Forgotten Geographies:  
*Historical Geographies of Black Women in Victorian and Edwardian London*

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Abstract

This thesis addresses some of the current gaps in our knowledge and understanding of black women in British historical geography, with an empirical focus on women who lived in or passed through Victorian London. Its aim is to tell the stories of a range of women who lived in this period, and present their biographies in the context of debates on race, identity and spaces of modernity.

Historical research of 19th century visual and written archives supports the central chapters of the thesis, which are concerned with the experiences of individual black women in three arenas of Victorian life: institutions (Barnardo’s and the Colney Hatch Lunatic Asylum), imperial elite society (Sarah Forbes Bonetta and her daughter Victoria Davies, both of whom were goddaughters of Queen Victoria), and anti-racist politics (focusing on Ida B Wells’ anti-lynching campaign).

By combining theories of the ‘black Atlantic’, localised historical geographies, and a sense of inclusive history, the thesis presents a structure that can connect these diverse women. This is coupled with a consideration of how class and social culture may have affected the extent to which these women experienced such a sense of collective identity themselves. The women are also discussed in the context of a broader Victorian public. The thesis considers how the Victorian press represented them, and how these representations reflect discussions of race, class and gender in Victorian society. The thesis concludes by weaving these debates into a discussion of the complex methodological considerations that are being exposed by the development of black history, particularly the use of photography as a primary tool. These questions are ones that impact not only on the study of the history of the black community in London, but also on British history as a whole.
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"The time has come", the Walrus said, "To talk of many things."

Lewis Carroll
Chapter one

Introduction

It must teach us, from our earliest childhood, that we are all brethren, whatever our nationality. In our times of wars, of national self-conceit, of national jealousies and hatreds ably nourished by people who pursue their own egotistic, personal or class interests, geography must be [...] a means of dissipating these prejudices and creating other feelings more worthy of humanity. It must show that each nationality brings its own precious building-stone for the general development of the commonwealth. [...] It is the task of the geographer to bring this truth, in its full light, into the midst of the lies accumulated by ignorance, presumption, and egotism.

P.A. Kropotkin

1889¹

I have often been asked why I am a geographer, or why research on black women's history would be located within a geography department. Since becoming a geography undergraduate the subject has offered me an entry into a diverse number of aspects of life throughout the world, past and present. What Kropotkin wrote in 1889 reflects my continuing, perhaps idealised, inspiration for the subject, and I hope that the ethos of this text fits within the remit of his plea. This is not to say that these ideals and a breadth of perspective will not be found within other disciplines. For me, the interdisciplinary nature of Geography, something it is often criticised for, has allowed me to take a broad cultural and social view of the history of black women. Furthermore the ideas of space, and peoples' interaction in places are central to this study.

For far too long, whether in academia, the media, government or the national curriculum, lies accumulated by ignorance, presumption and egotism, have dominated

¹ Quoted in David Stoddart, 1988, p139
the general knowledge and public debate of our nation's history. Although historical geographers are concerned with the historical meanings of the past,\(^2\) considerations of black history have been sorely lacking. It is hard to dissipate prejudices if the subject does not engage with absences, and there is a serious lack of perspectives from black and other non-white peoples in geographical debates in British geography, another reason why it is important that such work is attempted within the geographical tradition.

During the writing of this work friends and foe have asked why I had chosen to research the lives of black women in Victorian London, a question that is usually posed with interested surprise, but still surprise. This is usually followed by a pattern of assumptions: firstly that (although there may have been some men) there were no black women in Victorian London. When I challenge this I am usually faced with a second assumption, that if there were any black women they must have been immigrants. A woman once asked me if they were ‘all single mothers and prostitutes?’ These comments are part of a daily burden of “showing whites that blacks are people”\(^1\), people with a history, a history in Britain.

In collecting the evidence to challenge these assumptions I have been told too often by well meaning archivists and librarians that, “there weren’t really any you know”. Indeed I did not know, and as far as I could see neither did anyone else. Black women are not the only members of non-white communities who have been largely excluded from the history that we read or are taught about the British Isles. This absence in written documentation has led to the assumption that because there appear not to have been any, there were none. Within academia, despite an increasing concern for the subaltern, the whiteness of human geography has made it difficult for ‘other voices’ to be heard and inform geographical debate.\(^4\) The work of black women in the United States has helped to break many of the silences in debates in British history and geography, but although their voices speak directly to the black experience of black women in Britain, they do not speak directly of it.\(^5\)

Those working on the history of black communities in Britain are gathering evidence of the pre-Windrush presence of non-white communities in Britain, and so counter the

\(^1\) Leonard Guelke, 1983
\(^2\) Leanita McClain, 1992, p122
\(^3\) David Sibley, 1995
\(^4\) Beverly Bryan et al, 1998
claim that the post-Windrush epoch presented an entirely new experience of British life. The assertion that the 'English', 'Welsh', 'Scots' and 'Irish' were/are pure populations corrupted by the imposition of immigration from places in the sun has long been interrogated and shown to be a fallacy by many debates within history and geography. It is still a pervasive, if implicit, claim within the public sphere. It is not easy to counter this claim, and I believe photographs, such as those included in this thesis, will play a crucial role in dispelling the myths surrounding the historical existence of black people in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain.

Although not as common as the surprise at the subject of my research, I have been questioned as to why I chose London to be the site of its focus. (It seems to me that this question is usually based on an assumption that if there were black women in Britain, they would have been in the old slave ports of Bristol and Liverpool, probably not London, and certainly not in the countryside - an aspect of black history which also requires attention). In answer there are a number of reasons. Having spent my whole life living in London I have a very personal desire to investigate the city of my birth, the city that is my home, a city that I love, but one that holds spaces that I would hesitate to explore because of the colour of my skin.

Imagined as a machine, a laboratory of social experiments, a body - aged and wise, cruel and comforting, it is a city influenced as much by its own tradition and history as by the new and modern influences of the changing world. It is a place that has generated devotion and hatred, hosted pomp and ceremony, death and devastation. It is a city whose growth and density has terrified and impressed commentators throughout the ages. It is the also the nation's capital city, and as such it has been vital to the development of the nation, as a centre of politics, commerce and intellectual debate. It is an ideal location for an investigation of the diversity of experiences that must have befallen numerous immigrants and millions of their descendants.

As a young woman I began to spend more time walking through this city. I realised that although it seemed Londoners were proud of the fact that their city had always been a diverse and pluralistic community, the urban landscape reflected little of the histories of the millions of immigrants who sweated to support its foundations. The social and political geography of London's urban spaces has excluded them from public spaces. The social and cultural meanings which people invest in places means urban landscapes are a framework for connecting historical stories and the public
memory of contemporary urban life. The aim of this thesis is, by discovering black women's histories, to challenge traditional notions of English heritage and identity.

The theories that have informed this thesis are wide ranging. Perhaps the most prominent is Paul Gilroy's cultural examination of the Black Atlantic, and his idea of placing the Atlantic as a dynamic unit of analysis at the centre of histories about the black diaspora and the countries they were intimately or only briefly tied to. Working with this I have included Miles Ogborn's considerations of the historical geographies of modernity, as well as more general views on women's history, popular history, history and identity, and the cultural geographies of belonging and their intimate ties with history. Alongside this theoretical discussion, I have included additional research to give some extra body to the debates on race and racism that occurred in the Victorian public sphere. These should add to our general sense of Victorian and Edwardian London, particularly the experience of black women in these times.

These histories of black women will not be one discourse, but an intersection of several which do not always sit comfortably together. I hope the theoretical context in which I have placed their histories will allow women from different periods and experiences to be seen as part of the continuous history of black people in London. The thesis begins with two chapters that place the research in a theoretical context, and give some background to the complexity of the social life experienced in Victorian and Edwardian London. The research really begins in 1850, the year Sarah Forbes Bonetta, a young girl from West Africa, arrived in England. It ends in 1916, the date of the last letter sent by Sarah's daughter Victoria Davies, to the Royal Household. In between the main focus is on the 1880s and 1890s when the majority of girls and women I encountered were recorded in the archives. I have included the decades either side of these, partly to capture as many of the aspects of the histories as possible, but also to provide space to consider the changes towards attitudes to race that occurred and thus might have affected the girls' lives.

The women's lives are the keystone of this project, and their biographies are located in the central chapters of the thesis. Chapter four, To be Seen and not Heard is the first of these. It is a collection of vignettes of girls and young women from the Victorian

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6 Dolores Hayden, 1995
7 Paul Gilroy, 1996a
8 Miles Ogborn, 1998
archives of Barnardo's Home for children. Recovering black histories is not an easy task, and Barnardo's proved to be a fruitful archive. The girls located here were all poor although the reasons for their destitution and entry into the Barnardo's Home reflect the diversity of life experienced by working class black girls. The chapter uses their stories to highlight the presence of black women in London. Their biographies also illustrate the family ties and social networks from which they came, consisting of the people who, until their entry into the Home, usually supported them. These networks tell us something about the constructions of working class families, and how mothers attempted to cope with bringing up their families alone. The archives also pose questions about the racialisation of the young women within Barnardo's and the broader public sphere, a theme that is picked up in most of the chapters.

The second empirical chapter, chapter five, also focuses on poor women, women who became even more marginalized after they were designated insane. Taken primarily from the archives of Colney Hatch Asylum this is also a chapter based on a collection of vignettes, this time of four women. Two of the women, Caroline Maisley and Mary Matthews, were sisters and incarcerated within the asylum for a short period of time. The third woman, Susan Hayes, would die in an asylum, forgotten and alone. Susan's story is placed in contrast to that of Henrietta Cormack, who was a patient at The Priory before she was admitted to Holloway Sanatorium. As a middle class woman her treatment, both by the doctors themselves and the medication they prescribed, varied dramatically. Their stories take our attention to another aspect of the black experience in London life and of the experience of poor people in asylums more generally. Furthermore the racialisation, or absence of it, in the women's medical records draws our attention to the inconsistent manner in which race was applied in Victorian official documents.

Chapter six is the story of two African women who became god-daughters of Queen Victoria, Sarah Forbes Bonetta and her daughter Victoria Davies. They were chosen, partly because of the availability of archives, the unusual nature of these archives, and the contrast of their experiences to those in Barnardo's or Colney Hatch. Yet it is still hard to imagine the reality of these women's lives, the murder of Sarah's family followed by a life in slavery, her travels to England and back to Africa, a privileged education and position in both British and African society, ending with debt and death before her 40th birthday. Her eldest child Victoria also struggled to hold on to the aristocratic privileges she was brought up with, but she still led a cosmopolitan life.
Introduction

Their experiences are almost poles apart from the women who were guests in asylums rather than Windsor Castle, but despite their wealth and privilege Sarah and Victoria did not escape racialisation in the press, nor amongst those who knew them within the royal household.

Their experience of travel between Britain and Africa, and access to the upper classes of society may have given them more in common with Ida B. Wells, the focus of the fourth empirical chapter. Wells was a black American journalist, whose struggle for civil rights are admired and relatively well documented in the United States. The aspects of her life detailed in this thesis are her trips to Britain, particularly her stays in London, which she undertook in 1893 and 1894. Her presence in the public sphere during this time highlights a diverse number of aspects around race that occurred in London and throughout Britain during the 1890s. The public response to her anti-lynching campaigns reveals the complexity of race, and the relationships between blackness, rights and civilisation that were held by the diverse groups who had opinions on the matter, from the Anti-Slavery Society to the fledgling anti-racist community generated through the pages of Anti-Caste.

In traditional women's history, one that Natalie Zemon Davis has described as a history of "woman worthies," Ida B. Wells and Sarah Forbes Bonnetta's family might have expected to be a more familiar part of our knowledge. Wells is a well known and well respected historical figure of the United States, but the strong, if brief, impression she made on the British public in the 1890s has been little discussed in these Isles. Vron Ware is one of few British historians to write about Wells in the context of British history.⁹ She considers Wells' place among the white philanthropists she met such as in Britain, such as Catherine Impey, Lady Somerset and Frances Willard, and also Well's experience of racism - a theme which I intend to revisit in my chapter on Wells.

While in the process of writing and researching my thesis I read Rodinsky's Room, a book by Rachel Lichtenstein and Iain Sinclair.¹¹ The book is focused around Rachel's search for David Rodinsky, an orthodox Jew who disappeared from his attic room above the Princelet Street Synagogue, Whitechapel, East London, in the late 1960s. Iain Sinclair's commentary is a reflection on how history belongs to, and helps mould and

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⁹ Natalie Zemon Davis, 1996, p79
¹⁰ Vron Ware, 1992
¹¹ Rachel Lichtenstein and Iain Sinclair, 2000
remould the living, as he watched Rachel's search for David and for herself. I was particularly drawn to Rachel's side of the story, not only for the insight that it gave me into Jewish experiences of identity and their sense of diaspora, but also because of the relationship that was revealed between Rachel and her 'historical subject'. David Rodinsky could have been alive, unlike the women whose lives I have tried to bring to life here; for Rachel that had advantages and disadvantages, similar and dissimilar to my own.

I shared Rachel's feelings of nervous guilt for intruding into David's personal life, for having rummaged through his belongings, and discussed his personality and health with many people. I respected and understood her quest to bless David's final resting place, to give him and herself a sense of place. In the end, Rachel discovered that following a chance encounter with social services, David had been taken to Long Grove Hospital on Horton Lane, Epsom. This was one of five hospitals on the Horton estate, which included Horton Asylum where just over half a century earlier Susan Hayes had died.

At the time of reading Rodinsky's Room I had just begun work on the biographies of women who were patients in lunatic asylums. At that point I only knew Susan Hayes by name, and was not sure of her life. Eventually I too would feel voyeuristic guilt as I picked through her personal medical notes, dissected her post mortem and searched for her pauper's grave. How could I give her, her voice, her dignity, a history and a sense of place? Was that my place? Was it only my place? Was there a place for romantic, mystic, loved, academic geography and history? If so, how could I create it in relation to the black women who lived in Victorian London?

These are questions that have been in my mind throughout this research and I have tried to address at least some of them in this thesis, if only through arguing for the importance of the need to know about those who led lives often considered 'insignificant' and 'uneventful'. The emotions that the stories in these pages stir in us, and the questions that they force us to ask ourselves are equally important, and these are addressed in the eighth chapter on photography, identity and history. In this chapter I have attempted to consider the diverse aspects of race and black women's identity, including the problems of my own methodology, the way in which the Victorians used and viewed the photographs that have been so important to this project, as well as a more general discussion on the geography of race.
Doubtless I have posed more questions than I can answer. But in doing so the thesis reveals that there is so much more to be discovered about the black community in Britain, and the nations that make it up, than most people imagine. Black historical geographies have been waiting a long time to be located in the geographical tradition, and it is a perspective that will contribute much to the questions of history, identity and place in British geography. In discovering histories such as the ones here, I hope to have given voice and a place to part of a story that is not an other history, but the story of England in the modern world.\footnote{Paul Gilroy, 1993.}
Chapter two

Historical Geographies of Black History

‘Who controls the past, controls the future: Who controls the present controls the past.’ And yet the past, though of its nature alterable, never had been altered.

George Orwell
Nineteen Eighty-four

There is nothing inevitable about history. History consists of those bits of the past that someone had the knowledge, interest, foresight and ability to record for future generations. The telling of the Black history of London, ancient and modern, is more flawed than most historical narratives for several reasons, some personal and individual, others institutional and cultural.

Susan Okokon
Black Londoners 1880-1890

This chapter introduces the reader to issues affecting the collection and representation of black history in Britain. It begins by outlining our knowledge of pre-Windrush black British history to date, and highlights some of those who have played a role in bringing these stories to light. This is followed by a brief look at popular histories of London. These are placed here to give a general context to the society in which the women in the thesis were living, but also to highlight the absence of black people in such publications, which renders them invisible in the popular historical imagination. This section is followed by a consideration of the theoretical debates that have helped create the spaces in which black history has been researched and developed and has challenged such absences. These include feminist histories, debates around identity, and the role of history in our sense of belonging.
2.1 Defining 'black' and 'blackness'

Firstly, there is a need to draw attention to the fact that underpinning all my writing so far has been an assumption that author and reader have the same understanding of black women, and who a 'black' woman is. Heidi Safia Mirza is one of many authors to have pointed out that a personal identity of blackness is a contested space, and that who should or can be 'named' as black is full of controversy and debate. In this thesis I recognise and fully believe that 'black' as a signifier of identity (as well as race) is a culturally and politically constructed term (although its manifestation in life is animated with very real power and control). In his work on black people's attachment to place John Western defined 'black' as: All Afro-Caribbeans (non-white), Africans and British persons of immediate (non-white) African or Afro-Caribbean descent; but persons whose ancestry lies in South-Asia or the Indo-Caribbean were not termed black. Jayne Ifekwunigwe's investigation of the English-African Diaspora was comprised of African post-colonial constituents from the Caribbean, Northern and Latin America, and continental Africa in England for work, schooling, political asylum and frequently by birth.

To these ideas of blackness, in this thesis I have added those with 'mixed-race' ancestry. I have included them because for many of the women, if not all, signs of blackness in their skin, rather than the 'ethnic diversity' of their family would have been what defined them, as is still the case today. Or, as Elizabeth Fox-Genovese has argued, the identity of black women is grounded "in the historical experience of being black and female in a specific society at a specific moment, and over succeeding generations." At this point I need to highlight the concerns of Naz Rassol. In her discussion of the homogenising tendencies of 'blackness' she highlights three main points: that black identity is not a linear construction; that the impact of repression, exploitation and oppressions are historically specific; and that personal experience is a vital force in the manifestation of black identities.

Rassol's insights thus demand a fundamental questioning of who a black person is. Why is a mixed-race person black (and not white)? Is it the colour of their skin, or the

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1 Heidi Safia Mirza, 1997
2 John Western, 1993
3 Jayne Ifekwunigwe, p489
4 Quoted in Nellie Y McKay, 1988, p177
5 Naz Rassol, 1997
content of their character? Throughout this work I have come to see ‘black’ more and more as a political term, collecting together women who we would identify as a group, and who may have been identified as one in Victorian London. The questioning of the structures of the definition that allow us to do this, and of the very existence of race is one that occurs again and again throughout this thesis. The Victorians struggled with the classifications of colour as we do now.

The Victorians hotly debated race and the place of black people in the world, and the nineteenth century was the time when racism established its popular association with colour prejudice. There were those, such as the anthropologist James Cowles Prichard who promoted an idea of Christian Universalism, and argued that as all people were descendants of Adam and Eve, differences between the races - largely seen as the result of climate and culture - could be closed for some given the right conditions. Although Prichard despised the African way of life, he insisted that there was no physical limitation to the potential achievement of people, no matter what their racial type was.

Extreme racist views came from those who promoted the idea that permanent physical differences existed between the different races of the world. The ideas of the latter group were personified in the 1860s in the ideas and lectures given by James Hunt, an outspoken racist and president of the Anthropological Society of London. In his paper *On the Physical and Mental Characteristics of the Negro* published in 1863 Hunt concerned himself with “the full-blooded, woolly headed, typical Negro, to the exclusion of the half-breed.” He declared that it was a “patent fact” that there were races that had no history, and that “from the most remote antiquity the negro race seem to have been what they are now.” He further claimed that there were greater analogies between negroes and apes than between negroes and Europeans, and that the civilized blacks that people might meet were not pure Negroes, but in nearly every case had European blood.

Hunt formed a splinter group from the Anthropological Society of Great Britain and Ireland in order to follow his beliefs in eugenics, and the two bodies were in conflict

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6 George Stocking, 1987
7 See P D Curtin, 1964
8 P D Curtin, 1964
9 Catherine Hall, 2002
10 Douglas Lorimer, 1978
11 James Hunt, 1863, p386
12 James Hunt, 1863, p387
Historical Geographies of Black History

with each other for eight years.\textsuperscript{14} Initially Hunt’s society courted great success. Within two years it would have over 500 members, and at its height counted 800, although some of those attracted by Hunt’s personal dynamism resigned when they realised the racist nature of the society.\textsuperscript{15} But both societies discussed race and maintained the Western habit of regarding the converse of ‘civilisation’ as ‘savagery’.\textsuperscript{16} Furthermore their members, (and some held membership with both), subscribed to the idea that outside the British Isles there existed a scale of otherness on which differences were marked in racial terms, and colour became an indicator of culture.\textsuperscript{17} Eventually the two societies would be reconciled. Although Hunt himself found the compromise unacceptable, the ‘Darwinians’ with whom he had been in opposition did incorporate a good deal of racialised thinking into their “new form of monogenism”.\textsuperscript{18} One of the leading Darwinians was Francis Galton, whose interest in class, race and photography will be addressed in chapter eight.

As Claude Lévi-Strauss has observed, coding people as ‘barbarians’ or ‘savages’ refuted a concept of cultural diversity, and anyone who did not conform to the standards of the society in which the individual making such judgements lived was denied the name culture and relegated to nature.\textsuperscript{19} This placed the life of the ‘savage’ against that of urban life, which became a symbol of refinement in opposition to life in the forest or ‘bush’.\textsuperscript{20} And Stocking argues that such thinking offered strong ideological support for the colonial enterprise of the late nineteenth century - savages were not simply morally delinquent or spiritually deluded, they were racially incapable.\textsuperscript{21}

Christine Bolt has argued that there were more opponents than supporters of Hunt’s views in Britain, but she has also acknowledged that by the 1860s many Britons were violently prejudiced on the subject of race,\textsuperscript{22} although Douglas Lorimer has argued that histories of racism tend to exaggerate the impact of racist theorists such as Hunt who worked in mid-Victorian Britain\textsuperscript{23} Later in the century there certainly were people who

\textsuperscript{13} James Hunt, 1863, p387
\textsuperscript{14} Douglas Lorimer, 1978; George Stocking, 1987
\textsuperscript{15} George Stocking, 1987
\textsuperscript{16} Michel Leiris, 1975
\textsuperscript{17} George Stocking, 1987
\textsuperscript{18} George Stocking, p270
\textsuperscript{19} Claude Lévis-Strauss, 1975
\textsuperscript{20} Michel Leiris, 1975
\textsuperscript{21} George Stocking, 1987
\textsuperscript{22} Christine Bolt, 1969; Christine Bolt, 1971
\textsuperscript{23} Douglas Lorimer, 1988
actively supported the principles of racial equality. Catherine Impey was the editor of *Anti-Caste* - perhaps Britain’s first anti-racist journal. During the 1890s it had about 250 subscribers, men and women who were interested in the anti-racist struggle. Their number is not so insignificant when compared to the 363 who subscribed to the *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Great Britain* during the same period. In 1891 Impey discussed what the *Caste* in *Anti-Caste* actually meant. In 1888 when the journal was first published, Impey had outlined that the paper expected to deal mainly, although not exclusively with colour caste. When she revisited the meaning of caste three years later she stated that she would have "given a great deal for a searching definition of caste, so expressed as to indicate wherein lies its mighty power of evil."^26

Caste is an arbitrary and systematic restriction of persons to particular ranks of life on grounds other than those of individual merit and fitness. But this is too vague, and it does not, on the face of it, show why this system MUST BE TURNED OUT. [...] Complexion really is nothing; it is not the colour of his skin which fits a man, or unfitness for this or that place in life nor is it his supposed race characteristics, whatever they may be, but his ACTUAL PERSONAL CHARACTER.^27

At the start of the twenty-first century, although we have made progress in our understandings of race and fighting racism, we are still struggling with the notions of identity that Impey wrote about in 1891. Concepts of difference that the creation of race placed in the human psyche have not been erased. Although I have not denoted it in this way, the word black, should always be read as ‘black’, as a means of remembering the artificial nature of its meaning. However it is still a term that is left open to misunderstanding, manipulation, and slippage, even within the pages of this thesis. I can only say that I have attempted to destabilise ideas of race, ‘colour’ and ‘difference’ at every stage of the research.^28

### 2.2 Black Historical Geographies

The permanent residence of black people in Britain began with the development of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and the greatest knowledge of the lives of black people in

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^24 Douglas Lorimer, 1988
^25 *Anti-Caste*, Vol. 1, no. 1, March 1888, p1
^26 *Anti-Caste*, Vol iv, no 4, April 1891, p2
^27 *Anti-Caste*, Vol iv, no 4, April 1891, p2, original emphasis
British history is intimately related to period of forced migration between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. Although Britain’s involvement in this system did not develop to a mass scale until around the 1660s, as early as 1554, John Lock sailed back from the West Coast of Africa with a cargo of black slaves. But Kenneth Little believes it is doubtful that black men (or women, although the gendered nature of slavery meant that men were more numerous) would have been a common sight until later in the century. Peter Fryer and Paul Edwards have located a number of black people in Britain in the early part of the century, including black ladies in the Scottish court in 1513, and a black trumpeter in the courts of Henry VI and Henry VII.

There are far earlier references to a black presence in Britain, such as the African soldiers who served as part of the Roman army when it was stationed in Britain during the second century AD. Septimus Severus, the Libya-born emperor spent his last three years in Britain before he died in York; his presence inspired Bernadine Evaristo to write her tale of Zuleika, the daughter of Sudanese immigrants living in Londinium in 211 AD. There are claims for an even earlier record of a black presence. Basing his thesis on his readings of Tacitus, John Rogers argued that Tacitus’ mention of “the swarthy faces of the Silures, the curly quality, in general of their hair, suggested a black presence in pre-Roman times.”

Little, who reported this finding in his study of Negroes in Britain first published in 1948, rejected Rogers’ assertion, and argued that a black presence in Britain only really began in the sixteenth century. Since Little’s predominantly local study of black people in Cardiff, further evidence to support Rogers’ supposition has come to light. Before his untimely death Paul Edwards was using his knowledge of Old Norse, Old Irish and Old English to trace blacks who lived in Britain during the dark ages, and he also found evidence of a black presence in Roman Britain. Yet, despite these clues, current evidence still suggests that the continuous presence of black people in Britain began in the mid-sixteenth century.

28 The exclusion of those with ‘Asian’ ancestry was not taken with any intention to further marginalise the Asian experience in Britain. For examples of books investigating the Asian presence and diaspora see Peter Fryer, 1984; Ron Ramdin, 1994; Rozina Visram, 2002.
29 Kenneth Little, 1972
30 See Kenneth Little, 1972, p188
31 Ian Duffield, 1981; Peter Fryer, 1984
32 Peter Fryer, 1984, p1
33 Bernadine Evaristo, 2001
34 Quoted in Kenneth Little, 1972, p187
35 Ian Duffield, 1981
36 Kenneth Little, 1972; Hakim Adi, 1997
Towards the end of the sixteenth century it became fashionable for members of the aristocracy to have one or two black slaves among their household servants. Among the early setters of this trend in the 1590s was Lady Ralegh, the wife of Sir Walter Ralegh, who was soon followed by the Earl of Dorset. The fashionable status of the black slave among the titled members of British society retained its popularity well into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and is revealed in images such as Pierre Mignard’s portrait of the Duchess of Portsmouth with an unidentified servant, painted in 1682. In 1728 W Aikman painted Thomas Hamilton (later the 7th Earl of Haddington), with his younger brother and a negro servant. Around 1750 a picture of (an unknown) gentleman riding a white horse among urban crowds included a young black man in the background of the procession, and in 1773 in Edward Smith’s depictions of an angling party, a small black servant boy is seen peering into a pond.

Little argued that there is not much reason to doubt that by 1770 there were a fair number of blacks living on country estates as slaves and servants, and portraits such as these support his supposition. Although the servants and characters illustrated are usually unnamed, their images are proof of a presence of black people in Britain. The artist most commonly associated with work in this context is William Hogarth. Hogarth used images of black men and women in his representations and caricatures of eighteenth century urban life. His series of engravings, The Harlot’s Progress and Marriage A La Mode, are among the most famous of these. A black woman appears in plate 4 of the Chairing of members, and Hogarth produced serious studies of black people, like Head of a negro boy in chalk.

Not so well known for his representation of black people is John Zoffany, born in Ratisbon in 1733, who became a popular painter of the British aristocracy. Among his clients were George III and, during a trip to India, many members of the Raj. His images of the British aristocracy sometimes included black extras. In 1766 he painted the family of Sir William Young, and included a male black servant helping the

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37 Peter Fryer, 1984
38 Peter Fryer, 1984, p7
39 Heinz Archive, NPG, Peers eighteenth - twentieth century
40 Heinz Archive, NPG, Equestrian Sports
41 Caroline Bressey, 2001b
42 David Dabydeen, 1985
43 NPG Heinz Archive Artists Collections: William Hogarth (2) & Hogarth 447/11
44 Heinz Archive, NPG Artists Collections: William Hogarth (2)
45 National Portrait Gallery, 1990
younger children with their horse. He painted the 3rd Duke of Richmond and Lennox out shooting with a young male servant, who is pictured congratulating his master on a successful catch. In a portrait of an unknown lady, the artist depicts the young woman looking up at her, again male, black servant, who has brought her a bird in a cage as she sits writing at her desk, with a country view seen through the window behind her. He also painted Dido Elizabeth Belle, whose guardian was Lord Mansfield. Towards the end of his life Zoffany also painted an altar piece that he donated to Brentford Parish Church, which was close to where he was then living. *The Last Supper* includes the image of a black servant in front of the 'altar', and beneath the central image of Jesus.

The representation of black people in works of art has been an important tool for the investigation and examination of the black presence from the sixteenth century. Zoffany's representations of black people, although mostly of male servants, reflect the increasingly common presence of black people in eighteenth-century Britain. It has been estimated that by 1770 between 14,000 and 20,000 black people lived in London, making the black community a substantial part of the urban population. The true size of the black population remains vague, but paintings, like Zoffany's images of the landed aristocracy, are especially important as they locate black people outside the urban centres that they are normally associated with. Such archaeologies of black history are vital, but they are currently undertaken at a painfully slow rate.

Complementing evidence from visual sources in the eighteenth century, Paul Edwards highlighted the works of black authors and activists who left their stories, such as Olaudah Equiano and Ignatius Sancho. Further evidence has come from the work of Norma Myers, whose investigation of criminal records, parliamentary reports and baptism records between 1780 and 1830 gives an insight into the experiences of the poor and the petty criminal, their crimes and accomplices. Working within a similar time frame Ian Duffield has added to and diversified our sense of the black diaspora.

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46 NPG Heinz Archive, Arts: Music
47 NPG Heinz Archive, Sports & Pastimes E-Z: Guns
48 NPG Heinz Archive, Artist Collection: Joseph Wright (2) This image is attributed to Zoffany.
49 Gretchen Gerzina, 1995
50 Caroline Bressley, 2001b
51 Kenneth Little, 1972, p192. Little also notes that some authors doubt whether the entire slave population of the whole of England was ever more than 20,000.
52 Ian Duffield, 1987
53 Phil Kinsman, 1995
54 Paul Edwards, 1985
55 Norma Myers, 1987; 1993

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with his discoveries of black men and women who were transported to Australia to serve sentences with their white British peers. The Committee for Relief of the Black Poor set up in 1786 to oversee the plan to prevent blacks from begging in Britain and send them instead to Sierra Leone, has provided further evidence of the black presence, although examples of names appear to be mostly male.

Black women who lived in Britain are also coming to light in research done by those not directly focusing on British history, such as Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker’s evocation of a revolutionary Atlantic. By taking the Atlantic as a central space, theirs’ is an historical geography that touches upon the multicultural shores of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They have come across interesting tales of black women who were a part of this revolutionary world, such as Catherine Despard, who accompanied her British imperial officer husband from Central America to London in 1790. Though she was shunned by Despard’s family as “a poor black woman who called herself his wife” she became involved in prison politics, and worked to expose the awful prison conditions she encountered when her husband was imprisoned: he was executed for his alleged involvement in a plot against the government. Before his execution she helped her husband write his appeal to his fellow citizens from the gallows.

Moving to twentieth-century history, Jeffrey Green has introduced us to the diverse membership of the black community in the early part of the century with his work on Black Edwardians. Stephen Bourne has added to this with his work on black entertainers who worked in British theatre and film. In Edwardian London there are more texts written about London and British society by black authors. A. B. C. Merriman-Labor published his vision of Britons Through Negro Spectacles in 1909. Although it was taken to be a comical collection of observations, it does give some insights into the expectations and experiences a black middle-class male might have had. In the book’s preface he justified his light hearted commentary.

Considering my racial connection, and the flippant character of literature which, at the present time, finds ready circulation among the general public, I am of opinion

56 Ian Duffield, 1986; 1987
58 Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, 2000
59 Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, 2000
60 Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, 2000, p252
61 Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, 2000
62 Jeffrey Green, 1998
63 Stephen Bourne, 1996, 2001a
that the world would be better prepared to hear me if I come in the guise of a jester.\\footnote{64}

His claim that there were not many more than one hundred blacks living in London now seems an underestimate, and is challenged by the insights of Stephen Bourne and Hakim Adi. Beginning in Edwardian Britain, but carrying on into the 1960s, Adi has concentrated on recovering the experience of West Africans in Britain, particularly the influence on British social and political life of West African students, and the students' own politics and political organisations.\\footnote{65}

Actors outside the academic arena drive a great deal of black history. Marika Sherwood's tireless efforts as a founding member of BASA\\footnote{66} has brought to light many aspects of black history in Britain and Ireland that still await public attention. She has published a number of papers and books focusing on the biographies of many politically active blacks, such as Claudia Jones, a communist founder of Carnival and editor of the West Indian Gazette, and Pastor Daniels Ekarte who started the African Churches Mission in Liverpool in 1931.\\footnote{67}

2.3 Historical geographies of London

Compared to the relatively small number of publications on black history, there are a vast number of studies of Victorian and Edwardian London. London is a place that is seen to exemplify the idea of the city as a social laboratory in the making of modernity and the modern city. A space where "nature, communities and artefacts interact, where the past shapes the present and the present moulds the future - a future more unintended then planned."\\footnote{68} It is this idea of the city, physically enormous, bursting with people and energy, a space of processes, often contradictory, that I am using as the context for the women in this thesis.

Victorian London is popularly imagined as a place of huge transition and diversity, railway stations, urban slums and the dark dank streets haunted by Jack the Ripper, coupled with public pleasure parks and private gardens, great public works and

\\footnote{64} A B C Merriman-Labor, 1909  
\\footnote{65} Hakim Adi, 1998  
\\footnote{66} BASA, the Black and Asian Studies Association, is an organisation that encourages the study, publishing, teaching and research of the history of African, Asian and Caribbean peoples in Britain.  
\\footnote{67} Marika Sherwood, 1994; 1999  
\\footnote{68} Roy Porter, 2000, p7
dreaded workhouses. It was a city that aroused love and hatred: often considered more a kingdom or a nation in itself than a city, and various authors have expressed all of these opinions in their writings on and about London. Despite this diversity of opinions Roy Porter argued that all who wrote about the Victorian city acknowledged that it was unique.  

Although black people have not usually been considered, issues of race have long been a part of the popular imagination of London’s history. There are few popular tomes on Victorian London history that do not include some comment on the city’s Irish and/or Jewish communities. These two communities were also prominent in many Victorian works on the city. For example, towards the end of the nineteenth century the racialisation of the city was increasingly interpreted by ‘biostatisticians’ such as Joseph Jacobs, and social investigators such as Charles Booth, who themselves were recreating many parts of well worn methodology, initially developed by men such as Henry Mayhew.

In 1889 Joseph Jacobs and Isidore Spielman conducted a survey of Jews in London. After taking the physical statistics of 423 individuals, they concluded that English Jews could be divided into “two chief classes” consisting of West End Jews who were “the better nurtured inhabitants of the West End and descendants for the most part of Jews who ha[d] long been settled in this country, and “East End Jews”, the less fortunately situated Jewish dwellers at the East End, the parents of whom in many cases were born abroad.” It is perhaps curious that similar studies were not made about black people who lived in the city. Or perhaps not. The large influx of Jewish people fleeing Eastern Europe in the 1880s became the focus of racist discrimination in London. Furthermore the more established Jewish middle-class were worried about the Eastern European working-class Jews and how their arrival would influence their position. The absence of black people (whether through a deliberate erasure or because enumerators did not bother to note them) from such studies implies that the arrival of black migrants in the late Victorian period was not one which raised alarm. However their failure to attract such attention from concerned Victorians is to a large degree

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69 Jonathan Schneer, 1999  
70 Roy Porter, 2000, p207, p208 & p341  
71 Joseph Jacobs, 1885-6  
72 Judith Walkowitz, 1998  
73 Joseph Jacobs and Isidore Spielman, 1889-1890  
74 Joseph Jacobs and Isidore Spielman, 1889-1890, p77
why it has taken so long for them to be included in any form in modern studies of the city.

For those living in poverty, as many of the subjects of such studies were, without the support of social security, life was a precarious existence. Accidents and illness were threats of daily life that meant a slight mishap could send a family down a slippery slope. Some, like the girls we encounter in chapter four, would spend time in the workhouse or were separated from their families and transferred to the care of homes such as Barnardo's. The girls and young women who found themselves under the care of Barnardo's were taught how to become domestic servants, so that when they left the home they would be in a position to join one of the largest employment sectors in the country. Between 1851 and 1871 the number of servants employed in England rose by 60 percent, double the growth of the population. The greatest numbers were employed between 1880 - 1900, when many of the black girls in Barnardo's entered the home.

Most women who worked in London were employed in some kind of menial work such as washerwomen, needlewomen, charwomen, street sellers, hawkers, or they became prostitutes. Publishing his social research in 1891, Booth concluded that 30 percent of Londoners lived in poverty, meaning that almost a third of the city lived "short of the comforts and necessaries of life, ill-clothed, ill-housed, and ill-nourished." Out of this third about 7 percent survived under conditions of chronic want in a hand to mouth existence. Although only 1 percent of Londoners were calculated to be living in the lowest class - one of 'occasional labourers, loafers, and semi-criminals' - this still amounted to around 37 000 people.

For those who were poor in London life could be a perilous existence. In the 1850s and 1860s three out of every one thousand Londoners died from tuberculosis each year, thirty years later the rate had only fallen to two people in every thousand. In 1866 Thames shipbuilding collapsed, no longer able to compete with yards on the Tyne and

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75 Francois Bedarida, 1991  
76 Francois Bedarida, 1991, p53  
77 Francois Bedarida, 1991, p120  
78 Sally Alexander, 1995  
79 Clementina Black, 1891, p217  
80 Clementina Black, 1891, p217  
81 Clementina Black, 1891, p207 and p217  
82 Stephen Inwood, 1998, p417
Clyde, and was a part of the severe economic depression and social crisis that the city faced from 1866 - 1869. In the late 1880s over 11 000 of London children were in pauper schools, schools that had such bad reputation for disease, cruelty and overcrowding that some local poor law unions had moved their poverty stricken children to mainstream schools by the 1890s. In the West End and the City, wealth and consumption escalated. In 1864 975 new companies were registered with a nominal capital of £235 million; in the following year 1014 were registered with a capital of £203 million. The annual record of registrations maintained this order through the 1870s, and by 1887 it was twice as large.

In 1903 Jack London published *People of the Abyss*, created from personal observations and police and newspaper reports and laced with statistics such as the fact that one adult Londoner in four was destined to die on public charity whether in the workhouse, the infirmary or the asylum. Jack London was aware that not all workers in London lived in the East End, and Inwood believes that the best contemporary evidence suggests that poverty was spread thickly and fairly evenly in the inner suburban districts of the north, south and east. Yet the image that the Victorians and Edwardians held was that the East End was a ghetto, "where the rich and powerful do not dwell, and the traveller cometh not, and where two million workers swarm and procreate, and die."

These popular knowledges of the city are complemented by the social and cultural studies that have been undertaken by authors such as Lynda Nead and Judith Walkowitz. These works have challenged the traditional views of the city by examining social geographies of the city’s spaces. Lynda Nead has deconstructed the views of Londoners who saw the streets of the city as a *Victorian Babylon*, with London’s spaces of modernity fashioned more like the illogical structures of a maze than an ordered grid. This is a useful model for thinking about the structure of black women’s experiences of the city and of each other. Not all black women followed the same path, nor would they have visualised the city in the same way. However, their

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83 Francis Sheppard, 1998
84 Stephen Inwood, 1998
85 Stephen Inwood, 1998, p507
86 David Thompson, 1951, p140
87 David Thompson, 1951, p140
88 Jack London, 2001, p105
89 Stephen Inwood, 1998
90 Jack London, 2001, p113
91 Lynda Nead, 2000
navigation of the city may have given them more in common with each other than they imagined, because of the manner in which race and racism affected their lives.

Walkowitz sees the literary manifestations of London in the 1880s taking a similar path when the metropolis was presented as a dark, powerful and secretive labyrinth. She locates her work among that of feminist historians who work towards a more complex picture of Victorian sexuality in the 1880s, when new spaces and forms of social communication and political networks allowed middle-class women to speak publicly about sexual passion and danger. The narratives in her book are used to “illustrate the operation of power in a Foucauldian sense, as a dispersed and decentered force that is hard to grasp and possess fully.” This includes an interrogation of the scandal that surrounded ‘The Maiden Tribute’, an investigation undertaken by the Pall Mall Gazette in 1885 into girls in London’s spaces of prostitution. Walkowitz examines the attempt of the Gazette’s editor, W T Stead, to turn his paper into a forum of critical opinion for a public that would include the working class and women, people who were traditionally excluded from the public sphere. Through this episode Walkowitz draws attention to the linkages between men and women in the public sphere, and how women managed to negotiate themselves in these spaces. These insights are useful for the consideration of black women who were operating and represented in the public sphere.

However few traditional or new interrogations of the city include experiences of black people which could further point to the complexities of life and society in the modern city. As the centre of national government, and home to numerous parish councils, unions and metropolitan boards, London was a city of diverse politics. It was the site of demands for the end to slavery in Britain and throughout the world, and demands for suffrage, and mass demonstrations throughout the centuries, but black people in Britain who were involved in these struggles often have their agency denied. This omission is the focus of Madge Dresser’s new research on slave memorials in London, which has stressed the absence of any recognition for black people as proactive

92 Judith Walkowitz, 1998
93 Judith Walkowitz, 1998, p9
94 Judith Walkowitz, 1998, p8
95 Judith Walkowitz, 1998, p81
96 Judith Walkowitz, 1998
97 For an example of research that pays direct attention to the agency of black people in the ending of the slave trade, see Shyllon, 1974
participants in the anti-slavery movement, and highlighted the fact that there are no

An example of a man who could be included in such histories is William Cuffay. William Cuffay’s grandfather was sold into slavery on the island of St Kitts, where his father was born a slave. He was freed and travelled to England, and his children, William and Juliana, were brought up by their mother in Chatham. In his late teens William trained to be a journeyman tailor, which would become his lifetime craft. Although initially reluctant to support the Owenite Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, Cuffay came out on strike with his fellow members. As a result he was sacked from the job he had held for many years, he found it very difficult to find new employment, and it was this experience that took him into politics.\footnote{Peter Fryer, 1984} In 1839 he joined the Chartist movement - in support of the People’s Charter, which demanded among other things, universal male suffrage, secret ballots and the payment of MPs.

Cuffay was to become one of the most prominent leaders of the Chartist movement in London. In 1839 he helped set up the Metropolitan Tailors’ Charter Association and in 1841 he was sent by the Westminster Chartists to represent them on the Metropolitan Delegate Council. Then in 1842, following the arrests of George Harney and other national leaders, Cuffay was appointed by the Metropolitan Council to serve on an interim executive. Nor was he the only member of the black community to be involved in the movement. Two leaders of a Chartist demonstration in Camberwell in March 1848, were also “men of colour”.\footnote{Peter Fryer, 1984, p239} However Cuffay was savagely lampooned in \textit{Punch}, and \textit{The Times} referred to him and the London Chartists as “the black man and his party”.\footnote{Peter Fryer, 1984, p239} As a direct result of negative press campaigns his wife of the time, Mary Ann, was sacked from her job.

After the rejection of the Chartists’ 1848 petition by Parliament Cuffay was elected to be one of the Commissioners to continue the promotion of the campaign for the Charter. It seems that Cuffay was a reluctant and certainly late recruit to this group. On 16\textsuperscript{th} August 1848, 11 ‘luminaries’, allegedly plotting to fire certain buildings as a sign of the uprising, were arrested at the Orange Tree, a Bloomsbury Tavern near Red
Historical Geographies of Black History

Lion Square. Cuffay was later arrested at his lodgings. He had been a delegate to the committee for no more than twelve days, and had not been elected Secretary until 13th August, so he was not as The Times was to claim, "the very chief of the conspiracy", who they described as "half a nigger" among a group of Irishmen.\(^{102}\)

In court Cuffay pleaded not guilty but his plea was to no avail and he was sentenced to transportation, for the term of his natural life; Cuffay arrived in Tasmania in November 1849. Cuffay did not repent his radical politics and after his free pardon in 1856 he became involved in local politics, particularly the amendment of the colony's Masters and Servants Act. At one of his last public appearances he addressed the crowd as "fellow slaves" and told them "I'm old, I'm out of work, and I'm in debt, and therefore I have cause to complain."\(^{103}\)

The year after Cuffay arrived in Australia, the city he had been forced to leave was still the largest centre of production in the country,\(^{104}\) and at the time of the Great Exhibition in 1851, it was by far the largest industrial city in the world.\(^{105}\) During the six month display of power, innovation and wealth, over six million people would view the exhibitors' wares. Among them was Josiah Henson, a former American slave who had escaped to Canada, and was the only black exhibitor at the exhibition.\(^{106}\) Through contacts with the church Henson spoke about the plight of enslaved Americans and received invitations from Lord Brougham and the Prime Minister Lord John Russell. Yet men and women who held audience with a black man could still hold prejudiced views. Although Russell was happy to lend his support to the anti-slavery cause, the year of Henson's visit was also witness to one of the nineteenth century's worst racist out-bursts of anti-Catholicism, and Russell led the fray.\(^{107}\) Although 'anti-Catholicism' may not be considered racism, Russell's attitudes are one example of the diversity of views individual Victorians could hold towards 'others'.

Cuffay, who we will return to in chapter three, provides us with a means of thinking through the discourses of race which appeared and affected the core, rather than the fringes of English political life.\(^{108}\) Although Cuffay faced racist commentary in the

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\(^{102}\) Peter Fryer, 1984, p242
\(^{103}\) Peter Fryer, 1984, p245
\(^{104}\) Francis Sheppard, p292
\(^{105}\) Stephen Inwood, 1998, p444
\(^{106}\) Jan Marsh, 2001
\(^{107}\) K Theodore Hoppen, 1998
\(^{108}\) Paul Gilroy, 1996a
press, he was part of an organisation that welcomed his leadership on matters of principle far broader than race or 'colour'. Other members of the community faced racism and because of their 'colour' challenged it. One such example, a character we will also return to in chapter seven, is William Craft, who challenged the racist views of James Hunt from the floor of a debate held in 1863. Craft, a black American who had fled slavery with his wife and settled in London, was one of a number of black Americans who came to Britain to tour and lecture against slavery.

These visitors came at a time when there were numerous attacks on Southern slavery in the British media. But Christine Bolt argues that this sensibility formed part of a general hostility towards American institutions that masqueraded as respectable concern for the American negro. By the 1860s and 1870s both Britain and America were becoming increasingly fascinated with race. When the black American Sara Remond wrote to the *Daily News* in September 1866, she believed she sensed some feeling of racism among that British public that was not dissimilar to the planters of the American South. But as we shall see, when she was refused a visa to travel from London to Paris, the British press supported her cause.

Ida B Wells, was another black American who visited Britain, and who we will return to in chapter seven. She was given a degree of support by the British press that surpassed all her expectations. Considering she was present in Britain in the 1890s, well into the 'era of imperialism', a continuation of the aforementioned aspect of Anglo-American relations may have formed a part of the support she managed to command, especially during her second visit in 1894. Yet she too commented on the 'colour' racism that was on the rise in British politics when she was in Britain. During her stay in the metropolis Wells made two trips to the House of Commons. On her first visit she was shocked by the forced segregation of women in the House, and wrote to the Chicago paper *Inter-Ocean* commenting on the gendered division of the public gallery. She was also well aware of the racial debates occurring within British politics and commented on the case of the MP Naoroji who was the first Indian MP to be elected to the House of Commons.

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19 Christine Bolt, 1971
110 Christine Bolt, 1969
111 Christine Bolt, 1971
As the century came to a close, conservative politicians in the East End tried to turn popular anti-alienism into votes. Between 1801 and 1851 London’s population had increased by 150 percent from 900,000 to 2.36m, boosted by immigrants from the countryside, and the Irish poor who were fleeing famine. This community had born the brunt of racist abuse until the large influx of Jewish immigrants fleeing the pogroms in Eastern Europe arrived in the 1880s and 1890s contributing to an increase in London’s population to over 4 million by 1901. In the case of Naoroji the Tories started a rumour that he was a fire-worshipper. However, political celebrity was his almost overnight, when the then Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, declared in a speech that “however great the progress of mankind has been, and however far we have advanced in overcoming prejudice, I doubt if we have yet got to the point of view where a British constituency would elect a black man.”

Salisbury’s opponents rallied to Naoroji’s side and the National Liberal Club gave a banquet in his honour to mark their opposition to and disapproval of Lord Salisbury’s intolerant language. The *Newcastle Leader* pointed out that the majority of British subjects were black men, and that to condemn a man only because of his colour reminded the public of the “very worst days” of slavery. Naoroji took the positive publicity as an opportunity to stand for a parliamentary seat. Perhaps, as Wells put it, the English public were reluctant to draw a colour line, for Naoroji was elected Liberal MP for Central Finsbury in 1892.

If Naoroji’s election proved that ‘the colour line’ was one that could still be broken in mainstream politics, prejudice against ‘aliens’ was becoming far more entrenched. The Conservatives retained a dominance in office between 1895 and 1905, and they brought a spirit of imperialism into practical politics. They emphasised this tone despite having as a member of their party Sir Mancherjee Merwanjee Bhownaggree - the second ‘Indian’ to serve in the House - who was returned to parliament for them in Bethnal Green for ten years following his first success in 1895. The *Royal Commission on Alien Immigration* reported in 1903, and in 1905 the Aliens Act placed immigration restrictions on the statute book for the first time in eighty years. British attitudes towards foreign and imperial affairs became increasingly jingoistic fuelled by the so

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112 Sally Alexander, 1995, p10
113 Francois Bedarida, 1991
114 Peter Fryer, 1984, p264
115 Peter Fryer, 1984, p262
116 Alfreda Duster, 1972
117 Quoted in Rozina Visram, 2002, p133
called scramble for Africa, which resulted in all but two small areas of Africa being divided amongst the European powers between 1870 and 1914.\textsuperscript{19}

Naoroji was aware of the ill treatment of others under colonial rule, and he was one of those who gave financial support to the Pan-African conference held in London in July 1900. His direct support marks one of the earliest recorded illustrations of Afro-Asian solidarity in Britain; Naoroji saw an affinity between the aims of his work and that of the organisers of the Pan-African Conference. As we shall see in chapter seven, he also held an affinity with black people oppressed in America, and was one of the first to join the Anti-Lynching Committee when it was formed in London in 1894.

Salisbury's decision to label Naoroji a 'black' man illustrates the political nature of the term 'black' even in the nineteenth century, as a word that conflated 'otherness' rather than 'ethnicity'.\textsuperscript{120} In this sense the nineteenth and early twentieth century is an interesting period, for it was when the battle against slavery was largely won, but the battle against racism and 'otherness' was lost.\textsuperscript{121} It was a period that saw a shift in ideas about race and theories of equality, although these two had always had a complex and often confusing marriage. Without the stories of Cuffay, Wells, Naoroji and actors like them, the complexity of how the realities of race were imposed on and lived out by black people in London become lost in a generalised image of Victorian 'progress' or their troubles are dismissed because they originated from the ravings of 'pseudo-scientists'.

By the time of the 1901 census the city had reached a population of 4.5 million, a total that grew to 6.6 million when the inhabitants of Greater London were included.\textsuperscript{122} It continued to be a 'multi-ethnic' and multi-cultural city, informed by the ideas of race, racism and anti-racism. The Victorian metropolis gave its inhabitants the tools with which to challenge inequalities based on race in spaces of the 'anti-imperial city',\textsuperscript{123} or elaborate a vision of empire that increased feelings of arrogance and racism. As Bill Schwarz has acknowledged an insight into such decisions and the creations of identity are difficult histories to reconstruct.\textsuperscript{124} However, moments like the creation of the

\textsuperscript{118} Stephen Inwood, 1998
\textsuperscript{119} David Thompson, 1951
\textsuperscript{120} John Ellis has found this to be the case in British Army records, where recruits were 'black' whether they were African, Asian or from the Caribbean. John Ellis, The Invisible Men, paper presented at the Third Public History Conference, Ruskin College Oxford, May 2002
\textsuperscript{121} Patrick Brantlinger, 1985
\textsuperscript{122} Francois Bedarida, 1991
\textsuperscript{123} Jonathan Schneer, 1999
\textsuperscript{124} Bill Schwartz, 1996b
African Association in 1897 (which by the following year had 47 members\textsuperscript{125}), Naoroji's complaint in 1900 that discrimination in the India Office based on race was an "un-English course",\textsuperscript{126} and the Pan-African Conference held the same year, do provide occasional glimpses in the makings of the multi-cultural metropolis, and the debates about race and racism to which it played host.

\textbf{2.4 Historical geographies and black Londoners}

This sense that London was the greatest imperial metropolis by the end of the nineteenth century\textsuperscript{127} makes it all the more noticeable that a genuine consideration of the lives of black people and the formations of their identity are absent from the numerous studies of the centuries on either side. For example, in Peter Ackroyd's recent London biography, their presence was accorded only ten lines (although this is, to be fair, ten lines more than many other publications). The final sentence of that paragraph tell us that, in the nineteenth century black people "rarely appear in novels or narratives, except as occasional grotesques, and their general fate seems to have been one of settlement among the urban poor."\textsuperscript{128}

Kenneth Little acknowledged that if the evidence of late nineteenth-century commentators was to be believed then by the 1870s the black man or woman had virtually disappeared except for crossing sweepers and an occasional black bishop.\textsuperscript{129} Jonathan Schneer has supported these suppositions with his declaration that, although earlier in the nineteenth century there had been "a vibrant community of African-Britons [who] lived in London", by 1900 "there remained only a small black population in London, desperately poor, composed largely of West Indian sailors living in Canning Town in the East End."\textsuperscript{130} The women who appear in this thesis hint that there is a far greater historical geography of the black presence to be uncovered.

There are some characters who obviously stand out against the picture outlined above, including figures such as William Cuffay, the nurse and businesswoman Mary

\textsuperscript{125} Jonathan Schneer, 1999, p215
\textsuperscript{126} Quoted in Jonathan Schneer, 1999, p195
\textsuperscript{127} Jonathan Schneer, 1999
\textsuperscript{128} Peter Ackroyd, 2000, p714
\textsuperscript{129} Kenneth Little, 1972, p212
\textsuperscript{130} Jonathan Schneer, 1999, p203
Seacole, and the musician and composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. More ordinary characters have been revealed in studies such as Duffield's research taken from the archive offices of New South Wales and Australia, among which he found 195 black men and six women who, like Cuffay, had been deported from Britain. All the women had been domestic workers; case details include those of Charlotte Claydon, an unmarried single parent, who stole £6 in Bethnal Green and arrived in Sydney in 1837. Ackroyd might well think that characters such as Claydon, and the majority of women who feature in this thesis, do little to disprove his assumption. However, in the area of black history, absence is no longer an excuse for dismissive assumptions. Until the work of more researchers becomes available, authors should be mindful of the prejudiced myths they help perpetuate with their suppositions.

London's history has always been diverse, yet there is little to remind us of the histories of the immigrants who sweated to support its foundation. In 1851 migrants accounted for 38 percent of London's population, and 34 percent in 1891; the majority came from the Home Counties and the South East, about 15 percent were born abroad or in Ireland. In contemporary Britain, by the early 1990s around 98 percent of the black community lived in England, and of the 496 000 Afro-Caribbeans who lived in Britain, over half lived in London. It is Europe's most multi-ethnic city with over 200 languages spoken within its confines, and around 30 percent of London's present population can trace an ethnic heritage to first, second or third generation immigrants. It is truly a cosmopolitan metropolis.

But still this diversity is hardly reflected in the current or the historical urban landscape, and when attempts are made to change this they are hampered by residents who object to their 'political correctness'. Naming a small road after Mary Seacole, turned into a brawl in a London borough because some residents objected to its "political correctness". When the terraced house in which Mary Seacole once lived was earmarked for redevelopment in 1994, although the presence of a blue plaque was noted in Westminster Council's inquiry, it was only in the context that it "added to the interest of the terrace" and was not considered enough to demand the building's

131 Ziggi Alexander and Dewjee, 1984; Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, 1998
132 Ian Duffield, 1993
133 Ian Duffield, 1993
134 Stephen Inwood, 1998, p412
135 R Humphreys, 1995
136 Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, 2002, p5
It is hard to believe that if the building had once been the home of Florence Nightingale, such an attitude would have been taken, and in this respect black histories become sites of resistance and controversy.

The re-launch of the works of black writers like Ignatius Sancho, Olaudah Equiano and Mary Seacole provides examples of an articulate black membership of London society which have helped to jolt prejudiced minds to a degree. Their place in London society is often viewed through individual case by case examples, and it is still unclear as to how broad the communities from which they came were. Was there a sense of community, or was the experience more one of individuals who lived in a cosmopolitan metropolis? There are some hints at such an eighteenth century community; examples include the group of black people who attended a christening in the Parish Church of St Giles' in 1726, and the 52 women whose names appear in the records of the Committee for the Black Poor in 1786. But who were the ‘ordinary’ women in the Victorian city, what happened to the daughters of women such as Charlotte Claydon, was there still a community to care for them?

These unanswered questions mean that black women in London, or in Britain, have no collective historical memory. They are rendered insignificant, unimportant or are completely ignored in the popular imagination of London’s history. The historical geography of black women has been, and still is, forced to the peripheries of the British national conscience. The problem is not so much that white British history dominates historical debates, but that it is considered the only history of the British Isles. Care needs to be taken here, for collapsing the criticism to one of ‘white’ history is itself problematic. There is a danger of polarising a centred white history against a displaced black one. White ethnicity consists of a diverse number of Englands, located in many different locales. Within these spaces of ‘white’ history, the position of the Irish, Jewish and Eastern European communities, and particularly women, have all been, and still are, passionately debated.

In 1998 the 50th Anniversary of the arrival of the Empire Windrush, a boat that brought 500 migrants from the Caribbean to Britain in June 1948, was celebrated in the British public sphere in numerous radio and television programmes as well as various

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137 City of Westminster, Environment and Planning Department, April 1999, personal correspondence.
138 Paul Gilroy, 1996
139 See Zigi Alexander and Audrey Dewjee, 1984; David Dabydeen and Paul Edwards, 1991
140 Gretchen Gerzina, 1995
publications and considerable column inches. But, as Linda Bellos has pointed out, not only did commentators promote these celebrations in the context of the ‘first arrival’ of black peoples in Britain and the beginning of a multi-cultural nation, but many black people who had lived and worked in Britain before 1948 were excluded. The focus on these, mostly male, migrants who arrived in 1948 re-emphasised the temporal divide that British national memory insists upon building and rebuilding, despite efforts of a multitude of groups to dismantle it. It claims a white homogeneous land that existed in splendid isolation until the decay of empire and the arrival of ships, such as the Empire Windrush, from the colonies in the 1950s and 1960s. The Empire Windrush itself has become part of the creation myth of the ‘new’ multicultural Britain. Details are added to these events “retrospectively, so in the case of Empire Windrush, the boat whose arrival [...] supposedly inaugurated the epoch of New Commonwealth immigration, the process of projection, amplification and displacement seem inconceivably more important than the original event.”

