

Black Cultural Intermediaries: Difference, Neoliberalism the Negotiation of Black Cultural Value

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Abstract

In recent years, the UK screen industries have exhibited a renewed interest in racial difference that can be understood as the outcome of policy interventions into the unequal labour practices within film production and film culture. This has emerged with new modes of Black cultural visibility that has accompanied the increased presence of mainstream, publicly funded feature films. Here, the increasing body of Black filmic practitioners who have now occupied the creative status of writer-director is an outcome of not just the expanded and strategic racial equality agenda within the UK film industry, nor the intrinsic need to extend the representation of Black identities and related themes and characterisations within the screen industrial landscape. In identifying a conjunctural shift in Black cultural politics and the production of Blackness as a cultural value through film as a linear social and political phenomena that has produced a heightened moment of cultural visibility, this article identifies the presence of industrial actors as creative practice within Black film production and presentation have inaugurated a glacial but no less significant period of industrial reconfiguration and subsequently, new forms of cultural meaning to be ascribed to the cultural image of the Black writer-director. As Black Britishness comes into a greater industrial visibility in the film sector, its entanglements with neoliberalist logics of the marketed individual frame the Black cultural intermediary as the inevitable outcome of Black cultural identities continued trajectory into the popular.

Introduction

It is undoubtable that we have now firmly entered into a new cultural phase of Black creative visibility and recognition that has been orchestrated by a liminality of the definitions and applications of representations of Black identity, a liminality that permits for the tacit and disparate forms of notions of Black cultural production to be described, constructed and finally, telegraphed as Black culture, Black cultural relevance, Black cultural distinctiveness and of a significant Black cultural value. This is not an assessment that should be reduced to a question of cultural relativism, but to the re-orchestrating of the meanings and purposes of Black visual culture and representation that has been built into the technology of racial capitalism that forges previously unbridgeable linkages between the constructed and variable (cultural production) and the stable (racial identity). Such a cultural process has been accentuated by the development and tenor of racial consciousness and debate occurring within an episteme, an analysis identified in the critique by Stuart Hall (1988) in which our engagements with Black textuality are structured by an insecure and unguaranteed politics of difference. My own analysis performs a similar vivisection of cultural politics, where now Blackness acts as an elaborate but inevitable feint for the production of Black culture *as* identity as a source of an extractive economic and social value (Nwonka, 2021). However, whilst we find that this reading is located in Hall's historic but still resonant theoretical intervention for the rejection of the homogenising of Black identity and experience and the

acceptance of Black subjective positions can no longer perform in theory or practice as an affirmative centre for the negating of the universalism of Black existences, the argument perused here necessitates an intellectual departure that is not to be understood as a casualty of any general structural defect in the Hallian theory of the essentialising of, in his example, Black film as a form of Black culture, but of the cultural and intellectual continuum made ever-mobile, transitional and paradoxical by the (il)logics of postmodernity (Gilroy, 2000; Nwonka, 2021). It is in this analytical endeavour that I should make clear that my foregrounding of the screen industries reconditioning of Black culture through the binds of late capitalism is no claim to a new conceptual paradigm, for scholars have been alive to these continuums and developments, although articulated in perhaps less industrially and racially concentrated contexts and approached from a range of cultural spheres (Saha, 2017; Nwonka, 2021;). Notably, Sobande et al (2023) register a concern with the ambiguities of Black, Brown and Asian cultural and creative worker's anti-racism praxes via self-branding methods that speaks to 'how digitalization and platformization might be reshaping dynamics of race-making and racism in the contemporary CCIs' (5) Relatedly, a more American-centric but no-less applicable reading of the creative industries identify the proliferation of social media platforms in the promotion of racial diversity and its accompanying forms of self-branding and creative individualisation (Gray, 2013). However, despite the disparate nature of these analyses as born of different epistemologies, such scholarly works do exhibit Hallian antecedents and as a result are unified in that they remain generally attuned to the contradictory nature of the Black popular culture that possess the versatility to occupy a variety of different interpretative positions and meaning, and in my own reading of the intermediate period of Black culture, are populated by a set of heterogeneities that are all woven into what can be seen as the *politics* of Black hypervisibility (Nwonka, 2021; Saha, 2021). That its more popular iterations are governed by the institutionalist and industrialist imperatives of capitalism, allows the images and performances of Blackness to flourish as devoid of a normative basis upon which divergent forms of Black culture, as distinct from Black cultural *production*, are able to coalesce under a unified, of not homogenous presentation of Blackness via the screen sector and enjoy an assumed and uncritical cultural value. Again, this phenomena, in concert with the attendant theoretical antecedents of Hall, is one of contradiction, for one of the more critical shifts in this development is what I identify as a return to a Black homogeneity, or the return to a Black essentialism in which the very encounter with the textual images of Black identity are in possession of an instinctive Black cultural value *as* Black politics. This is theorised not simply in terms of contradiction but plurality, in that the commodifying liminality of Black culture is not comprised solely of negative consequences. For the very defence against the critique of a postmodernist orchestration of Black cultural expression as a racially-extractive economy is pre-constructed into the justificatory and legitimising modalities of the screen industry by the liminal textures of Black culture possesses a positive dimension, one that may indeed be constructed upon the conjunctural shifts that the neoliberal incorporating of Black cultural *value* inaugurates as it trajectories, *ala* Hall, into the popular (1993). This is indeed the essential facet of commodification that Saha (2020) terms as the industrial practice of 'race-making', but one that nevertheless is able to recruit the economic and social investments from both institution and audience, revelling in a practice of Black visibility and presence as a powerful modality through which an instinctive and socially investable Black cultural value is staked out and claimed by the market imperatives of the UK screen industries, and the film sector in particular. Given that the privileged domain of above-the-line or prestige occupations within the film industry and its attendant acclaim remain the preserve of male whiteness (Cobb, 2020), the idea of creative leadership, either

imagined or genuine, and its extension to the issue of Black creative identity invites a Foucauldian theorising of how knowledge, in this example as visibility, is essential in the harnessing, be it symbolic or material, of a certain cultural and industrial power (1980), and brings us to the question of writing/directing as an industrial practice that exhibit a number of industrial, cultural and social dynamics and features that cannot be decoupled from the current thrust of Black cultural politics.

