his wife and children, all wearing pink. One of the women standing behind him is holding a pink umbrella above his head, making him appear regal. Her mother's Creole ancestry is represented by a portrait of a Black woman wearing a white dress and a black hat, looking like a member of the bourgeois class. These portraits illustrate a shift in power and defamiliarises the story of slavery. Black ancestors are now given pride of place and depicted as esteemed members of society. Their ancestry is not a site of shame but of pride. These are affirming visuals that defy the dominant culture's devaluation of African-American history and culture, along with Beyoncé's embrace of the derogatory term 'bama' historically used during the Great Migration when African-Americans migrated from the rural South to the urban North to signal their redneck and unsophisticated characters (Franklin cited in Smith, *Washington City Paper)*. She is subverting the term, making it a term of pride. She is proud of the people and culture that have influenced her and that are part of her heritage.

Afrocentric physical features are also celebrated lyrically and visually throughout *Lemonade*. The lines: "I like my baby heir with baby hair and afro/ I like my negro nose with Jackson Five nostrils" are sung on top of images of Beyoncé's daughter, Blue Ivy. Blue is standing in the middle of a triptych with two other young girls next to her. This connotes her mother's time in the girl group *Destiny's Child*, where she was the biggest star of the group. Her daughter, her baby heir, is proudly displaying her afro and her 'negro nose'. Beyoncé's love of Black hair texture is a political statement due to the denigration of coils, curls, and nappy hair since the era of slavery. 'Jackson Five nostrils' refers to Michael Jackson's nose while he was still in the band, before having surgery to make his nose narrower to resemble a more European aesthetic. Featuring her real-life daughter whilst expressing her love of African-American features adds a layer of authenticity to Beyoncé and the visual album's

message of self-love. Beyoncé seems sincere when she intervenes in a tradition of portraying Black women in a derogatory manner and provides alternative images. She wants her daughter and the younger generation to grow up surrounded by positive representations of women that look like them and recognise their inherent beauty and value.

In an empty swimming pool we find Beyoncé surrounded by a large group of African-American women, all wearing variations of the same outfit. The women are split into two horizontal lines, each facing each other. Each line starts out performing a different choreography, before joining forces and dancing in unison in an X-formation with Beyoncé in the middle. The synchronised performance is accompanied by the lyrics: "Okay, ladies, now let's get in formation, cause I slay/ Prove to me you got some coordination". Beyoncé's position in the centre of the X-formation symbolises her role as the leader of the women. She calls on the women to prove that they can come together and bring about real change. It is a call for Black women to mobilise against oppressive forces and together fight against systemic inequality and racism. The X is also a reference to Malcolm X and Black Power, a political and social movement that also advocated racial pride and African-American rights. In addition to Malcolm X, Beyoncé also references Martin Luther King Jr. During the chorus when we hear the lyrics: "I dream it, I work hard, I grind 'til I own it" we simultaneously see a man holding up a copy of a newspaper called *The Truth* where the front cover is a photograph of King with the caption "More Than A Dreamer". Referencing his speech from 1963, "I Have a Dream", Beyoncé reminds her audience that what was once a dream became reality. Racism is still prevalent in the U.S., but the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were passed as a result of the Civil Rights movement and overruled the Jim Crow laws. Racial segregation was outlawed and racial minorities gained the right to vote. The mobilisation of King, Malcolm X, and the other civil rights activists achieved results. Their work was not done in vain. Beyoncé does not choose between King and Malcolm X, between nonviolent passive resistance and self-defence by "any means necessary". She recognises that they both contributed heavily to the improvement of African-American rights, and positions herself as a contemporary figure continuing the work they started.

A powerful scene in the music video is one where an African-American boy is dancing in front of a line of white police officers wearing riot gear. The boy is wearing a black hoodie, which references the dark hoodie Trayvon Martin was wearing when he, unarmed, was fatally shot by the neighbourhood watch, George Zimmerman. At the end of his dance, the young boy lifts his arms and finishes in a T-formation. The police officers respond by raising their hands as if to signal surrender. This is another reference to one of the victims of police

brutality, Michael Brown, and the slogan against police violence "Hands Up, Don't Shoot" that spread after Brown allegedly held his hands up when he was shot by a Ferguson police officer. Brown's death inspired the Ferguson Unrest that erupted the following day. These are more subdued references to police brutality and the Black Lives Matter movement. The most explicit political message of the graffiti the camera pans to after the police officers have raised their hands, reading: "stop shooting us". These visuals form a loud call for justice, for the end of institutionalised racism and the subsequent unjust killings of African-Americans. Seen in conjunction with the performed lyrics: "Slay trick, or you get eliminated", these scenes illuminate the urgent need to change the oppressive systems and culture and reform the criminal justice system. Unless they eradicate systemic racism and violence against African-Americans, the country will continue to see cases like Martin and Brown's. Unless the community collective opposes these structures, the violence and killings will continue.

"Formation" is both a protest and a celebration. It is a call to arms, a piece of social critique against the government's failure to care for its Black citizens, and a celebration of the complexity of African-American identity. Black Southern culture is represented through African American vernacular, bounce music (New Orleans hip-hop style), the Second Line parades, Mardi Gras and Mardi Gras Indians, high school basketball (represented by the team Bamas), a Black cowboy riding through a residential street, food in the form of collard greens, cornbread, and crawfish, Black spirituality (both Christianity and Hoodoo) and more. It also pays homage to the work of previous male civil rights activists and their achievements, but stresses that this era's activism depends on the mobilisation of Black women. They are the ones able to make lemonade, the ones who have "Found healing where it did not live" (*Redemption*). It is empowering Black women to prove their ability to take action and change the destructive patterns of violence and oppression. In the words of one of the directors of the video, Melina Matsoukas, the video is uplifting in its message that: "We triumph, we suffer, we're drowning, we're being beaten, we're dancing, we're eating, and we're still here" (Matsoukas cited in Alexis Okeowo, *New Yorker*). Echoing Langston Hughes' poem "Still Here" and Maya Angelou's "Still I Rise", "Formation" celebrates African-Americans' strength and ability to survive and find joy despite their brutal history and lives of adversity. Their spirits have not been broken. Despite the dominant race's countless attempts, they are still standing and not going anywhere.

2 "WOW – This is the Business of Capitalist Money Making at its Best"

Beyoncé in her yellow dress and gold jewellery, signifying on Oshun, is seen strutting down the urban street, grabbing a child's baseball bat and leaning it against her shoulder. The tempo switches between normal and slow-motion when we hear Beyoncé express her suspicions that her husband is cheating on her and the accompanying anger:

> "Something don't feel right
> Because it ain't right
> Especially coming up after midnight
> I smell your secret, and I'm not too perfect
> To ever feel this worthless
> How did it come down to this?
> Going through your call list
> I don't wanna lose my pride but I'ma fuck me up a bitch
> Know that I kept it sexy, and know I kept it fun
> There's something that I'm missing, maybe my head for once" ("Hold Up")

As the final line is sung, we see her wield her bat and aggressively smash a car window, all done whilst smiling and basking in her display of rage. There is no sign of regret or shame; she does not let the stereotype of the Angry Black woman or respectability politics stop her from expressing her true emotions after smelling another woman's perfume on her husband's collar and checking her husband's phone for proof of his infidelity. Torturing herself by wondering why he felt a need to cheat makes her feel as though she is losing her mind.

This scene was interpreted by scholar bell hooks (formerly Gloria Jean Watkins) in her critical essay on *Lemonade* "Moving Beyond Pain", to communicate a liberating aspect of violence and a justification of female violence. In her essay, the currently Distinguished Professor in Residence in Appalachian Studies at Berea College, Kentucky, touched on several topics which she felt were problematic. She is critical towards the commodity aspect of the film, arguing that it is simply an object made to make money, and the sexist portrayal of Black women as victims. She opposes how violence is sexualised and eroticised because she considers this to create the impression that violence can "create positive change". The most provocative point hooks makes in her essay is when she warns us against trusting Beyoncé's "fantasy feminism" and its goal of gender equality. She concludes her essay by emphasising that instead of romanticising domination in relationships, she would have liked to see a mutual change in both Beyoncé and Jay-Z where they move past pain rather than

simply enduring it. In the following chapter I will stage a dialogue with hooks' essay, explain her theoretical background and her larger project, and propose that Beyoncé's feminism is more aligned with Hip-hop feminism than hooks' radical, revolutionary feminism. Although I cannot cover all of hooks' points of critique, I have chosen to focus on her notion of 'fantasy feminism', the controlling images of Black womanhood, the Black female body, and Sisterhood.

2.1 "Her Construction of Feminism Cannot Be Trusted"

Beyoncé and hooks disagree in terms of the goal and definition of feminism. In her critical essay on *Lemonade*, hooks argues that Beyoncé's "construction of feminism cannot be trusted" because it focuses on gender equality rather than ending patriarchy, and lacks emphasis on how intersecting social categories like class, race, and sex overlap and affect a person's oppression. hooks' intersectional position is explained in her book *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*: "race and class identity creates differences in quality of life, social status, and lifestyle that take precedence over the common experience women share" (4). A simple structure of man and woman is therefore overly simplistic to hooks, and gender must rather be seen as just one of multiple layers of oppression. Intersectionality was introduced by scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 in her paper "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics". She argued that Black women often "experience double-discrimination – the combined effects of practices which discriminate on the basis of race, and on the basis of sex" (149). Crenshaw's paper focuses on the juridical practice of separating sex and race, and how Black women are discriminated when their intersecting identities are split. Their experiences are a result of multidirectional, compounded discrimination. Their sex cannot be separated from their race, but must be seen to interact and influence each other. Without an intersectional approach, Black women are forced to choose between their race and sex. This gives an inadequate and false image of their oppression because it is their combined identity as Black women that separates their experiences from Black men and white women.

Beyoncé's definition of feminism was made public when she on her previous visual album, *Beyoncé (*2013), sampled Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's TEDTalk *We Should All Be Feminists* on the track "Flawless" where she offers the definition: "Feminist: the person who believes in the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes". Beyoncé considers the goal of feminism to be acquisition of equal rights between the sexes, but without

challenging the existing class structure. hooks, which considers herself a revolutionary feminist, considers the real aim of feminism to be to "end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" (*Feminism is for Everybody*, 1). This definition covers both sexism encountered on an individual, personal level between people and the larger issue of institutionalised sexism. It is also as applicable to men as it is to women; signalling that we all need to rid ourselves of sexist actions and thoughts. hooks goes beyond gender equality and calls for a complete restructuring of society to end exploitation and oppression.

Gender equality as a main objective of feminism is seen as complete fantasy by hooks because Black men "do not possess actual power" and their "cruelty and violence towards black women is a direct outcome of patriarchal exploitation and oppression" ("Moving"). Placing all men in one category expresses a disregard for how race, class, and gender contribute to an individual's treatment in society in terms of discrimination, exploitation, and oppression (*Feminist Theory*, 18). Men cannot be treated as a homogenous group. Marginalised women are aware that men in their communities have certain privileges based on their sex, but, hooks argues, these men often perform their masculinity in chauvinist ways as a result of insecurity stemming from their lower ranking in white supremacist patriarchy. They are aware that white men hold more power, but instead of attacking them, they redirect their frustration towards Black women because they are not considered a threat. Black men are disadvantaged in terms of race and class, and overcompensate by asserting their masculinity and domination through violent actions. Having been exposed to this, marginalised women would not consider being equal to men a means to freedom. They see that those who would benefit from "fantasy feminism" would primarily be middle and upper class White women. Patriarchy is not equal. Straight white affluent men have benefits that gay Black working-class men do not. The idea that all men have the same rights is an illusion. The goal should therefore be to eradicate the structures that permeate sexism.

I disagree with hooks that Beyoncé represents a form of fantasy feminism. hooks disregards the transformation that has happened from the previous album *Beyoncé (2013)* and its typical celebrity feminism politics to the more systemic and intersectional feminism found in *Lemonade*. Beyoncé's celebrity feminism sold well because it promoted the "neoliberal principles of agency, choice, and empowerment" (Nicola Rivers, *Postfeminism(s) and the Arrival of the Fourth Wave*, 57). It is a non-threatening type of feminism that goes down well with the media, but not always with other feminists. A hierarchy between the celebrity feminists and those considering themselves "true" feminists is established. These disputes often make their way into the media, as is evident in terms of Beyoncé. When hooks trash

Beyoncé and her feminism, she seems to imply that she represent the "ideal of ideological purity", a non-commercialised, difficult to sell 'proper' feminism (Zeisler, 129). hooks implies that in her role as the authority, she must assess public feminists as being authentic and trustworthy or just sell-outs using feminism as an identity badge to increase their branding abilities. I agree with scholar Janelle Hobson who argues that some celebrity feminists, like Beyoncé with *Lemonade*, are able to voice and theorise "critical issues pertaining to gender and its intersections with race and class for a mass audience" (*Signs*). Beyoncé uses her hypervisible and amplified voice to show her global audience how the systemic oppression of African-Americans has pertained for centuries, and how this oppression takes form in the current political climate. Beyoncé narrows the scope of her project to mainly detail the experiences of African-American women, showing how race and gender affect oppression. This is emphasised through the sampling of Malcolm X's speech *Who Taught You to Hate Yourself*:

> "The most disrespected person in America is the black woman.
> The most unprotected woman in America is the black woman.
> The most neglected person in America is the black woman."

This excerpt is laid on top of visuals showcasing what hooks calls "Real life images of ordinary, overweight not dressed up bodies". These ordinary Black women symbolise those most affected by the intersecting categories of oppression of race and gender. Beyoncé visualises those most often rendered invisible and centres their unique experiences and pain; showing *Lemonade'*s movement beyond a simple man/woman structure as suggested by hooks into a more sophisticated intersectional approach that considers race and gender. *Lemonade* mainly speaks to and represents Black women but also educates the rest of Beyoncé's audience of the inequality these women face.

Although often shied away from by neoliberal, celebrity feminists, Beyoncé also delivers commentary on class. This is most clearly illustrated in the music video for "Formation". "Formation" closes with the image of Beyoncé laying on top of a New Orleans police car slowly being submerged under water and we hear the appropriated sound from the 2008 Hurricane Katrina documentary *Trouble the Water*: "Girl, I hear some thunder. Golly, look at that water, boy, oh lord". In the video we also get grainy footage of current poor African-American neighbourhoods in New Orleans and visuals of past floods; signalling the still felt trauma of how it was handled. The national conversations after Katrina covered "environmental racism, federal mismanagement, mass media misrepresentation, and

segregationist housing policies" (Maner, 198). Katrina revealed environmental racism through the African-American community's vulnerability to the flood since the segregationist housing policies of the city had led to them living in the most vulnerable low-lying areas when the levees breeched. The minority populations who did not own cars struggled to escape because the government's plan mainly involved privately owned vehicles. Those relying on public transport therefore had to stay behind, whilst the predominantly white, more affluent communities were able to evacuate and survive. The government's ineptitude becomes clear when we consider Beyoncé's use of the Louisiana Superdome in *Accountability*, *Reformation*, and *Redemption*. This venue was used as a shelter during the Hurricane and African-Americans were placed there without a sufficient supply of food and water. Families were separated and dispersed across the U.S. Scholar Sequoia Maner likens this to slave ships in the Middle Passage, illustrating African-Americans' long history of oppression and chattel-like treatment. Beyoncé seen lying on the ground in the middle of the Superdome is a humanising act and a resistance towards the misrepresentations of African-Americans as looting animals during the coverage of the disaster. She is not aggressive or violent, but laying quietly curled up in fetal position, crying and suffering from the abandonment, neglect and mistreatment from the government. This is not a scary visual, but one that evokes sympathy and amplifies the affective connection with the audience. The references to Hurricane Katrina reveal a class consciousness and how natural disasters "can be shaped into unnaturally cruel systems of inequity by human agents" (Maner, 199). The government's handling of the situation illustrates how poverty and race work together as intersecting categories of oppression, and the fatal consequences this can have.

2.2 "It's All About the Body, and the Body as Commodity"

The body takes centre stage in *Lemonade*. The Black female body has a long history of exploitation and commodification. hooks argues that what makes Beyoncé's visual album different is its intent to ""seduce, celebrate, and delight – to challenge the ongoing present day devaluation and dehumanization of the black female body" ("Moving"). It is the embodiment of the Black nationalist slogan "black is beautiful". The display of a wide range of bodies of all shapes and sizes, and the celebration of the diverse hair textures and styles of African-American women are different from the days when Black female slaves were put on auction blocks to be sold off and fill the roles of "laborer in the field, a worker in the domestic

household, a breeder, and as an object of white male sexual assault" (hooks, *Ain't I a Woman*, 22).

As field workers, Black women were expected to plant, plough, and harvest crops. If they failed to meet their masters' expectations of accomplished workload, they were severely punished, often stripped naked and whipped. Those that worked in the domestic sphere cooked, cleaned, nursed, and served as maids. In addition to being physically punished, the house slaves also suffered emotional abuse through constant surveillance and received abuse from their white mistresses. These roles show the racist exploitation of Black women. It is when we examine the sexual exploitation of Black female slaves that the intersection of racism and sexism is revealed.

When exploited through forced breeding, Black women were threatened with violence if they did not reproduce. For each child their bore, they we rewarded either with material items or money. These women had no choice or say in the matter, and were treated as animals. They were not given sufficient access to nutritious food and still had to endure a heavy workload during pregnancy, making them suffer through their childbirths. The frequency of their pregnancies, left with no time to recuperate before falling pregnant again, lead to many miscarriages and deaths. With a lack of legal protection for Black female slaves and the need for a supply of new workers for slavery to continue, these women were in an incredibly vulnerable position with no possibility to object.

