Chapter Two
Mapping the Contexts and Theoretical Framework on Race and Gender

I

"There is no single Africa, with consistent boundaries through time" – is the statement with which Robin Derricourt begins his book, *Inventing Africa: History, Archaeology and Ideas* (2011). This opening statement carries the weight of the larger thesis that Africa has undergone multiple geographical and ideological inventions long before it was declared a continent. Since the focus of the present study is to deal with representations of Africa in Black British writings, this chapter attempts to trace these ideological constructs, how they have shaped popular perception of Africa and its inhabitants, and how they have stimulated the production of counter-narratives in the fields of anthropology, sociology, history, and even literature. The purpose of the thesis is to demonstrate how the historical inventions and re-inventions of Africa are intrinsic to the search for roots by black British women novelists. Black women in Britain have been disproportionately affected by the politics of race, identity, and belonging, rendering them invisible and powerless. Their circumstances are made more difficult by the rhetoric of national identity. To resist these systemic forms of oppression, these women speak from a 'third space' or "spaces of unlocation" that take into account their multiple differences arising as a consequence of migration from different locations and periods (Mirza, *Black British* 5). Hence, their writings fall within these counter-narratives that seek to offer real, metaphorical, and imagined versions of the continent.

In the previous chapter, the study offered a general overview of the socio-political conditions that give rise to such a literature of resistance. This chapter will map out the theoretical framework that will allow our study to identify and expand the critical endeavours on race, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity in the novels of black British women writers. In short, the critical discourses on race put forward by black British cultural theorists and postcolonial critics will be discussed. Concerning the debates on race and anti-black racism, the critical deliberations of black feminists, African feminists, and mainly black British feminists who have countered or augmented the established theories with their observations on multiple forms of oppression experienced by black women in Britain will also be taken into account. Hence, in the latter part of the chapter, the thesis examines how concepts related to race, body, and 'difference(s)' form an integral part of black British feminism and their anti-colonial, anti-sexist politics. However, to serve as a basis of a history of resistance against the conceptualization of blackness in terms of

'alterity' to the West's image of itself, the thesis begins with the etymology of the term 'Africa' and a brief review of Afrocentric theories and the pan-African movements.

Robin Derricourt's *Inventing Africa* lucidly addresses the kind of discourses the term 'Africa' generates in terms of its history, people, literature, economics, and politics. While he acknowledges that discussion about Africa and its implied connotations of the 'other', 'exotic', and 'dark' is now no longer an obscure topic, he notes that "the boundaries of Africa, when seen as the 'other'", have undergone a continual shift, or are "fluid" (Derricourt 1). The Greeks termed the Mediterranean region, the Nile Valley, and some parts of the south as *Aithiops*, which later evolved into Aethiopia. Derived from the terms 'aithes' and 'opsis', *Aithiops* meant 'burnt face'. The Romans referred to the modern-day Tunisian region as "Africa". They dominated the continent's northern half but were prevented from venturing further south due to the Sahara. It was during the time of the Roman rule in this region that the term 'moors' was first applied to people in Maghreb of North Africa. Following the "Christianisation of the Empire", the Romans also began expanding into Africa from a small colony in Tunisia (Derricourt 11). The influence of Islamic Arabs began early during the same time as the Romans, but the former spread in a substantial part of the south. They were able to deal mostly with gold and slaves, which they sent to Europe since they had access and knowledge of interior routes and places. Ali Mazrui's article, "The Re-invention of Africa: Edward Said, V. Y. Mudimbe, and Beyond", points out that for some researchers, the term Africa can be traced to Berber origins, which is an indigenous population in the continent, and also the Semites or Phoenicians, with whom the continent shared complex ties. The variability and indefiniteness in the terms suggest that they were developed via exchanges between many cultures and civilizations.

These mediations of external influences in Africa and the consequent construction of the concept of Africa have been categorized into five different phases by Ali Mazrui. Of the five phases, our study emphasizes the final one because it gave rise to Afrocentric intellectuals who worked to change the historic perception of Africa from a 'dark continent' to the cradle of human civilization. This was in response to the "geography of monstrosity" constructed by Greek historians and Roman administrators such as Herodotus, Diodorus, and Pliny, respectively, who spread images of Africans as savage in Europe (Amadiume 3). Consequently, the idea of Africa began to be

understood in terms of binary dichotomies, wherein Europe and its civilization were positioned as superior (3). Regarding this, scholars like Mazrui give evidence of a culturally and intellectually advanced Africa, such as "the Al-Azhar University in Cairo, the collective scholarly academy in Timbuktu, and the oldest Qarawiyin University in Morocco in Fez", which were not only the most famous zones for classical Islamic learning in Africa but also older than any of the Western universities (Mazrui 71). Similarly, the existence of stone-built ruins of settlements in Great Zimbabwe and the southern part of central Africa, the art and architecture of Meroe, Kush, and the Axums in Ethiopia, also state the prevalence of advanced and complex civilization in Africa. However, there have been debates regarding its authentic origins, and most Western anthropologists, travellers, and scholars consider them as 'ancient' ruins. There were also persistent attempts to prove that the existence of this complex art and architecture is a product of Africa's interaction with various external influences like the Semites, Phoenicians, and Greeks. These attempts, as Derricourt puts it, of "distancing the site from African achievements served well the European image of their role in the subcontinent", and ultimately the invention of Africa with an "ancient past and an exotic present" (33). On this aspect, even V. Y. Mudimbe comments on how "explorers just brought new proof which could explicate 'African inferiority'" (26). Derricourt believes the work of Leo Frobenius, from whom V. Y. Mudimbe borrows the phrase "African genesis", has no doubt been insightful but is also disparaging in the sense that it complicated the already growing debate on the African past and the existence of powerful civilizations. This is because Frobenius takes credit for the discovery of the details of a lost civilization named 'African Atlantis' in Africa which was inhabited by white people (34). Similarly, even Basil Davidson's *Africa in History* (1968), also the 1984 TV series *Africa: The Voyage of Discovery*, which has gained a great deal of popularity among African and European scholars alike, is critiqued by Derricourt for being "selective and celebratory" and overlooking complex issues like slavery in Africa before the Atlantic trade (125). Davidson's political act of re-visiting Africa's history not only involves discovering and locating African pasts in its indigenous population but also validates the fact that most of the present 'turmoil' in Africa is a cause of colonial conquests. In pre-colonial Africa, Davidson states, "little occurred to disturb the quiet unfolding of traditional precedent and custom…" (132). His description presents two paradoxical observations; one, a clear distinction between the time before Africa came in contact/ interacted with Europe (which speaks of the existence of the "triumvirate" –

God, gold, and glory) and two, a re-assertation of the fact that nothing of significance happened in Africa before that contact (Mazrui 71).