How one assesses the mechanisms of this inclusion of Blackness can take a number of different analytical forms. My interest is in how the BFI Diversity Standards as both a policy framework of diversity and, as I will argue, a highly public discourse of race, becomes an invalidating curatorial structure of Black cultural value and provides a reliable basis for understanding how Black cultural intermediaries are cultivated through publicly funded support for film production and the production and distribution of Blackness within British film culture. The identification of the writer-director as an industrial practice that is bestowed with a cultural status and distinction just as industrial Blackness comes into a greater (if continuously fragile and subject to an undisturbed condition of fugitivity) but still an unprecedented period of visibility and attention advances writing-directing as a cohesive and in some senses an essential creative practice for the industrial consolidation of Black identity within the UK film sector. Again, I recognise that this is indicative of the very bidirectional outcomes that Hall has acknowledged in his theorising of Black cultural identity in the early 90s as an index of Black culture's glacial but continuous move towards the popular (Hall, 1993). But how are we to understand the social and market function of the Black cultural intermediary that this article positions as the index of the industrial platforming of Black writer-directors? Firstly, I want to explore the conjunctural essentialising of the Black writer-director, specifically in British contexts, as the embodiment of an industrial hypervisibility that here, functions both an industrial and cultural intermediary for industry/audience interactions. The Black writer-director as hyphenated creative practice performs as a powerful vector of cultural difference that Jimenéz-Martínez and Edwards have termed as a 'regime of visibility' where 'promotional industries structure visibility as a desirable and even inevitable requirement for both reinforcing and reconfiguring social arrangements' (2022:14). Secondly, in identifying film as one of the primary industrial arenas where we encounter the celebratory nature of Black cultural and creative visibility, I consider how the BFI's Diversity Standards and its associations with Black creative talent act as a counter-interventionalist racial homophily, where film production's characters and thematics display some correspondence with the racial identities of their creators. Finally, in critiquing what I argue is the screen sector's instinctive and inextricable reliance on the public as the performative and material sphere for the politics of racial diversity as a means for the over-indexicality of Black popular culture, I consider how the Diversity Standard's industrial, cultural and indexically *symbolic* investments the Black film creative as writer-director as not just an affirmative example of racial homophily, nor solely a strategic manoeuvre of hypervisibility to accrue cultural notability and the accumulation of various forms of capital where the visage of racial difference is accompanied with the perception of Black creative arrival and power, but a cohesive cultural and institutional strategy for the consolidation of Black creative identities within the screen industries through an insatiable culture of visibility and branding as a public discourse in which the institution, and the Black intermediary function symbiotically in the production of Black cultural value.

Black Film as Black Culture

Amongst what appears to be the most privileged and attractive aspect of the analysis of the screen sector as the paradigmatic primacy of both qualitative and quantitative academic research into the representational disparities within the UK cultural and creative industries, and indicative of the general emphasis on the inequalities of gender and class within research on the CCI's, the orthodoxies of the academic analysis of cultural policy have exhibited a rudimentary footnoting of race and racism as the gestural citation rather than as the basis for sustained and rigorous interrogation of the specificities of racial identity (Friedman & O'Brien, 2017; Brook et al, 2019). In the disavowal of an analytical universalism, the question of the CCI's and racial difference is a research field that should be seen as an *interventive* analytical paradigm that is able to register an indelible association with the question of inequality, racism and the evisceration of Black and global majority identities within the structures of the UK screen industry (Saha, 2017, Nwonka, 2020). Of course, these thematic and methodological orthodoxies display an analytical concern with structural inequality that is not necessarily associated with writing/directing specifically, but within a broader analysis of the film and television sector's creative workforce. The issue of screen production has been the primary subject of various imperatives to increase the number of Black screenwriters, directors and producers the UK screen sector (BFI, 2016, 2019; BBC, 2021; ITV, 2021). Indeed, there are a range of historical intellectual positions to draw upon in the navigation of the various theoretical and conceptual lenses used to describe as Black film or Black representation in British cinema (Snead, 1988; Mercer, 1994; Young, 1995; Ross, 1996; Alexander, 2000) but display an interchangeability that coalesced over the question of Black filmic and televisual images in the 1980s and early 90s', for example, through the specific production support towards Black and ethnic minority practitioners to be identified in the production cultures of Channel 4 (Nwonka, 2015; Snead, 1988; Alexander, 2000). Much of the historical readings of UK screen culture and racial difference in Britain has been generally situated in television, where the legislative purpose of Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) and its accompanying claim on the nation as primary vector through which cultural, social and national identities are created, reflected and negotiated (Ellis, 1999) has functioned as a powerful repository for our social identities and rendered PSB a crucial arena for a counter-hegemonic practice of cultural representation. Such a textual and contextual feature is particularly salient in television drama and its role in the constructions and counter-constructions of race and identity (Saha, 2012). The analysis as approached here reveals a departure from these readings in that it considers the writer-director as a distinct industrial activity as positioned within an industrial sphere of prestige, notoriety, cache, recognition and capital (Cobb et al, 2016). Indeed, we find neoliberal accents in the contemporary politics of racial diversity within the screen industries that place emphasis on the institutional investment in the visibility of racial difference, particularly when engineered or encouraged through the utilitarianism of film culture, and is bound up in the often-encountered instrumentalist shibboleth of cultural participation. What I observe as the role of writing-directing and the public value placed upon this practice *vis-à-vis* say, screenwriting, in its hegemonic acceptance as the prestige occupation within film, becomes entangled with new forms of Black visibility across the screen sector and is of particular importance, given the traditional understanding of film as an inherently director-led medium (ibid). My specific interest in film as a visual storytelling medium where a particular Black authorial visibility is observed can be theoretically placed within a period of transition, this being the concept of high or quality television, and despite its general understanding as

a cross-pollinatory medium where the aesthetic, narrational and tonal properties of television and cinema appear to cohabit, the concept of the writer-director as an inherently filmic industrial activity implies that the primacy of the medium of *cinema* maintains a certain industrial/cultural durability. Resultingly, I want to draw my reading of the technology that is implicated in the transition of Black filmic creative labour from the analysis of the British Film Institute's Diversity Standards, a quasi-mandative inclusion policy devised by the BFI in 2016 (after an 18-month pilot period) to encourage representational diversity within film productions as a framework for a consideration of how the establishing of the Black British writer-director as both a once novel but glacially increasing sector orthodoxy achieved through Black cultural struggle *and* source of industrial liberal triumph should be interpreted as a conjunctural outcome of the cyclical institutional engagements with race and Black identity. This is a paradigm that is engaged exclusively within the context of the reliance of British feature film production on public funding chaperoned by the implicit and explicit proviso that such investments are to provide some element of cultural value (BFI, 2022; Nwonka, 2020). As polysemantic as the definitions of cultural value of film may be, the creation of *Black* cultural value through film is not simply a textual endeavour, but indexically, a product of the public presenting of the text's contextual arrangements, or specifically, the filmic practitioner, who can be positioned as a symbol of Black creative autonomy and command. Thus, the Black British director/writer-director as a manifestation of creative and authorial power provokes an analytical interest in the BFI Diversity Standards B, colloquially understood as referring to the off-screen representation of protected characteristics. What we find here is that the Standard B's interventive relation to the historically contested ownership of the filmic representations and narratives of Black existence invaluates my analytical interest in Standard B, subtitled as 'Project Leadership and Creative Practitioners' and through we are able to capture the degree of Black exclusion from 'above the line' roles, this pertaining to the positions within the positions that have been generally been accepted to be the primary roles that draw tremendous degrees of symbolic/cultural capital and industrial and cultural prestige; directors, producers, screenwriters, editors and cinematographers (Cobb et al, 2016; Cobb, 2020). That these creative and authorial positions within the film production organisational structure are, once we enter into the subjective domain of authorship, creative endeavour and individual triumph that the most publicly facing above the line roles inevitably accrue, hierarchally fixed towards the director in an industrial logic that is accepted as essential in the marketing and promotion of films. The primary source of public visibility and notoriety is an important consideration when applied to the more specific issue of Black creative film practices and the film industry's justificatory embedding of Blackness within its automatic and linear institutional discourse, diversity and inclusion, and requires an ultra-expressivity. Termed differently, it is the industrial technologies of diversity and inclusion that insist on a heightened level of celebratory visibility as a manifestation and measure of interventionist success, and with this the symbolic power that is derived from the narrative image of the Black, individual, creative self that offers the sense, or at least the impression, of Black creative control.