Sexual exploitation of Black female slaves was widespread. They were routinely raped and sexually assaulted both by other Black male slaves and their white male owners. The owners also attempted to bribe and "buy" sexual services. "Buy" is put in quotation marks because it was not a fair transaction. If the women declined and resisted, they would be forcibly raped. By making it a transaction, the owners could mark the women as prostitutes and lessen their own feelings of guilt. The goal, unlike Beyoncé's with *Lemonade*, was "demoralization and dehumanization of black women" (27). This treatment reveals a deep-rooted misogyny with roots in fundamentalist Christian teachings where women signified sinful sexual beings that needed to be saved and controlled by white men acting on behalf of God. This lead to the production of new laws intended to govern white women's sexuality and protect white men from moral downfall. The signification of women shifted drastically during the 19th century. Along with a movement away from the fundamentalist doctrine, white women became idealised goddesses. No longer seen as inherent sinners, they now represented a "virtuous, pure, innocent, not sexual and worldly" character (31). The reduction of white women to virtuous, asexual beings happened simultaneously as Black female slaves were

sexually exploited. It was at this time the controlling image of the Jezebel originated; sexually aggressive and looking to seduce white men. They were framed as prostitutes, a strategic move that allowed blame to be shifted from the white men onto the Black women in cases of sexual assault and rape.

The intersection of racism and sexism is revealed when we consider that Black women were enslaved because of their race, but sexually assaulted and raped due to their sex and misogynistic attitudes towards women introduced through fundamentalist Christian teachings during the Colonial era. The intent behind the exploitation and commodification of Black female bodies by slave owners was to dehumanise, domesticate, and sell them and their offspring off as workers. Posed on auction blocks and reduced to their body parts, these women were dehumanised and objectified by their owners looking to display and sell them to onlookers. Forced breeding and sexual assault illustrate the brutal exploitation Black female slaves were subjected to. The different intent that hooks points out between the historical exploitation and commodification of the Black female body and what we see in *Lemonade* is striking. The visual album is trying to achieve the opposite of the white slave owners, to humanise Black women and promote their agency and ability to self-define. The commodification is obviously also done to sell Beyoncé's album and accompanying film, but it does so without reducing the women to their saleable body parts. Beyoncé's motivations go beyond the monetary aspects, wishing to empower and strengthen Black women's self-esteem and promote their self-love. The Black female body connotes beauty and resilience under adverse conditions. hooks is right in drawing parallels to the Julie Dash's film *Daughters of the Dust* in terms of providing strikingly beautiful images of the Black female body. Rather than the typical "Othering" of their bodies in mainstream culture, they are made the norm in *Lemonade*.

Black women and their bodies are not reduced to controlling images in *Lemonade*. Black feminist scholar Patricia Hill Collins defines controlling images as negative stereotypes that "are designed to make racism, sexism, poverty, and other forms of social injustice appear to be natural, normal, and inevitable parts of everyday life" (*Black Feminist Thought,* 69). The controlling images work in conjunction with binary thinking where your meaning is relational to your counterpart. In this system, white people represented cultured, rational subjects and people of colour were irrational and objectified through animalistic portrayals. hooks argues in *Talking Back*, that "As subjects, people have the right to define their own reality, establish their own identities, name their history" but "As objects, one's reality is defined by others, one's identity created by others, one's history named only in ways that define one's

relationship to those who are subject" (42). As objects you are denied all agency and right to self-define. You are silenced. We see here that the systems of dominations based on difference often contain an implied relationship of superiority and inferiority that combine with political economies of race, gender, and class oppression. Patricia Hill Collins argues that "African-American women occupy a position whereby the inferior half of a series of these binaries converge and this placement has been central to our subordination" (71). This treatment can foster resistance amongst the women where they demand their "right to define [their] own reality, establish [their] own identities, and name [their] history" (*Black Feminist* Thought, 72). They want the opportunity to self-define as a consequence of being marginalised to a dominant culture where they have had "little or no say in the construction of [their] socially acknowledged identity" (quoted in Perkins and Phelps, *Autobiogrpahy as Activism*, 36). Black women have been silenced and made invisible, excluding them from the opportunity to influence their own public signification. Entirely negative images have been created for them, with no opportunity to resist and intervene. They have been objectified and denied subjectivity.

While Elite white women aspired to the controlling image of "true" womanhood, African-American women were subjected to the images of the mammy, matriarch, welfare mother, and the Jezebel. The mammy is the domestic servant who loyally obeys her master and takes better care of his children than her own. This image serves to justify the economic exploitation of house slaves and support the racial superiority of white employers. Although this image is not as prominent after African-American women gained access to better jobs, "the basic economic exploitation where U.S. Black women either make less for the same work or work twice as hard for the same pay persists" (Hill Collins, 74). As mother figures in white families, African-American women were forced to sacrifice emotional labour in their own families and accept insufficient pay.

Unlike the "good" mother figure of the mammy, the matriarch is the "bad" equivalent. The image was introduced through the government report published in 1965; "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action", often referred to as the Moynihan report, referring to its author, sociologist Daniel Patrick Moynihan. The report "demonstrated that the black family was matriarchal because of its high rates of divorce, separation, husband desertion, illegitimate births, and female family heads" (Madhu Dubey, *Black Women Novelists and the Nationalist Aesthetic*, 17). This was of course done without accounting for the differing availability of contraception, abortion, and adoption facilities in black and white communities (168). Black women were blamed for Black men's unemployment, their children's failure at

school, and their partners' desertion or refusal to marry. African-American women became easy scapegoats that functioned as distractions from the political and economic inequalities produced by global capitalism. Instead of focusing on the "inferior housing, underfunded schools, employment discrimination, and consumer racism" that contribute to Black poverty, our attention is diverted towards Black mothers not being present enough to instil the proper values in their children that would enable their social mobility (Hill Collins, 76). The U.S. criminal justice system also evades blame for their disproportionate jailing of African-Americans. Unmarried African-American women is not a result of them being unfeminine and emasculating, but is connected to the fewer African-American men that are available to marry as a result of being 8 times more likely to get locked up than white men. Hill Collins argues that a result of the controlling image of Black women as matriarchs is that "Many Black men reject Black women as marital partners, claiming that Black women are less desirable than White ones because we are too assertive" (77). This intraracial sexism is illustrated in *Lemonade* when Beyoncé tells her husband that he "better call Becky with the good hair" after realising that "I'm just too much for you" ("Sorry"; "Don't Hurt Yourself"). Her husband cheats on Beyoncé with a woman inhabiting what hooks calls 'white supremacist aesthetics'; fair skin and non-kinky hair. In terms of race, the matriarchal family structure of African-American households was used to signify their cultural inferiority due to flawed gender relations and challenging of patriarchal ideals. This controlling image divided both the Black community and forced a wider gap between Black and white women.

The welfare mother refers to "poor, working-class Black women who make use of social welfare benefits to which they are entitled by law" (Hill Collins, 78). This image was created after the second world war when African-Americans fought for and gained political and economic protection in the form of "Social security, unemployment compensation, school feeding programs, fellowships and loans for higher education, affirmative action, voting rights, antidiscrimination legislation, child welfare programs, and the minimum wage" (79). Although this allowed them to reject exploitative jobs, there were limited economic opportunities. The bad economy led the elite groups to want to control Black women's fertility. They therefore portrayed the welfare mother as lazy and having bad work ethics which she could pass on to her children. The image of the welfare mother allows for victim blaming. Instead of attacking the structural sources of poverty, the blame is shifted onto Black mothers who are "producing too many economically unproductive children" (80). Similar to the creation of the matriarch image, the welfare mother enables focus and blame to be shifted from the larger structures of U.S. economy and politics onto the victims of their policies.

The fourth image, the Jezebel, was produced during the era of slavery to justify white men raping Black women and to marginalise them. It also functioned as a binary opposition to white women in terms of female sexuality. While white women were expected to be pious, pure, passive/submissive and domestic, Black women became a "racialized, gendered symbol of deviant female sexuality" with ravenous sexual appetites much like men's (Hill Collins, 72; 83). The likening to men is striking when considering the public "white patriarchal policing" of Serena Williams and her body (Sarah Olutola, "I Ain't Sorry: Beyoncé, Serena, and Hegemonic Hierarchies in *Lemonade*, 109). As a Black muscular woman playing an upper-class 'white' sport, Williams stands out, leading to the press likening her physique to a man's and portraying her in racist and sexist terms. This treatment is very similar to what was done to Saartjie Baartman (Hottentot Venus) in the nineteenth century; a South African woman brought to Europe and made an exhibition to display her large derriere and labia (LaVoulle and Ellison, 69). In addition, she was physically and mentally likened to an animal.

hooks argues that such negative assumptions and stereotypes were established even before white people had contact with Black people. She traces it back to how dark skin signals a biblical curse. Although she does not specify, she is most likely referring to the curse of Ham or Cain in Genesis. The darker skin is then said to mark out those who are inferior to the "chosen" people - those with white skin. Such attitudes were made clear when people from the colonies were brought back to Europe and paraded at parties as a form of entertainment. The pseudoscience of physiognomy was also used during the nineteenth century. This was a practice where different categories of value were conflated. "[T]he physical ugliness of black people was a sign of a deeper ugliness and depravity" (Paul Taylor cited in hooks, *Rock My Soul: Black People and Self-Esteem*, 36). Those inhabiting what was considered a beautiful body was subsequently thought to be more civilized and have larger intellectual capacity than those deemed bodily subordinate. This line of thinking served to justify slavery through naturalising a racial hierarchy.

Shaming was used to break enslaved Africans' spirits during their journey over the Middle Passage to ensure that they would easily submit when they arrived on the continent. The shaming continued when they were put naked on action blocks and were taught the Christian doctrine of how the colour of their skin marked their inferiority. This shame was internalised and has been passed on from generation to generation. Today, the Black female body is where we see most clearly the inscription of white supremacist thinking in terms of beauty and skin colour. Darker skinned women are not deemed desirable and is hardly found

in mass media. Those that align with white aesthetics are favoured, so a lighter skin colour and straight hair increase the likelihood of being employed.

Objectification of the Black female body, signalling both a fascination and rejection, illustrates how controlling images historically and currently are used to reduce and communicate Black women as hypersexual temptresses and as radically Other for white gazes to consume. This is the portrayal hooks is referring to in terms of "the gaze of white mainstream culture"; the gaze that typically portray Black female bodies as icons of deviant sexuality ("Moving"). Considering the frequency of this portrayal, we are forced to consider the strong influence this image has had on the public interpretation of Black women.

Beyoncé evokes and challenges controlling images in *Lemonade*. Serena Williams twerking in the music video "Sorry" connotes the image of the Jezebel. The track begins as Williams seductively descends down the stairs of the Madewell plantation house, wearing a black leotard and a matching chiffon robe. The camera follows her around the house, and she continuously turns around to confront our gaze, before she is seen twerking. It is a performance of defiance, a performance that echo the lyrics "Sorry, I ain't sorry". It is an unapologetic celebration of blackness and her Black female body. Seen in relation to the cultural appropriation and commodification of the African-American dance twerking a few years prior to the release of *Lemonade* by white American artists, most notably Miley Cyrus, Williams can be seen as reclaiming the dance. I agree with scholar Sarah Olutola that the transgressive twerking in "Sorry" can be seen as a "powerful societal challenge to white American society that would, on one hand, denigrate blackness, and, on the other, commodify and appropriate it for profit" ("I Ain't Sorry: Beyoncé, Serena, and Hegemonic Hierarchies in *Lemonade*, 110). She is exposing how the dominant culture pick and choose which elements of other "exotic" cultures they like and try to pass it off as their own, reinforcing their superiority. Other cultures are there for white supremacist capitalist patriarchy to exploit.

In addition to societal critique of white culture's appropriation of African-American culture, the transgressive dancing also has a personal dimension. Williams is calling attention to the culture that has subjected her to bodily denigration and devalued her professional accomplishments throughout her career, a culture where she is:

> "simultaneously sexualized and caricaturized, othered and exoticized. Her body is a representation of her athletic skill. But rather than being celebrated, it's been scrutinized mercilessly, turned into a kind of spectacle for white amusement […]" (Zeba Blay, *HuffiingtonPost)*

Her evident bodily confidence and self-love in "Sorry" is opposing these negative media portrayals she constantly faces that brand her as either too masculine or too animalistic. She is embracing her strong, muscular physique and her femininity through performing a dance that focuses on a body part that signifies female sexuality. It is not a sexuality that cannot be contained, but a sensual and alluring display of the Black female body.

Rather than assigning Serena Williams' dancing any critical value, hooks claims that her image in *Lemonade* simply "evokes sportswear" ("Moving"). She labels it commodification and fails to mention the performance anywhere else in the critical essay. It is, however, possible to hypothesise hooks' reception of the music video by consulting her essay "Selling Hot Pussy" in *Black Looks*. This essay includes close-readings of performances by the entertainer Josephine Baker and filmmaker Spike Lee to offer commentary on hooks' position on popular culture representations of the Black female body and sexuality. Much like Williams' twerking, Baker emphasised the butt in her dance routines. hooks argues that this is an example of colluding in "white eroticization of black bodies" where the large butt symbolises the projected hypersexual nature of Black women (63). This is contrasted with what hooks considers a positive representation of the butt found in Spike Lee's *School Daze.* She points to the scene in the film where the all-black swimsuit-clad party is seen 'doing the Butt'; a dance that encourages enthusiastic protrusion of the butt. These butts are "unruly and outrageous", a loud challenging of "assumptions that the black body, its skin color and shape, is a mark of shame" (63). This celebration of the Black body is subversive; it is a rejection of respectability politics that aim to police the behaviour of Black people and their appearance to appeal to and gain better treatment from white people. One of the features used to deem the Black body inferior to the white body constituting the 'norm' is here centred and held up as desirable and attractive. This positioning has the ability to alter the cultural signification of the body part in question; now representing something to be sexually desired rather than abject.

Although hooks does acknowledge that popular music can be a constructive site for problematizing and discussing Black sexuality, she also takes issue with the butt becoming a synecdoche for the Black female body. She argues that this reduction is a 'mutilation' of the Black female body, framing them as disposable. So despite her recognition of the positive potential residing in Lee's film, she insists that neither *School Daze* nor Josephine Baker "successfully subvert racist/sexist representations" (64). Sexualising Black women in popular culture is not a new offering, but rather perfectly aligns with reigning white supremacist constructions of Black female sexuality as heightened and deviant. This forms the backdrop

of hooks' probable argument regarding Serena Williams' performance in *Lemonade*. Williams would most likely be criticised for appropriating and exploiting "negative stereotypes" under the impression that this allows her to control the representation or benefit from the it. hooks considers this, much like Beyoncé's line of feminism, complete fantasy. She asserts that we cannot dismantle white supremacist capitalist patriarchy by creating our own versions of it. There is nothing liberatory in the act of reclaiming violating images; it just signals your collusion in the systems of oppression. She seems to echo Audre Lorde and her sentiment that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (*Sister Outsider*, 112). We may temporarily reap benefits, but it is not genuine lasting change.

Serena's image goes beyond the evocation of sportswear. Like Spike Lee and 'doing the Butt', I would argue that Williams' twerking is subverting the notion of the Black body as a site of shame, and rather diverting our attention to the power and beauty residing in it. I do not consider it fantasy to recognise the capacity of evoking controlling images in an effort to challenge them and reveal the power of redeploying controlling images, reversing its original intended oppressive and exploitative effect. It is a revaluation of the Black female body that defies the Eurocentric norm of fragility through the proud and confident display of Williams' muscular and voluptuous body. It also challenges white supremacist aesthetics that only value fair skin and straight, blonde hair, preferably also blue eyes. Williams has voluminous black curly hair and the "negro nose with Jackson 5 nostrils" Beyoncé expresses her love of in "Formation". The natural hair is significant because, as hooks argues: "Even though more black folks than ever before choose to wear natural hair, very few powerful public figures or successful entertainers who are black and female are able to wear their hair in its natural state" (*Rock My Soul*, 52). Williams is defying the mass media standard of white supremacist aesthetics. It is a powerful move for an athlete and celebrity of her status to wear her hair naturally in such a big production as *Lemonade*. Beyoncé has created a space that celebrates the Black female body and aesthetics in all its embodiments.