Like Davidson's apparent misrepresentations, even English literature disseminated the myths of savagery associated with a black individual and Africa. Ruth Cowhig in David Dabydeen's editorial work, *The Black Presence in English Literature* (1985), observes how black characters have often been represented through archetypal stereotypes that subject them to characteristics such as "evil", "treacherous", an "incarnation of lust", possessing "devilish powers", and so on (6,7). In the case of Othello, a celebrated hero in English literature, the fact that he was a "baptized Christian" was set parallelly with virtues of honour, self-control, and gallantry (12). Cowhig believes Shakespeare's incorporation of these traits had a massive influence in gaining the sympathy of the predominantly white audience in Europe during the Elizabethan period. Cowhig also points out that Othello was evidently "afflicted by the travel-book mythology" because he contrasts Desdemona's descent to immorality with her fair complexion (13). In "Beyond Miranda's Meanings: Un/silencing the 'Demonic Ground' of Caliban's 'Woman'", Sylvia Wynter shows how in the "context of behaviour-regulatory inferential system of meanings", Caliban in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611), is "constituted as the lack of the 'rational' Prospero" (113). Wynter also argues that the absence of Caliban's woman, his "physiognomically complementary mate" essential for the propagation of his "vile race", is an "ontological absence" and represents the act of eliminating the entire race (115, 116).

As these stereotypes and prejudices travelled from one era or place to another, English literature became embedded with such misrepresentations. Thus, taking forward the idea of the Negroid race as barbaric and lacking in prior history, culture, and a comprehensible language, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) imagines a black man, who is named Friday and can be trained in the English language and mannerisms. The eponymous protagonist, who is stranded on a tropical island, is found using phrases like 'the creature', 'poor savage', 'blinded, ignorant pagans', 'the rogue', 'you dog', and the like, to refer to Friday and people of his demeanour. Defoe's biased racial, religious, and cultural ideologies seem clear from the very first encounter between Crusoe and Friday, where the former states that "he [Friday] came and kneeled down to me, embracing my knees, said a great many things I did not understand" (268). Here, one can

picture the underlying image of a black man in a prostrated position. This representation of gloomy slaves asking for mercy became widely popular during the 18th century. The English Abolition Society (1787) used this image in medallions and badges and wore them as a sign of their political move against the slave trade. In this sense, abolitionism, as Jan Nederveen Pieterson points out, "promoted a new stereotype of blacks… the image of blacks as victims. The Christian tenor underlined this…. It made emancipation conditional – on condition of conversion, on condition of docility and meekness, on condition of on one's knees" (60). Pieterson also cites the example of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1853) which perpetuated this image. The idea behind this was that by being submissive and attaining the label of a good human being, an enslaved black individual may be sympathized upon and granted freedom, or even ideally accepted as part of English society. Repeatedly, a focus was put on the virtues of Christianity as the only way to liberation, in extension England – God's land. Thus, religious obligation, later backed by pseudo-scientific rationalism, justifies and at the same time erases the cruelties of the colonial enterprise.

In the same way, Charles Dicken's novels, which have otherwise depicted a detailed picture of the evils of industrialization in the 18th and 19th centuries, do not mention the presence of black people or the slave trade on which European wealth flourished. In *Great Expectations* too, reference to the source of the fortunes Pip inherits remains obscure. In 'The Chimney Sweeper' (1789) and 'The Little Black Boy' (1789), William Blake almost explicitly mentions "a little black *thing* among the snow": or a black boy who is "bereaved of light", and yet captivates the readers by hinting a Christian ethos (71, 49). Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) centres on the tragedy of a dark/person named Heathcliff but provides dehumanizing descriptions of his character. Though Heathcliff is often well-known as a romantic hero because of his ceaseless love for Catherine, he is mostly described as fierce and inhuman through the perspective of white characters, who are conditioned in the prevailing racist structures. Published in the same year, Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* created another image i.e., of the 'madwoman in the attic', propagating notions of mystery and exoticism associated with a black/Caribbean woman. Paradoxically, Bronte positions the eponymous protagonist as an emerging feminist who values individual consciousness. As Jane describes Bertha Marson's shadows wandering around Thornfield Hall, the writer's reflection of fear and at the same time curiosity towards the black woman is projected,

echoing the British society's prevailing predispositions. Bronte, like her contemporaries, also clearly evades any discussion on the imperialistic adventures of the white man that will probably explain how Bertha, a Caribbean woman, became Mr. Rochester's wife and ended up in the attic of Thornfield Hall in the first place. Jean Rhy's counter-narrative in *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) which addresses this discrepancy, not only provides a backstory to Bertha's subjection to madness but also initiates a re-reading of Bronte's narrative fiction. Figuring as Antoinette Cosway, a Creole woman and an heiress, Bertha's point-of-view subverts the romantic characterization of Mr. Rochester as seen in *Jane Eyre*. In these representations, there is a myth-making of the black individual which evolves through time and space. It is in response to such representations that black writers are now 'writing back'. In context to this, the Kenyan writer Binyavanga Wainaina's essay "How to Write about Africa" (2005) and the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's "The Danger of a Single Story" (2009), which challenges the age-old tropes and stereotypes on Africa and African writing, can also be recalled.

Likewise, among African cultural nationalists, two schools of thought emerged as a defence against the Western/European attempts at denigrating the historical and cultural discoveries of Africa. Ali Mazrui describes them as *romantic gloriana* and *romantic primitivism*. Cheikh Anta Diop, a Senegalese historian, and social scientist, and Molefi K. Asante belonged to the former school of thought, which believed that "Africa before the Europeans' arrival had its complex civilizations that Europeans regarded as valid and important – civilizations that kings, impressive empires, and elaborate technological skills" (Mazrui 72). For this, they revisited the contributions of Egyptian civilization and ancient Greece. This school of thought also emphasized rationality and the written word. As noted by Ifi Amadiume, Diop's focus on Egypt stemmed from the need to "establish an authentic narrative of African history" (2). In contrast, another school of African thought, called *romantic primitivism*, highlighted the "simplicity and gave respectability to non-technical traditions", instead of the past achievements and glory (Mazrui, *Africanity* 118). In Senghor's terms, "the great genius of Africa lay not in European concepts of rationality, but in indigenous capacities for intuition; not in the principles of scientific method and objectivity, but in the wisdom of custom and instinct; not in cold analytical reason, but in warm responsive emotion" (Mazrui 73-4). Here, oral traditions and the importance of discourse have substantial value. Mazrui adds another

dimension to this school of thought by adding the concept of egalitarianism in idealised primitivism. Critics like Robin Derricourt have a sceptical outlook and argued that romanticizing the primitive is an easy discretion for those who are overwhelmed by the grandeur of the past. Our study shows how black British women writers reject these distinctions by situating their novels in the socio-political contexts of the 1930s and 1940s when different countries in the African continent were under turmoil. For instance, in Aminatta Forna's *Ancestor Stones* and Nadifa Mohamed's *Black Mamba Boy*, black British migrant returnees go back to a fairly recent past because to return to the ancient glories of Africa would mean a neglect of the inconsistencies and contradictions within its social and state systems. However, in Chapter Three the thesis employs Mazrui's concept of "retraditionalization" as a tool for the analysis of novels, where traditional African values, family structures, and traditional practices are revisited and used as a means by displaced migrants to negotiate with their 'self'. Being influenced by the concept of *ujamaa*, a Swahili term for socialism, Marzui establishes that "retraditionalization of African culture can take modernizing forms, especially if it becomes an aspect of decolonization. Retraditionalization does not mean returning Africa to what it was before Europeans came…. But a move towards renewed respect for indigenous ways" (qtd in Mudimbe 169).