This work tries to counter these assumptions and the temporal 1948 divide, by bringing together a collection of biographies from Victorian and Edwardian London. All historical work divides history into chunks of time or intellectual traditions for its own purpose, and must choose its chronological realities according to, more or less, conscious references and exclusions. Relatively little is known about black history in any chronological period, even less is known about black people in Victorian London, particularly in the context of the numerous archives that are available to researchers of the nineteenth century. Census returns, parish records, birth, death and marriage certificates, prison registers, poor law registers, hospital admission registers, orphanage registers, newspapers and catalogues are just a small selection of the numerous forms of archives that are available. Yet evidence of black people is often collected from hints in lists, and searches of newspapers and periodicals that sometimes yield small facts here and there, but often yield nothing at all.

Some authors, such as Pratibha Parmar, have argued that black communities in Britain have discontinuous histories because of their experiences of cultural and social displacement through migration, slavery, indentured labour, political flight and
exile. This may be true for individual experiences of history, but given the evidence that is emerging from projects such as The Casbah Project and the success of BASA’s request to family historians for any references to black people in local archives that they come across, it would seem that such pessimism can be set aside. Perhaps eventually it will be the case that, given the evidence (or lack of it), we may revert to Ackroyd’s, Parmar’s or Schneer’s assertions, but there are a lot of records to be turned over before that stage is reached.

2.5 Feminist writings and black histories

Voices arguing for the development and importance of black history have grown out of an eclectic body of work, from post-colonial theories to the questions posed by the volunteers who run Saturday schools for black children. Within these broad demands for a greater understanding of the black past, Bonnie Dill has argued for the need to understand the way in which ethnic differences interceded with class, and what forms of domination and oppressions existed within class systems. The need to understand the signification of gender groups is a consideration that Natalie Davis has also demanded, for she believes that there is a need to examine the range of roles, and the ways in which they functioned to maintain or promote change of social order. In her paper In History, Jamaica Kincaid asks a series of questions about the meaning and impact of ‘history’ on black cultures. Many of the questions she raises can be linked to those of Teri-ann White who has been investigating her white family history in Australia. The cracks are in different places, and the silences of a different kind, but a black North American woman, and a white Australian woman are seeking answers to their past in conspicuously similar ways. This is a connection that Patricia Hill Collins has observed, as she sees the values and ideas which Africanist scholars in the United States identify as being characteristically ‘black’, often bear a remarkable resemblance

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146 Hans Werner Debrunner, 1979
147 Pratibha Parmar, 1990
148 CASBAH is a demonstrator project funded by the Research Support Libraries Programme, established in 2000 to identify and map national research resources for Caribbean studies and the history of black and Asian people in Britain. Its funding ended in 2002.
149 Bonnie Thornton Dill, 1996
150 Natalie Zemon Davies, 1996
151 Jamaica Kincaid, 1997
152 Teri-ann White, Finding Theodore and Brina, paper presented at the Royal Geographical Society and Institute of British Geographers Annual Conference, 1999
to similar ideas claimed by feminist scholars to be ‘female’.\textsuperscript{153} For Collins this illustrates that conditions of oppression can vary dramatically between subordinate groups, and yet produce some uniformity in the epistemologies they generate.\textsuperscript{154}

Historically there has been a difference in the way black and white feminists have approached their subject. Whereas black feminists tended to focus on the litany of race, class and gender, white feminists were inclined to focus on representations of white women in the context of gender, class and sexuality, without an acknowledgement of the dynamics of race.\textsuperscript{155} The early feminist positions taken by white women were heavily criticised by black feminists for their lack of awareness of the diversity of experience felt by women from different ethnic groups.\textsuperscript{156}

The historical repression of the ideas of black women had a pronounced influence on feminist theory. As long ago as 1831 Maria Stewart, a black American woman, asked how long black women would be “compelled to bury their minds and talents beneath a load of iron pots and kettles” and implored them to turn their attention “to knowledge and improvement; for knowledge is power.”\textsuperscript{157} Initially feminist theory was limited by its reliance on the examples of white middle-class women that ignored the experiences of women such as Maria Stewart and her descendants. Black feminist thought is vital for a general understanding of the historical and political meanings behind the representations of gender.\textsuperscript{158} But as “[w]e cannot remember what we have been made to forget”\textsuperscript{159} the rediscovery and critical analysis of black histories are an important part of this process. A process that forms a part of a political consciousness if we agree that the “primary challenge of liberation is not to construct the correct theory but the struggle to achieve freedom in history.”\textsuperscript{160}

All these debates have become part of a feminist discourse that stands for a political commitment to women, but, as Linda McDowell has pointed out, one that is not unified necessarily in its fields of theory, political positions or perspectives.\textsuperscript{161} The historical discipline itself has a considerable tradition of critical debate around the

\textsuperscript{153} Patricia Hill Collins, 2000
\textsuperscript{154} Patricia Hill Collins, 2000
\textsuperscript{155} Vron Ware, 1996
\textsuperscript{156} Hazel Carby, 1996
\textsuperscript{157} Quoted in Patricia Hill Collins, 1991, p4
\textsuperscript{158} Patricia Hill Collins, 1991
\textsuperscript{159} Patricia Hill Collins, 1991, p132
\textsuperscript{160} Sharon Welch, 1988, p214
\textsuperscript{161} Linda McDowell, 1999, p8
themes of gender and race, pioneered by women such as Catherine Hall and Vron Ware. Catherine Hall’s work has focused on race and particularly the impacts and meanings of race in the nineteenth-century metropolis. This has included an interrogation of white colonialists and imperialists throughout the empire, and the juxtaposition of nation, empire and race, which came to clarify the boundaries of belonging. In this context she has examined the changing forms of racial belonging which developed during the nineteenth century and came to emphasise the differences between the ‘typical Englishman’ and the ‘poor Negro’.

Hall has also interrogated spaces of empire, considering the biographies of those who lived in different sites of empire during their lifetime, and the impact of a sense of time-space compression on the ‘here’ and ‘over there’ in the imperial mind. Her most recent work has continued this, and in Civilising Subjects Hall has set forth her hypothesis that the colony and the metropole can only be understood in relation to each other, and that in this light, the identity of the coloniser becomes a constitutive part of Englishness. By connecting events such as the Morant Bay ‘rebellion’ in Jamaica in 1865 with the Reform Act in England in 1867, Hall analyses the dynamic relationships between political events in the colony, particularly Jamaica, and the metropole, where her focus is Birmingham. Although the actors she highlights in Birmingham are white missionaries, her work marks an important space for this thesis. By emphasising the importance of the ‘multi-cultural’ imagination and the imperial spatial dynamics in the making of Englishness, Hall locates empire within the heart of Britain, thus forging it a place in the heart of British history.

In her historical examination of women and racism, as I have tried to do in this thesis, Ware combines straightforward historical accounts and biography, where information is relatively unknown, and autobiography, where those texts are available. This enables her to connect different histories and underline the importance of recognizing different sorts of narratives within the history of feminism, as well as applying a perspective of race, class and gender to historical research.

\[^{162}\text{Catherine Hall, 2000}\]
\[^{163}\text{Catherine Hall, 1993, p220}\]
\[^{164}\text{Catherine Hall, 2002}\]
\[^{165}\text{Vron Ware, 1996, pxiv, p43}\]
Aside from her considerations on the practice of feminist history, Ware has analysed the close connection between the position of white women and blacks, especially in the hierarchies of race, where both white women and black men and women were considered the property of white men.

Ware's discussion of phrenology, the study of skull shape, which gained credibility in the 1820s, is an interesting example. Phrenology was a study that not only attempted to prove that black people were inferior, but also European women by declaring, for example, that men and women were suited to different tasks both mentally and physically. On the other hand the rhetoric of race was used positively by Unitarian, radical and feminist campaigners of the nineteenth century, as highlighted in the repeated use of the language of slavery in the passage of Married Women's Property Acts in 1870 and 1882, and anti-prostitution campaigns. However, using the language of slavery and the oppressed did not necessarily reflect a sense of solidarity on grounds of equality. As Clare Midgley argues, earlier in the century women had misplaced and racist opinions about the women they supported through the anti-slavery movement, and a belief in spiritual equality did not sit comfortably with a sense of white women's cultural superiority. However it is worth noting at this stage that Catherine Impey, the editor of Britain's first anti-racist paper Anti-Caste, was a white woman. It is interesting to speculate whether the discrimination Impey faced as a woman increased, or perhaps even generated, her interest in the discrimination people around the world faced because of their colour.

2.6 History and Identity

For members of ethnic diasporas 'at home' in England, the gaze of England and the effects of imperialism and the rhetoric of race are felt differently, as they are simultaneously centred and peripheral. Indeed Gilroy has argued that the black experience in England "is increasingly revealed to possess a certain uniqueness - a particularity and peculiarity that distinguish it from the history of black populations elsewhere in the diaspora." In A Small Place, Kincaid uses her novelette to consider

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166 Vron Ware, 1992
167 Laura E Nym Mayhall, 2001, p485
168 Clare Midgley, 1993
169 Paul Gilroy, 1993, p54
the impact of imperialism on the Caribbean island of her home.\textsuperscript{170} She writes and looks back in anger. Her use of repetition and accusation speaks directly to \textit{you} and she declares that 'the English' should be wearing sackcloth and ashes in token penance of the wrongs committed; everyone who is English is blamed. Those who look like her (that is they have black skins) are not held responsible. But what of those who are English but not white? It is not clear how these 'hybrid/mixed' people would fit into her strategy of blame, and her narrow definitions deny the multi-cultural nation that England is and has been.

The study of black people in Britain is an interdisciplinary endeavour. As well as historians, theoretical developments in the realm of cultural studies, particularly by Stuart Hall\textsuperscript{171}, have centred the importance of history in the making of the contemporary self. Although in a different vein from Kincaid's considerations of colonial histories and the making of the contemporary self, Hall has created new spaces in which to think about and frame black history. He has argued, along with authors such as bell hooks, that being placed in the margins can be seen as a place of power. From this has come a feeling that marginalised subjects in local spaces need to rediscover their own hidden histories so that they can be represented, and that there is a need to tell these stories from the bottom up, rather than the top down.\textsuperscript{172}

Ethnicity is intimately wrapped up in these visions of representation and place. As Hall says "[w]e all speak from a particular place, out of a particular history, out of a particular experience, a particular culture, without being contained by that position [...] We are all, in that sense, ethnically located and our ethnic identities crucial to our subjective sense of who we are."\textsuperscript{173} The absence of black histories from the national curriculum is one example of how the existence of such a plurality of positions in Britain is denied at an institutional level. Furthermore, "as long as the British education system promotes the fiction that the history of Africans in the Americas precedes by centuries the history of black communities in Britain, there will be no incentive to correct this ignorance and cultural chauvinism."\textsuperscript{174}

In light of these debates it is important not only to recover the history of black people, but also to consider the representation and place of history in the present. Stuart Hall

\textsuperscript{170} Jamaica Kincaid, 1988
\textsuperscript{171} Stuart Hall, 1996b
\textsuperscript{172} Stuart Hall, 1997c
\textsuperscript{173} Stuart Hall, 1996a, pp169-170
Historical Geographies of Black History

has argued that it is impossible to think of the history of English culture, and society, and its position of privilege, without the systems that are called 'globalization'. The theoretical development of 'time-space compression' enabled geographers to discuss the relationships between 'the global' and 'the local', through which 'localism' came to the fore of geographical debate. The digging for heritage and the importance of the local in this context was seen by some as regressive rather than progressive. David Harvey was one geographer who saw that an effort to evoke a sense of place and past was often a deliberate and conscious act, but this he saw as a dangerous quest for authenticity, invented traditions and a commercialized heritage culture.

The desire for historical knowledge, even if it is a conscious act, does not necessarily reflect such a quest. Harvey seems to ignore the desire for knowledge of oneself (a sense of your place) - and that a quest for authenticity (for example that black people who live in the British Isles are as 'authentically' English as white people) is as much about a desire to be accepted (in one's homeland) as anything else. Or, as bell hooks has argued, following Foucault, that memory can be a site of resistance, and that counter-memories are a way to understand and change the present by placing it in a new relation to the past. The location of hidden histories, as new places from which to stand and speak, are thus extremely important spaces.

Doreen Massey has also questioned whether communities are necessarily inward looking, arguing that it is incorrect to conflate the identification of place with community. Firstly because a community can be one without boundaries of place, such as those forged by religion or diaspora, and secondly that, even when boundaries can be drawn they will not encircle a homogenous community. If we acknowledge that people have multiple identities then the same must be true of a sense of place; within a community, peoples' favourite buildings, shops, or 'place' will all differ. Our unique moments and relationships with space interact and mix with the accumulated history of a place. But this mix can only occur with the history of which

174 Ziggi Alexander, 1990, p25
175 Stuart Hall, 1997
176 Doreen Massey, 1994
177 Doreen Massey, 1994
178 David Harvey, 1996
179 bell hooks, 1992
180 Stuart Hall, 1997c
181 Doreen Massey, 1994
182 Doreen Massey, 1994
we know; knowledge of different histories can generate connections that have a different specificity.

Friedrich Nietzsche perceived a sense of the historical and the unhistorical to be equally necessary for the health of an individual, and a culture.\textsuperscript{183} Similar to Massey’s discussion of the geographical, he viewed the history of the city as an intensely personal experience. For an individual, the history of London can become a history of the self; the local park, common or heath that has been a silent but animated witness to our lives - a collective public space that holds for each of us a personal history. Parks, statues, shops, or monuments, are passed, remembered, understood and recalled like an illustrated diary of our own lives.\textsuperscript{184} All these landscapes are full of the possibility of being read with simultaneous, and equally valid though different readings by each of us.\textsuperscript{185} “We” becomes the spirit beyond the individual, of the house, the generation, the city, the place. This is one of the very real ways by which History belongs to the living.\textsuperscript{186}

In this context Hall’s contribution to our understandings of the experience of race, culture and identity is invaluable. His insistence that cultural identity is a matter of becoming as well as being, and that it belongs to the future as much as to the past, allows cultural history to become a political tool in a black British context (unlike North America where the battle of history has a far more obvious position). We are forced to acknowledge that cultural identities come from somewhere, that they have histories. But, Hall has also recognised that, like everything that is historical, they undergo constant transformation (as does history). Yet, far from being grounded in a ‘recovery’ of the past which is waiting to be found, Hall sees identities as the name we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.\textsuperscript{187}

When seen in this light Kincaid’s simplistic good/bad, innocent/guilty, black/white binaries cannot work when faced with a multi-cultural society in which not all English people are white. In this context Carole Davies has argued that black British women writers have a crucial position, as they are able to launch a critique that is

\textsuperscript{183} Friedrich Nietzsche, 1980
\textsuperscript{184} Friedrich Nietzsche, 1980
\textsuperscript{185} Denis Cosgrove, 1989.
\textsuperscript{186} Friedrich Nietzsche, 1980, p14
\textsuperscript{187} Stuart Hall, 1997c
simultaneously internal and external.\textsuperscript{188} The need for black women to become more visible applies not only to fiction, but also to all forms of writing that discuss the concepts of the English nation. As a collection of black women have put it “[u]ntil we can be both visible and belong, the word “home” will remain for us ambiguous, ironic, and even sarcastic. We will still be ‘Strangers at Home’.”\textsuperscript{189}

Yet these women are writing from a post-Windrush perspective, and their critiques of national belonging are not historicised. To redress this imbalance I am seeking to listen to voices on a longer trajectory, though these stories have silences of their own. Prakash has argued that these silences are the point where interpreters must acknowledge the limits of their historical understandings.\textsuperscript{190}

This does not mean that the project is destabilised. Silence allows critics to mark a space of absence and a project of revival can begin at this point of erasure.\textsuperscript{191} Admittedly locating an absence and initiating a project will not always result in a successful exploration. Within the general neglect of the history of black people in Britain in the nineteenth century, the years from the 1840s to the 1880s are particularly under explored.\textsuperscript{192} The use of photography as a primary tool for this thesis has meant that this is a period that I have not managed to shed much light on. Although photography became increasingly important from the 1850s, it was used as a record of working-class people, and as an aid to institutional record keepers only from the 1880s. As the body of knowledge from either end of the period grows, it may be possible to trace children and grandchildren, grandparents and great-grandparents and thus increase our knowledge of black people during the middle decades of the century.

\textsuperscript{188} Carole Boyce Davies, 1994
\textsuperscript{189} Shabnam Grewal, Jackie Kay, Liliane Landor, Gail Lewis and Pratibha Parmar quoted in Carole Boyce Davies, 1994, p97
\textsuperscript{190} Gyan Prakash, 1997
\textsuperscript{191} Gyan Prakash, 1997
\textsuperscript{192} Ian Duffield, March 1999, personal correspondence.
2.7 Conclusions

The position of black history in the popular imagination of the British nation is still severely marginalized. Although there are a number of imaginative and important studies that have been published on the subject, these have yet to be fully integrated into the popular histories of London that are published. There is admittedly, and excitingly, a great deal more yet to be uncovered both about the biographies of black people who lived in London, and throughout Britain, but also analyses of their experiences. There is a need for these histories to be researched, not only because they are important for the overall interpretation of British history, but because such histories have such a major impact on black people’s sense of belonging within the nation. This thesis intends to contribute to this collection of new research by recovering biographies of black women, considering how their lives fit into or challenge our current conceptions of London life, and giving some consideration to how these may impact on the making of contemporary Londoners.

History is a hybrid form of knowledge, syncretizing past and present, memory and myth, the written record and the spoken word. All these aspects have informed the research in the thesis. During Rachel Lichtenstein’s search for David these tools created the perfect quest for her, but it was an epic search that ended with a question mark. Many of the histories in this thesis are littered with question marks, silences and distance. Some of the questions may become answerable with further research; some of the distance may be closed if personal records of the women come to light. Some absences and silences will always remain. However, the questions that are raised are often as important as the questions that are answered.

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193 Raphael Samuel, 1999, p443
194 Rachel Lichtenstein and Iain Sinclair, 2000, p273
Chapter three

The Victorian Black Atlantic

Besides good money, Hawkins had gained for himself a coat of arms - its motto, Advancement by Diligence - whose crest bore a Negro in chains above a lion rampant on the waves.

Antonio Benitez-Rojo
A View from the Mangrove.

This chapter continues to consider the theoretical debates that have informed this thesis, particularly Paul Gilroy’s conception of the ‘black Atlantic’, and his critiques of the development of modernity during the enlightenment. These are embedded in his challenge of the idea that being black and English or European are mutually exclusive spaces, and an investigation of “the special relationship between race, culture, nationality and ethnicity which have a bearing on the histories and political cultures of Britain’s black citizens.” These are considered with other concepts of modernity, such as the public sphere, which can be helpful in the understanding of black women’s history. The chapter then considers the reality of the black Atlantic for Victorian men and women in the context of these theories, which creates another layer of context for the biographies, which will follow in the empirical chapters.

Black women travelled throughout the black Atlantic and different women had different impacts in different places, and many will never be named or known about. Here the focus is on the women who became a visible part of this network and thus made an impact on London, however brief their presence in the city may have been. Privileged women who travelled within this space used the tools and methods of the modern world, and some of them created new networks to fight racism and prejudice and so fused new connections between places. Some had no obvious proactive impact on the processes of which they were a part, and some used them to support their

1 John Hawkins was the first English trader in enslaved Africans.
positions of privilege within the imperial elite. Women who were not privileged, and are present in the archives of institutions, are visible to us because, rather than creating new processes, they were captured by tools of modernity, such as the camera.

3.1 Theorising the ‘black Atlantic’

The ‘black Atlantic’, the main theoretical concept with which I will be engaging, was made popular by Paul Gilroy in his book of the same name, first published in 1993. It is an historical and geographical metaphor that allows for a complex imagining of the position of black history and the matrix of black lives throughout modernity. It encourages an historical geography that explores the impact of black movement across the spaces between and on the shores, the cities and the countryside of the Americas, the Caribbean, Africa and Europe. Gilroy’s conceptualisation of the black diaspora has been classed by Kristin Mann as one of three theoretical perspectives in the growing tradition of scholarship on Atlantic history. It is joined by those historians who have imagined the Atlantic basin as a single unit of analysis, and those who take what Mann calls ‘the counter-hegemonic approach’, which she believes is best exemplified by the work of the Program in Atlantic History, Culture and Society at Johns Hopkins University (now defunct). This unit aimed to integrate Africa, Africans and the indigenous peoples of the Americas into the linked experiences of societies bordering the Atlantic. All these perspectives evolved from an attempt to cast Africa with a far more dynamic role in scholars’ study of the African Diaspora.

As Alasdair Pettinger has pointed out, to some extent ‘the black Atlantic’ is a slogan which calls for a strategic realignment of the trajectories and imagination of black history. This call has made a big impact on the shaping of black British history, and ‘The Black Atlantic’ series, originally published by Cassell, and now Continuum, reflects this. Although slavery is still a heavy focus for the five books currently in the collection, it includes Madge Dresser’s examination of slavery and the social history of Bristol, considerations of slavery in rural Brazil, and the travel writings of black men and women who criss-crossed the Atlantic from the 1760s to the 1990s. Furthermore Gilroy’s claim that “the ship remained perhaps the most important conduit of Pan-

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2 Paul Gilroy, 1996a, p3
3 Paul Gilroy, 1996a
4 Kristin Mann, 2001
5 Kristin Mann, 2001
6 Alasdair Pettinger, 1998
African communication before the appearance of the long playing record," fits well with Linebaugh and Rediker's work which, although not born out of race, illustrates the importance of the movement of peoples of all races across the Atlantic in the development of radical ideas and agitation.  

Gilroy's examination of black history focuses mostly on the place of slavery, and the role of North American intellectuals in the north-western and eastern spaces of the Atlantic basin (that is the United States, Europe and Africa). He argues that the conditions of slave life (and these principles could be extended to those who were slaves in Latin America), hold a unique perspective on key intellectual and political debates that evolved during modernity. The slave's perspective on 'progress' and 'Universality' shocks the foundations on which such principles were based. For these men and women, modernity was directly associated with forms of terror which were legitimated by the perpetrators by reference to 'racial difference'.

These obvious critiques were not lost on the North American intellectuals who Gilroy identifies as challenging the reality of the universal ideals of modernity. Men like Fredrick Douglas and W. E. B. DuBois penned eloquent and philosophical, as well as practical challenges to the inequalities based on race that they saw in the United States. Aside from their works and the way in which they interpreted their positions, Gilroy highlights the importance that spaces of the black Atlantic played in the formation and dissemination of their ideas. They challenged scientific racism through the printed press and during their tours of England and the rest of Europe. For them the experiences of the slave trade and the plantation "were not unique events - discrete episodes in the history of a minority - that could be grasped through their exclusive impact on blacks themselves". Both men wanted to establish, as Gilroy and others are still attempting to do for Europe, that the history of black people in America was a legitimate part of the moral history of the west as a whole.

Aside from this reinterpretation of black history, Gilroy's work includes a stinging critique of enlightenment and its concepts of modernity, in which he argues that the philosophical projections such as progress and the advancement of civilization, can be vocalised only if the black experience of modernity is silenced. This sits alongside his

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7 Paul Gilroy, 1996a, p13
8 Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, 2000
9 Paul Gilroy, 1996a, p70
10 Bill Schwarz, 1996b
lament that slavery was once “recognised as internal to the structure of western civilisation and appeared as a central political and philosophical concept in the emergent discourse of English cultural uniqueness.” By reinserting these debates on race, new perspectives on black history create spaces from which new cultural and political units of historical analysis can be undertaken. These in turn form new positions from which to think about the origins and development of modernity; origins which when considering the relationship between slavery and modernity, require a reassessment and revision of the very terms on which debates of modernity have been constructed.12

3.2 Race and modernity

For Marshall Berman modernity is a “a mode of vital experience – experience of space and time, of the self and others, of life’s possibilities and perils”.13 He continues:

To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world - and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are.”

But who is included in this sense of *we*? Berman’s considerations are mainly focused on the twentieth-century experience of modernity, but as Gilroy points out, although Berman does notice a “black and Hispanic presence in the ruins of the modern city [...these] do not interrupt his haste to annexe the cultural forms of the black Atlantic for a single image of the working class.”15 Can the perils Berman talks about be compared to the desperate experience of the middle passage, and what were the possibilities for black people when suicide and the murder of one’s own children was seen as a rational alternative to life under the slave system?

In this light Gilroy writes against the homogenisation of ‘the modern self’, the ‘modern city’, of histories of modernity and the modern experience.16 With this Gilroy picks up on the feeling of ‘double consciousness’, a phrase that DuBois coined to explain the

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11 Paul Gilroy, 1996a, p9
12 Paul Gilroy, 1996a, p46
15 Paul Gilroy, 1996a, p48
16 Miles Ogborn, 1998
notion that many black people felt they were in, but not of the modern world. Modernity offered promises of democracy, equality and liberation that were not realised. Miles Ogborn describes Gilroy's restructuring of modernity as a complex geography of fracture and connection, one that conceptualises modernity in terms of power and difference, which in turn renews scepticism about modern promises and hopes. Cornel West has joined Gilroy, claiming that slavery sits at the centre of the epoch of equality, fraternity and liberty, and he has called the failure to acknowledge this "the ignoble paradox of western modernity".

David Theo Goldberg has also embedded accounts of modernity in the politics of race. He takes modernity as the general period that emerged from the sixteenth century in the historical formation of 'the West'. This was a period that evoked race from its inception, although Goldberg argues that it was a tool used to arm social subjects with a cohesive identity. Like Cornel West, Goldberg sees this as a central paradox "the irony perhaps, of modernity: the more explicitly universal modernity's commitments, the more open it is to and the more determined it is by the likes of racial specificity and racist exclusion." He continues:

So the irony of modernity, the liberal paradox comes down to this: As modernity commits itself progressively to idealized principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity, and it increasingly insists upon the moral irrelevance of race, there is a multiplication of racial identities and the sets of exclusions they promote and rationalize, enable and sustain. Race is irrelevant, but all is race. [...] The more ideologically hegemonic liberal values seem and the more open to difference liberal modernity declares itself, the more dismissive it becomes and the more closed it seeks to make the circle of acceptability.

Evoking themes of philosophical imagination David Harvey locates a universal modernism that stands on the pillars of linear progress, absolute truths and rational planning, with enlightenment ideas of universal reason at the core of modernity. Although he is critical of these, race is not one of the tools that Harvey uses to deconstruct its failures. Goldberg is damning of such theories that deny their racialized history, arguing that they hide "behind some idealized, self-promoting, yet practically ineffectual, dismissal of race as a morally irrelevant category."

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17 W. E. B. DuBois, 1994; Paul Gilroy, 1996a
18 Miles Ogborn, 1998, p16
19 Cornel West, 1998, p8
20 David Theo Goldberg, 1993
21 David Theo Goldberg, 1993
22 David Theo Goldberg, 1993, p4, original emphasis
23 David Theo Goldberg, 1993, pp6-7
24 David Harvey, 1990
25 David Theo Goldberg, 1993, p7, original emphasis
Alan O'Shea seeks out the role of history, and argues that 'modernity' is a European perspective on history that became a global experience because of colonisation, a process embedded in the politics of race. As a means of interrogating this imperial aspect of the spread of modernity, O'Shea sees advantages in Berman's theory of modernity as a practical negotiation of one's life and identity in a complex and changing world. He argues that this view provides space for framing modernity in a way that allows for a study of the many struggles for change made by subordinate groups against imposed structures, and an extended exploration of social processes. 

The need for an understanding of such processes is also an important part of Natalie Davis' feminist histories, where such processes and structures of power are seen to leave room for a concept of human agency, where attempts can be made to (re)construct identities, lives, a set of relationships, and a society.

For Peter Osborne there are three different senses of modernity. Firstly an historical period, secondly a quality of social experience, and finally modernity as a project. Yet, as Miles Ogborn has highlighted, the periodisation, the geographies, characteristics, and even the promise of modernity, remain elusive. Berman does acknowledge that although the world is united in the experience of modernity, "it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity". The histories of the middle passage force an acknowledgement that adventure, power, joy, and growth were not only distributed unevenly across space and time during the period of modernity, but that for a substantial part, they were completely denied to some. This is highlighted by Gilroy's questioning of the place of the black Atlantic experience in the debates of modernity.

Cornel West argues that slavery is a precondition for the progressive breakthroughs in the modern world, which is a theme that can be traced through some of the works of Nietzsche. In his examination of modernity Nietzsche found that below the surface of modern life lay a world of merciless energies, what Gilroy describes as a complicity between rationality and the practice of racial terror. While free, educated men came together to discuss politics and participatory government in Europe, the coffee houses,
which for Jürgen Habermas, and others, symbolised the sphere of the new chattering classes, were themselves supported by the profits and produce of the slave empires.

When black people are included in the stories of modernity’s evolution, it is most often as the Negro slave, usually portrayed as a nescient character. A history of slavery is assigned to black people, without real discussion of its effects, positive or negative, on others. This has also been the case with histories of empire more generally. For as Catherine Hall notes, although it is largely accepted that events in British imperial history, such as the Morant Bay Rebellion and its aftermath, can only be understood in a transnational framework, it is less often acknowledged that the consequences of such events travelled both ways between colony and metropole.\footnote{Catherine Hall, 2002}

Mostly such histories become a geography of blackness or empire, located outside the British Isles rather than being included in its intellectual history.\footnote{See Paul Gilroy, 1996a} This is also the case in the popular imagination. Turner is one of the nation’s most revered artists, but his picture of The Slave Ship, was exhibited to coincide with the Anti-Slavery Conference held in London in 1840 is not among his well known masters in the National Gallery.\footnote{J M W Turner, Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying: Typhoon Coming On (The Slave Ship) 1840} Although initially owned by Ruskin, it was sold to America.\footnote{Paul Gilroy, 1996a} Its absence takes slavery outside the imagination of Turner’s paintings of the English, and thus removes that symbolic image from notions of Englishness itself.

Seen through C L R James’ exploration of the black revolution in Haiti, led by Toussaint L’Ouverture in 1791, the black slave is imbued with agency. Knowledge of the principles of modernity, in this instance the triptych principles of the French Revolution - fraternity, liberty and equality - were highly influential in slave rebellions and later the basis for demands of freedom and equal civil rights.\footnote{Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, 2000, p342} Furthermore, Linebaugh and Rediker have shown that works on liberty such as those based on Volney’s Ruins were found in the hands of a mulatto in Bahia, Brazil, in the midst of a radical conspiracy put together by browns, blacks and whites in 1797.\footnote{C L R James, 1994} Rather than claiming a defective Western ideology black intellectuals and leaders, such as

\footnote{Catherine Hall, 2002} \footnote{See Paul Gilroy, 1996a} \footnote{J M W Turner, Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying: Typhoon Coming On (The Slave Ship) 1840} \footnote{Paul Gilroy, 1996a} \footnote{C L R James, 1994} \footnote{Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, 2000, p342}
Toussaint L’Ouverture and William Cuffay, argued that the modernist project had not been properly applied, on the basis of its own principles, to the modern world.

During the nineteenth century black people also sought inspiration from outside the arenas of Western philosophy in order to critique the realities of modernity. Egypt became a symbol of black creativity and a symbol of Africa before the European slave system. Egypt held the key to proving there was an Africa outside the European image of the barbarian and the primitive, and that it was an African and not a Greek world from which civilisation sprang. In her autobiography, published in 1893, the black American evangelist Amanda Smith recalled her own visit to Egypt after her stay in Europe.

Tuesday, 21† [September 1879]

Praise the Lord! [...] We are nearing Alexandria, Egypt. The great old historic Egypt! Egypt that I have read of in the Bible! Can it be possible?

Ten A.M
Here we are in the bay. [...] And who are these men coming off in the boats? There are four or five boats, all manned, each with six, eight, ten or twelve men -- black men -- my own race. I had been so long without seeing any of my own people that I felt like giving three cheers!

[...]

Many of them were fine looking men, black as silk and straight as arrows, well developed, and independent as kings. They moved about and did the business [of rowing] intelligently, and with promptness and ease. They didn’t know what it was to crouch to any man. I felt proud that I belonged to this race when I saw such nobility in ebony. Then I remembered the passage in the Old Testament history: “Princes shall come out of Egypt.” Then I remembered it was the birthplace of Moses, and the hiding place of the infant Jesus from the cruelty of Herod, the king. And out of all the world it pleased God to bestow this great honor on the black race, which ought to be held in everlasting remembrance. And I prefer being black, if for no other reason then to share this honor with my race.41

DuBois also claimed an African heritage for black Americans.

The shadow of a mighty Negro past flits through the tale of Ethiopia the Shadowy and Egypt the Sphinx. Throughout history, the powers of single black men flash here and there like falling stars, and die sometimes before the world has rightly gauged their brightness.42

Gilroy argues that struggles around the racialisation of civilisation and the access to rights were central to the philosophical concepts that emerged in the discourses of

41 Amanda Smith, 1997, p295
42 W. E. B. DuBois, 1994, p3
modern English culture. He is also forceful in his belief that slavery is an internal structure of western civilisation, and so we cannot underestimate the significance of scientific racism as a breakpoint in the development of modern thinking about the nature of humanity, and thus the development of enlightenment liberalism.\(^{42}\)

To unpack these complicated (and sometimes emotive and emotional) relations of power, gender, geography, race and class, Miles Ogborn suggests the use of an historical geography of processes to discuss the origins of modernity.\(^{43}\) This allows him to talk about the theorisation of modernity in certain places (and certain places’ impact on modernity) while still engaging in the ideas of the meta-narrative. I intend to follow Ogborn’s model to investigate the relationship between modernity, the black Atlantic and London. Ogborn argues that it is only when modernity is seen as unstable, contradictory and multiplex that it retains its usefulness as a means of telling the known and unknown stories of modernity.\(^{44}\) This is a useful vision for this thesis because it allows for reflection on the unstable, contradictory and multiple ideas that existed around race, equality and citizenship in Victorian and Edwardian society.

The destabilising of modernist norms is still a vital part of telling the untold stories of modernity. Writing contextual historical geographies enables us to change the way we theorise modernity by focusing on institutional change alongside the experiences of and the transformations in spaces, places and landscapes. In his work on eighteenth-century London, Ogborn seeks to interrogate how the spatial was written into different theories of modernity, and how different experiences are written into different places.\(^{45}\) This is not dissimilar to the method W. E. B. DuBois used to write his classic work *The Souls of Black Folk*. A sociology professor, DuBois first published his collection of essays in 1903. It was an eclectic mix of work that analysed particular historical geographies of black Americans as part of a “more general, discontinuous and sharply differentiated process” that contributed to the diaspora.\(^{46}\) This is a useful model for the collection of historical geographies gathered here. Their stories are placed within the general and differentiated processes of modernity and the black Atlantic.

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\(^{42}\) Paul Gilroy, 2000  
\(^{43}\) Miles Ogborn, 1998  
\(^{44}\) Miles Ogborn, 1998  
\(^{45}\) Miles Ogborn, 1998  
\(^{46}\) Paul Gilroy, 1996a, p124
Gilroy’s model of the black Atlantic is a complex unit of analysis, used to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective on and of places, and it is easily incorporated into geographical analysis because of the great importance attached to space (travel and migration) and the politics of location. The history of the black Atlantic is one of movement, relocation, displacement and rootlessness, experiences that all the women in this thesis encountered. Furthermore, although Gilroy is concerned primarily with the impact of the black Atlantic in the twentieth century, taking this model into an historical context, one can see modernities occurring at different times in different places, affecting black women in different ways. In order to tease out the resulting stories from such a perspective, Ogborn argues for a very localised geography that is place specific in its emphasis. Furthermore, the processes occurring in these places need to be investigated in the context of the people and spaces that made them. This allows for contextual accounts of identity, power and the production of space.

Raphael Samuel also argued for a new geography of history which he saw emerging out of a ‘four nations’ history. Considering why, when the very existence of the British state was under threat, there was a small vogue for the idea of Britishness, he felt that a greater sense of the four nations would encourage historians to see history more geographically. Not dissimilarly to Stuart Hall’s observations on cultural identity discussed in chapter two, Samuel felt that a focus on the histories of the four nations would make the notion of Britishness more unstable, and “instead of being a secure, genetic identity, [it] can be seen as something culturally and historically conditioned, always in the making, never made.” Furthermore Samuel’s model presents London as a world metropolis, a geographic space within which “to map the British diaspora, and to log the traffic in people and ideas across the Atlantic.”

Bill Schwarz has argued that it is only through an understanding of the black presence, that we can really see the imperial city, and thus understand its modernity, and Samuel extended this sentiment not only to London’s history, but to the nation’s history. He argued that the Celtic diaspora, as it took shape in the latter part of the nineteenth century, emerging at the height of Britain’s colonial expansion, was

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47 Paul Gilroy, 1996a  
48 Miles Ogborn, 1998  
49 Raphael Samuel, 1998, p22  
50 Raphael Samuel, 1998, p38  
51 Bill Schwarz, 1996a
connected unashamedly to the imperial process. Both were processes that "worshipped at the feet of race consciousness, that scientific version of natural selection theory which in the later nineteenth century intoxicated thinkers of all stripes."  

By combining the ideas of Gilroy, Ogborn and Samuel, the black Atlantic can be seen as a patchwork of spaces, places and networks - with London, as a world metropolis, the specific area being magnified in this study; a place that is a product of the intersection of global and local processes. Coupled with this is the significance of the discourses of race which, underlying these discussions of modernity, affected the imagination and representation of race in Victorian and Edwardian London. In this instance the use of 'modernity' is taken as a general theme. Such an application allows for those strands of modernity highlighted by Gilroy that revolved around debates of racialised identities to be considered, to be coupled with new perspectives on localised archives. This addresses not only how people were identified, and how they identified themselves, whether with 'Englishness' or a sense of diaspora, and whether this diaspora was 'African' or 'imperial' in focus. In Ogborn's work his investigations of historical geographies of modernity are concerned with the conditions of emergence and existence of spaces, and the social relations through which they were constituted. In this thesis 'spaces of modernity' were those areas of life where such debates and tensions might have occurred among a black collective, or black individuals in England.

This combination of theories, as spaces of modernity, provided a tool for considering the archival spaces that were investigated during research for this thesis such as 'spaces of public culture' - the theatre - and 'institutional spaces' - Barnardo's, prisons, and asylums. All of which used aspects of modern technologies, such as photography, in their development., this was particularly the case with Barnardo's. It was hoped that defining such 'spaces of modernity' would provide a way of locating and mapping black women's experiences. Furthermore it was a method which allowed for a consideration of how 'race' and the racialisation of women in the archives contributed to the processes of transformation in the making of contemporary institutions. Thus an attempt was made to make sense of the racialised histories of modern institutions in Victorian London, and the way in which racialised structures affected the women who

53 Linda McDowell, 1999
were re-formed by and re-formed the structures of the institutions through their presence in them.

However, this framework did not always support the reality of the archives. For example, no black women were located in the prison archives available for London, and in the archives of Barnardo's and of the asylum the lack of personal voices made it hard to consider how the perceptions of the women found there would have differed from the stories told by the institutions. Problems with reconstructing the institutional constructions of racial meanings will be discussed later in the thesis. In the theatre, although there were hints that black women would have been on stage and were represented in such spaces, for example in the popular and numerous stage productions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, despite research in London and New York it proved impossible to find the names of individuals who could then be traced and mapped through other London spaces.  

Thus the hope that characters, such as actresses, who were described as 'mischievous little niggers' and 'real negroes' in London theatre programmes, would have left records in which they considered the tensions between how they were racialised in public, and how they identified themselves, was not fulfilled. This may have been an over-ambitious project, but the archives used did not contain the material to make an investigation of such public and personal debates possible. As a result silences and exclusions have remained, but the combination still highlighted spaces from which to consider the experiences of those most often silenced and excluded from the historical record, black women. They become a part of the processes of the black Atlantic; a diverse network with connections across the diaspora, radical politics, racism and anti-racism of the times.

### 3.3 The public sphere, modernity, and black women

A possible way of thinking through local spaces of modernity is to use the concept of the public sphere. The public sphere was defined by Jürgen Habermas as a means of describing the development of the new social and political relations which developed
The Victorian Black Atlantic

with modernity. Habermas imagined the public sphere as a realm of social life where public opinions could be formed. Access to this forum was guaranteed to all citizens - private individuals who would come together to assemble as a public body. The freedom to express and publish opinions and a guaranteed freedom of assembly and association were essential to the making of the public body in Habermas' eyes. As Brian Cowan has recently stated, the notion of the public sphere has been one of the great success stories of recent historical writing. Habermas' definition is embedded with a deep faith in the democratic potential of modernity and is an optimistic and celebratory reflection of modern society.

The public sphere is also time and place specific, wrapped up in the ideals of enlightenment-modernity such as citizenship, and representative and participatory government. For Habermas the public sphere that first functioned in the political realm evolved in Britain at the turn of the eighteenth century. Here new political forces endeavouring to influence the decisions of state authority appealed to the critical public in order to legitimate its demands. This rise of a new independent, chattering middle-class represented a new political presence in Western Europe which voiced increasing demands for political reform. Habermas took this new emerging public, and turned the ideal of popular, participatory political action into the 'public sphere', a political model as well as a social phenomenon.

The key to this phenomenon was communication. The interaction between members of the public could take many forms. Direct interaction is inherent in Habermas' definition, but communication did not have to be face-to-face. In newspapers and journals, letters to the editor provided a forum for interactive communication, and the importance of the press as an arena for debate in the bourgeois and other public spheres is not to be underestimated. The communication of opinions expanded into and included literary expression such as diaries, letters and novels. These became a means of strengthening and reproducing affective experience generated in the intimate

54 'The Theatre' was an initially a site located for research, but after initial investigations, and following discussions at my workshop in January 2000, it was decided that other sites could be pursued more fruitfully.
55 Philip Howell, 1993
56 Brian Cowan, 2001
57 Philip Howell, 1993
58 Philip Howell, 1993
59 Philip Howell, 1993
60 Philip Howell, 1993
61 Geoff Eley, 1990
sphere of the home and the family, in the public sphere of literary clubs, debating societies and the culture of the coffee house.\(^2\)

Those writing from within the black community, and beyond, highlight the Eurocentric position this theory presents, and its lack of consideration for those moulding a public sphere from outside the traditional model of the western bourgeoisie.\(^3\) Houston Baker argues Habermas' thesis presents an historiography of time which presents men who were ideal citizens. However, Baker believes that, although such a sphere is a beautiful idea, if people were always excluded from it, the idealism of such a space cannot be maintained.\(^4\) In light of his model of the black Atlantic, it is not surprising that Gilroy questions the viability of Habermas' description of an enlightenment project based on these principles of modern life, nor that he questions Habermas' faith in the democratic potential of a critical bourgeoisie.\(^5\)

For the irony of racial relations and modernity in the public sphere is one which Habermas fails to acknowledge. When one realises that not only did London coffee houses exist because of the structures of plantation slavery, but that in the eighteenth century slaves were actually sold in them, the role of race in the development of English modernity becomes impossible to ignore.\(^6\) Feminist authors have also criticised the masculinity of the public sphere that appears to be taken for granted in Habermas' work. Yet few authors reject Habermas outright. For most his theory of the public sphere is like many of those of modernity, an incomplete project. As we see different spaces of modernity, so we may see many public spheres. Habermas is concerned with linking the social and historical with normative and political thinking, and as Philip Howell points out this is very relevant to the work of historical geography.\(^7\) Although as Cowan has argued, the public sphere is so fluid a term that it can be applied to almost any time in any place.\(^8\) In spite of this it does offer me a way to consider the relationship between social and ideological changes that occurred in relation to race, particularly in relation to the 1890s and the movement of the anti-racist community in London.

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62. H M Wach, 1996a
63. See Houston Baker Jr., 1995; Philip Howell, 1993
64. Houston Baker Jr., 1995
65. Paul Gilroy, 1996
66. For examples of advertisements for slaves to be sold in London coffee houses see Folarin Shyllon, 1974
67. Philip Howell, 1993
68. Brian Cowan, 2001
For feminists the gendering of Habermas' public sphere implies women's confinement (voluntary or forced) in private spaces which contributes to a reduction in the vitality of the public sphere as a political site, and their criticisms of Habermas are similar to those made about theories of modernity more generally. Theories of modernity, including Gilroy and those of Habermas, are saturated with metaphors of gender, and often ignore the multiplicity and diversity of women's relations and experiences of the process they relay. Barbara Marshall has also been critical of the dualistic categories that underlie these theories such as public/private, individual/society; though Marshall sees these constructions not as structures, but shifting fluid mechanisms of regulating identities. What these regulating identities may be are themselves strongly contested amongst women of different 'colours' and classes.

Black women in the United States have strongly argued against the white middle-class definitions of the private and public sphere. They assert the premise that in black communities the 'traditional' white role of 'the lady of the house' is a positive role taken on by black women to fight racism. They also highlight the different spatial boundaries between black private and public spheres. Within the black community in the United States the private extends into spaces that are not open to whites, but are open to blacks of both sexes. Similarly, women have argued that interference in their 'private space' by the law (police), and by welfare (sterilisation programmes) occurs far more often than among white women, and this is a point which resonates with historical as well as contemporary accounts of black women's experiences in the Americas.

Questions around privacy and dignity in the private sphere were a key element in the making of 'the modern self' and were a recurring theme in discussions of the invasion of rights within the black community during the nineteenth century. In her autobiography, a former slave girl, Harriet Jacobs recalled a visit to England with her master and his young children. Jacobs related her visits to the homes of the poor in Berkshire and compared them favourably to the condition of slaves. She did not deny that the poor were oppressed, nor their homes humble, but she noted:

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69 See Nancy Duncan, 1996
70 Miles Ogborn, 1998
71 Barbara Marshall, 1995
72 bell hooks, 1992
73 Gillian Rose, 1993
they were protected by the law. No insolent patrols could come in the dead of night, and flog them at pleasure. The father, when he closed his cottage door, felt safe with his family around him. No master, or overseer could come and take his wife, or his daughter [...]. There were no laws forbidding them to read and write; and if they helped each other in spelling out the Bible, they were in no danger of thirty-nine lashes, as was the case with myself and poor, pious, old Uncle Fred.^^

After emancipation these invasions of civil liberties continued with blacks being charged without evidence, men, women and children taken, from their homes and jails, and murdered, with the perpetrators seemingly running no risk of punishment. These actions carried with them a blatant disregard for black Americans as full citizens, and the inability of the black community to have the law enforced to protect them was a source of anger and humiliation. These realities support Gilroy’s quest to unmask the widening gap that appears in history between Habermas’ description of modernity in the public sphere, the expectation of modernity for all, and the experiences of modernity for many.

Some feminists have questioned whether there has ever really been a bounded separation between the two spheres for black women. This juxtaposition of the experiences of the public and private for black and white women highlights the restrictive use of binary oppositions. Inclusion and exclusion are experiences that occur on many levels, at different times or simultaneously, for different people. Depending on which facet of our self is being focused upon by those who gaze upon us, be it our ‘ethnicity’, gender or class, results in a malleable relationship between our self and the imagined community, the government, the police, the employer, the photographer, the friend, the lover etc. The notion of a shifting nature between identities is an important one for this thesis. Often the way black women were treated would alter and even be contrary in different places depending on the nature of the relationship and the way their colour was viewed in different spaces, whether it was within the family, in an institution or as a subject in an archive.

Other responses to Habermas’ thesis include Lara’s view of his work refiguring public and private readers, readings and readership. For Habermas the development of modern life created new literary genres and new social practices such as reading political journals and pamphlets. This expanding readership changed the body politic

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74 Harriet Jacobs, 1999, p664
75 Alfreda Duster, 1972
76 Paul Gilroy, 1996a
77 Gillian Rose, 1993
78 M P Lara, 1998
allowing the body, and narratives of the body, to become a mediating force. Habermas emphasises the importance of autobiographical texts whose essence contains a public dialogue,\textsuperscript{79} and the slave narratives and autobiographies published by members of the black community throughout enlightenment-modernity are an example of such a body politic. Hannah Arendt also saw the public sphere as a source of story telling,\textsuperscript{80} and this is a space in which black women contributed to public arenas during the nineteenth century. In slave narratives the body became political in the very essence of its being. The narrative of the body was used to defy those who once held the body captive, and as a means of generating public support. As Sojourner Truth put it, personal narrative was a means of translating "knowing into telling."\textsuperscript{81}

For Arendt no story belongs to any person in particular and "everyone is rewoven into stories that bring life to a variety of different meanings, experiences and possibilities for action".\textsuperscript{82} For Black women, telling their stories of an other side of modernity was a way of raising awareness of their and their folks' circumstances. The story of Ellen Craft, with her husband William, \textit{Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom or, The escape of William and Ellen Craft from Slavery}, published in London in 1860,\textsuperscript{83} and \textit{Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl} by Harriet Jacobs (published in Boston a year later) are examples of classic slave narratives.\textsuperscript{84} Their aim was to create an income for their authors, but also to influence debates of the anti-slavery campaigners in the public spheres of the late nineteenth century, culminating in both women taking part in lecture tours of America and England.\textsuperscript{85} Through the telling of their stories in the public sphere such women became the very subjects of public action.\textsuperscript{86} The Jamaican born nurse Mary Seacole is another illustration. She published her autobiography in 1857, the same year that a benefit concert was held for her attended by 40 000 people.\textsuperscript{87}

\section*{3.4 Critiques of modernity from the black Atlantic}

Orientation in Victorian public spaces was a complex task for women, particularly women of the black community. In the nineteenth century discussion of a 'public

\textsuperscript{79} M P Lara, 1998
\textsuperscript{80} M P Lara, 1998
\textsuperscript{81} Quoted in C K Doreski, 1998, p19
\textsuperscript{82} Quoted in M P Lara, 1998, p17
\textsuperscript{83} Ellen and William Craft, 1999
\textsuperscript{84} Harriet Jacobs, 1999
\textsuperscript{85} Yuval Taylor, 1999
\textsuperscript{86} See M P Lara, 1998

\textsuperscript{87}
woman' often referred to a prostitute, and what intrigues Eileen Yeo is how women active in the public sphere challenged such assumptions on their individual bodies in public spaces. She seeks to understand how politically active women created identities for themselves which enabled them to remain respectable in their own and other members of the public's eyes. Despite such inequalities and restrictions members of the black community have a long history of using and evoking counter-publics to challenge modern life. Members of the black community from Toussaint L'Ouverture to William Cuffay used the principles of modernity to challenge their traditional bourgeoisie associations and the spaces in which they did this are referred to as counter-publics. In his attempt to secure the independence of Haiti Touissant L'Ouverture wrote:

Brothers and friends. I am Touissant L'Ouverture, my name is perhaps known to you. I have undertaken vengeance. I want Liberty and Equality to reign in San Domingo. I want to work to bring them into existence. Unite yourselves to us, brothers, and fight with us for the same crusade, etc.
Your very humble and very obedient servant
Touissant L'Ouverture, 1793

L'Ouverture directly evoked the principles of the French Revolution in order to undermine those who brought them, as well as his enslavement, into existence. In the preface to Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom William Craft evoked the principles of the American constitution to justify their escape.

Having heard while we were slaves that "God made one blood of all nations of men," and that also the American Declaration of Independence says, that "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; [...] we felt perfectly justified in undertaking the dangerous and exciting task of "running a thousand miles" in order to obtain those rights which are so vividly set forth in the Declaration."

William Cuffay's speech during his trial in 1848 is also an example of a black public figure who evoked the principles of modernity in the public sphere. Cuffay's leadership was cut short when he was accused of being a member of the Post Ulterior Committee that had supposedly hatched a plan to blow-up London. At his trial Cuffay drew strongly on the principles of enlightenment for his defence and objected to being tried by a middle-class jury. In his final speech Cuffay denied the court's right

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87 The Times, 30 July, 1857, p5; The Illustrated London News; 1 August 1857, p115
88 Eileen Yeo, 1988
89 Philip Howell, 1993
90 C L R James, 1994, p125
91 William Craft, 1999, p486
92 Peter Fryer, pp237-246
to sentence him, and "demand[ed] a fair trial by my peers according to the principles of
the Magna Carta." He further added that a government supported by organised
espionage was a disgrace to "this great and boasted free country."

During her time in London, Ida B. Wells sent accounts of her experiences to the
Chicago paper, the *Inter-Ocean*. One of these dispatches sent in June 1894 was written
while London had been in the throes of a cab strike. This had drawn her attention to
London’s structures of public transport. Wells applauded the care that was applied to
protecting human life near railway tracks, but as to the internal design of the trains, she
felt they left much to be desired. The carriages were made up of narrow spaces “with
seats facing each other, knees rubbing against those of entire strangers”, and for Wells
“being forced to stare into each other’s faces for hours” was almost intolerable. It was
only because of English manners and the comparatively short length of the journeys
that they could be borne. Yet Wells was aware that,

> primitive as are these railway carriages, I as a Negro can ride in them free from
insult or discrimination on account of colour, and that’s what I cannot do in many
states of my own (free?) America.

Wells’ short comment illustrates how racism affected black women’s experiences of
modernity and how racism controlled the degrees to which women could engage with
the modern world in different places and spaces. Indeed she made reference to this
when she stated that her experiences in London and the rest of England had given her
a new sense of equality with her peers.

> It was an absolutely new thing to be permitted for once to associate with human
beings who pay tribute to what they believe one possesses in the way of qualities
of mind and heart, rather than to the color of skin.

These are just a few examples of black men and women evoking the principles of
enlightenment modernity to question the reality of their lives in the modern world,
and how these were affected by geography. For Wells and the Crafts a new found
freedom and space in which to criticise the inequalities of their American nation
became accessible when they were in London. Yet for L’Ouverture and Cuffay Europe
was no haven for their ideas. L’Ouverture was eventually arrested by his French

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93 See Peter Fryer, 1994, p242
94 See Peter Fryer, 1994, p407
adversaries and under the orders of Napoleon Bonaparte, was killed through ill
treatment and starvation in a prison situated in the Jura mountains; the British
transported Cuffay to the other side of the world.98

So, as Thomas Holt points out, despite its controversial position within cultural, and
other critical theory, the notion of a public sphere, or a black public sphere can provide
a powerful entry into and developments within the black community that otherwise
might appear disparate and unconnected.99 Holt argues that a concept of a black public
sphere is a far more adequate term than the ‘Negro problem’, ‘minorities’ or ‘multi-
cultural’. For although these all attempt to convey the complexities of modern life,
they fail to evoke the intricate relationships that occur across both time100 and space.
Although Habermas lacks a geographical imagination of race, his original theory still
provides an opportunity to include new histories of black women within a narrative of
the public sphere. It is a tool with which to consider not only the place of black women
in the public sphere, their public lives and the spaces these experiences took them into,
but how access was determined by class, and thus whether a ‘black public sphere’
really took shape in Victorian London.

In her paper on black survival in white society 1780-1830, published in 1993, Norma
Myers pointed out that black history in Britain has been dominated by elite black males
such as Sancho and Equiano,101 both of whom had privileged access to the public
sphere. Yet despite an increase in interest in black history, particularly from the early
1980s, the focus has remained on unique and exceptional characters like Mary
Seacole.102 The majority of black people languish in anonymity and a bottom-up
approach is required to bring forth the histories of ordinary folk. In her effort to
address this imbalance Myers turned to a variety of archives including the Newgate
Calendars, baptism records, indictments brought before the Commissioners of the
Peace and Gaol Delivery recorded in the Old Bailey Session Papers.103 Myers found
eleven women accused of theft in her samples of the Old Bailey and Newgate
Calendars between 1791 and 1810, including Mary Goring who stole a silk
handkerchief and Elizabeth Mandeville, who with her white accomplice Ann Grace,

97 Alfreda Duster, 1972, p212
98 C L R James, 1994
99 C Thomas Holt, 1995
100 C Thomas Holt, 1995
101 Norma Myers, 1993
102 Norma Myers, 1996
103 Norma Myers, 1987; 1993
stole $3^{1/2}$ guineas. But post 1810, a change in format to the Newgate Calendars excluded physical descriptions, a practice which seems to have been maintained by the criminal system throughout the Victorian era. The 1841 and 1851 census have no physical descriptions except remarks about the deaf, dumb and blind. This format remained in place for the remainder of the century.

Norma Myers found no figures to support Fryer's assumptions that black females were forced into prostitution in the nineteenth century. His presumption is further countered by Ian Duffield whose examination of records in the archives of New South Wales and Tasmania located 195 black men and a number of black women including a skilled needlewoman, a plain cook, a laundress, a housemaid and a laundry maid. Yet little is known about the family and community of black people in Britain, or of their strategies for economic and psychological survival. It is in moving beyond a name, and finding the place of each person in the historical geography of London, that the challenge of black historical research really lies.

Initially this thesis was conceived as a study of power relations. An investigation of how such black women lived, how they were perceived and how they challenged this. At first sight it may appear that Gilroy, Ogborn and Habermas have little in common in such a context. In this thesis I attempted to locate black women in archives that would provide us with more insight into their lives and their place in London life and their strategies of survival, and thus address some of the absences that Myers exposed. The concept of the public sphere formed part of the basis of this strategy, and for the structure of this thesis, by moulding the types of archives that I chose to investigate. It also proved useful as a tool for a creating an imaginative space from which to consider ways into the archives, and how people interacted inside and outside them.

Although Ogborn does refer to Gilroy in his examination of modernity, Ogborn retains the idea of modernity in his essays because he believes it is a useful way of looking at localised geographies and the structures of power, ideas of 'progress' and other social histories of the eighteenth century. This he does by focusing on spaces that reveal
material and everyday concerns. Each space is grounded in a particular geography, whether they be bounded spaces (like asylums or Barnardo's), an imagined landscape, or a far-flung network (like the black Atlantic). For Ogborn spaces like Vauxhall Gardens and Magdalen Hospital are places where modernity's transformations of time, space and social relations can be examined.

Ideas of times, space and social relations also lie at the heart of Gilroy's research. Although in contrast to Ogborn, Gilroy's examination of modernity is a critique of the history of modernity, and thus for Gilroy modernity retains its usefulness as it allows him to examine the pervasive nature of racism and its place at the heart of Western thought. Ogborn sees Gilroy's deconstruction of modernity as an example of how modernity can be theorised in terms of power and difference, and sees the black Atlantic as "a complex historical geography of race politics." Indeed, with his emphasis on the absence of the 'black' experience in modernity and histories of modernity, Gilroy directs attention towards wider issues of the absence of black histories in academia. The absence of 'race' and racism in institutions and spaces such as those highlighted by Ogborn, is not only theoretical, the presence of black people is largely ignored in practical historical research as well.

The public sphere can be imagined as a space in which these two aspects of historical investigation co-exist, aspects of each highlighting the presence and absences of the other. Of course the public sphere is not just a vessel for the interplay between the histories which Gilroy's and Ogborn's theories force to the foreground, and a discussion of the 'public sphere' as a theory is included elsewhere in this chapter. However, in this context, the public sphere is a way of imagining spaces where the role of 'race' and racism might have played a part in the shaping of institutions as well as material and everyday concerns.

For example the notion of a public sphere highlights spaces where it might be reasonable to expect representations of or discussions about 'race' and black people in Britain, such as newspapers, journals, or theatre programmes. Here discussions of 'ordinary' black people, whether as individuals or as a group, may be examined. Such spaces also incorporate women such as Sarah Forbes Bonetta, and later Ida B Wells, whose experience fits to a greater degree with Gilroy's imaginings of a black Atlantic.