In *Lemonade* Williams and her body are not fetishized or relegated "to the realm of the grotesque" like in the press, but made to signify a desirable subject using her agency to self-define her sexuality (Olutola, 109). Her body is not devalued or made a spectacle for her Afrocentric features or impressive muscles. She symbolises Black female beauty. In "Sorry" we are witnessing Williams being allowed "to be proud of – and indeed flaunt – [her] sexuality" (Pough, 188). By being bold about her sexuality, she signals a level of freedom and agency that can be empowering for a lot of Black women who have long been afraid of being reduced to stereotypes. It makes us question the ideological justification for the existence of

controlling images of Black female identity. The bodies in *Lemonade* function as ideological texts with a power to influence our normalizing gaze. Rather than accepting the norms of whiteness, thinness, and Anglo features as what constitutes beauty, Beyoncé's rich and diverse representation disrupts them by situating Black female bodies in contexts that communicate their beauty and that intends to "seduce, celebrate, and delight", not reduce them to saleable parts ("Moving Beyond Pain). This has the power to disrupt our internal self-managing and self-regulating gaze; challenging the long exclusion of Black features and bodies of what is considered attractive and desirable. It has the power to form "the foundation for a psychological revolution by emphasizing the importance of self-acceptance" (hooks, *Rock My Soul*, 42). Rather than listening to the internalised shame surrounding their bodies, hair texture, skin colour, and appearance, the beautiful display of Black women in *Lemonade* and the celebratory lyrics can change their mindsets surrounding their beauty and promote self-love. I would therefore argue that *Lemonade* functions as Hill Collins' notion of 'safe spaces' where Black women can self-define, where they can create empowering identities to resists the dominant ideology that devalues them and consistently portrays and imagines them in negative controlling images. Hill Collins argues that "For U.S. Black women, constructed knowledge of self emerges from the struggle to replace controlling images with self-defined knowledge deemed personally important, usually knowledge essential to Black women's survival" (*Black Feminist Though*, 100). It is through the rejection of externally defined negative stereotypes, such as the hypersexual Jezebel, and introduction of self-defined positive and empowering representations, such as Serena Williams in "Sorry", that African-American women construct vital knowledge of self, who they are outside their Othering. Visual representation is therefore crucial in the process of Black female empowerment.

Beyoncé's as a feminist able to use her celebrity status is beneficial in relation to her systemic critique of police violence and support of Black Lives Matter. hooks only praises how "The unnamed, unidentified mothers of murdered young black males are each given pride of place" ("Moving") in relation to the film's diverse representations of Black women. The music video for "Forward" is dedicated to the Mothers of the Movement and their lost sons. We see Gwen Carr, Eric Garner's mother, Sabrina Fylton, Tayvon Martin's mother, and Lezley McSpadden, Michael Brown's mother. They are individually shown in close-up shots, holding portraits of the sons they have lost to police violence. Their facial expressions are clearly affected by a mixture of rage and grief, a tear rolling down McSpadden's face. The mothers are in one of the plantation houses. The lighting is dimmed and the mood is dreary. The slow ballad enhances the atmosphere and message of the Mothers of the Movement; we

have to communicate with those who have hurt us in order to move forward and initiate change.

While I agree with hooks that the centring and dedication of a music video to the Mothers of the Movement and their sons are important, I would argue that *Lemonade*'s overall feminist message would have been strengthened by including mothers of lesser known female victims of police brutality and violence. The most obvious choice would be Sandra Bland's mother, Geneva Reed-Veal, considering she is also a member of Mothers of the Movement, but there are countless other female victims deserving of the pride of place in the visual album whose encounters with the police force were equally unjust and gruesome as the male victims'. Representing these women, such as Rekia Boyd or Tanisha Anderson, would bring awareness to how Black women's brutal encounters with police often include sexual assault and frequently happen to women suffering from disabilities or victims of domestic or sexual assault (Crenshaw and Ritchie, *Say Her Name*, 1). It would have been an act of public consciousness raising, creating awareness surrounding the intersecting oppressions in current U.S. society that Black women face in terms of racism, sexism, classism, ableism etc. Their race makes them susceptible to racial profiling, and their sex puts them in a vulnerable position in encounters with male officers. Disability and having already suffered domestic or sexual assault also make them vulnerable to police officers abusing their power.

If *Lemonade* is dedicated to showing the unique experiences of African-American women, then these women rendered invisible in the media would have benefitted from the same sympathy and recognition as the men already made into household names received. It would have helped nuance the public perception that all victims of police brutality are male. The dozens of Black women dying in police custody with no proper explanation must be accounted for because without it we are unable to "broaden our understanding of vulnerability to state violence and what do (sic) we need to do about it" (Crenshaw cited in Khaleeli, *Guardian*). We need to examine how Black women's vulnerability to state violence differs from Black men in order to combat these assaults and murders. Those responsible for the deaths of unarmed Black women and girls must be held accountable. Visualising or vocalising the stories of Bland, Boyd, or Anderson could impact policy to protect Black women facing racialized police violence. This is why movements such as Kimberlé Crenshaw's #SayHerName is so important. *Lemonade* would have been a more radical production if it had supported #SayHerName and represented Black women's experiences of police violence, showing a gender inclusive approach to racial justice. It would have signalled that all Black lives matter equally.

2.3 "A Feminism Brave Enough to Fuck with the Grays"

hooks and Beyoncé have differing opinions on representations of Black female sexuality. Beyoncé is known for explicitly embracing her sexuality through her choreography, her costumes, and her lyrics. At the "Are You Still a Slave?" panel discussing the Black female body at The New School, hooks received a question from the audience that offers insight into why she is critical of Beyoncé's "sexualized" character in *Lemonade* ("Moving"). hooks was asked how to understand and acknowledge the history of Black female bodies as exotic sexual commodities whilst simultaneously creating a liberatory sex-positive framework that honours their sexual agency. Rather than recognising the subversive potential in Black women's assertion of sexual autonomy, hooks responded by suggesting celibacy as the most powerful political act a Black woman could do to challenge the hypersexual images. Understandingly, this was met by confusion and dismissal amongst the audience and the other panellists. It is especially odd considering how hooks has previously expressed her disappointment with those she referred to as "mainstream aging feminist individuals" who went from advocating female sexual freedom to "valorizing celibacy" (*Feminism is for Everybody*, 89). The same attitude that she saw as old-fashion and non-radical, she has now adopted herself. I disagree with hooks and would argue that celibacy signals a displacement of responsibility. Instead of encouraging more diverse and challenging displays of Black female sexuality that would offer alternatives to the pervasive controlling images, hooks seems to suggest that Black women subdue their sexuality. This would only allow the controlling images to limit their personal freedom of expression and their ability to self-define. It sounds radical but in reality it just creates another stereotype. Black women are then seen as polarising extremes; invoking the virgin/whore dichotomy with nothing in-between.

Surprisingly, hooks with her new advocacy of celibacy seems to conform to the notion of respectability politics, policing Black women's bodies and behaviour. These are the same respectability politics Beyoncé as a Hip-hop feminist is challenging. Hip-hop feminism as a movement is rooted in Black feminism and intersectional theory. It is a bridging of feminism and Hip-hop culture that speak to African-American women who have grown up during the hip-hop era and who do not relate to what they consider white feminism or the academic Black feminism. Author Joan Morgan, who coined the term 'hip-hop feminist', makes a

demand in her book *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost*, for "a feminism brave enough to fuck with the grays" (59). Instead of working with strict binaries where things are constructed as black-or-white, this generation is interested in examining grey areas. Scholars Aisha Durham et el. argue in "The Stage Hip-Hop Feminism Built: A New Directions Essay", that "hip-hop feminists insist on living with contradictions, because failure to do so relegates feminism to an academic project that is not politically sustainable beyond the ivory tower" (Durham et al., 723). One of these contradictions is to express explicit Black female sexuality within Hip-hop culture that is known for its misogyny and patriarchal attitudes made apparent through the objectification of women. The feminist sensibility here lies at disrupting the misogynistic representations and challenging the controlling images.

Hip-hop feminists are characterised by their use of popular culture to communicate their feminist politics. Rather than writing scholarly articles that restrict the reach of their politics, the new generation of "educated women of color also choose films, music, videos, fiction, spoken word-poetry, magazines, and other dimensions of popular culture as venues for their feminist politics" (Hill Collins, *From Black Power to Hip-Hop*, 191). Beyoncé using a combination of film, music videos, and spoken-word poetry in *Lemonade* is able to forego the academic elite and those women of colour who attend higher education and women's studies; she has the potential to reach the poor and marginalised Black women who are unlikely to encounter feminism in college or university. She is using a medium that can successfully communicate in a manner they understand and that seems relevant to them. They might stumble upon one of hooks' or Hill Collins' books, but could be intimidated by the genre or language. Beyoncé using popular culture as her medium of choice makes her message appear less threatening and more accessible. It shows how Black feminism is relevant to those most unlikely to search for it. In a society where feminism is becoming increasingly privatized and restricted to an ivory tower, *Lemonade* is a counteract that reaches poor and working-class African-American women, as well as those who have access to higher education of women's studies classes, and presents the feminist movement as inclusive and relevant. She is creating what Angela Davis called an "aesthetic community of resistance" that can influence both the affective and intellectual register through music, visual images, and spoken-word poetry (*Women, Culture, and Politics*, 201). Like the slaves were able to through work songs and spirituals sung in the fields, Beyoncé is fostering a community through her music that promotes freedom struggle.

The focus on representations of Black womanhood and pro-sex stance are what marks Beyoncé's position in hip-hop feminism. Hip-hop feminists see explicit visual representations

of Black female sexuality as confronting both the historical and current controlling images of their bodies and sexualities. This forms the backdrop when African-American female performers embrace their sexuality in a wish to transcend or resignify the controlling images imposed on them. In the video of "6 Inch" Beyoncé is seen moving and dancing seductively on the same stage as the visual album opens with, now wearing a leotard and six-inch heels. Her hyperfeminine and at times hypersexual image can be seen seen as "a subversion and/or outright rejection of gendered racial stereotypes that police the public behavior of African-American women" (Treva Lindsey, "Complicated Crossroads", 58). Like Serena's seductive dancing in "Sorry", Beyoncé will not let oppressive and exploitative controlling images of Black women as asexual Mammies or Hypersexual Jezebels keep her from expressing her sexuality. She displays "the right to be desirable yet have bodily autonomy" (Zeisler, xv). Although hooks would brand this line of thinking fantasy, it illustrates the grey areas of hip-hop feminism. Beyoncé's performances within this line of feminism can be read as conscious decisions on her terms rather than adhering to larger exploitative and oppressive gazes. She is what author Silja Talvi argues characterises third-wave feminists: "young women who refuse to allow anything (or anyone) to dictate to them how they should look, act, or think" (*inthesetimes.com*). This in itself is a powerful stance when considering African-American women's history of being denied agency of their own bodies and sexuality. Both Beyoncé and Serena represent empowered and self-assured African-American women who will not have their behaviour or appearance determined by anyone else. They align with celebrity feminists in terms of representing agency, choice, and female empowerment. Their confident sexual assertion is empowering when read against the historical sexual exploitation of Black female slaves who endured rape, sexual assault, and breeding and the continued policing of their bodies through respectability politics.

2.4 "I see a part of Beyoncé that is in fact anti-feminist – that is a terrorist"

hooks made this statement during The New School panel "Are You Still A Slave?". Her arguments surrounding Beyoncé came across as more personally motivated than professional, and bordered on trashing. Trashing as a phenomenon comes from Jo Freeman's *Ms.* Article "Trashing: The Dark Side of Sisterhood" in which she defines it as "a particularly vicious form of character assassination" that "is not done to expose disagreements or resolve differences" but "to disparage and destroy" (cited in Zeisler, 129). This attack is not done by members of the general public, but by other feminists typically with a focus on an "ideal of

ideological purity" (129). Because your feminist beliefs are tightly connected with your identity, these character assassinations are deeply unprofessional and only create a bigger divide within the movement. I would argue that hooks' statements on Beyoncé during the panel and parts of her essay on *Lemonade* are examples of trashing, especially when examining her evaluations of other celebrity feminists.

Emma Watson and her UN #HeForShe campaign have many of the features of "fantasy feminism"; focus on gender equality, lack of emphasis on intersectional categories, and only "simplified categories of women and men" ("Moving"). Yet, hooks fails to mention any of these elements when interviewing Watson. In her UN speech, Watson lends her support to a definition of feminism that centres on "The belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities. It is the theory of the political, economic and social equality of the sexes" (*unwomen.com*). It is almost identical to the definition Beyoncé sampled on the track "Flawless", yet somehow Watson is not ridiculed for having an overly simplistic and reformist understanding of feminism. She is not branded untrustworthy either. She is in fact commended by hooks for using her global celebrity status and her ability to simplify her message: "When you are speaking out to a global audience you have to start where the world is. That means, at times, starting with things that are basic […]" (*Paper Magazine*). What is striking here is that she does not set the bar too high in terms of what the campaign should achieve or contain. It is allowed to be basic. *Lemonade* is devalued because "it does not bring exploitation and domination to an end" (Moving"). Watson is not expected to dismantle white supremacist capitalist patriarchy with her speech or campaign. She is praised for simply stating that the feminist movement would benefit from male support. hooks' evaluations seem extremely inconsistent and biased.

The patriarchal structure of the #HeForShe campaign also foregoes hooks' critique. She appears to have no problem with women being posited as needing to be saved by men and that the only reason men have not supported the feminist movement is because women have not formally invited them or made them feel welcome enough. Watson seems to blame women for not creating a warm and inviting enough environment for men to want to join, instead of pointing out the obvious connection where men are the ones who massively benefit from patriarchal structures and naturally are less inclined to want to eradicate them. As the creator of the blog *Black Girl Dangerous* Mia McKenzie sarcastically puts it:

> It's not because, you know, men benefit HUGELY (socially, economically, politically, etc. ad infinitum) from gender inequality, and therefore have much less incentive to

> support its dismantling. It's not because of the prevalence of misogyny the entire world over. It's just that *no one's asked*. (cited in Zeisler, 125)

McKenzie's comment highlights the odd conclusion of Watson's speech. Men are not vampires; they can join the movement without a formal invitation. If they truly supported the message and were passionate about dismantling systems of domination, they could have joined at any time. But the fact that the majority choose not to and instead remain silent, become acts of complicity with the dominating structures. One might want to lend hooks the benefit of the doubt and assume that there was a time span between posting her critical essay on *Lemonade* and conducting her interview with Watson where she could have revised her stance on certain issues, but they were both done in 2016 within a few months from each other, so her politics should not have changed so drastically. I would argue that the different evaluations of identical features expose how hooks holds celebrity feminists up to different standards. While Beyoncé is branded "anti-feminist", untrustworthy, and a "terrorist, Watson is branded the "perfect ambassador" ("Are You Still A Slave?"; *Paper Magazine*). Ironically, hooks also states that "There are people who are very cynical about celebrity activism. As a consequence, it may lead celebrities to feel like they've got to do more to prove they are genuine" (*Paper Magazine*). This is a bit rich coming from someone whose first impression of *Lemonade* was "WOW – this is the business of capitalist money making at its best" ("Moving"). This is a cynical remark that makes it clear that hooks approached the work with her mind already made up that it would not be an important work of Black feminism. Due to hooks' inconsistence evaluations of Watson and Beyoncé, I would argue that her essay "Moving Beyond Pain" seem more like an attempt to discredit Beyoncé's character, to dethrone her and portray her as uneducated and unqualified to speak about feminism. Feminism should be left to 'real', ideologically pure feminists like hooks. This is not a professional disagreement. If it were, hooks would have held Watson equally accountable for how her campaign falls short.

The inconsistencies in hooks' political evaluations over which celebrity feminists she considers worthy of being called feminists, those whose politics are more than capitalist money-making, leads me to agree with Professor of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality studies Janell Hobson when she argues that in terms of celebrity feminists "Critics can project their own desires onto the persona, which determine whether that figure is seen as in control of her own public identity and political arguments or as woefully exploited by market demands" (*Signs Journal*). They become screens for critics' projections of agency or branding. When

hooks argues that Beyoncé's sexual image makes her a "terrorist, especially in terms of impact of young girls", she appears to want to police Beyoncé's harmful display of sexuality ("Are You Still A Slave?"). She seems to want to "regulate the bodies of women of color in order to *eradicate difference*", to police them for "daring to transgress proper social relations by celebrating her sexuality (Duan, "Policing Beyoncé's Body", 61). It starts to resemble respectability politics meant to control Black women and their bodies. What started out as strategies based on "notion of honor, self-respect, piety, and propriety" to gain rights and respect in the public sphere, turned out to be just another way for white supremacist capitalist patriarchy to keep Black women under surveillance and control their behaviour (Durham et al., 724). Rather than recognising Beyoncé's assertion of female sexual agency, hooks projects the image of sexual promiscuity, a patriarchal structure of domination she opposes. Therefore, Beyoncé cannot be a proper feminist to hooks; she adheres to too many dominating structures.

2.5 "A Powerfully Symbolic Black Female Sisterhood"

Although hooks is overall sceptical towards *Lemonade* and what it achieves, she is positive towards the visual landscape of the visual album:

> the construction of a powerfully symbolic black female sisterhood that resists invisibility, that refuses to be silent. This in and of itself is no small feat – it shifts the gaze of white mainstream culture. It challenges us all to look anew, to radically revision how we see the black female body.

hooks' notion of sisterhood refers to political solidarity between women. This solidarity should be based on "shared interests and beliefs", "appreciation for diversity", and "struggle to end sexist oppression", not the myth of common oppression or victimisation that characterised women's liberationists (*Feminist Theory*, 65). The latter should be avoided because it is based on sexist ideology where women are always victims and men the enemy. hooks argues that women must take responsibility for our contributions to maintaining sexism, racism, and classism, and together fight to overcome these dividing forces.