Negritude as a political movement, the pan-African congresses, and Presence Africainé created a new path forward for alternative discourses. Sartre's "Black Orpheus" (1948) led to a major contribution to African Studies through the application of Marxist philosophy to negritude. Frantz Fanon too centres his ideology around the importance of socialism and how it aids political liberation. According to Fanon, violence, and rebellion are potent tools that act against suppression, resulting in nationalist agendas that aim for complete liberation from colonialism. V. Y. Mudimbe cites Leopold Senghor as another advocate of the negritude movement, who promotes an "existential thesis (I am what I have *decided* to be)", which operates through a socialist model, and ultimately fulfils its goal of transforming into a "universal civilization" (emphasis added,106-7). Senghor's statement foregrounds the belief that African societies have potential for such transformations. However, Florence Stratton and Annie Françoise critique the gendered national allegory reflected in the literature that emerged from the Negritude movement. For example, works like Senghor's "Black Woman"/ "Femme noir" and "Night in Sine"/ "Nuit de Sine", and David Diop's "Africa", valorised

the Mother Africa trope and limited black women to "simplistic maternal roles" (Gagiano 48). Stratton's criticism also extends to African men's writings like Chinua Achebe. In the succeeding chapters, our study attempts to show how black British women's writings are equally sceptical of such representations of black women. In narrating stories that situate the family at the core and the role of women in it, the writers project it as a microcosm of the society at large. Women as herbalists, entrepreneurs, fortune tellers, and preservers of oral history, offer an alternative prospect of living through communal sharing of space, nativism, and social democracy. Unlike the advocates of *romantic gloriana*, the writers represent both the rural or pastoral and the urbanised aspects of Africa, but consider kinship patterns and social divisions that exist between the communities as far from simple. The fact that there are various ethnic and religious communities, linguistic divisions, and political differences amidst the people in the continent is established in the novels.

In this context, it is necessary to point out the ideological differences between the African scholars that stemmed the growth of diverse approaches in rebuilding the African Self. While Mudimbe opposes Fanon and Senghor's approaches as limiting, he supports Julius Nyerere's brand of communalism or '*ujamaa*', a Swahili word for socialism, as the most pragmatic because it does not consider the principles of socialism and democracy as occurring outside the boundaries of African societies. Despite their differences in envisioning Africa's future, Mazrui and Mudimbe's political thoughts seem fairly equivalent in the sense that both acknowledge the contribution of external forces, like the Islamic religion or the West, in defining and interpreting Africa. Their works focus on African philosophy as a *gnosis* of a "higher and esoteric knowledge" and revolve around a critical intervention of the discourse on its alterity (Mudimbe ix). Mudimbe has also criticized Afrocentric thinkers, who according to him romanticize Africa's indigeneity and authenticity, but hinge on Western ideologies such as Marxism as a "panacea for otherness" (Mudimbe 128). However, in his book *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge* (1988), Mudimbe examines the European intervention in Africa as signifying "a new historical form and the possibility of radically new types of discourses on African tradition and cultures", though he also posits that European colonialists "have all tended to organize and transform non-European areas into fundamentally European constructs" (1). Mudimbe calls this grand interaction between Europe and Africa a "historical accident" (15). Mudimbe holds the

social scientists and their inability to move away from the idea of Africa's primitive, tribal past responsible for the failure of African nation-states and their underdevelopment.

Ifi Amadiume, in her book *Re-Inventing Africa*: *Matriarchy, Religion and Culture* (1997), critiques Mudimbe's ambiguous stance on "European-invented Africa", where he questions the "cultural bias" of the Greek and Roman historians but does not critically contextualise it as racism (3). Instead, he uses the term 'racism' while discussing Edward Blyden's pan-African ideologies, implying that they had European influences. Amadiume rather states that Mudimbe's approach is reliant on a "Western episteme" because he does not mention an "alternative body of knowledge" from which he is arguing against the construction of Africa's state of 'otherness' (3). She also points out that Mudimbe's works reflect the immense influence of European scholars like Claude Levi-Strauss and Michel Foucault. In juxtaposition to Mudimbe's approach, Amadiume holds that Cheikh Anta Diop's theories have more relevance because they suggest an alternate possibility for an "independent African approach and objective" (1). According to her, Diop's focus on the Egyptian glories challenged many historical hypotheses, like the onset of modernism in Africa since the advent of Europeans, and the Hamitic origin of Africans. Diop essentially rejected the myth of Ham that is associated with the influence of the Aryans and the Semites in Africa, by showing their patriarchal social structures. In relation to this, Amadiume states that to claim, "an organic and dignified cultural identity for Africa", Diop centralised "gender valued principles" and a "matriarchal superstructure in early African social societies" (1, 54). Hence, Amadiume's work mainly focuses on Diop's use of a "*Nzugwalu* polemic", an Igbo word that means to answer back (4). She employs the *Nzugwalu* to demonstrate the social history of Nnobi, an Igbo community in an African village, and the existence of a matrilineal structure in it (4). At the same time, Amadiume critiques Diop's method of retracing the glories and wealth of African kings and queens living in cities, because according to her it created a dichotomy with the ordinary, unprivileged people in rural Africa. She goes on to prove the feudal system and class structures that existed in African societies. However, despite contradictions, all these scholars and thinkers envision a politically independent Africa, which is built on factors that enhance its Africanity.

The trans-Atlantic Pan-Africanism, under the aegis of Kwame Nkrumah, George Padmore, W. E. B. Dubois, and Marcus Garvey, is one of the most significant movements that emerged out of the need to assert Africanity. In his essay, "Africa Between Nationalism and Nationhood: A Political Survey" (1982), Ali Mazrui also discusses the presence of sub-Saharan Pan-Africanism and trans-Saharan Pan-Africanism in Africa. African cultural nationalism, as it developed through these ideologies, became the basis for political mobilisation within the continent. People were mobilised even through popular culture. For example, a songwriter and singer from South Africa named Miriam Makeba, also known by the name 'Mama Africa', wrote a song titled 'A luta continua' (1981) to show her support for the militarist regime of Samora Machel and generate the idea of unification between African countries. Another African singer named Cesaria Emora from Cape Verde, expresses in her song 'Our Africa', similar perceptions of Africa as the motherland calling upon its diasporic children to unite and rebuild it. Similarly, even Kwame Nkrumah, the then Ghanian president, envisioned an integration of the continent but his ideology became an obstacle for the newly independent regions that were beginning to form as sovereign nation-states. Among the influential figures of the trans-Atlantic Pan-Africanism, Marcus Garvey, who propagated the idea of 'Africa for Africans' became exceedingly popular both in the African continent and the diaspora. His popularity reached such an extent that his ideology gradually came to be widely known as Garveyism.