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109 Norma Myers, 1996
110 Miles Ogborn, 1998, p16
However, the usefulness of the public sphere in this context is perhaps what it is most often critiqued for, that is its position vis-à-vis a private sphere. In order to highlight aspects of black life in Victorian London, detailed examination of selected spaces, as highlighted by Ogborn, is required. However, to address Gilroy’s concerns – that is the real and theoretical absence of black people in British history - the real needs to be examined in the context of the theoretical.

The public sphere is a useful way in which to do this because it emphasises the nuances that exist between public and private spaces. These differences may be between the published stories of Barnardo’s children in the institution’s journal and the original details collected about the children when they arrived, access to which was restricted to members of Barnardo’s staff. Such a method allows some insight as to whether silences were deliberate, and if changes occurred what ideas of ‘race’ they challenge or confirm. Such experiences of public representation and personal identity could also be revealed in the personal records of female asylum patients who were sometimes allowed to express themselves through letters and art, and the private letters of women who held a public role such as Ida B Wells.

As Ogborn has also noted Habermas’ understandings of space is problematic - and that historical investigations cannot simply be focused on identifying public spaces that seem to correspond with public spheres. However, as the tensions above illustrate, it is still possible to examine the ways in which publicity and privateness were constructed in material ways. This thesis investigates both the networks of such publicity (for example through journals and newspapers), and the role institutions played in formation these structures. At this point it is also worth bearing in mind the degrees of ‘publicness’ and ‘privateness’ the women in this thesis had access to. Women in the intelligentsia such as Ida B Wells, would have had far more ‘public’ lives than the women in institutions like Barnardo’s and asylums who would have had very little, if any access outside the institution walls while they resided there. However, it is not my intention to privilege Habermas, nor to spend time attempting to produce a definition of the/a public/private sphere, for this sets up an intellectual closure that could negate the usefulness of Habermas’ theory in this context.

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111 Miles Ogborn, 1998
However, despite its presence within the foundations of the thesis, as will be discussed in later sections of this work, a sense of a black public sphere, or even a black community, has proved elusive. The most obvious collection of characters who might have formed such a sphere are those who took a proactive role in the anti-racist struggle. As previously shown by the presence of Catherine Impey, this was a multicultural endeavour, but it is not clear how closely those working for a similar aim came together. For example, although Wells met Naoroji, she makes no mention of meeting any other black people aside from a handful of African students, while she was in London.

3.5 The Victorian black Atlantic

Women like Wells, and those found by Duffield and Myers were all a part of the black Atlantic, and locate a sense of the African diaspora in England and as far away as Australia. Yet although his thesis emphasises the importance of travel and the politics of location Gilroy has tended to concentrate on the role of the privileged black male in spaces of the diaspora. Male intellectuals from the United States such as W. E. B. DuBois were privileged not only in contrast to other black men and women, especially those under the rule of Western colonies, but working-class people of both genders and all colours in Western countries that were influenced by the networks of the black Atlantic. This does not mean that they did not experience racism or that their perspectives on the black diaspora are not valuable when we consider the plight of black people, but Gilroy’s account does tend to exclude ordinary men and women, and within black feminist thought there is a challenge to the male dominance of the public/protest sphere that he describes.112

Moreover there is a sense that intellectual theorising of the black diaspora by black people was born out of the intellectual elite of the United States. A sense of a broader black Atlantic may create a way of seeing other ideas and theories of liberty and modernity that were discussed outside the United States, and thus influenced thinkers in the United States, who in their turn may have discussed these ideas and sent them, reformed, back out into the diaspora. For example DuBois’ work on the Souls of Black Folk was surely influenced by the papers he heard and conversations he had at the Pan-
African Conference in London in 1900. An illustration of this is DuBois’ use of the phrase ‘the colour line’ which has often been claimed as his. In fact it came out of the multi-authored declaration of the Pan-African congress. Gilroy’s assessment of DuBois’ work in *The Black Atlantic* does not include such a critical analysis. Furthermore it is limited in its consideration of contributions to the black Atlantic from other parts of Europe and Africa which might have had a bearing on black American thinkers.

In 1848 France created a commission whose job was to prepare, in the shortest possible time, an act for immediate emancipation in all the colonies of the republic. Among those selected to sit on the commission were four Africans, Gaumont, Perrinon, Wallon and Perain. Gaumont was described as a “coloured person, a watchmaker”, and Perain as a secretary. What impact did their appointments have on discussions among black intellectuals throughout the black Atlantic system, and who were their peers? William Cuffay was a prominent leader within the London Chartist movement at this time, but there do not appear to have been any similar government endorsed positions held by black people in America or Britain at this time. This example not only draws attention to the different experiences that occurred throughout the diaspora, but that the historical spaces of the sense of the black Atlantic need to be expanded in order to see how geographical difference had an impact, if any, on the black diaspora at large.

The Fourah Bay College, Sierra Leone, was founded in 1827 as the first permanent institution for advanced training of black people in West Africa. It was established by the Church Missionary Society who undoubtedly had their own educational agenda, but by bringing together some of the intellectual elite in West Africa it must have had an impact on discussions between people who might otherwise not have met. What impact did they have on the intellectual development of the black diaspora, one which in the nineteenth century was concerned with the rights of black people as slaves, then under colonialism, and later the development of anti-imperial sentiments? They came together in London from the mid to the end of the nineteenth century to meet, create and reinforce spaces of anti-racist debate, in which they demanded equality and

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112 Heidi Safia Mirza, 1997
113 Imanuel Geiss, 1974
114 Hans Werner Debrunner, 1979
115 Hans Werner Debrunner, 1979, p196
critiqued the failure of modernity to live up to its own expectations in print, debates, lectures and conferences.

In 1852 William Wells Brown, an American escaped slave, stayed with Harriet Martineau in the Lake District. His friends, Ellen and William Craft (themselves escaped slaves), were also visitors there. Martineau, born in Norwich in 1802, was a writer and the author of numerous books including *The Hour and the Man* published in 1840, whose hero was Toussaint L’Ouverture. The Crafts’ flight had required the pale skinned Ellen to pose as the male slavemaster of her husband. When Martineau heard the Crafts’ tale of escape, she exclaimed that “I would that every woman in the British Empire, could hear that tale as I have, so that they might know how their own sex was treated in that boasted land of liberty.”

And yet there are those who would have the world believe that the labourer in Britain is in a far worse condition than the slaves of America. Such persons know nothing of the real condition of the working classes of this country. At any rate, the poor here, as well as the rich, are upon a level, as far as the laws of the country are concerned. It is not enough that the people of my country should point to their Declaration of Independence which declares that “all men are created equal.” It is not enough that they should laud to the skies a constitution containing boasting declarations in favour of freedom. It is not enough that they should extol the genius of Washington, the patriotism of Henry, or the enthusiasm of Otis. This time has come when nations are judged by the acts of the present instead of the past. And so it must be with America.

By the late 1850s and 1860s, there was a growing hostility towards black people in Britain, supported by the derogatory theories of race which were particularly popular with James Hunt and his supporters. As mentioned previously, when Hunt delivered his paper *On the Physical and Mental Characters of the Negro*, at the annual conference of the British Association in Newcastle in August 1863, William Craft was there to challenge him on almost every point he made. William and Ellen arrived in England and undertook numerous lecture tours with their friend William Wells Brown during the 1850s, and gave speeches about the horrors of slavery. The Crafts were popular on the lecture circuit, and lived in Hammersmith for some time, operating an

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116 DNB
117 William Wells Brown, 1852, p200
118 William Wells Brown, 1852, p206-207
119 William Wells Brown, 1852, p141, original emphasis
120 Yuval Taylor, 1999, p482
121 R J M Blackett, 1978
import and export business from west London. When Craft rose to challenge Hunt he was not unknown, and his audience knew how important his response was. *The Times* reported that the audience "loudly expressed assent or dissent from views of each speaker and the discussion assumed quite a political turn."  

Craft began his response by stating that although he was "not of pure African descent he was black enough" to respond. He made various points in defence of black people, beginning by pointing out the physical diversities that existed among Africans, and he gave the example of the Sierra Leones, peoples from part of Africa he had visited himself, who he felt had prominent, almost Jewish features. He was critical too of Hunt's argument that "negroes were not erect", something Craft thought could also be said about agricultural labourers in southern parts of the UK, a point that was met by cries of "hear, hear" from the audience.

Craft argued that the position he was forced to occupy in the United States gave him no chance to prove what he was really capable of - a reference to the importance of the notion of 'opportunity' in ideas of modernity, and that to be able to 'progress' one needed access to the tools of modernity, like education, to take advantage of the modern world, an option not available to many blacks in the black Atlantic, free or enslaved. To further illustrate his point he used the example of Sarah Forbes Bonetta, of whom we will learn more in Chapter six. She was an orphan who had been a slave at the court of Dahomey in West Africa. Craft felt

[h]e might refer to the instance of the little girl brought to this country by Captain Forbes. This child was presented to the Queen, who had her carefully educated. When she grew up she mingled in good society, and interested everyone by her proficiency in music, and recently she had been married to a commercial gentleman of colour at Lagos.

Craft ended by saying that he was sorry that scientific and learned men were wasting time discussing a subject which did not benefit mankind, and completed his defence with a poem by Cowper.

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122 Yuval Taylor, 1999, p482  
123 *The Times* August 31 1863, p7  
124 James Hunt (Discussion), 1863, p388  
125 James Hunt (Discussion), 1863, p388  
126 *The Times* August 31 1863, p7  
127 James Hunt, 1863, p387  
128 James Hunt (Discussion), 1863, p389
Fleecy locks and black complexion
Cannot alter nature's claim;
Skins may differ, but affection
Dwells in white and black the same^129

According to The Times, Craft "spoke with great fluency, and at the time with great modesty, and in sitting down was loudly applauded."^130 Yet Hunt dismissed Craft's points as vague general assumptions, compared to the scientific facts he had presented,^131 and his response was not only scathing but mocking too. Hunt began remarking that it was not at all necessary for Craft to tell anyone acquainted with the subject that he was not a pure Negro; he believed that black people who were intelligent and eloquent must have some European blood in their veins.\(^ 132\)

He dismissed Craft's reference to Julius Caesar's belief that British natives were so stupid that they could not be made slaves for Rome, by claiming that no European race would make good slaves, and that in this the Negro was certainly superior. He ended with a demand that scientific evidence of the character he had presented "should be met by scientific argument and not poetical clap-trap, or by gratuitous and worthless assumptions."^133

Although Craft was not the only man to speak up in defence of the Negro he seems to have taken the brunt of Hunt's response, but others also attacked Craft and his allies from the floor. Mr Carter Black rebuked Craft's assertion that the heels of Negroes were not longer than Europeans for this was contrary to the evidence presented by anatomists. He also believed that philanthropy should not have been brought into the discussion, and until Craft could "rail away the seal which nature had impressed on the physical character of the Negro" his breath was spent in vain trying to argue the equality of the Negro and the European.\(^ 134\) These comments show how easy it was for scientists to dismiss the claims for equality made by black people of the black Atlantic, and it gives some insight into how difficult it would be for black people to challenge successfully the ideas of scientific racists.

However, it is still difficult to make broad assumptions about the Victorians' attitudes to race. According to The Times Craft had supporters in the audience, and in the same
year as Craft took the floor in Newcastle, Sarah Remond, a black American woman and a US passport holder, was denied a visa to visit Paris from London. She declared that she expected such treatment from America but not Americans under 'English influences'. The British press strongly supported her position, and the US Ambassador in London felt so vilified that he threatened to return to America. Remond's comment implies that she did not expect to find colour racism in Britain in operation as it was in America; this was a belief that Mary Seacole had held when she arrived in London in 1848. When Seacole's offer of her nursing services for soldiers in the Crimea was turned down by the British government "[d]oubts and suspicions arose in [her] heart for the first time. [...] Was it possible that American prejudices against colour had some root here [in Britain]?"

Perhaps the period between the end of slavery and the dramatic rise in colonisation in Africa from the 1870s, fostered a popular imagination of Britain as a nation without state sanctioned racial inequality, and thus the expectation that it was a nation without racism. From the 1860s the writings of Hunt and others like him, who however small in number, might have had enough influence to stir the interest of a racism that lingered beneath the fabric of English society, one which by the Edwardian period would become more vocal and ugly. By the 1890s black people were organising themselves in order to challenge increasing racism and colonisation, and London became their focus, not only from visitors like Ida B. Wells, but for black people who lived in Britain such as Celestine Edwards and Sylvester Williams.

Edwards was born in Dominica in 1857 and attended a Roman Catholic and then a Wesleyan Chapel School. Having left school he became an archetypal actor of the black Atlantic, sailing to North and South America and India, before he settled in Edinburgh. What he came across on his travels stirred within him the "ardent desire to assist in securing both the true elevation of his own and the other races of the earth." He became one of the key actors in the anti-racist movement in Britain. On 3rd July 1893 he spoke on lynch law and America in Bristol, and toured all over the country speaking on related subjects, including London where he spoke before 1200

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134 James Hunt (Discussion), 1863, p390
135 C Peter Ripley, 1992
136 Mary Seacole, 1857
137 Ziggi Alexander and Audrey Dewjee, 1984, p126
138 Jonathan Schneer, 1999
139 Jonathan Schneer, 1999
140 Quoted in Jonathan Schneer, 1999, p206
people. He was with Wells when she spoke in Liverpool in 1893, where he seconded Wells’ belief that “British sympathy would […] hasten the time when Negroes would be properly emancipated.” During this time he had also become the editor of Fraternity. In July 1893 Impey had asked him if he would become the editor of the new magazine, which she hoped would become an alternative to Anti-Caste, but barely a year later Edwards had died, and Impey resumed the publication of her journal for a brief period.

Sylvester Williams had moved throughout the black diaspora from Trinidad, the country of his birth, to Canada, before he enrolled at Kings College London. To help his finances he became a public speaker, lecturing to associations like the Church of England Temperance Society, and the National Thrift Society. On the lecture tour for the Temperance Society in 1897 he shared a platform with A V Kinloch, an African woman from Natal who spoke about the South African bigotry she had experienced first hand. As Wells had done a few years earlier, Williams was pleased to see her “telling the people of England things that they knew not […] convincing them that there was something to be done by the British public.”

He spoke out against crown colony rule and he also led a group of Trinidadians living in London to meet MPs. Perhaps his greatest impact came when he convened a meeting in September 1897 which saw the birth of the African Association. He became the Association’s secretary, its president was the Rev. Henry Mason Joseph from Antigua, and A V Kinloch, became its treasurer. The aims of the collective were:

To encourage a feeling of unity to facilitate friendly intercourse among Africans in general; to promote and protect the interests of all subjects claiming African descent, wholly or in part, in British Colonies and other places, especially in Africa, by circulating accurate information on all subjects affecting their rights and privileges as subjects of the British empire, by direct appeals to the Imperial and Local Governments.

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141 Peter Fryer, 1984, p279  
142 Alfreda Duster, p142  
143 Jonathan Schneer, 1999  
144 Imanuel Geiss, 1974, p177  
145 Quoted in Jonathan Schneer, 1999, p214  
146 Peter Fryer, 1984  
147 Jonathan Schneer, 1999  
148 Peter Fryer, 1984  
149 Peter Fryer, 1984  
150 Imanuel Geiss, 1974, p177
The constitution was ratified by "several representative members of the black race who lived in London", and by the end of 1898 the Association had forty-seven members, mostly students from different colonies. As the Lagos Standard noted, it was significant of the times that "an Association of this nature be formed in the Metropolis of Empire", and it called for their countrymen "to rally round the standard of the AFRICAN ASSOCIATION." Two years later the Association would present the world with the first Pan-African Conference, the first time the phrase 'Pan-African' was used to indicate such a political collective.

3.6 Conclusions

The depth of historical and contemporary experiences within the black Atlantic illustrate Stuart Hall's comment that there is an "extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences and cultural identities which compose the category "black". The individuals highlighted in this chapter are examples of the diverse characters who travelled the paths conceptualised by Gilroy in his model of the black Atlantic.

They embraced the principles of modernity, such as freedom and equality, and used them to challenge the unsound foundations of the societies in which they lived, worked and fought racism. Despite a sense that the networks of the black Atlantic had an increasing impact on metropolitan London throughout the Victorian era, the men and women who pioneered them faced a hard battle. Following the 1840s and 1850s when escaped American slaves were welcomed in London to help further the cause of the anti-slavery movement, the development in the theories of scientific racism challenged their claims to equal citizenship. This was followed by the dramatic expansion of the colonisation of Africa and a rise in jingoistic and imperial politics. These events were challenged in the 1890s by the anti-racist community which gathered together disparate peoples, drawn to a common cause as imperial subjects and/or fighters of racism.

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150 Jonathan Schneer, 1999, p215
151 Imanuel Geiss, 1974, p179
152 Imanuel Geiss, 1974. For further information on the Pan-African Conference see chapter seven.
153 Stuart Hall, 1996a, p166
However, for some of the women in this thesis, these battles may have been of a secondary concern when compared to their struggle to survive the harsh realities of life that existed for London’s poor. This exclusion of ordinary folk from the tales of the black Atlantic re-emphasises the importance of class in Victorian and Edwardian society, and draws our awareness to the class relations between black people in Britain. Did Ida B. Wells meet working-class members of the black Atlantic when she visited Britain? Would any of the girls of the families from the Barnardo’s archive have been among the audiences she spoke to? From Wells’ descriptions of London it is hard to believe she spent much time beyond Bloomsbury. What impact did the presence of Sarah Forbes Bonetta or Victoria Davies have on the ordinary (black) folk of Britain? Did they use their positions of privilege to draw attention to less fortunate members of the black Atlantic, or were class concerns more important to them than the politics of race? Were any of London’s working-class in the audience at Westminster Hall when the unique and radical collection of speakers came together for the Pan-African conference in 1900? Moreover how do these class and gendered relations fit with Gilroy’s concept of the black Atlantic?

These themes will all inform my project of recovering the histories of black women in the social, political and public life of late nineteenth-century London. Thus it is a contribution to a broader agenda within black community history. Firstly, to recover forgotten histories in order to challenge assumptions about a black past in London, and also an attempt to link different women through experiences of modern life, by focusing on peoples of the African diaspora who were simultaneously centred and peripheral in imperial London.
Chapter four

To be Seen and not Heard

People are trapped in history, and history is trapped in them

James Baldwin
The Price of the Ticket

Dr Barnardo has become an unlikely custodian of black history. Each album of the institution’s admission photographs provides us with an array of historical evidence. It is within this archive that the pictures of more than twenty young black girls who were admitted to the Home lie. Their presence in the albums proves the existence of black people in Britain and, as these girls had parents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles and grandparents, they embody a turnstile to an interconnected, ‘multi-cultural’ understanding of a new historical geography of Britain. The stories of their lives provide a key to exploring a new and particular geography of the experiences of the black community in Britain.

Barnardo was keen that his Homes would welcome children of all nationalities as long as they could prove their destitution:

any destitute boy and girl, of whatever nationality, who finds itself upon the streets of London without a home may apply at our doors for help. During the month of March [1887] three boys from Constantinople were admitted. So also was an African negro, rejoicing in the grandiloquent name of Cæsar Pompey Gortschakoff; together with a very interesting Christian lad from Syria; with John Nzipo, a Zulu, and Thomas Watt, a half-caste from St. Helena.¹

They along with French, German, Italian, Greek, and Spanish children reflected the cosmopolitan make-up of Victorian London. In 1887 Barnardo reported that in the institution’s Youth’s Labour House, “no fewer than fourteen languages and dialects were spoken among the inmates.”² Two years later Barnardo used the case of Henry

¹ Night and Day June, 1887, p2, original emphasis
² Night and Day June, 1887, p3, original emphasis
Ginger, of "West Indian parentage", to illustrate the Homes' "catholicity as to colour". The fact that Barnardo felt that Henry Ginger's 'ethnicity' would "render him less able to withstand the severities of our English climate," is an indication of the racialised ideas that black children were surrounded by, even within notions of equality.

This chapter is based on the biographies of the young black girls whose images were found during research in Dr Barnardo's 'institution of social conscience' and the photographic and written archives that remain there. The girls we learn about from these archives were all poor, but their reasons for being so and their experiences of racism and family life, reflect the diversity of the black working class in London. Some had been born in the city and were 'third-generation' Londoners in the 1880s. Others came from communities in Liverpool and Cardiff, and a few had crossed the seas from Africa. In turn, their children's children would become at least 'third-generation' Britons just as the Empire Windrush was docking.

4.1 Aspects of race and class in Victorian Britain

Like many Victorian philanthropic agencies, Barnardo's institution sought to tackle the problems associated with an 'other', located not in a distant colonial land but in British cities. As well as a social geography, an imperialist geography was used to map the spaces inhabited by the poorest people of modernity. When Henry Mayhew visited a neighbourhood where he thought the people to be listless and lazy he observed that "these people, who here seem as inactive as negroes, will perform the severest bodily labour, undertaking tasks that the English are almost unfitted for". The blurring between the races of empire and those found in the metropolis was furthered by the use of developing photographic techniques. In the context of empire, images of 'native others' were becoming increasingly common in the late Victorian periods. Consequently the camera became a tool to subject the underclass in 'darkest London' to the same processes of exploration and objectification as the natives of 'darkest Africa'. The poor were defined as 'other' races, which muddled their national identities. Kenan Malik has argued that the Victorians saw race as a social distinction,

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3 Night and Day March, 1889, p7
4 Night and Day March, 1889, p7
5 Henry Mayhew, 1985, p60
6 James Ryan, 1997, p146
rather than one of colour\textsuperscript{7}, that the European working-classes were somehow racialised
but colour blind. The absence of colour from official government and church
documents could support this theory, but the Victorians attitude to race and ‘colour’ is
not so neatly defined. People within the working class were sometimes defined by the
colour of their skin. In Barnardo’s, where the black girls were from the same poor class
as their fellow companions, their ‘colour’ was used as a descriptive category in their
admission records.

It was through the work of social investigators like Henry Mayhew that racialised
representations of the working-class became part of the public imagination. Mayhew’s
\textit{London Labour and the London Poor} originated as a series of articles published by the
Morning Chronicle between 1849 and 1850. These were collected together and
published in four volumes between 1861-2. Within these there are a few references to
black men. In an “asylum for the houseless poor”, Mayhew came across men from all
over the United Kingdom, “with a coloured man or two”.\textsuperscript{8} At a pub and dancing
house in Whitchapel he “noticed a sprinkling of coloured men and a few thorough
negroes scattered about here and there”.\textsuperscript{9} It is impossible to know if the black men that
Mayhew mentions were the only black men that he saw, and though he does not
mention any black women, it is hard to believe he did not come across any at all. If he
did meet some, why was the colour of a person’s skin highlighted in some contexts
rather than others, and who was seen to be ‘coloured’ or a ‘thorough negro’- a
distinction James Hunt was keen to make in his 1863 paper.

Forty years after Mayhew, Charles Booth began to publish his survey of \textit{Life and Labour
of the People in London}. This investigation of the city’s poor would become one of the
largest private social inquiries ever undertaken, being financed and co-ordinated by
Booth.\textsuperscript{10} The surveys, notebooks and interviews would eventually run to seventeen
published volumes. Booth and Mayhew are two of the most eminent men who strove
to understand, through what they considered to be the academic pursuit of urban
exploration and survey, the apparently coded landscape of the poor, just as
Livingstone and Stanley were ‘decoding’ the landscapes of Africa. The late Victorian
explorers concentrated on mapping the fears of the middle-classes and attempted to
code the social and geographical boundaries of the urban poor, as well as highlighting

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{7} Kenan Malik 1996 \textsuperscript{8} Henry Mayhew, 1985, p419. \textsuperscript{9} Henry Mayhew, 1985, p482}
districts dominated by slums, sewage, the respectable, the healthy, the Jew and the ‘foreign born’.

4.2 Barnardo’s institution of social conscience

The philanthropic institutions that were influenced and created in response to their work used tools of modernity, like the camera, in their development. The formation of these institutions, their function and the reproduction of their racialised perceptions, are a concern of black historical analysis in Britain because of the roles they played in social change and social control. The importance of charitable activity in London lay not only in an attempt to interpret and understand the behaviour of the poor, but also in attempts to control them. One of the tools used in this new exploration of poverty was the camera. Photography began to be used as a means of documenting the inhabitants of the urban jungles of Britain as much as it was used to record the inhabitants of empire and those peoples encountered during exploration of ‘new lands’.

Thomas John Barnardo, born in Dublin in 1845, was to become one of the most famous of the Victorian philanthropists, combining the roles of explorer, missionary and photographer. He originally planned to work as a medical missionary in China and to meet this aim he travelled to London in 1866 to train as a doctor. While studying in the city, he experienced the over-crowded and poverty-stricken conditions in the East End, particularly highlighted during the cholera epidemic of 1866 when over 5000 people died in London. Barnardo saw that there was as much missionary work to be done in England as in China, and so he decided not to go abroad. Instead he turned his attention to the poor and homeless children of London, and in 1870 set up his first Residential Home in Stepney, in London’s East End (see figure 4.1).

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10 David Englander and Rosemary O'Day, 1997
11 See John Marriot, 1996, especially p79
12 See Alan Baker and Derek Gregory eds., 1984., especially p22.
14 James Ryan, 1997
15 Stephen Haliliday, 1999, p124
16 J Wesley Bready, 1932; A E Williams, 1946; Norman Wymer, 1954
The building at 18 Stepney Causeway, E1 would be the headquarters of the Barnardo's charity for over a century. It remained open all night, but initially only to boys. It was not until 1873 that the Girl's Village Home, based in Ilford, Essex, was opened. Barnardo was critical of workhouses, arguing that they were too much like an institution and too little like a home. From 1873 girls were transferred to one of thirteen cottages around a village green in Barkingside, after admission at Stepney (see figure 4.2). Each cottage became the home of twenty girls who were cared for by their "Mother". The aim of these homes, aside from providing a clean home and regular meals, was to teach the girls to be hard working and well trained, which would eventually enable them to find work as respectable domestic servants. As

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17 Thomas J Barnardo, 1899
18 Night and Day, August, 1877, p102
Barnardo saw it, each girl “saved from a criminal course is a present to the next generation of a virtuous woman and a valuable servant.”\textsuperscript{19}

The cottages at Barkingside were all alike; each made of redbrick and in gothic style. The ground floor was made up of a dayroom, kitchen, scullery and pantry with a small sitting room for the Mother. The rooms in which the girls slept were “plain and homelike”.\textsuperscript{20} The beds had green iron bedsteads with quilts that had the name of the cottage woven into them. A washing-stand with a basin, jug and soap dish was placed on one side. Aside for personal use these items were “to enable the girls to learn to use and lift such breakable items without fear or awkwardness”.\textsuperscript{21} It was the aim of cottage life to teach each of the young women a range of skills so when they entered domestic service they had “already learnt in her Home to do thoroughly all the commonplace duties which are likely to fall to her lot as a servant.”\textsuperscript{22}

Meal times and general life in the cottages was overseen by Mother, whose word ruled the girls’ lives. The women who were employed as ‘mothers’ were educated and chosen for their capability to be both firm and kind to their ‘inmates’;\textsuperscript{23} they were not paid a salary, but received “a small yearly sum for their incidentals.”\textsuperscript{24} The older girls would have taken it in turns to cook their dinner, lay the table and generally help keep the house in order.\textsuperscript{25} Although none of the tasks in the Home were supposed to be completed by force, there was a routine of repetition and each girl would repeat her chores until she was as good at peeling potatoes, cleaning

\textsuperscript{19} Cited in June Rose, 1987, p60
\textsuperscript{20} Night and Day, August, 1877, p102
\textsuperscript{21} Night and Day, August, 1877, p102
\textsuperscript{22} Night and Day, August, 1877, p102
\textsuperscript{23} Night and Day, August, 1877, p102
\textsuperscript{24} Night and Day, August, 1877, p102
\textsuperscript{25} Night and Day, January 1877, p28
\textsuperscript{26} Night and Day, August 1" 1877, p102
out a room or washing and dressing a younger child as her Mother. The girls' duties also included washing and ironing in the laundry connected to the cottages. Apparently "the pride with which they exhibited their ironing showed plainly that it was no forced task, but a labour of genuine pleasure".26

Barnardo was not the first to believe that women could be saved through work. As early as 1758 John Fielding published *A Plan for a Preservatory and Reformatory for Benefit of Deserted Girls, and Penitent Prostitutes*.27 He proposed that such young women could be transformed into housewives and domestic servants through reading, sewing, washing, ironing and religion.28 Barnardo felt that if a girl could learn to do all these tasks with pride, then when she began to earn a living as a domestic servant she would have already learnt to deal with the duties she would probably have to undertake. There was no consideration that any of the girls might or could have had ambitions for another life. Whereas boys had the opportunity to be trained in some of the fourteen different handicrafts offered to them, girls were trained only for domestic service.29

4.3 Barnardo’s Studio Portraits

Barnardo’s use of photographs focused on small prints of ‘before and after’ images of the children who were admitted to the Home. These images showed the children just after they arrived at the home usually dressed in rags and looking poor, ill and generally not at all respectable. The ‘after’ images showed the children as clean and respectable, ready to contribute to society as upstanding citizens and useful members of their community. During the 1870s members of the public could buy packs of twenty at 5 shillings, or individual images for sixpence, from the Home in Stepney.30 All the photographs were “sold for the benefit of the Institution, which receive[d] help either from the direct profits resulting from their sale, or indirectly, by the enlistment of sympathy towards destitute or neglected children generally, and in aid of the Homes established for their rescue.”31 Barnardo’s stopped selling the images following the negative outcome of a public enquiry into the Homes fundraising methods in

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26 *Night and Day*, August 1st 1877, p102
27 See Miles Ogborn, 1998, p48
28 See Miles Ogborn, 1998, p48
29 *The Westminster Gazette*, June 25th 1894, p8
30 *Night and Day*, November 1 1877, p144
31 *Night and Day*, November 1 1877, p144
However, Barnardo’s studio photographer continued to take images for the institution, and ‘before and after’ images appeared in Night and Day - the institution’s fundraising magazine - well into the Edwardian period. Between May 1874 and December 1901 over 40,000 portrait images were taken. These are of the children who were admitted, taken on or close to the day of their admission. This collection does not include the many group shots, images of the cottages, workrooms, emigrants to Canada and other aspects of life as a child in the Barnardo’s home that were also captured by the camera.

Each photographic album provides us with an array of historical evidence, for behind each two-tone image there is a person of colour, an existence within a network, interwoven with lives in London, and far beyond, and prove the presence of black people in Britain. These photographs became the starting point for building biographies of the children’s lives. The copies of the photographs of the children included their names and the date the photograph was taken. By assuming the date of the photograph was the same, or close to, the date of their admission, it was possible to search the written archives for their records. Out of the 42,000 photographs in the photographic archive, 25 were identified as containing images of black girls, whether as individuals or among groups. Out of these, 13 written case studies were found, and it is their stories which are told here. The girls’ biographies are comprised substantially from admissions records, what Barnardo’s called the ‘Girls’ Histories’.

Each biography is prefaced by a selection of quotes from the Oxford English Dictionary, which highlight the racialised phraseology used by Barnardo’s. It is perhaps hard for us to believe that such terms existed as a part of the English language outside enclosed walls of institutions such as Barnardo’s. I have thus placed definitions from the Oxford English Dictionary with the histories, not only to give a context to the use of such words in life and literature during the period, but also to serve as a reminder of how difficult, if not ludicrous, it was/is to place the reality of the girls’ family histories within the confines of racial definitions.

The story and network of a girl’s life was given in as much detail as possible, including age, date and place of birth, the religion of both parents, and whether the girl had been baptised. The colour of their hair, eyes, complexion, her height, the size of her chest

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32 June Rose, 1987. Further details of this enquiry will be discussed in Chapter eight.
and the ‘general condition’ of her body was also recorded. There was also space for 
extra remarks made by the Medical Officer and this is often where racialised 
descriptions of the girls appear. Details of the parents’ employment was then 
gathered, as well as anecdotes about their reputations and that of their extended 
families. Uncles, aunts and their partners, cousins, sisters and brothers would all be 
detailed in a girl’s history. But the Barnardo’s archives are gendered. As a rule far 
more information was sought and recorded about a young man’s stay and experiences 
once he left Barnardo’s compared to those of the young women.
4.4 The Williams Children

Negro, 1.1. An individual (esp. a male) belonging to the African race of mankind, which is distinguished by a black skin, black tightly-curled hair, and a nose flatter and lips thicker and more protruding than is common among white Europeans. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries also applied [...] to individuals of African ancestry born in or resident in the United States or other English-speaking country.

1876 tr. O. Peschel’s Races of Man 464 Narrow and more or less high skulls are prevalent among the negroes

Negress, A Female Negro.

1801 Wolcot (P.Pindar) Tears and Smiles Wks. 1812 V. 58 Now Negress Night came solemn down.

1817 T. L. Peacock Melincourt I. 71 His gentleness and sweet temper winning the hearts of the negro and negress.

1891 C. Roberts Adrift Amer. 101 A fine strapping young negress came out of the house.33

The earliest record of black girls in the Barnardo’s archive comes with the admission of Annie, Eleanor and John Williams34 on the 13th August 1875 (see figure 4.3). We can gain some insight into these sisters through their own and their brother’s admission records.

I was born in St Helena. Father is dead a long time. I have two sisters; they are in the ‘home’. I went to school afore I come here, at a ‘Great Big Place’. Don’t know where t’was. Don’t know where mother is, but she come to see me this day.35

In fact, John had never known his father, Peter, as he had died before he was born. Elizabeth and Peter were married in 1864, eleven years before he drowned saving the life of a man who had fallen overboard the Life Light of London, on which he had been working as a ship’s cook. After Peter’s death Elizabeth received all his possessions and wages due to him, but his passing left his family in severe financial difficulties. Elizabeth found some work to support her family moving the children from Rotherhithe, Stepney, and then Shadwell, before they found themselves in the back room of a tenement courthouse in Poplar. Here Elizabeth found work, stitching sacks at Stratford Jute Works. She earned 3/3 a week, a third of which she used to pay her rent.36

33 OED
34 At Barnardo’s request names have been changed
35 B Boys Register 1872-1875, Volume Two
36 B Girl’s Record Book 1875, p102
Both sisters were placed in the same cottage in September 1876, but the following year Eleanor died from tuberculosis. In July 1878 Annie and John went to visit their mother who was gravely ill at Bromley Sick Asylum, she was also to die of tuberculosis. Annie would also die of tuberculosis, and John attended her funeral in February 1879.\textsuperscript{37}

The admission report for the Williams children states that they arrived at the admission Home in Stepney in clothes borrowed for the occasion. Despite this, the children were photographed apparently naked, under the sacks under which they had been supposedly found the day before their admission. As we have seen, it was not unusual for children to be dressed down in their admission photographs, but the Williams children were the only ones to be photographed naked (see figure 4.3).\textsuperscript{38}

In 1877 Barnardo came under sharp criticism from members of the Christian community, particularly George Reynolds of Stepney and the Charity Organization Society. These men accused him of various forms of dishonesty including his use of the title ‘Dr.’ without the proper qualifications and that his institution had misused funds. These were coupled by claims that the Home had used cruelty against the children under its guardianship, and that the photographs Barnardo used to advertise and raise money for the Homes, such as that of the Williams children, were indecent as well as falsified.

In order to counter these accusations Barnardo decided to arrange for an independent inquiry by men trusted by the Christian and legal worlds. The preliminaries for the

\textsuperscript{37} B Girl’s Record Book 1875, p102
\textsuperscript{38} This inquiry will be discussed further in Chapter eight.
inquiry began in May 1877 and were undertaken by a large committee formed of at least ten clergymen and ministers resident in London’s East End, and the trustees of Barnardo’s. This committee then decided to leave the full enquiry in the hands of three men. The Rev. Miller and Mr William Graham, who for sometime had been M.P. for Glasgow, accepted two of these positions. The third place was taken by Mr Maule, Q.C., who was also the Recorder for Leeds. These three men presided over the inquiry which lasted for several months. Eventually Barnardo was cleared of the charges, the arbitrators being “of the opinion, that these homes for destitute boys and girls, called the Barnardo Institutions are real and valuable charities, and worthy of public confidence and support”

During the hearing Barnardo brought a number of witnesses before the arbitrator, Mr Maule. One of them was Elizabeth Williams. An account of her testimony was given in the *Christian Herald*. Elizabeth was described as a widowed woman of colour. Her testimony confirmed that for some time she earned her living stitching sacks, but unlike the figure of 3/3 a week given in the Barnardo archive, her wage is recorded as being 1/8 per one hundred sacks. The *Christian Herald* also recounted that due to Elizabeth’s extreme poverty, sometimes her children had no clothing except for the sacks and the sacking with which she worked. Elizabeth made quite an impression on the hearing, and the *Christian Herald* recorded that:

So touching was the account given by this witness of her distress that both the arbitrator and Canon Miller were visibly affected, and one of the counsel engaged in the case was compelled to leave the room to hide his feelings, while the opposing counsel could not refrain from offering the poor woman a small sum of money.

The Williams family made three more appearances in the public sphere when, over the following decades, Barnardo told the story of the Williams children in *Night and Day*. *Night and Day* was produced and edited by Barnardo’s as *A Monthly Record of Christian Mission and Practical Philanthropy*; its aims were to inform the public of the Home’s work and to raise money. The Williams’ story first appeared in 1880, in an article called “Out of the Depths”. It was to be repeated almost verbatim in 1898 when it was told as one of the columns Barnardo regularly wrote in the journal called *Leaves*

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39 *Night and Day*, May 16th 1877, p67
40 Seth Koven, 1997
41 *The Christian Herald and Signs of Our Times*, October 24, 1877, p596
42 *The Christian Herald and Signs of Our Times*, September 6, 1877, p505
43 *The Christian Herald and Signs of Our Times*, September 6, 1877, p505
44 *Night and Day*, May 1880, pp32-33
from my Note Book, a collection of stories about some of the children who had been cared for by the institution. "Three Woolly Black Heads" was accompanied by an engraving of the admission photograph which was titled "IT REVEALED THREE WOOLLY BLACK HEADS".\(^{45}\)

The article began with Barnardo apparently recalling his approach to the Williams' home as he went to find the children.

There is no hall door, and the crazy stairs are exposed to view from the outside. Up I climb, disturbing in my passage several groups of children, who in the dim light which enters through the narrow casements of each landing, are playing noisy games. [...] It is a high house for so narrow a court, and was once inhabited by people of better quality; now it is but a tumble down affair. The balustrades are nearly all gone. One here and there suffices to afford the railing an insecure support. The rats have appropriated not a little of the staircase; huge holes leading to their burrows suggest to the unaccustomed traveller the necessity for carefulness; but due caution being exercised, I get to the garret "top back," as I was directed when below. There is no need to knock, for the door of the back room on the upper floor is partly open.\(^{46}\)

The room, which this open door revealed, was depicted as dark, dirty and airless, the only window could not be opened. There was only one piece of furniture, a broken upturned box made of deal, and it was on this that Elizabeth sat, stitching sacks under the gloom of "four in the winter afternoon".\(^{47}\) Here, however we begin to see artistic licence creeping back into the texts which Barnardo then presented to the public. Barnardo goes on to tell his audience that the children arrived at the rescue home the very next winter morning, yet the admission records tell us that the children were admitted in August. This is not the only discrepancy that occurs between the accounts told to the public through the space of the journal, and the private spaces of the institution, as we will see below.

The children were discovered and assessed by the Beadle. The original Beadle's report written up in 1875 appears in Annie's admission records.

When I visited the home the mother was out, but the landlady showed me a small back room, entirely void of furniture; in the corner was some sacking on which were the three children entirely naked. She said that they had been like that for months, and had only dry bread what the neighbours would give them. Then I saw the mother, who said the parish would give her no assistance unless she went into the House with them.\(^{48}\)

\(^{45}\) Night and Day, February 1898, p10
\(^{46}\) Night and Day, February 1898, p10.
\(^{47}\) Night and Day, February 1898, p10
\(^{48}\) B Girl's Admissions, August 1875, p102
This report was the basis of Barnardo’s account in *Night and Day*. Barnardo described Elizabeth as a negress, dressed in the poorest rags, with a face full of suffering, and a voice full of weariness in its tone.

"Eh, sar," she says, "mebbe you’ll help the childer! My hearts most bruck! de good Lord forgive me!"
Big tears coursed down each swarthy cheek!

Barnardo recalled that he was moved greatly by Elizabeth’s distressing request and pulled aside the sacks which were in a corner under the room’s slanting roof, and there were revealed the “three woolly black heads! Yes, sure enough, there three little black children lay." Barnardo then recounted a conversation he had with the family’s landlady.

She hain’t no clothes for ‘em this while back,” explained the landlady in a low voice; “so they keeps together under the sacks to keep warm, till the mother takes her work off to the factory. When she comes back they’ve a new lot of sacks, but 'taint much they’d have to eat if it warn’t for the neighbours who pities ‘em and gives ‘em a bit of broken wittles now and then. But the neighbours 'bout here are poor themselves, God help ‘em."

In an attempt to find out how Elizabeth found herself in this state of poverty Barnardo listened to her history. The story recounted in *Night and Day* for a public audience followed, to a large extent, what is held in the admission records except for one racialised detail. The description of Peter and his death is almost identical to the admissions records, except for his ethnicity. Contrary to the admission book which describes Peter as an ‘Englishman’, the article proclaims that he was a freed coloured man. It is possible that Peter could have been black and called an Englishman, but this would be unusual. An examination of other records suggests that ‘English’ was used to signify whiteness. Furthermore, slavery was legally outlawed in the British colonies in 1833, even if he had been a baby at this point Peter would have been in his sixties as far as the readers in 1898 were concerned. This does not really fit with Barnardo’s description of him as “a sailor, tall and powerfully built”. The alternative is that Peter was born in a country where slavery was abolished far later, such as Brazil where enslavement was not completely outlawed until 1888 - but then he would surely not have been considered an Englishman.

89 *Night and Day*, February 1898, p10, original emphasis
50 *Night and Day*, February 1898, p 10
51 *Night and Day*, February 1898, p10
52 *Night and Day*, February 1898, p10
The courageous reason for Peter’s death was also elaborated. The accident was relocated to an unnamed West Indies Island. A companion of Peter’s was thrown overboard, but rather than drowning, the real danger came from the fear that the man might be devoured by a shark. According to Barnardo’s version it was then that Peter jumped overboard to rescue his friend. Barnardo probably manipulated this narrative to make it more exciting, and also to ensure that the reading public would sympathise with Elizabeth’s adversity, her children’s tragedy, and realise the necessity of the Rescue Homes, but the points Barnardo chose to change are telling. Perhaps to counter the images of blackness, Barnardo emphasises the young widow’s religious qualities. He lamented her tragic tale, one he believed she could not have borne if it had not been for her strong Christian beliefs. He saw:

Enshrined beneath the dark and swarthy skin which proclaimed her race was the bright jewel of a soul that had been cleansed in the Redeemer’s blood. Sickness came, and then poverty, and then sickness again, followed by the birth of her posthumous child, a little boy.

Following this Barnardo hinted at some of the racism black women may have faced while looking for employment, and the difficulties single mothers faced looking for employment in Victorian London. Elizabeth “might have gone to service, but who would engage a coloured woman? And then what of her children?” he asked. Perhaps Barnardo felt that such racism was a reasonable explanation for Elizabeth’s lack of better employment, and one that his audience would recognise. Perhaps in the 1870s this was true. Yet as we shall see in the remaining stories, most of the black girls who came of age under Barnardo’s care left the homes to take up positions as domestic servants, so this explanation is not as persuasive as it first appears.

Despite her waves of adversity, Elizabeth had managed to keep her children away from life on the streets. She told Barnardo,

“anyway and anyhow” she said to me with streaming eyes, “away from sin and wickedness!” True, they had no clothes and were almost starved, for she received only one penny a sack for her work. “But they’d know’d summat ’bout de Lord Jesus; and I wants ‘em sore to lub Him.”

“I have a Home for such; I will take them. Will you give them up to my care?” [...] Her eyes glistened. “She would like to let ‘em go, but-----” A voice from the corner cried, “Mudder, let’s go! Plenty food, nice warm tings. Let’s go mudder!”

53 Night and Day, February 1898, p10  
54 Night and Day, February 1898, p10  
55 Night and Day February 1898, p11
The girls' excitement about moving to a children's home was conclusive for Barnardo, and, according to the *Night and Day* piece, he made arrangements for the girls to enter the Home the next day. Barnardo's article describes the children arriving the following morning wrapped in some of the sacks under which they had been found the evening before. Yet it is stated in the admission records of 1875 that the children arrived in clothes borrowed for the occasion. Perhaps Barnardo was still wary of the accusations of artistic licence and the undressing of the children unnecessarily for photographs levelled against him in 1877. So, Barnardo wrote that he collected the children wrapped in the sacks, and took them straight to the photography studio in Stepney by cab. The photographer then heaped the sacks as Barnardo had witnessed in the evening before. The discrepancies in the telling of this process will be discussed further in chapter eight, but for now we can agree with Barnardo that,

thus, in a few seconds, preserved for future years a picture of the state in which I had found them. That was their first stage in their journey to the Girl's Village Home, Ilford.\(^5^6\)

After receiving a bath, clean clothes and some warm soup, the girls began their transformation into respectable girls "with their braided hair fastened demurely by a little scarlet band, given by the matron to each, there stood before me two twinkling-eyed congenitors of the world-renowned "Miss Feely's Topsy."\(^5^7\) This was (most likely) a reference to the character 'Topsy' in the stage adaptation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, written by Mrs Stowe, which was a popular play produced, with various casts, throughout Britain during the mid and late Victorian period. It was especially popular in London, with regular productions being held at various theatres. One programme for Her Majesty's Theatre, Covent Garden, in June 1886 described "Topsy" as "a mischievous little Nigger".\(^5^8\)

The process their brother went through to enter the Home is strangely omitted from the public narrative in 1880 and 1898. Barnardo concluded the Williams' story by assuring his audience that Elizabeth was quickly found better employment by the institution, illustrating that his work not only saved poor children, but deserving mothers too. Barnardo was not the first to present stories of the poor in such a manner. The mixing of fact and fiction in the representation of the people helped by the

\(^{56}\) *Night and Day* February 1898, p11
\(^{57}\) *Night and Day* February 1898, p11
\(^{58}\) TMA Her Majesty's Theatre, Programmes 1886, box 1255
institutions of social conscience had its origins in the complex charity endeavours of the previous century.

In the eighteenth century The Histories of Some of the Patients in the Magdalen House, as Supposed to be Related by Themselves had been published in 1759. It was a collection of stories based on patients from Magdalen Hospital, established in Whitechapel the previous year for the charitable reformation of prostitutes. The collection, which was later produced as The Histories, consisted of four narratives by women who ended their tales within the walls of the Magdalen. The narratives were based on facts, but when their stories were told to the public their narratives were presented in novel form and as fiction.

Barnardo reversed the method in The Histories by fusing fact and fiction in his narratives, but presenting the new histories as faithful depictions of actual encounters. Conversations and emotions were retold in the present tense, as if they had happened only last week. The lack of dates in the stories allowed Barnardo to take the narratives out of their temporal context. In both genres the result is the same however; all the tales end with the transformation of the children within the walls of the Barnardo Home, just as the prostitutes were reformed within the walls of the Magdalen Hospital. However, as well as embellishing his stories with fiction, Barnardo also failed to reveal details of a history that might cause the public to doubt the transforming powers of the Homes.

In December 1880, an update of the Williams’ story was given. It revealed that both sisters and their mother had passed to their “eternal rest.” It also revealed an entrenched concern about black children and the idea that, even if they were born in England, the colour of their skin - their ‘ethnicity’ - made them unsuited to the nation’s climate. It was a theory that would impact on the life of Queen Victoria’s goddaughter, Sarah Forbes Bonnetta in 1851, and for John, who in 1880 was ten years old, it meant he was sent to live in Jersey, where it was thought that the climate would suit him better, and that he would brought back to England when “old enough” if his state of health permitted it. In 1889 Barnardo also wrote about a black boy, whose “West

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59 Miles Ogborn, 1998
60 For further details on The Histories and Magdalen Hospital see Miles Ogborn, 1998, pp39-74.
61 Night and Day December 1880, p87
62 Night and Day December 1880, p87
Indian parentage would [...] render him less able to withstand the severities of our English climate."^63

However, Barnardo's 1898 article about the Williams' family failed to remind the public of any of the negative facts of their lives, even though John had been living back in England since 1884 when he had been sent to work as a page at a dental surgery in Reading. John had stayed in touch with Barnardo's until October 1885 when he wrote to them from Barnardistow, North Haverhill, Suffolk,

complaining of the cruelty of his master. He has been with him about 9 months [during] which time his master has died. The boy complains of being overworked, roughly treated and left alone in the house and [...] without anything to eat for days. He was written to telling him not to leave his situation [...] and that we would endeavour to find him another.^

John's records end here, and it is not clear whether Barnardo's found him another job. It would seem when Barnardo wrote about the Williams' family in 1898 he had fallen out of touch with its last surviving member. This part of the Williams' story would not show Barnardo as a saviour of the poor, probably because of this it was eliminated from the public account in the 1890s.

^63 Night and Day, March 1889, p6
^64 BLU Boys Register 1872-1875 Volume Two
^65 BLU Boys Register 1872-1875 Volume Two
4.5 The Peters children

Coloured, 2.b. spec. Having a skin other than ‘white’; esp. wholly or partly Black or ‘coloured’ descent. In S. Africa. Of mixed black or brown and white descent, of or belonging to the population group of such mixed descent.

1832 Marryat N. Forster xxi, ‘Au cachot!’ cried all the coloured girls.

1844 Gilchrist Cape of Good Hope ii. 20 The native population of the colony is generally called Hottentot, or bastard Hottentot, most of the coloured people approaching pretty nearly the Hottentot formation, and some presenting a greater or smaller mixture of other, principally European blood.

1850 Mrs Stowe Uncle Tom’s Cabin xviii. 182 Among the coloured circles of New Orleans.

1880 Print Trades Jnl. Xxii. 5 Fredrick Douglas, the celebrated coloured orator

On January 12th 1882, “three coloured children of one family” with “light olive complexions”; Eleanor aged nine, her sister Sally aged seven (see figure 4.4), and their brother Joseph arrived at the Home. The sisters’ earliest memories were of living in Liverpool and it is not clear when they moved to London. According to Eleanor’s birth certificate, when she was born in January 1872 the family was living at Vale Royal, York Road, Islington, when their father, Robert Peters, was working as a foreman on the railways. Perhaps moves to and from Liverpool and London were due to their father’s work on the railways. Soon after the family moved south again, their “coloured” father had left them for a place as a ship’s cook on board the Glengarry. He had once left the family returning after five years, but this time he had not been heard from since leaving port.
Robert had left the family with no means of support and as a result their mother, Sarah, had gone out to work. She began washing and charring as a means to provide an income for the children’s care. That had not been enough, and gradually she was forced to sell their belongings to supplement their income. She still found it difficult to survive. The family were forced into St George’s workhouse and her youngest child died soon after.

During this time the three children were at the Plushett School, a children’s branch of the workhouse. The three siblings arrived in the evening of Monday 7th October 1881. They were admitted and ordered to remain by the Board of Guardians for St George’s-in-the-East, on the 14th October 1881. They remained at the school until they were discharged in the morning of Monday 2nd January, 1882. On leaving the workhouse the family lived in Shadwell, until Sarah applied to Barnardo’s.

Despite their poor status Sarah, then thirty-six and “bear[ing] the character of a respectable woman” seems to have been keen to keep up her children’s education. The children had been to the Board School in Shadwell, the Mission School in Davenport, and Sunday school. Although there should have been no reason to think that they could not, in their records it was noted that both girls spoke good English. Eleanor was described as being a “remarkably intelligent child”, who was eager to learn. She could read well and had achieved all this despite being “a regular imp”. Part of her rebellious character may have come from her experience as a dancing girl “in a low theatre”.

Little else is known about Eleanor except that she left Barnardo’s to enter domestic service when she was fourteen in 1887. Sally was considered to be in a more delicate condition than her sister as she had been in the Children’s Hospital before the family had gone into the workhouse. There are no details of her departure from Barnardo’s. It would seem that both sisters left Barnardo’s and became a part of London’s working-class community.

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70 LMA St/BG/SG/130/6
71 LMA St/BG/SG/130/6
72 B Girls’ Histories 1880-1901
73 B Girls’ Histories 1880-1901
74 B Girls’ Location Book (A)
75 B Girls’ Histories 1880-1901
4.6 The Jefferson Family

**Half-caste.** 2. One of a mixed race, a half-breed; esp., in India, one born or descended from a European father and native mother.

1848 Arnold in *Stanley Life & Corr.* (1844) II. ix. 200 To organize and purify Christian Churches of whites and half-castes.

1884 *Century Mag.* XXXVII. 919 Much as we admired the Maori race, we were even more struck by the half-castes."

Jane was the first of two sisters to be admitted to Barnardo’s in August 1889 (see figure 4.5). She was born in Limehouse in November 1882 to a poor but working family; on her birth certificate her father Louis was recorded to be working as a blacksmith. In the admission records Jane is described as a ‘half-caste’ girl with a dark complexion. In other records in the institution she is “a little coloured girl” and she appears to have had some interesting ancestry. The girls’ paternal grandfather was thought to have been an escaped African slave, and well known in the East End as a street preacher; he settled in London and married a white woman. This means that their son Louis, himself described as “a negro” in the archives was of mixed race ancestry, and that his children were not ‘half-caste’. Louis also married a white woman, Emily, who already had two illegitimate children when she became Louis’ wife. Together they added four more children to their family.
Emotional and financial difficulties struck the family when Louis died as the result of a work accident in April 1888. At the time he had been employed by the United Telephone Company as a labourer. On the 24th April he was working with five other men in the company yard moving poles onto a truck. As one of the poles was being lifted it struck him and he was knocked to the ground. He suffered head injuries and was taken to hospital, but he died a short time later. It seems Louis had been a popular man in the yard, his funeral expenses were defrayed by a collection, and his fellow workmen presented Emily with a sewing machine worth £12. The United Telephone Company also gave her £1 a week but this only lasted for a month.

Due to the lack of support she received from the United Telephone Company Emily was persuaded to sue them for compensation. Her civil case was heard in the City of London Court, before Mr Commissioner Kerr and a jury during November 1888. The court heard her claims for £500 compensation, but she lost the case. The jury agreed with the defence, that Louis died through his own negligence, and returned a verdict in favour of the defendant. However, the jury did sympathise with Emily, and each member gave her the fees he received for serving on the jury. The United Telephone Company seemed to have felt some pressure despite the verdict, and gave Emily 10s a week for the next three months. It is not clear who persuaded Emily to bring the case, £500 was a large, perhaps excessive sum for her to claim, although failure still resulted in the family receiving some modest charity.

When these funds ended, Emily found herself financially responsible for the care of her six children. Emily was awarded some Parish relief, but her two eldest children and their half-brother were placed in Poplar Union Workhouse, while the younger children lived with their mother in Grace Street, Bromley. The family’s financial situation did not improve, and Jane was the first to be sent to Forest Gate District School, the Poplar equivalent of the Plushett School. Jane was admitted on 1st November 1888, and was joined by her sister Matilda in January 1889. According to Barnardo’s records Jane and Matilda were not at the school long before their mother withdrew them. Records of the Poplar Board of Guardians show that although the girls were discharged

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82 *The Times*, 27 November 1888, p4
83 *The Times*, 27 November 1888, p4
84 B Girls’ Histories 1880-1901, no 8940
85 LMA PO/BG/214/1
86 LMA PO/BG/214/1
relatively quickly, in February 1889, this was to the workhouse rather than a domestic home.  

Board of Guardian records also indicate that the girls entered the main workhouse system before they became “inmates” at the school. In the Religious Creed Register, the two sisters, and their younger brother Sidney, were recorded at the workhouse on September 10th 1888. It is from here that Jane was ‘discharged’ to the Forest Gate School in November 1888, followed by Matilda on 10th January 1889. Their brother was not transferred to the school with them; a month after their admission he was transferred to the sick asylum. Although Sidney returned to the main body of the workhouse on November 21st, he was sent back to the hospital three days later. His records among the Poplar Board of Guardians end here, but we learn from the Barnardo's archive that he died some time that year.

According to Emily’s testimony to Barnardo’s, she believed the school had worsened the health of her children, which is not unlikely considering the reputation pauper schools had for disease, cruelty and overcrowding. As a result she preferred them to live within the family alternately in the care of herself or their paternal grandmother. Jane’s stepbrother was adopted by his maternal uncle and her stepsister was adopted by a maternal aunt. A year after Louis’ death Emily found work and was earning 7/- a week as a machinist. Yet out of this she had to pay 1/6 for the care of her baby while she was at work, and on top of this she had to meet her rent of 2/6 a week.

As a result she applied for her two girls to be cared for by Barnardo’s. Barnardo’s initially agreed to take only Jane. She was deaf and this had had some impact on her speech. This disability appears to have persuaded Barnardo’s that she would have been more vulnerable than her sister and thus in greater need of the institution’s protection. However it appears that Emily’s financial situation did not improve, and Barnardo’s agreed to take Jane’s younger sister a year later. After this we know very little of what happened to the sisters. Neither have a recorded leaving date, but there is another photograph of Jane taken in August 1900. Second sittings for portraits were usually only taken when the children who had sometimes become teenagers, were

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87 LMA PO/BG/214/1  
88 LMA PO/BG/169/13  
89 LMA PO/BG/169/13  
90 LMA PO/BG/169/13  
91 B Girls’ Histories 1880-1901, no 8940  
92 Stephen Inwood, 1998
leaving the home. Perhaps Jane’s deafness had made it more difficult for her to find work and the institution kept her for longer than they otherwise may have done. Her photograph shows her in a domestic uniform and it would suggest that she successfully entered domestic service. In the 1901 census there is one further reference to Jane. Then 18 years old, Jane was listed as a general domestic servant in the home of Henry Von Der Ben Copeland, a clerk to an electrical engineer. So, at least during March 1901, we know that she lived at 67 Merton Hall Road, south Wimbledon.

In her work on children who emigrated to Canada from institutions of social conscience, Joy Parr has found that typical admissions followed not from a single crisis in the child’s immediate family, but from a series, such as deaths, illnesses and a lost job. As a result children were admitted into homes following a breakdown in the kin traditions of mutual help, rather than family neglect. The short biography of Jane and her family reflects a common experience in the lives of the black girls in this study, and their relationship with white extended family members. Both Jane’s white siblings were adopted by maternal relatives, and help with the black children was only found with their paternal grandmother.

In the case of black girls, it would seem that prejudice, based on the colour of their skin, meant that white extended family members were not willing to extend the traditions of mutual help to them. The reluctance of white relatives to take care of their young black relations seems to have been the cause of the final breakdown in the girls’ immediate family’s usual strategy of coping with financial hardship. White siblings remained within the community, temporarily taken in or adopted by white extended family members. It would be the black sisters who found themselves in care.