In the video for "Love Drought" Beyoncé is leading a line of women along the shore, all wearing the same white dresses. They are wading through the water. Beyoncé recites: "Baptize me…now that reconciliation is possible. If we're gonna heal, let it be glorious. 1,000 girls raise their arms". They have turned to face the horizon, joining and raising their hands. The visuals and poetry signal a communal baptism where the women rid themselves of male

supremacist values of suspicion, defensiveness, and competition amongst each other (hooks, *Feminist Theory*, 47). The women represent transformed female consciousness, a feminist consciousness, where they trust, support, and consider each other as equals. Women are socialised into male supremacist values from an early age. Adichie asserts in her TEDTalk, "We should All Be Feminists", that "We raise girls to see each other as competitors. Not for jobs or accomplishments, which I think can be a good thing, but for the attention of men". Sexist attitudes promote the equation of women's worth to men's evaluation of their appearance. These are destructive thought patterns that must be resisted and untaught in order to achieve female solidarity. Beyoncé and her line of women standing in the water is a powerful visualisation of a diverse Black female sisterhood united based on shared interests and conviction that they must mobilise against the larger oppressive forces that produce and perpetuate police violence, and the culture that promote misogynoir. They bond based on their collective wish to gain the respect, love, and protection African-American women deserve - to end the intersectional oppression they face in U.S. society based on their race, sex, and class. The support and solidarity communicated through their interconnectedness are vital in resistance struggle. They have been able to overcome the divisions of racism, sexism, and classism and collectively fight against these oppressive forces. They have gained a voice. It shifts the gaze of white mainstream culture that reads the Black female body as a symbol of heightened sexuality, towards a new understanding of Black women as strong, united, political activists with a transformed feminist consciousness.

Despite her positive reading of the Black female sisterhood in *Lemonade*, hooks criticises the album for staying "within a conventional stereotypical framework, where the black woman is always a victim" ("Moving"). In her essay "Refusing to be a Victim", hooks explains that the image of the Black woman as victim is an established and accepted image in white consciousness and is therefore not contested. But she urges Black women to resist identifying as victims because it entails "deny[ing] agency" (58). Rather than defining themselves in terms that signal powerlessness and inability to change their circumstances, hooks promotes the allocation of accountability within white supremacist capitalist patriarchy and addressing how African-Americans are complicit in their own victimisation. When hooks claims that Beyoncé's production posits Black women as victims, she is simultaneously accusing her of "acting in complicity with an assaultive structure of racist domination in which [she] invest[s] in the absence of agency" (58). The oppressor/oppressed structure where Black people are the oppressed does not challenge white supremacy, it reinforces it. It helps keep the image of Black people as helpless and inferior alive. hooks wants Black women to

instead employ their agency and resist structures of domination and sexist stereotypical portrayals of their womanhood. She calls out for Black self-determination: adopting radical consciousness that empowers and betters life quality despite racist domination. They must reject all structures of domination (white supremacy, racism, sexism, class elitism, homophobia, heterosexism) and envision equal structures based on shared resources. hooks' complete dismissal of the victim identity goes against what Patricia Hill Collins has argued about the socio-political strategy behind claiming such an identity because it enabled the vocalisation of their oppression. Victimisation "signalled progress, not defeat, and a challenge to the status quo, because it meant gaining a voice in the face of a repressive silence through which oppression facilitated itself" (Peoples, 415). Hill Collins considers the term as signalling Black women talking back. She does not see victimisation and agency as mutually exclusive. Entering a victim position allowed Black women to gain visibility and vocality they had previously been denied, which gave them agency to critique the oppressive structures.

Black women are not portrayed as victims devoid of agency in *Lemonade*. I disagree with hooks' overly simplistic interpretation of the narrative. What she claims is a stereotypical victimising structure, I would argue portray women now strong and independent enough to speak out against their exploitation and oppression. They refuse to suffer in silence anymore, and are defending their dignity. What I believe is present in *Lemonade* is vulnerability. Beyoncé successfully presents herself as someone capable of admitting to vulnerability and pain, making her story relatable to those she wishes to inspire. She is also seen as a capable agent who confronts her cheating husband and makes a holistic assessment of whether it is worth it for her to stay in the marriage. By making her indecisiveness public, she seems less like a persona and more like a real person who is neither weak not invulnerable. Being made a victim of her husband's infidelity made Beyoncé talk back and defend herself. It did not render her powerless, but provoked her into action. Beyoncé transcends the victim position. By the third track, Beyoncé is reminding her husband that he "ain't married to no average bitch" ("Don't Hurt Yourself"). She leaves him in "Sorry" and takes their daughter with her. She is financially independent, "keep your money, I've got my own", and aware of her power, "I just might be a black Bill Gates in the making" ("Don't Hurt Yourself"; "Formation"). Although she briefly returns to self-doubt and self-blame in "Love Drought", it only emphasises her line in "Hold Up"; "I'm not too perfect/ To ever feel this worthless". She is Queen Bey, but that does not exclude her from feeling insecure or hurt from time to time.

Positioning herself on the level of her intended audience and humanising herself increases the likelihood of the Black women being able to imagine themselves as capable of reconciling their marriage or mending other conflicts in their lives, gaining agency in the process. Women learning from each other by sharing experiences and strategies are especially evident in the chapters *Hope* and *Redemption*. In the former, the opening images are of a group of women preparing a meal together in a kitchen in the grounds of the plantation property, in what was formerly slave quarters of the Destrehan Plantation. They are all contributing and working as a team; some are washing the vegetables, others are chopping or grounding spices in the pestle and mortar. In the latter chapter, Shire's poetry sounds:

> 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 kit. Broke the curse with your own two hands. You passed these instructions down to your daughter who then passed them down to her daughter.

The poem is followed by the home video of Hattie White giving her birthday speech about turning life's lemons into lemonade while her granddaughter is listening. We are given a visual demonstration of how survival strategies and life lessons can be passed down from one generation to the next. With the help and guidance from the older generations, the women can decolonise their minds and develop critical consciousness surrounding the systemic injustice they and their communities experience and what needs to be done to rectify them. The process of decolonising the mind begins, according to hooks, "whenever those of us who are members of exploited and oppressed groups dare to critically interrogate our locations, the identities and allegiances that inform how we live our lives" (*Outlaw Culture*, 248). Black women must question and examine racist and sexist stereotypes, and the larger societal structures that determine their existence.

There is a visual movement from the female utopia in *Redemption* to the happy couples in "All Night". Beyoncé is ready to confront her marriage after exchanging experiences and getting support from the women around her. She is reminded of their milestones, illustrated visually through the home videos dating back to when they were dating, to their wedding, her pregnancy, and the birth of their daughter. Jay-Z is no longer seen as the enemy, but someone who has accepted responsibility for his actions and is able to change. As hooks stresses, men are not the enemy, but their actions can be destructive. It is therefore key to both learn how to navigate a society that privileges men and how to counter the sexist thoughts and actions we are socialised into accepting.

Beyoncé and Jay-Z's marital problems can be seen as resilience discourse, more specifically, what Robin James calls a "Look, I Overcame!" narrative where her husband's infidelity is a resource for personal and community development rather than a weakness (*Resilience &* Melancholy, 78). Beyoncé transforms her real-life marital problems into a source of inspiration for a financially lucrative, consciousness-raising Black feminist production. She has chosen to channel her resilience into a work that signifies on Black feminism and that aims to raise African-American women's consciousness surrounding their treatment in U.S. society - how they have been systematically oppressed, exploited, devalued, and underestimated since the day they were forcibly brought to the continent, and providing a visual representation of what a powerful Sisterhood can look like and accomplish when male supremacist values are rejected and women bond over political solidarity with a goal to end sexist oppression.

When hooks argues that "concluding this narrative of hurt and betrayal with caring images of family and home do not serve as adequate ways to reconcile and heal trauma", it reveals how her desired resolution did not involve Beyoncé forgiving her partner for his mistakes ("Moving"). She seems to have interpreted her choice to forgive and stay as simply a repetition of the patriarchal norm of women forgiving their partners' transgressions no matter what. This reveals how hooks fails to see the work Beyoncé demanded her partner to do in order for her to take him back. In "Sandcastles", the most intimate music video of *Lemonade*, she is heard telling Jay-Z to "Show me your scars and I won't walk away" whilst we see visuals of them together, him with his head bent in humility, embracing her, and laying at her feet. Later, in "All Night" she reassures him and tells him "I've seen your scars and kissed your crime" and that she will "give [him] some time to prove that [she] can trust [him] again". Beyoncé is not passively accepting his actions and welcoming him back with open arms, but is willing to listen and let him prove that he is trustworthy again.

Instead of projecting the patriarchal norm of female submission onto Beyoncé's choice to stay, I would argue that the concluding images of Beyoncé, Jay-Z, and Blue Ivy as a happy nuclear family functions as an authenticity marker that reflects Beyoncé's real-life choice to work on their marriage and stay together. The wholesome concluding images also function as "a counter to prevailing discourses that the 'typical' black family is composed of an absentee black father and an unwed, poor or welfare-dependent black mother", a narrative that originated in the previously mentioned Moynihan report (Chatman cited in Smith, 238-9). Beyoncé not only offers alternative images to controlling images of Black womanhood but also Black families. She is challenging the racist public perception of the inferior and deviant

Black family. *Redemption* offers visuals where Beyoncé and Jay-Z are a happily married couple again, raising their daughter together. They represent a resilient Black family, not a damaged, dysfunctional one. They are posited as aspirational, having managed to turn their painful situation into one they could grow stronger and closer from. The images of them as a happy couple are interjected by visuals of other couples embracing and kissing each other. We simultaneously hear the romantic message of the love ballad "All Night":

> They say true love's the greatest weapon
> To win the war caused by pain, pain
> But every diamond has imperfections
> But my love's too pure to watch it chip away
> Oh nothing real can be threatened
> True love breathes salvation back into me
> With every tear came redemption
> And my torturer became my remedy

Their "true" love triumphed the shallow affection offered by Jay-Z's "side chicks" (*Apathy*). Her torturer, the one who caused all the pain, self-doubt, anger, and self-blame, was also her remedy, the one able to restore their love through admitting his transgressions and being willing to face whatever consequences she saw fit to be willing to consider taking him back. She has not just taken him back for the sake of it, but realised that what they had was worth fighting for, but her husband had to be willing to do his share. The change was mutual, not one-sided as suggested by hooks.

In the process of growing stronger from the infidelity, Beyoncé reveals her vulnerable side to those she wishes will "get in formation" by the end of the film ("Formation"). hooks argues that "the empowerment of students rests upon the vulnerability of the teacher and her willingness to share personal experiences and take risks" (quoted in Murphy, 83). I argue that Beyoncé intends to empower African-American women and inspire them to mobilise by exposing her own vulnerability in the face of "pervasive and toxic masculinity that devalues black women in particularly destructive ways" (Maner, 192). By showcasing her own humanity, that despite her class privileges she is not immune to intraracial sexism, she is able to connect across social classes based on shared experience. The intraracial sexism is illustrated by Beyoncé's reference to Jay-Z's mistress, "Becky with the good hair", in "Sorry". 'Becky' signals that she was a white woman and reveals how Jay-Z is a product of a white supremacist culture that considers Eurocentric features superior to Afrocentric. He has internalised the white normalising gaze. But it is a hopeful narrative as he takes his wife's

warning of taking their daughter and leaving him seriously and calls her crying and wanting to apologise because his "heart is broken cause [she] walked away "Sandcastles"). He realised the truth of what Beyoncé tells him early on: "They [his mistresses] don't love you like I love you" ("Hold Up").

If we conduct a close-reading of the two music videos that Jay-Z makes an appearance in, "Sandcastles" and "All Night", there is a significant movement. In the former, he is seen with his eyes downcast, signalling how he has realised his transgressions and have taken a submissive role to Beyoncé. He is not arrogant and believes that he can get away with anything, but humble and regretting his actions. They are seen standing forehead to forehead, leaning on each other. The most powerful scene is the one where Jay is seen laying at Beyoncé's feet, stroking her legs. She kisses his cheek and lovingly strokes the back of his head. There is still a lot of pain in these encounters, Beyoncé often seen with tears in her eyes. But they are focused on working through this together.

In the latter, "All Night", the mood is shifted 180 degrees. Here, we find no sorrow, no grief, only love. The majority of this music video consists home videos or grainy footage meant to look candid. The home videos trace Beyoncé and Jay's happy memories and big milestones. These videos are intersected by footage of other couples in love, dancing, holding each other, kissing. The couples are both straight and same-sex, and are of all ethnicities and ages. We also see Beyoncé's mother Tina's second wedding when she and her husband Richard Lawson shared their first dance. These visuals show a movement beyond pain, representing the title of Beyoncé and Jay-Z's later joint album *Everything is Love* (2018). There is no exclusivity to love here, but a celebration of both choosing to stay and leave a marriage. It is a celebration of love, not endurance of pain. Jay-Z is no longer downcast and acting on Beyoncé's mercy, but a dedicated partner and father. Beyoncé did not choose to stay in her marriage due to patriarchal norms, but because she missed her husband and "believe[s] in [men's] capacity to change and grow" (hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody*, ix).

Her husband's capacity to change is communicated structurally. In "Sandcastles", his lack of eye contact makes his image an 'offer image', "an object of contemplation" (Kress & van Leeuwen, *Reading Images*, 119). We are meant to observe him and consider the act of betrayal he represents. When he later reappears in "All Night", now forgiven and back to being a happy family, Jay-Z is seen making eye contact in the home videos of him and Beyoncé getting matching tattoos and putting on their matching sunglasses. He is looking directly into the camera and smiling, making them 'demand' images. We are now expected to enter into a "relation of social affinity" with him (118). Beyoncé's framing of him signals that

she has forgiven him and it is safe for us to do the same. He is not meant to be on display to represent betrayal, but to be listened to and try to understand. His portrayal is very flattering; a now family oriented and present father and partner. It is a far cry from his description in *Intuition*. His role as a "magician" went from signifying one "able to exist in two places at once", who comes "home at 3 a.m. and lie to me", to the one able to "pull me back together again, the way you cut me in half" (*Intuition*, *Redemption*). He has is no longer the one causing her pain, but the one healing her pain. This is what her line "my torturer became my remedy" encapsulates (*Redemption*, "All Night"). He is present both in Beyoncé and Blue Ivy's lives, not splitting his time between his side chicks and his family. He is not stonewalling her and sneaking mistresses out the back doors, but facing his duties as a father and husband. I would argue that this shows both inner and outer transformation on his part.

This transformation was, however, not achieved through violence. When hooks argues that "women do not and will not seize power and create self-love and self-esteem through violent acts", it reveals a misreading of *Lemonade* and in particular the music video for "Hold Up". Although it seems displaced, her argument illustrates her larger understanding of American culture as one of domination that socialises everyone into condoning violence as the appropriate way to achieve and maintain social control. She argues that it is a culture where "Dominant parties maintain power by the threat (acted upon or not) that abusive punishment, physical or psychological, will be used whenever the hierarchical structures in place are threatened […]" (*Feminism is for Everybody*, 64). As hooks is opposed to all societal hierarchies, it naturally follows that she insists that the feminist movement should work towards the removal of all forms of violence against women, not just male violence, because both men and women are complicit in creating the American culture of violence.

In the music video hooks reads as violent, we hear Beyoncé turn to ascetic practices and self-flagellation in an effort to gain answers and clarity after starting to suspect her husband of being unfaithful. She is parading down the street, wielding a baseball bat which she uses to symbolically and literally destroy a CCTV camera, a fire hydrant, car windows, and a storefront. She does this unapologetically; smiling and laughing all the way through. I disagree with hooks that this represents a "celebration of rage". I argue that this rather an illustration of the basic human response to betrayal and feeling taken for granted; the sudden urge to want to break something in an effort to release tension and channel the emotions externally. She releases her anger whilst reminding her man that "they don't love you like I love you". Her trust has been betrayed and he has embarrassed her on a global scale after the CCTV tape from the Met Gala was leaked. Refusing to act, silently standing by her man while

her sister is trying to hit and kick him, could be read as an act of complicity at the time. But after the release of *Lemonade* it seems like a calculated move both in terms of her spotless, highly managed public image and career wise. She did not want to seem "jealous or crazy" but above handling private issues in public ("Hold Up"). It is also worth pointing out that hooks misses the act of Signifyin(g) on Oshun in this music video and the intertextual reference to Pipilotti Rist's *Everything is Over All*, as mentioned in the formal analysis in chapter 1. Beyoncé is playing a character and referencing Nigerian mythology and European visual art, not trying to signal that violence will improve women's conditions.