Black Cultural Intermediaries and Screen labour

The above formulation is one that can be placed within a Bourdieusian reading of how particular social actors are involved the social negotiation of ideas of cultural taste (1984), specifically, the concept of the cultural intermediary. In the most proximal Bourdieusian understanding, cultural intermediaries are active figures in the

negotiation and/or orchestration of a society's notions and acceptance of cultural taste and accentuate the markers of social and cultural distinction, and perform an intervening and regulating function within a range of social dynamics (Smith-Maguire and Matthews, 2010). Given that cultural intermediaries are most energized in the construction and the conducting of perceptions of significance, meaning and value that affect the consumption and engagement with a number of cultural products, cultural forms and cultural practices as *social* practices, the disciplinary intersections of sociology, cultural studies and media and communication have found the concept of the cultural intermediary particularly conducive for the analysis of the cultural and creative industries (Miller, 2014; Smith-Maguire and Matthews, 2014). These cultural intermediaries can be independent and free formed in concert with shifting cultural trends, but remain generally aligned in their deference and service to the ideas and mandates of the cultural institutions from which the artifacts of cultural taste and distinction are produced and engaged and from which corresponding ideas, perceptions and meanings emanate (Smith-Maguire, 2014). Indeed, there is particular relevance in the Smith-Maguire and Matthews approach, whose intellectual project traces 'the translation of the concept from Bourdieu to a cultural economy approach that is concerned with the material practices involved in the formation of value' (2014: 1). For despite the above overview, the function and affectivity of the cultural intermediary activity is both nuanced and at points accentuated by race, and the idea that social/cultural actors hold a centrality in the positional interplay between racially cultural institutions and cultural consumers have permitted for the use of cultural intermediary concepts as a citational resource for race scholars who have researched these interactions in less definite Bourdusian nomenclatures when exploring the nature and function of Black and POC workers and practitioners across the various fields of the cultural and creative industries (Gray, 2016; Titley, 2019; Saha and Van Lente, 2022). Particularly, the relationship between the question of racial difference and the cultural intermediary has been explored in these less Bourdusian contexts by Saha (2017; 2021), whose theorisation of the cultural industries and race emerges as a more Gramscian interpretation of the Black cultural/creative practitioner as a highly navigated war of position, applied by Saha as a mode of industrial consolidation. These actors, with race(ism) and its attendant politics produce an exploded meaning to the intermediary's prefix of the *cultural*, and in accepting the cultural industries as a site of counterhegemonic and strategic contestation as argued by Saha, this allows for the Black cultural intermediary to be conceived as a cultural emissary. Here, the fixity of the 'actor' to an institutional agenda or imperative compels the cultural intermediary to maintain a proximity to the ideologies of the screen industries in relation to the unbounded and ossified faith in the efficacy of diversity practice, the dispersal of alluring ideas, imageries and crucially, tangible examples of racial inclusion (and its pathways) that are readied for consumption and uptake; in other words, the consenting nature of the ideas permeated by and through the actor positions the screen industry's Black cultural intermediary as the *hegemon*. I see this as an outcome of a necessary and inevitable imbrication, rather than outright complicity, and the cultural permeation of such ideas is indeed sufficient to be understood as a form of hegemony, for such actors maintain a continued and essential presence within the inclusivity agendas of various cultural institutions. Although these practices can be described as quasi-ambassadorial, the Black cultural intermediary's function as the structuring axis through which ideas of desirability, cultural significance, value and representation all work to compel the Black audience, as the Black cultural intermediary's primary interface, to invest in the continuously contested imaginary of a screen industry structured not by the continued technology of racism and exclusion but of benevolence and meritocracy. This is secured through not solely the image of the Black filmic practitioner's

now seemingly autonomous position within the sector's production culture that affirms the Black writer-director status as a conduit for a Black industrial access, but the equally generative spectacle of Black creative success/celebration within the physical spaces of film industry as a site of Black cultural value and significance. I am cautious that the introduction here of the issue of institutional racial diversity and what I have argued previously as one of diversity's necessary repertoires (Nwonka, 2021) in the industrial suppressing of our experiences of *racism*, for this may imply that the Black cultural intermediary, here being the proliferating Black writer-director as the combinational outcome of Black cultural struggle and institutional altruism functions as an industrial bulwark against public perceptions of a racially-organised screen sector and the testimonies of Black collective experiences of racial inequality. However, the writer-director's attachment to institutionality, albeit an attachment of precarity given the undiminished and sophisticated practice of racism, produces a certain degree of obsequiousness to the Black cultural intermediary's functions. Further, the Black cultural intermediary's attachment to racial capitalism and the securing of extractive value finds notable favour in the production cultures of the screen industries and film in particular, where the attention to the experiences of representational desire and the cultural consecration of directors presents a more contemporary demonstration of filmic auteurism and an individual creative vision. Correspondingly, the celebrating of the individual industrial triumph of film in its most cultural inflections (in this example, Black film, however one defines this) can uncritically be presented as collective triumph, attend to Black collective, communal and societal interests and resultingly, can be both framed and circulated as a product of Black cultural value. Of course, such arguments return us to my analysis of the Black text as structured by a triangulation of ownership where the film's racial representations carry out the important cultural connections and bridging work through the textual encounter with filmic Blackness (Nwonka and Saha, 2021). But my revisitation of the composition of Black film as a triangulation is a relationship not just of co-dependency but extraction and makes heterogeneous the function performed by the cultural intermediary in being readied for the participation in and pertinently, the production of notions of Black cultural and social value. Bourdieu was, of course, conceptually concerned with applying the idea of the cultural intermediary to questions of taste and distinction (1993). The contingencies of race and Black cultural politics however reveal the presence of an ideological imperative to the cultural intermediary, and possesses a multidimensionality that, just as the very hegemony of diversity as its structuring field, can both preserve the practice of racial inequality and in this static action attend to, even temporality, the monolithic power structures of the CCI's as well as to Black identities who are impelled to commit culturally, economically and emotionally, to any semblance of Blackness as cultural value. This suggests that such actors operate in more dynamic forms than the concept of the cultural intermediary as advanced by Bourdieu and subsequently applied as the basis for academic research into the service of cultural intermediaries as a mechanism for inequality, social reproduction and class exclusion within the UK's CCI's (Friedman, 2014). I accept that the orthodox analytical use of the idea of the cultural intermediary under the conceptual aegis of Bourdieu has been in its application to the question of the sociology of culture and its attendant artifacts and arenas (Friedman & Laurison, 2019; Oakley et al, 2017), and indeed, the early 2000s emergence of an inchoate but monetised cultural and creative industry was accompanied by analyses of the practices of individual actors within the UK's creative sectors, the issue of the cultural consumption of the products/artifacts of these industries, and the range of inequalities brought into being by, *inter alia*, social class. The attachments of race and identification to film culture find particular attention within the theories of Hall (1988), specifically the