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93 FRO 1901 Census RG13 1652 89 17 18
94 FRO 1901 Census RG13 1652 89 17 18
95 Joy Parr, 1993
4.7 Margaret

Quadroon. 1. a. One who is the offspring of a white person and a mulatto; one who has a quarter of Negro blood.
   b. rarely. One who is fourth in descent from a Negro, one of the parents in each generation being white. [...] When it is used to denote one who is fourth in descent from a Negro, the previous stage is called a terceron.
   a. 1819 W. Lawrence Lect. Physiol. Zool. 295 Europeans and Tercerons produce Quarterons or Quadroons.
   b. 1833 Marryat P. Simple (1863) 228 The progeny of a white and a negro is a mulatto, or half and half-of a white and mulatto, a quadroon, or one quarter black.
   1880 Ouida Moths L. 178 That brute goes with a quadroon to a restaurant.
   1860 O. W. Holmes Elsie V. xxi. (1891) 292 How could he ever come to fancy such a quadroon-looking thing such as that?
   c. transf. Applied to the offspring resulting from similar admixture of blood in the case of other races, or from crossing in the case of animals or plants.™

The complex definitions and contradictions in racial definitions was not unique to Barnardo’s. The racial imagination that divided up the black body into black and white parts had a history before Barnardo applied it to black girls in the 1880s. The children of ‘white’ and ‘black’ Islanders on the French colony San Domingo, which following the slave revolution in 1791 was to become Haiti, were divided into 128 parts. For example, a child of a pure white and pure black was a mulatto; the child born to a mulatto mother and a white father a quarteron with 96 parts white and 32 parts black.™ These divisions of the body continued through to the sang-mêlé who, with 127 white parts and 1 part black, was still a child of colour.™ In the 1991 British census, the inclusion of ‘ethnic categories’ for the first time was seen as a positive step to understanding the socio-economic needs of Britain’s ‘ethnic minorities’. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries exclusion and control, rather than explaining or attempting to understand visual difference, was at the core of these complex tables of identity. Despite the debates on equality that surrounded the abolition of slavery, these terms remained part of the language of the nineteenth century. The contradictions and superficial nature with which these terms, that held so much meaning, were used and understood are highlighted in the next two case studies.

In August 1899 Margaret a “[h]alf-caste from grave moral peril” was admitted to Barnardo’s. Margaret was born in May 1887 in St George’s-in-the-East, and was baptised into the Church of England. When she arrived at Barnardo’s she stood four feet and five inches, two months after her twelfth birthday. Margaret was described as

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™ OED
™ C. L. R. James, 1994, esp. p38
To be Seen and not Heard

a “quadroon with a dark complexion”. Yet in the first line of the admission history we learn that the “mother made an application in person for the admission of this girl, who is half-caste”.

Margaret was the illegitimate child of an English woman and “a native of Bermuda”. Her parents first became involved while her mother Rebecca was still living at home and working as a tailoress. Her father had been working as a ship’s steward but does not seem to have ever been a stable part of Margaret’s home life. Ten years before her admission her father had given Rebecca £2.10s., and she had not seen him since. Ultimately Rebecca married a Irish Roman Catholic named Burke, a casual dock labourer with whom she lived in Limehouse, and together they had a further three children. Conflict arose between Margaret and her new family. She ran away from home seven or eight times. The flight before she was admitted to the home followed an accusation that she had beaten the younger children. In her records her violence was characterised as a jealous reaction to her half-brothers and sisters.

This conflict was not given as the main reasons for the application. The principal justification was based on the mother’s assertion that Margaret had “strongly immoral properties” deriving from her being “in the habit of tampering with herself”, and that she had accused a person of indecently assaulting her, although upon a medical examination the charge was not substantiated. Margaret’s account of the sexual assault was also qualified by the proclamation that she was “untruthful, dishonest, and inclined to immorality” as well as having a violent and passionate temper, the implication being that any attack was the creation of her imagination.

It seems that Margaret experienced a rocky passage through Barnardo’s. A month after she was admitted she was fostered to a family in Streatham. However the records show she was back in the Barnardo’s Rescue Home in Stepney in May 1901 when she was placed in one of the home’s private cottages. Margaret must have left the cottage again at some point, although it is not clear why or where to, because she was again

98 C. L. R. James, 1994, esp. p38
99 B Girls’ Histories 1880-1901, no 22 317
100 BLU D239/D/2/2a/104 Précis Book 15
101 B Girls’ Histories 1880-1901, no 22 317
102 BLU D239/D/2/2a/104 Précis Book 15
103 BLU D239/D/2/2a/104 Précis Book 15
104 B Girls’ Histories 1880-1901, no 22 317
105 BLU D239/D/2/2a/104 Précis Book 15

108
recorded as arriving at the Rescue Home once more in September 1905. Margaret is given a final leaving date of September 1906 when she entered domestic service.

Although Margaret ended her time in Barnardo's as most of the girls did, by entering domestic service, she was one of only two of the black girls to have been fostered at any point during their stay and none of the black girls were chosen to emigrate to Canada or Australia. There is no evidence to suggest whether this was because the girls were black and thus not considered suitable or if there were concerns for them because of their colour. It is impossible to know whether Margaret's unsuccessful attempts support or refute this idea. The fact that Barnardo's attempted to find a place for her more than once suggests that they were hopeful that they would find a home for her before she was old enough to work.

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106 B Girls Location Book (A)
107 B Girls Location Book (A)
4.8 Nancy, Florence and Elizabeth

Octoroon. A person having one-eighth Negro blood; the offspring of a quadroon and a white; sometimes used of other mixed races.
1861 D. Boucicault (title) The Octoroon
1862 J. E. Cairnes Revol. Amer. 17 The mulattoes, quadroons and octoroons who now form so large a proportion of the whole enslaved population of the South.
1891 Times 8 Jan. 9/3 The mulatto, the quadroon, and the octoroon are chiefly products of the slavery period.

A month after Margaret’s admission in August 1899 two sisters, Nancy aged twelve and Florence aged nine, and their companion Elizabeth, also nine, arrived from the west coast of Africa (see figure 4.6). The girls had been living with their grandmothers in Sierra Leone, and it is ironic, at best, that it was from Freetown that their ‘guardian’ Ralph Benson made the application for the girls’ admission. Born in Knightsbridge, with homes in west London and Shropshire, the thirty-four year old Benson had first come into contact with them while working at Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone. As mentioned earlier, the College had been set up in 1827 by the Church Missionary Society, as the first permanent institution for the advanced training of black people in West Africa - it is not clear what role Benson played at the college. In Benson’s letter of application, which was sent from his west London home, he drew a grim picture of the surroundings from where they came. He claimed that the girls were not properly cared for because their mothers spent a lot of time away from their children, trading. Their fathers’ whereabouts “could not be got at” and it was assumed that they were “probably tradesmen or clerks who have long ago left the colony”. They lived with women “calling themselves grandmothers”, who were, apparently only too anxious to get rid of them; one of these women had apparently declared her intention to devote the children to prostitution. Moreover, their guardian noted the girls were “herded with negro gutter-children”. He deplored the social environment in which he claimed they lived where:

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108 OED
109 B Girls’ Histories 1880-1901, nos., 22 781, 22 782, 22 783
110 BLU D239/D/2/2a/104 Précis Book 15
111 Hans Werner Debrunner, 1979
112 B Girls’ Histories 1880-1901, nos., 22 781, 22 782, 22 783
113 BLU D239/D/2/2a/104 Précis Book 15
Amongst the native population the most ordinary morality in the great majority of both sexes, he states, is non-existent. [...] They lived and slept among surroundings which meant bodily and spiritual ruin, and which, in the case of girls almost white seemed specially revolting and sad.\(^{110}\)

Apparently Elizabeth’s home was “exceptionally horrible and filthy”.\(^{115}\) She was considered to be in very delicate health perhaps requiring a great deal of care. This assumption seems to have stemmed from a malformation of her jaw, which was supposed to have been caused by an injury at birth. However, the medical officers at Barnardo’s felt it could be cured with a small operation. Despite this Benson was doubtful that she would be able to make her living as a domestic servant.\(^{116}\)
To be Seen and not Heard

In their admission histories the girls are all described as being “octoroons”, with “dark complexions”\(^{117}\), and in contrast to Benson’s assertion, in their photographs they do not appear to be almost white (see figures 4.7 and 4.8). This explanation is further complicated by the remarks of the Medical officer. Despite being labelled an ‘Octoroon’ with a dark complexion, the remarks by the medical officer state that the girls are “Quadroons”.\(^{118}\) According to the ‘definitions’ of the racial terms, you cannot be both. The discrepancy only illustrates how untenable and superficial such definitions of race were.

Barnardo retold their stories in the context of the imperial concerns of the day. In an issue of the *National Waifs’ Magazine*, 1903, Barnardo responded to those readers who:

near and far have expressed surprise in reference to the statement made in a recent issue that the Homes received destitute British-born children from such far away places as Alexandria, Barbados, Constantinople, and various towns in France and Germany, Poland, Russia, and Persia. Such rescues are, however, far from unusual in our annals, and in some few exceptional instances the children admitted cannot even be said to be British born.\(^{119}\)

He went on to add:

Just now, for example, everybody is thinking about Africa. On the next page will be seen two little girls from Sierra Leone now under my care.\(^{120}\) They have been inmates of our Village Home for four years, and they are making good progress at school. These dear children may one day, perhaps, return to their place of birth. If they do, I hope and expect that they will carry with them the wonderful tidings of the Saviour’s love, for these they have learned during their years of training in our quiet Essex cottages. To make such children missionaries in their turn is truly the apostolic method. These two are good and gentle children and doing well in School and Cottage life.\(^{121}\)

There is little other documentation of the girls’ lives in England, or what interest their guardian kept in them. Nancy received one letter from Ralph Benson in November 1899, but he does not seem to have made any further contact with the girls he had

\(^{117}\) B Girls’ Histories 1880-1901, nos., 22 781, 22 782, 22 783

\(^{118}\) B Girls’ Histories 1880-1901, 22 781, 22 782, 22 783

\(^{119}\) The *National Waifs’ Magazine*, April 1903, pp24 – 25; all original emphasis

\(^{120}\) The image that appears is that of the two sisters. There is no picture of Elizabeth in the archives, a possible explanation as to why Barnardo did not include her in the article.
taken upon himself to rescue. Nancy and Florence did make another appearance in *National Waifs’ Magazine* in November 1903. They were not named, but they seem to be the same girls, and they formed part of another illustration of the international (and racialised) nature of the Barnardo’s homes. “Here are two girls from Sierra Leone and one from the Congo. The different types of face are distinctly perceptible.” Five years later, Nancy left Barnardo’s to enter domestic service, and we do know that she had at least one child. Her son Mark was admitted into a Barnardo’s home in 1920. Florence left to be employed at a doctor’s surgery in Croydon in 1907.

It seems unlikely that the girls ever returned to Africa, or saw their African family members again. Formal agreements with the parents of all the children were supposed to be received by Barnardo’s. In the case of Nancy and Florence only “an informal agreement” with their mother is recorded in the Précis, although in the admission records it is stated that their mother “signed an agreement handing over both her daughters unreservedly to the custody of Mr Benson with a view to their being placed in these Homes” with Elizabeth Smith there was no agreement, formal or informal, with any relations. After her initial admission Elizabeth Smith was not referred to again.

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121 The *National Waifs’ Magazine*, April 1903, p24
122 *National Waifs’ Magazine*, November 1903, p88
123 BLU D239/D/2/2a/104 Précis Book 15
124 B Girls’ Location Book (A)
125 BLU D239/D/2/2a/104 Précis Book 15; B Girls’ Histories 1880-1901, 22 781, 22 782, 22 783
126 BLU D239/D/2/2a/104 Précis Book 15
4.9 Helen

**Mulatto** n. and a. mulato young mule, hence one of mixed race, a mulatto, obscurely derived from mulo MULE.

A.n. 1 One who is the offspring of a European and a Black; also used loosely for anyone of mixed race resembling a mulatto.

1854 Thackeray *Newcomes* I. 31 Two wooly-headed poor little mulattos.
1885 R. L. & F. Stevenson *Dynamiter* xi. That hag of a mulatto woman was no less a person than my wife.

B. adj.

1 Belonging to a class of mulattos.

1837 H. Martineau *Soc. Amer.* II. 156 She was asked whether she thought of doing anything for her two mulatto children.

1900 Deniker *Races of Man* xiii. 542 A Mulatto woman, the offspring of a Spaniard and a negress, may give birth to a Morisco by uniting with a Spaniard.

In September 1899 Helen was admitted to the Home (see figure 4.9). Her history begins: “[t]his illegitimate child is a Negress, but the mother is a white woman whose maiden name was Jenkins.” The application on Helen’s behalf came from the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) who had stepped in to protect her from habitual neglect. In the letter from the NSPCC Helen is described as a negress who is “quite black, with curly hair”. Yet those assessing her case at Barnardo’s felt she was “probably a mulatto”. Helen was eight when she arrived at Barnardo’s to be described as a “half-caste” with a “Negress’ complexion”.

Helen had been living in Swansea, and was born two months after her mother’s marriage to a labourer who worked at the Swansea Gas Works. It seems however, that although she was supposed to have been christened with her stepfather’s name “[o]n account of her colour she had been a source of irritation to her stepfather and has caused much strife between him and his wife.” As a result of this about three months before the application, Helen had been sent to live with her mother’s sister-in-law, who ran a low-class lodging house, and her young married daughter.

Helen was employed by both women chiefly to run errands for them between their two homes. She was not well looked after, and her clothes gradually became ragged and dirty. She was abused by these relatives too and had been severely beaten in the

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127 OED
128 B Girls’ Histories 1880-1901, no 22 633
129 BLU D239/D/2/2a/104 Précis Book 15
130 B Girls’ Histories 1880-1901, no 22 633
131 B Girls’ Histories 1880-1901, no 22 633
132 B Girls’ Histories 1880-1901, no 22 633
133 B Girls’ Histories 1880-1901, no 22 633
street by her step-aunt. Barnardo’s and the NSPCC felt that her parents had failed to take responsibility for Helen; she had been very unhappy and had run away several times. Under the circumstances both institutions felt it impossible for her health and neglect not to have been noticed by her parents. It would seem that her parents did not care, and continually sent her back to her step-aunt.

The NSPCC were unable to make a case for a prosecution, but her mother was advised to have Helen placed in a Home. It seems her mother and stepfather were only too eager to have Helen taken away and her stepfather said he would have been willing to pay between 1/6 and 2/- a week to get rid of her “chiefly because of her colour”. It seems that Helen was the only other black girl to be fostered. She was sent to a foster home at the turn of the century, the records do not state where, and we do not know how her life really fared. She does not seem to have been back to the rescue home, yet she must have found it hard to find a stable life for herself. Her son Frank had his case for admittance into the Home placed before Barnardo’s in 1921.

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134 BLU D239/D/2/2a/104 Précis Book 15
135 B Girls’ Histories 1880-1901, no 22 633
136 BLU D239/D/2/2a/104 Précis Book 15 & B Girls Location Book (A)
137 BLU D239/D/2/2a/104 Précis Book 15
4.10 Maggie Rose

Black 1.c. Having an extremely dark skin; strictly applied to negroes and negritos, and other dark skinned races; often, loosely, to non-European races, little darker than many Europeans.

1842 Prichard Nat. Hist. Man 24 Forrest says that the Pappua Caffres are as black as the Caffres of Africa.

d. fig. Of or pertaining to the negro race.

1852 in J Ludlow's Hist. U. S. 342 The 'black law', by which coloured people were excluded from the territory.

1885 Stevenson Dynamiter 152 The black blood that I now knew to circulate in my veins.¹³⁸

Maggie Rose (see figure 4.10), a “half negro” with a “colored” complexion,¹³⁹ was another girl to be rescued “from moral danger” by the NSPCC, this time in Cardiff.¹⁴⁰ Maggie certainly had a difficult childhood. Her parents “both colored people” were married in Liverpool, and this was where Maggie was born.¹⁴¹ A few years afterwards her father went abroad and had not been heard from since. In the late 1890s Maggie’s mother, Sally, and her grandmother decided to leave Liverpool and moved to Barry Dock.¹⁴² Here Sally found work as a washerwoman and lived with a builder’s labourer named Thompson.¹⁴³ He deserted her in 1900, and after this the family’s fortunes faltered. Sally turned increasingly to prostitution to support herself and Maggie. She had been convicted, imprisoned or fined four times for drunkenness, disorderly conduct and using filthy language and once for soliciting.¹⁴⁴

Figure 4.10
Maggie Rose 31st January 1901
49/19, c/o BPA

¹³⁸ OED
¹³⁹ B Girls’ Histories 1880-1901, no 2- 863
¹⁴⁰ BLU D239/D/2/2a/104 Précis Book 17
¹⁴¹ BLU D239/D/2/2a/104 Précis Book 17
¹⁴² B Girls’ Histories 1880-1901, no 2- 863
¹⁴³ BLU D239/D/2/2a/104 Précis Book 17
¹⁴⁴ B Girls’ Histories 1880-1901, no 2- 863
In these, and other cases, it was alleged that Maggie had been used as a decoy and go-between for her mother’s prostitution, and frequently sent to pubs for whiskey and beer. As a result Maggie had been under police surveillance for the previous twelve months. The courts took decisive action after Maggie was found sleeping naked, with her mother and a man on the bed which was on the floor of their home. On 28th January 1901 at Barry Police Court, South Wales, seven year old Maggie was placed by a Magistrate’s Order into the custody of Dr Barnardo until she was sixteen, and by the end of the month she had been admitted to the Home.

Yet despite her mother’s demonised status, Maggie is the only one of the girls in this chapter to have received a letter from her mother, or any family member. Her mother also applied to have her restored to her own custody, which seems to contradict the admission report that Sally reportedly had told a constable and also the School Attendance Officer that she “wanted rid of the child” by placing her in a home until she was about fourteen years old. The implication being that Sally could not be bothered to look after her daughter, rather than believing that she may have thought a home could provide, temporarily, a better environment for Maggie while she attempted to stabilise her own financial and social situation. It is not clear if Maggie left Barnardo’s before she was sixteen, or if she went home, but she also found it difficult to keep herself out of the poverty trap. In 1923 her two sons and their sister were admitted to Barnardo’s.

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145 BLU D239/D/2/2a/104 Précis Book 17
146 B Girls’ Histories 1880-1901, no 2-863
147 BLU D239/D/2/2a/104 Précis Book 17
148 B Girls’ Histories 1880-1901, no 2-863
149 BLU D239/D/2/2a/104 Précis Book 17
Sara and Mary Richmond

woolly, a. (n)
A. adj. 2. a. Of the nature, texture, or appearance of wool; resembling wool; wool-like
1801 SHAW Gen. Zool. II. 91 Its fur...is of a woolly nature
1840 R H DANA Bef. the Mast iii. 31 Coarse black hair, but not wooly, like the negroes.
3 b Having hair resembling wool: applied esp. (depreciatingly) to Blacks of African origin or descent (=woolly-haired or -headed).
1512 Mrs BARBAULD 1811, 166 Street, where the turnban'd Moslem, bearded Jew, And woolly Afric, met the brown Hindu.
woolly-head. A person with woolly hair, esp. (disparagingly), a Black, a Negro; hence, a nickname for an abolitionist in America.
1859 BARTLETT Dict. Amer. (ed.2), Woolly-heads, a term applied in the first place to negroes, and then to anti-slavery politicians.
1884 19ᵗʰ Cent. June 993 Our friends the 'woolly heads' [sc. Arabs] are peeping at us from amongst the bushes.

Sara and Mary arrived at Barnardo’s in July 1901 (see figure 4.11). Aged eleven and nine respectively, with “coloured”[151] complexions and “woolly” hair, the “quadroon” sisters came from the Female Orphan Asylum, Myrtle Street, Liverpool.[152] It was the matron at that institution who had made the application for the “half-caste orphans”. [153]

Theirs’ had been a stable home until the death of their parents. Their father, Thomas Richmond, was from Sierra Leone and as a young man had joined the Royal Navy. Later in his career he was transferred to the Coastguard service and was stationed for a number of years at Blundell

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[150] OED
[151] BLU 0239/D/2/2a/104 Précis Book 17
Sands. Their mother, a Cambridgeshire woman, died of scarlet fever in September 1892. Their father remarried and it was in the care of his second wife that he left his children when he died of a haemorrhage in October 1897. It does not seem that their stepmother cared for them at all after his death. She soon placed them in an orphanage, and left the area to marry a painter who lived in Crewe. In 1901 Sara was of the age to be transferred from the infant orphanage to the female adult asylum. However Sara suffered from eczema, and it was on this basis that the medical officer of the women's asylum refused to accept her. This meant Sara had to be found another home.

The asylum's matron applied to Barnardo's on behalf of both sisters, with the hope that they would not be parted. The girls' elder siblings remained in the Liverpool area earning their own keep. Their brother, aged fourteen, was an apprentice, although it is not clear in what trade, in Liverpool. Both their sisters, aged eighteen and sixteen, who were said to "bear excellent characters", worked as general servants in West Kirby. Their step-brothers and sisters continued to live with their mother who settled in Crewe. Both girls were considered intelligent and well behaved and like their sisters went on to take positions as domestic servants; Sara was employed in a position in Wallington in 1906, and Mary left in 1907 to join a house in Tyenbury. Again it was difficult for them to break out of the cycle of poverty and in 1921 Mary applied for her son to be cared for by Barnardo's.

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\(^{154}\) B Girls' Histories 1880-1901, nos., 25 530, 25 531
\(^{155}\) BLU D239/D/2/2a/104 Précis Book 17
\(^{156}\) B Girls' Histories 1880-1901, nos., 25 530, 25 531
\(^{157}\) B Girls' Histories 1880-1901, nos., 25 530, 25 531
\(^{158}\) BLU D239/D/2/2a/104 Précis Book 17
\(^{159}\) BLU D239/D/2/2a/104 Précis Book 17
\(^{160}\) B Girls' Histories 1880-1901, nos., 25 530, 25 531
\(^{161}\) B Girls' Location Book (A)
\(^{162}\) BLU D239/D/2/2a/104 Précis Book 17
4.12 Reflections on black histories in Barnardo’s

These case studies reflect a little of black women’s history, but they are not a reflection of the whole picture even within Barnardo’s. There may have been other girls who applied for entrance to the home but were rejected. There are still others whose records are lost, for some girls who had portrait photographs in the archives do not have records in the written archives. The stories that can be retold are spread across space and time and reveal very different experiences of life in the Victorian underclass, yet they all contain common themes.

The most obvious theme is the racialisation of the girls’ identity, and Barnardo’s endeavour to define the racial make-up of the black girls in their care. Within the institution a hotch-potch of imperial jargon contributed to the girl’s racial identifications. The earliest black family in the archive, the Williams children, are not given a racial classification as those who followed them were, but this does not mean that their colour did not matter, and there was certainly an awareness of their ethnicity. This is reflected in the photographic images, and the manipulation of their ethnicity and that of their parents in the public sphere.

Jane Jefferson was initially described as a half-caste girl, although we later learn that her black ancestry came from her African grandfather and her mixed-race father. Nancy, Florence and Elizabeth, although far more likely to be ‘half-caste’ than Jane, were initially described as octoroons. It was important for Benson and Barnardo’s to reduce the girls’ black blood by as much as possible. This is because it was the apparent ‘whiteness’ or lack of ‘blackness’ in the girls’ skin colour that is given as the primary motivation for ‘saving’ them from their poor black families and the ‘negro gutter-children’ with whom they had been ‘herded’ in Freetown. Helen was described as having a Negress’ complexion and being ‘half-caste’. Knowing the girls’ ‘ethnic family’ backgrounds, these ‘racial’ definitions must have been predominantly produced from the colour of the girls’ skin.

We should also remember that Barnardo’s was a part of the large philanthropic movement to improve the lives of the deserving poor, and it is this that drove the organization’s vast structure. The importance of a sense of respectability increasingly embodied the concerns and aspirations of self-respect and self-representation during
the Victorian era. From their earliest moments in the home the girls were indoctrinated with this belief of respectability. The public versions of their lives were sanitised and yet also exaggerated. The girls and their mothers were presented as victims of circumstance. In the public sphere and the private archives, the mothers and children who receive sympathy are presented as women who are victims of deception, desertion, seduction and sometimes the colour of their skin.

It is not easy to tell from the archives if race affected the girls during their everyday life in the homes, but there is perhaps a small hint in the images. There are two images of the Williams sisters aside from their appearance under the jute sacks. They appear on their admission records and both are half-body portraits. They stand looking at the photographer with their arms folded across their naked chests. Out of all the admission photographs I have looked through, they are the only girls to have been photographed in this manner. In their brother’s ‘before’ photograph taken in 1875, John wears the ragged clothes of a poor street child with his long curly hair hanging round his face. Although it is repeatedly claimed that John and his sisters were naked under the sacks, he is not photographed naked. The ‘after’ photograph of John shows him sitting on a chair with a smart buttoned-up jacket. His hair has been cut short and the curls slicked down, removing its ‘woolly’ texture and imitating the style which the West considered clean and tidy.

Imperial, racialised and gendered powers were also operating in determining the fates of the women and children who were involved with Barnardo’s. These power relationships are explicit in the case of the girls removed from their families in Sierra Leone. Why and how did Ralph Benson come into contact with poor and uneducated black girls? What were his motives? We do not know what the true circumstances of the girls’ lives in Africa were, but the shock of being removed from their families, the journey to England, and the final destination of a children’s home in east London must have been extreme. That a man who appears, and presents himself to be wholly unconnected with their families could be considered an appropriate guardian with such power over their lives is extraordinary. That it was felt that the lightness of the girls’ skin could be reason enough to move them across continents is even more so. It not only reveals the arrogance of imperial discourse, but also hints at the longstanding philosophy that the whiter you were the easier it was for you to be ‘saved’ by, or ‘absorbed’ into the supposedly superior European cultures.

Anna Davin, 1996
Asylum Seeking

There is no looking glass here and I don’t know what I am like now. I remember watching myself brush my hair and how my eyes looked back at me. The girl I saw was myself yet not quite myself. Long ago when I was a child and very lonely I tried to kiss her. But the glass was between us - hard, cold and misted over with my breath. Now they have taken everything away. What am I doing in this place and who am I?

Jean Rhys
Wide Sargasso Sea

At 1.30 on the 18th December 1891, Inspector Bartow, of Molyneux Street Police Station, Marylebone, filled out a form printed for the Metropolitan Police under the 1890 Lunacy Act. It was addressed to the Master of the St Marylebone Workhouse, on Northumberland Street. It stated that at 11pm on the 17th December 1891, one of Bartow’s Police Constables had found ‘A Woman Unknown’, wandering on John Street (now Cranfield Road), which lay adjacent to Molyneux Street. The ‘Woman Unknown’ had been ‘deemed to be a lunatic’. Consequently Bartow requested that the Woman be received, relieved and placed under ‘proper care and control’ at Marylebone Workhouse, under the provisions of the 1890 Lunacy Act, until further information about her identity could be discovered, and taken by the Police before a Justice. Two months later the ‘Woman Unknown’ was moved to Colney Hatch Asylum, where she would remain for almost a decade.

5.1 A brief history of London’s asylums

As many commentators have observed throughout the city’s history, London drives some of its citizens insane. We are able to gain some insight into the lives of the women in this chapter because they were, at some point and for some time in their

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1 LMA ST/M/BG/134/4
2 LMA ST/M/BG/134/4
3 See Peter Ackroyd, 2000, esp. pp618-23
lives, confined within the walls of a lunatic asylum. Foucault warned that these symbolic women could easily become nightmarish silhouettes, but like all the other women we will encounter, they should not be seen as only embodied within the institutions in which the archives locate them. As Roy Porter has explained, medical events, such as entry into an asylum, were complex social events that involved families and communities, as well as the sufferers and their physicians. So although the voices of the insane are incredibly difficult to hear, we must remember that they were also heard outside the walls of the institutions where we first encounter them.

Alongside the institutions of social conscience which developed throughout the nineteenth century, the number of people confined in asylums increased dramatically from around 5000 in 1800 to almost 100,000 in 1900. Between 1854 and 1884 a quarter of paupers certified as insane were inmates of workhouses, and between 1873 and 1898 there were a third more lunatic women than men. By the mid-nineteenth century the rate of insanity in London had trebled. The increases were in a large part due to the whole new classes of insanity introduced throughout the century, that included alcoholics, sex maniacs, paralytics and the criminally insane. To many Victorians the new categories were seen to be the result of scientific advances that showed people for what they really were, highlighting diseases that had previously been unrecognised.

In the Commissioners of Lunacy Annual Report for 1861, the commissioners wrote that although the developing system of observation and inquiry was still imperfect, it had led to the detection and classification of people as insane, people who had formerly been considered ‘ordinary’ paupers.

The relationship between ‘the asylum’ and ‘the public’ also changed throughout the century. In its earlier years the asylum was a place of public spectacle. On Sundays people would stand outside hospitals conversing with the patients. St Mary of Bethlehem in Liverpool Street, had been a hospital since 1247. It treated its first insane patients in the early 14th century, and became synonymous, both as ‘Bethlem Hospital’ and ‘Bedlam’, with the insane. The hospital remained at the site on Liverpool Street.

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4 Michel Foucault, 2001
5 Roy Porter, 1985
6 Roy Porter, 1999
7 Felix Driver, 1993
8 Vieda Skultans, 1979
9 Peter Ackroyd, 2000
10 Roy Porter, 1999
11 Andrew Scull, 1979
12 Andrew Scull, 1979
13 Lenord Smith, 1999
until 1676 when it moved to a new building at Moorfield, the first custom built hospital for the insane in Britain. During the mid eighteenth century it was to become one of the British asylums that actively encouraged the association and the sense of spectacle that surrounded asylums, as it displayed its patients for financial gain. The initial price of admission was one penny, and for this the visitors could walk along the corridors in each floor of the hospital's galleries and view the patients in their cells, an iron gate placed in the middle of the wards separated the male and female patients. One report to the House of Commons written in 1815 claimed that Bethlehem hospital attracted 96,000 visitors a year.

From the beginning of the nineteenth century reformers attempted to have changes to the asylum system implemented. A parliamentary committee was established to investigate the experiences of the insane and the asylum system in 1807, but it was short lived. It was followed by a far more rigorous attempt by the committee that sat 1815-16. It was this committee's conclusion that the neglect and maltreatment of lunatics was endemic in all the various types of institutions in the asylum system. They called for the introduction of national public asylum institutions that would at least care for all pauper lunatics, as well as a vigorous system of inspection that would also operate on a national scale. For various political reasons this bill was defeated, and it wasn't until 1827 with the creation of yet another committee that the issues resurfaced. This committee managed to get an act of some reform passed in 1828. Although far more diluted than its forerunner, unlike the previous bill its passage through the House of Lords was secured.

In 1842 the need for more public asylums and the importance of inspection was reiterated, and eventually a substantial overhaul of the system came in the form of the 1845 Lunatic Asylums Act. As part of this, every county and borough in the country had a statutory obligation to provide adequate asylum accommodation for its pauper lunatic populations. The new system of asylums was to be completed, at public cost, within three years of the passing of the act. There was some initial resistance, but by the end of 1847, 36 out of 52 boroughs and counties had complied with the legislation.

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14 Patricia Allderidge, 1997, px
15 Peter Ackroyd, 2000
16 Michel Foucault, 2001
17 Andrew Scull, 1979
18 Andrew Scull, 1979
19 Andrew Scull, 1979
Although, contrary to the spirit of the act, a significant proportion of pauper lunatics continued to be housed in workhouses.\textsuperscript{20}

These facts highlight some of the material aspects of the workhouse system. They form an important part of geographical research that has come to be known as ‘institutional geography’. In this instance, and others throughout this thesis, I am using what has been identified as a ‘traditional’ understanding of an institution, by looking at built environments that sought to control, treat, and produce particular bodies.\textsuperscript{21} Within geography, the deconstruction of these spaces in this sense, has mainly occurred in two ways. Firstly, through the investigation of the ‘geography of institutions’, that is examining the institutions as containers, and through examining a physical presence of ‘difference’, perhaps because of illness, deviance or poverty.\textsuperscript{22}

The second has been concerned with the geography inside institutions, deconstructing the internal spatial arrangements of such places, and interrogating their meanings and influence on society.\textsuperscript{23} There has been very little on the biographies of the people who actually lived in these spaces as patients, prisoners or paupers. This chapter is not about relations of power and discipline, or difference in the ‘traditional’ sense. It is instead an attempt to rediscover some of the biographies of women who found themselves within these geographies; it is an attempt to focus on the lives and geographies of the patients, rather than the geographies of the institutions.

The four women in this chapter were for at least some part of their lives resident in London. Even if the city did not drive them mad, they were labelled ‘insane’ and treated for their ‘disorders’ in the city’s asylums. The voices of the ‘insane’, black or white, are incredibly difficult to retrieve.\textsuperscript{24} This is perhaps not surprising. In fact, it is perhaps inevitable that the choices and desires of the insane should be obscured in medical and other records, since it was because of their inability to recognise and comply with the rules, both of their local communities and society at large, that they found themselves segregated in the first place.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{20} Joseph Melling and Robert Turner, 1999
\textsuperscript{21} Chris Philo and Hester Parr, 2000
\textsuperscript{22} Chris Philo and Hester Parr, 2000
\textsuperscript{23} Chris Philo and Hester Parr, 2000
\textsuperscript{24} Chris Philo and Hester Parr, 2000
\textsuperscript{25} Chris Philo and Hester Parr, 2000
5.2 The racialisation of madness

Finding the voices of the insane is difficult, locating and recreating a biographical presence of black women in these institutions is even harder. It highlights the differences that existed in the catalogued and lived experiences of race, between Britain and its colonies. In 1891 and 1894, two new asylums were established in South Africa. Both had exclusionary admittance practices based on colour. This was also the case in colonial India. In nineteenth-century India, European and India patients were generally confined in separate institutions, in the few instances when they were confined together, segregation provided the Europeans with better living conditions. British asylums practised an exclusionary admittance procedure, but like Barnardo's this was based on economics rather than colour, (although of course, the two were, and still are closely tied).

There was certainly an awareness of religious identities in public asylums. For example the City of London lunatic asylum kept a list of its Jewish and non-conformist patients. There seem to be no such lists based on colour in any British institutions in the British Isles. Moreover, two of the black women we encounter in Colney Hatch Asylum, Caroline Maisley and Mary Matthews, have no reference made to their colour or 'ethnicity' anywhere in the records that are available to us. If it weren't for the photographs of patients made by Colney Hatch asylum during the 1890s, their colour would have remained invisible.

There is no indication in any of the women's available records that their colour was thought to influence the state of their madness. Indeed, as stated above, in the cases of two of the women their colour is not noted at all. Race and insanity had been connected in the past, and the impact of the former on the latter was still being debated by the late Victorians. The United States 1840 census had seemed to show a higher rate of insanity among free blacks than among slaves and it was concluded that freedom drove black people insane. The results of the census were quickly incorporated into racialised discourse that claimed that black people were uniquely suited to servitude. It eventually became clear that the statistics had been falsified: black people had been

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25 Joseph Melling and Robert Turner, 1999
26 Sally Swartz, 1999
27 Sally Swartz, 1999
28 Richard Keller, 2001
29 Melissa Nobles, 2000
recorded as insane in towns where no black people lived. However, this did not stop the then Secretary of State, John Calhoun, from presenting the data as evidence in support of the servitude of black people to the British Foreign Secretary who had been voicing concerns about slavery in the recently annexed state of Texas.31

For some nineteenth-century commentators the racialisation of madness was embedded in debates on the relative growth of insanity and civilization. This was a thesis that emphasised the public's divided geographical imagination between the urban (and its civilized and modern inhabitants), and the rural (with its traditional and sometimes primitive and barbarous inhabitants), both in Britain and throughout the world. According to Henry Maudsley, Victorian travellers were in agreement that insanity was a disease that they seldom came across in rural "barbarous peoples".32

Maudsley was well known as a medical psychologist throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century, and he discussed the rates of insanity among 'savages' in The Pathology of Mind, first published in 1867. It was widely admired and extensively translated, and enlarged in later editions.33 In it he quoted Cameroon who in his Journey across Africa, had proclaimed that he had met only one man who suffered from the disorders of madness.

In his own book Maudsley argued that this was no proof that insanity did not occur in Africa.34 He maintained that among 'savages', the weak in mind and body, or the sick and the helpless were not cared for as they would be among 'civilised' nations. Instead they were killed, or cast out in to 'the bush' and left to perish. As a result of this system of purging, insanity was not passed on to future generations. Furthermore he believed that savages did not poison their brains with drink, although Maudsley thought it unlikely that alcohol, regardless of the quantity involved, would produce "mental derangements" in the savage because of his 'undeveloped' brain. Most importantly 'the savage' had few wants compared to those of the civilized citizen. Unlike a member of the modern world, a 'savage' was free from the 'artificial passions' and desires that came with the advances of modernity.35
These may have been some of the ideas and incidents that George Savage considered when he wrote his book *Insanity and Allied Neuroses: Practical and Clinical*, first published in 1884. Savage was a physician and superintendent at Bethlem Royal Hospital, a lecturer in mental diseases at Guy's Hospital, and one of the editors of *The Journal of Mental Science*. He argued that there was a lack of evidence to support arguments that the "peculiarities of race alone are sufficient to cause marked differences in the insanities."[^6] Although he conceded that the amount of excitement or excess that might 'disturb' an Englishman would probably have little effect on an Italian or Spaniard, he insisted that statistics clearly showed that insanity was as likely to occur at least as frequently among the 'slow' as the 'fast' living.[^7]

However, Savage did racialise the experiences of those who lived in the Scottish Highlands and rural Ireland and Wales. Among these populations a 'general paralysis' of insanity was almost unknown, but as soon as the same people migrated to the cities this immunity seemed to leave them. It was an immunity similar to this that was said to be "enjoyed by the negroes in slavery."[^8] Savage was unsure of the causes of insanity during slavery (the abolition of slavery in the United States occurred in 1863), but he claimed he had it on good authority that since the abolition of slavery, insanity existed "not only among negroes, but among negresses also."[^9]

### 5.3 Inside the asylum

The Prince Consort laid the first stone of Colney Hatch Asylum, later to become St Friern Hospital, in May 1849 at Friern Barnet. An Italian style structure with stone decorations, it admitted its first patients in July 1851, as the second pauper lunatic asylum for the County of Middlesex, built to cope with the overflows of the pauper insane.[^10] The first, now St Bernard's Hospital, had opened in Hanwell in 1831. When Colney Hatch opened in 1851 it was considered to be the most modern in Europe. Erected at a cost of around £400 000 it was intended to hold up to 2000 patients. The principle north-facing front was nearly 200 feet long, flanked on either side by a

[^6]: George Savage, 1886, p19
[^7]: George Savage, 1886
[^8]: George Savage, 1886, p20
[^9]: George Savage, 1886, p20
[^10]: See Peter Ackroyd, 2000, pp618-23
ventilating tower. In the centre was a chapel with an oblong chamber that could hold 600 people. The land also contained residences for the officers, farm buildings, a laundry, gas and water works, a workshop, yards and lodges. Including the kitchen garden and burial ground the establishment’s land stretched to about 119 acres.41

However, by the 1860s the asylum was falling out of favour. According to the Commissioners in Lunacy’s 16th Annual Report, by 1862 several of the wards in the old blocks were dark and gloomy and the wards were mostly ‘comfortless’; and on the wards there was no comfortable or ordinary domestic furniture to be found.42 For Mortimer Granville, who wrote about the asylum in the 1870s, Colney Hatch was a “colossal mistake”: it combined and illustrated more faults in construction and errors of arrangement “than might have been supposed possible in a single effort of bewildered or misdirected ingenuity [...] the wards are long, narrow, gloomy and comfortless.”43 On the creation of the County of London in 1889 Colney Hatch Asylum was transferred from the control of the Middlesex, to the London County Council. Although based in New Southgate it remained geographically within the administrative county of Middlesex.44 Following the provisions of the 1888 Local Government Act, Colney Hatch became exclusively dedicated to the treatment of pauper lunatics who were charged to parishes in the county of London.

Three out of four of the women whose cases are described below, were patients in this hospital. They were identified through the albums of the photographs taken of female patients in the hospital between 1893 and 1920.45 These photographs became the starting point for building biographies of these women. The images taken of the patients included their surnames and initials, and in some circumstances the date they were admitted, and their admission number. With this information it was possible to look for the women’s medical records in the hospital’s case books for female patients. These in turn were a source of further information and a tool for tracing an historical geography, even if a somewhat fragmented one, of these women’s lives.

41 http://www.workhouses.co.uk/asylums3.htm
42 Andrew Scull, 1979
43 Mortimer Granville, for the Lancet, 1877, quoted in Andrew Scull, 1979, p195
44 LMA H12/CH (Introduction)
45 LMA H12/CH/B/18/1-4
5.4 The case of Susan Hayes

It transpired that the ‘Woman Unknown’, found by one of Bartow’s police constables on 18th December 1891, was a black woman called Susan Hayes, a 29 year old Roman Catholic widow, who lived in Marylebone (see figure 5.1). The name and address of any relatives was not known, and there is no mention of her having any relations in any of her papers, nor of anyone ever visiting or enquiring about her. The day after she had been picked up by Bartow’s police constable she was recorded in the list of ‘Lunatics Admitted into Workhouse’ at Marylebone.\(^6\) The register notes that she was transferred to Hoxton House on 23rd December 1891.\(^7\)

Although there was a section in the register for ‘remarks’ none were made about her colour. In fact her notes are identical to Maria Back who was also of ‘unsound mind’, transferred to Hoxton House on the same day.\(^8\)

Under the Lunacy Acts of 1890 and 1891, very particular meanings were attached to phrases such as ‘wandering’, and these had specific repercussions for the people involved.\(^9\) To be found ‘wandering at large’, like Susan, was to be “wandering aimlessly without any definite ideas to destination.”\(^10\) When a person, pauper or not, was found ‘wandering at large’ within the district or parish of a constable, and, as in Susan’s case, was deemed a lunatic, that

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\(^{6}\) LMA ST/M/BG/141/02
\(^{7}\) LMA ST/M/BG/141/02
\(^{8}\) LMA ST/M/BG/141/02
\(^{9}\) A Wood Renton, 1897
\(^{10}\) A Wood Renton, 1897
person had to be taken before a Justice of the Peace immediately. A Justice could then, with the collaboration and certification of a Medical Officer, commit the person to an institution.\textsuperscript{51} This procedure was altered in emergencies when a constable had the summary power to detain lunatics who were paupers or deemed to be wandering at large within their district or parish. These powers allowed the police authorities to avoid notifying the Justice immediately, and instead send them to a workhouse. Here they could be held for up to three days, during which time proceedings to obtain a Summary Reception Order had to be undertaken.\textsuperscript{52}

On the 21\textsuperscript{st} December 1891 an 'Order of the Relieving Officer for the Reception of a Lunatic into a Workhouse' was filled out for Susan Hayes.\textsuperscript{53} It stated that Susan Hayes of 6 Tucker Place, (perhaps 5, the number has been changed, it seems, from 5 to 6), was not under proper care or control, nor was she a pauper. But she had been deemed a lunatic, furthermore the relieving officer was satisfied that it was necessary for Susan's welfare that she was placed 'under care and control'.\textsuperscript{54} The workhouse was thus required to receive Susan Hayes for three days, unless otherwise ordered. (see figure 5.2).

In Susan's admission papers to the workhouse one section was devoted to 'Facts specified in Medical Certificate upon which opinion of Insanity is founded'. This itself

\textsuperscript{51} Daniel Charnier, 1892, p23
\textsuperscript{52} Daniel Charnier, 1892, p24, 25
\textsuperscript{53} LMA ST/M/BG/134/04
\textsuperscript{54} LMA ST/M/BG/134/04
Asylum Seeking

was divided into two parts. The first was for 'Facts indicating Insanity observed by Medical Man'. He noted that during his examination Susan 'could not fix her attention', and that she did not know where she was or her name, and that she rambled incoherently and understood nothing. He also added that she had "delusions as to property and furniture." It is not clear how the authorities discovered who Susan was if she did not know herself - perhaps someone else identified her. She may have been well known within her local community, perhaps for being eccentric. One woman who did know her was Louisa Tucker, and her evidence was recorded on Susan's admission papers.

The second section on the form made room for 'Other facts indicating Insanity, communicated to him by others'. This is where the evidence given by Louisa Goodyer is noted. Mrs Louisa Goodyer of 5 Tucker Place, Marylebone, a widow and a charwoman, stated that Susan had declared that she would "cut the throats of all in the house", and that she also got "very excited" and would alternately laugh and cry. Thus Mrs Goodyer became complicit in this system of medical and community consultation. There were no details about how Mrs Goodyer knew Susan, or how she become such an important part of her life.

According to the census of April 1891 two families occupied 5 Tucker Place. Joseph Jennings lived there with his wife and six children, as well as Louisa Goodyer who was the head of her household. She lived with her two daughters, her son and two grandchildren. Susan is not listed as living at 5 Tucker Place, or at any other number on that street. Neither is she listed as a patient at Hoxton House at this point, nor is she recorded as an inmate at Marylebone workhouse. In her medical records Susan's 'previous occupation' is given as a 'washerwoman' and this would have been similar work to that of most of the women who lived on Tucker Street. Most of the men were general labourers, builders, and bricklayers although a gilder and a gardener were also living there - almost all the women on the street were char- or washer-women.

Susan’s form of disorder was described as 'chronic mania'. The attack that had struck her and led her through the doors to Colney Hatch onto Wards 27 and 28, had lasted five days. In his book Savage described the characteristics of various forms of insanity

55 LMA H12/CH/B/11/34
56 LMA H12/CH/B/11/34
57 FRO 1891 RG 12/103 140-3
58 FRO 1891 RG 12/103 140-3
using his patients at Bethlem as case studies. According to Savage a patient with a case of chronic mania would suffer from delusions, incoherence, violence, coarse language and express little interest in the outside world. However, Savage estimated that half of all the work done in county asylums throughout the country was done by patients who were classed as having chronic mania, implying that although these people were institutionalised they were still able.  

Susan was one of five women to be transferred to Colney Hatch from Hoxton House on 15th February 1892. Her admission records at Colney Hatch are the first to note her ‘racial’ make-up. Following the comment on her physical wellbeing comes the statement that Susan was mixed-race, embedded in a continuation of her physical description, rather than being recorded as a separate form of identification: “The patient is half negro and very stout”. The same doctor labelled her lazy because she refused to work and “only laughed”. Her refusal to work may have been Susan’s way of subverting treatment. Until the second half of the nineteenth century treatment in London asylums had relied upon mechanical restraints. Following an inquiry into these methods, a supposedly more sympathetic regime of treatment was introduced, this included giving patients jobs or occupations.

As we have seen, the doctor who initially examined Susan at Colney Hatch felt she could not concentrate, and that she did not know who or where she was, both in space and time. Furthermore she rambled incoherently, understood nothing, and had delusions relating to property and furniture. The next entry for her medical notes implies that she remained in much the same state, although she appears to have started to struggle with staff and become “violent”. By late February she had started to try and bite the nurses, perhaps another way of expressing her attempt to retain power over her body. By March this defensiveness was being labelled as “spitefulness”; in April she was considered to be “not so spiteful”, though it was noted that “she never works.”

In June her doctor recorded that her mental health had not improved, and that she could become very excitable. On the last day of November, the first of a series of

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59 George Savage, 1886
60 LMA H12/CH/B/11/34
61 LMA H12/CH/B/11/34
62 See Peter Ackroyd, 2000, pp618-23
63 LMA H12/CH/B/11/34
64 LMA H12/CH/B/11/34
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⁵⁹ George Savage, 1886
⁶⁰ LMA H12/CH/B/11/34
⁶¹ LMA H12/CH/B/11/34
⁶² See Peter Ackroyd, 2000, pp618-23
⁶³ LMA H12/CH/B/11/34
⁶⁴ LMA H12/CH/B/11/34
continuation orders was signed. ‘Reception Orders’, unless continued, expired; initially they remained in force for one year. If renewed the subsequent order was valid for two years, then three years and after that successive periods of five years. A continuance required a special report of the medical officer or attendant, as well as a certificate to show that the patient was still of ‘unsound mind’. The continuation order confined Susan to the asylum, regardless of the fact that the hospital had not managed to induce an improvement in Susan’s health. For this entry there was a reaffirmation of her illness as well as her ethnicity. The doctor’s final prognosis was that “this negress is excited incoherent and violent; unoccupied”.

The next entry in her medical notes was not made until February 25th 1893, at this point Susan was still considered to be “spiteful”, “incoherent” and “excitable”. It seems most likely that she was coming to be recognised as a long-term, poor, patient. In March 1893 she was adjudicated to the county, relieving the Marylebone Union from the cost of her care. By May she was somewhat “less spiteful” if still unoccupied, but she was in fair health; in August she was “noisy and spiteful”, but still in “fair” health. There are no other comments in her notes until 24th November, the date of Susan’s second continuation order. It was once more re-affirmed that she was suffering from ‘chronic mania’ and that as a result she was still excitable, incoherent and unoccupied, but also “violent”. Despite all this her health was considered ‘fair’. In the notes for this order, there is no mention of her ethnicity.

Similar reports to the continuation were made in January, May and July 1894, but a change seemed to occur in October. By now a resident at Colney Hatch asylum for two years, and perhaps having been a part of the asylum system for far longer, Susan began to become withdrawn. Her doctor noted that she had become very quiet, and that although she remained incoherent when speaking, her only reply to questions was a smile. The doctor also noted that she was “clean, eats and sleeps well” and was “in fair bodily health”. The next entry, not until four months later in January 1895, states that she was still quiet and unoccupied. These were the phrases that were used to

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65 LMA H12/CH/B/1/11
66 Daniel Charnier, 1892
67 LMA H12/CH/B/11/34
68 LMA H12/CH/B/11/34
69 LMA H12/CH/B/3/2; LMA ST/M/BG/152
70 LMA H12/CH/B/11/34
71 LMA H12/CH/B/11/34
72 LMA H12/CH/B/11/34; LMA H12/CH/B/1/11
73 LMA H12/CH/B/11/34
describe Susan again and again throughout 1895 and 1896. These also stretch across her third continuation of the reception order, which was signed on 14th December 1895.\footnote{LMA H/12/CH/B/1/11}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 30th</td>
<td>Still the same mentally &amp; physically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 28th</td>
<td>Remains quiet, unoccupied, clean, good appetite, in fair health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 28th</td>
<td>Mentally quiet and incoherent, clean, unoccupied, eats and sleeps well, in fair health.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 28th</td>
<td>Has not had any attacks of Mania lately, is quiet, though incoherent, unoccupied, in fair physical health.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>Mentally &amp; physically the same.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 28th</td>
<td>[M]uch the same quiet &amp; incoherent, clean, good appetite, in fair health.\footnote{LMA H12/CH/B/11/34}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 25th</td>
<td>[M]uch the same quiet &amp; incoherent, clean, good appetite, in fair health.\footnote{LMAH12/CH/B/11/34}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These six entries are all that reflect more than a year of Susan’s health in the asylum. It was not until September 1896 that the comments began to vary. Susan was then described as being in a ‘very chronic state’ although she was still quiet, and at times she was again being ‘spiteful’. By December her spitefulness was also being directed at other patients, although she mostly remained quiet. In March 1897, now a patient at the hospital for five years, her doctor noted that she was in the same mental state and that she remained unoccupied. In June, her notes read that Susan was still considered to be “spiteful”, and that she was “untidy, demented and incoherent”; whereas before she had smiled in response to questions, Susan now smiled for no apparent reason and she remained “unoccupied”.\footnote{LMA H12/CH/B/11/34} Four months later her doctor felt that there was “no change of any kind to note”.\footnote{LMA H12/CH/B/11/34}

By January 1898 the experience of the asylum was, rather than helping her, having a seriously detrimental effect on Susan’s health. Seven years into her ‘treatment’ in Colney Hatch Susan was described as “depressed, deluded and incoherent”.\footnote{LMA H12/CH/B/11/34} She was emotionally “troubled” with aural hallucinations.\footnote{LMA H12/CH/B/11/34} Hallucinations of hearing were the most common form of hallucination, “voices” being the form most frequently

\footnote{LMA H/12/CH/B/1/11}
\footnote{LMA H12/CH/B/11/34}
\footnote{LMA H12/CH/B/11/34}
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Asylum Seeking

encountered. As well as these new problems, Susan remained ‘spiteful’. Counter to this she had “clean habits” and was in fair bodily health, although she remained “unemployed”. In April, when the next entry was made there had been no mental or physical improvement, but by July it seems that she had become further detached from the world. She was dull and apathetic, and when Susan was spoken to she no longer smiled, but simply looked about and then burst out laughing. She still suffered from hallucinations or the voices and noises she heard in her head, and was impulsive and “inclined to violence”. By October of that year, there had been no improvements in her health.

Savage compared those suffering from chronic mania to a mountain lake, on which a very small storm could produce a large amount of disturbance. He argued that most should remain within the asylum system, as they were liable to become violent without warning. He also maintained that those suffering from chronic mania could remain “as useful drudges” for years, but then suffer from a fresh attack of acute insanity that would leave them in a weaker state of mind and more liable to “recurrences of excitement”. It was perhaps a similar medical view that kept Susan inside Colney Hatch for so long. There are no indications as to the kind of support that might have been available to a long-term patient such as Susan, or if she was treated in this way because of her colour. There is no discussion in her notes of the possible causes for the decline in her health, or the fact that the asylum was obviously failing to make her into a better body. It was Susan that was seen to be failing, rather than the asylum’s treatment or the system of asylums itself.

Susan was eventually discharged from Colney Hatch asylum in 1901. She and a fellow patient Elizabeth Addicott were transferred to Warwick County Asylum on 21st February 1901, otherwise known as Hatton Lunatic Asylum, which was Warwickshire’s county lunatic asylum, at Hatton near Warwick. In 1892, Kelly’s Directory described it as a well designed building of brick, standing in 72 acres of land laid out in pleasure grounds, and the rest as meadow and arable land; the institution was available for nearly 700 patients, 200 of whom, chiefly ‘chronic lunatics’ and

80 George Savage, 1886
81 LMA H12/CH/B/11/34
82 LMA H12/CH/B/11/34
83 George Savage, 1886, p227
84 George Savage, 1886, p227

136
'idiots' occupied a separate building, erected in 1871-72. In 1891, it was home to 276 male and 404 female inmates, and 81 attendants and servants. Even this far away from Marylebone, both in time and space, Louisa Goodyear's statement about Susan still retained importance, and was paraphrased in Warwick County's Asylum notes, which also reaffirmed that Susan was a "fat negress" with brown eyes and dark, curly hair.

On the 20th December 1901, Susan was moved again to Fisherton House, Salisbury. The Fisherton House Asylum was reported to stand in beautiful wooded grounds, containing a cricket field, lawn tennis courts and croquet courts. Susan was a patient here for only a short period of time, and her notes at Warwickshire begin again on January 2nd 1902. They fail to explain why she returned, perhaps it had been a Christmas and New Year holiday. The break did not seem to have made a great difference to Susan, she remained unoccupied, often talked to herself, and continued to be irrational and incoherent. She was lucid enough for her doctor to report on February 15th that, "she drops down dead at times. Mutters to herself and gives herself a variety of names." Her final medical examination at Warwickshire was entered on March 12th 1902, and it noted "no mental or bodily change."

A month later on April 17th Susan was discharged from Warwick once again. She was moved south to Horton Hospital in Epsom. She was admitted to Horton on 14th April 1902, aged 40. The first case books for Horton do not survive, so Susan's clinical case notes are lost. The surviving admission register shows that 'Continuation Reception Orders' were signed on 8th December 1903, 1st December 1908, and 28th November 1913.

85 LMA PH/MENT/4/28; H12/CH/B/11/80. It is not clear why Susan was moved. A possibility, which was quite common, is that Middlesex asylums were often full, and unions chose to send patients to asylums where there were vacancies to free up beds. Elaine Murphy, June 2001, personal correspondence.
86 http://www.workhouses.co.uk/asylums3.htm
87 http://www.workhouses.co.uk/asylums3.htm
88 WRO HA 11215/89-90
89 LMA PH/MENT/4/28
90 http://www.workhouses.co.uk/asylums3.htm
91 WRO HA 1125/89-90
92 WSRO J7/190/65
93 WRO HA 1125/89-90
94 LMA H22/HT/B/08/001
95 LMA H22/HT/B/08/001
Susan died aged 52 in Horton Asylum, on 18th January, 1914. The form of mental disorder she was suffering at her death was secondary dementia, the cause of her death heart failure. When Rachel Lichtenstein found David Rodinsky’s grave, it was much as she had expected. “There was no headstone, just a shallow gravel plot with a broken concrete border and a small tin plaque that read David Rodinsky, March 5th 1969.” Not even that is left for Susan.” A chance encounter with a Policeman a street away from her home led to the next 23 years of her life being spent in the asylum system in which she died. Susan’s story is a sad tale, and although it does not reveal much about the geographies of ethnicity, or her experiences of life as a black woman in an asylum, her presence here means she is not entirely forgotten.

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96 ONS DXZ 934752
97 H22/HT/3/06/004
98 Rachel Lichtenstien and Iain Sinclair, 2000, p315
99 It seems likely that Susan was buried in Horton Estate Cemetery, although a search of the register of graves for Horton did not reveal an entry for her, and the burial registers for the estate are missing for the dates when Susan died.
5.5 The case of Caroline Maisley

Unless, like Susan, a person was found ‘wandering at large’, or was truly outrageous in their public behaviour, they were unlikely to draw the attention of the police, or enter the asylum system because of police intervention. It was far more likely that consultation between relatives, neighbours, Poor Law authorities and medical professionals would lead to a person’s admittance. However, these networks might not have operated beyond a very local scale, both in space and time. It would seem that these were the processes which operated in the case of the only other two black women who appeared in the Colney Hatch photograph album, Caroline Maisley and her sister Mary Matthews.

Caroline Eliza Maisley (see figure 5.3) was admitted to Colney Hatch on 1st November 1898, although an initial reception order was given on 10th October.

When she arrived she was 27 years old, and married to a dock labourer. Her previous address was given as the Stepney Union workhouse, and her stay was chargeable to Poplar Union. Her disorder was classed as ‘Mania’ and her attack, which was officially the first one she had experienced, had lasted a week. As a result she had initially been admitted to the infirmary at Stepney Workhouse on

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Figure 5.3
Caroline Maisley 1898
LMA H12/CH/B18/1 1893 - 1899 p216, c/o LMA

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100 Joseph Melling and Robert Turner, 1999
101 LMA H12/CH/B18/1
102 LMA H12/CH/B/01/13
103 LMA H12/CH/B/01/13
October 18th 1898.\textsuperscript{104} Her bodily condition was considered "good" on admission, despite the fact that she had several bruises, and there is no discussion as to how she might have come by them.\textsuperscript{105} She had been detained in the workhouse with a 14 day order, but on this order no medical reasons were given for her detention.\textsuperscript{106} On the fourteenth day she was transferred to Colney Hatch Asylum, thirteen days before her sister Mary Matthews.