Contrary to hooks, Sequoia Maner argues in "Where Do You Go When You Go Quiet?": The Ethics of Interiority in the Fiction of Zora Neale Hurston, Alice Walker, and Beyoncé", that despite addressing violent issues, "*Lemonade* is not explicitly violent" (195). When addressing chattel slavery via images of slave cabins/quarters in the grounds of the plantation manors, Igbo Landing, and the giant oak trees, Beyoncé could have shown scenes of lynching, whippings, or rape. When referencing Hurricane Katrina, we do not see any actual footage from the disaster; there are no images of affected residents struggling in the flood or any of those who lost their lives when they were unable to evacuate. When we see a stage filled with African-American women in the opening chapters of the film, they are not there to be auctioned off. In "Formation", we see a young boy dancing in front of a row of police in riot gear and we hear Messy Mya, a victim to gun violence, but there is no scene depicting a fatal police encounter. The graffiti in the same music video reading "Stop shooting us" is as explicit as it gets, Beyoncé preferring a more implicit and subdued approach. I agree with Maner that taking the subject matter of *Lemonade* into consideration, the violence depicted visually and lyrically is minimal. In the song hooks references, the most violent line is "I don't wanna lose my pride, but I'ma fuck me up a bitch" ("Hold Up). Beyoncé is suspecting her husband has been cheating on her and goes through his call list to confirm. She is conscious of how going after her husband's mistress is beneath her and she should take the high road, but she desires answers and feels betrayed. She wants to hurt the woman she considers a home-wrecker. Luckily, she realises in the following bridge that the person really responsible for the infidelity is her husband. One could argue that this is a threat that illustrates the American culture of domination and violence, but it seems like quite a stretch. It is not a celebration of rage, but a display of hurt and urge to locate the source of pain in order to eliminate it. This is not particular to U. S. culture, but is a global human emotional response. I disagree with hooks that the video to "Hold Up" sends mixed signals in terms of shamelessly performing violent acts whilst the overall message communicates the pain of

emotional violence. What hooks argues is sexualised and eroticised violence is Beyoncé in the role of Oshun symbolically unleashing her anger on parked cars, a fire hydrant, a storefront, and a CCTV camera. She does not use it to obtain domination, but as an emotional outlet. It shows the struggle of wanting to externalise the inner turmoil when realising that your partner has been unfaithful. "Hold Up" does not undercut the message that betrayal and lies hurt, it rather reinforces it. The pain in unbearable, and Beyoncé therefore channels it towards inanimate objects in a fantastical scene. hooks arguing that Black people expect life to contain suffering and that it is "by facing that suffering with grace and dignity that one experienced transformation" creates unrealistic expectations and deprives African-Americans the right and to display their rage and pain. ("Refusing to be a Victim", 52). It is again a nod to respectability politics that seek to police the public behaviour of African-Americans.

3 The Importance of Autobiography in *Lemonade*

> "For most African-American women those individuals who have lived through the experiences about which they claim to be experts are more believable and credible than those who have merely read or thought about such experiences. Thus lived experience as a criterion for credibility frequently is invoked by U.S. Black women when making knowledge claims" (Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 257).

African-American women value lived experience over abstract knowledge. The autobiographical references in the autofictional visual album *Lemonade* therefore lend Beyoncé a sense of authenticity and allows her to create the impression of trustworthiness. This is important when lending her voice to Black women who often find themselves silenced and made invisible in both society and art. The African-American literary tradition of using autobiography to gain credibility stretches back to the slave/emancipation narratives, such as the ones by Olaudah Equiano, Fredrick Douglass, and Harriet Jacobs.

Equiano's autobiography, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African, Written by Himself* (1789), is the first to be written by a slave independently. It is a first-hand testimony against slavery, pleading for its instant abolition. By detailing and emphasising the brutality and horrors of slavery from the perspective of an innocent young Black man, Equiano placed his predominantly white readers on a level that recognised the humanity of Black people.

Douglass' autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Fredrick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* (1845), presented him as an image of the American Dream and a hero. He taught himself how to read and write during his time as a house servant. He later became a farm worker where he endured hard labour, ruthless whippings, and humiliations. His heroic status originated from a scene where Douglass successfully resisted one of his owner's attempted beatings in a manner so intimidating that he was spared any future attacks.

Harriett Jacobs is the earliest known female African-American slave to write her own autobiography. She revealed in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), how Black female slaves suffered from sexual exploitation, but unlike the male slave narratives, she did not frame herself as a victim. She rather illustrated the resilience and strength of Black women when she resisted the sexual exploitation and successfully fled and secured freedom for

herself and her two children. Her autobiography resisted the controlling image of Black women as hypersexual Jezebels, and rather, like Equiano, emphasised their humanity.

Equiano, Douglass, and Jacobs all highlight the fact that they have written their autobiographies themselves because the words 'literate slave' should at the time be contradictory. Black people had been officially denied access to literacy, excluding them from professions of teaching, research and creative writing and from obtaining positions of power. The lack of written literature has always been held against those of African descent as a sign of their inferiority to Europeans. Despite the denial of literacy, Europeans required text to be produced in the language of the slave owners and in Western approved genres for literature, meaning no orature. Being able to master the art of writing was the requirement for acknowledging their humanity and freedom (Kraft, *The African Continuum and Contemporary African American Women Writers*, 46-7). Former slaves emphasising that they had written their autobiographies was therefore used to signal their self-determination, self-reliance, and intellectual capabilities.

The slave narratives often depicted the personal journey from slavery in the South to freedom in the North. The journey, typically framed as one from hell to heaven, was inspired by the slaves' Christian faith and "a commitment to liberty and human dignity comparable […] to that of America's Founding Fathers" (Gates and Smith, vol. 1, 83). The freedom they gained in the North was both related to now being in a free state, but also the freedom of being able to rename oneself and devoting their lives to promote the abolition of slavery. *Lemonade* promotes self-definition and the importance of political activism, but it reverses the signification of the North and the South. The South signifies female utopia in *Lemonade* – the space Black women can exchange experiences, be seen and heard, and receive the support they need. The urban North is not the land of the free, but a fractured and fragmented existence of masculine street culture. The urban landscape in "6 Inch" is characterised by poverty, drugs, alcohol, and the male gaze. The North becomes the image of hell - what Beyoncé wishes to escape. The South is no longer where the women are enslaved, but the symbol of home and rootedness. This is a safe space that promotes community and ensures cultural continuity.

The slave narratives mixed autobiography and social and moral protest. This was extended and adopted by African-American political activists and authors; perhaps most notably by Malcolm X and Maya Angelou. Malcolm X's autobiography, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965), was co-authored by African-American journalist and writer Alex Haley. The narrative forms of the autobiography range from "the spiritual autobiography established

by St. Augustine and the American conversion narrative developed by seventeenth-century Puritans like Jonathan Edwards, to the cheerier secular self-representation of Benjamin Franklin and the emancipation tale of the African American slave narrative" (Gates and Smith, vol. 2, p. 566). The reader is taken on a journey through the different styles and their limits, constantly forced to adjust both what to anticipate and how to assess it. The structure mirrors Malcolm X's quest for authenticity that required being open to new ideas and expressions. Beyoncé's audience is taken on a similar journey in *Lemonade* through a wide variety of genres and styles. The structure reflects Beyoncé's inner emotional development towards "self-knowledge and healing" from intuition to reconciliation (Pinkard, *Tidal*). It also shows her growing confidence as a political leader. Beyoncé aligns herself with Malcolm X through the sampling of his speech in "Don't Hurt Yourself" in terms of an agreed sense of urgency and Black pride.

Maya Angelou's first autobiography, *I Know Why the Caged Birds Sing* (1970), gives an account of the racism she experienced when growing up as a Black girl in Arkansas and the trauma of being raped by her mother's boyfriend at the age of eight. Despite the painful experiences of her childhood, her autobiographies are full of positive values and optimism. Much like in *Lemonade*, the grandmother is a figure that represents resilience and strength - admired for her ability to navigate a racist and sexist society.

Autobiographical elements not only garner credibility, but are also used as tools for exploring the shared experiences of the community, rather than the typical Western tradition of celebrating the supposedly unique individual and his success. Scholar Stephen Butterfield argues in *Black Autobiography in America* that the "self" of Black autobiography is "conceived as a member of an oppressed social group, with ties and responsibilities to the other members" where the personal voice is merged with a communal voice (3). They speak as representatives of their marginalised communities with a felt responsibility to accurately capture them and their struggles. Autobiography enables Black women to self-define; "to name one's reality", a key aspect of Black feminist thought according to Patricia Hill Collins (*Black Feminist Thought,* 300). Beyoncé, as a self-proclaimed representative of African-American women, is voicing and visualising the social problems affecting them from their perspective, the perspective of those affected by racism, sexism, classism, etc. Considering how Black women's experiences are often told through either Black men or white women, this is a crucial move in terms of gaining recognition and having their pain acknowledged.

The tradition of autobiography is not only central to African-American literature. It has been gaining momentum over the last couple of decades, especially in Scandinavia where

a new framework for analysing art that heavily depends on using biographical material has been developed. In the following chapter I will provide theoretical background of the concept 'performative biographism' ('performativ biografisme' in Danish), and its constitutive elements before touching on how Beyoncé also situates herself in the tradition of Hip-hop feminists using their relationships to their mothers, brothers, and self to create new feminist theory and stage authenticity.

3.1 Performative Biographism and the Investment of Bodies and Identities

Danish literary scholar Jon Helt Haarder coined the term 'performative biographism' in an effort to describe and develop a method for analysing the new phenomena that had developed in Scandinavian literature and art post-2000 - art whose primary characteristic is its elaborate biographical referentiality. Artists now use themselves and other real people to provoke reactions through aesthetic interactions with the audience and the public. The biographical reference, through performative biographism, goes from being a secret behind the artwork to acting as material or an effect on its surface, a surface consisting of the audience, the artist, and the artwork itself. The biographical references are no longer hidden but made explicit. This signifies a movement from the man behind the work to women and men in and next to the work (Helt Haarder, *Ingen Fiktion, Bara Reduktion*, 78). The media-saturated society the artwork is a product of makes it impossible to consider as autonomous. It is an intermedial mode "created and operated relationally and contextually in the interplay between artist, audience, artwork, and other media texts" (Lousie Brix-Jacobsen, 253). Its interaction with other contexts and the artist outside the work become focalised.

The performative aspect of the term relates to the interactive dimension with the audience. This interaction results in the artwork not being finished, but happening and evolving. Leaning on Erika Fischer-Lichte's definition of performance, Helt-Haarder considers the release of aesthetic objects events and speech acts. They are not constatives, but performatives. The use of real people means that the aesthetic objects have immediate consequences in real-life and are met by reactions that do not consider the protective cloak of fiction or the rope barriers of art galleries. Performative biographical works elicit two types of responses; a moral one or a questioning of the truth value of what is being told. *Lemonade* received both types of responses, hooks clearly belonging to the latter. These responses form part of the aesthetic object and are products of the energy between the bodies present; the boundaries between artist and audience are dissolved and they all participate in a collective

experience that is located in-between aesthetic phenomenon and social happening. Beyoncé turned the release of *Lemonade* into an event by first premiering the visual album on HBO before releasing the musical album for download later the same day, along with an accompanying digital booklet with pictures from the visual album. She ensured that her audience would be exposed to the visual biographical references before listening to the album on its own.

'Performative' also relates to the Maskenspiel or experimentation with masks found in the aesthetic object and the biographical irreversibility. The latter refers to how the audience often implicitly or explicitly know something about the artist that will affect their understanding of the aesthetic object. Artists today who are working with autobiographical material treat the 'authentic' and 'real' as basic elements in their artistic expression, to the extent that we can talk about it becoming a movement, an –ism, hence 'biograph*ism*'. These references are part of the staging and experimentation with identity. Biographical references act as aesthetic tools in the aesthetic object; they create public debates or stories in the media as a result of the uncertainty and ambiguity surrounding what is factual and what is fictional.

Artists exploring and playing with their own identities are relatively safe, but ethical implications arise as soon as they start experimenting with identities other than their own. Artists often incorporate family members, close friends, or acquaintances into their aesthetic objects. This is evident in *Lemonade* where Beyoncé's husband and father are both named and shamed. Their transgressions are made public both to avoid repeated offence and to create a sense of authenticity through the sharing of intimate information. Her husband is likened to her father already in the opening of the visual album when Beyoncé recites Shire: "You remind me of my father, a magician…able to exist in two places at once" (*Intuition*). The media's speculations seem to be confirmed; both her father and her husband cheated on their wives. Later including their actual faces and bodies, not only alluding to them lyrically, signals the genuine quality of what is disclosed, and makes it impossible for the audience to avoid drawing on their cultural encyclopaedia and feel as though they are gaining a truthful insight inside Beyoncé and Jay-Z's marriage. Whether we like it or not, the information obtained through peritexts does influence our interpretation. Mathew Knowles and Tina Lawson's divorce in 2011 was widely covered in the media with reports of him fathering a lovechild with one of his mistresses. We naturally connect this information with the line "able to exist in two places at once", and understand that Beyoncé is referring to her father living a double life. The ethical aspect is then brought into question when we consider how both Beyoncé's husband and father have been given public identities as unfaithful husbands

following the release of the visual album, an identity marker difficult to shift. Their characterisation in the visual album will leave a lasting imprint on how they are perceived in the public eye.

Jacques Derrida argued that the confession has transformational potential: "The confession is a matter of transforming my relationship to the other, of transforming myself by admitting my guilt. In the confession there is a saying of the event, of what happened, that produces another event and is not a saying of knowledge" ("A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event", 448). Beyoncé and *Lemonade* do not just state that Jay-Z and Mathew Knowles cheated on their wives, but transform the energy created between Beyoncé and her audience when the visual album was released into a feedback loop. This is evident in "the headlines it generated, the memes it launched, the countless nerves it hit" (Harris-Perry, *The Messenger*). The confessions were not met by indifference or apathy, but changed how we see Jay and Mathew. Their cultural signification has changed. Although their portrayals in *Accountability* and *Redemption* show them as present loving and caring fathers and grandfather, this only adds to their masks. They do not replace the masks that mark them as unfaithful husbands.

Although the biographical references in the form of real people are characters in *Lemonade*, the investment of their actual bodies and names also make them senders able to use the visual album for self-fashioning purposes. The self-acting characters in *Lemonade* are exhibiting agency in their character construction because they bring "their extratextual identities and their intention to represent those identities in a combination of referentiality and invention" (Jacobsen, 257). They are actively involved in their own self-fashioning and identity negotiation by playing themselves in the public sphere, constructing new masks to nuance their already established extratextual identities. It also functions as "an extradiegetic interruption within the narrative structure" (Willis, "Do the Right Thing", 780). Biographical elements in a fictional setting rupture the narrative universe, signalling interaction with a world beyond the screen. We are not meant to treat the visual album as strictly fictional, but as an experimental hybrid between documentary elements and a distinct fictional narrative

Beyoncé and Jay-Z are obviously self-acting in the visual album with both personal and political intentions, but their other family members, celebrity friends, and political activists all have an agenda for lending their bodies and names to the production. Serena Williams using the album as a way to respond to the media that has continuously devalued her performance and described her in animal and grotesque terms, as well as subverting the controlling image of the Jezebel, has been covered in the previous chapter. The Mothers of

the Movement bring both their own bodies and their late sons' in order to personalise their message and raise awareness of police violence. They ensure that the deaths of their sons are not reduced to statistics. By combining the mothers' grieving faces and their sons' smiling portraits, Brown's being his graduation picture, Beyoncé highlights the injustice of robbing these innocent young men of their youth. This is why *Lemonade* would have benefitted from showcasing more female victims of police brutality. By offering visual representation, the female victims could finally gain the recognition they deserve. It holds the potential to evoke the sense of urgency needed to bring about important legislative change that would protect rather than exploit Black women. Reducing the female victims to numbers and figures makes them easily forgotten and ignored. The male victims pictured in "Forward" have become icons for the Black Lives Matter movement. Investing the women's faces and bodies would have helped nuance the public perception of both the systemic issue of police brutality and violence and the Black Lives Matter movement.

Beyoncé self-acting in the visual album allows her to reject the image created after the surveillance tape was leaked. The perception of Beyoncé as the wife that neither intervenes when her sister physically attacks her husband, nor exhibits any emotion during the incident, was not compatible with her own desired public persona. She did not wish to be reduced to a silent victim of her husband's infidelity or be ashamed of being cheated on. By partaking in performative biographism where she mixes fictional and non-fictional elements, Beyoncé is able to construct new public masks based on her performance in *Lemonade*. She is able to rhetorically employ fictionalisation in order to comment on rumours and publically designated masks. She has created a space where she can exaggerate her emotional expressions. In "Hold Up" and "Don't Hurt Yourself" Beyoncé can display her rage and expose her husband's infidelity more explicitly than she would have been able to if she were doing a regular sit-down interview. It would break with social conventions/decorum. In *Lemonade* Beyoncé can hide behind the mask of fictionality if something becomes too uncomfortable or controversial. In an interview you must be prepared to defend your utterances and expect to be taken literally, whilst in performative biographism the audience responds to the aesthetic object in large because the artist leaves elements suspended on the topic of what is true and what is fiction. Beyoncé can therefore experiment with the different masks of her role as wife and mother, ranging from being insecure and betrayed, to angry and tired of being neglected and taken for granted by her husband, ignoring him and focusing on her female friends, the single-mother, the hard-working woman, the assertive wife making demands for what it would take for her to take her husband back, the regretful wife missing

her husband, the all loved-up wife and mother of the nuclear family, and the empowering political leader of African-American women. She is not quiet or invisible, but self-acting in a wide range of masks, making it harder to pin her down and redirecting more power in her direction in terms of curating her public image.

Beyoncé as an artist is not a character she has sole control over, but is rather 'socially defined'. Bourdieu argued in "Intellectual Field and Creative Project" that:

> The artist may accept or reject this image of himself which society reflects back at him, he cannot ignore it: by the intermediary of the social image which has the opacity and inevitability of an established fact, society intervenes at the very centre of the creative project thrusting upon the artist its demands and refusals, its expectations and its indifference. (cited in Helt Haarder, *Ingen Fiktion. Bara Reduktion*, 87).