questioning of the indexicality of screen culture as a site for the politics of racial difference and the dispersal of ideas of 'good' within the production and circulation of the Black film. For whilst Black cultural intermediary actors can be situated within a 'triangulation of ownership' (Nwonka and Saha, 2021) that has been previously described in terms of a contestation between author, industrial context and its audience, the Black cultural intermediary in its Bourdieusian guise occupies a fluid position at the centre of this affective technology in which the intermediary performs both its industrial role in the creation of institutionally funded Black filmic products, and their social function in the *performance* of Black culture. For the cultural intermediary provides an example of the obligatory weight of Black creative and social labour that Kobena Mercer had identified as a 'burden of representation', this being the idea of a heterogeneous, all-encompassing Black representational critical realism in which the Black text is assigned the task of articulating the totality of the contemporaneous or historical Black experience within one filmic moment (1988). I'm conceiving a different set of entanglements and outcomes from the function of the writer-director as Black cultural intermediary, and their situating within a position of influence suggests a less vertical set of relations in the negotiation between the text, institution, audience (Black or otherwise). Here, the Black cultural intermediary is relieved of at least *some* of the social/cultural/creative indentures that are deeply embedded within the very term burden; which constituent within this technology are able accrue different forms of capital, power and recognition? In other words, the conjunctural reconfiguration of the cultural value of Black film as contingent and representational concerns are indeed ascribed onto the Black cultural intermediary but devoid of the more overt contestations between practitioner and institution. We cannot conceive the Black cultural intermediary as independent from the ossified and possessive structures of the cultural institutions, and such a reading insists that we are cognisant of the shift from Black representation to Black visibility that inaugurates the shift in the emphasis from text (the Black film) to the practitioner (the writer-director) whilst accepting that such a transition suggests a more conscious and strategic Black cultural intermediary that, as in the very navigated and negotiated life cycle of institutionally-reliant Black creative identity as argued by Saha (2017; 2021) possesses a certain appeal through the production, distribution, and reception of a novel presence of Black identity across these three social and cultural fields. What is being argued is that the efficacy and affectivity of the screen industry's Black cultural intermediary is a contingent outcome of the conjuncture, and the more general reading of the cultural intermediary as conjuncturally reliant is conceptually generative when situated in the context of race and Black creative identity, conceived here as a cyclical and evolving cultural politics where representation is sacrificed for a subdued politics of race. This suggests that whilst the Black cultural intermediaries existence and function in the service of the dominant agendas of the funders of their filmic products as writer-director possesses a more contractual intentionality that displays a commodifiable relationship between the intermediating actor and cultural institution, visibility on its own as the assumed index of Black cultural value/significance produces the imaginaries of racial inclusivity and individual triumph that is sufficient for the Black cultural intermediary to attend to and fulfil its *representational* commitment, congruent with its description as 'authorities of legitimation' (Bourdieu, 1990: 96). In returning to Hall, the question of race, and specifically whiteness, what occurs socially through which we can understand the affectivity of the industrial principles that both orientates the Black cultural intermediary and makes fertile social and cultural conditions for the consumption of the symbolic and material products of the Black cultural intermediary? Once such account is provided by Raymond Williams' historic reading of the ways in which a society becomes responsive to a dynamic but still embryonic

and nascent emergence of social ideas, sensitivities and inferences (1961;1987). Williams situates such social feelings in terms of a nuanced interpretation of hegemony, which find a presence in the fissures between the official discourses of the period and public responses, and find some affective manifestation in the textual products of a culture (ibid). Raymond Williams 'structure of feeling' may appear as a novel contribution to my analysis of the Black cultural intermediary when placed in theoretical synthesis with the more specific interest in the question of Black identity, film culture and the industrially intermediating actors imbricated in the production of value. However, its dividend is located in, from one perspective, the Bourdusian development of the cultural intermediary as an arbiter taste, value and distinction and from another, what can be accepted as Hall's critique of the unguaranteed didactic politics and Black significance contained with the Black film (1988) and resultingly becomes an apt phenomenon for the adjoining of both cultural institution and Black identities within the constructing of a Black *popular* culture. Racial diversity, particularly the most utilitist applications to be observed in the orthodoxial, postmodernist and symbolic investment in the youth cultural participation and industrial training of Black identities, means the Black cultural intermediary is unable to fully exist and flourish as a singular practice structured solely by the subjective interests of either institution or the intermediary itself. Rather, race reconfigures the intermediary as an interventionalist practice and is able to produce an *affective* register amongst its most immediate and eager constituents, is subject to the structure of feeling latent within an episteme, here the degree of Black desire and longing present within the public sphere. Such an analysis renders representational diversity, particularly in its commodifying of race and Blackness, as a dependent technology; one that performs a regulating function within the dialectic between the film industry and Black creatives/audiences, specifically on the issue of race(ism). This may indeed be the point where Mercer's burden of representation offers a more generative contribution to the study of Black cultural intermediary activity. This departure is characterised not just by the kinds of power asserted by the neoliberal popular Black, or the performance and cultural permeation of the Black texts themselves in articulating the Black experience in all its assumed homogeneity, but the ability and willingness of the Black filmic practitioners who assert a communal practice within their film texts as an anti-racist intervention whilst flourishing firmly within the parameters of late capitalism. Thus, the issue of the Black cultural intermediary cannot be reduced to a question of cultural consumption, but the strategies used by the screen industries to secure a level of obedience amongst Black audiences/creatives circulating within its cultural and economic orbit. The dynamics of the screen sector have of course developed significantly since the initial Bourdusian iteration of the cultural intermediary, primarily as a result of the increasing power of contemporary promotional culture, and the film industry's continued seasoning of public understandings of film as a high, esoteric cultural form within mainstream liberal media and the modes and degrees of distinction achieved through extended film reviews, interviews and features all provide the necessary industrial frameworks for the securing of forms of social and cultural consent (Gramsci, 1971). My description of the UK film sector's Black cultural intermediary as the racial hegemon displays more than a tincture of late capitalism's postmodernist schema of occupying of 'hitherto uncommodified areas' (Jameson, 1984:78) and in the theoretical and conceptual transition from the cultural intermediary, even in its most Bourdusian provenances, to the terrain of race and the film sector, it is pastiche that characterises the Black cultural intermediary's (via the Black popular) claim to an instinctive source of Black cultural value. This said, and retaining the Bourdusian function in the practice of meriting/demeriting cultural texts as forms of cultural distinction, the Black cultural intermediary as the Black industrial hegemon is capacious in meaning and