Although case papers are recorded in the register by admission date, there are no papers for Caroline, so her registration form contains all the details we have about her stay in the hospital. We do not know which symptoms Caroline suffered from, or how she was treated for them, or how she felt about that treatment. What the records do tell us is that, unlike Susan, Caroline "recovered", and left the hospital on the 1st September 1899.\textsuperscript{107}
5.6 The case of Mary Matthews

Mary Ann Cecilia Matthews (see figure 5.4) found herself admitted to Colney Hatch Asylum on 14th November 1898. Her ‘Order of Reception for a Pauper Lunatic’ under the 1890 Lunacy Act was signed on 12th November 1898.108 She was then a pauper in receipt of Relief and the expenses she incurred were also chargeable to Poplar Union. Mary was 32 and had ‘no occupation’.109 She also had a relative who had been ‘afflicted with insanity’, her sister Caroline Maisley, who by this time was already in the Asylum.110 In the Colney Hatch records her previous address is given as 36 Broomfield Street, Bromley-by-Bow, and this is also the address given for her husband James Alexander Matthews.111

Broomfield Street was mapped in 1898-99 as part of Booth’s Descriptive Maps of London Poverty.112 The street was coloured ‘light blue’, an improvement from its original definition as a ‘dark blue’ area. This change from dark to light blue indicates that Mary and her husband lived in an area that had once been considered to house the very poor, where labouring men could not expect to get more than three days work a week. By 1898 it was an area considered to be the home of those who lived off ‘intermittent earnings’, of between 18s and 21s per week. These people were poor, but they were seen as the lower class of the ‘honest poor’, the victims of competition and of the recurrent depressions of trade. Those in work were mostly employed as labourers, poorer artisans and street sellers. However, Mary’s order states that at the time of her

108 LMA PO BG1/62/10
109 LMA PO BG1/62/10
110 LMA PO BG1/62/10
111 H12/CH/B/01/13
illness she was living at the Poplar Union Workhouse, although this was because she had been admitted to the workhouse infirmary, not that her family had fallen on hard times.\textsuperscript{113}

Dr John Lamont examined Mary on the 12\textsuperscript{th} November at the Poplar Union Workhouse. She may have been placed there on a seven or fourteen day order, but this is not clear. Lamont’s examination led him to the conclusion that Mary was ‘a person of unsound mind’ and this required that she be ‘taken in charge of and detained under care and treatment’.\textsuperscript{114} He formed his conclusions by observing Mary in the infirmary, although it is not clear from his evidence how long she had been a patient there, for he reports that he had frequently seen Mary walk around the ward aimlessly when, to Lamont, she appeared “lost in her mind.”\textsuperscript{115} He also reported that Mary experienced sensations that led her to believe she was falling through the ground, and that she appeared to be in low spirits. As part of his examination Lamont asked Mary if she heard voices. Mary replied that she did not hear “anything in particular now”, implying that she had done before, but then she “gave evasive answers to all questions.”\textsuperscript{116}

On Mary’s examination form there is also an “informant” who testified in her case. Jane Stamp, a lunatic attendant at the Poplar Union workhouse confirmed that Mary often appeared to be “wandering in her mind”, and that sometimes she was in very low spirits.\textsuperscript{117} The order for Mary’s reception at Colney Hatch was completed on the same day as her ‘certificate of medical practitioner’ was completed by Lamont.

In Colney Hatch it was decided that Mary was suffering from her first attack of ‘Chronic Melancholia’.\textsuperscript{118} This form of insanity, according to Savage, showed itself through the symptoms of weak mindedness and forms of chronic insanity that could include a variety of ‘mania’, such as active mania. This could involve the wringing of hands, pulling of hair and a monotonous dialogue from the patient describing their suffering. At the time of her admission Mary’s attack had lasted three weeks, although none of the above symptoms were used to describe her. She had been suicidal, cutting

\textsuperscript{117} http://booth.lse.ac.uk
\textsuperscript{113} LMA PO BG/162/10; LMA PO/BG/154/04
\textsuperscript{114} LMA PO/BG/154/04
\textsuperscript{115} LMA PO/BG/154/04
\textsuperscript{116} LMA PO/BG/154/04
\textsuperscript{117} LMA PO/BG/154/04
\textsuperscript{118} H12/CH/B/01/13
her throat in October, and she seemed to have been a threat to others (although at the time of her order the doctors felt that she no longer posed such a threat). As there are no records that locate her in the workhouse before, it seems most likely that her husband agreed, or sought to have her placed in the Poplar Union Infirmary at some point during the initial three weeks of her attack. Once her behaviour had been 'observed' by the medical staff she was deemed to be a serious enough case to be transferred to Colney Hatch, rather than remain at the workhouse (which did happen to some patients), or return home.

Savage believed that those suffering from chronic melancholia with suicidal tendencies deserved greater medical attention because of the "great social and general importance attached to suicide." In the case of suicide, Savage saw some indication of racial difference, with suicides occurring more frequently among those of an earlier age, within members of more "emotional races" (this is as likely to refer to the 'passionate' peoples living in the Mediterranean, as to the 'over emotional' Africans) than the English. Savage also had a gendered view of suicide. He believed that women attempted suicide by drowning or hanging themselves. It was a man who would attempt to "blow his brains out", or as in Mary's attempt, cut his throat. So she would not have fulfilled his expectations of a female case.

As with her sister, there are no case records of Mary's stay in the asylum. Consequently it is not clear how long her attack lasted once she was in the hospital, though she remained in the asylum for almost a year. She eventually 'recovered' and was discharged from the hospital on 29th October 1899. The power to discharge a pauper lunatic from a county asylum rested with the 'visitors' of the asylum, whose role was not dissimilar to that of a board of trustees. Committees of visitors were appointed by Justices to manage county and borough asylums. Any three of them, or any two with the advice of medical officers, could direct discharges. They had to give notice of their intention to release a pauper patient to the overseers of the parish from where they had settled or been sent. Some provision was also made for delivering a pauper patient to his or her relatives or friends once they had satisfied the visitors that the patient "would no longer be chargeable to any union, parish, or

119 LMA PO BG/162/10
120 George Savage, 1886, p188
121 George Savage, 1886
122 George Savage, 1886, p189
123 H12/CH/B/01/13
county, and shall be prevented from doing injury to himself and others." So it would seem that Mary returned to her home in Bromley, or at least into her husband’s care.

5.7 The case of Henrietta Cormack

Henrietta Cormack, a woman of a “dark swarthy complexion”, became a patient at Holloway Sanatorium, at Virginia Water, Egham, in February 1891. Unlike Colney Hatch, Holloway Sanatorium was a private institution, built on St Anne’s Heath, Virginia Water in Surrey. Henrietta was then a thirty two year old, married, Roman Catholic woman. In the admission records her previous address is given as 93 Cromwell Road, in the relatively prosperous area of Kensington. When the census was taken in April 1891 John Claude Cormack, aged forty and a registered GP born in Dublin, was staying with his business partner Robert Mois, also a GP, born in Edinburgh. Robert Mois, his wife and their two children lived at 93 Cromwell Road, Kensington. Also staying with them at the time was Mois’ brother-in-law, a director of the United Lankat Plantation Company. They all enjoyed the benefit of Mois’ two servants, one a cook and the other a domestic, both in their late twenties and both born in Scotland. Harrietta is not listed because she was at Holloway, through the census records for the asylum only her initials identify her; the entry confirms that she was thirty-two and married. She is listed as being a lunatic, and having no profession, her place of birth is recorded as Devizes.

The attack that took her to Holloway was not her first, and Holloway was not Henrietta’s first experience of an asylum. She had been treated for her initial attack about two years before when, between the 19th December 1889 and the 18th April 1890, she had been treated by Dr Wood, at The Priory, Roehampton. The Priory, like Hoxton House where Susan Hayes had been a patient, was a Metropolitan House, but unlike Hoxton House it was a private institution. The attack that resulted in Henrietta’s admittance to Holloway had begun about five months earlier, in September 1890, thought to be a relapse from her previous attack; one that was considered “hereditary”

124 George Savage, 1886
125 From the 13th Report of the Commissioners, 1859, quoted in George Savage, 1886, p511
126 WI WMS 5158 Case Book no 4
127 FRO 1891 RG12/150 p34
128 FRO RG12/1010 p17 folio 163
129 FRO RG12/1010 p17 folio 163
rather than “epileptic”.\textsuperscript{130} In her family history it is noted that her half-sister and niece were also ‘insane’, but no further details are given about them. There is nothing to indicate that Henrietta received treatment during the initial five months. She had been suicidal and became dangerous, throwing missiles and attempting to strangle those around her, and these are perhaps the reasons her family took her to be treated at Holloway.

Two doctors assessed her before her admission. On the 5\textsuperscript{th} February she was seen by G F Blanford who completed her first certificate from a medical practitioner in Holloway. He wrote that Henrietta admitted that “she does nothing and does not occupy herself in any way”\textsuperscript{131}; she rose late in the day and then lay on the sofa doing nothing, and she refused food “without reason”\textsuperscript{131}. Unlike Susan, Mary or Caroline, Henrietta also had a second opinion and a second certificate. This assessment was carried out the following day by J D Leeson. He confirmed Henrietta’s lack of “interest in anything” and that she seemed to know nothing even of her children.\textsuperscript{132} Leeson also noted that Henrietta had tried to strangle someone, although he did not discuss the circumstances, or include the testimony of any witnesses.

In her medical notes Henrietta was described as a woman of dark swarthy complexion. It is among these notes that one doctor considered her ethnicity adding “Creole” to her physical description, as well as noting her jet-black hair, dark eyes, thick lips, pale dusky complexion and vacant expression.\textsuperscript{133} The examination also included comments on Henrietta’s occasional refusal to eat any food, although it was noted that she appeared fairly well nourished and suffered from no signs of physical disease. The ‘mental assessment’ that followed concluded that she was in a stupor, maintaining a dull, listless, and stupid attitude. She would only give yes and no responses when questioned, and otherwise she remained silent, unoccupied, and she also refused to eat.

Henrietta’s refusal to eat cannot have been rectified, as on the 15\textsuperscript{th} February one of her doctors noted that the staff had been forced to feed her with a tube, four times a day. Aside from this imposed interaction she remained silent, taking no notice of any of her

\textsuperscript{130} WI WMS 5158 Case Book no 4
\textsuperscript{131} WI WMS 5158 Case Book no 4
\textsuperscript{132} WI WMS 5158 Case Book no 4. We do not know anything of her children either, as they are not mentioned again in her medical records, nor recorded as living with their father in the 1891 census, perhaps they were at boarding school.
surroundings. Her doctor noted that she seemed to be quite unconscious of them, spending her time gazing vacantly into space. When her next set of notes were taken on the 24th February she was still being force fed, although the staff were no longer using a tube. Overall the doctor felt that there was no real improvement to be noted in her mental state.  

By March Harrietta's doctors shifted tack, intensifying their treatment. On the 8th they reported that Henrietta had been treated using a system that included massages, electric shocks and forced feeding. As a result of this treatment her doctors decided there had been an improvement in her mental state, although she was still being force fed and remained in bed "motionless as a statue with one arm thrown back over her head." Ten days later although the electric shock treatment seems to have been stopped, she was being massaged twice a day for 20 minutes each time. She was also still being force fed and for the two days before the report was made, the staff had reverted back to feeding her through a tube. However, she had begun talking especially during and after "feeding." After her 'meals', she would ask for Mrs Eleave, perhaps a nurse or attendant whom she liked, who she could listen to or converse with. Despite all the emotional trauma that Henrietta was surely experiencing because of the treatment, her doctors considered Henrietta's general condition to be "fair".

A month later Henrietta was still being massaged twice a day, now for an hour at a time and until the 6th April staff had continued to feed her through a tube. Now Henrietta had begun to hit back and it took great force to make her eat. During 'feeding' she was very troublesome, struggling, kicking and shouting. Though she would not speak she noticed everything going on but when she was spoken to she would turn her head away. Despite all this her doctor felt that her general condition was good. At the end of April her massage sessions still continued twice a day, but now each one lasted for an hour and-a-half. Her eating had improved and she was now taking her food fairly well. Her doctor added that at times she still had to be force fed, and that on other occasions she ate ravenously and cried out for more. Her erratic eating habits had seriously affected her for her periods had stopped. On 26th April,
Henrietta was dressed for the first time after much “fighting and trembling” on her part. At times it seemed that Henrietta was prone to violent behaviour; at other times she would be catatonic; or she trembled when spoken to, and scarcely answered or spoke. Still, it was felt that her general condition had improved.

The next entry in her notes is for 27th July. Here it is recorded that Henrietta’s massages had continued until May 14th. It was felt that, to some degree, her general condition had improved, but she had moved into what her doctors described as “a condition of stupor”, during which she apparently lacked any real interest in her surroundings. Although she would shake hands voluntarily, she did so very slowly. She also occasionally answered questions; for example, she might say “quite well thank you” in a high pitched and feverish tone; she was also “emotional”, and would burst into tears for no obvious reason. She continued to refuse food and needed to be fed by the nurses, and on occasions she violently resisted their efforts. Her general health was considered to be quite good, despite the fact that her periods had still not returned. Her doctor’s final ‘medical’ observation was that his patient was “very brown with the sun on her hands and on her face” - perhaps another hint to her ‘Creole’ ethnicity.

There are no further notes until the 25th August and it appears that this was Henrietta’s last day in Holloway. On that day she was discharged, “released at the request of her husband”. If John Cormack requested her release, it seems fair to assume that Henrietta was reunited with her family.
5.8 Reflections on asylum geographies

There are many black women who lived in Victorian London that we will never know anything about. There are many members of Victorian society about whom we will never know anything more than what's recorded about them in the national census. There must have been other black women with similar experiences to Susan, Mary, Caroline and Henrietta, but because they were admitted to an asylum before the use of photography, or because they were treated in institutions that did not use or keep photographic images, we may never know about them. It is because the women in this chapter were temporarily excluded from mainstream society, and captured on film in these spaces, that we can learn something of their lives. In this sense the study of the records of lunatic asylums can contribute to the biographical histories of black women.

The records these institutions kept, where they survive, form a foundation for these new investigations, but these women's lives are told using the observations of other people. We do not hear Susan or Henrietta's voice through their case papers. In fact their medical records are more like a catalogue illustrating how others perceived them. Jonathan Andrews has shown in his work on the Gartnavel Royal Asylum, Glasgow, that in the late nineteenth century direct patient testimony virtually disappeared from case papers. Rather than concentrating on recording what the patient said to their doctors, if, how and in what tone patients answered questions became more important. As a result the case papers became increasingly remote from the patient, and the patient was increasingly objectified.\footnote{Jonathan Andrews, 1998} This shift is certainly reflected in the case records of these women.

Even the information in the records raise ambiguities. For example, it is not clear that Henrietta was a black woman. The comment in her medical notes which described her as a 'Creole' woman was preceded by a question mark. The doctor who took the details of her physical appearance engaged with the superficial nature of racial classification. What denoted a black woman, or a creole woman? Was it the colour of her skin, or the texture of her complexion, or 'thick lips'? After the detail of Henrietta's eyes, the examiner at a later time, perhaps after some consideration, added "thick lips" to her list of physical features.\footnote{WI WMS 5158 Case Book no 4} In the late nineteenth century these were a
‘sign’ of black ancestry. Did the doctor add this because it gave weight to his belief that Henrietta might have been a Creole?

There is a photograph of Henrietta within her case notes, taken in the spring of 1891. It is a very faded, sepia image (see figure 5.5). You can see a woman lying in bed with the covers up to her chin. Her hands are above the covers (perhaps they are restrained?). She has thick eyebrows. She is the only woman in the album to have had her photograph taken while she was in bed. But the image is so discoloured that is impossible to gauge the ‘original’ colour of the woman’s skin, or any ‘defining’ features of her physicality. Was she a “Creole”, and if so, what did this actually mean in terms of her ethnic heritage?

**Creole, n., a.** [According to some 18thc. writers originally applied by S. American Blacks to their own children born in America as distinguished from Blacks freshly imported from Africa.]

A. *n.* In the West Indies and other parts of America, Mauritius, etc.
orig. A person born and naturalized in the country, but of European (usually Spanish or French) or of African Negro race; the name having no connotation of colour, and in its reference to origin being distinguished on the one hand from born in Europe (or Africa), and on the other hand from aboriginal.

a. But now, usually, = creole white, a descendant of European settlers, born and naturalized in those colonies or regions, and more or less modified in type by the climate and surroundings.

b. Now less usually = creole negro: A Black person born in the West Indies or America, as distinguished from one freshly imported from Africa.

1863 Bates Nat. Amazon i. (1864) 19 The term 'Creole' is confined to negroes born in the country.

B. attrib. or adj.

1. a. Of persons: Born and naturalized in the West Indies, etc., but of European (or Black) descent; see A

1862 J. M. Ludlow Hist. U.S. 316 note. There are creole whites, creole negroes, creole horses, &c.; and creole whites are, of all persons, the most anxious to be deemed of pure white blood.146

Our understanding of the term 'creole' is a complex one, the definitions above highlight some of the plays with race and identity that occurred in the metropolises and colonies of European Empires. During the nineteenth century definitions of creole describing people of both black and white descent were circulating. It is impossible to know to which definition Henrietta's doctor was referring. In nineteenth-century English literature the creole appeared along with mulattas, quadroons and octoroons, as a woman who could be described as being neither black or white, yet also as both black and white.147

In Jane Eyre, first published in 1847, perhaps the most famous 'creole' in English literature makes her brief appearance. In Brontë's novel, Bertha Antoinetta Mason, Rochester's first wife, is the daughter of Jonas Mason, a merchant, and Antoinetta Mason, his wife, a creole. Brontë leaves the colour of Rochester's Jamaican bride ambiguous, invoking an imperial-geographical imagination rather than a purely racialised one. This ambiguity was vividly interpreted by Jean Rhys' in her novel Wide Sargasso Sea. It is told through the voice of the creole woman who is driven mad

146 OED
147 Jennifer DeVere Broody, 1998
because of Rochester's English sensibilities and prejudice. In this interpretation the first Mrs Rochester is, as Rhys was, a white creole woman.

Henrietta may have been a black-creole woman. If she was, her experiences as a middle-class woman in the late Victorian black Atlantic world could provide us with interesting insights; (but if she was a white-creole woman, does this mean that her experiences are no longer worthy of our interest?). What she definitely shows us is how easily identities slip across supposedly fixed physical boundaries, and that photography and our understandings of what we 'see', will not always help us to negotiate our way through these slippages.

It is also difficult to read between the lines or gauge an understanding of how the women felt about themselves. If they ever did express themselves, as some female patients certainly did, through media such as letters or drawings, these do not survive. It is also difficult to gain an understanding of how these women were racialised. Susan's records note her 'ethnicity', but her treatment within the system does not appear dissimilar to white women who were treated at the same time. Henrietta's ethnic identity was, and remains, ambiguous, but either way it does not seem to have affected her treatment. Yet the attitude of her doctors may have stemmed as much from the awareness of her wealth and the status of her husband as a fellow practitioner, than a lack, or not, of racial prejudice. Perhaps her doctors had a similar perception to Savage who, although not a direct supporter of racist conceptions in medicine and madness, had racialised notions of science informing his ideas.

Though the picture of Susan's life is far from complete we know a great deal more about her than either Caroline or Mary. Yet it is still difficult to understand how ten years of her life could be told over only a few pages of A4 paper. Reports on her health were taken on a roughly quarterly basis. In 1893 and 1894 four reports were made, in 1895 five. This dropped to four in 1896, and dropped to three, in 1897. In 1898 the reports were back to quarterly slots, but in 1899 there is only one, and this is the last one. It was to be another two years before Susan left Colney Hatch asylum, and it is not clear where, or if, the notes for her care and health in those final years were recorded. Perhaps the main reason for the lack of interest in Susan as an individual, was one of class. The archives of asylum records tend to be biased in favour of well educated or extrovert patients, for they generated more interest among their carers, and
were far more likely to be written about. More attention was paid to wealthier clients, such as Henrietta, and the eleven months that she spent in Holloway occupy the same amount of physical space in the archives, as Susan's ten years at Colney Hatch.

In this sense there is great satisfaction in giving the lives of Susan, Mary and Caroline a sense of importance that the archives do not allocate them. To those who admitted them in to the asylum system they were part of the urban working poor. Their admission forms to the asylums were filed as any other, and sit in the archives as any other. Their ordinariness is what makes them so interesting in the context of this thesis. That they seem to be treated as any other members of London's working class; that before they entered Colney Hatch there is no reason to assume that they did not live like any other member of the working class, is key to our understanding of the black presence in Victorian London. Caroline and Mary provide a glimpse of women who went about their lives, got married, fell ill, recovered and rejoined society. They provide an example of women who were not 'single mothers or prostitutes' who lived in London half a century before the arrival of the Windrush. Their ordinariness also places them in great contrast to the women who are our concern in the following two chapters.

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Chapter six

Ina Sarah Forbes Bonetta & Victoria Davies

The women at the focus of this chapter led their lives in totally different spaces from those inhabited by Susan Hayes or other women of the working class. Although when Sarah Forbes Bonetta was a young woman she certainly faced great personal tragedy, and must have suffered great trauma, she was not confined within the walls of an institution. Instead she became a protégée of Queen Victoria, and was endowed with all the trappings of an aristocratic upbringing. In this sense, her story is not very original, there are many histories written about women who were a part of the British and imperial aristocracy. However, neither of these women have been made a part of them.

They may have been ignored because they were black, or perhaps because neither women seems to have published or produced an autobiography, memoirs or a diary, and a few personal papers seem to be all that remains of whatever Sarah and Victoria
might have written in their own hand. As a result the biographies in this chapter are pieced together using sources that are not dissimilar to those that were available for the young women in Barnardo's and the women in the asylums. From Sarah’s arrival in Britain in 1850, she and her family can be occasionally found, referred to in archives, in newspapers and the journals, letters and diaries of the diverse Victorians who met and knew them. The lives of Sarah Forbes Bonetta and her daughter Victoria Davies provide a great contrast to those like Susan Hayes, not only because their lives were of such a contrast, but also because they highlight a wholly different world that could become available to black women. However, as we shall see, their lives of privileged education, travel and access to spaces in Britain and in Africa, did not mean that they were not vulnerable to racialisation and prejudice in public and in private.

*Oloba* was one of the pieces of music in *Twenty-four Negro Melodies*, a collection published in 1905 and transcribed by the “Anglo-African” London born and based composer, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. Mrs Victoria Randle provided the only example of a West-African folk song in the collection, from songs she must have learnt while she lived in Nigeria. Victoria Randle began life as Miss Victoria Davies, named by her mother, Ina Sarah Forbes Bonetta, after both women’s godmother, Queen Victoria. The stories of Ina Sarah Forbes Bonetta and her daughter Victoria Davies are extraordinary reflections of the diversity of experience of women who were a part of the Black Atlantic. Their place among the upper echelons of British society surpassed those of Mary Seacole and the spaces these two women travelled through were fused with exclusive royal patronage, privileged and protected due to their relationship with the Queen.

**Part One, Sarah Forbes Bonetta (d. 1880)**

The man who initiated this story by bringing a young black orphan girl from Dahomey to England, was Captain Fredrick Edwyn Forbes. Born in April 1819, the third son of Captain John Forbes, Fredrick Forbes joined the Royal Navy in 1833 and became well known as the British Envoy to the court of Dahomey in 1849 with H. M. S. Bonetta.

1Peter Fryer, 1984, p256
2 The spelling given in the publication of ‘Randall’ is different, but evidence suggests that the Victoria Randle of this chapter was the same woman.
The kingdom of Dahomey was then "a Black Sparta squeezed between the Yoruba tribes of present day Nigeria and the Ewe tribes of Togo."3

Forbes made his first visit to King Gezo of Dahomey in 1845 as a lieutenant, in an attempt to persuade the King to give up his part in the slave trade, but he was unsuccessful. Four years later Forbes tried once again, King Gezo still refused to cooperate, but he did give Forbes some presents as an act of conciliation. As a British journalist later reflected:

Whether the King wished to be ironical, or thought he would have a joke at the expense of the negotiator, is hard to say; at all events Capt. Forbes found the Royal liberality had bestowed upon him a little negro girl!4

Forbes was to become the girl's guardian, but his published diaries show that initially at least, the little African girl was merely one on a list of items.

July 5th
The Mayo [...] brought His Majesty's presents, [...] two magnificent cloths (to me) to present to Her Majesty. To Mr Beecroft and myself [...] a rich country cloth, a captive girl, a caboocer's stool, and footstool, ten heads of cowries, and one keg of rum.5

At the time she was given to Forbes the enslaved girl had been detained at the court of Dahomey for about two years. She had been taken captive during the Okeadon war described by Forbes as "a dreadful slave hunt."6 Dahomey waged war annually. Most European visitors believed that these battles were conducted to capture prisoners for the slave trade, domestic slaves or human sacrifices for royal custom. The Dahomeans never conceded this. But in 1848 Dahomey had targeted the Egbado town of Okeadon, whose leaders had become brokers for their slave trade to the coast. The King's Amazon army took part in the campaign and with the help of an Okeadon traitor eventually captured the town with ease. Thousands of prisoners were taken and Thomas Jefferson Bowen, an American missionary, heard that 600 captives were supplied to a Brazilian slave dealer.7

It was during this time that the captive girl's parents were killed, although she did not know what had become of her brothers and sisters. She had been spared from a life of slavery in the Americas, but instead she was kept as a slave to the court, waiting for the

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3 Bruce Chatwin, 1980, p9
4 RA PP Vic. 1882/12279
5 Fredrick Forbes 1851, p193
6 Fredrick Forbes, 1851, p206
time when she would fulfil whatever role was required of her. Forbes believed that as she had not been sold into slavery, it was most likely that she was from a ‘good’ family. At various times during her life there was speculation over her family’s origin and status. As a result she would at times be described as ‘a chieftain’s daughter’, a ‘woman of noble blood’, and even a ‘princess’.

Her daughter Victoria provided another more personal account of her mother’s early life, although it’s not clear whether she knew of the history through conversations with her mother, or from other secondary sources. In a letter to Mrs Emma Dent, Victoria gave the fullest account of her roots as she knew then. She confirmed that her mother came from the Yoba country, one of the most important kingdoms in West Africa. Victoria used her knowledge of European political history to compare the kingdom’s constitution to that of Germany “under the old regime being divided into states ruled over by princes or chiefs who will scarcely acknowledge the head chief as their lord.”

Victoria’s grandfather was one of those princes, and he owned the town of Kahn which included the adjacent country. According to Victoria’s family history he was a good ruler and much loved by his subjects, although she does not mention whether he was involved in the brokering of slaves. Victoria’s mother was about five years old when the King of Dahomey, accompanied by a large army, appeared before the gates of Kahn and attempted to storm the town. But according to Victoria, the town was too strong, and its defenders too brave to submit tamely. After several days the king was obliged to retreat into the woods. The people were elated with their success for Dahomey was the most powerful kingdom of West Africa, and its ruler feared throughout the surrounding area. The unprecedented attack had been made in consequence of no quarrel, but because of the King’s desire to acquire financial gains to fund his yearly religious festivals which included human sacrifices. Broadly this follows the story Forbes told in his memoirs; one that he perhaps told Victoria’s mother, although Victoria may have done her own research for her account is filled with greater detail.

According to Victoria’s account, the defence of the gates to Kahn was relaxed three days after the departure of their enemies, but that same night, owing to the oversight of the guards (perhaps the work of the Okeadon traitor), the gates were forced opened

7 Stanley Alpern, 1998
8 Letter from Victoria Davies to Mrs Emma Dent (undated), SCA F56A
by the Dahomians, who overpowered successfully half the inhabitants before their presence was discovered. The chief and his warriors appeared half armed and half dressed on the scene. They fought bravely for their homes and families, but the town was taken. Many prisoners were captured and many more were killed. A few escaped into the woods, but they came mostly to "an untimely end", and, according to Victoria, her grandmother died of a broken heart, caused by the death of her husband and the capture of her child.9

Victoria’s letter also confirmed that her mother was held in the King of Dahomey’s Palace at Abomey for two years and that she remembered being treated kindly during her incarceration. King Gezo lived in his own two storey house, that stood forty feet high,10 but as Victoria wrote, the new sights her mother witnessed never filled her with any affection for the murderer of her parents and destroyer of her home. Apparently the King had not decided whether he would sacrifice or adopt his young servant girl when Forbes arrived in the city. During their final meeting before she was given away, the King embraced her, as the last member of a noble family, although Victoria did not think the hug was enjoyed.

Perhaps Forbes was right to think that despite her status, his "extraordinary present"11 would have died had she not been given to him. He was aware of the irony of returning to England with a slave and felt that she would be "at least a burden".12 Convinced that due to the nature of his mission the government would consider the child the property of the Crown, he accepted the slave girl. They eventually set sail from the British fort in Whydah, the principal port of Dahomey, on the morning of July 12th 1850. The little African girl, now named Sarah by Forbes, became a favourite of the ship’s crew, and it was the sailors who gave her the nickname of Sally, which would stick with her for most of her life.13

Once they arrived in England, Forbes took Sarah to his father’s home in Winkfield Place, near Windsor.14 By August, Forbes had written to the Admiralty, explaining that he had returned from Africa with a little girl who was a survivor of the massacre of

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9 Letter from Victoria Davies to Mrs Emma Dent (undated), SCA F56A
10 Stanley Alpern, 1988
11 Fredrick Forbes, 1851, p206
12 Fredrick Forbes, 1851
13 RA PP 3/7/2
14 RA PP 3/7/2
Okeadon. He added that he did not doubt that some charitable persons would provide for her education, “so that she might be taught that her duty lay with rescuing others who had not had the advantages of education” rather than “the mysterious ways of their ancestors.” As a government official, he asked their Lordships to put forward his proposal to Queen Victoria and see if she would accept responsibility for the young girl and her future. He also added that the little girl was now being called Sarah Bonetta, and was “an intelligent and good tempered (I need hardly add Black) girl about six or seven years of age.”

There is no record of the Queen’s initial response when she heard Sarah’s story, but officially she replied that she would be very pleased to take the little orphan girl under her protection. Sarah was received by the Queen in November, an encounter that Queen Victoria recorded in her journal on the 9th November, 1850:

Albert waiting for Captain Forbes and a poor little negro girl whom he brought back from the king of Dahome, her parents and all her relatives having been sacrificed. Captain F saved her life asking for her as a present. […] She is seven years old, sharp and intelligent and speaks English. She was dressed as any other girl. When her bonnet was taken off her little black woolly head and big earrings gave her the true negro type.

Although the Queen took financial responsibility for Sarah, the Forbes family continued to care for her. According to William Willett, the nephew of Fredrick Forbes, Sarah always referred to his Uncle as ‘Daddy’. His own mother taught her to write and educated her at Forbes’ home for some months. Queen Victoria became her godmother when she was baptised on November 17th 1850 as Sarah Forbes Bonetta. In the baptism register her address was listed as Winkfield Place, so it would seem that it was here that Sarah spent the first months of her life in England.

However stereotypes born from the theories of scientific racism were to determine that Sarah’s initial stay would not last long. Sarah arrived in England nine years before Darwin’s On the Origin of Species, was first published in November 1859. Although the development of ‘social Darwinism’ is often seen as a watershed in the evolution of racial thought in western Europe and North America, Darwin’s own evolutionary concepts were themselves conditioned by social ideas already being discussed.

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13 Fredrick Forbes, 1851, p206
14 RA PP Vic A 38a FE Forbes to the Admiralty (copy) 3/8/1850
15 RA Queen Victoria’s Journal, 1850
16 RA PP3/7/97
17 BRO D/P151/1/12
18 David Livingstone, 1992, p187
surrounding race had been a part of enlightenment modernity from its inception, and the habit of looking at society through a racialised lens was already firmly established by the time Sarah arrived on British shores.

Whiteness had been an ideal in racial hierarchies in the West before the change in racial ideas that occurred in the nineteenth century. As early as 1684 François Bernier, a French philosopher, doctor and traveller, published *La Nouvelle Division de la Terre.* In this he identified up to five "Species or Races of men so notably differing from each other that this may serve as the just foundation of a new division of the world." Such ideas were to fuse with those of early environmental determinists such as Oliver Goldsmith. In *History of the Earth and Animated Nature*, published in 1774, Goldsmith set forth his ideas on the ‘natural’ differences between black and white peoples:

In all regions, the children are born fair, or at least red, and that they grow more black or tawny, as they advance in age. It should seem, consequently, that man is naturally white; since the same causes that darken the complexion in infants, may have originally operated, in slower degrees, in blackening whole nations.

The fetishistic relationship between Western science and the foreign black body was exemplified in the experience of Sarah’s namesake, Sarah Bartman. She was a young black woman who had been bought from a community of Dutch-Boers, who themselves had brought her from the South African interior to the Cape. In 1810 she found herself in England, her voluptuous and sexualised body displayed at various exhibitions throughout Europe. During her five year tour she became known as the ‘Hottentot Venus’. For public spectacle she was “produced like a wild beast, and ordered to move backwards and forwards and come and go out of her cage, more like a bear on a chain than a human being.”

The American Samuel George Morton’s doctrine stated that different human species came into being in different geographical locations across the world, and emphasised that these peoples were inherently different. In 1841 his research was published in the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society.* For him and those who agreed with him, skin was not a mask but the sign of another species, just as the leopards had their spots. There also appeared that year the sixth edition of *The Influence of Tropical Climates on European Constitutions* by James Johnston, first published in 1812. This was essential

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21 Siep Stuurman, 2000
22 Siep Stuurman, 2000
23 Quoted in Siep Stuurman, 2000, p28
24 *The Times, 26th November 1810* p3
reading for Europeans involved in the early globalization of travel. Along with the development of tourism, there grew a concern that there were certain parts of the globe, particularly the hot and humid places normally associated with people of colour, that Europeans were not suited to, so much so, that they might not be able to survive in them. These theories were also inverted and applied to black people living outside these regions.

It is important to remember that these arguments did not go unchallenged. But the atmosphere they fostered help to explain why, in January 1851, a letter was sent to the Rev. Henry Venn, of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), concerning Sarah’s health and her future education. Harriet Philips, the Queen’s Personal Secretary, wrote to him stating that the palace had been informed that the climate in England was often fatal to the health of African children. Therefore, it was decided that it would be better for Sarah if she were to be educated in one of the British dependencies on the African coast. Venn was asked to make enquiries about the CMS School in Sierra Leone, which he did.  

Venn was typical of the kind of person that the royal household would call on to mould Sarah’s future. Most of them, like Venn, had some direct experience of colonial life. Born in Clapham in 1796, Venn was ordained the priest of Ely Cathedral in 1820. Following an active career in the church, he resigned his position at St John’s in Holloway in 1846 to devote himself to the CMS and its work in Africa. In 1841 he became the society’s first secretary, a post he held for 32 years and during this time he increased the numbers of black clergy in the society from 9 to 148. Firmly against the slave trade, and eager to find work for converted Africans, Venn encouraged the development of trade in African natural products, including the sponsorship of trips for African men to Britain where they learnt methods to improve the preparation of products such as cotton and palm oil.

The last months of 1850 and the beginning of 1851 became the focus of the arrangements for Sarah’s return to Africa, which would take her to the school in Sierra Leone. On the 14th December Venn reflected upon Sarah’s future in his diary. He was to have a long relationship with her, and would officiate as one of the priests at her wedding. His entry is revealing because it is the first time that we see Sarah referred to

25 RA PP Vic A38a Philips to Venn 25/1/51
26 Hans Werner Debrunner, 1979
as a princess, suggesting the complexities that surrounded her personal and racialised identity.

The Queen has taken a fancy to her and agrees to pay for her education. We agreed to propose to Her Majesty that the child should be sent to our Female Institution in Sierra Leone for education ... Both Captain Forbes and Her Majesty wished the princess to be trained for missionary work.28

In February 1851, Venn visited Buckingham Palace, as Queen Victoria was anxious to have Sarah sent to Sierra Leone, but no missionaries were available to escort her there until November. Venn followed up his visit to the palace by writing a letter to Miss Julia Emily Sass, who had been appointed Head Teacher of the CMS Female School in Freetown in 1849.

It is possible that at the turn of the year we may send you a little negro girl, brought to England by Commander Forbes from Dahomy, given to him by the King of Dahomy. Our Queen has undertaken her education and is thinking of sending her to your school. I am shortly to have an interview with one of the gentlemen of the court upon the subject. The girl is now only 7 or 8 and is now living with the family of Cap. Forbes, so that her wildness will be partly tamed before you have care of her. She is called a Dahomian Princess.29

However privileged her connections in England, Venn felt that Sarah’s African blood made her inherently wild and unmanageable. The fact that she must have been a severely traumatised child, who had been a slave (a practice that he campaigned against), without the freedom to exercise her own will for two years, did not alter his perception of her. Venn’s words reflect the prejudice that existed among some educated liberals. A century before the geographer Immanuel Kant had announced that the “African Negro, by nature has no feelings which rise above the trifling.”30 Venn’s hope that Sarah would have been ‘tamed’ before she reached the CMS school shows that he viewed Sarah more as the Queen’s new pet than her protégée. In contrast Sarah’s ‘good family’ origins had elevated her to the privileged heights of a princess. Yet she had been transformed into a Princess of Dahomey, the place where she had been held a slave, rather than of her homeland.

It was decided that Sarah would attend the CMS school in Sierra Leone, but how she was to get there and who would assure her safe arrival became complicated matters. Venn also wrote to Philips that month, informing her that a missionary, the Rev. Schmidt, would be leaving for Africa shortly with his wife. He suggested them as

27 William Knight, 1882
28 William Knight, 1882, p213.
29 BUA C A1/L4, my emphasis.
possible chaperones. But in April 1851 Venn realised that Mrs Schmidt would not be leaving until the 7th of May. Perhaps exasperated by his inability to achieve a solution, on the 26th April Venn wrote and asked if he should still be attempting to make arrangements for Sarah. It seems that Venn was told to do so, and renewed negotiations with the Schmidts.31

While these exchanges were determining the next stage of her life, Sarah had visited the Queen once again. Queen Victoria notes in her journal on January 11th 1851 that:

After luncheon, Sally Bonetta the little African girl came with Mrs Philips and showed me some of her work. This is the 4th time I have seen the poor child who is really an intelligent little thing.32

1851 was the year that Sarah became far better known to the British public, largely due to the publication of Forbes’ book, Dahomey and the Dahomens: Being the journals of the two missions to the King of Dahomey and residence at his capital in the years 1849 and 1850 (see figure 6.2). In them, Forbes revealed Sarah’s story, as well of some of her life to date in England. Forbes also placed Sarah at the centre of the racial debates of the time by presenting her as an ideal of what members of the Negro race could be. Although she did not know how old she was when she arrived in England, Forbes assumed she was about eight. For this age Forbes felt she displayed the talents of a genius. She had learnt English well, and had a wonderful talent for music. He also felt her ability to learn, and her strength of mind and attention, put her ahead of any white children of a similar age. Drawing on contemporary debates on race, ones already applied to Sarah’s health, he claimed that with Sarah,

being an excellent specimen of the negro race, might be tested the capability of the intellect of the black, it being generally and erroneously supposed that after a certain age the intellect becomes impaired and the pursuit of knowledge impossible; that though the negro child might be clever, the adult will be dull and stupid.33

Forbes then explicitly referred to Sarah’s physical appearance in the light of phrenology, the study of the external form of the cranium, a then fashionable ‘science’ that was supposed to display a person’s character and mental capabilities. He wrote:

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31 Quoted by Allison Blackely, 1999, p94
32 RA PP Vic A38a
33 RA Queen Victoria’s Journal, 1851
34 Fredrick Forbes, 1851, p206.
Her head is considered so excellent a phrenological specimen, and illustrating such high intellect, that M. Pistrucci, the medallist to the Mint, has undertaken to take a bust of her.34

Sarah's bust was moulded in grand company, Pistrucci's sculptures included the Duke of Wellington.35 Although Sarah's bronze bust supposedly remains in Windsor Castle to this day, its whereabouts are a mystery. It certainly existed for, as a token of thanks for her role in the care of Sarah, the mother of William Willet (a nephew of Fredrick Forbes), was sent a brooch and a plaster cast of the bust of Sarah by the Queen.36

The Female Institution in Freetown where Sarah was to expand her high intellect had been established by Julia Emily Sass. A devoted missionary worker, Julia Sass had been sent out by the CMS to open a Female Institution in the mission house on the northeast corner of Wilberforce and Oxford Street in 1849. Two years later she moved the Institution to a house on the north side of Kissy Road. Girls there included both boarders, who paid £13 a year, and day girls, whose fees were £4 a year.37 The school aimed "to produce noble, gracious, and well-educated women who would exercise a strong beneficial influence in the community, a liberal education first and foremost with the utilitarian purpose secondary."38 The school was for African girls only and heavily oversubscribed, so it was decided to exclude girls who were the illegitimate daughters of Europeans, as it was felt that they should be able to afford their own education.39

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34 Fredrick Forbes, 1851, p206.
35 DNB
36 RA PP3/7/97
37 Christopher Fyfe, 1962, p253.
38 Christopher Fyfe, 1962, p253.
39 BUA CMS CA1/0 10C Julia Sass to Venn
Thus less than a year after Sarah’s arrival in England she returned to Africa to a very English institution. It is impossible to say whether this journey filled her with fear and terror of another forced migration, or excitement at the prospect of some kind of return. When she finally arrived in Freetown, she became one of 13 pupils at the Church Missionary School. Minutes of a visiting committee to the Female Institution in 1850 portray an existence similar to the one Sarah would lead. The girls rose at 6am and were to be dressed for breakfast and prayers that began at 8am. The school day ran from 9.30am – 2.30pm. The afternoon was broken up by dinner, which the girls ate at 4pm. They then studied and completed their homework between 7pm and 8pm. They studied a broad curriculum that included reading, geography, history, writing, arithmetic, French, drawing and music. The day came to a close at 8pm with evening prayers. It was a pattern of life modelled on the British boarding school.

There is a little to be learnt of Sarah’s first return to Africa in the letters of Julia Sass to England. On the 7th June 1852 she wrote to Venn about the Queen’s involvement with the school.

The Queen has sent me a box of working materials for them [the children]. We are making things for a Missionary Box. The Queen has expressed much satisfaction with Sally’s progress who is now getting tamed a little and gets on nicely with all she learns, and will, I hope, prove worthy of all that is done for her. She is a dear little girl, but requires at times a very firm hand.

Figure 6.3
Sarah Forbes Bonetta, 1856
William Bambridge (photographer)
c/o RA, Windsor Castle

*BUA CMS CA1/0 10C Julia Sass to Venn
* BUA CMS CA1/0 187 Julia Sass to Venn

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Sass sent another letter on the 3rd of August 1852, again mentioning Sarah.

You will be glad to hear that Sally F Bonetta grows [into] a nice intelligent child and that Her Majesty has been pleased to express her appreciation as to the progress she has made and has lately sent her some nice books and games.

In 1853 the Royal Household received a bill for £20/3/8, the amount due to be paid for the education and board of Sally F Bonetta for the half-year ending 31st December 1852. Sarah was certainly still at the school in 1853 as two entries for her in the accounts exist for that year. The first notes the half-yearly account for Sarah’s board, which in September 1853 was £139, but her expenses were almost double that. At the end of 1853 a list of articles bought for Sarah in England was recorded in the royal accounts. These were forwarded to her at school in December and give some indication of the items she used as a young girl. They included muslin, print for 4 frocks, 24 yards of cloth, 2 bonnets, 14 reels cotton, a black silk loose, sleeveless cloak known as a mantle, mittens & gloves, ribbon, 4 aprons, paper and envelopes, and soap.

It is not clear how much longer Sarah stayed at the school, nor when she came back to England, but it would seem that during the late 1850s Sarah moved to Brighton to live with Miss Sophia Welsh. Welsh, selected by the Queen to oversee the completion of Sarah’s education and her introduction to society, appeared in the fashionable Brighton Court Directory in 1862. Throughout the 1850s and 1860s Brighton remained a fashionable sea-bathing resort, as well as the place to parade along promenades, cliffs and pier. Its hotels were of the highest quality and were often visited by crowned heads of Europe as well as the fashionable English aristocracy. Its German spa and pump established in 1824, was an added attraction to the ‘season’, which ran from March to October.

Like the various guardians before her, Welsh had personal experience of the imperial other, having been born in India. In 1861, she was 62 years old, and head of the house where she lived at 17 Clifton Hill, a home she ran with the income from her private fund. A widowed cousin, a nephew, and two servants were also listed at Clifton Hill when the census was taken in April 1861. Sarah was not among them, although

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42 BUA CMS CA1/0 187 Julia Sass to Venn
43 RA PP 2/1/3000
44 RA PP 2/3/3905
according to newspaper reports she lived with Welsh for several years. It may be that she was away on the day that the census was taken. According to The Brighton Herald, Sarah had become an accomplished and talented young lady who had acquired a knowledge of French and other European languages. Under Welsh's guidance she had mixed with the best circles, and her amiable manner, coupled with her great talent for music, had made her a popular member of Brighton society.

On 14th August 1862, when she was twenty-three, or perhaps twenty-four, Sarah was married at St Nicholas Church, Brighton. She became the second wife of James Pinson Lubulo Davies, an African merchant in his early thirties. Their wedding was a lavish affair; Queen Victoria paid for Sarah's trousseau, which cost the Royal household over £250. It is not clear how the couple met, but The Brighton Herald claimed that it was during a visit to England that Davies had heard of the charms and accomplishments of Sarah and sought an introduction with her. He had thus become a frequent visitor to Brighton. Davies' personal history was also tragic, and romanticised by the press, although conflicting reports make it difficult to distinguish fact from fiction.

The Brighton Herald wrote that Davies' father had been a slave until late in life, when he escaped from bondage to Sierra Leone where James was later born. Yet the version published in the London based Penny Illustrated Paper stated that James Davies was originally a slave himself, taken and freed by one of the British cruisers and left in Sierra Leone. Both accounts mention his education at the CMS boy's school in Sierra Leone, and also agreed that following his schooling he was given a position on board the Royal Navy's H. M. S. Volcano, stationed at Sierra Leone and commanded by Captain Coote. Davies worked hard and proved himself, and was liked by the captain and men. Too old to become an officer he trained as a merchant captain and learnt enough from his experiences under Coote to support himself in his own trading enterprise based in Lagos. This grew into a prosperous business and by 1861 he employed "more than one hundred of his fellow countrymen." The couple's marriage certificate confirmed that Davies was an African merchant, and the son of Labulo, a Negro of Sierra Leone.

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44 The Brighton Herald, August 16th 1862, p2
45 The Brighton Herald, August 16th 1862, p2
46 A working man would have been earning about £100 per year.
47 Christopher Fylye, 1962, p318.
48 The Brighton Examiner, 19 August 1862, p.
The certificate reveals another aspect of Sarah; her full name is given as Ina Sarah Forbes Bonetta.\textsuperscript{51} Perhaps Ina was her African name, dropped by her English guardians at her baptism,\textsuperscript{53} but reclaimed by her at her marriage. Although her daughter Victoria seems to have learnt something of her grandfather’s life, on her mother’s marriage certificate, his name and surname were listed as ‘unknown’ and in their place is the description ‘a Negress of Dahomey, West Africa’. Her address at the time of her marriage was given as 17 Clifton Hill. The couple were married by licence, which was often used by the aristocracy as an alternative to the more common process of publishing banns.

The event commanded a large amount of attention in the local Brighton press, as well as grabbing column inches in the London papers, and the \textit{Anti-Slavery Reporter}. The latter announced on 1\textsuperscript{st} September that the “African Princess, Sarah Forbes Bonetta […] has been married to Mr James Davis\textsuperscript{4}, now a merchant of considerable wealth and influence in Lagos.”\textsuperscript{55} Despite being held on a wet Thursday afternoon, the ceremony drew large crowds, swelled by those who had come down from London to see the spectacle for themselves. The “approaches to the Old Church, by way of Church-street, North-street, and Church-hill, were thronged with crowds of persons anxiously waiting for the opening of the church doors.”\textsuperscript{56} As soon as they were opened, a little before 11 o’clock, the parts open to the public were packed. Those unable to find a place in the church remained outside, eagerly anticipating the arrival of the bride and her guests.

The theme of Africans becoming civilised along the path of Christianity, one which was so important in the public narratives about black children in Barnardo’s, is apparent in the \textit{Penny Illustrated Paper’s} report on Sarah’s wedding.

On Thursday week a marriage was performed at the parish church, Brighton, to unite a lady and gentleman of colour, whose previous history gives the ceremony a peculiar interest, chiefly to those who have so long and so deeply interested in the African race, and who have watched the progress of civilisation caused, by the influence of Christianity on the negro; and the ceremony will also tell our brethren on the other side of the Atlantic that British ladies and gentlemen consider it a

\textsuperscript{51} ESRO PAR 255/1/3/35
\textsuperscript{52} ESRO PAR 255/1/3/35
\textsuperscript{53} BRO D/P15/1/12
\textsuperscript{4} Sarah spelt her surname ‘Davies’; it was sometimes miss-spelt as ‘Davis’ by reporters. I have not altered this spelling when it appears within quotation marks.
\textsuperscript{55} \textit{The Anti-Slavery Reporter}, vol. 10, no 9, 1862, p194
\textsuperscript{56} \textit{The Penny Illustrated Paper}, 23\textsuperscript{rd} August, 1862, p133
pleasure to do honour to those of the African race who have proved themselves capable of appreciating the advantages of a liberal education.\textsuperscript{57}

For \textit{The Brighton Herald} the wedding was one of the most novel ceremonies ever witnessed in the town and probably within the United Kingdom. For their journalist the ceremony was full of interest from both a religious and a social point of view, presenting

the spectacle of the natives of a distant Continent, separated from us by strong natural barriers, assembled under the wing of the Church of England, partaking of its rites, and recognised to all its privileges by a large party of fellow-subjects and fellow-Christians, differing indeed in the colour of their skin, but asserting no social, religious, or natural superiority on that account.\textsuperscript{58}

Reference to ‘difference’ was explicit and implicit in many of the newspaper accounts of the wedding. The Brighton newspaper referred back to Forbes’ memoirs and agreed that “Capt. Forbes was quite right when he called her head an excellent phrenological specimen. Its formation is almost Caucasian in its regularity; and the features partake of the same exalted type to an extent which we have not hitheto seen paralleled.”\textsuperscript{59}

The wedding party set out from West-hill lodge, the home of Mrs Thompson who also appeared in the Brighton Court Directory that year, in ten carriages each with a pair of greys, and entered St Nicholas Church by the north-east door - the path had been matted and carpeted for their arrival. The first party arrived at about 10.45am, the others following behind in quick succession. All were watched with great interest as they entered the church and took up their positions in front of the altar. The guests entered as couples, first an English gentleman and an African lady; then an African gentleman and an English lady; and then two “coloured ladies; and then again fair English ladies and English gentleman and so on”\textsuperscript{60} until nearly all the space for the bridal party was occupied.

For one of the Brighton papers, the mixed congregation who chatted and intermingled with each other at the wedding “was one of much interest and animation”. But it was still important for the author to draw out distinctions between the English and African members of the wedding party:

\textsuperscript{57} \textit{The Penny Illustrated Paper}, 23\textdegree August, 1862, p.133.
\textsuperscript{58} \textit{The Brighton Herald}, August 16th 1862, p2
\textsuperscript{59} \textit{The Brighton Herald}, August 16th 1862, p2, my emphasis
\textsuperscript{60} \textit{The Brighton Herald}, August 16th 1862, p2
One of our fair English girls might be seen talking to one of those several African girls and the contrast was a curious one. And in conversing, too, or in the expression of pleasure which the recurring incidents of the moment called for from those interested, the contrast was still more marked. The coloured ladies certainly acquitted themselves very admirably in the trying and novel position they held during the morning, but, after all, as we have said, the contrast of social and physical character to be observed was most marked. As for the gentlemen, nothing could be better than their demeanour. There were, apparently, but few of African blood present, yet their fine physical conformation told well in the throng around them, and the gentlemanly ease of their actions could not fail but elicit admiration from the bystanders. These of mixed blood need not fear comparison in any society. [...] So, to complete our information for the curious in such matters we may add that all the gentlemen, coloured, of course, included, wore fashionable morning dress.\(^1\)

In The Brighton Herald the mixing of the congregation was "a triumph [...] of the labours of the philanthropists and the missionary over prejudices of pride and blood which [the] most sanguine followers of Wilberforce could scarcely have looked forward to!"\(^2\) The first carriage of the party to arrive included four of the fourteen bridesmaids, who were "ladies of colour". These young black women wore white dresses, with pink or red trimmings (depending on which newspaper report you read), around their chests and necks, with a broad sash of the same material around their waists. They wore white tarlatan opera-cloaks around their shoulders, and their hats were bonnets of pure white tulle, interspersed with apple-blossom. The black women were Miss Davies, who was James Davies' sister, Miss Decker, Miss Pratt and Miss Robin. The bridegroom soon followed behind, with five 'coloured groomsmen.' A further four "English bridegrooms and another coloured gentleman completed the party, with the exception of numerous friends."\(^3\)

The clapping from the hundreds (one report claimed thousands) of spectators outside the church heralded Sarah's arrival; she was the last to arrive and late, reaching the church at 11.20am, looking "extremely well, and her countenance (which is of a high order of African beauty) betokened great intelligence, though she appeared much affected."\(^4\) Mr Sch""\(\text{ö}n\) escorted her, although Fredrick Forbes' father (Forbes himself had died in 1852)\(^5\) gave the bride away. She wore a pure white dress of glace silk with trimmings of the same material. In her hair she wore a circle of orange-blossoms, a veil of white lace hung down around her shoulders, and she carried a white bouquet.

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\(^{1}\) The Brighton Herald, August 16\(^{th}\) 1862, p2  
\(^{2}\) The Brighton Herald, August 16\(^{th}\) 1862, p2  
\(^{3}\) RA PP Vic 1882/12279  
\(^{4}\) The Brighton Herald, August 16\(^{th}\) 1862, p2  
\(^{5}\) The Times June 4\(^{th}\) 1852, p5
The ceremony lasted around 20 minutes and was conducted by the Bishop of Sierra Leone with the Rev. Henry Venn and the Rev. G. Nicol, “the latter a coloured clergyman.” Going to the vestry Sarah was apparently so nervous that she was unable to write her name in the register, and one of her bridesmaids was obliged to do it for her. Her name was entered thus “Ina Sarah Forbes Bonetta, from Dahomey, West Africa.” At the ceremony’s conclusion, following the signing of the register, the bells of the church rung, announcing the marriage to all those who had been waiting outside. The merry peel was met by a hearty cheer, as the newly married couple passed through the crowd of spectators from the church to the carriages. The newly wed couple and their party then returned to West Hill Lodge, for the wedding breakfast, held under a marquee erected on a platform over a flower garden.

Several toasts were drunk during the breakfast, the one for the Bride and groom was proposed by Venn, who expressed his pleasure that “the Bride had received such an education as was calculated to be of the greatest benefit to the African natives, amongst whom she was so shortly to reside” and said that he hoped that her marriage represented the establishment of a more friendly feeling between the people of England and of Africa, “which latter country has been so much civilized, chiefly with her connection with England.” The groom followed acknowledging how kind the English had been to him, and saying how he too hoped his countrymen would benefit from his wife’s English education. The couple left on the five o’clock train for London, where they were to spend their honeymoon.

The couple took up residence in a house belonging to Mr Moses at 60 Burton Crescent in Bloomsbury, intending to stay there for six weeks. But a week after the wedding the couple found themselves in the papers once more, although not for such a happy affair. The Times, and the Brighton Examiner, which carried The Times story under the headline THE AFRICAN MARRIAGE – A WARM HONEYMOON, reported that two fires had broken out in Burton Crescent. Sarah and James had been at home when a fire took hold in one of the rooms at about half-past noon. Thanks to the quick arrival of fire engines this fire was contained to just one room. Inexplicably, a second fire occurred that evening. This did far greater damage, having taken a firm hold by the

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“*The Times,* August 20th 1862, p1

*The Brighton Herald,* August 16th 1862, p2

*The Brighton Herald,* August 16th 1862, p2

*The Brighton Herald,* August 16th 1862, p2

*The Brighton Herald,* August 16th 1862, p2"
time it was discovered. It was not contained until much of the roof had burnt off, several of the upper floor rooms had been destroyed, and the lower floor severely damaged by water.

It was feared that some of the wedding presents including “the splendid presents of Her Majesty” might have been ruined by the large amounts of water used to put out the fire. Moreover James Davies, only intending to be a temporary resident, had not been insured. More ominous was The Times’ and Brighton Herald’s final sentence on the story - that the origin of the fires remained a mystery, hinting that there was a suspicion of arson.

According to the papers Sarah and her new husband intended to sail for Sierra Leone in early September, but they were certainly in London on September 15th, when they had their portraits taken at Camille Silvy’s studio (see figure 6.4). Silvy, a French aristocrat was a renowned photographer and specialised in taking pictures of the great

Figure 6.4
Silvy portraits of Sarah Forbes Bonetta after her marriage to James Davies 1862
Silvy Day Book 11697-11702, c/o NPG, London

71 The Times, August 25th 1862, p9
and good. It is likely that Sarah and James turned their images into the then popular cartes-de-visite. These cards, which Silvy produced for his wealthy clients, were carefully crafted images of a public self, taken against symbols of power and privilege recreated in studio backdrops. That the Davies' had their images taken by Silvy reflects their wealth and status in Victorian society.

In 1867 we learn from Queen Victoria's journal that Sarah was in England once again. On the 9th December she went to visit the Queen with "her dear little child, far blacker than herself, called Victoria, aged 4." Queen Victoria described her young godchild as "a lively intelligent child, with big melancholy eyes." This is the only reference to Sarah in England that I have found until 1875, when Sarah returned to England with her family. It was a time of severe stress for them: James' business was failing and eventually he would face bankruptcy hearings in both London and Lagos courts. The case was brought against him by Messra, Callender, Sykes and Co., merchants and former business associates. It would drag on through the courts and be reported in papers in England and West Africa for over four years. The Davies family came to England together, but James left Sarah and their children while he returned to Africa to defend himself and sort out the family's financial affairs.

On December the 9th 1876 The Times published the notice of adjunction and the first meeting of creditors for James Davies was to take place at 11am on the 11th of that month. The case continued in January 1877 when the paper reported details of a further hearing. During this James Davies was living in Langham Street, Portland Place, near Regents Park, and had been brought to court by a petition lodged by Messra, Callender, Sykes and Company. According to The Times report debts amounting to £20 500 were proved against Davies. James Halliday of Manchester was appointed trustee and a resolution was passed for the proceedings to be transferred to Manchester. There is no mention of Sarah in the report, no confirmation of whether she was living with James at Langham Street, or of Davies' royal connections through her.

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72 Graham Clarke, 1997
73 Graham Clarke, 1997
74 RA Queen Victoria's Journal, 1867
75 RA Queen Victoria's Journal, 1867
76 RA PP Vic 1882/12279
77 The Times January 9th 1877, p11
It is not clear how long Sarah stayed in England, but by 1880 James and Sarah's financial position to breaking point. In August of that year James was in prison in Acca awaiting trial on charges of fraud. In a statement he gave on the 25th of August he recalled the hearing in London and that there had been an attempt to force him into bankruptcy. He argued that Masser of Manchester had falsified their invoices and cheated in the account of their sales. He further alleged that the trustee, James Halliday, was also fraudulent. Halliday was certainly on friendly terms with the Judge and according to a report from the trial, the men could "be seen from the court in Woodcock's veranda smoking their pipes." Davies declared that Masser had in fact robbed him of £30 000. The judge, according to the reporter's transcript, seemed to have little respect for Davies or his position, and directed the jury to consider a verdict before Davies' counsel arrived at the court. This they did, but "to the sore perplexity of the Judge, and the Queen's Advocate" found him NOT GUILTY. The cheers of the public waiting outside "rang unanimously from New Site to James Town, Acca" and, as the reporter decreed there ended the trial of James Davies "a man whose character is unimpeached."