At the crux of his ideology remained the strife for liberation and integration and the success of the pan-African Congresses, which started in 1900 under the supervision of W. E. B. Du Bois. On a positive note, it galvanized Garvey to initiate the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in 1914, leading to the first "trans-oceanic and trans-national networking of African peoples" (Fergus 32). Garvey's idea of 'going back to Africa' had a dialectic between homeland and diaspora and, it developed a new dynamic between the African Union and the diasporic organizations elsewhere (Fergus 32). The Rastafari movement or Ras Tafari, a religious, social, and political force that developed during the 1930s in Jamaica, is one of the upshots of Garvey's dynamic influence in the Caribbean. It is believed that Garvey had prophesied the rise of a black messiah and subsequently, Haile Selassie, crowned as emperor of Ethiopia was seen as this messiah. Hakim Adi mentions in his book *Pan-Africanism: A History* (2013), that on the coronation of the emperor in the year 1930, Garvey wrote:

We have no doubt that the time has now come. Ethiopia is now really stretching forth her hands. This great kingdom of the East has been hidden for many centuries, but gradually she is rising to take a leading place in the world and it is for us of the Negro race to assist in every way to hold up the hand of the Emperor Ras Tafari. (39)

Since the Rastafarians considered Ethiopia as their promised land, they started worshipping the emperor and named themselves after his real name, Ras Tafari. Thus, through different forms of cultural expression, the Rastafarians began to endorse Garvey's notion of a 'return' to Africa. For instance, a British reggae group named Aswad released a song titled 'Back to Africa' (1976), which refers to a "far off land/ For you and me/ Africa is her name/ A place/ Where we'll be free/ Once again". Again, in1977 a Jamaican reggae artist named Peter Tosh incorporated the idea of diasporic hybridity in his song 'African', as he sings: "don't care where you came from/ As long as you're a black man, you're African/ No mind your nationality/ you've got the identity of an African… 'cause if you come from Trinidad… Nassan…Cuba, you're an African". Bob Marley was one of the popular Rastafarians who echoed Marcus Garvey's Pan-African ideologies and pointed at the "'movement of the Jah people' – out of bondage and return to a Promised Land" (Hall 49). Marley's 'Africa unite' (1990), which talked of black people moving out of Babylon to their Fatherland and witnessing the "unification of all Africans", greatly appealed to the people of the Caribbean as much as in the African diaspora. contrastingly, the phrase which adhered to such reverence and enabled to self-fashion the notion of blackness on both sides of the Atlantic was used in a derogatory sense as well. In 1998, an American metal band called Mudoven released a song titled "Back to Africa" which had racist lyrics and targeted not only black people but also anti-racist organisations. The lyrics of the song went as follows: "Emancipated man, you do as you please/ we should have left you where you were, up in the trees/…Completely uncivilized… You're the great curse of the entire planet… Go back to Africa… 'cause we don't want you here!". Such acts function as a deterrent but the constant efforts of Pan-Africanists to initiate a voluntary 'return' to their homeland strived to challenge the reiteration of these images of barbarism.

As Ola Opeyemi and Molefi K. Asante point out, however, the wave of an "emigration rhetoric" was already beginning to form within newly emancipated slaves

who wanted to reject the American way of life and values, and among the African American abolitionists and leaders like Martin Delany, Henry McNeal Turner and Edward Wilmot Blyden, who called it the 'Back to Africa' movement (Asante 166). From Britain, Hakim Adi observes that influential black figures like Olaudah Equiano and Quobua Ottobah were the pioneers in believing that "Africans had the duty to emancipate themselves from slavery" (27). In that way, they emphasized the idea of black British people's return to their ancestral homeland. Again, Duse Mohammad Ali, a Nigerian activist who mostly formed his political orientations in Britain, had been Garvey's mentor and a forebearer of his Pan-African ideology. Born of Egyptian and Sudanese heritage, Mohammad Ali had a close inclination towards his fellow Africans and immediately challenged in his book, *In the Land of the Pharaohs* (1911), against Roosevelt's decision to civilise Egyptian fanatics through violence. In 1911, he also organised the Universal Races Congress in which W. E. B. Dubois too was a member. Under Mohammad Ali's influence and the help of John Eldred Taylor, *The African Times* and *Orient Review* (AT&OR) was launched in 1912. He was one of the first modern Pan-Africanists "to understand the necessity for an economic approach to the liberation of Africa and Africans" and suggested the establishment of universities in Africa (Adi 1). However, his intentions conflicted with Garvey and Dubois due to his ideological shift from Pan-Africanism to nationalism, particularly after his settlement in Nigeria in the 1930s. There were ideological differences between Garvey and Dubois too even though they were working in the same forum. Garvey highly criticised Dubois' idea of the 'Talented Tenth' and Frederick Douglass' integrationist politics.

Likewise, Garvey had been attacked by African American historians and diaspora critics such as Keisha N. Blain and Erik McDuffie who state that his popularity overshadowed the contribution and fervent activism of black women nationalists like Amy Jacques Garvey, Ethel Maud Collins, Amy Ashwood Garvey, and many others involved in the movement. Amy Garvey, his wife and the co-founder of the UNIA, had a significant influence in developing the Universal African Motor Corps and the Black Cross Nurses, based on the model of the Red Cross during WWI, which participated in various community programmes, provided health services to the public, and gave vocational training to women. Amy had frequent tours across the world and established a significant model for women during those visits, even after her separation from Marcus Garvey. For instance, in 1924 she staged theatrical productions in New York, in 1936,

she opened the 'Florence Mills Social Parlour' in Carnaby Street, and in 1957, she founded the Afro-women service bureau providing laundry and mending services. Through her entrepreneurial skills, she drew the attention of the public towards another influential businesswomen of the time, Madam C. J. Walker. She had also opened an Afro-Caribbean restaurant in New Oxford Street in 1935, which was often visited by other Pan-African activists like Una Marson, George Padmore, and C. L. R. James. Una Marson, a Caribbean political activist, greatly benefitted from these associations and her involvement in the League of Coloured People in the early 1930s, as she developed her nationalist and anti-colonial politics. After her return to Jamaica then, she engaged in the active politics of decolonisation and women's freedom.

Claudia Jones, another black poet, feminist, and communist from the Caribbean, was not only involved with the UNIA but also with the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) due to her radical anti-capitalist activism. In the 1950s, when she came to London, the Communist Party of Britain (CPGB) did not readily accept the presence of a black woman. Therefore, she established the *West Indian Gazette* in 1958, which later expanded to *West Indian Gazette* and *Afro-Asian Caribbean News*, with a collaborative effort from Amy Ashwood Garvey. In the same year, Jones also suggested the organisation of the Notting Hill Carnival in Britain, to celebrate black pride and black roots amidst the rising devaluation and dehumanisation of black people and their culture. As already stated in the introductory chapter, through their literary involvements and political activism these women had a significant role in the development of the black British literary tradition. Again, there were also important figures like Malcolm X's mother, Louise Little[1] who established black women's position as different from the mainstream feminist movement by promoting the idea of a 'new negro Woman' and subverting the "old type of male leadership" (Matthews 11). She was known as the "grassroots leader of the UNIA" and "community feminism", but the lack of her popularity, adds to the debate on male dominance in radical black politics (McDuffie 146). There is no doubt that Garvey's Pan-African idea of a 'unified homeland' was widely acknowledged, but Carol Boyce Davies mentions that there was simultaneously the creation of another 'imagined community' i.e., of a diaspora. The diasporic existence, as Davies states, that is caused by "the migrations of many peoples from homelands for economic or other political reasons", generated a condition of exile and the need to form

"new communities with new relationships to those homelands" (*Black Women* 14). In the American setting, radical black activists like Elijah Mohammad and Malcolm X promoted the idea of a separate black land for their followers who were also part of the Nation of Islam (NOI). Similar to the African cultural nationalists, these two influential personalities also intended for a positive reclamation of their black identity but sought to trace it through the origin of Islam in Africa.