function, and the Black writer-director as a cohesive Black film industrial identity possesses a significance beyond what may appear to be the simple occupying of a creative role. In such settings, the Black cultural intermediary is an industrial and cultural *identity* that exhibits no commitment to detangle itself from the gravitas of neoliberal individualism that the thrust and trajectory of Black cultural value/significance as a project of hypervisibility bestows, but rather absorbs and projects all that is purported through the most conspicuous and instrumentalist inflections of diversity: influence, inspiration and the image of cultural, creative and industrial distinction. The Black film creative is constitutive of two entwining regimes of the Black cultural intermediary, both of which present a racially concentrated iteration of the Bourdieusian theorisation that exhibit a contradictory but cohabiting bidirectionality. The Black writer-director is both very much a *cultural* intermediary who legitimises institutional products, experiences and identities that have not previously been accepted in legitimate terms, and a figure that exists as an *industrial* intermediary in the mutually beneficial need to function as a tangible access point to the imagined vista of a post-racial but racially determined screen sector.

Given the relationship I am conceiving between the liminalities of Black cultural value and the postmodern vista of racial difference (Gilroy, 2002), Black identity here becomes conducive to the essential tenet of *racial* diversity as an industrial management model – visibility, be this through the need for the screen industries to demonstrate the outcomes of its racial inclusivity work or its attachment to forms of celebrity culture that esteem the creative lifestyle of the individual and the artifacts of Black cultural production. These conventions register an appeal to the Black individual and the commodifying instincts of the neoliberal-self, and the homogenising application of racially and ethnically diverse industrial representation as a collectivist endeavour renders the screen industries as particularly fertile for the aggrandising of Black creative practitioners, be this under the auspices of a leading cultural institution. It is beyond the ambit of this chapter to rehearse many of the critical scholarly positions and analyses on the efficacy of the BFI Diversity Standards, of which have been explored from a number of inter-disciplinary perspectives (Nwonka, 2015; 2020; 2021, Cobb, 2020; Geraghty, 2020), however, this very industrial technology participates in the liminality of Black cultural value. It is very possible that such a conceptual approach undertaken here becomes vulnerable to charge of reductionism in the exclusive analytical focus on the BFI Diversity Standards, and the Black cultural intermediary as writer-director is not in itself an outcome of the policy's quantitate data, but by the very capaciousness of the Diversity Standards as a vanguard of Black British (feature) film culture. In the BFI's status as the UK's lead body for film culture, alongside its position from 2011 as the custodians of public funding via the DCMS to be distributed to UK film production, the BFI can in many ways be understood as a symbolic and physical site for various points of *social* interaction. This is also be identified by the gradual and expanding application of the Diversity Standards across not merely BFI film productions but the industrial spaces where the textual and socio-cultural outcomes of the BFI Diversity Standards become manifest, visible and interactable, and this is accentuated by the elongating of the BFI Diversity Standards functions through the 2023 addition of a Standard E to include the diversification of other aspects of the film industry such as film exhibition, distribution, audiences and festivals (BFI, 2022). Indeed, Black directed films under these auspices with the presence of a Black writer attached to the project produces the kind of racial homophily that can be interpreted as an indexical outcome of the historical association between Black narrational subject matter and Black creative authorship.

This description of the BFI Diversity Standards as a normative basis from which the Black film creative performs as a cultural intermediary is ballast by the visible tenor of a particular structure of feeling, in this instance, the disquiet over the absence of Black inclusion and authorial power within the film sector (Nwonka, 2015, Hall, 2023). And despite the BFI Diversity Standards framework referencing all the protected characteristics within the Equalities Act 2010, the Black cultural intermediary is compelled to interact with the hegemony of the BFI Diversity Standards' synonymy with Black film culture and indexically, Black culture as both a liminal term and sphere of visibility becomes unified in the production of Black cultural value. Simply placed, the interaction between cultural institution, policy, cultural space, text and the intermediary become the 'sphere of the legitimizable' (Bourdieu, 1990: 96). The physical theatrical space becomes the arena of liminality that renders racial inclusion as a primary tenet of cultural diversity and as both opportune for the Black cultural intermediary's dispersal of cultural products (film) as source of textual and cultural (Black) value and conditions the intermediating actor as both vulnerable to the institutional ideologies that exhibits itself in a certain acquiescence to racial capital's commodification of difference and the beneficiary of the conditions of Black hypervisibility, presence and the purported claim of collective address achieved only through individual platforming, ascendance and creative/cultural consecration.

The Popular, Branded Power and Black Film Culture

This article's interest in the interdependency of the Black cultural intermediary and the hegemonic practice of diversity is specifically located in how the thrust of the inevitable if highly strategic aggrandising of Black-centric productions to be located within the BFI Diversity Standards registers an interaction with the expanding visibility and celebration of Black popular culture and the Black presence *within* British film culture. We should pay particular attention to how the Black filmic creative as a public encounter with Blackness within a sustained period of industrial visibility has emerged in alignment with the decrees of neoliberalism. As Herman Gray (2013) observes, 'The object of recognition is the self-crafting entrepreneurial subject whose racial difference is the source of brand value celebrated and marketed as diversity; a subject whose very visibility and recognition at the level of representation affirms a freedom realized by applying a market calculus to social relations' (771). It should be made clear that in drawing associations between Gray's entrepreneurial subject and the orthodoxy of the Black writer-director within the structures of BFI Diversity Standards as Black cultural intermediary activity that is on the commodifying continuum of neoliberal individuality is not to conceive such occurrences as instinctively derogatory or as a demonstration of the ethical and moral surrender, or compromising if you will, of the reality of racism as a foundational experience of Blackness, but an inevitable and in some ways required reflexive strategy in navigating the shifting industrial contours of Black identity that remains very much in position of fugitivity within the film sector. My qualification here, when the function of Black cultural intermediary is considered culturally, is very much in concert with the conventions of the 'entrepreneurial subject' as articulated by Gray, but when applied industrially, is indicative of what Hall described as a essentialising posture of the Black popular and the capitalistic compromising of Black culture as the prerequisite of the popular (1993), where the demonstration of autonomous, creative difference is strategically required for the affirming of a position within the ever fragile, contingent and contradictory sphere of the screen industries. Where the cultural processes as observed by Hall meets an inevitable temporal and conjunctural *cul du sac* here