The court proceedings seriously affected Sarah's personal wealth and health. In mid 1880 she left Lagos and travelled to Madeira, an island off the West Coast of Africa, hoping that a change of air would improve her health. She took up residence at the Ried's Hotel with her two youngest children and an African maid. If she had been seeking an escape from the proceedings these merely followed her, and in May 1880 Sarah wrote to Justice Macleod to try and clarify the family's financial situation for herself:

Funchal Madeira, 21st May, 1880

Sir, - By yesterday's steamer I received information of the judgement that you had given in the case of my marriage settlement properties. It gave me great shock for having no counsel to plead for me. I cannot understand how this could be done. I know nothing of the law and its forms, and I must beg your honour to take into consideration the following points, and in the cause of common humanity, see that I am righted.

That written statement of Mr Foresythe to Mr Earnshaw, was given at a time when Mr Foresyth and ourselves were not on friendly terms, and as sorry as I am to say it, yet the truth is that he wrote it from ill-feeling, wishing to injure me on account of this private pique, and he knew perfectly well that those properties you have adjudged to belong to the Trustees in Bankruptcy, were really mine. As for the Oil

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77 RA PP Vic 1882/12279
78 RA PP Vic 1882/12279
Mills, I myself paid Mr Mills nearly £200 towards that purchase in England in 1875, I think when I was there, though I cannot produce the receipt to prove this.

Before my marriage, the Queen who brought me up, insisted on a settlement being made upon me, before she would give the consent. Is it therefore right that through the ignorance and negligence of those who should have studied my interests, I should be deprived of a means of existence? For since my husband was made Bankrupt, I have been drawing and living upon the rents of the properties before-mentioned, I must also state that when I found my Trustees so careless and indifferent about the Trust, I authorized my husband to look after the properties, and I am sure neither he nor I knew that it was wrong of him to do so. This fault lies at my door; and I must throw myself on your Honour’s Mercy, and ask you to protect me and my children from being beggared. At the time the Settlement was made, I know there were three or four large properties, some we sold, using the money to buy others in their place. The Government took in some for roads compensating us; and we bought others in their stead, all this before Mr Sykes made my husband Bankrupt.

I appeal to your Honour’s humanity. Am I and my children to be left penniless and unprovided for, because we had no lawyer to make out the papers properly and legally? Everyone in Lagos knows that Ogologun House is mine. My Trustees never troubled about this manner possibly thinking as I did that these properties could not be touched, and when they saw the necessity of securing them, it was rather too late to do so.

The anxiety and worry consequent on all these troubles have ruined my health, hence my being at Madeira, I left Lagos almost dying from ill-health and anxiety. How am I to live, if I am to be beggared, and my husband also in trouble?

I trust that in administering Justice, your Honour will also remember mercy, even in my husband’s case, for he has undergone enough persecution as everyone in Lagos knows, if they chose to enlighten you. He may have made mistakes, but I am certain that he never intended to defraud his Creditors, he has always acted honourably in his business; but of course my evidence goes for nothing being his wife.

I throw myself on your mercy, and beg that your Honour will in some way help me and my children.

I remain, Sir, yours faithfully
S F Davies.

In June 1880 she received a reply from McLeod. He wrote with the distressing news that all the property that had not been secured to her in the Marriage Contract by the trustees had been handed over to her husband’s trustee in bankruptcy. He ended by saying that he would ensure that neither she nor her children would suffer from lack of counsel. But Sarah’s health deteriorated drastically over the next two months. On 23rd August, the Queen was “grieved and shocked to hear that poor Mrs Davies, was hopelessly ill.” In fact Sarah had died on the 15th August 1880, officially of

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81 RA PP Vic 1882/12279
82 RA PP Vic 1882/12279

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consumption, 10 days after her husband was cleared of fraud. On her death her daughter Stella and her younger brother were sent, with their maid, back to Lagos.

An obituary for Sarah appeared in the Lagos and West African newspaper lamenting the loss of one of Africa’s “brightest ornaments”. A published sermon preached at St Paul’s, Lagos on the 19th August also remembered her with reverence. She had been well known, and the priest spoke of her wide popularity, and her social and intellectual superiority, which made her in every respect an accomplished lady. The goodness of her heart was recalled fondly, along with her personality, one that was always active, lively and buoyant, revealing a woman full of energy and of purpose. Indeed he asked who could forget her when “she spoke or when she sang or when she played on an instrument of music?” She had taught at the Sunday school, and when no one else was there to carry on, she had managed the administrative affairs of the Female Institution where she had been a pupil.

Following her death Sarah’s poorly managed financial arrangements left her children as reliant on the generosity of the Queen as she herself had been. An undated letter from the British consul in Madeira demonstrates that the dispute over money and expenses continued after her death. Sarah owed the Reid Hotel over £90 for the cost of bed and lodging, nurse’s attendance, medical and funeral expenses, as well as the cost of her maid and children’s return passage to Africa. Held as security for the repayment were Sarah’s jewel case and jewels.

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82 RA PP Vic 1882/12279  
83 RA PP Vic 1882/12279  
84 RA PP Vic 1882/12279  
85 RA PP Vic 1882/12279
The final insult came on December 8th, 1880, when a notice was placed on the back cover of *The Lagos Times & Gold Coast Advertiser*.

IN THE MATTER OF
SARAH FORBES BONETTA DAVIES

**Deceased**
Sir - I HEREBY GIVE YOU NOTICE, as the Solicitor of the Trustees under the Marriage Settlement of the said SARAH FORBES BONETTA DAVIES, deceased, that unless you forthwith desist in interfering with the properties of the said deceased which were settled to her separate use under the said Settlement they will be compelled to take legal proceedings against you or any person or persons claiming through you on behalf of the parties beneficially entitled under the said Settlement, for the properties or any of them.

Dated at Lagos, this 1st day of December, 1880

Yours

(Signed) NASH. H. WILLIAMS
Solicitor for the said Trustees

To George Ernest Moss Esq.,
Lagos
Agent of James Halliday, Esq.
Trustee of J P L Davies
A Bankrupt

This notice appeared on the back of every issue of the *Lagos Times*, which was published twice a month, until June 28th, 1882.\(^5\)

\(^5\) *The Lagos and Gold Coast Advertiser*, Vol. 1, no. 3 December, 1880, back page.
Part Two Victoria Davies (b. 1863)

Victoria Davies, Sarah’s eldest child, heard the news of her mother’s death while on her way to visit her godmother, the woman she had been named after, Queen Victoria. On 24th August, the Queen entered in her diary:

After luncheon...saw poor Victoria Davies my black godchild, now 17, who heard this morning of the death of her mother at Madeira. The poor child was dreadfully upset and distressed and only got the news as she was starting up here, so that she could not put off coming. Her father has failed in business, which aggravated her poor mother’s illness. A young brother and a little sister, only 5, were with their mother. Victoria seems a nice girl, very black and with pronounced negro features. I shall give her an annuity.®

Victoria (see figure 6.5) was born in Lagos in 1863, and at her baptism the Queen had stood as godmother by proxy. Her gifts to Victoria were a gold salver, cup, knife, fork and spoon. The salver was inscribed to ‘Victoria Davies from her godmother Victoria – Queen of Great Britain and Ireland 1863’®. Although based in Africa, Victoria had accompanied her mother on trips abroad and in 1873 Victoria visited her godmother and the Queen had commented in her journal that Victoria, now eight years old, was “wonderfully like her mother, very black and with fine eyes.” She was well educated and had spent some time being educated in France.®

Following her mother’s death Victoria’s future seemed uncertain. Mr Lancelot Nicholson, the missionary who had been her guardian, wrote to James Davies in Lagos, and asked what he envisaged for his daughter’s future. James replied that he

® RA 2 390 1880
® RA pp 3/7/12
had no home in Lagos, the case had cost him everything; but he wanted Victoria to stay and be educated in England until she was 21. It had been Sarah’s wish that her daughter would complete her education at the Quanndon School, an establishment for young ladies in Derbyshire. The school was willing to take Victoria, but she did not have enough of an income to pay her own way.

Victoria turned to her godmother, and Mr Lincon wrote to the palace on her behalf. He received a reply from Harriet Philips who wrote to him from Kensington Palace later that month. At the time Victoria was in Catford staying with Mr Christie her father’s agent in Britain. Victoria had been to see Lincon in mid November with Christie who came with the news that James Davies’ business was improving and that he hoped to visit England in the spring of 1881, although there is no evidence that he took this trip. In her father’s absence Victoria formed her own plans for her future. She hoped they would include a trip to Hanover to improve her German accent, music and singing. Philips felt that Victoria showed no haste to return to Lagos, and her letter implies that she hoped, or thought, that Victoria should return to Africa. Nicholson agreed with her: “Knowing Miss Davis as I do [...] she ought to return to Africa.” It would not be the last time that members of the royal household wished Victoria was settled in a colony rather than England.

Nicholson agreed with her: “Knowing Miss Davis as I do [...] she ought to return to Africa.” It would not be the last time that members of the royal household wished Victoria was settled in a colony rather than England.

Christie, who was still trying to sort through Sarah’s debts from Madeira, claimed that money had been sent to her while she was there. However, this did not solve the dilemma of where the £86 a year, plus expenses of around £100 a year, were going to be found if Victoria was to attend the Quandon School. Nicholson asked if the Queen would pay the fees until James Davies was in a position to do so. The Queen agreed to give Victoria £100 a year for three years. This decision was followed by a dispute, echoing the debates that surrounded her mother’s education, as to which school Victoria should attend. According to a letter from Harriet Philips, Victoria was not at all keen to study in Derby, which she considered to be a cold county. Philips herself wrote that “[n]atives of Africa I imagine suffer from the cold” and Nicholson agreed with her. The Queen suggested they look for somewhere warmer on the south coast, and Brighton was suggested, as long as it was not too expensive.

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99 It is not clear how long Victoria spent in France, but correspondence shows that her mother had been paying for her studies there, and following her death and resulting debts, Victoria’s final term at her French school had not been paid for. RA PP3/7/12

90 It is not clear who Mr Lincon was, nor what his relationship with Victoria was.

91 RA PP 3/7/12
It seems that Victoria was unaware of her precarious economic status, or, she did not care. Her wish to go to Germany and her complaints to friends about Derby imply that she was oblivious to the impact her father’s economic position would have on her life. At this stage Sir Henry Ponsonby, who had been appointed the Queen’s private secretary in 1870, and added the duties of Keeper of the Privy Purse eight years later, became involved. Ponsonby was also concerned about Victoria’s attitude to her disposable income and asked Nicholson if she was aware of the seriousness of her situation, and if she had a guardian. Nicholson replied that in fact both he and Victoria had been in touch with her father, who had confirmed that he was still in a financially precarious position. As a result Christie had become her guardian, although at the time of the letter dated December 1880, Victoria was staying with Mrs Alice Mannering, a close friend of her mother’s, who lived at Thurlow Road, Hampstead in north west London.

In January 1881, Victoria asked her guardians if she could attend Cheltenham Ladies College, Gloucestershire, instead of moving to Derby. A letter arrived from Christie later that month confirming that Cheltenham had been agreed upon. The school taught subjects such as geography, history, literature, English, maths, natural sciences, philosophy, French, German, Latin and Greek. For an extra fee piano, dancing, singing, drawing and painting lessons could be arranged. Victoria enrolled at the school at the expense of Queen Victoria in February that year and remained there until the summer of 1883.

Victoria is mentioned In the Days of Miss Beale, a book about the College’s history by

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RA PP 3/7/14
DNB
RA PP3/7/12
The Cheltenham Ladies College, Private Correspondence, December, 2000
one of its old girls Florence Steedman. In her version of Victoria’s time at Cheltenham, Steedman presents her as a “pure bred African” lady with a “romantic” story. This involved the retelling of Sarah’s experiences but with a more exaggerated sense of tragedy than previously. Steedman’s version has Forbes travelling through a remote part of the Niger country when he reached a village where a sacrifice was being offered. This sacrifice was being carried out “by the interesting process of binding young girls each into a little boat, carrying them to the top of a bluff overlooking a deep ravine, and hurling them into the river below.”

According to the information available in Cheltenham College’s archives Victoria spent her holidays with a fellow student, Alice Lambert, in Leeds. However, according to Steedman’s account, Victoria also spent a lot of her vacation time with the royal household. Although she sometimes went to Sudeley Castle to spend holidays with a Mrs Emma Dent, apparently it was more usual for one of the Queen’s Gentlemen of the Household to collect Victoria from Cheltenham at the end of term. He would then solemnly escort “a dancing, chattering, gaily clad imp” to wherever the Queen happened to be in residence. This description gives the impression that Victoria was more of a child than a young woman approaching her 21st birthday. Certainly Victoria did stay in touch with the Queen and in March 1882 wrote to her expressing her relief at the Queen’s escape from an assassination attempt. By calling herself the Queen’s devoted little subject, she hints at the intimacy of their relationship.

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Florence Steedman, 1931
Florence Steedman, 1931, p68
Florence Steedman 1931, p68
Victoria was also a popular guest at Sudeley Castle, and her visits there can be dated by her entries in the castle’s visitors book. On March 18th 1882 she signed Victoria Davies, Lagos, West Africa, but also left a message in Yorubá.

 أدیدوینالتوکو، أتاسولا، أكلابولا

These were three Yorubá names, which she translated to give their English meanings.

1) the crown of honey is surrounded by care
2) the crown is cared for
3) the glory is almost departed

Five months later, on the 20th August, Victoria was a guest at the castle once more. This time she was one of a party of young people, mostly from Cheltenham College, who had been invited to tea at the castle. Mrs Dent noted in her diary that the party included “Miss Davis, the African girl - god-daughter of Queen Victoria - she brought some of the Queen’s presents to show us.”

It would thus seem that Victoria made friends in college and enjoyed life there. A signed portrait of the Queen, which could be seen in the Lower Hall Gallery during the 1930s, was apparently hung at Victoria’s request. It also seems that through the Queen’s patronage Victoria had some influence in the running of the school. Steedman claims that when Victoria passed an elementary music exam she suggested that her celebrations include a school holiday; it appears that with the Queen’s intervention her wish was granted. Steedman justified this rather excessive celebration by arguing that “it is a long step from human sacrifice for the mother to music examinations for the daughter, and one wonders what other girls in the history of the world would have been able to take it.” Steedman seems to have forgotten, or had not been told, that Sarah Davies was an accomplished musician, and ignores the possibility that Victoria herself was quite skilled before she went to Cheltenham.

In addition, common racialised and stereotypical images of Africa were ascribed to Victoria. According to Steedman Victoria had only ever worn “native dress” before coming to England and so she found dressing in European uniform incredibly uncomfortable, the implication being that she had not been to Europe before she came to school. Apparently, during one hot day in July Victoria felt she could no longer face

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99 SCA F56A Sudeley Castle Visitors Book, 1874-1889
100 SCA F38 Emma Dent’s Diary, January 1879-December 1896

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the restrictive uniform. After breakfast she slipped up to her room and having removed everything but her stockings put on her best nightdress and a pink sash. Then she walked across the garden to College, but her ingenuity was not appreciated and she was sent back to her room to change once more. Moreover as Victoria had lived an active out-door life at home, she “could climb like a monkey”, and found life without climbing dull. One day when

Miss Hopkins came back from an afternoon call, she saw as she turned the corner people standing in Bashill Road and staring up at the roof of her house. In a moment she was staring herself, for there was Victoria on the little ledge outside the parapet, clutching the parapet with her hands and the ledge with her bare toes. Miss Hopkins dared not try to attract her attention, for fear of making her lose her balance, and she just had to wait helpless until the girl chose to come in.\(^{10}\)

Victoria had lived in England, appeared at court, and her knowledge of English and European customs was far more acute that Steedman imagined.

Victoria’s understanding of European history allowed her to communicate her knowledge of Africa to Britons interested in her experiences. Sometime before she was married in 1891, Victoria wrote a letter to Sudeley Castle.

At Abomey, the capital, there are various places of torture and execution situated near enough to be seen from the stand when the king and his friends are assembled to enjoy these fearful sights as much as the Spaniards enjoy their bull fights and the old Bouans enjoyed their wild beast shows and martyrdoms. Women, children and men muster in great force attired in the [...] richest of clothing.\(^{10}\)

After her time at Cheltenham, Victoria slips out of public view, but her trips to Sudeley Castle place her in England at various points over the following years. In 1889, six years after she had left Cheltenham she stayed at the castle from the 26\(^{th}\) November until the 2\(^{nd}\) December, and after signing her full name as Victoria Matilda Anna Catherine Davies, of Lagos, West Africa, she left another Yorubá message.

Addagejinaluuke, Olujuoke, Olakalo, Ēka Ká firi pọdá!

She translated this as:

*May we meet again in all good fellowship.*\(^{11}\)

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\(^{10}\) Florence Steedman, 1931, p69

\(^{11}\) Florence Steedman, 1931, p69

\(^{12}\) SCA F56A Letter from VD to Mrs Emma Dent (undated)

\(^{13}\) SCA F56A Sudeley Castle Visitors Book, 1874-1889
Then on the 28th June 1890, she signed herself Victoria Davies, and left another Yorubá message.

"Olabo"

This she decided not to translate, but it was another warm phrase, ‘God has done some good things (shown kindness)’.¹⁰⁵

Victoria was married in 1891 to John Randle, a doctor from Regent, Lagos. He had been trained as a dispenser in the colonial hospital in Sierra Leone, qualified as a doctor at St Andrews’, and then went into practice in Lagos.¹⁰⁶ He was well known and highly regarded among the European and African elite in the region. In 1884 he was resident at the Colonial Hospital in Lagos, having been appointed Assistant Colonial Surgeon. Following a dispute with his superior there, Randle was offered a ten year contract by local European merchants. Eventually he would become the region’s ‘leading native physician’.¹⁰⁷ So with her marriage, Victoria moved from membership of the elite in Britain to a place among the elite in West Africa.

In August 1890 Victoria wrote to Mrs Dent at Sudeley Castle, who noted in her diary:

"Victoria Davis writes how busy she is preparing for her return to Lagos and her wedding - The queen is giving her wedding dress which is being made at Redfern’s"¹⁰⁸

Scanning through the Lagos Standard, there are various references to the social movements of Victoria’s family, including her father and stepmother, and her sister, Stella. In 1895, the Lagos Standard welcomed Stella home from England, where she had been continuing her studies.¹⁰⁹ Dr Randle was mentioned in 1895, for hosting a dinner to bid Consul Schmidt farewell¹¹⁰, and he figures in newspaper columns through the next few years. For example, his hall was used for a concert given by the Ladies Musical Club, and he, as well as James Johnson a prominent black church man in

¹⁰⁵ SCA F56A Sudeley Castle Visitors Book, 1874-1889. Thanks and credit for this translation to Dr Akin Oyetade, SOAS, London.
¹⁰⁶ Christopher Fyfe, 1962
¹⁰⁷ The Lagos Standard, February, 17th 1897, p2
¹⁰⁸ SCA F38 - Emma Dent’s Diary January 1879-December 1896. The letter implies that Victoria was married in Lagos, but I have been unable to find reference to this in any of the Lagos papers available at the British Library for these dates. Redfern’s was the couture house, founded by John Redfern with a salon on the Rue de Rivoli, Paris in 1881. In 1888 he was appointed dressmaker to the Queen (wysiwyg://87/http://www.handbag.com/fashion/vogue)
¹⁰⁹ The Lagos Standard, September 25th 1895, p2
¹¹⁰ The Lagos Standard, November 20th 1895, p2
Lagos, was on a provisional committee to arrange celebrations for the Queen's Jubilee. The beginnings of his political actions were also noted, and as early as 1896, he presided over a mass meeting at the Clover Memorial Hall that concerned itself with the report into the Commission to the Oyo.

Victoria surfaces in British archives again in 1900 when Sir Fleetwood Edwards wrote on her behalf to ask if the Queen would authorise the release of a small amount of money, so that Lady Denton, the wife of the Colonial Secretary in Lagos, might help pay for a passage for Victoria from Lagos to England. There was also a request for Victoria's daughter Beatrice to have her fees paid for full-time education at the rate of £35 a year. Denton felt that it would be good for Victoria to leave Lagos for a time, although she does not say why. A conflict in Victoria's marriage was implied when Denton confirmed that Victoria did not have her own means to make the trip and that her husband would not help her.112

The tone of the resulting correspondence suggests that initially there was a negative response from the Royal Household. In spite of this Victoria continued to pack her bags for the journey to England. Meanwhile her request was passed on to Princess Beatrice, Queen Victoria's daughter, and it seems to have been the Princess who arranged for her namesake's education. In February word came that the Queen would help Victoria once again and Lady Denton was authorised to provide a modest sum, fixed at her discretion, to enable Victoria to travel to England. However, not everyone on the staff in the Royal Household wished to see Victoria back in England, the author of an anonymous letter to Philips wrote that Victoria could go "to England or some other colony the latter, as you say, would seem to be preferable."113

Victoria did sail to England with her children and it seems they spent several months living in London. But she had lost most of the security formerly provided by her godmother, the now frail Queen. For a while she was forced to become a boarder in west London. She lodged with Adelaide Smith Casely Hayford and her sisters at 5 Melrose Terrace, a "mediocre little dwelling at Shepherd's Bush".114 Despite her financial and social demotion from the royal household, Victoria remained an

111 The Lagos Standard, August 26th 1896, p2; January 13th 1897, p2
112 RA PP Vic 1900/9147
113 RA PP Vic 1900/9147
114 Adelaide Cromwell, 1986, p57
important part of the black community in London, and was responsible for introducing the sisters to Samuel Coleridge-Taylor.\textsuperscript{115}

Something of how Victoria spent these months can be drawn from an article that appeared in \textit{The Church Missionary Gleaner} in September 1900. The author was Bishop James Johnson “who, although a coloured man, was consecrated Bishop of Lagos on the Gold Coast.”\textsuperscript{116} As a Reverend, he had written to the lawyer Samuel Lewis on behalf of Victoria’s parents in 1880. His piece, ‘The Queen and her West African Godchildren’, was concerned with the time the Bishop had spent time with Victoria Davies and members of the royal household.\textsuperscript{117}

On the 14\textsuperscript{th} May 1900 the Bishop accompanied Victoria and two of her children to Buckingham Palace where they visited Princess Beatrice, now Princess Henry of Battenberg. This followed Victoria’s recent appearance at a Church Missionary Society meeting for young people at the Queen’s Hall. On July 2\textsuperscript{nd} he accompanied Victoria once more, this time to Windsor Castle, to visit Queen Victoria as well as the Princess of Battenberg. The Bishop described the meetings between Victoria and the royal family as very informal and far more like gracious family encounters, with the Queen kissing Victoria and her children, than official and formal visits. Victoria’s daughter, then nine years old, and the godchild of Princess Henry, was being educated in Africa with the keen involvement of the Queen.

In this article the Bishop explained who Victoria was and the nature of her relationship with the Queen, but the context in which he placed her also reflects the way in which her mother’s story had become an important part of the international image of the British monarch, and her relationship with her black subjects.

Sarah Forbes Bonetta, though of African royal blood, had unfortunately as a child fallen into slavery. The King of Dahomey presented her to the late Captain Forbes, of one of Her Majesty’s cruisers, on the west coast of Africa, and the captain in his own turn introduced and presented the child to Her Majesty. The Queen afterwards adopted her as her protégée and gave her a first rate education in this country, where she resided for many years, and also exercised a lively interest in her all her life\textsuperscript{118}

\textsuperscript{115} Adelaide Cromwell, 1986
\textsuperscript{116} Charles Winslow, 1900, p312
\textsuperscript{117} The \textit{Church Missionary Gleaner}, September 1\textsuperscript{st} 1900, p135
\textsuperscript{118} The \textit{Church Missionary Gleaner}, September 1\textsuperscript{st} 1900, p135
The story of the visit drew attention across the Atlantic and was retold in *The Colored American Magazine* and the New York *Journal*. The *Journal* headed its article ‘All Coons Look Alike to Her Gracious Majesty, Victoria Imperatrix’, and for a sub heading added, ‘My Gal is a High-born Lady’. The *Colored American Magazine* felt that the articles in the *Journal* on the subject were otherwise “interesting and decent”, but their title betrayed the “low, mean prejudice which prevents the average American from being just as generous to red, yellow and dark skinned races”. This was a prejudice which “has no place in the heart of one of the most aristocratic and the most powerful woman upon the whole earth.”

During her time in London Victoria may have also spent some time staying with Alice Mannering; at the very least she visited her. In October 1900 Mannering wrote to Harriet Philips enclosing two photographs of Victoria with her children in her letter (see figure 6.8). One was for Philips and the other was intended for Princess Henry. But Mannering’s correspondence implies that Victoria’s stay was not purely a social one. After her marriage Victoria had continued to receive the £30 a year that had been promised to her by the Queen on the death of her mother. Philips was told that Victoria had asked for this allowance to be paid into Mannering’s account at Lloyds. It seems that for some reason Victoria no longer wanted her husband to have access to her income, and Mannering added that it was “sad to think of her being married to such a man as Dr Randle appears to be.”

Five years later Samuel Coleridge-Taylor published his collection of Negro melodies. The collection was significant for him and with them he hoped that he had done for black music what Dvorak had done for the Bohemian and what Brahms had done for Hungarian folk-music. *Oloba* was as Coleridge himself called it “a highly original number.” In the foreword, written in December 1904, he admitted that “I am indebted to Mrs. Victoria Randall for the only specimen of West African music.” He did not mention how she came to give it to him. Perhaps she left the transcript with him when she was in London sometime between 1900 and 1904. It is not known how

119 Charles Winslow, 1900, p
120 Charles Winslow, 1900, p312 - 3
121 RA PP Vic 1900/9147
122 Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, 1905, forward
123 Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, 1905, forward
124 Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, 1905, forward
Victoria knew of, or chose the piece, or how it was transcribed - perhaps she transcribed it herself.\textsuperscript{125}

Two years after the publication of \textit{Twenty-four Negro Melodies}, Victoria’s husband became the leader of a new political party in Lagos, and this was perhaps the source of the tension that existed between the couple. In 1908 the city’s Muslims applied to the British Administration for a loan to complete the building of a mosque. Their application was turned down despite a similar loan being granted to a Christian Bishop to erect a sailor’s institute that same year.\textsuperscript{126} This preferential treatment of the Christian church over colonial faiths prompted Dr Randle and Dr Obasa to establish the People’s Union, its aim being to embrace peoples of all religions in the fight for the welfare of the Lagos community.\textsuperscript{127}

African resistance to the British administration in Lagos also increased during the First World War particularly following Governor Lugard’s attempt to impose new water

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{125} Paul Richards, 1987
\item \textsuperscript{126} Emmanuel Ayandele, 1979
\item \textsuperscript{127} Emmanuel Ayandele, 1979
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
rates, and a criminal code that would have provided for corporal punishment in public places.\textsuperscript{128}

the whole agitation has been engineered by its two leaders, Drs Randle and Obasa. [...] Dr Randle stands alone as an agitator pure and simple. He is well off, but gladly leaves the placid atmosphere of law and order, for the troubled waters of political disturbance which appears to be his hobby in life.\textsuperscript{129}

Lugard even applied to the Colonial Office in London for a Deportation Order, to rid him of the two men. This he was denied, but he was asked to take appropriate measures to prevent violence.\textsuperscript{130} August 1915 saw numerous mass demonstrations in Lagos, and Randle and his party were at the heart of them. But the People’s Union was not only in conflict with the British in Lagos, but also with the African members of the legislative council. When the council convened a ‘patriotic meeting’ in connection with the First World War, Randle and Obasa countered it by holding a mass meeting to protest against the water rates and new criminal code.\textsuperscript{131}

Many people felt that the Native Unofficial members of the Legislative Council did not represent them. They were not nominated by the people, and their re-nominations, every five years, were made by the Government.\textsuperscript{132} James Johnson, who had accompanied Victoria to Windsor Castle, was also politically active. Aside from being present in London for the birth of the African Association in 1897, he had sat on the Legislative Council. In 1894, the Aborigines Protection Society had held a meeting which discussed the arbitrary nature of the removal of James Johnson from the Council of Lagos, seen to be a punishment for his protests against the Jehu War. The members of the Council in August 1915 were particularly resented for their lack of identification with their people, and so why, the \textit{Lagos Standard} asked, should the people respond to the Council’s requests?\textsuperscript{133}

It was in this context that Victoria found herself in London once again, during August 1916, this time staying at 4 Broadhurst Mansions, Broadhurst Gardens, Hampstead. While in London Victoria wrote to the Palace, and her letter revealed that she was still married to John, although he had not accompanied her to England. Victoria hoped that he and their son Jack would be able to join her, but at the time they were both

\textsuperscript{128} Akinjide Osuntokum, 1979
\textsuperscript{129} Quoted in Akinjide Osuntokum, 1979, p73
\textsuperscript{130} Akinjide Osuntokum, 1979
\textsuperscript{131} Akinjide Osuntokum, 1979
\textsuperscript{132} PRO CO 583/38
\textsuperscript{133} \textit{The Lagos Standard}, August 11\textsuperscript{th} 1915, p7
serving as special constables, as “our soldiers have been fighting at Duala and elsewhere.” Her letter is a reminder of the ordinary and extraordinary roles Africans played in the Great War, on behalf of the Allies. For, although Randle and other Lagosians of the educated elite were discontented with the administration of their region, they were sympathetic to the British cause, and did not use Britain’s political situation as a means to attempt to gain independence.\(^{136}\)

Having been in touch with Queen Alexandra, who had informed her that the King was at Windsor, Victoria asked for an interview so that:

> I may do homage as the daughter of Princess Bonetta and deliver a message from the people of my country as I promised the Prince Electro.\(^{136}\)

She wrote that she also had a message for Queen Mary, and recalled the

> Old days at Osbourne and Windsor where my mother and I stayed with my beloved godmother Queen Victoria.\(^{137}\)

As well as these messages, Victoria had brought gifts for the royal household. Curiosities for the royal children were sent in a wooden case. An ebony and ivory walking stick had been bought for Prince Albert. Unfortunately some things were stolen during her voyage, so Victoria was obliged to send Princess Mary a big Narsagoota basket for work instead of hair ornaments and a “pin of native gold.”\(^{138}\)

On this visit she was in London only for a week, moving on to stay with Christie, whom she still considered her guardian, and his wife, who lived in Castle Hill, Tonbridge, Kent. This is the last reference to her in the Royal Archives and, at least in a British context, she disappears again. As with the girls in Barnardo’s, and the sisters Caroline Maisey and Mary Matthews in the asylum, outside the Royal Archives the trail of Victoria’s biography runs cold, and it is not clear what happened to her or her family in the British Isles after 1916.

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134 RA PP3/7/91
135 Jacob Ajayi and Michael Crowder, 1974
136 RA PP3/7/91
137 RA PP3/7/91
138 RA PP3/7/91 & PP3/7/85
Reflections on two privileged lives

Sarah and Victoria led very different lives from the Barnardo’s girls or Caroline and Mary. Their experiences reflect a world and class apart from those found in the archives of the poor and dispossessed. Yet this does not mean that what we know about their lives is any more conclusive. Unlike most working-class people Sarah and Victoria did leave some evidence written in their own hand, though there are not many and they mostly retain an official and distant tone. There is no evidence of Sarah’s feelings when she reflected on her violent childhood, as she surely must have done, or on the privileged if bizarre life she lived after that. The majority of the information we have about both women is second-hand; through others’ letters, biographical information, newspapers or journals. These give us little insight into the emotional lives of the women.

There were emotional difficulties in both women’s personal lives, in their marriages and finances. Both had to compete with the barely disguised racist, or at least patronising attitudes they faced from some members of the British establishment. But we have no real insight into the feelings they might have had about their position and possible conflicts between homes, friends and family in Britain and Africa. Nor do we know how they felt about the plight of black people around them who were not as wealthy or as privileged. Bishop James Johnson, who knew both mother and daughter, was politically active and present when the African Association was established in London in 1897. Moreover when the African Association organised the first Pan-African Conference, held in London in July 1900, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor wrote the music which was performed at the evening receptions.

These were two men that Victoria seemed to know well, but we do not know if she discussed their politics with them, or if she supported their anti-imperial stand, or the confrontational stance taken by her husband. Thus, although their biographies are longer than the black women we have looked at before, they still represent a small insight into the lives they led. Still their presence is equally important. They reflect a real multi-cultural vision in Queen Victoria’s character, certainly vis-à-vis members of her own staff who wanted Victoria to remain outside England. They also show that black women living in Britain were rich as well as poor, educated and respected as well as isolated and ignored, but that all classes faced difficulties and prejudice.
Not all black women in Britain were as poor as the likes of Susan Hayes, nor lived a life as privileged as Sarah Forbes Bonetta and Victoria Davies. This chapter focuses on women whose experiences of life fell somewhere between the two. These women were undoubtedly privileged as regards their education and access to wider society, and used their position to highlight the position of black people in the United States and under colonial rule throughout the European empires. The woman at the centre of this chapter is Ida B Wells, a black American journalist who made two very public crossings of the Atlantic in the 1890s. Ida B Wells is a relatively well known figure in her home country, with numerous books written about her contribution to the American civil rights campaign, and her role as a black American female journalist and campaigner. Yet her visits to Britain, which she undertook to draw attention to the lynching of black Americans, the reception the British press gave her, and the impact she had on British debates on civil liberties and notions of international human rights, have been given little consideration.

Like Toussaint L’Ouverture and William Cuffay, Ida B Wells used the principles of liberal modernity and ‘the public sphere’ to draw attention to the plight of black Americans when she toured Britain to draw attention to the horrors of lynching. She demanded an end to the violent attacks on black people, and did so using demands for
equality and full citizenship as the foundation of her arguments. In the context of debates around the public sphere and ethnicity put forward by Houston Baker and Paul Gilroy, locating Wells in this way is complex. However, it does provide a way to draw together women and events, which might otherwise appear disparate and unconnected. As previously noted the ‘public sphere’ can convey more than ‘minorities’ or ‘multicultural’, for although these terms attempt to convey the intricate nature of modern societies, they fail to evoke the complexity of their formation across both time and space. When Wells was in London her closest allies were white women, and a sense of the public sphere enables us to create a more inclusive history. She used modern networks and institutions to communicate ideas on racial inequalities, civil rights and suffrage on both sides of the Atlantic.

Furthermore, Wells’ presence in the public sphere highlights that, although Habermas may have neglected race in his analysis, race was discussed in the Victorian public sphere, and race was a subject used to consider the merits of civilisation and liberal democracy in the West. By interrogating the fragmented and shifting relationships of identity and modernity, we can reconstruct and refigure the spaces used by some black women, and see how they asserted themselves in the public sphere. For some of these women, London became an important space in the development of themselves, their ideas and the impact of these ideas in the public spaces of the English speaking world. It is a paradox that a society that had officially abolished slavery was one that came to endorse the expansion of Empire and the repressive and undemocratic processes of colonialism. With the expansion and domination of the British Empire, London became the most important imperial city in the world. Its political geography also made it a central focus of anti-imperial and anti-racist debates.

7.1 Ida B Wells

In 1886, a black woman living in Jackson, Tennessee, was accused of poisoning her mistress. A mob broke into the prison where she was being held, dragged her to the court house square, stripped her naked, and hung her. It later transpired that she was innocent of the crime. Nobody was arrested for her murder, nor any attempt made to

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1 Thomas Holt, 1995
2 Jonathan Schneer, 1999
punish her attackers. The story of this lynching, one of over 1000 that occurred in the United States between 1883 and 1894, appeared in the June edition of *The Contemporary Review* to coincide with Wells' second British tour in 1894.

Wells is an example of a young black woman who became a respected voice within the liberal public spheres of America and Britain. The spheres in which she was engaged were truly transnational. Following her success in drawing attention to the crime of lynching in the public spheres in the United States, she set sail for England in April, 1893. This was to be the first of two trips across the Atlantic. The majority of the detail of her trips comes from articles she wrote at the time, and her autobiography *Crusade for Justice*. First published in 1970, nearly forty years after her death, Wells was still working on the text when she died in March 1931. Although it may not be as complete as she intended, it does detail her trips to Britain and her visits to London.

Wells was born in Mississippi in 1862, at the end of the epoch of American slavery, but a continuing disregard for the civil rights of black people in the South, including the shooting, burning and hanging of black people, euphemistically called "lynchings". Wells was the eldest of eight children born to James Wells and Elizabeth Warrenton who had both been slaves, and as a result could not be legally married until after emancipation. Her father was a carpenter, and both Wells' parents placed an emphasis on education, James Wells being selected as one of the first members of the board of trustees for Rust College. In 1878 Wells' parents died during a yellow fever epidemic which struck their home in Holly Springs, Mississippi; aged sixteen Wells was determined to keep her family together, and trained to become a teacher. After passing her teaching certificate she was assigned to a one room school in a rural district about six miles from Holly Springs, and she worked there until 1882 or 1883 when her aunt suggested that she move to Memphis, Tennessee, and seek a teaching position there.

In 1883 the US Supreme Court upheld the right of private businesses, such as train companies and theatres, to segregate peoples of different skin colours in separate,
although equal, accommodation. This process of apartheid became known as Jim Crow. The following year Wells became a local cause célèbre when she refused to sit in the segregated first class compartment of a train. She was on her way to her school in Woodstock, Tennessee, when she refused to move from the Ladies car in which she had been travelling, because the ‘coloured’ accommodation was a smokers car. The carriages were separate, but not equal. She told the conductor that she would rather get off the train than go in the smoking compartment, which she did. She returned to Memphis and hired a lawyer in order to sue the railway company.

She may have taken inspiration from other black women who challenged their racist treatment. In 1880 Jane Brown, who had also been ousted from a ladies’ car was awarded $3000 in damages, and in 1881 Julia Hooks had taken a seat reserved for whites in a local theatre, and refused to move until she was arrested and given a $5 fine for disorderly conduct. Wells won her case, and in December 1884 the headline in the Memphis Daily Appeal read: A Darky Damsel Obtains a Verdict for Damages against the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad - What it cost to Put a Colored Teacher in a Smoking Car - Verdict for $500. But Wells’ victory was short lived, for in 1887 the Tennessee State Supreme Court overturned the decision.

The result formed the basis of her first article which appeared in a church paper in 1887. She began to write regularly for church papers, and eventually some of the weekly papers for the black community. It was on the basis of these that she was offered a financial interest and the editorship on a Memphis paper Free Speech and Headlight. Her articles criticising the condition in the separate coloured schools in Memphis got her fired from her teaching job in 1891.

As well as education, lynching became a personal and institutional tragedy in Wells’ eyes, one that she knew was wrapped up in larger issues of civil, social and political rights in the United States. As well as the physical horror and injustice of the lynch mobs, the indignity of the attacks was highlighted by many black Americans writing in

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9 In America “first class” was the class used by ordinary passengers, the Pullman car being the equivalent of British “first class” (from Anti-Caste, vol.i, no 2, March 1888, p3)
10 Alfreda Duster, 1972
11 Linda McMurray, 1998
12 Alfreda Duster, 1972, footnote, p19
13 Linda McMurray, 1998
14 Alfreda Duster, 1972
15 Alfreda Duster, 1972
the nineteenth century who reflected on the lack of dignity and respect afforded them. This was seen as an invasion of their rights, both de jure and de facto. Black people found members of their community being charged with crimes without evidence, and they lacked access to protection from the law - men, women and children could be taken from their homes or jail cells, and then murdered, with the perpetrators seemingly running no risk of punishment. All of these infringements reflected a blatant disregard of black Americans' rights as full citizens, and the inability of the black community to have the law enforced to protect them was a constant source of anger and humiliation.

These issues were debated in the black press, but unlike Habermas' view, for black people in the American South, visibility in the public sphere was not neatly equated to power in the public sphere. Black newspapers had become fairly numerous in the latter half of nineteenth century America, and they were certainly on a scale unheard of in Europe. Most major American cities had daily and weekly newspapers catering for the interests of their black communities, with some also supporting journals and other literary editions. Wells' experiences with *Free Speech* demonstrates that the freedom of assembly and association, and the freedom to express and publish opinions, was a fragile notion in the American South.

After the lynching of three men including the husband of a close friend of hers, Wells ferociously attacked the injustices of lynch law, and the charge of rape that was most usually used to justify it. In the 21st May edition of *Free Speech* Wells wrote *Eight Men Lynched*, an editorial that spoke out strongly against mob rule. The piece raised the wrath of the racist elements with Memphis' white community, and, fortunately for Wells, when the piece was printed she was on a trip visiting friends and supporters in New York and Chicago. In her absence, anger focused on Wells' co-worker, Flemming. The tone of their response was reflected in the *Memphis Commercial*:

> Patience under such circumstances is not a virtue. If the negroes themselves do not apply the remedy without delay it will be the duty of those he has attacked to tie the wretch who utters these ca lumnies to a stake at the intersection of Main and Madison Sts., brand him on the forehead with a hot iron and perform upon him a surgical operation with a pair of tailor's shears.

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16 Alfreda Duster, 1972
17 Linda McMurray, 1998
18 Linda McMurray, 1998
Following this, and the publication of other editorials like it, and fearing that he himself would be lynched, Flemming heeded the threats and left his newspaper, as he had been forced to do once before from Marion, Arkansas. Wells then heard that a mob had descended on the Free Speech's offices, destroyed its furnishings, and sent death threats to those who might have been tempted to try and restart it. She did not return to Memphis, but instead accepted a position as a reporter for the New York Age and continued her campaigns to improve the civil rights of women and blacks from the North.

7.2 Wells, Catherine Impey and Anti-Caste

In 1892, while spending time in Philadelphia, Wells met Catherine Impey, the editor of the English journal Anti-Caste. As Vron Ware has noted, Impey seems to have been forgotten except for her presence in Wells' articles and autobiography. The first issue of Impey's journal appeared in March 1888. Anti-Caste deplored lynching and other forms of racism. Originally its strap line was devoted to the interests of coloured races, but in 1889 this changed to Anti-Caste: Advocates the Brotherhood of Mankind irrespective of Colour or Descent, and it dealt "mainly, although not exclusively with colour caste". It seems that Impey must have read numerous editions of national and international papers and journals each year, which she then edited and presented to the readers of Anti-Caste. Some she may have subscribed to, some international papers were sent to her by people from all over the world. The articles commented on a diverse number of papers that raised questions of racialisation and caste.

Anti-Caste was aware and in touch with other pressure groups with a similar aim, and issues included funding requests from the Anti-slavery society, the Aborigines Protection Society, and the National Indian Association. In its first issue it printed a message from Charles Allen, the Honorary Secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society, who would cover Wells' trip in various papers. He was pleased by the inception of the paper, and promised to supply Impey with items on slavery and the slave trade that

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19 Jacqueline Royster, 1997, p210
20 Vron Ware, 1992
21 *Anti-Caste*, vol. I, no 1, March 1888, p1
22 *Anti-Caste*, vol iii, no 12, December 1890, p2
might be of interest to the general reader. The members of this readership were fairly significant too; by the end of 1889 it had over 250 subscribers, and up to 3500 copies were printed for distribution each month. These were sent to readers not only in London, but all over Britain, from Edinburgh to Evesham, and Sunderland to Bristol. It gained an international readership as well. By 1890 100 copies were being sent to the Rev. S P Foster for distribution in South Carolina, and in 1895 personal subscriptions came from men and women in Africa (4), Bermuda, the Bahamas (6), Canada and the United States (13).

It received favourable responses from popular papers closer to home like the *British Friend*, *Christian Recorder*, the *Indian Messenger* and the *Liverpool Daily Post*. Its readership also came from overseas, and as part as the paper’s first annual report, a letter from Fredrick Douglas, was published. Douglas, then the US minister to Haiti, and a life subscriber to *Anti-Caste*, was a man held in high regard by international anti-racist and anti-slavery campaigners. He wrote that there was;

> a world wide need of your little witness against the pride and prejudice that poison the relations of human beings, who otherwise find it both for their interest and happiness to esteem and love one another. Anything you can do to expose this foul spirit [or caste] and enlighten the moral sentiment of your countrymen on this subject excites our gratitude and increases our hopes of a better future.

In 1892 Impey revisited America and stayed with Fredrick Douglas and his wife at Cedar Hill near Washigton, and also Bishop and Mrs Tanner in Philadelphia. During this visit she met Wells and was horrified at the lynching stories she told her. Wells must have made quite an impression on Impey, and it was her invitation that brought Wells to Britain in the spring of 1893. Like Hallie O Brown who came to London in 1895 to raise an appeal for Wilberforce University in Ohio, Wells also came with the highest recommendation from Fredrick Douglas.

Certainly the readers of *Anti-Caste* were already aware of the issues of lynching and equality that Wells was going to bring to a wider British public. In April 1889 Impey wrote a short piece about a murder in Atlanta, Georgia, during which Captain John I Hearn had shot and fatally wounded an unknown black man. Trouble had arisen, as it

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23 *Anti-Caste*, vol. l, no 1, March 1888, p4
24 *Anti-Caste*, vol. v, nos. 2 & 3, February & March 1892, p4
25 *Anti-Caste*, vol ii, March, 1895
26 *Anti-Caste*, Supplement, vol III, no 1 January 1890 p3
27 Alfreda Duster, 1972
28 *Anti-Caste* vol vii, March 1895, p5
would do in Wells’ case, because of the black man’s refusal to give up his seat on a train. In the February edition of 1891 another lynching was reported. The Barnwell Outrage, the murder of eight men tied to a tree and then shot, closely followed by the murder of another man, was taken from the Charleston News and Courier. Six months later a letter from “a Negro Professor of a Southern University” was published. He wrote that:

I notice in the February issue of Anti-Caste that you had heard of the Barnwell outrage, and the other horrible murder that followed soon after. […] I feel it my duty to say, fearing lest you may not get it elsewhere, that, not one of these lynchers has been brought to trial. Of course it [is] as everybody expected. The murderer who followed so quickly with his crime, has been tried, and despite the clear evidence of his guilt, a mistrial was declared, at the court last week - the jury standing 6 to 6. People may read of the South and think that they know all about it, but they know nothing of the grievances we have to suffer.”

In March 1892, Impey commented on a lynching in Arkansas, which had gained unusual publicity in the English press. Then in January 1893 edition Impey placed an image of a lynching on the front page. Entitled ‘A LYNCHING SCENE IN ALABAMA’ she asked how long would “the callous nation look on?” (See figure 7.1)

Throughout the early 1890s the ‘American question’ was present in most issues of the paper, and the issues highlighted were not just lynchings. In October 1891 the journal reported the case of a black clergyman who was ejected from a Pullman sleeping-car, and the fact that in this instance the Afro-

29 Anti-Caste, vol iii, no 2, February 1890, p3
30 Anti-Caste, vol iii, nos. 7 & 8, July & August 1890, p4
31 Anti-Caste, vol iii, nos. 7 & 8, July & August 1890, p4
32 Anti-Caste, vol v, nos. 2 & 3, February & March, 1892, p4
American League had taken legal action. This was followed in May by an extract from *National Pilot*, a Virginian Magazine, that commented on the debate around the separate cars for whites and blacks on the American railway system. The cars, if separate, were supposed to provide 'equal accommodation'. According to a report by the Rev. G B Gordon, this was not the case. In October 1891 he had completed a 5000 mile trip through the American South through states such as Tennessee and Mississippi, where the separate car law was in force. Gordon did not find a single state where first class accommodation for black passengers which was equal to that of whites.

Wells began her effort to draw international attention to these issues when she left the United States on 8th April 1893, and arrived in Liverpool nine days later. Initially she stayed in Street, Somerset with Impey and her sister Kate. After a few days she left to stay with Isabella Fyvie Mayo in Aberdeen, a home which Wells described as an asylum for 'East Indians'. Here Wells met Dr George Ferdinands " a native of Ceylon, [who had] finished his collegiate and medical course at the University of Aberdeen and was practicing his profession of dentistry. Another young man, a relative of his was attending school." From Scotland she went on to speak in Newcastle, Manchester and Birmingham. Although these meetings were well attended, the local communities did not universally support Wells. Compassion fatigue was also a problem for civil rights workers in the nineteenth century. In the first issue of *Anti-Caste* Impey stressed the importance of fighting for international human rights, although she knew that there would be some readers who would say that they did not have time to listen because, "drink, impurity, militarism" and a thousand other evils clamoured on every hand for redress. A week before she was due to speak in Birmingham, Wells also found herself defending her lectures, to a 'wearied councillor' whose letter to the editor of the city's *Daily Post* had been published.

My time is valuable, my powers limited and I feel justified in asking what possible practical object can be attained by such meetings. [...] I fail to see what ground there is for Birmingham people to dictate on questions of detail in the local police arrangements of certain towns in the United States. As a public man I cannot find time to do all that I would wish for our city; and I protest against being expected to

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33 *Anti-Caste*, vol iv, no 10, October 1891, p1
34 *Anti-Caste*, vol v, no 6, May 1892, p6
35 Alfreda Duster, 1972
36 Alfreda Duster, 1972, p89
37 *Anti-Caste*, vol. 1, no. 1, March 1888, p1
give my attention to matters of municipal detail in a civilized country at a great
distance, any interference with which by English people would be an
impertinence."

Wells reacted swiftly, and on 16th May, a day before her meetings, her response from 66
Gough Road, Birmingham, was published by the editor of the *Daily Post*. She
highlighted the numbers of black men and women who had been murdered since the
end of the civil war and she accused the American press and pulpits of remaining
silent over the atrocities. As these organs remained silent, she explained that it was up
to the British public to vocalise a public opposition.

The moral agencies at work in Great Britain did much for the final overthrow of
chattel slavery. They can in like manner pray, write, preach, talk and act against
civil and industrial slavery; against hanging, shooting and burning alive of a
powerless race.
[...]
The horror and amazement with which my story has been received in Scotland and
England; the prompt and vigorous resolutions of protest and condemnation of
lynch law, have convinced me the truth of my supposition. And I believe the
people of Birmingham, when they hear the story, will be not one whit less willing
nor too busy to lend their influence to what is fast becoming a national evil."

Wells then headed to London and her imminent arrival was announced in *Society*, a
London periodical.

A very interesting lady is about to visit London in the hope of arousing sympathy
for the Blacks, whose treatment in the United States is not seldom fiendishly cruel.
Miss Ida Wells is an American Negro lady, who is fortunate enough to have
secured as an ally Mrs Isabella Fyvie Mayo...opened her campaign in Aberdeen
with a drawing-room meeting at Mrs Mayo's home."

Wells was in London in time to attend the May Meetings. The Meetings were the
annual gathering of Britain's charities and societies, when they held elections, dinners,
ermons and the distribution of prizes. But before Wells reached the city she found
herself embroiled in a dispute between Mayo and Impey. The women fell out over the
latter's romantic letter to a co-worker. According to Wells, Impey had fallen in love
with Dr George Ferdinands and believed he loved her. As a result she wrote him a
letter, which was basically a proposal of marriage, informing him that "she had written
to her family acquainting them with the state of affairs, and telling them to prepare to
receive him as her husband and that she rejoiced to give this proof to the world of the
theories she had approved - the equality of the brotherhood of man."41

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38 Alfreda Duster, 1972 p99
39 Alfreda Duster, 1972 p100-101
40 Alfreda Duster, 1972, p90
41 Alfreda Duster, 1972, p103
It seems that Ferdinands did not return her feelings, and, for reasons that are not clear, forwarded the letter to Mayo's home, where Wells had first met him. Mayo was outraged and insisted that Impey no longer remained a public part of the campaign, and so Wells was left without her influential support. Despite her raised profile due to announcements in journals *Society* and the *Ladies Pictorial*, Wells felt that the loss of Impey meant she was unable to gain access to as many of the May Meetings as she would have liked. Wells however stayed loyal to Impey and as a result was cast out of Mayo's circle too. Wells also received a letter from Ferdinands strongly condemning her for staying loyal to Impey. Wells did not answer his letter, but she did “often wonder if he ever realized his mistake in passing on the offending letter instead of destroying it.”[^42]

Despite this setback Wells was successful in securing a few minutes to speak to the British Women’s Temperance meeting, which was presided over by Lady Somerset. Somerset had invited Amanda Smith to London in 1878. Amanda Smith was another black American woman who had spoken to British congregations (before her trip to Egypt), although on a smaller scale to Wells, and on matters of religion rather than politics.[^43] Somerset had met Smith during a trip to America where she had visited black congregational churches. Telling a friend in London about her visit she wrote that “you would love the coloured people, they are delightful [...] they nodded their dear heads, and shouted their hymns and were so nice.”[^44] Somerset thought if Smith visited London at her invitation she would “attract really educated people”[^45] to the temperance cause in London. Since Amanda Smith’s visit Somerset had advanced her position in the temperance world, having been elected president of the British Women’s Temperance Association in 1890.

It is worth mentioning the relationship between Somerset and Smith, firstly because it suggests that Wells was given time to speak to the Temperance society because Somerset had sympathies for black people. But also because Somerset would not find Wells as ‘dear’ as she might have thought, and would later attempt to discredit her in public more than once, despite eventually becoming a member of the Anti-Lynching

[^42]: Alfreda Duster, 1972, 105
[^43]: Amanda Smith had also met Impey, and was listed as one of those with whom Impey enjoyed “the friendships and acquaintance of many of those known as ‘coloured’ people”, in the first issue of *Anti-Caste*, vol I, no 1, March 1888, p1
[^44]: Quoted by Adrienne Israel, 1998, p102
[^45]: Quoted by Adrienne Israel, 1998, p102
Society. All that was to come and it seems that at this stage they engaged in little in depth discussion about lynching. Wells returned to New York disappointed.

She was not, however, defeated, and she still believed that if she could turn the 'English press and pulpit' in her favour, they would in turn influence American opinion. So Wells returned to England in 1894. She landed in Liverpool on March 24th 1894 and remained there until she travelled to Manchester in April. Later that month she went on to Bristol and Newcastle. Her second tour was to be far more successful, and raised the interest of a trans-Atlantic public sphere.

Once more she was staunchly supported by Impey and Anti-Caste. In the journal's annual report for 1884, Anti-Caste's endeavour to support Wells' campaign was highlighted. Included in the expenditure for the year were the balance sheet of Miss Wells' first campaign, and a grant to Wells (to cover her expenses in London and Bristol) which came to £4. With their help, Wells' return to Britain firmly placed the subject of lynching on the liberal agenda. At the Friends (Quakers) May Meeting, following a debate on how to pressure countries where slavery still thrived, (such as Zanzibar, Borneo and Uganda which were still under British influence or were British Protectorates), a Friend brought up the subject of lynching in the Southern United States, but was told that it had been taken up the previous week.

At the beginning of June, the Review of Reviews announced that Wells, "a talented and resolute young lady of colour", was on a pilgrimage around the British Isles to gain 'pity' from its inhabitants on the subject of negro lynching. Although Wells raised the profile of her cause, she was not always directly associated with it in the press. When Charles Aked, the Secretary of the Aborigine's Protection Society, wrote his article on 'The Race Problem in America', published in Contemporary Review in June 1894, he made no mention of Wells. Nor did the Spectator, when it commented on the aspects of lynching raised by Aked, in one of their June issues.

The Spectator's report illustrates that public opinion, although mostly united behind Wells' cause, did not always condemn the principle of lynch law outright. The
Spectator’s columnist argued that there were periods when lynching was justified. Firstly when society was in a state of transition when an, “inability or unwillingness” of the full rule of law made punishments inadequate, or certain crimes not punished with enough severity, and so it was left for citizens to do it themselves.\(^5\) However, in the case of the Southern States the Spectator argued against illegal action.

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\text{[N]o such excuses can be pleaded in the present case. [...] The sole reason that seems to account for the determination of the white population of the south not to allow negroes to take their trial, is the race-feeling that what is good enough for the white man is too good for the black man. The white man loses his life after trial and conviction; the black man shall lose his before either. The white man is condemned upon by evidence; the black man shall be condemned upon by mere suspicion. The white man is put out of his misery quickly, the black man shall be subjected to prolonged torture. For the white man hanging is a proper punishment; therefore, for the black man it must be burning alive. Race-hatred, apparently, blinds the white population alike to the mischief of their actions.}\]

In his piece for the Review, not unlike the Birmingham councillor Wells had encountered the year before, Aked was loathe to express an opinion on the way in which England’s neighbours should manage their own affairs, but felt that when “ruffians take to skinning men alive, vivisecting them, and burning them slowly to death, no decent man can resent the expression of horror and indignation that burst from the lips of all observers.”\(^6\) The paper republished a table of statistics that had originally appeared in the Chicago Tribune, illustrating the number of black people that had been lynched in 1893. The Review calculated that in 1893, “excluding Sundays, a coloured man was lynched every day from January to December, and two out of three of the victims were not even accused of assaulting white women.” The condemnation continued, with a final statement;

\[
\text{This is not civilisation, it is savagery; and all Americans will rejoice if the cry of shame and horror from outside nations should rouse the local authorities to a sense of their duty to suppress this systematised murder.}\]

On 12\(^{th}\) April 1894 Aked introduced readers of The Christian World to Wells. Under the headline LYNCH LAW RAMPANT/ A DEEP DISGRACE TO AMERICA/ MISS WELLS’ CRUSADE, he described her as “a coloured lady, young and of great personal charm, a master of forceful and eloquent English” and made much of the fact that she was a personal friend of the ‘old slave orator’ Fredrick Douglas.\(^7\) The paper retold the story of the lynching of the black men who had been “personal friends of the courageous

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\(^5\) Spectator, June 2\(^{nd}\) 1894, p744  
\(^6\) Spectator, June 2\(^{nd}\) 1894, p744  
\(^7\) The Review of Reviews, June 1894, p559  
\(^8\) The Review of Reviews, vol. 9 June 1894, p559
editor of Free Speech” and that she had “denounced the inactivity, the criminal complicity of the police administration of the city”.

When her friends had been lynched almost under her office windows, when her business had been destroyed by a lynching mob, when her own life had been sought, when a man like Douglas pleaded with her to make this cause her own, she, believing in God and in His Christ, could do no other than conclude that the word of the Lord had come to her saying “Go, tell to the civilised world, or as much of it as will hear, what things are done to the coloured race under the flag of the United States.”

Writing from Liverpool, Aked reported that before him as he wrote was

[T]he original telegram which was received by the editor of The Inter-Ocean, a Chicago Daily which had denounced the lynching of C J Miller of Bardwell, Kentucky, for the crime he had not committed last July […] from Memphis this wire was despatched telling the editor of the Inter-Ocean that the negro would be burnt that night, and adding “can you send Miss Ida Wells to write up?”

Aked visualised the geography of lynching as a contagious disease that was spreading across America, having already crossed the Mason and Dixon Line, and “invaded the Quaker State itself.” He felt that if it was left unchecked by civil authorities, the virus threatened Philadelphia, or even New York. But the role Aked saw the British public playing to halt the spread was relatively small, a surprising stance considering the vocal position of the Aborigines Protection Society’s position on many issues of the rights of black people, particularly in Africa. But in this piece he claimed that Wells did not really hope to achieve anything through political action in Britain, and clearly saw that it was “only possible for the British people to exert a strong and friendly influence upon the best portion of the American public, who themselves must see that the wrong thing is put right.”

By the end of May, Wells had made her way to London. She stayed for six weeks, during which time she moved among the city’s religious, liberal and intellectual elite. She spoke at 35 meetings, including gatherings at the Protestant Alliance, the Women’s Protestant Union, the Bloomsbury Chapel Congregation, Belgravia Congregational Church, the Democratic Club, the Ideal Club, the Pioneer Club, and also the congregation of the Unitarian Chapel on Little Portland Street. Her address to this

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55 The Christian World, April 12th, 1894, p259
56 The Christian World, April 12th, 1894, p259
57 The Christian World, April 12th, 1894, p259
58 The Christian World, April 12th, 1894, p259
59 The Christian World, April 12th, 1894, p259
60 The Christian World, April 12th, 1894, p259

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audience was reported in the *Daily News*, which also printed the resolution that the congregation passed at the end of Wells’ talk.