For blacks in America, going back to their roots does not entail a confrontation with their national identity, unlike black people in Britain. The latter have to deal with the constructions of Englishness and Britishness, which are intrinsically linked with their blackness. A cultural recovery of roots for black British people is much more complicated than that of the African Americans due to the absence of a homegrown black tradition and the systemic erasure or selective remembering of their collective histories. Moreover, race discourse in the US does not always serve as a viable tool to examine race and racial dynamics in Britain due to the social and historical contexts. Therefore, our thesis will go on to discuss how black British cultural theorists and diaspora critics contextualise discourses on race and 'difference and examine it in correspondence with the politics of Britain seeking to formulate a rational, homogenous cultural and national identification. This contextualization is relevant in order to understand black British women's writing, because their works are not only influenced by the conceptual and ideological constructions of Africa but are also a critique of these constructions. Moreover, the contexts will enable the study to examine the writers' preoccupation with the idea of 'return' and how it shapes or formulates the imaginary of their homeland, i.e. Africa. Hence, a detailed background study has been incorporated in detail to support the analysis made in the succeeding chapters.

II

Before delving into the theoretical frameworks on race and Race Relations in Britain, let us draw the contexts on which the term 'black British' developed and the consequent contradictions within black British writers regarding the appropriateness of the term. The 'black British' people, specifically those coming from the West Indies and Africa, were initially referred to as 'coloured immigrants' in the 1950s and officially classified as belonging to 'New Commonwealth ethnic origin'. Most of these people primarily came to Britain in the year 1948, of which many were stationed as ex-servicemen and nurses

under British Loyalty during the world wars. Presently, as a category, they are referred to as BAME (black, Asian, Minority, and Ethnic). Due to scattered settlement among the migrants, forming an organisation and a political struggle based on ethnic differences became a challenging task. Therefore, colonial oppression formed a common ground based on which these ethnic minorities protested and disputed the epistemic, state-sponsored violence meted against them. Hence, 'black' was used in a more inclusive sense to also mean the 'non-White British' including migrants from Asia. Given the contemporary state of black people in Britain, Razia Aziz remarks on the heterogeneous quality of the category 'black' since it indicates both skin colour, history, and culture, and how "blackness is a product of self-conscious political practice" (162). Shabnam Grewal and her co-editors in *Charting the Journey*: *Writings by Black and Third World Women* (1988), provide a more extensive understanding of the idea of 'blackness' in contemporary Britain which they believe is "as yet unmatured and inadequately defined, but proceeding along its path in both real social life and in the collective awareness of many of its subjects" (1). They point out that, "both as an idea and a process it is, inevitably, contradictory… because its linguistic expression is defined in terms of colour, yet it is an idea transcendent of colour" and also "gives political expression to common 'colour'" (1). The use of 'black' as a political signifier extends to organisations such as the Black Liberation Front (BLF), one of the many sections of Black Power groups in Britain, and the Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent (OWAAD) too. The BLF later formed the Universal Coloured People's Association (UCPA), which promoted "third revolutionary movements in the Caribbean, Latin American, Asia, Africa and elsewhere, to secure human rights, dignity and justice for oppressed people" (Johnson 126). Hence, considering these affiliations in mind, the emergence of black British writers can be said to have led to a direct challenge against the concept of borders and national belonging in many respects. This essentially owes to the diverse trajectories, having polyvocality as its defining feature, unbarred by national, racial, class, or ethnic distinctions, that helped the development of Black British literature. Even Tracy Walters provides a lucid description of the same by pointing out that:

> Black British literature has been defined, variously, as literature written by people of African descent who were both born and, reared in England, literature written and published by expatriate writers from Africa and the Caribbean who published on both sides of the Atlantic (e.g., V. S. Naipaul or Christine Qunta), literature

composed by authors who did not necessarily establish literary careers in England but published in England, and, lastly, literature written by people who are simply dark in color, such as East Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, and other Asians, Near Easterners, and North Africans. (172)

However, the relevance of the term for people of Asian descent has condensed since the 1980s and a new term, 'Asian British', has been usually applied in studying the people and the conditions of this specific community.

The debate regarding the use of a correct epithet or categorizing writers under the term 'black British' has been one of the major issues discussed by black British writers. While Bernardine Evaristo believes that the use of the term 'black' makes it easier for readers to find their preferred writers, Mike Phillips, in his Foreword to Gail Low and M. Wynne-Davis' *Black British Canon* (2006), explains how the term 'black British' eliminates the transnational connections the writers have or represent in their writing (19). In *Race and Anti Racism in Black British and Asian British Literature*, Dave Gunning too discusses how the use of the term to specify nationality excludes writers having both African and Asian origins, like the Ugandan Asians. Similarly, Fred D' Aguiar in "Against Black British Literature" (1986) rejects the limitations posed by the term and how it solidifies the literary bearing of present generation of writers with earlier black writers in Britain. By doing this, D' Aguiar means to state that the varied spatial influences in black British literature is dismissed. Like Gunning and D' Aguiar, John McLeod in "Some Problems with 'British' in 'a Black British Canon" (2002), states how anthologies "risk falsifying the mechanics of black British creativity and tradition and look only at national, rather than transnational, fields of influence" (57). Thus, McLeod suggests the alternative, 'black writing in Britain', instead of 'black British' writing/literature in order to accommodate the diverse experiences and histories across nations that writers have themselves undergone and/or write about. McLeod's suggestion of this ontological shift stands as an attempt to re-visit the "nationalist understanding" of Britain and "the creation of British culture, if not British nationhood, in transnational terms" (59). While agreeing with McLeod's discussions, the study also seeks to understand how the idea of finding one's roots in one's ancestral homeland or the sense of belonging to it is altered by their allegiance to British identity as a "national paradigm" (McLeod 58).