is in the horizontal equating of the popular with the *public*, and the development of the idea of the hyphenated category of writer-director carries with it the all-important and culturally accumulative imperatives of recognition, industrial arrival and cultural and marketed notability and distinction. However, a further consideration of the cultural intermediary as a form of *branded* consolidation is its ability to be understood as a creative and industrial subversion; by this, I'm referring to the Black writer-director as born of a subversive and fugitive creative identity. We should be cognisant of the conjunctural and industrial specificity to the Black creative practitioner as Black cultural intermediary as argued here, and invaluates my reading of the practice of the cultivation of Black cultural value via the optic of the BFI Diversity Standards. Captured within the entanglements that are present in the authorship of films in receipt of public funding and/or institutional support and its attendant cultural validation through public visibility, my theorising of the popular as the public is neither assumed, instinctive, atemporal or symmetric in its nature, and we cannot fully understand the Black intermediating actor's defining of different *forms* of distinction without the necessary exploration of the hegemonic acceptance of film as a director-centric medium. This has found notable manifestation in the BFI's branded presence in the production of recent Black British film. Notably, *Blue Story* (Dir Rapman, 2019), *The Last Tree* (Dir Shola Amoo, 2019), *Rye Lane* (Dir Raine Allen Miller, 2022), *Girl* (Dir Adura Onashile, 2023) and *Pretty Red Dress* (Dir Dionne Edwards 2023) are all films captured within the capacious BFI Diversity Standard sphere that exhibits a correspondence between Black creative leadership and a Black representational thematic that have been produced through the BFI Film Fund's Diversity Standards decree or adhered to through being produced by the other public funders for film production in the UK, BBC Films and Film4. To this end, the film *Boxing Day* (Dir Aml Ameen, 2021) offers demonstration of Black cultural intermediary activity in Ameen, a Black British actor who had starred in a number of films and television shows in roles that centre questions of Black urban identity and experiences (*Kidulthood*; *Fallout*, *Yardie*). However, rather than being on the continuum of the more socially mimetic demonstrations of the British urban film genre, the film is framed as a romantic comedy in which Ameen plays a British writer in the US who returns home with his African American fiancé to London for Christmas, where his Caribbean-British family are introduced to his wife-to-be. It is here that we should be particularly attentive to the perpetuating symbiosis of the Black authored/populated film as an implied Black cultural value, for the film's presenting of Ameen as screenwriter, director and its lead actor can be accepted as both a demonstration of the Black cultural intermediary as an aggregational exemplar of Black creative omnipotence and through this, a counter-interventive Black racial homophily, a both industrial and social claim to a Black cultural value further accentuated by the film's description as 'the first ever Black British rom com' (BFI, 2021). Indeed, we cannot disregard how significant the BFI's curatorial rendering of the film as a site of Black cultural value that is developed from the public aggrandising of the film's all-Black cast, whereas other areas of the production crew, from what we can ascertain from the BFI Diversity Standards data, exhibit a much less racially homogenous composition. However, the cultural intermediary work activated in Ameen's status as Writer-Director is an assertion that presents no rupture to the film's more discursive claim to a Black film, nor one that brings into question the creative labour undertaken by Ameen, who had developed the idea for *Boxing Day* over a number of years. Rather, the purpose here is to establish a context for the identification of a film that remains subject the conjunctures of Black cultural politics, where one creative category (actor) is to be collapsed into a more industrially and culturally generative *branding* as writer-director, and accompanying this, the degree of

symbolism that is essential to both the industrial production and social uptake of a branded Black cultural value. This version of Black cultural intermediary work manifests as a creative autonomy that attends to a particular imperative, this being the proliferating trajectory of Black promotional culture that has positioned itself firmly within the liminal spheres of Black cultural value and the perceptions, ideas and responsive behaviours that are evoked by the very applying of the term diversity to within this sphere; here, the omnipresence of race, and more specifically, Blackness, within a structure of feeling where the system of diversity is (re)established as the essential remedial demand and structural provision of race politics within the ambiguities and subsequent liminalities of the definition and uses of Blackness as a cultural product in the wake of the murder of George Floyd and the American Summer. The films produced under the auspices of the BFI Diversity Standards as a Black cultural interface produce a plethora of expanded meanings, and can be interpreted as an industrial protocol of inclusion or funding prerequisite, a mark of cultural approval, but as I will expound upon below, the innate associations with racial difference in the legitimising of public funded films as *diverse*, it can also be understood as a technology of aggregational Black cultural/textual meaning. In other words, the BFI Diversity Standards, in being placed at the visible and branded backdrop of the public interaction with Black British feature film, is purposed as the symbolic and material nomenclature for Black cultural relevance and value.

My reading of the Black cultural intermediary here pursues an analysis that requires the situating of the interdependencies between the liminalities of Black cultural value and the logics of the UK screen industries with the expanding cartographies of racial wokeness (Sobande et al, 2023). Concentratedly, Sobande et al's attempts to construct a particularly valuable taxonomy of woke activity across digital media posits a disentanglement from the described practices of the Black cultural intermediary, and whilst similarly argued by Jiménez-Martínez and Edwards (2023) who identify the ambiguities of the dominance/resistance nexus within promotional culture as energised by 'regimes of visibility', this is not restricted to the alluring platforms of social media, but in the very physical sites of cultural interaction required for the production of an imagined Black cultural value that makes a symbolic and material registration on the current tenor of racial politics. To this end, we find a similar exemplar of Black racial homophily as a modality through which we can observe a claim to progressivity in writing-directing as a concerted and strategic activity that becomes an accumulative practice once presented to us as an outcome of cultural policy, and with this, the all-important and desirable exemplar, however chimeric or horizontal, of the perception of racial progressivity that can be interpreted as the structural demand of the Black popular and therefore the Black *public*. I want to draw on a further example of how the BFI Diversity Standards performs implicitly as Black cultural value, and we observe the practice of the Black cultural intermediary and the visibility of the writer-director as a demonstration of Black creative autonomy in the BFI funded film *Pirates* (Dir Reggie Yates, 2021), a comedy that, holistically congruent with the unsettled definitions of Black film, irrespective of the terms, be them indexical (Mercer, 1994), thematic (Young, 1995), industrially constructed (Snead, 1988) or multi-constituted (Nwonka, 2021) by which Black is prefixed, was circulated as a text of Black cultural significance. Yates, a childhood television personality and actor who had presented a number of youth orientated television documentaries for the BBC, notably *Reggie Yates: Extreme* documentary series that investigated themes of a particular appeal BBC Three's 16-34 demographic, had by this point been the creative lead in a number of productions that exhibited a gradual expansion from factual programming to short form screenwriting, and his first short film, *Patriarch* (2013)