[T]his meeting of regular and occasional worshipers in Little Portland Street Chapel desires to express its abhorrence of the barbarities perpetrated in the Southern States of America under the names of Lynch Law, and to appeal to all lovers of justice in the United States to obtain the equal protection of the law, and the recognition of common human rights for all their fellow citizens.

The *Daily Chronicle* ran a column on “the young coloured lady who is conducting in England such a plucky campaign for the rescue of her people from the brutalities of the Southern States of America.” The newspaper noted that parts of the American press were supportive of Wells’ tour, and had “noticed the comments of the British press with great magnanimity.” This contrasted with the defensive stance that the *Chronicle* believed the American press would take, that would be the resentment of foreign advice, and a reminder to the appropriate editors in Britain that charity began at home.

The *Inter-Ocean* was one such paper. The Chicago *Daily Inter-Ocean* was published from 1872 - 1914, and was the only journal in the States “brave enough to print at length the dings, impressions, and reactions of a colored woman who was in another country pleading for justice in her own.” The paper had responded to the *Chronicle’s* early remarks by wondering “what are we to do about it?” It was, the *Inter-Ocean* admitted, simply impossible to deny Wells’ statements, nor could they “offer any excuse as to why these things should be so.” The Chicago paper thus concluded that the civilised world would hold “America responsible for the outrages in the South, so long as there [wa]s no earnest and active opposition to the outrages in the North.” However, considering the space *Inter-Ocean* gave to Wells’ dispatches, their supportive response to her cause is not surprising.

The *Daily Chronicle* also noted that a few American journals had taken up the lynching cause, but that in reality they had had little practical success. The *Chronicle* declared that,

The truth is that lynching is a part of the brutal spirit prevailing throughout the South which manifests itself otherwise in duels and blood feuds. [...] The mere
hatred of the freed negro and jealousy of his influence at the polls would not explain the lynching mania, unless it were grafted on to the violence and lawlessness which are too common in the Southern States.\textsuperscript{66}

However, in sympathy with these lawless states, the paper accepted that,

in fairness it must also be added that the negroes are undoubtedly guilty of infuriating crimes, and that the process of criminal justice, slow and uncertain everywhere in the United States, is slowest and most uncertain of all in the Southern States.\textsuperscript{67}

It countered again by stating that in fact these factors did not “remove in the slightest degree the overwhelming reproach which these recurrent horrors constitute for American civilisation.”\textsuperscript{68} Overall the writer concluded that Wells could;

congratulate herself that her gallant efforts are already bearing fruit, and that her words are already echoing from continent to continent. It is a valuable reminder that individual initiative is still one of the most potent factors in the world.\textsuperscript{69}

However, as the \textit{Chronicle} had hinted, not all reactions from the American press were as encouraging as the \textit{Inter - Ocean’s}, and opposition to Wells’ assertions were also sent across the Atlantic to British editors. In these instances Wells retained the support of the British press, particularly when she faced personal attacks. \textit{The Memphis Commercial} published an article with the intention of discrediting her in America and Britain, and copies of the piece were sent to editors in Britain. Most seemed to have ignored the articles and its questioning of Wells’ integrity and honesty, but the \textit{Liverpool Daily} did respond. Although it did not reprint the article, it strongly criticised the \textit{Memphis Commercial}. Following this trans-Atlantic tussle, the Women’s Era Club, based in Boston, wrote an open letter of support for Wells and her work.\textsuperscript{70} It was given wide publicity in England, and Wells believed it gave greater weight to the arguments she had been making against lynching. It included the following statement that:

\begin{quote}
We, the members of the Women’s Era Club, believe we speak for the colored women of America. […] As colored women we have suffered and do suffer too much to be blind to the suffering of others, but naturally we are more keenly alive to our own suffering than to others. We therefore feel that we would be false to ourselves, to our opportunities and to our race should we keep silent in a case like this. […] We know positively of case after case where innocent men have died horrible deaths. We know positively of cases that have been made up. We know positively of cases where black men have been lynched for white men’s crimes. We know
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{66} \textit{The Daily Chronicle}, May 29\textsuperscript{th} 1894, p4
\textsuperscript{67} \textit{The Daily Chronicle}, May 29\textsuperscript{th} 1894, p4
\textsuperscript{68} \textit{The Daily Chronicle}, May 29\textsuperscript{th} 1894, p4
\textsuperscript{69} \textit{The Daily Chronicle}, May 29\textsuperscript{th} 1894, p4
\textsuperscript{70} Alfreda Duster, 1972, p197-200

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positively of black men murdered for insignificant offences. All that we ask is for justice - not mercy or palliation - simply justice. Surely that is not too much for loyal citizens of a free country to demand."

Wells was a woman concerned with the social rights of women as well as blacks. She was therefore very pleased to receive the letter of support from the Women’s Era Club, and to be invited to speak at the Pioneer Club, the first women’s club in London. Established in Regent Street in 1892, it was considered to be one of the most democratic clubs in the city as it accepted women from all classes, ‘rich as well as poor - poor equally with rich’. It had a thriving membership, and a strong influence on the position of women, one that the Shaft’s editor felt would only increase. The Pioneer Club’s proceedings were advertised in Shaft’s, ‘a magazine for women and workers’, that was later to become ‘a magazine for progressive thought’. Just as Wells arrived in London, the Pioneers celebrated the opening of the new club premises at 22 Burton Street, West London. Club dinners, lectures, debates and discussions were held on Thursday evenings, and covered a wide selection of topics. The 1894 summer session that ran from April 12th until July 19th included ‘Corporal punishment a mistake’, ‘That women have nothing to gain from the spread of socialism’ and ‘Is the needle in its proper sphere?’

Although Wells wrote to the Inter-Ocean on June 6th that she was due to speak on ‘Thursday next’, her talk is not listed in Shaft’s as one of the Thursday evening debates. It is possible that one of these was changed, although this is not noted or acknowledged by Shaft’s. However, there were alternative debates held fortnightly on Wednesday evenings at 8.30pm. These meetings only required a week’s notice for participants, and the topic of the debates were posted on the Club notice board a few days before each meeting. Members and non-members attended these debates, and they were an opportunity for friends to meet friends, and for new faces to be introduced to the club; ‘at homes’ were also held every Tuesday between 4.30 and 6pm. Perhaps her talk was scheduled for one of these evenings instead. When Wells spoke at the Club, the discussion was presided over by Annie Besant. Besant was a radical woman, and a member of the Fabian Society and the Social Democratic Federation; she also helped organise the Matchgirls strike of 1888 and to form their

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71 Alfreda Duster, 1972, p198 - 199
72 Shaft’s, vol. II, no 17 1894, p283
73 Shaft’s, vol. II, no 15 1894, p251
74 Shaft’s, vol. II, no 15 1894, p251

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union. After 1895 she devoted her energies to India and eventually founded the Central Hindu College.\footnote{DNB}

Wells was certainly impressed with the club, claiming that most of London’s most intelligent women belonged to it, and that it boasted a membership of nearly 500, although she does not mention whether she met any other black women there.\footnote{Alfreda Duster, 1972, p179} She also wrote that the Club had given “a swell reception a few weeks ago” (perhaps the 2\textsuperscript{nd} anniversary celebrations that were held on May 25\textsuperscript{th}), and that everybody and her husband, father, brother, or lover was there.\footnote{Alfreda Duster, 1972} The Club consisted of beautiful and illustrious rooms that included a reading room supplied with the latest books, although these were not to be taken out of the Silent Room.\footnote{Shafts, No 16, vol. II, 1894, p276} Wells also spent a pleasant afternoon at the Writers’ Club, another women’s organisation, and a supporter of the Pioneers. Their rooms were at Hastings House, Norfolk Street, on the Strand, and Wells spoke to the members and their guests about lynching. During her talk to the Writers, Wells was challenged by an American woman who proclaimed that her allegations were lies. During her reply Wells realised that the woman had never been to the South and was a ‘victim of her own imagination’. She also overheard an Englishwoman remark that an unpleasant side of the questioner’s character had been revealed that evening.\footnote{Alfreda Duster, 1972, p179}

It is unclear whether Wells associated herself with a Pan-African philosophy, but certainly she engaged with an audience aware of Africa and Africans. One of her speeches was delivered on the evening of Wednesday 23\textsuperscript{rd} May, at the annual meeting of the Aborigines Protection Society (APS). Presided over by Lord Northbourne, the meeting was held at the Centenary Hall, Bishopsgate Street, lent to the APS by the Wesleyan Missionary Society. Those present included the Rev. Robert Ashe of Uganda, and the Bishop of Mashonaland. Wells was the only woman to be mentioned in the list of attendees that appeared in \textit{The Daily News}.\footnote{Daily News, 25\textsuperscript{th} May, 1894, p8}

A fuller account of the evening was written up in \textit{The Aborigine’s Friend}. Among those listed as supporting Lord Northbourne were Catherine Impey, Mr Meakin (from...
Public Crossings of the Black Atlantic

Miss Ida B Wells to address the meeting.

Miss Wells said she was grateful for the opportunity afforded her of addressing a few words to the members of the Society on the subject of lynching of negroes in the United States. She came to urge the cause of her people, at least a thousand of whom had been lynched in the Southern States during the last ten years. No effort had been made to find out whether these men, women and children were guilty of any offence; without trial or semblance of law they were hanged, burned, shot or drowned. The Christian sentiment of the States had been silent. The Young Men's Christian Association, the Young Women's Christian Associations, the churches, the schools, the social clubs, the Temperance Societies, were all closed against the negro. Only the drinking Salon, the gambling den, were open to him.

If they [black men and women] improved their position, got well off, or became rivals of the whites, then they were lynched. To injure them, falsehoods were put about, and this by the people who, in the Civil War, had left their property, whilst then went to the battlefield, in the hands of the negroes, who well knew that the success of their masters meant the perpetuation of slavery. Yet, when after four years, the masters came back, not a thing was missed, and there had not been an instance known of complaint against a single negro who had been left in charge of his master's property. Miss Wells demanded that every person charged should have a fair trial. It was to obtain the moral support of England that she appealed on behalf of her people. Such support would have great weight in the United States; it would for one thing show Americans to themselves as others see them. Already there were indications of the public mind there being exercised. But the struggle to obtain justice was a hard one. All classes - bishops, minister, judges, pastors - were singularly lax. Governors, sheriffs and officials had been present at lynchings, and had done nothing to prevent them. She asked English people to help her in her demand for equal justice for black and white.

The Rev. Dr Matthews, in proposing the following resolution, “That this meeting, having heard the statement of Miss Ida B Wells, as to the lynching of negroes and others in the southern portions of the United States, expresses an earnest hope that the Government and people of the great American Republic will take prompt measures to prevent such lawless proceedings, and to secure for all alleged offenders, of whatever colour, fair trial in duly constituted courts of law, being principles of justice and humanity, and that it is equally essential to the well-being of all sections of society,” said he was not quite sure that the resolution was wanted after Miss Wells' speech, though he quite approved of it. He had lived in America, and his sympathies were with the negroes. He was afraid that lynching was regarded in the Southern and Western States as a very ordinary affair. [...] During his stay in America he had been struck by the wonderful development of the negro race, intellectually, socially and morally. Outside influences were, he thought, responsible for the larger part of this development.

[...] Miss Wells explained that she did not denounce white people in the South indiscriminately. What she asked for was that the law should assert itself, and negroes be put on the same footing as other citizens of the States by being given a fair trial when accused of any crime.®

® The Aborigine’s Friend, 1894, p415
® The Aborigine’s Friend, 1894, p421-423
The APS' proclamation was carried in the Daily News as the "earnest hope that the Government and people of the great American Republic, will take prompt measures to prevent such lawless proceedings, and secure for all alleged offenders of whatever colour fair trials in duly constituted courts of law."^83

What the list of attendees illustrates is that Wells was in touch with Catherine Impey, and that Impey may well have been more involved with Wells' second tour than is revealed in Crusade for Justice. One man who is named is Oguntala Sapara. Every morning he went to Tavistock Place and gave what help he could. He was one of seven black students, including two women (who Wells does not name), who had initially helped Wells while she had been staying at a hotel.^84 Their interaction implies, at the very least, a well informed and active political consciousness of issues concerning black people from across the diaspora, among educated black people in London.

Initially Wells was staying in one of the temperance hotels in London, but was soon invited to live with Mr and Mrs Clayden. Ellen Clayden was the second wife of Peter William Clayden, an editor on the London Daily News, then the second biggest selling morning paper in London. References to Wells' cause in The Daily News would have

^83 Daily News, 25 May, 1894, p8
reached a relatively broad church - at the time the paper claimed to have the largest
circulation of any liberal paper in the world.® The Clayden’s lived at 13 Tavistock
Square, about a five minute walk from the British Museum (see figure 7.2), and when
Wells sat in their breakfast room she could look out of the windows across to one of
Dickens’ London homes. It was from here that Wells wrote the letters that appeared
in the Inter-Ocean.

Wells’ stay with the Claydens gave her access to numerous resources in London.
Clayden was an ardent liberal who had been a strong advocate of the North’s cause
during the American civil war. He was responsible for the increased influence of the
*Daily News* as an organ of liberal nonconformist opinion, although Wells claimed that
he refused to take sides with any political party, so that he could remain without bias
and conscientiously give his opinion as an editor.® He was well respected by his
peers, and the year before Wells became a guest in his home he had been elected
president of the Institute of Journalists.®

To some degree Wells’ presence in Tavistock Square influenced the editorial
comments in the *Daily News*. Reports on lynchings and the progress of her tour
appeared in the paper during her stay, and after her return to the States. For example,
on Friday 15th June, 1894, the *Daily News* published the details of a

"[Lynching Outrage in America - A Negro flayed alive (Through Reuter’s Agency)
The “World” publishes a dispatch from Waycross, Georgia, reporting a terrible act
of barbarity by a crowd of whites. A Negro had assaulted a young white girl near
Blackshear. He was subsequently caught by the mob and hanged from a tree.
After a time the mob cut him down while still alive and then proceeded to flay
him. The wretched man lived for 6 hours afterwards.®"

A similarly horrific story was published on Monday 25th June, however on Thursday of
that week the paper published a report that countered the column on the 15th. Their
own correspondent wrote from New York that

"Files of the London papers lately received with comment on the flaying alive of a
Negro in Georgia on June 13th cause surprise here. The report was a pure
invention, and was so recognised by all reputable journalists. The scene of the
outrage was located in two different counties in two reports. Investigation in both
failed to reveal any foundation whatever for the report. There are newspapers"
here which deal largely in news of this sensational character, but little credence is given to them.\textsuperscript{90}

This illustrates that the contents of the British press were being addressed by an American public. But Clayden was still aware of the reality of lynching and the fact that the Southern Press had accused Wells of lying herself in the past, for underneath this column appeared another notice:

A case of lynching is reported from Bowling Green, Kentucky, where a mulatto, who had admitted having attempted to outrage the wife of his employer, a white man, was seized by a mob, and hanged on the spot.\textsuperscript{91}

Two more accounts were placed in the paper the following day, and similar stories appeared in the Westminster Gazette on April 28\textsuperscript{th} and June 14\textsuperscript{th}.\textsuperscript{92}

The British press became a positive tool for Wells and her supporters. She recorded that each morning after one of her many meetings, copies of the papers with the best review of her presentation would be bought, and sent across the Atlantic with letters to the President of the United States, state governors, leading ministers in large cities, and leading newspapers.\textsuperscript{93} All this took place around the Claydens' breakfast table, and Oguntala Sapara was obviously also welcomed into the Claydens' home.

Wells wrote in her autobiography that she was given attention, 'beyond all expectation' by the London press.\textsuperscript{94} Aside from the Daily News, the Daily Chronicle, Westminster Gazette, the Sun, the Star, and the London Echo (daily newspapers); the Labour Leader, the Methodist Times, The Christian World, the Independent, the Inquirer and Westminster Budget (weeklies); the Review of Churches, Contemporary Review, and the Review of Reviews (monthlies) all ran articles on Lynching while Wells was in the city. A number of the editors she had met personally, and some, such as the editor of Contemporary Review, would become members of the English Anti-Lynching Committee, based in London.\textsuperscript{95}

\textsuperscript{90} Daily News, Friday June 28\textsuperscript{th}, 1894, p7
\textsuperscript{91} Daily News, Friday June 28\textsuperscript{th}, 1894, p7
\textsuperscript{92} Westminster Gazette, April 28\textsuperscript{th} p4 & June 14\textsuperscript{th} 1894, p5
\textsuperscript{93} Alfreda Duster, 1972
\textsuperscript{94} Alfreda Duster, 1972, p179
\textsuperscript{95} The Times, August 1\textsuperscript{st} 1894, p11
During her weeks in London, as well as her visits to the House of Common Wells attended smaller congregations, drawing-room meetings,® as well as dinner and breakfast parties. Her second visit to the Commons was for such an occasion with 16 MPs their wives and friends. The host of the breakfast was William Woodall, the liberal MP for Hanley from 1885. He was a warm supporter of home rule, disestablishment and local veto, as well as an extension of the franchise.® His other guests included Mr and Mrs H Kohlsaat of Chicago and Florence Balagirnie, a journalist, the Superintendent of the political department of the BWTA, and “one of the most eloquent and lucid of the Liberal Women’s Federation.”® They were also joined by Mr Moyles, an MP and proprietor of the Bradford Observer, Mr Russell MP, and also Edmund Robertson - civil Lord to the Admiralty. As Wells spoke to the breakfast party she brought home the horror of the spectacle she described by passing round a picture of the lynching of C J Miller, which had been reprinted in the Inter-Ocean the previous summer.

7.3 The English Anti-Lynching Committee

On the last night of her stay with the Claydens, friends and supporters gathered at Tavistock Place to form the English Anti-Lynching Committee, under Wells’ determined and pleased gaze. In Wells’ opinion the Claydens gathered together a brilliant company in honour of her presence and her leaving. At the end of the social evening the Committee was formed. Florence Balgarine took the post of honorary secretary. Among those who joined her on the Committee were the Duke of Argyll, Lady Stevenson, Alderman Ben Tillet and almost twenty MPs, including Dadabhai Naoroji, although Wells herself was not listed when the names of the members was published in The Times.® Wells does not comment on her absence, but she was disappointed that despite all the publicity there was no financial support for the committee from America. However she was pleased to note that among the first to donate funds to the committee were a dozen Africans living in London, who sent nearly £14.®

® The themes of the drawing room meetings were printed in a special issue of Anti-Caste, although I have not been able to find a copy.
® DNB
® Westminster Gazette, June 13° 1894, p3
® The Times, 1° August, 1894, p11
® Alferda Duster, 1972, p217
Initially the members of the pressure group were made up mainly of the liberal elite with whom Wells had come into contact and lobbied during her stay with the Claydens. John Passmore Edwards MP, the liberal and social reformer and owner of the *Echo* - the first halfpenny newspaper - became Treasurer.101 A fuller list was later published in the *Philadelphia*. Among the list of new recruits were a number of Americans, as well as Lady Somerset, Sir John Gorst and James Keir Hardie. The *Philadelphia Press* also reported that Passmore Edwards already had £5000 in his chest to support the committee’s work.102

The announcement of the Committee to the British public was made in *The Times* by Florence Balgarine. She wrote to the paper from 13 Tavistock Square, to draw attention to the committee’s inception and its aims. She proclaimed that the committee had been formed in response to the appeal for help, which had reached Britain from the negro population of the United States, although Wells was not mentioned by name. The committee’s objectives were “to obtain reliable information on the subject of lynching and mob outrages in America, to make the facts known, and to give expression to public opinion in condemnation of such outrages in whatever way may be best seem calculated to assist in the cause of humanity and civilization.”103

Wells’ legacy, and the English Anti-Lynching Committee, were still in existence over a year after she left London. A sketch of Wells by Florence Balgarnie appeared on the front pages of *Great Thoughts* in March 1895, and Balgarnie continued to be devoted to Wells’ cause and the work of the Committee. A précis of the Anti-Lynching Committee’s 1894-95 report was reported in *The Times* in December, 1895. Since its inception the Committee had met eleven times, and during this time letters of enquiry or protest had been addressed to the Governors of Arkansas, Tennessee, Mississippi, Kentucky, Louisiana, Texas, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina and Ohio. In addition over 2000 newspapers containing anti-lynching material such as articles, letters and resolutions had been sent to various Governors and editors. In addition the Committee was also in contact and had kept a correspondence with between “60 and 70 coloured editors”.104 Overall they felt they had initiated a successful campaign.

101 Alferda Duster, 1972, p217
102 Alferda Duster, 1972, p217
103 *The Times*, 1st August, 1894, p11
104 *The Times*, 20th December, 1895, p4
The Committee acknowledged that some resented the interference of the British in American politics, but despite this, the committee had received innumerable expressions of thanks from both 'white and coloured' Americans, male and female. These assured the committee that if it had not been “for the mission of Mrs Ida B. Wells Barnett, and the subsequent formation of this committee, the extent and nature of lynching horrors would never have been fully exposed.” The committee felt that pressure from the British committee had contributed to the changing attitude of the Southern Press. But despite these positives changes there had been at least 138 cases of lynching between January 1st and August 31st, 1895. The committee also declared its intention to hold a conference on lynching in London in May 1896, although it is unclear as to whether this meeting did actually take place.

Wells herself returned to America and continued to write and campaign against mob violence against blacks, and for universal civil rights. In June 1895 she married Ferdinand L Barnett, a union which *Anti-Caste* and many leading papers in England and Scotland announced. Although Wells was no longer in Britain, *Anti-Caste* was still encouraging its readers to study Wells’ writing for themselves, and called for people to continue to actively support her cause.

To the question frequently put to Miss Wells at the close of her address “What can I do to help the cause?” her invariable reply is, she says, “Tell the world the facts, for when the Christian World knows the alarming growth and extent of outlawry in our land, some means will be found to stop it.”

The journal also reported the work that Balgarnie was continuing to do for the Anti-Lynching lobby in England. In June 1895, at the British Women’s and World Women’s Temperance Convention in London, a charge was brought against Wells once more by Lady Henry Somerset. She accused Wells of alienating some of the (white) Americans who might have helped her. Balgarnie came to Wells defence.

And in an eloquent and impassioned speech, received with some disfavour by the American visitors, gave some accounts of the horrors of lynching. [...] She thought American women too often apologised for instead of denouncing these outrages, and called upon their American sisters to put much more boldly on the subject.

To a degree Balgarnie’s words were heeded. A resolution denouncing lynching had been introduced by the Executive, and had been supported by 65 branches of the

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106 *The Times*, 20th December, 1895, p4
107 *Anti-Caste*, vol VII, June-July, 1895, p4
108 *Anti-Caste*, vol VII, June-July, 1895, p5
109 *Anti-Caste*, vol VII, June-July, 1895, p6

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British Women's Temperance Association. It was carried unanimously, although it was followed by one,

far less satisfactory, declaring the belief of the Convention that the WCTU of America "has maintained the attitude which all Christian bodies must adopt towards this (lynching) question, namely, that under no circumstances must human life be taken without due process of law."

The *Daily News* also picked up on the debate at the Women's Temperance Convention, and agreed:

that Miss Balgarine, the Honorary Secretary of the Anti-Lynching Committee made a powerful speech in vindication of Miss Wells and in condemnation of the outrages which has shocked the moral sense of civilized mankind. The American ladies, led by Miss Williard, appeared to complain that Miss Wells had not sufficiently minced her words in telling of these shocking outbursts of lawlessness.

It concluded that:

> We are not accustomed in Great Britain to express our opinion of mob outrages by shaking our heads and saying that human life should never be taken except by due process of law. We use, as Miss Ida Wells did, more decisive and energetic terms and follow them up with decisive and energetic deeds.

In America Wells concentrated on raising her family, although she continued to campaign and support the civil rights movement until her death on 25th March 1931. According to the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP), 3318 black Americans were lynched between 1882 and 1931. Wells, and members of the British Anti-Lynching Committee must have been shocked when they realised that lynching was not to remain a wholly American disgrace. According to records uncovered by Marika Sherwood, the first official lynching in Britain was reported in 1919 with the death of Charles Wootten. Wootten a West Indian ship's fireman, was chased into the Mersey by a Liverpool crowd of over 200 people during race riots that affected a number of British ports during the early twentieth century. The mob stoned the young man until he sank, and despite police presence on the bank, nobody was arrested for this murder.

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109 *Anti-Caste*, vol VII, June-July, 1895, p6
112 Marika Sherwood, 1999
7.4 Women at the Pan-African Conference, 1900

Although her anti-lynching campaign made a lasting impact on the British public, Wells did not return to England, and it is surprising that she was not one of the delegates at the Pan-African Conference. As Immanuel Geiss has stated, the conference was a major turning point in the history of Pan-Africanism, being the first time 'Pan-African' as a term appeared and assumed organizational form. The conference opened for three days, at Westminster Town Hall on the 23rd of July 1900; it bolstered the new Black Atlantic and its sense of a transnational public culture. The Colored American Magazine heralded the conference as the mark of a new era for black people throughout the world. Out of the 32 black delegates who attended this historic meeting five were women. Anna Jones, Anna J Cooper, Miss Barrier and Miss Ada Harris were all American, Mrs J F Loudin was also American but had settled in London with her husband J Loudin, who had been the leader of the Fisk Jubilee Singers when they had toured Europe.

The chair was taken by Bishop Alexander Walters from Jersey City, and he declared that it was the first time in history that black people from all over the world had come together with the objective of discussing and improving their situation. The Times devoted almost an entire column to the first days proceedings. These included a paper from C W French of St Kitts, in which he argued that black men only claimed from the British government the recognition that they were entitled to as men, and that black and white men should be entitled for political and social rights without distinction. Also among those who spoke on the first morning was Julia Jones. A teacher from Kansas, Jones gave her talk on "The Preservation of Race Individuality".

At noon the Bishop of London joined the proceedings and expressed his hopes for the success of the convention. In his speech he argued that people had reached a stage at which they realised how small a place the world was, and touched on points that are still being debated hotly over a century later.

After all, the sense of human brotherhood was a real thing, and in every sense, magnificent as it is, it was as an ideal, created very great practical difficulty. Brotherhood must be fair all round. A short time ago it was possible to say that, if

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113 Immanuel Geiss, 1974
114 S Hamedoe, 1900
115 Immanuel Geiss, 1974, p182
116 S Hamedoe, 1900
there were any people on the earth’s surface who wanted to be left alone, it was
best to leave them alone. That seemed a very easy way of settling such questions.
But he was afraid it was not to be so as a matter of fact since is was no longer
possible for any race or nation to go on entirely by itself. Somehow or other the
forces of the world would not allow it. People did make their way all over the
world’s surface, and it was no longer a tenable proposition for the inhabitants of
one any part of the world to say: “We don’t want to see anybody else, we prefer to
isolate ourselves; we won’t have visitors, and we won’t render account to any
outsiders; leave us alone.” That had now become impossible, owing to forces,
which they could recognise but could not regulate. 17

The Bishop continued:

[It was necessary that the experience and knowledge of those who knew native
races, who were concerned in their progress, and had a right to represent them,
should be placed at the disposal of the public. More mistakes were made through
ignorance than through anything else in the world. […] They were aware that the
future of any race must be in the hands of that race itself, who should learn to
protect the race against the result of the too rapid contact with other and more
advanced forms of civilization. […] They must rest assured of the real sympathy
of the English people. Any help that the delegates could give in the settlement of
the problem would be most gladly welcomed.”]

The proceedings reconvened at 8pm, when the chair was again taken by Bishop
Walters. He presided over what the Colored American Magazine considered to be the
most striking paper given at the conference, on “The Necessary Concord to be
Established between Native Races and European Colonists”, by Benito Sylvain, aide de
campe au Negus Menelik. In this paper Sylvain argued that the metropolis of the
British Empire had been rightly chosen for the meeting place of the conference, as this
took the debate to the heart of the British people who:

[Of all civilizing powers, were responsible for the anti-liberal reaction which had
characterized the Colonial policy for the last fifteen years. The British government
had tolerated the most frightful deeds of colonizing companies.”]

He argued that the colonised should no longer be considered like serfs - taxable and
workable at their master’s discretion, but instead they should be viewed as an
indispensable element, for the prosperity of the colonies. Consequently, he argued,
this meant that they should also have an equitable participation in the profit, both
material and mental, of colonising;

Mrs Jane Rose Roberts, elderly widow of Liberia’s first president was also on the
platform. Anna J Cooper read a lengthy paper on “The Negro Problem in America”.
Cooper had once spoken at a meeting at the Metropolitan Church, chaired by Fredrick

17 S Hamedoe, 1900, p224
18 S Hamedoe, 1900, p225
Douglas, and attended by Ida Wells in 1893, in Washington when she was principal of a local high school. On the second day of the conference the talks were based on ‘The Progress of our people in the light of recent history’. Professor W E B DuBois was in attendance at the morning session. In the afternoon the members of the conference were given tea at Fulham Palace by invitation of the Bishop of London.

The final day brought forth various speeches. The afternoon was mostly taken up by the report from the committee, which was adopted. This provided for the permanent establishment of the Pan-African Association whose headquarters were to be in London, with branches to be established all over the world. These branches were not established, and it appears that personal misunderstandings and disputes led to its decline.

7.5 Reflections on anti-racist and anti-imperial spaces in London

Speakers at the Pan-African Conference appear to have toed the empire line, but this is not necessarily how these people would have thought about or discussed these issues in private spaces. It is quite likely that the argument for reform within the imperial system was a political rather than an ideological position, and that inside the private sphere greater anti-imperial emotions may have surfaced. In her work on Victorian American women, Jill Conway found a difference between the more powerful, evocative and ambitious personal letters that women wrote, compared to their publications. Such letters remain to be found for the Pan-African delegates.

These letters would also help to distinguish discrepancies that occur between the articles of Anti-Caste, and the recollections of Ida B Wells in her autobiography. The first concerns the issue of who brought the horrors of lynching to Impey’s attention. Wells wrote about their first meeting in her autobiography.

She was the editor of Anti-Caste a magazine published in England [on] behalf of the natives of India, and she was therefore interested in the treatment of darker races everywhere.

[...]

119 S Hamedoe, 1900, p226
120 Cited in Carolyn G Heilbrun, 1988, p70
She was present at my meeting at the Quaker city and called on me at Mr Still's home. She was shocked over the lynching stories I had told, also the indifference to conditions which she found among the white people in this country. She was especially hurt that this should be the fact among those of her own sect and kin.\textsuperscript{121}

Although Wells was listed as a subscriber to \textit{Anti-Caste} in 1894, she was not listed before this. If she had read Impey's journal she would have surely realised that \textit{Anti-Caste}, from its inception, focused on discrimination against 'people of colour' not only in India, but all over the world, including America. She would have also realised that Impey's meeting with her would not have been the first time that Impey had heard or been horrified by the reality of lynchings. Certainly as a subscriber, she would have realised her misconceptions, but yet she maintains this image of the journal in the autobiography.

Wells also wrote that her interview with Impey occurred in November 1882,\textsuperscript{,} but Impey wrote about what would have been at least her fourth trip to America, in the October issue of that year's \textit{Anti-Caste}. It seems unlikely, although it is not impossible, that Impey returned to America again so soon. Furthermore, when Impey wrote about her trip, and that words failed her when she attempted "to picture the horrors of life in the South, the outrages to which these men and women are subjected to"\textsuperscript{122} she did not mention Wells. Instead she credited the source of the stories she relayed to Judge Albion W Toorgée.

Another important difference is the way in which Wells places Impey in the campaign against racism. From the articles she wrote in \textit{Anti-Caste} it seems Impey was a woman who not only fought racism and inequality in social life, but also against the very idea that a difference could be made between peoples based on the colour of their skin. Thus, although Wells argues that Impey was particularly upset to know that such racism occurred among those of her 'own sect and kin', this is surely a racial categorisation she would have resisted? - even if the reference to 'sect', (the Quakers?) was a religious affiliation she would have aligned herself to. When Impey wrote of a meeting she attended at Mrs Coppin in America in 1882, she was wary of identifying herself as one of only two white people at the meeting, and placed the word "white" in quote marks.\textsuperscript{123} This discrepancy is another illustration of the different understandings of race and racism that have existed in America and Britain.

\textsuperscript{121} Alfreda Duster, 1972, p82
\textsuperscript{122} \textit{Anti-Caste}, vol v, no 9, October 1892
\textsuperscript{123} \textit{Anti-Caste}, vol v, no 9, October 1892, p4
However the encounters of the women in this chapter do illustrate the complex, transnational and intercultural perspectives that formed the foundations of the anti-racist community in London. They also locate this movement in the geographical spaces of the black Atlantic. For Wells, the importance of her encounter with Impey in America and during her travels to Britain cannot be underestimated. While she was in Britain, the printed media played a vital role in bringing attention to her presence and the issues she brought to public attention. In turn these articles were sent back across the Atlantic and were a vital contribution to Wells’ ability to use British public opinion to force a response, even if the results were not always as she hoped from Americans who had influence on and in the ‘press and pulpit’. Furthermore, her own dispatches to Inter-Ocean provided Wells with an opportunity to relay her success to the readers of the paper, and thus sustain the campaign’s momentum in the American public sphere. These pages also gave her an opportunity to make personal observations about London. Whilst not the focus of her trip, she was to comment on her experience of the city, and the issues around race and gender which she encountered there.

The experiences of the women who attended the Pan-African conference are harder to illustrate. It would seem that the Pan-African conference signalled the first time that so many black women appeared on the same platform in Britain, and certainly they took part in a momentous occasion in the history of black politics, and the formation of Gilroy’s model of the black Atlantic. In the context of British history it is pertinent to ask why such an occasion has been ignored in the histories of London. The characters who took part are not unknown in British history. The music for the conference was arranged by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, and his wife reveals in her memoirs of her husband that Loudin was one of their closest friends.\(^{124}\) This hints at a black intelligentsia that developed in London in the 1890s, and it is strange that this has not attracted more attention. Admittedly, the conference was not largely attended, but it did attract interesting visitors and was reported throughout the world. Despite this it has successfully been ignored in popular histories for over a century.

The fact that very little research has been carried out on Wells’ presence in London, the Pan-African conference, or the life of Impey, illustrates that the anti-racist community in late Victorian London has been pushed to the margins of academic thought. Work by Schneer and Marika Sherwood has refocused our attention on work begun by

\(^{124}\) Jessie Coleridge-Taylor, 1943
Immanuel Geiss in 1974, but it still needs to be given far wider attention. Even in his own work on the black Atlantic, Gilroy fails to draw attention to the conference, which was the first time the term 'Pan-African' was used in an institutional context. It is a curious omission for Gilroy to have made, for the conference lends great weight to his argument that the development of black cultural ideas was forged by a fusion of African, American, Caribbean, and British ideas. Both the Conference and Wells’ experiences show how important London spaces, and the relationships forged within them, were in the development of black campaigns throughout the Atlantic world. By placing them in the context of the black Atlantic, it is possible to see that London was part of a network in which ideas were considered, debated, reprocessed and returned along the lines of communication to be reconsidered, refigured, and relayed back to London and other spaces of the black Atlantic.
As Denise Riley has argued, the identification of women on the historical stage is the tip of the iceberg, and what is more engaging is to ask questions about what lies beneath the surface. In this chapter, I will be attempting to do this, both with regard to questions raised by the photographs of the women, but also their context, and discuss some of the insights they may give us into Victorian and Edwardian representations of black women.

8.1 Photography and history

Photographs are, for us in the twenty-first century, a part of everyday life. They bring us images from across the world during war and conflict (as McCullin is famous for), they take us to places we may never visit, and show us things we might otherwise not believe to be true. As Susan Sontag states, something we may doubt (like the fact that all sorts of black folk did live in Britain during Victoria’s reign) seems proven when we see a photograph of it.

There will be few, if any people in Britain who have not had their photograph taken. Embodied in numerous forms of ID, portraits from schools, engagements and weddings, in magazines, and iconic imagery in museums, photography accompanies us from birth throughout our lives, (although often not through death). It has taken

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1 Don McCullin, 1995, p96
2 Denise Riley, 1996
3 Susan Sontag, 1977
just over one hundred and fifty years for the photograph to move from its birth as a new, exciting, wholly modern, expensive and exclusive technology, to become one of the most accessible and common mediums in our society. However, running parallel to this increasing accessibility, the technology of the camera is still used by modern states in the surveillance and control of their citizens.

In some societies people remain apprehensive when being photographed, and avoid the tourist’s lens. This distrust of the camera is often embedded in cultural ideas that the click of the shutter takes something of the spirit away from the person who is photographed. This is almost the opposite of the views held by most people in the West where it seems that a photograph of someone makes them complete, makes them real. A passport isn’t valid unless your photograph is in it, and that photograph makes it yours: the photograph is almost more important than the information written in it. As the eyes are considered to be the windows to our souls, we feel a photograph, even of someone who is dead and who we never knew, can give us access to their spirit. If we can gaze into the eyes of a person, we feel that somehow we can see into them. That we will know something of their views on life, their state of wellbeing, their happiness or sadness. As McCullin says, photography is not just looking, it is feeling, connecting. That is why the photographs in this thesis are so powerful.

When we connect with them, meet their gaze, the people in the images can “live again in print as intensely as when their images were captured on the old dry plates of sixty years ago”, or more. With its ability to affect our nodes of knowledge and emotions, photography has a crucial role to play in dispelling the myths surrounding the history of black people in British History, particularly late Victorian and Edwardian Britain. As Robert Levine illustrated with his investigation of *Latin American Photographs as Documents*, photographic images are a rich source of documentation of the past, both as an illustration of historical narrative, and as evidence on which to frame new ideas, or test old ones. But how and where we see these images will affect how we perceive their success or failure in the interrogation of different hypotheses. Sontag argues that the photographs taken as records by Barnardo’s are as beautiful as the Scottish portraits David Octavia Hill took as ‘art’ in the 1840s. For others, because the

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4 Susan Sontag, 1977
5 Don McCullin, 1995, p96
6 Ansel Adams, quoted in Susan Sontag, 1977, p202
8 Susan Sontag, 1977, p143
photographs of the girls in Barnardo’s are just a fragment of space and time, the moral and emotional weight that they carry will depend on where they are inserted into our lives.  

In trying to ‘read’ photographs, we may not attempt to read them up and down or left to right, “but to find within the composition a meaning of a story, of which the photograph is the concluding detail, the clinching moment.” Pictures tell different stories depending on how they are framed, literally and metaphorically. The meaning taken from an image will change depending on the personal social context in which we see it. For some, the images of black men and women in institutions will be more than a documentation. They will provoke an emotionally heart-wrenching experience, for a photograph is not only an image, but an interpretation of the real, one that we can see and touch. Their faces are a tracing from the past, directly stencilled off the real, like a death mask.

As we all see images in many different ways, Levine argues that the contextual evidence that photographs give us should be seen as provocative and suggestive rather than definitive. Although photographs do allow us to glimpse individual lives – they can indicate religion, ethnicity, economic status, attitudes and human relations, they are imbued with the complexities of the image that lie outside the frame of the negative and thus our vision. When Boltanski used photographs as an ethnographic method to reconstruct a family, he realised “that these images were only witness to a collective ritual. They didn’t tell us anything about the family”. In this sense it can be argued that a photograph may be said to record, to show, or present, but it cannot ever properly speak or describe in the way that language can. Yet language can manipulate an image, and as Ryan suggests, the meaning of photographic images is often framed by the linguistic messages, captions, headlines and other accompanying text, that surrounds them. If a photograph is going to be used, Raphael Samuel states that it must be accountable to historical criticism, it should focus on what the picture

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9 Susan Sontag, 1977
10 Simon Armitage, 2001
11 Raphael Samuel, 1999
12 Susan Sontag, 1977
13 Robert Levine, 1989
14 Quoted in Marjorie Perloff, 1997, p35
15 Susan Sontag, 1977
16 James Ryan, 1997
excludes, and why we find the image appealing. Cornella Brink is equally concerned that usually photographs are accepted as straightforward and unambiguous reality, and that like no other historical source, the photograph is commonly, associated with authenticity, even beyond popular use.

In light of these complex understandings of images, we need to be aware that we read a photograph as a cultural text like any other. For John Tagg, a photograph, as a link between the past and the present, (i.e., the trace), requires a complex reading. For him photographs are never ‘evidence’ of history, for the images themselves are the historical. It is important to note that the images I am drawing together in this thesis are from a number of different genres. As with all historical artefacts we see these nineteenth century images with twenty-first century eyes, and are thus presented with a graphic representation of “otherness”.

Raphael Samuel argued the journey of knowledge along the trace is thus reversed. The power of pictures is not the knowledge of the past that we think we may gain from them, but it is the knowledge that we bring to them that makes them historically significant to us, and may convert them to precious icons. Barthes argued that a myth resulted from the repetition of images, plus a message and a system of communication. In this light Liliane Weissberg asks which messages can be transmitted by a particular photograph, and when and how does a photograph enter the mythical realm?

8.2 Racialised technologies

In his book *Between Camps*, Gilroy is interested in the role of cultural technologies such as radio, television, film, and video and how such media have a reach and power to extend and transform a nation’s imagined community. Relating these queries to

17 Raphael Samuel, 1999
18 Cornella Brink, 2000, p139
19 Gillian Rose, 1997
20 John Tagg, 1998
21 Raphael Samuel, 1999
22 Raphael Samuel, 1999
23 Roland Barthes, 2000
24 Liliane Weissberg, 1997
photography, a picture, as the presentation and representation of a complex technology that constructs and reproduces power, becomes more than a reproduced image. The representations it produces are cultural tools through which ideas on race circulate, impacting upon relations of solidarity associated with nationality and ethnicity. These images also help form, nurture and reproduce certain forms of belonging. The need is to question what it is that such images illustrate about the persistence of race as a means to classify, identify and divide human beings.\textsuperscript{25}

Although images are a powerful and emotive device, they are a complex one. Audre Lorde once argued that:

Survival is not an academic skill [...] It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. For the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house. They may allow us to temporarily beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change.\textsuperscript{26}

To extend Lorde’s logic to photography and history, images of ‘blackness’, or race may temporarily ‘beat’ the master. The presence of the images and their histories, should force a change in the writings of the dominant canons of British history. I believe that these rewritings, and the change in popular understandings which must accompany them, may help bring about genuine change. The concern arises when we consider the possibility that by reinforcing definitions and biological distinctions of race, the role of photographs as a tool to bring about genuine change is limited.

In the context of these debates on race raised by writers like Lorde and Gilroy, it is pertinent to ask why I thought the women in the Barnardo and Colney Hatch photographs might be black. On one level this is incredibly obvious. They had physical characteristics that I thought identified them, or could identify them, as black women. The methodology illustrates the persistence of race as a means to classify, identify and divide human beings. Herein lies the eternal paradox of this method. The use of photographs in this project means that an anti-racist, anti-race work is bolstered by evidence that would not seem entirely out of place in the ‘racist’ world of Victorian phrenology and physiognomy.

Not only does the use of photography in my methodology reinforce the artificially fixed attributes of race, it reinforces colonial and imperial discourse in what is really a

\textsuperscript{25} Paul Gilroy 2000
\textsuperscript{26} Quoted in Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1995, p264
thesis attempting to directly contradict these claims. This paradox is highlighted when we reconsider Lorde’s lament. Although James Ryan is keen not to exaggerate the coherence or effectiveness of photography as a tool of imperial repression, he also argues that photography was a powerful means of classification and visualization of the non European world. But how did this visualization work when representing those of black descent in Europe? And what kind of genuine change can we truly bring if our methods of change are ‘simply’ reforming the imperial discourses that they are attempting to dismantle?

These are questions that need further research and debate, but although it is relatively easy to discuss these problems in the abstract, it is very difficult in practice. People continue to associate great personal meanings to ‘black’ and ‘white’. A degree of certainty about who “I am” has to come before the deconstruction of the self. It seems that those of us just discovering the geography of our place and histories in Britain are not yet on a strong enough platform to fully contest the definitions of our historical and contemporary identities. You have to have a history to reinterpret it.

The stories behind the images give us a sense of the geography of black people’s location of home and work in the city. This map can provide some co-ordinates to begin the next stage of research. Barthes argued that a photograph is truly subversive, not when it frightens, repels or stigmatizes, but when it is pensive, when it makes us think. Images that dislodge assumptions about black people in British history, and make us reconsider our understandings of the past, are subversive. Such photographs are not just a tool to examine historical canons on national belonging, or abstract ideas of race. They have a contemporary subversive role to play. The photography of Ingrid Pollard has directly contributed to the project by contesting symbolic access to nationhood. By photographing herself in the English landscape Pollard re-inscribed black identity on the English terrain.

Pollard is uncomfortable in the countryside spaces to which many English people retreat. The power of the landscape as a space of national identity is particularly powerful in Britain; if a group of people are excluded from the landscape of British

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27 James Ryan, 1997, p219
29 Phil Kinsman, 1995
identity, they are to a large extent excluded from the nation itself. So contemporary photography is the tool Pollard uses in her project of affiliating black people with ENGLAND, and in so doing, to redefine what it means to be ENGLISH, and attack the manner in which racism has sought to make ENGLISHNESS and BLACKNESS mutually exclusive.

In this sense all photographic images, like literary and other visual representation are informed and shaped through historical memory. Many black women continue to feel marginalised in English society. Some feel that black women are rendered completely invisible, while others feel they are stigmatised as sensuous, promiscuous temptresses, bewitching and emasculating men. To counter these feelings Pratibha Parmer has argued for the need to create identities not “in relation to us”, “in opposition”, or “as a reversal of, but in and for ourselves.” This may be a way to see the images as a part of the complex notion of identity politics, without them becoming reproductions of racial intolerance, or mere artefacts. Moreover whatever they mean to us, at whatever time or in whichever place, they will always be somebody’s photograph.

This also focuses attention on the times and places that we are looking at. As Brink points out, a “person looking at photographs from the concentration camps today will not for the most part be able to relate what he or she sees to his or her own experiences in the way that a liberated inmate, a member of the SS or sentry in the camp or a bystander would”. These feelings will also be different among audiences in Germany and in Britain, and Brink argues that it is deeply confusing if photographs showing Nazi crimes become readable with shifting meanings according to the context in which they are shown and looked at. She adds that “the ambiguity of photography does not exclude the struggle for accuracy” and that both what a photograph shows and what the viewer sees are part of the photograph’s history. Photographs become a part of the struggle for knowledge and in the absence of the evidence they supply, gaps are filled with assumptions - like those hypotheses that insist black people were not present in Victorian and Edwardian society.

References:

30 Phil Kinsman, 1995
31 Pratibha Parmar, 1990
32 Annecka Marshall, 1995
33 Pratibha Parmar, 1990, p
34 Cornelia Brink, 2000, p145
35 Cornelia Brink, 2000
36 Cornelia Brink, 2000, p149
8.3 Photography as evidence in Victorian and Edwardian society

The use of the photographic image as a form of evidence and a tool of political struggle has a long history. In the 1890s Ida B Wells passed the image of a lynched man around a breakfast table to portray the reality of what she was telling her audience. For the same cause, Catherine Impey made a cut of a photograph of a man who was hung in Clanton Alabama in August 1891, and placed it on the cover the January 1893 edition of *Anti-Caste* (see figure 8.1). The caption she placed beneath it read:

> Southern Planters teaching their children how to treat offending (defenceless) negroes. Many hundreds of similar lawless scenes (AND WORSE) are enacted every year in the Southern States of America - and NO ONE IS PUNISHED. The laws are administered solely by white men - who are corrupted - not by bribes, but by a fierce and terrible prejudice - the outcome of slavery. Four white men only have been hung in the South in 26 YEARS, although their records for murder more than doubles that of any other "civilized" nation. The hangings are of negroes only - with or without trial. HOW LONG WILL THE CALLOUS NATION LOOK ON? 

Like Barnardo’s images, the authenticity, the ‘truth’, that the image portrayed was called into question. Wells wrote in a dispatch to the Chicago *Inter-Ocean* that when he had seen the *Anti-Caste* cover (see figure 8.1), Sir Edward Russell wrote an editorial proclaiming that it was an illustration drawn from someone’s imagination. When he was informed it was a ‘truthful’ depiction of a lynching and distributed by the perpetrators themselves he become a vocal supporter of Wells’ cause, and when she spoke in Hope Hall, Hope Street, Liverpool in 1894, Russell presided over the meeting.

Despite their controversial nature, such images provided a powerful and immediate way for Wells (and Impey) to confront audiences with the
reality of murder as spectacle. Likewise, the images from Barnardo’s and Colney Hatch Asylum are a simple and immediate way of combating contemporary perceptions of British history. These historical images will play an important part in the geographical imagination of belonging, of who has belonged in a place and has the ‘right’ to be in certain spaces; the images are a key part of the (re)creation of an imagined community. The photographs are a proof of presence, and provide a rooted sense of “I was”, a necessary component of the sureness of “I am”. Although the use of photographs as a means of re-inscribing black people into British history may seem like an easy answer to the problems of historical research referred to initially, the methodology raises complex issues. The means by which these images have been collected, that is the reliance on physical features as a sign of ethnic origin, is problematic, as is a personal ‘racial’ or ‘ethnic’ identification. In short the method reinforces the fixed, physical classifications of race.

In the United States nineteenth century visual culture reflected and shaped the racialized formation of American identities. Although the racialization of identity in Britain took a different form to that in the United States, photography was used by scientists on both sides of the Atlantic to prove the innate, biological and permanent differences between people of different colours. When in 1851 Fredrick Forbes situated Sarah Forbes Bonetta in British debates on race, by presenting her as an ideal of what a Negro could be, he explicitly referred to Sarah’s physical appearance in the light of phrenology, the study of the external form of the cranium. This system, which was supposed to display a person’s character and mental faculties, was not dissimilar to the studies created around the Cephalic Index, first established by Arrtzius in 1840. This focused on the proportion of the length to the breadth of a person’s head, and increasingly moved towards a belief in inherent racial characteristics, that could be read through visible signs displayed on the human body.

Victorian English middle-class social explorers establishing a trail into the unknown were joined by photographers such as John Thompson. Published in 1878, Street Life in London was the result of a collaboration between John Thompson, who had a studio in London, and the journalist Adolphe Smith. It proved to be a popular publication and

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41 David Lowenthal, 1985
42 Shawn Michelle Smith, 1999
43 Shawn Michelle Smith, 1999; James Ryan, 1997
44 John Haller, 1995
45 Peter Hamilton and Roger Hargreaves, 2001
an abridged version Street Incidents was published in 1881.\textsuperscript{46} The individuals who appeared in these editions were placed in 'classes' or races based on their appearance, habits, occupation and where in the city's spaces they were to be found. Ryan argues that social commentators like Thompson, Smith and Barnardo, could classify the poor as an homogenous 'other', because of the homogenised classification of natives which had become a practice in the colonies and newly explored regions of the Earth.\textsuperscript{47} Photographs of natives displayed as 'other' were becoming increasingly common, and they paved the way for the underclass in 'darkest London' to be subjected to the same processes of exploration and objectification as the 'savage' races in 'darkest Africa'.\textsuperscript{48} In nineteenth century India, photographs of racial types became one of the most important uses of the medium\textsuperscript{49}, and before his publication on London street life, Thompson had been better known for his ethnographic studies of 'racial types' in India and China.\textsuperscript{50}

The Scientists, Anthropologists and Geographers who developed these arguments, increasingly believed that photographs could capture and classify racial types,\textsuperscript{51} as Dr Diamond believed 'types' of the mentally insane, and Francis Galton that classes of criminals could be captured by the lens. There was a similarity between the images taken by doctors photographing mental patients, and those taken by anthropologists and colonial administrators.\textsuperscript{52} In 'Images of Sudanese men' published in 1910 in the Journal of the Anthropological Society of Great Britain and Ireland (JAS), the men were photographed face on and in profile, with an identification label hanging around their necks.\textsuperscript{53}

Kenan Malik has argued that, although its impact was long lasting, by the 1840s the practice of phrenology waned as its assertions were disproved.\textsuperscript{54} The Victorian public were certainly aware of the meanings of classification the system supported in the 1850s and 1860s. If they did not there would have been no reason for Fredrick Forbes to refer to Sarah as an 'excellent phrenological specimen' as an illustration of her high intellect. A shift in the understandings of physical racial difference is hinted at by the

\textsuperscript{46} Peter Hamilton and Roger Hargreaves, 2001
\textsuperscript{47} James Ryan, 1997
\textsuperscript{48} James Ryan, 1997
\textsuperscript{49} John Falconer, 2001
\textsuperscript{50} Peter Hamilton and Roger Hargreaves, 2001
\textsuperscript{51} James Ryan, 1997
\textsuperscript{52} Peter Hamilton & Roger Hargreaves, 2001
\textsuperscript{53} A W Tucker and C S Myers, 1910
journalist at The Brighton Herald who agreed in 1862 that Forbes had been quite right, and that in his opinion the formation of her head was 'almost Caucasian'. Then, almost forty years later, Ralph Benson wrote to Barnardo's about three girls who were 'almost white'.\textsuperscript{55} Certainly deciphering and representing the differences between the races retained its importance among some academics and intellectuals during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, and photography had an important role in the understandings and developments of these theories.

In 1869 the anthropologist, J Lamprey wrote a paper for the Journal of the Ethnographic Society of London on a system of anthropometric measurement using photography, for the express use in the measurement and classification of 'racial types'.\textsuperscript{56} In 1875 the newly created 'Anthropometric and Racial Committee' was set up with the objective of collecting data about racial characteristics in Britain, and photography was the tool it used to carry out its research.\textsuperscript{57} Although James Ryan has argued that by the 1890s anthropologists were beginning to question the claims of photographers that their images provided conclusive proof,\textsuperscript{58} it was still being used as a means of classification by institutions such as Barnardo's and by anthropologists themselves. In 1882 images accompanying a paper On the Aboriginal Inhabitants of the Andaman Islands, included an Andamanese Chief, and a group of Andamanese against a height chart.\textsuperscript{59} In the 1890s colonial administrators constructed photographs to present measurements of people, such as the image of Ikeliwa women of the Ta-Keda tribe who were photographed against a checked background in 1893.\textsuperscript{60}

From new technologies in photography, pioneered by Francis Galton, composite photographs became closely related with ideas on genetics.\textsuperscript{61} Galton presented his early results to the Anthropological Society in the late 1870s. He believed that his method of placing photographs on top of each other, the composite images, represented no man in particular, but an imaginary figure possessing the average features of any given group of men, they were portraits "of a type, and not of an

\textsuperscript{54} Kenan Malik, 1996, p88  
\textsuperscript{55} B Girls' Histories 1880-1901, nos., 22 781, 22 782, 22 783, original emphasis  
\textsuperscript{56} Peter Hamilton & Roger Hargreaves, 2001  
\textsuperscript{57} James Ryan, 1997  
\textsuperscript{58} James Ryan, 1997  
\textsuperscript{59} E H Man, 1882  
\textsuperscript{60} Peter Hamilton & Roger Hargreaves, 2001, p116  
\textsuperscript{61} Peter Hamilton & Roger Hargreaves, 2001
individual." In his paper Galton presented portraits of criminals convicted of murder, manslaughter or violent robbery. Aside from noting that the composites of men were much better looking than their components, he argued that, "the special villainous irregularities of the latter have disappeared, and the common humanity that underlies them has prevailed." The composites represented "not the criminal, but the man who is liable to fall into crime."

Galton was interested in the idea of taking his method into the realm of race. In 1863 he had been present at Hunt's presentation to the British Association and had argued for Hunt's suppositions, claiming that among "negroes of Africa" there were instances of "brutal behaviour" that could not be paralleled elsewhere in the world, and that it was "a wonder that people like those of Dahomey could mould themselves into any form of society at all." Galton's own paper included a letter that had been sent to his cousin Charles Darwin, from Mr A L Austin in New Zealand. Austin had been experimenting with composite photography, and although he had not had the time to undertake the investigations himself it seemed to him that

something might be made of this by photographing the faces of different animals, different races of mankind, &c. [He thought that] a stereoscopic view of one of the ape tribe and some low caste human face would make a very curious mixture.

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62 Francis Galton, 1878-79, p133, my emphasis
63 Francis Galton, 1878-79, p135
64 Francis Galton, 1878-79, p135
65 The Times, August 31 1863, p7
66 Francis Galton, 1878-79, p137
8.4 Barnardo’s and photography

It was in the context of such developments that Barnardo set up his photographic studio in Stepney. His use of photography in the development of his Home for Destitute Children makes him an unlikely, but effective, custodian of black history in Britain. The photographic studio at the Stepney Rescue Home was established to serve a number of ends. The images produced there were used as a method of surveillance, of institutional record, and to raise awareness and an income from the public. Barnardo saw the potential of photographic images as a means to raise money and gain sympathy for the children in his home. As a result Barnardo’s was the first organisation to effectively use photography to stir the hearts of the charity-giving public. The charity’s photographic campaigns still evoke controversy and debate, and the Victorian public was no exception. Barnardo’s use of photography contributed to the charity’s initial success, but in 1877 his success caught up with him in the form of the arbitration hearing.

In the light of theories developed by Galton and Diamond it is easier to understand how and why Barnardo justified the photographic methods that he used - perhaps he also saw the images of the children represented no individual child, but a type. Yet, in 1877 Barnardo found himself facing a variety of accusations which took definite form in a pamphlet written and extensively distributed by the Rev. George Reynolds of Stepney, who was supported by the Charity Organization Society. During the subsequent Reynolds versus Barnardo’s hearing, the photographic images Barnardo’s used to advertise the children’s homes came under heavy criticism. One witness declared that:

On the covers of the Children’s Treasury for 1876 there is a portrait entitled, ‘Pitch and Toss down our Alley’, where five boys are represented as playing ‘pitch and toss.’ Upon the boys entering the Home, they were taken to Dr Barnardo’s residence, to have their photographs taken. The eldest lad informed me that Dr Barnardo placed him on a box, and photographed him as a lad gathering waste paper. He then took his shirt off, placed a besom in his hand, borrowed tenpence from the ‘Boys Beadle,’ which he gave the boys to play with, and then photographed them as playing at ‘pitch and toss.’ He was then taken as sitting on a doorstep with his arms around his young brother’s neck, to represent two little destitute children. The younger was also photographed as sitting on a doorstep.  

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68 The Baptist, October 26th, 1877 quoted in Night and Day 1st November 1877, p135 
69 Night and Day 1st November 1877, p130
In regards to this, the hearing concluded that "the photograph on the cover of the Children’s Treasury for one thousand eight hundred and seventy-six, called ‘Pitch and Toss’ represents five boys engaged in that game. The subject reproduces very nearly a scene in which some of them had been known to take part." Although in the end Barnardo was vindicated of the accusations, The Echo reported that The Arbitrators did “strongly reprobate fictitious representations of destitution by means of photographs, which in a few cases Dr Barnardo, had made use of.” Although Elizabeth Williams was a witness at the hearing there is no mention of her or of race in Barnardo's reflections on the case in Night and Day. In her work on Victorian Street Arabs and photography, Lindsay Smith argues that although white children were photographed in ragged clothes, or with their skirts defying gravity, the presentation of the Williams children, naked, under the sacks, coded their ethnicity as nakedness. So although all the images of the Williams children were as staged as those of any other child, the public images were, Smith argues, made to be read quite simply as ‘natural' ethnic difference.

Barnardo responded to the accusations of “artistic fiction” by reprinting a justification of the institution's photographs in ‘Deceptive Photographs’ based on a piece that he had first published in December 1876, when criticisms of the Home’s photographs first became public. The pamphlet contained a detailed explanation of Barnardo's perception of the photographs and was inside every pack of photographs sold. The Explanation of the photographs as issued by the East End Juvenile Mission as illustrative of its work among Orphan, Neglected, and Destitute Children began by stating that every girl and boy that was received into the Homes was photographed on the day of their admission, or as soon after as was convenient. Barnardo was exceedingly clear as to why the photographs were taken.