Despite these contradictions, the construction of 'black' as a political strategy, instead of a racial signifier, was a significant step of resistance mainly against two aspects. Firstly, it was against the idea of pure, absolute 'Englishness'. The separatist notions created between the African, Caribbean, and Asian immigrants and the rest of Britain, led to the political mobilization of the racial and ethnic minority under a common category. Secondly, it was a move away from the "import of black American ideology, which was seemingly centrally formed within the climate of African slavery, Jim Crow segregation, and the struggles for Civil Rights" (Gunning and Ward 152). To elaborate on the first aspect, let us give an instance of an Antiguan American writer Jamaica Kincaid's account in her essay, "On Seeing England for the First Time" (1991). Though the writer later shifted to America, having spent her childhood in Jamaica, a place colonized by the British empire, conditioned her into a mindset that most black migrants in Britain would relate to. Not only was England and its cultural history indoctrinated into the lives of these colonized people, but an us/them, superior/inferior dynamic was created. About this, Kincaid articulates in her essay that she did not understand the weight of the phrase, "Draw a map of England", during her school days. As an adult she now knows that the phrase signified "something far worse than a declaration of war… a process that would result in my erasure… that it was meant to make me feel in awe… at its existence, small because I was *not* from it" (emphasis added, 34). The mention of 'maps' here alludes to the creation of material and symbolic borders outside and within the British Isles, particularly England, that demarcate the English from 'other' racial and ethnic communities. Map-making process as part of a Eurocentric project, has always been a subject of criticism for postcolonial scholars. Even black British women novelists like Nadifa Mohamed challenged the European demarcation of borders within Africa. As seen in *Black Mamba Boy*, the protagonist Jama constructs an alternate map by walking through the east of Africa. Like Christine Matzke states, the narrative practically creates the Horn of Africa by starting the story, and consequently Jama's journey, from Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia to Djibouti. The 'Horn of Africa' was a phrase accorded by the English to the easternmost part of the continent, but the narrative challenges this by referring to an "internal map that included humps in the sand, electricity pylons, noteworthy bird nests, forks in sandy paths, shallow marshes in the Red Sea" (232). This route could only be recited by the local Africans. Thus, by following Jama through these roads committed to his memory, "the text performs a narrative cartography" which is indicated by the 1930s map of Africa

placed at the start of the novel (Matzke 213). The suggestion of national and international borders threatening the socio-political harmony of the continent, however, lingers in the narrative.

As Kincaid observes, being instructed to 'draw a map of England' also connotes imposition, power, and a war-like discourse on its colonial subjects. In the aftermath of World War II, such discourse continued as British politics directed its attention towards a cultural crisis generated by the commonwealth migrants. Paul Gilroy's *There Ain't no Black in the Union Jack* (1987), describes this as New Racism because it marks the xenophobia, territorialism, and nationalism of the English people. Gilroy points out how, firstly, "the politics of 'race' in this country is fired by conceptions of national belonging and homogeneity which not only blur the distinctions between race and nation but rely on that very ambiguity for their effect" (44). Secondly, the black presence in Britain and their mass influx since the 1940s has been described through the use of "military metaphors" like "the enemy within, the unarmed invasion, alien compartments, alien territory" (44-5). The use of such a language has undertones of "war and invasion" that draws attention to national boundaries and the inclination to speak of its security, tactically regulating the "entry and exit" of outsiders (45). The notion of borders and imaginary 'territorial markers', if not always physical, are also constructed within Britain. The presence of inner cities and racially or ethnically segregated localities, as seen in Zadie Smith's *NW* (2012), are a testimony to this. Here, differences are marked particularly in terms of physiognomic features, culture, language, and so forth – anything that defines their lack of Englishness. As observed by black British scholars, such a language arises from the crisis of forming a homogenized sense of cultural and national identity that bothers most white Britons.

In the essay, "Defining British National Identity" (2000), Bhikhu Parekh contextualizes what constitutes a sense of identity with the altering dynamics of Englishness and Britishness. Parekh initiates the discussion by defining the concept of 'self' or 'identity' and its inherent trait of undergoing "unlimited reconstruction" in relative terms to 'differences' (252). With an analogous understanding of individual identity, a national identity is considered as the political identity of a community, "its values and commitments, its characteristic ways… of conducting its collective affairs, its organizing principle… too complex and elusive to be reduced to a set of easily

identifiable features" (253). Critics like Bhikhu Parekh and Paul Gilroy examine how race is constructed both politically and socially. In the previous chapter, we had explored how the social constitution of 'mugging' and crime as black people's unlawfulness creates a racial dynamic. The racist opinions laid out in the 1960s by the New Right stressed the Parliament's sovereign power, Britain's individualistic character, and essentially its separation from Europe. Along with it, Enoch Powell's speech on 'Rivers of Blood' and election campaigns that rallied with slogans like "Keep Britain White", and "If you want a nigger, vote for Labour", had repeated associations with race discourse and the idea of national belonging. Margaret Thatcher's governance too used similar discourses through the political strategy of neo-liberalism, where both state funding and taxes were curbed. Thatcher's idea of national belonging harked back on imperial legacies and its glories which is problematic. Parekh believes that the views of New Labour gave a new meaning to British national identity by rejecting the traditional way of celebrating Britain's past, but to be more inclusive, it has to go beyond its homogenizing conceptions because the notion of identity itself is "contingent and transient" (251). Concerning this, Jay Bernard, in a black lesbian roundtable conference, pointed out that now "it's not about celebrating Britishness, because borders and nationalities are violent, arbitrary and absurd, but what people make of their situation" (37). Camel Gupta, who was also a part of the conference, prefers to identify themselves as British over English to avoid dealing with the "specific colonial legacies of Englishness" (37). They stated that their obvious preference is not much as a matter of pride for Britain, but rather an honest acceptance of the reality that Britishness is part of their identity.

The emergence and rising popularity of black British cultural studies have also brought about a radical transformation since the 1970s in debates regarding race, racism, and representation. During the post-modern era of thought, when every dominant approach believed in the "end of everything", black British cultural theorists centralized debates that usually occupied marginalized positions (Mercer 2). Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1993), which examines the Middle Passage as a "counterculture of modernity", brought about a revolutionary shift in the European perception of diasporic black cultures (36). By situating the cultural memory of the slave trade at the centre, Gilroy makes a pivotal argument of black and white cultures influencing and being influenced by each other, transcending national and ethnic boundaries. Gilroy's reference to music

and the ideologies of influential black figures like W. E. B. Dubois, Richard Wright, and Toni Morrison, presents the pan-African consciousness they shared as part of the black Atlantic diasporic culture. The central focus was put accordingly on the "polyphonic qualities of black cultural expression" and the representation of the black subject (32)[2]. Stuart Hall, in this triumph of the black subject, calls into question the issues of reclaiming a cultural identity and elaborates on the two phases that are involved in the process of representation. He first suggests the "relations of representation", that involve countering stereotypical narratives of blacks through positive images ("Cultural" 222). Hall points out that the second phase involves the "politics of representation", which concentrates on the "machineries and regimes of representation" ("New Ethnicities" 165). In this phase, the complexity of the black subject and its formation of identity becomes problematic and thus leads to "the end of the innocent notion of the essential black subject" (166). This means that there are multiple subjective positions, at least theoretically non-essentialized and mutually exclusive. In relation to this, Hall suggests the notion of roots and routes that do not represent an essentialized image of blacks subscribing to authentic cultural identities. In fact, there is no absolute structure, un-mediated roots, or 'originary' values for identification. Hall elaborates on this idea in his essay, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" (1994), where he rationalizes the concept of identity itself as contingent and "always in a process" (222). Hall places his arguments in opposition to the manner of absolutism and homogeneity of the idea of Englishness projects. One way of asserting one's difference, Hall suggests, is by recovering the cultural identity that lies in one's origins. The other way is by acknowledging one's diverse experiences, as a futuristic mode of expression, rather than concentrating on a fixed, "essentialized past" (224). In simple words, Hall rejects the idea of going back to Africa as "forgotten connections" of the Caribbean and seeks to consider the hybrid connections of the latter (225). This is because Caribbeanness is crudely defined by its "ruptures", "discontinuities" and "differences", the existence of multiple histories, and thereby cultural identities, that are under "constant transformation" (225). Therefore, Hall uses Derrida's concept of 'differance' to mean that black cultural and historical legacies might be "deferred" or "displaced" while tracing origins, but it asserts the existence of a hybrid culture that has been shaping and re-shaping itself for centuries ("Diaspora"12). Here, by using the example of archival photos from Toney Swell's *Garvey's Children*: *The Legacy of Marcus Garvey* and Derek Bishton's *Black Heart Man* (1987), Hall establishes the fact that physical and symbolic journeys to Africa and

the Caribbean are mediated by both ancient and contemporary influences and therefore, imaginary constructions of those places are bound to change. This is why in Bernardine Evaristo's *Soul Tourists* and *Girl, Woman, Other*, the protagonists find their roots not in a pristine, unmediated homeland but in the host land itself.