would be screened on Channel 4's Random Acts season. Further, another of his short films, *Shelter* (2015) which he would both write and direct, would be made available on BBC iPlayer and *Date Night* (2017), starring Daniel Kaluuya, would win best UK Short at the London Independent Film Festival. Given the forms of recognition and cultural/creative distinction that are augmented by social media platforms (Gray, 2013) his creative storytelling practices aggregate as a creative lifestyle that is made all the more desirable and importantly, distinctive, by the carnivalesque image of screen texts authored by Black British identities. An analogy can indeed be drawn from Sobande et al's qualitative analysis of how Black cultural workers navigate the dichotomous community/individualist CCI terrain through digital self-branding (2023) and the capturing of the unattended desires of Black industrial recognition and our *negated* rights to Black representation (Mercer, 1994). That Yates has enjoyed an authorial presence across a plethora of mediums perhaps offers a more cogent demonstration of Black British cultural and creative identity coming into a new sphere of the popular, indeed an observable feature at the point of the theatrical release of *Pirates*, set in 1999 at the turn of the century where three friends prepare for the Millennium New Year's Eve party to the backdrop of the UK garage scene. The film's thematic interests suggest a claim to a Black cultural value by such representations of Black vernacular cultural and subcultural practices, here being garage music and its attendant subcultural expressions that speak to the questions of Black urban existences and Black cultural memory. In this example, the Black British writer-director as the (filmic) Black cultural intermediary assumes a duality of function, firstly as the recipient of the spectacularising attention to be placed upon the writer-director as industry lore, and secondly as the source and shared beneficiary of a hyper-celebration not just of the arrival of the film as a much needed and expression of Black culture and identity, but a particular focus towards Yates himself as the organic creative force asserting a holistic custodianship over the film as a Black cultural product. What unifies both texts in my formulation of the function of the Black writer-director as cultural intermediary, beyond their analytical status as feature film productions that secure the required degree of Black cultural validation through a structural adherence to the BFI Diversity Standards, the identification of the texts as a star-led vehicle in many ways can be understood as the outcome of a certain democratisation of the film sector in which the image of accessibility and inclusion produces what I describe as a homogenising sphere of Black cultural value. Indeed, and indicative of Yates and Ameer's status as first-time Black feature film directors, their industrial carnivalizing is an example of an inherent industrial reflex that accompanies with it an accepting of the more contradictory elements of Black popular culture in the accelerated inclusion modality that can be interpreted as a practice of *horizontal talent identification*; the identification and strategic commissioning of feature films by racially diverse artists/creatives/writers/talents already established within other cultural sectors or roles. This industrial practice displays an obvious linearity with the broader agenda of racial inclusion and accompanying this, the tendency towards racial homophily within the BFI Diversity Standards. The paradox that one is confronted with here is that in the aggrandising of both texts as an industrial breakthrough, we observe that such outcomes are congruent with the informality of its commissioning practices (Bhavnani, 2008; Nwonka, 2015; Newsinger and Eikhof, 2020) that allows one to assert with some authority that such projects were brought into being through the maximising of existing industrial networks that may potentially bypass the more official (if also concealing the tremendously uneven, unequal and nepotistic) avenues of institutional talent identification, script development and commissioning processes. But given that the very presence of textual racial difference is engineered upon industrial landscape of racial erasure, the Black writer-director can be seen as an embodied

cultural intermediary that possesses within its conventions the key Bourdusian repertoires in the dispersal of the markers of distinction (branded Black film/authorship) and of taste (here, Black cultural value) to its specific audience as the dynamic essential for the celebration and desire of Black popular culture. The idea that the BFI Diversity Standards maximises the figures of Black cultural notability that subsequently registers an influence on the production cultures and circulation of British film is of course no novel feature in the capitalist modalities of a film industry where star attachment, fandom, and the question of cultural recognition are all factors contained within film's horizon of expectation that attend to the economic imperatives of the film commissioning logics (Wayne, 2020). What is particular, and what I argue is the outcome of the conjunctural product of the adjoining of the neoliberalist maximising of Black popular culture and the circulating and commodifying power of social media is how the amplifying of Black visibility and the spectacle of a creative Black existence provides an additional symbolic dimension to the Black writer-director as Black cultural intermediary, this being the cultural text and cultural impact that are constructed upon existing measures to increase the industrial representation of marginalised social, cultural and racial identities via an investment in the Black entrepreneurial self. The new phase, as I term it, of social visibility and cultural recognition is a form of power that regulates and manages through appeals to identifications with styles of cultural and creative life tied to identities constructed upon the spectacle of racial and cultural difference. This is the very tendency that has been identified by Herman Gray (2013), who asserts that 'the desire for recognition and the quest for individual distinction take place not through the state, civil society, or cultural institutions like film and television but in crowded cultural and social spaces like Internet-based social network sites (Twitter, Facebook) and user-generated content sites and distribution platforms (Instagram and YouTube)' (771). It is absolutely correct that Gray's reading of the processes of subject recognition are constructed both by and through the Black creative/cultural/industrial subject, particularly that of 'individual distinction' and the imagery of a marketized, desirable creative lifestyle as imbricated in the ascent of Blackness as a branded identity made commodifiable through social media possesses an accentuating function in the symbolic and material functions of a strategic Blackness. The obvious addendum provided by my own analysis of the visibility and recognition of Black film creative endeavours and individuals, is in the emphasis placed here on the film industry, with all its sense of prestige and symbolic/economic/cultural capital, as a viable creative existence where the writer/director as a autonomous creative identity, at least within the status-coded hierarchies of the marketized and capitalistic exigencies of film, remains an innate creative practice where any other comparable creative role *as* identity, Black or otherwise, does not accrue similar degree of power and individual visibility. What concerns me in advancing a theory of Black cultural intermediary activity as convertible Black cultural value that delineates the writer-director from other roles within the above-the-line taxonomy of film production creative labour is that just as the very technology of racial diversity in the screen sector places racialised identities within a condition of industrial metamorphopsia that makes nebulous and blurred the linear patterns and experiences of racism, the illusion of creative meritocracy created by the interaction between institution and intermediary places its susceptible Black audience (either within the cinematic space or through its ancillary marketing platforms) within a state of perceptual distortion where the writer-director as cultural intermediary becomes the vector of both creative inspiration and industrial unattainability. This is a process that enjoys a conceptual proximity to the technologies of racial capitalism, this being the modalities of the UK screen industries and the issue of racism, racialisation and the instinctive practice of race making through cultural production (Saha and Van