The primary purpose of a portrait was to make it a part of the History of the child. The image would retain an exact reflection of the child and this would then be entered with the ‘faithful’ written records in the History Book of each individual child. The photograph could then serve as a visual reminder for those who came into contact with

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70 The Times, October 20 1877, quoted in Night and Day, 1 November, 1877, p130, original emphasis
71 The Echo, October 19 1877 quoted in Night and Day, 1 November, 1877, p138
72 Lindsay Smith 1996, p43, original emphasis
73 Lindsay Smith 1996, p43.
74 “Deceptive” Photographs, Night and Day, November 1, 1877, pp143-144
the child throughout their life in the Home and would “bring to remembrance minute circumstances, which without a photograph, would be impossible.”

Secondly it was clear that photography was a means of surveillance and social control. In 1870 an act of parliament required county and borough prisons to photograph convicted prisoners, although not all of them complied. Barnardo was not running a prison but he saw the photograph not only as a form of memory, but also as a mug shot. Children who had been found guilty of criminal acts such as theft, burglary or arson, sometimes managed to fool those in charge of admissions that they were members of the ‘deserving poor’, worthy of a place in the Homes. The photographic archive would be shown to the police, and to former employers, as a way of catching out offenders, and extend the control over the personal characteristics of the children that remained in the Home.

In this context Barnardo was proud to announce the vital role of photographs in catching children who had absconded from the Homes, and that criminals within the Homes had been flushed out because of photographic recognition, and given up to the police or former employers. There were also a number of occasions when children were kidnapped from their parents or guardians, or those “tempted by evil companions to leave home”, who then found themselves abandoned on the streets and

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75 *Night and Day*, November 1*,* 1877, p143
76 *Night and Day*, November 1*,* 1877, p143
77 *Night and Day*, November 1*,* 1877, p143
made their way to the Rescue Home, had been recognised and reunited with their families.78

Finally, by far the most important for Barnardo and the most controversial for the public, was the use of the photographs as advertising for the claims of the institution with the “Christian public”.79 In order to communicate with this public, Barnardo admitted systematically using various methods. Initially a photograph of the child would be taken “exhibiting an individual in the exact condition when received” at the Home.80 This exhibition of poverty would be contrasted with another photograph taken at a later period. This second photograph would show how the child had changed in both appearance and circumstance due to the treatment and care of the Homes.

In his admission photograph taken in 1875, John Williams wears the ragged clothes of a poor street child with his long curly hair hanging round his face (see figure 8.2). Although it is repeatedly claimed in Barnardo’s article in Night and Day that John and his sisters were naked under the sacks, he is not photographed naked. An undated ‘after’ photograph of John on his admission records shows him sitting on a chair with a smart buttoned-up jacket, his hair cut short and slicked down, limiting its ‘woolly’ texture in a style considered clean and tidy. Yet in their admission photographs Annie and Eleanor Williams appear in a half-body portrait in which they do appear to be naked, and we see them to be topless.81

According to the Governor’s report written on the day of the girl’s admission, the family and their mother looked half starved, and had seldom tasted meat unless it was given to them, had not known a good meal for several weeks, and although they owned no clothes “the garments which they made their appearance in were borrowed for the occasion”.82 So, if we are to believe the ‘faithful’ record in the History Books, the children were received at the Home in clothes, and according to Barnardo’s own process should have been pictured in those clothes.

78 Night and Day, November 1st, 1877, p143
79 Night and Day November 1st 1877, p143
80 Night and Day November 1st 1877, p143
81 These images are on microfilm and it has not been possible to reproduce them here.
82 B Girl’s Admissions, August 1875, p102
However, Barnardo viewed children who arrived looking as respectable as they could, as somehow cheating the potential viewing public. Many children, he argued, were found in "a condition of great neglect or destitution, and in the most deplorable and shocking state - often clothed in the fewest and filthiest rags, and sometimes even entirely naked." Barnardo and his team were often surprised to find that when such children arrived at the Home, they had been cleaned, carefully washed and dressed. This transformed the child presented before them into an "altogether fairly respectable" sight, sometimes presenting such a different image that, unless the child's true destitution had not been known to them, the team would not have believed the child to be a deserving claimant of the Institution's resources, and refused them admission.

In such cases, like that of the Williams family, neighbours, friends, or perhaps poor relatives, "from natural feelings of pride or kindly benevolence common among the poor" gave or lent cast off garments and a decent pair of shoes and perhaps a bonnet or a cap. In Dr Barnardo's eyes, a child so visually altered and so visibly clean ceased to exhibit the state from which s/he had been rescued. So to photograph them as they appeared would then in fact present a false view of the circumstances of the case. So such children were dressed down, as far as possible, to the state in which they had first been seen, providing of course that the admission team at the Home believed that condition "was their normal one."

Light was also presented as an obstacle to true representations of young people at the time of their admission. In the winter months, the poor light, and the bad weather had a profound affect on the ability of the studio to produce really 'descriptive photographs'. As the children could not be expected to wait in their "rags and filth", Barnardo's had to be content to photograph them a few days later in their new and tidy Home clothes. A similar situation arose with children who arrived in clothes that were so covered in dirt or vermin that their garments were submitted for "instant destruction" followed by "the thorough and immediate cleansing" of the child.

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83 *Night and Day*, November 1st 1877, p143, original emphasis
84 *Night and Day*, November 1st 1877, p143
85 *Night and Day*, November 1st 1877, p143
86 *Night and Day*, November 1st 1877, p143, original emphasis
87 *Night and Day*, November 1st 1877, p143
88 *Night and Day*, November 1st 1877, p143
Barnardo admitted that taking a 'true' portrait of all the children as they arrived involved further complications for various reasons. As well as the seasons, they included the days of the week, and general hygiene. If the children were received on a Wednesday, Friday afternoon or Saturday, they could not be photographed as the studio was not open on those days. If a child who arrived on one of these days had to wait in their condition of arrival to be photographed they would have been “kept in an unsanitary condition for two or three days” a condition that placed themselves and other members of the Home in an “unsafe” position.

Most importantly, Barnardo stated that many photographs were what he termed representative or typical. By this he meant that the photographs were not so much to represent the individual boy or girl whose faces we now see, but to use them to represent a whole class of street children. The visual was an important tool for all of those who represented the poor in Victorian London. If people looked poor, if they wore ragged clothes etc., then they were poor. The problem facing Barnardo was that these complications prevented the most deprived and most typical cases from being photographed. These children were often received in the most filthy conditions, and were immediately washed down, or arrived during the winter months when bad and cold weather made the life of the poor even harder.

Like Thompson and Smith, Barnardo placed the children in ‘classes’ based on their appearance and physical features. He highlighted the well known photographs of the German artist Rejlander, and the paintings of B. S. Marks as examples of other, celebrated artists whose work drew public attention to classes rather than attempting to serve as truthful portraits of individuals. To reflect the images of their ‘CLASS and their condition’, Barnardo seized the most favourable circumstances which would take the most detailed image. This often meant using a boy or girl, of a less destitute class, whose expression of face, form, and general carriage may, if aided by suitable additions or subtractions of clothing, and if placed in corresponding attitudes, convey a truthful [sic], because a typical picture of the class of children received in unfavourable weather, and whom we could not, for the reasons given, photograph immediately.

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89 Night and Day, November 1st 1877, p143
90 Night and Day, November 1st 1877, p143
91 Stephen Inwood, 1998
92 Night and Day, November 1st 1877, p148
Barnardo addressed the concerns of the modern public with one of the technologies of
the modern world, and was consciously creating an album of social documentary - for
the Victorians photography represented a new kind of verisimilitude. Henry
Mayhew used a similar method to depict the London poor, but he did not receive the
same degree of criticism as Barnardo. However, Mayhew used sketches and
engravings. Photographs were seen not quite as a copy, not quite actuality, and in this
sense the medium defined the modern experience, teetering between authenticity and
medium that was, and still is, seen to produce images that are somehow more real than
paintings or drawings.

The narrative biographies of black women in Barnardo's reflect a little of black
women's history, but they are a small part of the whole picture, even within
Barnardo's. There may have been other girls who applied for entrance to the home but were rejected. There are still others whose records are lost, for not all the girls who had a portrait photograph in the archive had records in the written archives. Similarly, there may be records which have been missed because I passed over girls whose features appeared to be 'too white'.

Images without text or written histories can often pose more questions than they
answer. What can we read into the image of Woodland, Woolcott and Molly (see

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93 Mary Warner Marion, 1997
The photograph is not dated, but given its position in the album, we can assume it was taken on the 29th or 30th of August 1892. Although Woolcott is the name in the centre of the photo, the girl on our right of the chair, appears in the album more than once. On her second photo the name underneath it is given as Ethel Woolcott, so it seems that Molly is the young black woman sitting in the chair. Is Molly a surname, and if it is a forename, why is her surname not given? She is sitting in the centre of the group and gives off the air of a confident determined young woman. But why is she on the chair? Molly is wearing clothes that are respectable, but unlike those of her companions whose dresses are almost identical. In an institution where images often reflected the importance of sameness, particularly with dress, why this exception?

Molly becomes an even more striking figure when her stance and position is compared to that of the three, perhaps four, black young women in the undated image of some of the ‘inmates’ of Honeysuckle Cottage (see figure 8.4). Miss Eleanor Hocking, the Mother of the cottage, sits in the centre of her ‘daughters’. Four of them are black, but, unlike Molly, they are very much at the margins of the group and the image. Although

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94 BPA Archive Photographs Box 28 p20
95 BPA Stills Book 6, D557
one rests her hand on the shoulder of the young woman next to her, the two young
women at the top left and bottom right, seem outside the sense of community
portrayed by the rest of the group. Their positioning differs again from the young
black girl (I think she is, but as I have said it is impossible to be certain), who sits at the
front of a cookery class in the Village that was given in 1903 (see figure 8.5). Is there
any significance in the fact that she is the only child in the class not looking at the
teacher?

Figure 8.5
Cookery class 1903
D514, c/o BPA

Her averted gaze suggests that there were opportunities to subvert surveillance and
the homogenisation of the Barnardo’s project. If we can read such postures as
opportunities, they existed in the more ‘relaxed’ images of everyday life in the home,
like that of Molly, compared to the

admission photographs. The only focus of an admission image is the young women it
portrays. Aside from the sacks in the photograph of the Williams children, and a chair
to be sat on, the admission photographs are stripped of any props. There are no
backdrops, no indications of the time, or the year, or the season, nor any props that
might enable the young women to subvert the camera’s gaze. Without the written

96 BPA Stills Book 6, D514
97 Felix Driver, 1993. Driver considers this possibility in relation to a photograph of children at the Hitchin
Workhouse in the 1880s.
archives which accompany the images, it is hard to distinguish 'official' ideology from reality. Barnardo's saw the children as stereotypical 'types' of the poor, and by stripping away the context of their lives, he made it harder for them to take control of the way in which their image would be preserved for antiquity.

This would also have been the case for the women in the asylum records. It is hard to tell if the women had the images taken against their will but, like in the Barnardo's admission photographs, although they are not dressed identically, there is a sense of uniformity about the images. Not only in the clothes that the women are wearing, but also in the manner that all their heads are turned away from the camera by a certain angle. The only tool they had left to express themselves were their faces, and as with any tool, if you do not know the mechanics of it, it is harder to manipulate it in order to get the results you would like. It is unlikely that many, if any, of the women in Barnardo's or in the asylums had had their photograph taken before they entered these institutions, and there is no evidence to suggest that they were given or entitled to keep copies of the prints of themselves when, and if, they left.

This is, once again, in vast contrast to the images that are left of Sarah Forbes Bonnetta and Victoria Davies. Although to a degree governed by the constraints of fashion and convention, these women had a freedom over the creation of their images, and a public reflection of themselves, which the women above, even if they considered it a possibility, would have had to covertly fight for. Of particular interest in this context are the images of Sarah after her wedding, and Victoria Davies with her children. As Robert Levine has shown, family photographs mirrored not only the broad conventions of society, but gave their subjects the opportunity to express their own aesthetic and thus tell us something about the individuals who took, posed and saved such images. The presence of Sarah in the Silvy album is telling, both in the space that the images occupy, and the spaces within the images themselves. The luxurious backdrops behind Sarah and James portray a sense of wealth and spatial mastery. That they had images taken, suggests that they took the time, and the money, to pose for a series of shots that would portray them in the manner in which they wanted to be seen to those who would receive the carte-de-visite.

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94 Robert Levine, 1989
In contrast, the photograph of Victoria with her children is far more relaxed, and personal. Both of the children lean towards their mother and seem relaxed in front of the cameras gaze. The sense of their pose is not dissimilar to the one of the Richmond sisters taken in Barnardo’s in July 1901. On one side of London two girls arrived from Liverpool to a new home, and were photographed in matching dresses probably found for the occasion. Three months later, two other children were taken by their mother, probably also in clothes chosen for the occasion, to have their photographs taken, not for police records or charity fundraising, but to be sent to friends and relations and kept in precious places, including the archives at Windsor Castle. The production of these two photographs, their sameness and their difference, both in where and how they were taken, is representative of the spaces black women found themselves in. Some were by choice, and manipulated to their own ends, others were because they had little or no choice. But for black women, these experiences were occurring in different parts of the city throughout the Victorian period.

So, although we may not know that the knowledge we give to a photograph is true, the image may still teach us something. The kind of costumes and or clothes that the girls wore when they were photographed at Barnardo’s, the kind of furniture, the kinds of hats. From the clothes the four young women in the group image are wearing it would seem that the photograph was taken during the Victorian period, but I found no corresponding images of them in the Admission images for this period. It would thus seem, that for whatever reason, Barnardo did not take the image of every child that entered the Homes. There is also the fact that not all photographs were taken in the studio, and that the girls who may have been the subject of the photographer’s gaze at times of their admission, may have been at other times. Perhaps these girls do have stories in the archives, but without their names or another image of them, discovering their stories will be incredibly difficult, if not impossible.
In addition there are the girls who, when I saw their images I thought they could be black, but their written records did not elude to any racial references, so I did not include them (see figure 8.6). Like the case of Henrietta Cormack, these images illustrate that what we 'see', is not always what we think it may be, and that sometimes we will never know if our assumptions are right or wrong. Showing may come very close to knowing, but they are not the same.

Unlike the Ikeliwa women, the black women in Colney Hatch were not subject to a similar classification. Although at the same time the images of these men were being taken, black men and women in Africa were being photographed against measured black drops. Why were black women in Britain not catalogued in this way? Why, in a society in which race and the classification of races meant so much, were these acts of surveillance not routinely carried out? Was it because the blackness of those who came from or lived abroad was seen differently from those who were black and lived in Britain? Why was the classification of a women’s colour not added to their records as a matter of course; particularly in a society where the physical features of a person were thought and represented in art and literature to reflect (even determine) a person’s personality. Was a visual representation, (i.e., the photograph), considered enough of an identifier?

8.5 The geography of race

The discrepancy illustrates a malaise between the line of state and national institutions, and the opinions expressed by individuals. Before the 1830s a number of baptism records have recorded descriptions of the colour of the new convert on them. Yet after 1831 and the standardization of Church of England baptism records, these personal comments seemed to have disappeared. Although Sarah’s colour, and physical structure would never be lost on the British public, in her baptism record there is no mention of her colour. Just as the Jefferson sisters were colour coded in their Barnardo’s records, but their birth certificate makes no reference to their colour or to their fathers. The reason colour was not included in official records is most likely because there was no space allocated for it. But that begs another question. Was this because there were so few black people that it was not considered a category that was

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99 Peter Hamilton & Roger Hargreaves, 2001
needed? Or was it because seeing a person of colour was no longer unusual and it was not thought necessary to record it? Although unlikely in the light of debates around the Victorian fascination with race, was it because the colour of a person’s skin was not thought to be important?

The evidence available would make such a thesis hard to believe. Edward Said’s study of Orientalism highlighted the need for a rethinking of the politics of place and a critical de-centring of histories and nationalism. His research also illustrated that “the journey, the history, the fable, the stereotype, the polemical confrontation [...] are the lenses through which the Orient is experienced”. It would seem that similar lenses and bounded geographies were placed on the British imagination of African. The authors of textbooks Victorian children read were certainly aware of difference between the races, and imparted this ‘knowledge’ to their readers. The Short Geography of Africa, published for those taking the Cambridge local and other examinations in 1889, presented images of the ‘Negro’ which informed stereotypes still recognisable today. Students were told that:

The negroes, or “black” men, native to central Africa, are marked generally by their black woolly hair, protruding lips, and flattened nose; they are fond of ornament, and above all, dancing; they live for the moment [...] Lowest of all in African humanity are the wandering Bushmen of the Kalahari deserts, living in holes and caves like wild animals, without dwelling or property, nor any domestic animal, save, it may be, a miserable dog.

The guide also illustrates that black Africans were not seen as a homogeneous group. The authors were careful to note that Negroes were not the same as Egyptians (who were Arabs), nor those who lived in Nubia or along the Upper Nile. The latter “although of swarthy complexion [were] not negroes” and strode “across the plain with erect graceful figures, armed with spear and buckles.” Separated from these ‘noble savages’ were the Abyssinians, who were described as Semetic in origin with a relationship to Arabs in their brown colour, although towards the north, some Abyssinians became “almost white”. With their lighter colouring came the more ‘Caucasian features’ of “curved noses” and “oval eyes”.

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1 Edward Said, 1995
100 Keith Johnston, 1889, p8
101 Keith Johnston, 1889, p8
102 Keith Johnston, 1889, p24
103 Keith Johnston, 1889, p24
104 Keith Johnston, 1889, p24
Wells made reference to this awareness of colour in a conversation she had held with Sapara, the student who had helped her compile anti-lynching clippings to be sent to America.

He [Sapara] therefore put himself at our disposal to help in the clerical work of mailing out the newspapers. He told me several amusing stories of how patients, who had never seen a black man, were too frightened to let him minister to them. He didn’t mind, because he knew it was an innocent fear, that there was nothing of the hatred and prejudice in it which were shown in my country by white people. Indeed, Mrs Clayden often remarked that she thought that my success would have been made much greater if I had been a few shades blacker. For it was a remarkable fact that after English people got to know black people they seemed to prefer their company.¹⁰³

Ware has pointed out that Wells’ view of racial prejudice in England must be seen in the context of her horrific experiences in the American South, but Ware has also questioned why Wells did not face more opposition than she did, especially when segregation in the South was very similar to social constructions in the Empire.¹⁰⁶ When Wells was in Britain, racist anthropology, geography and other imperial discourses were infusing the language of identity. It would seem that a spatial geography was formed in the Victorian imagination of race - a geography that saw black people in Britain as black but believed them to be different from black people in Africa. This would have been an imagination that included blacks in America. According to many of the papers that considered Wells’ cause, black Americans should be treated with the respect that being citizens of a ‘civilized’ country allotted them; a stance that was not extended to blacks in Africa. Following the Pan-African Conference in 1900, the APS recorded the society’s support in its transaction papers, along with

all supporters of natives’ interests, and there is great promise in this inaugural conference, in which about two dozen men and women of remarkable intelligence and education took part. They are champions of the already civilized Africans chiefly to be found in America and the West Indies, however, rather than the uncivilized and oppressed millions in Africa itself.¹⁰⁷

It would thus seem that even societies whose raison d’être was to monitor the treatment and rights of black people in the colonies made distinctions between ‘civilized’ Africans, who had been cultured and educated in America, or older European colonies (with European school structures and examinations), and the ‘uncivilized’ and oppressed poor of colonial Africa. This was not the first time that the APS had failed to

¹⁰³ Alfreda Duster, 1972, p214
¹⁰⁶ Vron Ware, 1996, p213
¹⁰⁷ Transactions of the Aborigines Protection Society 1896-1900, p560
fight for equality for all black people. In 1882 D G Garraway, a West Indian Barrister, wrote to Charles Allen and complained of discrimination in Grenada, further he was

strongly of the opinion that you are mistaken in thinking that your society would ‘lose influence in going out of the Anti-Slavery department.’ If you identified yourself more closely with the interests of coloured people in the West Indies I feel sure that you would in a short time observe that the benefits derived would be mutual. It would appear to me however that whilst the majority of Englishmen loudly denounce slavery of the ‘blacks’ they cannot help showing their prejudice against ‘colour’.108

Perhaps black Britons were thought of in the same light, and were to be treated equally as citizens of the civilized country to which they belonged - for their ‘belonging’ (however complicated by class, race and gender this identity was) made them different. Perhaps black people in Britain did challenge the fact that liberal values were supposed to apply to all ‘civilised’ individuals, regardless of their colour; that the English were not supposed to feel racist towards those ‘civilized’ men and women of colour, and that white Englishmen and women saw themselves as different from the English colonialists abroad, and prided themselves in that difference because it reflected them as fairer and more ‘liberal’. Annette Ackroyd was surprised to encounter the attitudes of white people in Calcutta, and Ware believes this suggests that she had not encountered such ‘colour prejudice’ against Indian visitors in England.109 It is not clear whether this sympathy would have been extended to those of Indian descent living in England, and one imagines that the Indian visitors Ackroyd encountered would have been of a similar class to Wells, rather than Susan Hayes.

This difference in attitudes to race in Britain and the colonies is further illustrated by the statement a (‘more ordinary’?) black South African woman gave when she came to England on tour with her choir in October 1891 (see figure 8.7). Asked in an interview for the Review of Reviews what she would like to say to the English people on behalf of her race, she replied that:

Let us be in Africa even as we are in England. Here we are treated as men and women. Yonder we are but as cattle. But in Africa, as in England, we are human. Can you not make your people in the Cape as kind and as just as your people here?110

The interviewer was pleased to announce that the visitors, “reported that throughout the Cape Colony the race antipathy was much stronger than in this country. They

109 Vron Ware, 1996, p136
were overwhelmed with gratitude at the unwonted sensation of being treated as human beings on a footing of perfect equality with white men. Equality was the most important right that the "Kaffir maiden" who the interviewer described as "black but comely" requested, but one that the interviewer believed the most unattainable:

For they might as well attempt to carry St Paul's to the Karoo as to attempt to make the Boer and the English colonist regard the coloured man with the respect that, from Her Majesty downwards, has been everywhere paid in this country to the South African Choir.

Although sentiments like these might have been the principle that people expected, or hoped, English society lived up to, on an individual level, relationships had to negotiate a more complex reality. In the article above the interviewer also described three members of the choir who came to thank him for his support and report on their progress. Despite the apparent endorsement of the black Africans desire for civil rights and social justice, the article described one of the choir members "one smart little lad who would be a jewel of a page-boy for any fine lady who wanted a curiosity for her

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110 The Review of Reviews, vol iv, no 21, September 1891, p256
111 The Review of Reviews, vol iv, no 21, September 1891, p255
112 The Review of Reviews, vol iv, no 21, September 1891, p256. It is worth noting that when Catherine Impey placed an extract of this interview in the October issue of Anti-Caste, she edited out this description, see Anti-Caste, Vol iv, no 10, October 1891, p2
113 The Review of Reviews, vol iv, no 21, September 1891, p256
This condescending image hardly seems in keeping with the tone you would take with a young man you viewed with respect. It may illustrate that racism in late Victorian Britain was as much about class as colour. It might be an illustration that overt and covert racism often sat closely together, operating as two different registers of racism. Or it might support Little's supposition that by this time, despite the rhetoric of equality, black skin had become a sign of social inferiority, the black was no longer an object of pity, but one of condescension. It was a perception that Catherine Impey challenged. She was

[o]ften struck how little realized by [the] English, that England itself is a small part of a great empire, over which our Queen and Parliament reign and rule. That we English are, as it were, but an inner cluster of the big crowd of British subjects, the masses of whom live in lands other than ours, and have been brought under British rule sometimes voluntarily but more often, we fear, by force and fraud, and for ends not purely disinterested. Now they, like us, press around the same British Government with its might and cumbrous machinery of State, looking to it, as we look to it -- though almost despairingly at times -- for power to carry out necessary reforms, for the redress of public grievances. One is led to wonder how long the slender fabric of the empire shall hold together? Especially does this thought press when the bitter cry of suffering and oppression reaches us from some outer part of the great crowd.

As has been suggested, this aspect of Britain's geographical imagination was nurtured and supported by academic theories. In 1911 the international peace movement was developing, and as part of this the first Universal Races Congress was held in London to encourage 'friendly feeling and co-operation among all races and nations'. George Stocking has highlighted the participation of British Anthropologists at this conference. Franz Boas, an American anthropologist, gave a paper on "the instability of human types" under environmental influences - essential to his critique of racial assumption. Alfred Haddon, who had published his theories on The Races of Man three years earlier, argued against Boas, and declared that in essence the "great race types" were permanent. Stocking believes that Haddon's interest in racial ethnography was a factor in the belated development of an anti-racist critique within Britain's social sciences.

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114 The Review of Reviews, vol iv, no 21, September 1891, p255
115 Stuart Hall cited in Catherine Hall, 2002, p17
116 Kenneth Little, 1972, see p227-229
117 Anti-Caste, Vol ii, no 12, December 1889, p2
118 Hakim Adi, 1998, p13
119 George W Stocking, 1995, p381
120 George W Stocking, 1995
121 George W Stocking, 1995
Concluding Thoughts

For British history more generally, these findings on the visible/invisible nature of ‘colour’ in British archives are a strong challenge to the assumption that those in our history without a given ethnicity were white. There is no way to tell how many black men and women walked the streets of our cities, towns and villages, and slip past our eyes and through our fingers because we cannot ‘see’ the colour of their skin in the archives. As a result there is no way of knowing how many black people lived in London, or in Britain during the Victorian period. Perhaps we will never know. What we can no longer assume, is that everyone in the archives who is not allocated an ‘Other’ colour, is white. The Whitening of our national archives is one of the most blatant examples of the Whitening of Britishness. It can no longer be accepted in such a simplistic form.

Racial prejudice seems to increase with growing fears whether real or imagined. Indeed, Alan O'Shea has argued that the growth of modernity became such a threat to imperial Britain and the aristocracy. Anti-imperial institutions such as the African Association and the Pan-African Congress indicated the development of a black elite who were ready to challenge Britain’s imperial role using the words and philosophical arguments of the rulers. In response, he argues that this threat was countered by a growth in a cultivation of a sense of Englishness, and also by a growth of Otherness. The late nineteenth century saw the introduction of art galleries, institutions and media, such as the Dictionary of National Biography, which produced ideologies of Englishness. This can also be considered a part of the process that Claude Lévi-Strauss saw humanity forever involved in two conflicting currents; one tending towards unification (which we can see as the growth of modernity), the other towards the maintenance or restoration of cultural diversity (the reinterpretation of Englishness). Although occurring in different spheres and at different levels, both currents are two aspects of the same process. The deterioration in Britain’s race relations appear to have begun, at an institutional level at least, at the end of Victorian Britain, becoming part of the popular consciousness of the Edwardians, and would seem to be intimately connected with, if not a direct by-product of these processes.

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122 Alan O'Shea, 1996
123 Alan O'Shea, 1996
124 Claude Lévi-Strauss, 1975
125 Claude Lévi-Strauss, 1975
Conclusions

Towards a New Historical Geography of Black Identity and Racism in Victorian and Edwardian Britain

This is not the end, it is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.

Winston Churchill
Mansion House, London
November, 1942

9.1 Objectives of the thesis

The main objectives of this thesis were threefold. Firstly, and most importantly, to bring to light new historical biographies of black women who were born, lived in, or visited Victorian London. Secondly to put these biographies in the context of London life, and place them in the popular and theoretical imagination of Victorian London. Finally the biographies were a tool to consider how the presence of black women impacts upon our understandings of the black diaspora, particularly in the context of Paul Gilroy’s model of the black Atlantic, and on the history of black people in Britain - concerning both our understandings of that history and the methodological implications of their presence and absence.

The completion of the research also signals a space for black history in the discipline of geography. Hopefully it will not be too long before the historical investigation of the black presence in Britain is seen to have a legitimate place in the geographical tradition. Furthermore at a time of public debates on immigration, asylum seekers, and who belongs to the nation, the location of historical perspectives on migrant communities and on these debates is urgently required within geography.
If academics have a political role it is partly to ensure that there is no excuse for an absence of knowledge, and critique the imperial histories that for far too long have neglected the consequences of empire for the metropole. Geography and geographers can, and should, have a vital role in combating prejudice whenever and wherever it raises its ugly head of national self-conceit, national jealousies and hatreds nourished by people who pursue their own egotistic, personal or class interests. This is as true now as it was when Kropotkin wrote his plea in the *Journal of the Manchester Geographical Society* in 1889.¹

### 9.2 The women’s biographies

The girls who were located in Barnardo’s in chapter four provide us with an insight into poor working-class life, and the strategies of survival that their parents, usually their single mothers, used to keep a roof over their childrens’ head. These families were often ‘ethnically’ mixed, with at least one side of the family relatively well established in London or other regions in Britain, as well as having family members living close by. These observations help to dispel two historical myths. Firstly that black women did not live in London, and secondly that if they did they were immigrants. Of the young women in the Barnardo’s archive some were born in London, and most were born in England. These genealogies show that there were certainly ‘second generation’ women in London in the 1880s and 1890s, and those with black grandparents in the country had even longer family histories in Britain.

Jane Jefferson’s father had two sisters and three brothers all of who would seem to have been ‘mixed race’ - what of their lives and the lives of their families? Both Maggie Rose’s parents were ‘coloured’ people, and Margaret’s mother - ‘a native of Bermuda’ was living at home with both her parents when she became pregnant. According to Barnardo’s records at least one of her parents would have been black. An investigation into these family histories could lead our sense of the black presence back from the 1880s into the 1840s, a period of time which currently remains as a gap in our knowledge.

¹ David Stoddart, 1998
The fact that so many of the young women from Barnardo's entered domestic service when they left Barnardo's goes some way to dismantling Fryer's claim that black women in nineteenth century London had to find work as prostitutes. Similar points can be gleaned from the brief biographies of Susan Hayes and those who also spent time in the asylum system. Before Susan entered the asylum system she had been a charwoman, and the implication from the evidence given by Louisa Goodyer is that Susan worked and boarded with a number of other working-class people who had similar jobs to her own. That Caroline Maisley was the wife of a dock labourer, and that her sister Mary Matthews was living with her husband James Alexander before her incarceration, implies that the siblings were part of an ordinary working-class community, part of the community of the 'honest poor' as Booth called them, in Stepney and Bromley. Their presence in these areas of London hint at the diversity of the communities that were earnestly investigated by Booth et al, although this may not have also been reflected in the notes created by such social investigators.

The chapter on Sarah Forbes Bonetta and her daughter Victoria Davies, along with that on Ida B. Wells illustrates the movements of black women who enjoyed a privileged access to areas of public and private life that would not have crossed the minds of the women above. They were women who were a part of, and exploited their positions in the black Atlantic, and their connections within the empire. However, although their experiences mark them apart from the women found in institutional spaces, their lives were also markedly different from each other. Whereas Bonetta and her daughter were women who used their relationships with the central powers of empire to maintain their lives among the imperial elite, Wells used the networks of the anti-imperial community to fight racism and racial difference.

Sarah Forbes Bonetta and her daughter are important figures in black British history for two major reasons. Firstly because they are evidence of black women who lived among the highest echelons of English society, and secondly because of their intimate relationship with Queen Victoria. Although it is difficult to tell how much of an impact they had on the Queen's life, they do tell us something about the Queen and her attitude to her 'subjects' in the empire. This is perhaps most obviously revealed in the private correspondence in the royal household which seemed intent on marginalising Victoria Davies whenever they could. Sarah perhaps formed more of an

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2 Peter Fryer, 1984
obstacle because she was so well known. She was certainly important or well known enough for Craft to use her story in his defence of black people when he challenged the racist Hunt in 1863. This debate came thirteen years after Sarah had first arrived in England, eleven years after Forbes' book published the details of her presence in England, and two years after her marriage and return to Africa. However I have yet to see a biography of Queen Victoria that mentions either one of these women.

Ida B. Wells' time in London is the most explicit example we have to date of a black woman who used the networks of the black Atlantic to forward her cause for civil rights. Her place in this thesis is central for two reasons. Firstly her times in London highlight the connections and communication networks that were available, to those who could access them, in the black Atlantic. Her relationships with supporters such as Catherine Impey and Dadabhai Naoroji illustrate that the actors in these networks were not only black, and that men and women of all 'colours' came together to fight for the anti-racist cause throughout the 1890s. In order to do this they co-opted a number of tools of the public sphere; they printed publications such as *Anti-Caste*, held public meetings, and lobbied parliament. The opposition that they met reveals much about the racialist tide that was turning at the end of the century, one which would bring a new form of racism into British culture.

Wells' second contribution is revealed in the absences that we can see in her successful tours of England. There is no mention of the black working-class in her works, and although she speaks of contributing to debates in front of large audiences, no attempt to analyse their class make-up is given. As commented on before, her writings about the geography of London are confined to the streets of Bloomsbury, and the black people she comments on meeting were all students. The absence of any actors from the black working-class is telling. Their presence was ignored by other key actors in the black Atlantic - it seems that Sylvester Williams who was so important in the formation of the Pan-African movement seemed to make no effort to contact members of the black working-class in London before the Pan-African conference. The conference is reported to have attracted an audience of thirty-two. Considering that the archives at Barnardo's alone would locate more than thirty-two black people living in London at these time, we can surely assume that there were at least hundreds, if not thousands of black people and their families living in the city at the turn of the century. Were the black working-class aware of the seminal meeting of the Pan-African
movement? If they were why did they not attend, is it because they did not prescribe to a Pan-African identity?

It is difficult to gauge how important such movements were to the black working-class in London. It is also difficult to guess whether they had an identity as a black community, or if they felt any sense of connection with members of the black diaspora, and if so, if this was one that cut across national and class boundaries. Research on black history is keen to reclaim black identity. Yet there is still little evidence to suggest that, in the nineteenth century, the black working-class community considered themselves a part of such a community. There is no evidence that has come to light in this research to suggest that this was the case. Indeed, it is hard to know whether the women here would have identified themselves as black, or if they would have recognised the place of their stories in a historical geography of black women.

9.3 Considering theory

All the women's stories presented opportunities to consider historical geographies of London's spaces from new perspectives. Women who occupied spaces in asylums and Barnardo's and who have been previously ignored in historical analysis, either because of their colour or because of their 'ordinariness' have thrown invaluable light on to our image of the Victorians. To a degree their own images contest the idea that during the nineteenth century black people were only represented in terms of their essential characteristics. Stuart Hall has argued that the Victorians saw little else in the kneeling slave than servitude, and that there was nothing more to Uncle Tom than his Christian forbearing. Yet the images here show that, although black women were racialised, in the most part their images were not represented in regard to the essential characteristics of their race, but in regards to their class or their illness.

The experiences of Sarah Forbes Bonnetta, Victoria Davies and Ida B. Wells grant us an insight into the lives of women who were represented in entirely different ways, though again they did not avoid the racialised lens. However, their experiences of being represented, and representing themselves in the public sphere sheds a contrasting light on the way spaces of the metropolis were utilised and impacted on
black women's daily life. This section addresses these new perspectives in the light of the theories that framed the thesis, and asks how the women's biographies contribute to furthering our understandings of the theories which supported their rediscovery.

In this respect the concept of continuity through a 'modern' period, running from 1750-1950 might be a particularly useful tool. Firstly it would challenge the perception of a discontinuous presence of black people. It could also enable closer links between the historical experiences of black people and their families with political developments, as well as the changing attitudes towards black people between the wars, and the dawn of mass immigration after the second world war. Playing with time may be a way to deconstruct the 'authoritative' accounts of British history, and thus enable the examination of the ways in which particular conceptual frameworks have restricted our knowledge of the historical nature of Britain's 'ethnic' past.

9.3.1 The black Atlantic

Gilroy's model of the black Atlantic provided this thesis with a way of connecting, or seeing the lack of connections between, black women in Victorian London. It is indeed true that the experiences of black women were diverse, as were their geographical origins. The model has allowed their experiences to be brought together under the umbrella of a dynamic unit of analysis. The absence of working-class women in Gilroy's model was identified earlier in this thesis. The histories that have been brought to light, point to the fact that a strong class divide operated in the black Atlantic during the Victorian period at least.

Certainly there was a divide in the minds of certain 'white' organisations like the Aborigine Protection Society who saw blacks like Wells, Williams and Dubois as part of an educated civilized elite. How far such an imagination impacted on the black actors themselves is speculative. Certainly all three included the 'ordinary folk' of America and empire in the campaigns for equality which they instigated, but the degree to which they included working-class in the structural formation and organisation of their campaigns seems incredibly limited. It does not appear that there

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3 Stuart Hall, 1997b
4 Kathleen B Jones, 1988
was ‘a black public sphere’ in operation in Victorian London, even during the years when the anti-imperial collective made its mark. This community was made up from a multi-ethnic educated elite, perhaps reflected in the readers of *Anti-Caste* who included George Cadbury and Joseph Rowntree.\(^5\) Some light on any social and geographical divisions might have been shed by Williams’ article on ‘The English Negro’ which appeared in the first issue of *Pan-African*, but the only copy that would appear to have been available in Britain, at the British Library, is now ‘missing’.

**9.3.2 Spaces of modernity**

The presence of black women in social institutions, that is in Barnardo’s and Colney Hatch Asylum, has added to our understanding of the experiences of such spaces. The women’s biographies, regardless of their colour, contribute to our understanding of the asylum process in Victorian London, and the way it could be used by the working-class to find temporary help for their relatives. The stories of Susan, Caroline and Mary also highlight how important relatives and the community were, both in determining entry into asylums, and for securing freedom from them. To be alone in the modern city made one very vulnerable to marginalization. Had Susan not been a widow, or if she had had relatives who also lived in London like Mary and Caroline, her incarceration may not have been such a permanent one.

When seen in the context of asylums as black women, their collective experiences add more to the complex applications of race in the British empire. Their presence in Colney Hatch shows that the geography of asylum institutions was arranged differently in the metropolis than in the rest of the empire. Whereas there is evidence that segregation based on race dominated the geography of asylums in India and South Africa, it would seem that no such pattern occurred in the UK. It would be interesting to develop this aspect of research and consider if black people were members of staff in such institutions. Wells met a number of black medical students when she was in London in 1894. Where did these students gain their practical experience, did any of them visit asylums, and how were they greeted by the patients that they cared for in London’s hospitals?

\(^5\) *Anti-Caste*, list of subscribers, March 1895, p8
Oguntala Sapara's comments to Wells about his medical experiences are useful for a number of reasons. Firstly if he did see patients “who had never seen a black man, [and] were too frightened to let him minister to them”, this would imply that he worked in a very particular geography of London, or among a particular class, for surely by the 1890s there would have been few among working-class Londoners in the East End who had never even seen a black person. Sapara says he “didn’t mind, because he knew it was an innocent fear, that there was nothing of the hatred and prejudice in it which were shown in [the United States] by white people.” Wells does not mention whether Sapara ever came across any black patients, and if so, how their reactions to him differed from the, presumably white, patients that Wells highlighted.

An investigation into the medical staff in London’s institutional spaces may bring to light members of a ‘middle-class’ black community, and also shed some light on whether Sapara’s experience of being the ‘first black person’ patients had seen was a common one.

The presence of the young women in Bamardo’s again sheds light on several aspects of institutional geographies of Victorian London. Regardless of their colour, the girls’ records give us some insight into the attitudes of Victorian philanthropists to the working-class community that was the subject of their interest. The process of the girls’ admission into Barnardo’s illustrates that there was a feeling that given the ‘right’ conditions in which to live, even the ‘right’ clothes, young people could be transformed into ‘respectable’ citizens. The fact that children were referred to Barnardo’s from other national institutions such as the NSPCC and law courts, implies that this opinion was endorsed by a broad church of Victorian society.

There are also reflections to be made on the girls’ experiences in these spaces in context of their ‘colour’. Like the asylums, Barnardo’s did not segregate their charges on a basis of ‘colour’, but their ‘colour’ did impact on how they were recorded and visualised. The girls in the photograph of Honeysuckle cottage are such an example. Their presence in the photograph shows that black and white girls were integrated within the homes, but their location on the margins of the group suggests that they were not fully integrated into the community life of the cottage. The inconsistent, yet explicit racialisation, of the girls’ admission records also shows that their ‘colour’ was seen and thought to be an important part of their physical and biographical histories.

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6 Alfreda Duster, 1972, p214
Yet the inconsistency of their racialisation suggests that Barnardo's did not have a 'collective' imagination of these girls as 'black', and that they struggled to find a terminology that reflected their ideas of the girls' 'difference'.

Still the girls were trained in the same career as their white peers, and were placed back into the general geographies of the working-class when they became domestic servants. As has been previously noted, unfortunately unless they had children who also became part of the Barnardo's institution, most of the girls' records end when (or even before) they left the Home. Coupling these experiences with further research of black males would again enable a more in depth analysis of the black presence in Britain. The records kept for John Williams once he left the Home show that he worked in Reading and Suffolk in the 1880s, again locating a geography of the black presence outside the urban centres with which it is normally associated.

The spaces of anti-imperial London are easier to identify, yet understanding them is a more elusive process than that of the bounded spaces of institutions. Like the girls in Barnardo's the anti-imperial community was an 'ethnically' diverse one. Wells considered her second anti-lynching tour to Britain as a great success, and the formation of the Anti-Lynching Committee in London in 1894 is testament to this. Wells met a diverse range of people during her campaign from members of parliament, to African students and anti-racist campaigners like Impey. Through Wells' writing we are able to see some of the spaces used by her and her supporters, such as large meetings in Halls, lectures delivered to well established societies, and church congregations, debates in private clubs and living rooms, local and national newspapers and independent periodicals. Yet aside from named key actors, those who joined Wells et al in these spaces and participated in these debates is hard to gauge, as I outlined in earlier in this chapter in section 9.2.

9.3.3 The photographic method

By considering the methodological implications of using the photograph as a primary tool in the research of black history, I have used photography to consider the nature of racialisation in Victorian and contemporary Britain. This discussion in chapter eight

7 Alfreda Duster, 1972, p214
has shown, that although on one level it can be problematic, the use of photographs as a primary tool can be exceedingly fruitful for those investigating black history in Victorian London, and it is a model that could be extended for other similar projects in numerous archives. For example, there is fruitful work to be done in the Barnardo's archive on young black men who were members of the institution. During a brief examination of the albums, there appear to be many more images of young black men than young black women, and as noted before, there is far more information on the males helped by Barnardo's in the written records. Putting the chapter on the Barnardo girls with such an investigation would create a substantial archive of black working-class life, and be a great contribution to the reconstruction of the historical geography of the black community in Britain.

9.4 Redefining 'black' and 'blackness'

The second chapter of this thesis began with a brief consideration of issues surrounding the definitions of 'black women', and how they would be defined in this work. I argued that bringing together women of 'non-white' and 'mixed' 'ethnic' ancestry was justified because the signs of their 'blackness' in their skin, rather than their 'ethnic' diversity would have been what defined them, as is the case today. I think this is still justified, firstly because there is still a need for a peg to hang research such as this on - something that gives the work a sense of collective identity. Secondly, contemporary awareness of race and 'blackness' are still very powerful and impact on how we read the past. However considering the issues around race and the body in this thesis, it would seem that the reality of race and 'blackness' in these women's lives was more complex.

The young women in Barnardo's were certainly racialised, but not by a collective term of 'black', in fact none of them were referred to as black. By labelling them 'Half-caste', 'Half-negro', 'coloured', 'quadroon' or 'octoroon' Barnardo's categorized the young women as an 'other', but I'm not sure this would have necessarily meant they would have been seen as a group. This is perhaps partly because the girls arrived at the Home over a period of over two decades. Further research of young black men in the Barnardo's archive could be of help here too. Aside from having more information written about them compared to women, young black men also appear to have been
more numerous. Locating them in the archives would give greater continuity to the black presence in Barnardo’s. This in turn would provide an opportunity to consider whether there were any subtle changes in the defining of black people over time. For example the girls from Sierra Leone who were labelled ‘quadroons’ and ‘octoroons’ arrived at the Home in 1899; were young men in Barnardo’s labelled in a similar way during the 1890s, and if so is this an illustration of late Victorian scientific racism having a real impact on British institutions?

A number of adjectives were used to describe Ida B. Wells when she was in London, including ‘negro’ and ‘coloured’. When the London periodical Society announced Wells’ presence in London it first called her an ‘interesting lady’ with no reference to her colour. It continued by telling its readers that Wells had come to London to draw public attention to the treatment of “blacks” in the United States, and it then went on to say that Wells was an “American Negro lady”. Wells referred to herself as a “colored” woman, and seems to have made no comment in her dispatches or in her autobiography about the labels she was given in the London press, implying that she felt these portrayals were fair, or labels of identity that she ascribed to herself.

One paper that did not ascribe a ‘colour’ to Wells’ identity was Impey’s Anti-Caste. Indeed Impey was wary of ascribing ‘colour’ to the identity of the men and women that featured in her paper. When Impey reprinted the interview with a South African woman who was on tour with her choir in Anti-Caste, (as referred to in chapter eight), Impey edited out references to the woman’s “black but comely” appearance, that were made by the original interviewer from the Review of Reviews. These comments were probably meant as a compliment by the interviewer, and probably would have been taken as such by the majority of the article’s readers. However Impey’s editing shows us that there was a reading public that would have been offended by the inferiority of black people implied in the article, and that Impey at least, saw there was no reason to have such comments in the public spaces of the anti-racist community. Impey was not unaware of the importance of racialised identities. Her proposal of marriage in her letter to Dr George Ferdinands shows that she was aware that even if she erased colours of identity from the pages of her journal, they still held great power in the spaces of everyday life.

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8 Alfreda Duster, 1972, p90
9 Alfreda Duster, 1972, p127

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9.5 History and Identity

Stuart Hall has argued for the need to change the iconography of popular memory - the need to appropriate a niche for black people amongst the historically and spatially significant spaces of British life. The deliberations around race and 'colour' outlined above impact upon our sense of history and identity in the contemporary world. In Jamaica Kincaid's paper *In History*, she asks a number of questions about history and its relationship with black people in America. Is history an open wound, opened again and again with each breath she takes? Or is it a moment that has come to no end yet? Relating these questions to my own research I wondered how dynamic (the open wound) was my methodology and subsequent research? To what degree would it engage with communities in London and beyond? How would the biographies help an examination of the place of black people in London's history, and how would they be received? How helpful would the (re)discovery of a black underclass be to the black community living in London now? A community that is fighting an institutional disregard of its diversity, skills and history. Will the detailing of an(other) underclass become an extra tool for those challenging racism, now a recognised problem in many of our national institutions, or will it reinforce prejudice?

These were some of the questions I had in mind when I spoke to a group of students about some of my research. They were students on a course on Black History in Britain at Middlesex University, and nearly all were black women. They saw some of the photographs that appear in this thesis, and I asked them to write down their initial feelings, before I told them the biographical stories behind the faces. Some of their thoughts are tabled below.

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10 Anti-Caste, Vol iv, no 10, October 1891, p2; The Review of Reviews, vol iv, no 21, September 1891, p256
11 See Phil Kinsman, 1995
12 Jamaica Kincaid, 1997
Conclusions

Asylum Photographs

Susan Hayes: “appears to be happy maybe she is domestic or childminder.”
“looks quite happy.”
“there’s some kind of sadness in this photo even though she is smiling.”

Mary Matthews: “appears sad, HARD life.”
“no hope in eyes, hair chopped off.”
“she looks gloomy as if her life has been extremely hard.”
“unhappy, miserable old, looks badly looked after, bags around her eyes, she does not look like she wants to take the photo.”
“facial expression sad, frowning, institution or jail.”

Caroline Maisley: “looks well dressed, as if she is in a hospital or asylum.”
“she has a distant look in her eyes.”
“been admitted to an insane hospital/prison, there’s nothing she can do - no control over her life, loss of hope.”

What became clear to me in the discussion with these students was that in the absence of historical knowledge, we fill the gaps with assumptions. I had been concerned that some of the images of the girls in Barnardo’s would have been seen as negative representations of black women. One young woman responded to my concerns by stating, that yes, some of the images were sad, but that they also held a positive story. This was because they showed her that there were a number of orphaned black children in Victorian London, who were cared for. She was in fact pleasantly surprised that black girls and boys had been taken in by Barnardo’s, for she had assumed that poor black children would have been forced into slavery (even though she knew this had been officially abolished for several decades by then), or domestic service, a job which consisted of Dickensian stereotypes in her mind.

I was also interested in the racial breakdowns the students gave to the girls in the pictures. The attempt to assess their ethnic backgrounds from often faded and sepia photographs reminded me of two things. Firstly that ‘racial’ classification based on physical appearance still holds great power over us today. This was coupled with the arbitrary nature of the method, that children with certain hair and features were not seen as Londoners, or black British people, but aborigines. This caused me to wonder at the similarities of the method that the students used to identify ethnicity to that of...
the Victorians, and I wondered how far we could really say we’ve come at dismantling the boundaries of race and the racism that derives its power from them. I was pleased by the students’ positive response to the stories, and their belief that it was more important to have some access and knowledge to these women’s lives than none at all, no matter how poor or marginalised they may have been.

Barnardo’s Photographs

Richmond Sisters: “they both look a little sad to me. Although well dressed”
“Makes me realise how much of a story a photograph can tell. (Torn button on somewhat pretty dress)”

Molly: “motive for sitting Molly in the middle? Is she sitting for a reason? Pretty African looking girl. The layout of picture (black girl sitting with white girl on each side) suggests equality, no question of colour which I believe to be a deliberate pose by [the] photographer.”

Sally Peters: “I like the picture although she looks sad she also looks innocent and sweet and lonely.”
“probably an orphan, result of a mixed relationship - she looks scared and innocent.”

Williams Group: “Mixed race Aborigine children, [...] they appear to look uncomfortable, as if they have been forced to pose in such a manner.”
“No clothes, should at least be wearing night clothes?”
“Not happy, sad eyes. Perhaps naked”

Many authors have commented on the importance of the cultural and collective memory that becomes a nation’s history. These memories, histories and myths have an enormous power, particularly when the cultural assumptions of the dominant group appear to be simply common sense. The pervasive nature of these assumptions are those which critical writers attempt to break down. In 1962 James Baldwin wrote that people who cannot tell themselves the truth of their past will remain trapped in it, and this applied to nations as well. And in Helen charles’ view, dominant national histories
are always a distorting process anyway, and so they must be countered by the counter-opinions of cultures which accompany such histories. Understanding these histories and their relationships requires an unflinching assessment of the historical record. But as Samuel points out, history is an argument as well as a record of the past, and the terms and the context of opinions and counter opinions will be constantly changing.

The black American experience of redefining history has seen black women drawing on the tradition of using everyday actions and experiences in their theoretical work. Intellectuals like bell hooks, have emphasised the direct link between their ideas and real people and real lives. Although the study of history limits our ability to connect with our subjects in this way (you cannot ask them how they were feeling, how people spoke to them, how people treated them), we can connect the experience of history with people today. History is a justification for inclusion and exclusion, who should feel that they belong and who shouldn't, who does belong and who doesn’t. Black and Asian peoples have no real written history of their long presence in Britain, and certainly no popular presence. This discrepancy must be addressed for those facing ‘the challenge of belonging and challenging the belonged’.

The black history that is generally remembered in Britain contains a number of challenges for historians. The Windrush celebrations were predominantly focused on men, and black histories of slavery and sailors also tend to present gendered reflections of history, which often dislocates the experience of black British women. Geographically historical debates on slavery often locate racism and prejudice and the historical relationship of black people with the British as external to Britain. In turn, this map of Britishness locates black people outside the Isles themselves. So although the experiences of slavery, the foundations of British cities and the continuing high position of slave and plantation owning families is most certainly an important history, it is a part of an internal history that must be addressed in even deeper detail. The experiences of diaspora that are touched on do connect to those who migrated to Britain during the 1950s and 1960s, but they exclude any observation or interrogation of the continuous black presence in Britain.

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13 Helen (charles), 1996.
14 James Baldwin, 1985, p318
15 Raphael Samuel, 1999
16 Patricia Hill Collins, 1991
17 Patricia Hill Collins, 1991
18 Naz Rassol, 1997, p189
19 For an example see Madge Dresser, 2001
Many blacks in contemporary Britain continue to denounce the advantages of modernity, its citizenship, formal political freedoms and life chances, as a sham. This juxtaposition between the official status and the reality of being black in Britain has called into question the nature of the formation of the modern British nation. The fusion of space and time in official and civil projects reflects the belief that the British nation is both its people and its terrain - this landscape being both real and imagined. History is inscribed on both the landscape of the real and the imagined and these landscapes form a powerful bond between our past and our contemporary selves.

When The Parekh Report on the future of multi ethnic Britain was published in October 2000, it was into a storm of media coverage and controversy. The Daily Telegraph led the way erupting with a wave of hysterical journalism, its editorial on the 10th October claimed that it was "astonishing that ministers should have welcomed the sub-Marxist gibberish" which it saw making up the report's text. In fact the report covered a wide range of debates and ideas around issues that affect 'multi-ethnic Britain' including colour racism, discrimination because of faith, and hostility encountered by white Britons such as the Irish communities. It considered these encounters of discrimination in relation to different aspects of British life, including policing, the wider criminal justice system, education, asylum, the arts, sport, health and immigration.

The Daily Telegraph published its response to the issues raised in the Report the day before it was published. It claimed that the report said that the word British was racist and thought that the report was another examples of excessive 'political correctness.' In fact at no point does the Report say that 'British is a racist word', but what it does say is that the imagined community of Britain and the nations that make it up are racialised. Many people who are from black and Asian communities could comfortably call themselves British, but not English, Scottish or Welsh. It seems to me that this is because the artificial and imperial make-up of Britishness has allowed 'Britain' to perceive itself as, even to have become, a 'multi-cultural' society, without ever having to confront the racist structures that remain within the member nations.

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20 Paul Gilroy, 1996
21 Bhikhu Parekh, 2000
22 The Daily Telegraph 10th October 2000, p29
23 Caroline Bressey, 2001a
24 Caroline Bressey, 2001a
25 The Daily Telegraph 10th October 2000, p29
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Within the context of greater European integration and the disintegration of the union, this discrepancy will have to be faced, because we will no longer be able to hide behind the facade of Britishness.26

It would seem that the reporters for the Daily Telegraph failed to realise that the manner in which they attacked the Report, led them to become the very subjects of the work that they were trying to ridicule. Indeed the vicious attacks the report received from all sections of the media, only illustrate how pertinent its observations were and show how far we have to go before the admirable, if idealistic, aims of the report can be discussed, let alone put into practice.

This is true within academic disciplines and the theories that inform them. For example, without a detailed examination of how black women have been racialised in the past, how can we begin to understand how the historical memory of these stereotypes affect black women in the present day? Patricia Hill Collins has argued that the suppression of black women’s ideas has had a pronounced influence on feminist theory, as it has traditionally relied upon white middle class ideas as the origins of their arguments.27 Kum-Kum Bhavari has added to this argument insisting that feminist work needs to have an adequate historical understanding of difference among women.28

Until this work is done how can feminist work be fully aware of the differences and, perhaps more importantly, the similarities in the experiences of women and their history in the British Isles? I place an emphasis here on similarity and unity, not only amongst women but also across class and other experiences of identity. This is important because, as Mary Maynard has pointed out, discussions on difference have rightly drawn attentions to serious generalizations about women in early feminist work, or the absence of blackness in British history.29 However, there is perhaps a danger that an overemphasis on fragmentation and difference could cause unhelpful, unnecessary and dangerous divisions between groups working towards similar ends of intellectual interest and social justice.

26 Caroline Bressey, 2001a
27 Patricia Hill Collins, 1991
28 Kum-Kum Bhavnami, 1994
29 See Mary Maynard, 1994
Still there are academics who acknowledge the authors who point out gaps of racial analysis, but continue to ignore race in their own work. Consideration of the theories and impacts of race needs to become as much a part of historical analysis as class and gender. There has been a tendency to homogenise black experiences, and this is sometimes apparent in this thesis. There is a need to examine the similarities and differences in the experiences of black people who were born in Britain, Africa the Caribbean, North and South America, and other parts of Europe. However, in the case of history, a larger body of work needs to be carved out before such comparisons can begin to be made successfully.

9.6 Concluding Thoughts

The girls and women in this thesis have helped us to answer some of the questions I have raised in this conclusion. As is usual with all women’s history, I found ‘ordinary’ working and middle class women difficult to locate. As a result the poor women tend to be from, what we would call today, the socially excluded. Women who appeared in institutional records because their parents could not, or did not wish, to care for them, as well as women who were deemed insane and institutionalised in London county asylums. For those on the left attempting to reconstruct the experience of ‘ordinary’ people from below, Juin Sharpe has also argued for the need to understand experiences of the ‘ordinary’ and the marginalised.

The focus on these women may attract an accusation that the thesis reinforces the tendency to theorise the experience of black women as a list of oppressions. This can be refuted from several angles. Firstly, the women I have chosen to write about have, to an extent, been determined by the archives. Secondly, from a feminist perspective, and a broader history of the working-classes, these histories add an important dimension to social history. Black women lived among the poorest of the poor, and their stories are as important as any other, even if they are more difficult to listen to, or accept. If over a century later they are seen to reinforce racist or racialised stereotypes

30 Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, 1996
31 Bakare-Yusuf, 1997
33 Bibi Bakare-Yusuf, 1997
in our own society, that is surely a reason for us to look at the reasons why so little has changed.

To a degree their stories are countered by the presence of women who came from the opposite end of the social spectrum: two women who were god-daughters of Queen Victoria, and more political women who spent time in London. With all of them, regardless of social status, I have attempted to reconstruct an identity, a life and a set of relationships for them. Identifying their presence, and adding them to the construction of a women’s history is only the beginning. To take their experiences further would be to ask how or if they ranked themselves together as black women, and if so, what were the conditions for their joint consciousness.

The women’s biographies have also provided us with an excellent illustration that the absence of a defined ‘colour’ has become an assumption of whiteness. It is of great concern that scholars have given the impression that all people, except named exceptions, were white English peoples. As a result the illustrations that remain in our history books urgently need to be reviewed and altered to include these new discoveries. Seeing the canons of British history in this context, it is not hard to argue that the silencing of the women in this thesis has been governed by the litany of class, race and power.

The great historical geographer H. C. Darby, once wrote that in the writing of historical geography there was no such thing as success, only degrees of unsuccess. In the end it may not matter that the historical biographies of some of the girls and women in images will never be known to us, that the faces in photographs are not only unknown, but also unknowable. The Kodak camera was introduced in 1888, but there are few surviving snapshots of the working-class family holiday, at football matches, or an evening at the pub, or images created just for the fun of it. The camera had not yet become a tool for preserving the working-classes in their own image. Thus as it stands these albums and collections still exclude ‘the ordinary folk’, but they do picture a visual history of people who would otherwise be unremembered. These new images are ones that should affect all Britons. These are not just black histories or even black

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34 Joan Wallach Scott, 1986
35 See Denise Riley, 1996
36 Joan Wallach Scott, 1996
37 Cited in Alan Baker and Derek Gregory, 1984
38 See Gillian Rose, 1997
British histories; they are British histories in the fullest sense. They are part of a new historical geography, the forgotten geographies of people ignored, erased and forgotten in London and throughout the British Isles.

39 Robert Levine, 1989
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