Somewhat side-tracking from the racial discourse, Stuart Hall's "politics of difference" which builds on the idea of "self-reflexivity" and "contingency", has laid its focus on ethnicity ("Minimal Selves" 118). To be more precise, Hall terms it the "politics of articulation" as a necessary tool for new black identities, that speaks up against absolutism (118). In context to this, Hall states:

> The slow contradictory movement from 'nationalism' to 'ethnicity' as a source of identity is a part of a new politics. It is also part of the 'decline of the West' – that immense process of historical relativization which is just beginning to make the British, at least, feel just marginally 'marginal'. (119)

Keeping in mind the likelihood of essentialism, however, Hall again clarifies that "the grounding of ethnicity in difference… as a means of disavowing the realities of racism and repression…will have to be contested, the term disarticulated from its position in the discourse of 'multi-culturalism'" ("New Ethnicities 169). Avtar Brah perceives Stuart Hall's formulation of 'ethnicity' as a possible form of 'difference' as impractical because the ethnicity of an English person may be expressed in the form of his/her Britishness as hostility against black British people or even Scottish, Irish and Welsh. She states that like race, even ethnicity forms a significant source for the construction of a national belonging. Thus, Brah suggests a critical understanding of Hall's 'politics of representation', which might enable critics to observe how and when boundaries of ethnicity are constructed, "imagined and instituted" according to the specific socio-cultural and political contingencies (173). Working together under similar interests on race, 'difference' and ethnicity, Hall and Brah were immensely influenced by Gramsci's idea of hegemony, which defines the "complex ways in which social 'consent' is secured in non-coercive ways, at the level of state and civil society" (Roman and Henry 245). Echoing Hall's discussions on the need to rethink 'ethnicity' just as race and nation, Kobena Mercer also emphasizes individualized differences. He highlights how hybridity brought about by "new, syncretic, mixed identities" has reconstructed and challenged imaginary conceptions or constructions of England (26). In other words, Mercer implies

that the revolutionary changes involved in black cultural politics also concern people racialized as white. This is what differentiates the cultures of hybridity and multiculturalism in the US from Britain. Thus, diasporic identities and communities, which according to Homi Bhabha and Salman Rushdie are in a state of "translation", hold the responsibility to act as the "concerned locator at the hyphenated intersections of disparate discourses" (Mercer 30). Diasporic consciousness questions the idea of belonging to one nation or identity.

Diaspora, as James Clifford points out, involves movements inside and outside nation-states and dislocations or scattering of people. Displacements, followed by discrimination in the host land, lead to a specific condition of alienation and an exiled status, which stimulates migrants' nostalgia for home and a return to their homeland. In a British setting, black migrants are engaged in the tussle between being a part of 'British' and being able to be 'English'. Therefore, the distinction between national and ethnic or cultural identity as separate entities enables black subject positions to create spaces of belonging in the host land. In certain instances, groups of communities and individuals with different historical origins, cultures, and nations share similar "structural, behavioural and cultural patterns in the host land" and establish "diasporism" (Lahiri 5). This is caused mainly due to the sense of rootedness incited by their displaced, immigrant status. Thus, the diaspora space can be viewed as the construction of an imaginary belonging formed by "linking members 'at home' and 'away'" (Clifford 309). These connections however, as Clifford observes, are "selectively restructured and rerouted according to *internal* and *external* dynamics" with the changing situations caused by globalisation, postcolonialism, and neo-colonialism (emphasis original, 309). Nevertheless, the theorization of diaspora, Anh Hua argues, "opens up the discursive or semiotic space for a discussion of many ideas… homing desire and homeland nostalgia… cultural memory and trauma, the politics of return, and the possibility of imagining geographical and cultural belonging beyond and within the nation-state formation" ("Diaspora"191). Hua's argument indicates the creation of diasporic spaces which is inclusive and seek a demystification of racial and cultural boundaries. In congruence with Hua's observation, Avtar Brah also mentions that the concept of 'borders' is embedded within the idea of diaspora, and views the "diaspora space as a conceptual category [that] is 'inhabited', not only by those who have migrated and their descendants but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous"

(205). In this sense, 'diasporism' and cultural diversity have also been "re-inventing Britain", which indicates that "there is no fixed and ready British culture or 'English identity' in the singular, which can be displayed as if it did not have dislocating or transforming impulses working on it in the context of the era of globalisation" (Hall, "Re-Inventing" 37).

Similar to these discussions on diasporic connections and crossing boundaries, the concept of transnationalism has become a relevant subject in Diaspora Studies. Transnationalism, by definition, refers to "migrants' durable ties across countries… that transcend international borders…ties reaching beyond and across borders… of at least two national states" (Baubock and Faist 9-13). Michael Pearce, in his book, uses the concept to focus on a). The constant movement of ideas, people, and products to and from the host and the homeland, b). the sustained connection of diasporic immigrants with their homeland "through return migration/visits, economic and political involvement… as well as through psychic and cultural links", and c). considering the idea of borders as "sites of confluence and crossings" rather than as "sites of separation" (45-7). In equivalent terms, Bill Ashcroft deliberates on the notion of "in-betweenness" to indicate a space that contains "no one, definitive people, nation or community, but is everywhere, a space without boundaries" (16). He describes the possibility of conceptualizing 'borders' as connecting routes to other geographical places. In his travelogue, *Afropean: Notes from Black Europe* (2019), Johny Pitts also builds on this idea to develop the "Afropean" identity, that incorporates the multiplicity of historical experiences of blacks in Europe (291). The term itself offers a "mosaic" image of "myriad communities" (322). This is in correlation to the concept of transnationalism, which is in "association with larger, more impersonal forces – specifically, those of globalization and global capitalism" (Lahiri 3). To add to it, mobility as the significant mode of resistance against fixed categorizations, is the primary trope of Pitts' theorization of the black migrant subject position. As stated right in the beginning, his need for such a journey arises from the discontentment with the less "encompassing and nuanced… Black Britain club, whose sense of itself was starting to feel outdated, often packaged exclusively as an embodiment of the Windrush Generation" (Pitts 11). Travelling through Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam, Berlin, Stockholm, Moscow, Marseille, and Lisbon, Pitts redefines his concept of 'blackness' and the significance of Africa in relation to Europe, instead of just Britain. His epic journey ends in the Gibraltar Strait,

just as Stanley in Bernardine Evaristo's *Soul Tourists* (2011). Stanley's reflection at this crucial juncture of in-betweenness, where he is closer to his homeland but is unwilling to begin another expedition, shares parallels to Pitts' experience. Despite being geographically close to Africa, Pitts imagines the presence of "a pastiche seaside Britain of the 80s, mean-spirited and pissing it down, fish-and-chip shops with Union Jack flags set amid browny-grey postwar architecture" (320). Both Pitts and the fictional character, Stanley, are aware of their inability to go back to Africa but feel a completeness at the end through their 'Afropean' experience.