The public image created by society must be addressed because it affects the image Beyoncé is constructing of herself. She is not alone in the process of narrating her life - she is always competing with others' stories about her. *Lemonade* is a product of this struggle. Her marriage was scrutinized in the media after the leaked CCTV footage. This altered her otherwise highly controlled and spotless public persona. By releasing a confessional album and accompanying film where she addresses the marital infidelity rumours and the surrogacy rumours surrounding her first pregnancy, she is experimenting with and attempting to regain control of her public image. The concept of the "real" no longer exists, only strategic masks on can put on. It boils down to a desire to regulate and govern her own public identity. She wishes to relocate some of the traditional and social media's defining power to herself. She is contributing to her own feedback loop as a result of 'alternative writers', i. e. her audience and the public who has weighed in on her private life, commenting on and making allegations. None of the involved in the elevator altercation delivered any official responses, leaving the rumours to flourish online over what sparked Solange to physically attack her brother-in-law. I argue that Beyoncé purposely delayed her response to create suspense. The only way to get seemingly personal information about her and Jay-Z's relationship was to buy Lemonade on TIDAL, Jay-Z's streaming platform. This adds an exclusive element to the album, increasing its value.

The authenticity of *Lemonade* is brought into question by its hypermediacy. Hypermediacy contains a dual fascination with reality and the medium/technology that reproduces reality. By drawing attention to the medium, we become aware of the illusion of unmediated return of the real created by centring "trauma, blood, sex, ethnicity" ("Inga

fiktion, bara reduktion", Haarder, 83). The hypermediacy of *Lemonade* highlights how the biographical references are malleable elements to artists using performative biographism. Our attention is drawn to the medium both by the frequent eye contact Beyoncé makes, but also through the scene in "Hold Up" where she first smashes a CCTV camera outside a shop after posing for it, and later hitting the professional camera filming her, seeing the camera fall to the ground where the child who owns the baseball bat used to hit it with comes over and curiously stares directly into it/examining it. The foregrounding of the camera and intersecting professional quality with 8mm shots draw attention to how what appears authentic and raw is highly mediated and constructed. Her posing in front of the CCTV camera reveals how aware Beyoncé is of her presence in the public eye and how she takes on a persona when she knows she is being watched. So although the visual album is meant to seem authentic and genuine, there are elements that reveal the constructed and staged aspect of it.

3.2 Contesting Master Narratives

Master narratives and their assumed universality are today met with scepticism due to how they have repeatedly ignored social categories, such as race and gender. According to literary theorist Jean-Francois Lyotard, contemporary Western discourse prefers little narratives that "present local explanations of individual events or phenomena but do not claim to explain everything" (Bennett & Royle, 328). These little narratives are fragmentary and subjective narratives, presenting knowledge as situated, a product of our surroundings and the contexts in which it is presented. This favouring of little narratives can according to Professor of Screen Media, Jon Dovey, be seen as a symptom of a new 'regime of truth' that values individual subjective reflexive experience over generalised transparent objective claims of truth. The subjective experience and intimate details come to signify authentic knowledge. Regime of truth is here used in the Foucauldian sense where there is no absolute truth, only a society's accepted discourses that it considers to be true. It also refers to a society's preferred methods for obtaining truth and how we treat those we believe are telling the truth. In postmodernity; "Subjectivity, the personal, the intimate, becomes the only remaining response to a chaotic, senseless, out of control world which the kind of objectivity demanded by grand narratives is no longer possible" (Jon Dovey, *Freakshow: first person media and factual television*, 26). The postmodern world is too fragmented and decentred to trust any claim of absolute truth or objectivity. We no longer consider grand narratives to contain any truth

value, and we depend on little narratives to feel as though we are gaining authentic information about the world.

Lemonade as a little narrative, a confessional counternarrative, lends a voice to those formerly excluded from the dominant narratives of the culture; African-American women. Like in Harriet Jacobs's autobiography, African-American women are not silenced or reduced to controlling images in the visual album, but are humanised and centred. Beyoncé is not the invulnerable Strong Black woman or the one-dimensional Angry Black woman. She, along with the long list of women featured in the visual album, are multi-faceted and have complex emotional lives. In *Lemonade,* they are allowed to move through all twelve adapted stages of grief, from *Intuition* to *Redemption*. Already in the opening chapter we see Beyoncé so worn down and exhausted by her husband's lies and deceit that she is ready to leap off a building, eyes filled with tears and arms raised horizontally in a cross-formation. Her vulnerability is evident from the start; both visually through her tear-filled eyes, and lyrically when she tells her husband "I'm prayin' you catch me" (Pray You Catch Me"). She is not afraid to let her husband and her audience know that she is hurt by what she suspects is his betrayal and that this state of not knowing is leading her to symbolically leap off the tall building and commit suicide. She cannot withstand anything thrown at her. Even she is reduced to self-blame and self-doubt when she in the following chapter tries to change and punish herself in an effort to find the answer to why her husband cheated. This is a counternarrative to the dominant Strong Black woman portrayal where Black women are depicted as "independent, resilient, and over-extending in work and nurturance while remaining immune to the psychological toll of abuse, neglect and abandonment (Edwards et al., 86). No matter the oppression or injustice, these women flourish. They are able to develop despite all the obstacles they face privately and structurally, a dehumanising controlling image.

In the West, confession is used to produce 'truth'. Foucault argued that "Western man has become a confessing animal" - the structure is found everywhere and lays the foundation of how we perceive individual identity (*The History of Sexuality,* 59). Since the publication of his seminal work, public confessionals have only increased along with the development of new technologies. But if we look historically, we find that there are strong ties between women and the confessional performance. Performance art allowed women to gain visibility and vocality that had previously been kept from them in terms of access to art movements. Although a powerful and constructive genre, it has routinely been devalued and labelled 'raw', 'narcissistic', and 'unformed' due to it being considered a feminine space (Irene Gammel cited in Deidre Heddon, 139). Beyoncé situating herself in this tradition of female confessionals of

personal experience signals both the value of the genre/mode and of her life. By performing and staging her life in the public sphere, she is communicating that her life and experiences, and by extension the lives and experiences of other Black women, deserve to be heard. The structure of the confessional is ideal in terms of enabling "counter-discursive stories, the forging of other truths, other possible lives" (Heddon, 139). Beyoncé and her story of Black female experience function as a counternarrative to the dominant narratives of American culture where the Black female perspective is erased, silenced, or exploited through controlling images. It reveals the destructive and false quality of racist/sexist stereotypes of Black womanhood and Black families. Beyoncé and the other women confess to their pain, making it public how they have been hurt both by their loved ones and by the government meant to protect them. This alters the usual narratives of the American Dream and the morally superior 'City Upon a Hill' that the rest of the world supposedly aspires towards. The 'moral superiority' is questioned and found to be false when looking at the federal government's insufficient handling of Hurricane Katrina and how police officers who have killed innocent African-Americans are often acquitted at trial.

The structure of *Lemonade* invites its audience to relate their own experiences to those in the narrative. "Testimony calls forth testimony" (Miller and Taylor, "The Constructed Self: Strategic and Aesthetic Choices in Autobiographical Performance", 177). By bearing witness to the pain she has endured and overcome in relation to her husband's and father's infidelity, and by including the inspiration work the Mothers of the Movement have done in transforming their pain into activism, Beyoncé is inviting her audience to testify to the injustice done to them. She encourages "reflection, challenge, and transformation" in the recipients (Miller & Taylor, 171). The audience is not meant to passively consume *Lemonade*, but actively consider their own lives and intersecting identities as Black women, resist controlling images, transform their consciousness through the visual album's consciousness raising properties, mobilise and become the leaders of this new era of activism against racism and social injustice.

3.3 Meyrowitz' 'Middle Region'

Media scholar Joshua Meyrowitz' notion of 'middle region' is visible in *Lemonade*. Meyrowitz extends sociologist Erving Goffman's theory of back and front region behaviours. Goffman's theory of social interaction suggests that we all play multiple roles on different social stages. We adapt and offer different versions of ourselves depending on the audience, the situation,

and our role in it. We depend on internalising social conventions and practicing our performances because we need predictable behaviour for social life to run smoothly. Goffman divides our behaviour into 'front stage' and 'backstage' behaviour. Front stage refers to the public sphere where we have an "audience" present. Here we perform a fairly ideal image of a social role. The back stage refers to the closed off or hidden private sphere characterised by informality. Goffman argues that we find symbolic acts of intimacy or disrespect in this region, such as profanity, open sexual remarks, 'sloppy' sitting posture, use of dialect or substandard speech, playful aggressivity etc. (*The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, 128). By invoking these acts, any region can be transformed into a backstage.

Meyrowitz' extends Goffman's theory to include how the introduction of new media has impacted our behaviour. We no longer have static boundaries between front stage and backstage behaviour, but a merged 'middle region' behaviour that:

> develops when audience members gain a "sidestage view". That is, they see parts of the traditional backstage area along with parts of the traditional onstage area; they see the performer move from backstage to onstage to backstage (*No Sense of Place*, 51).

Electronic picture media favour expressive backstage information that appeals to our emotions and senses. They break down the traditional spheres of print culture by introducing a much easier code and by visualising the body and situation. Picture media have restructured the basic sociological conditions by acclimatizing us to the area backstage always being visible, both privately and publicly. We are now allowed access to the formerly out of bounds/hidden backstage behaviour. As a result, we now have forms of communication characterised by a more informal and personal tone. We are witnessing a staging of the self where the artist steps into character and occurs in the (liminal) space between the private and the public.

The middle region often involves former backstage behaviour being transformed into front stage behaviour. Meyrowitz argues that this is due to front stage behaviour being more varied and malleable, whilst backstage largely consists of universal essential human behaviour, such as sleep, eating, sex, bodily waste, as well as emotions such as "depressions, anxieties, and doubts" (*No Sense of Place*, 52). We try not to draw too much attention to our efforts to hide our backstage behaviour because it would reveal the staged aspect of our performance. We control as much as we can in terms of access to backstage information, but we are not always in complete control of what information escapes. Meyrowitz argues that in cases where "damaging backstage information escapes into front region, it is often integrated

into the performance" (53). The leaked information cannot be ignored because it would cause our personalities to appear inconsistent and highlight the calculated character of our performance. We must acknowledge the leaked information, place it into the feedback loop, and use it in our next performance.

The middle region and its characteristic behaviour pattern is employed in *Lemonade*. We clearly see Goffman's symbolic acts of intimacy and disrespect throughout the visual album, especially in the lyrics. The track "Don't Hurt Yourself" illustrates a mixture of both the profanity and open sexual remarks Goffman argues characterises the backstage region:

> Who the fuck do you think I am?
> You ain't married to no average bitch, boy
> You can watch my fat ass twist, boy
> As I bounce to the next dick, boy

Such use of language was previously reserved for the private, invisible backstage where you could relax and step out of character. This behaviour has now been made public and part of Beyoncé's character. A wife would not have publically addressed her husband this aggressively or infantilised him by referring to him as 'boy', nor would she evoke such explicit sexual imagery. In the music video for "Sorry" we also find Beyoncé sitting in a "sloppy" sitting position when she sprawls across what appears to be a throne with her legs on the armrest. Being situated in the vernacular tradition of African-American literature and *Lemonade* being an album, Beyoncé naturally also makes use of Black vernacular elements. In "Hold Up" we hear Beyoncé sing "me sing se" which is Jamaican Patois for "I sing that". This adds to the visual reference to Nigeria and Nigerian mythology in the music video because the word "se" is partly derived from the Igbo language of Nigeria. In the public region one would expect standard and formal language, not the nonstandard colloquial variety usually reserved for the home/private sphere. All these elements combined create a false sense of intimacy. As an audience we would not have been allowed to witness this side of Beyoncé if the static boundaries between the private and public sphere were still prevalent. This would have been reserved for when she let the mask drop. But now it is part of a mask and a strategy of staged intimacy and authenticity. She gains agency and power through strategic aestheticizing of traditional soft values, such as openness, presence, and honesty.

Beyoncé also reveals her "depressions, anxieties, and doubts". In the chapter *Apathy* we learn how finding out about her husband's infidelity made her feel, as the chapter title indicates, apathetic:

> So what are you gonna say at my funeral, now that you've killed me? Here lies the body of the love of my life, whose heart I broke without a gun to my head. Here lies the mother of my children, both living and dead. Rest in peace, my true love, who I took for granted. Most bomb pussy who, because of me, sleep evaded. Her god listening. Her heaven will be a love without betrayal. Ashes to ashes, dust to side chicks.

She is providing her husband with material to use in her eulogy now that his betrayal has killed her. She is devoid of emotion, feeling numb. She is disappointed and depressed as a result of her husband's neglect and complete disregard of how their children would be affected by his transgressions, which he performed out of free will. He has been blind to what was right in front of him, the love of his life. Beyoncé is not putting on a mask and pretending that their marriage is flawless or that she was unaffected by her husband's cheating. She is confessing how badly she was hurt when she found out. She even questions if the betrayal is the result of something she did: "Tell me, what did I do wrong?" and doubts her husband's affections for her: "If I wasn't me, would you still feel me?/ Like on my worst day? Or am I not thirsty enough?" ("Love Drought"). She is both making her self-doubt concerning her libido public, but also her insecurities surrounding her appearance. When learning that her husband's side chick was white, Beyoncé offers to wear his mistress' skin and hair to become his "perfect girl" (*Anger*). She also tries to abstain from worldly pleasures and seeks forgiveness for her sins. *Lemonade* exposes Beyoncé's anxieties and doubts over her own complicity in her husband's choice to cheat and her feeling of inferiority. This, in conjunction with the deeply personal and intimate home videos included in the music video for "All Night" and what is meant to look like private Polaroids of her and Jay-Z in the digital booklet, make us feel as though we are allowed a sidestage view of Beyoncé, her public persona and her private, "real" person which works to "heighten the affective connection to [her] audience" (P. David Marshall, "The Promotion and Presentation of the Self: Celebrity as Marker of Presentational Media", 37). We become virtual guests at Beyoncé and Jay-Z's wedding and feel as though we are facetiming Beyoncé when she reveals her pregnant bump due to it being filmed on a web-camera. We are allowed access to closed events, such as Tina Lawson's wedding and Hattie White's 90th birthday party. This seems less mediated and sensationalised than if we were to obtain the information through peritexts. The home videos function as authentication markers because they coincide with what we know about Beyoncé's life from the public press and the documentary she released in 2013, *Life is But a Dream*. They also make it clear that the "I" of all the lyrics and spoken-word poetry is meant to be

read as representing Beyoncé the person, not a fictional character. Beyoncé stages an intimate relationship with her audience, as if they are part of her inner circle.

Lemonade also provides a great example of how to incorporate and capitalise on damaging backstage information that has escaped into the front region. The leaked surveillance tape and the subsequent infidelity rumours in the media cannot be ignored or hidden. If Beyoncé had actively tried to deny that aspect of her story and keep it hidden, she would have come across as highly calculated and staged, performing a persona rather than sharing her real person. She would have lost the sense of intimacy and authenticity sharing personal information creates. Her credibility would also dissolve because she would have no lived experience to bond over with the other Black women she wishes to inspire and empower. Sharing her pain and vulnerability has enabled Beyoncé to position herself on her intended audience's level. That would be lost if she had presented a glamorised image, and a hierarchy would be installed. Her efforts would have read as disingenuous rather than a real attempt at collective consciousness-raising. *Lemonade* becomes an arena where Beyoncé is allowed to give her version of events and as a result expand and self-construct her social masks. She is rejecting the image assigned her by the media, and rather talks back and self-defines.

3.4 Threshold Aesthetics

Beyoncé establishes what Haarder calls 'threshold aesthetics'. This is done through biographical speech acts in a public setting, a result of the middle region. The audience is both told that *Lemonade* is a work of fiction, signalled by the genre being a visual album/long-form music video and not a documentary, and shown biographical references that invite a non-fictional interpretation throughout that the audience recognises because they have access to peritextual information about Beyoncé and her life. It alludes to our cultural encyclopaedia in the same way references to historical circumstances or intertextuality does.

The tension between the fictional elements and the non-fictional elements, authenticity and staging, is meant to provoke the audience into contributing to the feedback loop. This is also the result of a conflict between suzjet and fabula and of being in a place where one continuously has to question what is factual and what is fictional. The result is that we contribute our interpretations, which can later be turned into a new aesthetic object. Our contributions become part of the performance. The non-fictional elements are meant to produce a sense of confidentiality and make it seem personal, but because it is meant for

public distribution Beyoncé stylizes herself between the role she has established as the empowered feminist who publically calls out her man when he transgresses and the backstage Beyoncé. By confessing to her husband's cheating and her subsequent self-blaming and –doubting and sharing her brutally honest thoughts and emotions in the public sphere, she invites the audience into a more intimate relationship where you feel as though you know the 'real' Beyoncé, not just one of her masks. This is constructed backstage that can easily be interpreted as authenticity.

We see the beginning formation of an eternal feedback loop when we consider Jay-Z's album *4:44* (2017) and their joint album *Everything is Love* (2018). *4:44* is a response to *Lemonade* and opens with the track "Kill Jay-Z" in which he directly comments on the leaked footage from the altercation in the elevator between him and his sister-in-law: "You egged Solange on/Knowin' all along all you had to say you was wrong". He explicitly names his sister-in-law, inviting a non-fictional reading. He confirms the public suspicion that *Lemonade* was a response to the leaked tape, and that Jay-Z's album adds to the feedback loop and responds to *Lemonade*, confirming that he was unfaithful. The track "Family Feud", whose video includes Beyoncé and Blue Ivy, responds to Beyoncé's track "Sorry": "Yeah, I'll fuck up a good thing if you let me/ Let me alone, Becky". Jay-Z is seen rapping these lines whilst in a confessional booth. We see him through the latticed screen, positioning him as the penitent subject desiring our forgiveness after cheating on his wife with 'Becky' and neglecting his family. He continues the confessional motif Beyoncé started in *Lemonade*. He has realised how he let his family down and the pain it caused them, emphasised by the visuals showing Blue Ivy sitting on one of the church benches as he is heard rapping: "Nobody wins when the family feuds". Just like in *Lemonade*, Blue Ivy is portrayed as the innocent victim of her parents' feud and as one of the main reasons why Beyoncé was willing to consider forgiveness and reconciliation. Beyoncé and Jay-Z have realised that nothing is more important than family, which is why their main priorities now are being good parents and keeping the family together. This is highlighted by the home videos in "All Night" depicting the three of them together. The most intimate is one that depicts what appears to be Blue's first birthday party. She is seen sitting on Beyoncé's lap and feeding Jay-Z cake. Beyoncé is looking lovingly at Jay-Z with no resentment or bitterness. She has forgiven him and is enjoying being able to raise and experience their daughter's milestones together.