Lente, 2022). Black film, and the film industry's negotiation of racial difference is to be interpreted as a contemporary exemplar of the strategic essentialism that is reflected in Hall's assertion that 'There are always positions to be won in popular culture' (1993: 108). For us, notwithstanding the application of Hall's theorising of the *Blackness* of Black popular culture as a continuous strategic positional contestation, the continuity of racial capitalism as a parallel and synthesised feature of Black culture is ruptured by its purported function as Black community praxis and it is through the Black cultural intermediary's relationship with the Black audience as an imagined Black *community* allows for the BFI Diversity Standards to transcend its own mandative function; the institutional placing of racial difference within the film sector's various production, industrial and organisational roles is organised by a similarly tripartite, extractive structure. For the institution, the Black authored film as either funded, approved and endorsed by the BFI Diversity Standards performs as the validating public exemplar of the efficacy of the policy and provides the industrial gratification for the film sector; for its Black audience/spectatorship, the experience of Black filmic representation as a source of collective inspiration and celebration in the spectacle of individual ascent within the otherwise mono-racial official national film culture; and for the writer-director as the Black cultural intermediary, a cultural, social and economic accumulation that points to the contingent nature of the Black cultural intermediary, specifically when framed within the logics of diversity. Again, we must consider the significance of the public platforms where the consenting hegemonic activity is performed, and I want to expound further on the question of the hegemony of diversity as a public sphere through the consideration of a public talk at the British Film Institute in 2021, that would be chaired by Afua Hirsh, a noted Black Mixed Race broadcaster/journalist who, whilst in no way can be considered as an authorial voice on British film culture nor one who occupies a primary position within the UK film industry's critical firmament, can equally be described as a hegemon in the field of a *visible* Black culture. But the migrating of a highly visible cultural intermediary from the arena of Black social commentary to within film culture/criticism of course is an outcome of the irrelevance of any specificity of medium, and is indicative of how (in this example) the liminality of Black culture (film) is buttressed by the universality of the casual factor (Blackness). In the construction of the public spectacle of *Blackness* as Black uncritical and vital cultural value, Hirsh's function in the chairing a discussion between both Black writer-directors is equally an exemplar of both implicit and explicit Black cultural intermediary work that draws both the audience and the text/institution to within a kind of structural alignment; the amalgamated Black 'event' can be presented, with evident success, as the defilement of white cultural exclusivity that underpins the politics of Black recognition through the spectacle of industrial and creative achievement and the celebratory public investment in the cinematic representations of Black British cultural identity through the novel occurrence of the theatrical releasing of two feature films made by Black writer-directors within the same industrial moment. Here in the capturing of a Black cultural and industrial momentum, the orthodoxy of the film Q&As as an essential platforming industrial practice that offers the audience an insight into the practitioner's creative methodology. Indeed, the event would allow for the discussion of the motivation, genesis and purpose of the productions, and the broader relevance to the question of Black identity as both films cultural value, as prefaced by the BFI Film Fund director, who would comment in her introduction to the discussion on the significance of diverse filmic representation and crucially, authorship. The two significant manifestations of intermediary work present within the BFI discussion should be understood in terms of progression, in one being the index of the other. First, the discussion represents a departure from the industrial orthodoxies of the promotional strategies of the film

industry in that it would be remiss for the event to be described as a film screening, but as a Black *gathering* - the BFI did not screen either of the films in their entirety, but a brief clip of each film was showed to offer a visual signpost to the discussion to follow. Second, and relatedly, the spectacle of race and Blackness as film culture allows both industry and practioner to coalesce over the racial specificity of the texts to engage its particular and desired audience in the Black cultural event. However, the films platforming at the BFI Southbank undoubtedly render both films as a product of diversity discourse, in that it is through the strategic hyper-celebration of Black film (and its writer directors) that Black film cultural value as a standardising feature of the BFI Diversity is brought into circulation and uptake; it is the very *spectacularising* of filmic Blackness and racial difference under the Diversity Standards through which it undergoes a process of normalisation. In other words, in the UK screen industries support for Black film through neoliberalism as the inescapable market logic accompanying the carnivalesque platforming of the Black writer-director, the Black cultural intermediary becomes an *Industrial* intermediary.

Conclusion

This article's aim in relocating certain descriptive aspects of the Boudusian idea of the cultural intermediary to the question of Black industrial and creative culture is not to insist upon the replacing of class for race. Nor, in turn, does it offer an easy pathway of how race can be seamlessly accommodated into the cultural intermediary paradigm; to do so would be to neglect all that is experiencedly distinct and analytically generative in the specificity of the Black identity and film culture embrace. For although the four imperatives fixed within its taxonomy; economic, social, cultural and symbolic, are all active within the Black cultural intermediary's negotiation of Black film cultural value, its intentions are neither instinctively or even intentionally protectionist or socially reproductive in the use of film as an instrument for the production and preservation of vertical social relations. Rather, institutional diversity's instinctive capture of Black cultural identity is the determining factor in the presenting of the Black authorship of film as form of cultural distinction. This offers a contention to what may appear as a linier set of cultural processes, for the reality of Blackness as a negated and fugitive creative, industrial and social identity where Black film authorship remains in a bind of racial evisceration and denial, institutional diversity is compelled to evidence in the most elaborated and curatorially strategic ways, revealing the material practices present and implicated in the staging of Blackness and racial difference that demands a degree of carnivalescence. But the BFI Diversity Standard's curation of Black film as mode of convalescence possesses a contextual element, for this investment ventures beyond the affordance of cultural recognition in providing support to continuously excluded Black film texts and cultures through visible recognition, albeit through the placing of specific forms of filmic labour within hierarchies of significance. Within the institutional space as a site for the concentration of different forms of power, the strategic platforming of Black writing-directing is able to accrue the kinds of public engagement and individual, industrial and cultural acclaim that can in turn be converted into both Black visibility and crucially, desire. These are merely two of a number of processes to which the Black writer-director as Black cultural intermediary is imbricated in and performative of within cultural and industrial spaces of Black film production and consumption. Black film as cultural value, made increasingly liminal by the politics of diversity within film production contexts, requires a consideration of the Black writer-director as a specific exemplar of the self-reliant, entrepreneurial postmodern Black subject

where, institution, intermediary and audience are engaged in the performance of autonomy, control and the concentration of an authorial, creative and branded power.

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