The two confessional albums, *Lemonade* and *4:44*, culminated in Beyoncé and Jay-Z's joint album, *Everything is Love* (2018). This also deals with their marital problems. The

concluding track of the album is dedicated to showing how happy they are together, despite still having to work on their problems:

> Baby, the ups and downs are worth it
> Long way to go, but we're workin'
> We're flawed but we're still perfect for each other
> Sometimes I thought we'd never see the light
> Went through hell with heaven on our side ("LOVEHAPPY")

These lyrics work to further confirm the narrative of *Lemonade*; that it was true that Jay-Z cheated but Beyoncé decided to forgive him and try to work through their difficulties. It has not been easy, but their love makes it worth fighting for. Beyoncé and Jay-Z have found a way to stay relevant. By constantly adding some information about their private life and sharing documentary home footage, they keep the interest going and provoke their audience into reacting because they feel as though they are let in on a secret, something they should not have access to. They create a sense of verisimilitude. The three albums are connected narratively, adding to the story and confirming each other. None of them deviate from the original narrative of *Lemonade*, increasing the credibility of Beyoncé and the visual album. The consistency of the biographical references makes the fictional element less prominent, and enhances the authenticity and credibility.

After the shooting of Michael Brown and death of Freddie Gray, anti-police brutality protests broke out in Ferguson and Baltimore. Knowing that Beyoncé and Jay-Z helped bail out protesters who could not afford their own bail, strengthens the genuine character of *Lemonade*'s references to Black Lives Matter and its message against police violence (Glenza, *Guardian*). The accusations against Beyoncé for appropriating the tragedy of Hurricane Karina are also weakened when her audience learns that she along with her parents, sister, and former band mate Kelly Rowland, founded The Survivor Foundation in 2005 to help those displaced by the hurricane by offering cost-free transitional housing for victims and evacuees (Lewis, *Essence*). Beyoncé rather comes across as someone truthfully concerned about the residents' wellbeing, not someone capitalising on their pain and exploiting the tragedy to further her own career. We understand that the references are not superficial, as suggested by hooks, but deeply personal and sincere.

3.5 Hip-Hop Feminist Autobiography

Autobiography is not just a well-established genre within African-American and Scandinavian literature, but also amongst hip-hop feminists. They use music to share aspects of their personal lives with their audience. Scholar Gwendolyn Pough argues in *Check It While I Wreck It,* that these aspects often extend beyond the artist herself and rather represent larger issues or highlight connections between the artist and other Black women. Her audience is able to relate to the artist's life story because they see themselves represented. Hip-hop then has the ability to communicate an artist's life story and function didactically. Her audience can learn from her learned life lessons and apply them to their own lives.

Already in the title of *Lemonade* it is signalled how the album is meant to extend beyond the personal narrative of Beyoncé. The title references Hattie White's birthday speech found in the chapter *Redemption* where she shares how despite a life of hardship and adversity, she has managed to turn these experiences into something positive and prosper. It speaks to the African-American expression of making a way out of no way, bringing forth the legacy of Black women's historical and current resilience. In terms of Beyoncé, her visual album is what extends the signification of the musical album's personal narrative. On the album, "Freedom" and "Formation" are the tracks that can be read as being explicitly political. The remaining ten tracks steer more towards the personal narrative of Beyoncé's tragedy. The visual album with Shire's poetry connecting each track and chapter broadens the picture. Beyoncé is able to specify and intensify the political aspect of her message. Including easily recognisable faces and bodies that represent current political movements and paying homage to Black men and women who came before her and paved the way illustrate Beyoncé's political agenda. I disagree with hooks' argument that Beyoncé's sampling of and visually referencing political figures are superficial. She rather honours their invaluable contributions to the Civil Rights movement and positions herself as the next step in the still unfinished project of creating an American society where African-Americans can live lives free of oppression and exploitation, a culture free of sexism, racism, classism, etc. She is the leader of the women she speaks to in "Formation" where she tells them to "get in formation" and "prove to me you got some coordination". Beyoncé wants all Black women to come together and unite against the systems and structures that enable the continual oppression of African-Americans, because when they work as a collective, they are "magic" (*Resurrection*).

The sampled excerpts of interviews with ordinary African-Americans in *Accountability*, *Resurrection,* and *Redemption* are the clearest illustrations of how the

personal narrative of the album is extended to represent larger issues. In *Accountability* we meet a poor, working-class adolescent African-American man from New Orleans who shares insight into the hopelessness and meaninglessness he experienced before his inspirational meeting with Obama, where he realised his worth and that gave him the confidence to believe in himself and his potential. *Resurrection* features a middle-aged working-class African-American woman who talks about the importance of religious faith during times of personal crises and how we should lead the younger generation with love. In the last of the three chapters we find Hattie White's speech. She commends herself for being resilient throughout her life, symbolically commending all Black women for their ability to survive and prosper despite barriers and obstacles erected to keep them subordinated. These sampled excerpts testify to different aspects of the African-American experience. Their learned life lessons illustrate the wide sources of hope, inspiration, and love, and the importance of these factors in the African-American community. Using real people depicted in grainy 8mm visuals increases the feeling of authenticity, that these selected people accurately represent their communities.

The feeling of authenticity is also produced when Beyoncé describes staying in her marriage despite suspecting that her husband was cheating on her. She knows that she deserves better, but struggles to leave him: "although I promised that I couldn't stay, baby/Every promise don't work out that way" ("Sandcastles"). She poses the question: "Tell me, what did I do wrong?" ("Love Drought"). By reflecting on and admitting to how she was also complicit in her heartache and pain, her audience connects with her and can acknowledge their own complicity. Self-reflection and acknowledgement of personal complicity make the songs more than "the typical my-man-did-me-wrong songs" (Pough, 109). This would counter hooks' argument that *Lemonade* is a "he was my man alright, but he done me wrong" narrative ("Moving"). By reflecting on how she stayed and kept quiet despite knowing that "you come home at 3 a.m. and lie to me" and feeling that "you've killed me" creates a model of critical self-reflection that is crucial to autobiography (*Intuition*; *Apathy*). She is not simply framing her husband and his actions as bad, but showing that she might have enabled it and actively chose to return to him.

One can draw a parallel between Beyoncé's *Lemonade* and Lauryn Hill's *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* in terms of releasing their autobiographies in the form of music. Both their albums are honest and nuanced portrayals that do not romanticise but openly share their personal tragedy as well as victories. Part of the reason why *Lemonade* comes across as genuine and honest is its connection to peritexts, such as the leaked surveillance tape and

interviews. The interview that most explicitly confirmed that the infidelity narrative was based on real events was one Jay-Z gave on *My Next Guest Needs No Introduction with David Letterman* in 2018:

> I want to cry, I want to be open, I want to have the emotional tools that it takes to keep my family together…And much like you, I have a beautiful wife who was understanding and knew that I'm not the worst of what I've done. And we did the hard work of going to therapy…I like to think that we're in a better place today, but still working, still communicating and growing. I'm proud of the father and husband that I am today because of all the work that was done.

Jay-Z had confirmed his infidelity in an interview with Dean Baquet in the *New York Times*'s *T* magazine in November 2017, but not offered as much insight as he did with Letterman. He accepts responsibility for his transgressions, admitting that his lack of emotional cues which prevented him from properly connecting with his wife, lead to his infidelity. This, along with his confessional album *4:44*, his response to *Lemonade*, confirm the speculations circulating in the media and amongst his and Beyoncé's fans for years. Beyoncé and Jay-Z's joint album, *Everything is Love* also reference the infidelity and how it almost broke up their family:

> Beyoncé: Yeah, you fucked up the first stone, we had to get remarried
> Jay-Z: Yo, chill man
> B: We keepin' it real with these people, right?/Lucky I ain't kill you when I met that b-
> J: Nah, aight, aight. Y'all Know how I met her, we broke up and got back together/To get her back, I had to sweat her./Y'all could make up with a bag, I had to change the weather

They confess to breaking up for a while as a result of his infidelity, but have since found their way back to each other, worked on their marriage, and even remarried as a symbol of their renewed commitment to each other. These peritexts, interviews, Jay-Z's confessional album, and their joint album, all contribute to the blurring of lines between life and art, facts and fiction. This illustrates Meyrowitz' concept of a sidestage view. Beyoncé and Jay-Z stage these authentic, intimate bonds with their audience in order to inspire them with their success story and to create a sense of loyalty between them. They do not represent a broken home, but a resilient family able to work through their problems - an image far from the one perpetuated by the Moynihan report.

Beyoncé situates herself in the company of other female Hip-Hop artists and feminists who build on Black women's activist legacy and explore new territory. According to Black feminist scholar Kimberly Springer, these women specifically explore "young Black women's

relationship to our personal and political histories", "relationship to self", and "Black women's relationships to Black men" ("Third Wave Black Feminism?", 1060). Their identities are both influenced by their current situation and their historical past. Hip-hop feminists base new theory and activism on these relationships and are able to "bring wreck to the misconception and stereotypes of Black womanhood that inhibit their lives" (Pough, 112). 'Bringing wreck' refers to how African-Americans have had to disrupt the public gaze in order to humanise themselves and gain a position in the public sphere. Hip-hop feminists have used wreck to challenge controlling images of Black womanhood and expand the public understanding of Black female identity and sexuality.

In terms of personal and political histories, *Lemonade* showcases Beyoncé' relationship to her political foremothers in the music video for "Forward". Here we see the Mothers of the Movement and Leah Chase, the Queen of Creole Cuisine. Chase, along with her husband, Edgar Dooky Chase, own the restaurant *Dooky Chase Restaurant* in New Orleans which is known for being one of the few places in the segregated city where mixed race groups could meet and discuss strategies during the Civil Rights Movement. Martin Luther King Jr., who is featured in the music video for "Formation", visited the restaurant and would discuss strategy with local Civil Rights leaders. The restaurant also opened its doors to "Black voter registration campaign organizers, the NAACP, backdoor political meetings" and would cash pay cheques for their patrons during a time when there were no Black-owned banks in the African-American community in New Orleans (*Dookychaserestaurant.com*). Beyoncé honours the Black women who inspired her to fight for African-American rights and to take risks to support what you really believe in. Releasing the track and music video for "Formation" involved taking a risk for Beyoncé because unlike the majority of the previous work, this track "unapologetically focuses on black American experiences and comments on contemporary issues of racial injustice" (Lauron Kehrer, "Who Slays? Queer Resonances in Beyoncé's *Lemonade*, 82). Instead of targeting a global audience and staying quiet during a time that saw increasing amounts of footage showcasing the severity of police violence and racial tension, Beyoncé chose to use her platform to mark her alliance with Black Lives Matter and critique the U.S.' continued legacy of oppression and exploitation of African-Americans. She took a risk in her career that did result in law enforcement claiming that "Formation" and her performance of it during the 2016 Super Bowl was anti-cop due to her and her dancers' costumes visually referencing the Black Panthers. This lead to police unions discouraging their members from working for Beyoncé as security during her next tour. Beyoncé responded by launching "Boycott Beyoncé" merchandise to be sold at her concerts,

an illustration of her established feedback loop. Even the negative responses to her performance are converted into new aesthetic objects. Their threats did not intimidate her. Instead of apologising or downplaying the political message of the song, she chose to capitalise on the media attention.

Nina Simone is also referenced both through the sampling of "Look of Love" in *Forgiveness* and visually when we see her album *Silk & Soul*. Simone is a political foremother and inspiration to Beyoncé in terms of being a Black female artist and a civil rights activist that used her music to express her political views. Simone is known for writing protest songs, "Mississippi Goddamn" perhaps being the most well-known. On *Silk & Soul* we find the protest songs "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free" and "The Turning Point". Beyoncé is inscribing herself in the same tradition with the release of *Lemonade*.

Beyoncé references and alludes to real people who have played a significant role in the Civil Rights Movement and the current Black Lives Matter movement, encouraging an autobiographical reading of the narrative. She showcases and pays homage to those that helped pave the way for women like her who belong to "the post-Civil Rights, post-feminist, post-soul hip-hop generation" and are "daughters of feminist privilege" (Morgan, 21; 59). The prefix 'post' is not used to indicate that these movements are obsolete in today's society or that all their battles have been won, but that they are connected to specific eras with their particular tactics and objectives. Beyoncé showcases how her generation of Black female Hip-hop feminists build on the legacy of older Black feminists and Civil Rights activists but have to carve out a space for their generation and make it relevant to their reality. Previous generations have fought hard to achieve privileges we now take for granted, such as "access to birth control, legalized abortions, the right to vote, or many of the same educational and job opportunities available to men" (Morgan, 59). We act as if we are entitled to them, even though we now see a resurgence in attempts to limit female reproductive rights along with the rise of conservative, far-right politics both in America and Europe.

Beyoncé's relationship with her biological mother is also explored in the visual album. Tina Lawson is visually represented in "All Night" via footage from her second wedding. Beyoncé and her mother have similar experiences with their husbands, but unlike Beyoncé, Tina chose to leave her partner and start anew with someone else. Before the track "Daddy Lessons" start, Beyoncé asks her mother for advice in the spoken-word section on *Accountability*:

> "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 you husband or your father?".

Her mother is a source of wisdom and valuable experience. Beyoncé consults and confesses her marital problems to her mother in order to learn from her and come to greater clarity surrounding how to handle the situation. They are exchanging experiences during a time when Beyoncé is doubting whether to take her husband back and try to work through their problems or leave like her mother did. Beyoncé's relationship with her mother is one of mentor and protégée. Although Black women are silenced and made invisible in society at large, they are acknowledged and listened to by other Black women. They recognise how invaluable their advice and guidance are. Much like how Beyoncé describes her relationship with her grandmother, she considers Black women alchemists who have been able to turn life's adversity into knowledge and experience, and then pass it on to their daughters to ensure that they also inhabit the strategies needed to survive and navigate a world that will continually try to oppress and exploit them.

The visual album also explores Beyoncé's relationship to self and controlling images, which has been discussed in chapter 2, and her relationship to Black men. Although *Lemonade* is a woman-centred production, men also feature visually and sonically in supportive roles throughout the production. The men are almost reduced to spectators, rarely given a voice. The most prominent men are Beyoncé's father and husband, Mathew Knowles and Jay-Z. These relationships have suffered due to their infidelity, but the concluding visuals of Mathew playing with his granddaugher and Jay-Z and Beyoncé playing with Blue in their garden, signal that they have managed to heal their relationships. It can also be noted that their character developments are hidden from viewers. Beyoncé's personal journey is made explicit and detailed throughout the visual album, but the men's developments are only referenced lyrically, and from Beyoncé's point of view. They are shown in relation to Beyoncé, she tells her story through them and in light of them.

In terms of political 'brothers', we hear Malcolm X and see Martin Luther King Jr. in *Anger* and "Formation". We also see the portraits of Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, and Michael Brown in the music video for "Forward". Malcolm X and King are, like the Mothers of the Movement, Leah Chase, and Nina Simone, referenced to pay homage to their crucial roles during the Civil Rights Movement and to signal political alliance. Beyoncé's politics and feminist views are inspired by African-American men and women of previous and current

generations. Although *Lemonade* is a work of Black feminist empowerment, Beyoncé is celebrating and highlighting the potential of the African-American community as a whole. She is reminding the community of their strength and what they are capable of achieving when they collectively mobilise to resist systems of oppression and exploitation. Beyoncé's political brothers were all killed. X and King were killed because of their politics, and Martin, Brown, and Garner were killed as a result of the systemic racism X and King wanted to abolish. The latter visualise the outcome of current U.S. politics and emphasise the urgent need for change. Although the Civil Rights movement did result in racial segregation being outlawed, gained voting rights for racial minorities, and the Fair Housing Act, the legal system still has room for improvement in terms of gun control and police accountability.

Beyoncé joins other female Hip-Hop feminist artists who use biographical references to their relationships with their political history, themselves, and Black men to develop new feminist theory. She joins the tradition of female slave narratives when her relationship with her political foremothers and her biological mother and grandmother highlight Black women's important position in the African-American community and posit them as an invaluable source of knowledge and experience. They are not reduced to controlling images or negative stereotypes, but "poised as though they are royalty" (hooks, "Moving"). These positive and inspiring representations of Black womanhood and motherhood have the potential to subvert the negative images and affect the public gaze in terms of projected inscriptions on the Black female body. The women are not only wives, mothers, or partners, but also political activists able to make a change for themselves, their families, and their communities. They are the central agents in the new era of activism post-Katrina that targets systemic inequality and racism. *Lemonade* therefore uses autobiographical material to explore personal and historical relationships in order to disrupt the controlling images and humanise Black women.

Conclusion

> "What I really want to do is be a representative of my race, of the human race. I have a chance to show how kind we can be, how intelligent and generous we can be. I have a chance to teach and to love and to laugh" (Maya Angelou, 2014)

Beyoncé's intention with *Lemonade* echoes Angelou. This excerpt from one of Angelou's final interviews before her passing was sampled on Beyoncé's latest release, *Homecoming*. It is a documentary of her 2018 Coachella show, which marked a historical moment because she was the first African-American woman to ever headline the festival. The show continued what she started with *Lemonade* – centring and celebrating African-American culture through music, dance, visual references, and sonic samplings. Beyoncé's personal narrative of marital infidelity is extended in *Lemonade* to represent African-American women's historical and current position in U.S. society. She merges her personal voice with that of her community in a Black feminist production that highlights how Black women's intersecting identities lead to unique forms of oppression in U.S. society.

This thesis has through the staged dialogue with radical, intersectional feminist and cultural critic bell hooks and her critical essay "Moving Beyond Pain" examined the concept of 'fantasy feminism' and issues regarding the Black female body and sexuality. It has countered hooks' argument that *Lemonade* is simply a capitalist commodity that promotes an untrustworthy line of feminism by highlighting how the visual album creates powerful counternarratives to prevailing controlling images of Black womanhood and the Black family.

The visual album revaluates and resignifies the Black female body in mainstream culture through Serena Williams' empowering and defiant display of Black female sexuality that opposes respectability politics. Beyoncé rejects the media's reduction of Williams into a contemporary Saartjie Baartman, a masculine and animalistic caricature. Her dark skin, curly hair, and muscular and curvy physique become sites of beauty and strength in *Lemonade* rather than shame. Williams' performance in "Sorry" is not dehumanising or objectifying, but positions her as an autonomous subject employing agency in her identity negotiation. She invokes the controlling image of the Jezebel and reverses its intended oppressive and exploitative effect. She, along with all the women in the visual album, become symbols of unapologetic love of blackness and the slogan "black is beautiful". Williams' love of self is affirming, a loud and clear challenging of the misogynoir and dehumanisation of Black

women found in current U.S. culture. The introduction of positive, self-defined empowering visual representations of Black womanhood and Black female sexuality allows Black women to envision and learn who they are outside their Othering, outside the racist/sexist stereotypes assigned by the dominant culture. Williams' and Beyoncé' confident sexual assertions are empowering when read against the historical sexual exploitation of Black female slaves and the continued policing of the Black female body through politics of respectability.

The Black female Sisterhood in *Lemonade* envisions a transformed feminist consciousness free of male supremacist values. The women do not see each other as competitors, but as equals united based on political solidarity. Beyoncé does not underestimate Black women but encourages them to mobilise because they have the potential to improve the conditions of the African-American community. Through visual references to Leah Chase, Nina Simone, and the Mothers of the Movement, Beyoncé highlights Black women's historical significance in resistance struggle and places herself and Black women as the ones continuing the legacy. They are the leaders in the new era of activism against intersectional oppression, police violence, and social injustice.

The importance of visual representation has also been explored in relation to the Black Lives Matter movement. The thesis has argued that the visual album would have benefitted from including Black female victims of police violence because it would have brought attention to how their encounters often include sexual assault and frequently happen to women suffering from disabilities or victims of domestic or sexual assault. It would have strengthened the feminist message of *Lemonade* and furthered its intersectional analysis of Black women's oppression in U.S. society.

The concluding visuals of the visual album where Beyoncé and Jay-Z are playing with their daughter challenge the racist/sexist image of the deviant and inferior matriarchal Black family created by the Moynihan report. Their embodiment of the Black nuclear family offers a positive image of the Black family where Jay-Z is not absent, but an active part of his daughter's life. Their daughter was not born out of wedlock and Beyoncé is financially independent. They also function as an aspirational image due to their ability to transform the infidelity that could easily have broken up their family into an experience that allowed them to grow stronger and closer. Beyoncé's willingness to resolve her strained relationships with her father and her husband for the sake of her daughter positions her as an affirming image of Black motherhood. She signals the importance of forgiving those who have hurt us when they have been held accountable for their transgressions and proven their commitment to change.

We must be positive role models for the younger generation and lead them with love, not resentment.

Authenticity and credibility in the visual album are achieved through basing the narrative on lived experience Beyoncé's audience can recognise and confirm by drawing on their cultural encyclopaedia. *Lemonade* continues the tradition of African-American literature to use autobiography to promote the humanity of Black people, reject negative stereotypes and offer heroic and inspirational images instead. Beyoncé performs in the middle region, making previously private behaviour public. The audience is given the illusion of gaining a sidestage view of Beyoncé and her family through the investment of real people and places and using them as aesthetic tools. The ambiguity of mixing biographical references and fiction provokes the audience into reacting to the aesthetic object and contribute to the feedback loop established between Beyoncé as the artist, the aesthetic object, and her audience. This is feedback that can later be converted into new aesthetic objects, which we see examples of in Jay-Z's response to *Lemonade,* his confessional album *4:44*, where he explicitly references his altercation with his sister-in-law Solange that was caught on tape and leaked to the press, and his infidelity. The infidelity narrative continues in Beyoncé and Jay-Z's joint album, *Everything is Love*, where they provide even more insight into their marital problems and how they overcame them. The aesthetic objects are all part of the same feedback loop, responding and referring back to each other.

Beyoncé and the other real people used as aesthetic tools in the visual album engage in Maskenspiel, playing and experimenting with their public masks. Through threshold aesthetics performed in the middle region, Beyoncé is able to expand both her own public masks and the larger masks assigned African-American women. Beyoncé, through self-acting in *Lemonade,* is able to reject the mask created by the leaked surveillance tape. She is not just a betrayed wife who silently stands by her man. She will not let his transgressions become a source of shame or embarrassment. She uses performative biographism to establish threshold aesthetics in middle region where she can talk back at both her husband, her father, the media, and the larger U.S. culture that devalues Black women. Beyoncé, as a socially defined artist, is unhappy with the mask created by the leaked tape, and wishes to regain control of her public image. She wants to introduce a mask that does not only read as victim, but as a resilient subject able to learn from her supportive Sisterhood and turn life's lemons into sweet lemonade.

African-American women in *Lemonade* are neither the scapegoats as in the Moynihan report nor reduced to controlling images that date back to the era of slavery. They gain a mask

that highlight their important role as political activists in liberation struggle. Rather than being framed as the source of their communities' problems, their new public mask portrays them as those ensuring the survival of their communities through the passing down of survival strategies and vital life lessons. They are given a voice and represented in the visual album, humanising those often objectified, silenced, or rendered invisible. Beyoncé uses her platform to address rumours about herself and her family through rhetorical fictionalisation, and issues particular to the Black female experience as a result of their intersecting identities. She also touches on class through her sonic and visual references to Hurricane Katrina where the intersection of race and class becomes evident. The trauma still being fresh in our minds, we are reminded through the visuals of submerged houses and poor neighbourhoods in New Orleans of the city's segregationist housing policies that meant that African-Americans lived nearer the faulty levees, and the government's ineptitude to properly care for its citizens by showing up too late and creating inadequate escape plans. It also brings back the misrepresentations of the affected residents that flooded the media where they were likened to looting animals. Beyoncé opens up the dialogues surrounding institutionalised racism and classism by invoking these images and posing the question: "What happened at the New Wilins'?" ("Formation").

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Appendices

Credits

United States, 2016, Parkwood Entertainment

Director: Beyoncé, Kahlil Joseph, Melina Matsoukas, Dikayl Rimmasch, Mark Romanek, Todd Tourso, Jonas Åkerlund
Writing Credits: Warsan Shire
Producers: Onye Anyanwu, Thomas Benski, Kira Carstensen, Danyi Deats, Violaine Etienne, Keenan Flynn, Michael Garza, Scott Horan, Jonathan Lia, Thomas Martin, Nathatn Sherrer, Laura Tunstall
Executive Producers: Beyoncé, Ed Burke, Ryan Heiferman, Steve Pamon, Todd Tourso, Melissa Vargas, Erinn Williams, Krista Worby
Cinematographer: Khalik Allah, Pär M. Ekberg, Chayse Irvin, Reed Morano, Dikayl Rimmasch, Malik Hassan Sayeed.
Director of Cinematography: Santiago Gonzalez
Film Editing: Bill Yukich
Music: Melo-x
Casting: Elizabeth Coulon
Production Design: Hannah Beachler, Tom Foden, Jason Hougaard, Jc Molina, Ethan Tobman
Art Direction: Nathan W. Bailey, Chris Britt, Paul Rice
Set Direction: Jenna Craig, Pele Kudren, Kimberly Murphy
Makeup Department: Sir John Barnett, Kimberly Kimble, Karina Konupek, Allison Lacour, Lisa Logan, Katalina Mitchell, Golden Sun Shyne
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Second Unit Director: Khalik Allah, Nicole Otero
First Assistant Director: Sean Harner
Second Assistant Director: Lily Garcia, Dean Peratsakis
Second Second Assistant Director: Angel De La Vina, Aman Segal
Additional Director: Melina Matsoukas, Dikayl Rimmasch, Mark Romanek, Todd Tourso, Jonas Åkerlund
Sound Department: Matthias Eklund (re-recording mixer/supervising sound editor), Eric Hoffman (sound designer/sound mixer), Carlos Wilkerson (boom operator/sound utility)
Visual Effects Artists: Simon Backlund, Sam Hencher, James Jonston, Alizée Leroy, Jonas Lindfors, Ross Vincent, Evelina Åkström
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Visual Effects: Fredrik Nord, Nuno Xico
Visual Effects Supervisor: Tony Rivas
Stylist: Newheart Ohanian, John de Peralta, Marni Senofonte
Wardrobe: Caitlin Wells
Assistant Costume Designer: Zoe Zhou

Map of Visual Album

This is a structural map of *Lemonade* that contains time stamps of when the different chapters and tracks begin and end, and when the poems are recited. The chapter titles are italicised, the names of tracks are in inverted commas, and the poetry has been transcribed.

1. "Pray You Catch Me" 00:25 – 01:58, 03:20-
    a. *Intuition* (02:00)
    b. I tried to make a home out of you, but doors lead to trap doors, a stairway leads to nothing. Unknown women wander the hallways at night. Where do you go when you go quiet?

       You remind me of my father, a magician ... able to exist in two places at once. In the tradition of men in my blood, you come home at 3 a.m. and lie to me. What are you hiding?

       The past and the future merge to meet us here. What luck. What a fucking curse. 02:10-03:19

2. *Denial* (04:36)
    a. I tried to change. Closed my mouth more, tried to be softer, prettier, less awake. Fasted for 60 days, wore white, abstained from mirrors, abstained from sex, slowly did not speak another word. In that time, my hair, I grew past my ankles. I slept on a mat on the floor. I swallowed a sword. I levitated. Went to the basement, confessed my sins, and was baptized in a river. I got on my knees and said 'amen' and said 'I mean.'

       I whipped my own back and asked for dominion at your feet. I threw myself into a volcano. I drank the blood and drank the wine. I sat alone and begged and bent at the waist of a God. I crossed myself and thought I saw the devil. I grew thickened skin on my feet, I bathed in bleach, and plugged my menses with pages from the holy book, but still inside me, coiled deep, was the need to know ... Are you cheating on me?

       Cheating? Are you cheating on me? 04:31-06:00
    b. "Hold Up" 06:11- 09:38

3. *Anger (*10:22)

a. If it's what you truly want ... I can wear her skin over mine. Her hair over mine. Her hands as gloves. Her teeth as confetti. Her scalp, a cap. Her sternum, my bedazzled cane. We can pose for a photograph, all three of us. Immortalized ... you and your perfect girl.

   I don't know when love became elusive. What I know is, no one I know has it. My father's arms around my mother's neck, fruit too ripe to eat. I think of lovers as trees ... growing to and from one another. Searching for the same light. (The Unbearable Weight of Staying – Shire)

   Why can't you see me? Why can't you see me? Why can't you see me? Everyone else can. 10:32-12:29

b. "Don't Hurt Yourself" 12:35 – 15:50
   i. "The most disrespected person in America is the black woman. The most unprotected person in America is the black woman. The most neglected person in America is the black woman." 13:35-13:51(sampling of Malcolm X's speech)

4. *Apathy (16:15)*
   a. So what are you gonna say at my funeral, now that you've killed me? Here lies the body of the love of my life, whose heart I broke without a gun to my head. Here lies the mother of my children, both living and dead. Rest in peace, my true love, who I took for granted. Most bomb pussy who, because of me, sleep evaded. Her god listening. Her heaven will be a love without betrayal. Ashes to ashes, dust to side chicks. 16:15-17:05

   b. "Sorry" 17:15- 20:35

5. *Emptiness (*20:58)
   a. She sleeps all day. Dreams of you in both worlds. Tills the blood, in and out of uterus. Wakes up smelling of zinc, grief sedated by orgasm, orgasm heightened by grief. God was in the room when the man said to the woman, "I love you so much. Wrap your legs around me. Pull me in, pull me in, pull me in." Sometimes when he'd have her nipple in his mouth, she'd whisper, "Oh, my God." That, too, is a form of worship.

      Her hips grind, pestle and mortar, cinnamon and cloves. Whenever he pulls out ... loss. Dear moon, we blame you for floods ... for the flush of blood ... for men who are also wolves. We blame for the

night for the dark, for the ghosts. Every fear, every nightmare anyone has ever had. 20:48-23:02

b. "6 Inch" 23:16

    i. *Loss* 24:41

6. *Accountability (*28:12)
    a. You find the black tube inside her beauty case where she keeps your father's old prison letters. You desperately want to look like her. You look nothing like your mother. You look everything like your mother. Film star beauty. How to wear your mother's lipstick. You go to the bathroom to apply your mother's lipstick. Somewhere no one can find you. You must wear it like she wears disappointment on her face. Your mother is a woman and women like her cannot be contained. "How to Wear Your Mother's Lipstick"(poem) – 28:18-29:16

    "I even met the president one time, huh, did I tell you that? Yeah, I met the president, you know. Before I met him, I ain't really see myself going to, really, I ain't, you know, I ain't really cared if I lived or died. Now, I feel like I've gotta live, man, for my kids and stuff, you know. He from the hood just like me. He from (?), you know, I'm from New Orleans. Know, that give me inspiration on I can be whatever I wanna be, like, you know, whatever I wanna be. You know, I'm proud of him (?), understand what I'm saying?" 29:21-30:03

    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? 30:03-30:59

    b. "Daddy Lessons" (30:59- 34:50)
        i. "Do you wish your grandmother and grandfather was here with us?" (Matthew Knowles)
        "Yes." – Beyoncé
        "Tell them!"
        "I wish you were here with us."
        "Why? What would we do?"
        "What?"

"What would we do if they were here with us?"
"Have fun."
"Have fun?"
"Yeah."
"What would we do to have fun? Give me a kiss. I love you."
"I love you too."
33:15-33:43

7. *Reformation (*35:21)
    a. He bathes me until I forget their names and 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. You are the love of my life. You are the love of my life. 35:15-35:55

    b. "Love Drought" 35:59-37:49

8. *Forgiveness (*38:30)
    a. Baptize me ... now that reconciliation is possible. If we're gonna heal, let it be glorious. 1,000 girls raise their arms. Do you remember being born? Are you thankful for the hips that cracked? The deep velvet of your mother and her mother and her mother? There is a curse that will be broken. 38:31-39:31

    b. "Sandcastles" 39:33-42:43

9. *Resurrection (*42:47)
    a. Something is missing. I've never seen this in my life. So many young women, they tell you, "I want me a hu — see, all them make me feel better than you. " What? So how we supposed to lead our children to the future? What do we do? How do we lead them? Love. L-O-V-E, love. Mm-mmm-mmm. Hallelujah. Thank you, Jesus. I just love the Lord, I'm sorry, brother. I love the Lord. That's all I got.

    When your back gets against the wall and your wall against your back, who you call? Hey! Who you call? Who you call? You gotta call Him. You gotta call Jesus. You gotta call Him. You gotta call Him 'cause you ain't got another hope.

    *Y*ou are terrifying ... and strange and beautiful.

Magic.
(For Women Who Are Difficult to Love) 42:50-44:08

b. "Forward" 44:11 – 45:12

10. *Hope (*46:25)
    a. The nail technician pushed my cuticles back ... turns my hand over, stretches the skin on my palm and says, "I see your daughters and their daughters." That night in a dream, the first girl emerges from a slit in my stomach. The scar heals into a smile. The man I love pulls the stitches out with his fingernails. We leave black sutures curling on the side of the bath.

       I wake as the second girl crawls headfirst up my throat, a flower blossoming out of the hole in my face.
       "The Nail Technician as Palm Reader"(poem) 46:25-47:18

    b. "Freedom"(acoustic mixed with studio version) 47:33 – 50:10

11. *Redemption (*50:17)
    a. Take one pint of water, add a half pound of sugar, the juice of eight lemons, the zest of half a 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 kit. Broke the curse with your own two hands. You passed these instructions down to your daughter who then passed it down to her daughter.

       I had my ups and downs, but I always find the inner strength to pull myself up. I was served lemons, but I made lemonade. (Hattie White, home video of her 90th birthday party) 51:33-51:47

       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're 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. 50:20-53:17

b. "All Night" – 53:18-56:35

12. [Ø] (56:38)
    a. "Formation" 1:00:34 – 1:05:20