Other than his identification with multiple subjectivities, Pitts' work also justifies his dismissal of the idea of affiliating oneself to one national and cultural identity, to a specific place of origin, and to a material concept of home and homeland. Race discourse has now taken us towards diverse historical contextualities that advocate for a "post-diasporic space" (Scafe 223). In congruence with this 'new politics' on race theory, Paul Gilroy too shifts his discourse on race from anatomical determinism to genetics. In his book *Against Race*: *Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (2000), he states that, "the boundaries of 'race' have moved across the threshold of skin. They are cellular and molecular, not dermal. If 'race is to endure, it will be in a new form, estranged from the scales respectively associated with political anatomy and epidermalization" (47). Here, Gilroy suggests a utopian possibility of post-racial humanism where 'race' as a biological determinant is no longer valid. Rather, the body is opened up for more "penetration" to display further genetic disparity within people of the same race (47).

These discussions on diaspora consciousness and transnationality certainly brought about developments in race discourse. However, the central methodology of our study lies in black British feminist criticism, an aspect widely ignored in postcolonial and diaspora theories put forward by men. This section incorporates the insights of black British, queer, and diaspora feminists like Jay Bernard, Sita Bilani, Anh Hua, and Avtar Brah because of their relevance. However, additional concerns, notably those pertaining to their gender and sexuality, arise from their unique perspectives. This leads us naturally into the chapter's subsequent discussion on the concept of body and 'difference(s)'. The constructions of the body shapes black women's experiences and their memory as part of a collective history. As such, the ideas and methods of resistance proposed by black British feminists to address their fragmented sense of identity will continue to be a

significant aspect of inquiry, but the succeeding section will begin with a very brief discussion of (white) feminist and black feminist criticism before proceeding to explore black British feminist criticism.

<div align="center">III</div>

The term 'feminism' refers to the movement which had its roots in the struggle for equal political and legal rights of women. It began in the late 18th century, more precisely with Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), and later with J. S. Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869). The primary argument of these works, and perhaps all major feminist positions, is based on the assumption that women are socially discriminated against primarily due to their sex. Subsequently the feminists started to question the complex interplay of power and politics, their ideologies and needs, and demands evolved with time. With the publication of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), the movement witnessed a principal shift in its focus from political to social equality, sexuality, and reproduction. By making a landmark statement – 'One is not born but becomes a woman' – Beauvoir bases her primary hypothesis on the fact that while 'sex' is biological, 'gender' is social. Eventually, with the support of black and Third World women, organisations like the National Organization of Women (NOW- 1966) were formed which sought sisterhood and solidarity among all these women and also to show that issues of race, gender, and class are interlinked. During this time, phrases like "women's struggle is a class struggle", "the personal is political", "identity politics", and "the politics of housework", became popular in the United States (Krolokke 9). In the British context, the *Spare Rib* magazine traced the trajectories of the Women's Liberation Movement from the 1970s to 1987, which not only challenged the male-dominated press but also the abundance of women's magazines dealing with beauty ideals and domestic life. However, at the same time, feminist criticism faced a huge backlash from black and Third World feminists due to the former's tendency to universalize forms of oppression. Black women activists like Sojourner Truth, who were part of both the black and women's liberationist struggles, had been voicing out the need to address the issues of black women. Truth's polemic statement, "Ain't I A Woman?" in 1851 at the Women's Rights Convention held in Ohio, resounded black women's concerns across space and time. More than a decade later, bell hooks published *Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (1981) to articulate the specific problems between

black women's experiences and (white) feminism. Black feminists mainly differentiate their approach from the mainstream (white) feminists mostly in terms of "family, patriarchy, reproduction" (Carby 46). Hazel V. Carby's "White Women Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood", published in 1982, bases her premise on the (his)torical constructions of a black woman's femininity and sexuality in relation to the white woman as "prize objects of the Western world" (45). She states that black women's "absences" can only be made visible through the expression of "herstories" (45). She also argues that feminist politics, namely of white women, becomes debatable especially when they perceive the cultures of Third World countries as oppressive to women, without much contextualization. This observation by white women itself is considered, at least theoretically, as a form of liberation for the said oppressed women. However, white women's absence in the racial and sexual politics of Britain, speaks of their duplicity. In *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Centre* (1984), bell hooks also pointed out that "the ideology of Sisterhood" propagated by white feminists did not make black feminists feel "they shared common interests or political concerns" due to the former's dismissal of racial biases within the group (50). In response to the (white) feminists' disregard for historical and socio-cultural contexts, black feminists like Alice Walker developed 'Womanism', a new brand of ideology seeking to voice the issues of black women. In her book, *In Search of Her Mother's Gardens*, Walker used the term to refer to women who are brave and mature and cited the names of black women like Sojourner Truth, bell hooks, and Audre Lorde to justify the term. As Patricia H. Collins states, this new approach allowed many black feminists to express their opinions by developing "a self-defined, collective black women's standpoint about black womanhood", which challenged the stereotypes of black women created by the white hegemonic discourses (9).

In context to this, we must mention the concept of 'Nego-Feminism' put forward by an African feminist named Obioma Nnaemeka. She states that most feminists describe the condition of black women in relation to the "weird regimes that make up the unacceptable part of the so-called third world" (371). It is often the practice of polygyny that becomes an aspect of their criticism. (White) feminists consider the polygynous family structure as a form of patriarchal control over African women that subject them to the status of objects with no sense of individuality. African men are seen as agents of that patriarchy who claim possession of wives/women just like properties. Such kinds of

explanations are given to justify the poverty and unemployment in the families of the immigrants in Britain. For Obioma Nnaemeka, however, polygyny is a way of "maintaining equity, justice, harmony and sharing responsibilities" (173). Even African feminists like Y. C. Ng'umbi view polygyny as an "antidote to a stepmother's cruelty" (24). Black British writers like Aminatta Forna also reflect on these ideas on polygyny in *Ancestor Stones*, as will be discussed in Chapter Three of the thesis. Conversely, writers like Buchi Emecheta have been critiqued by African feminists like Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi for showing polygyny and other cultures of Africa in a negative light. In her article "Womanism: The Dynamics of Contemporary Black Female Novel in English", Ogunyemi points out that Emecheta has been conditioned to think in terms of the "Western expectation of monogamy" (75). Her critique of Emecheta's novels is based on the former's all-encompassing idea of womanism as a philosophy that "celebrates black roots, the ideals of black life while giving a balanced presentation of black womandom" (72). However, it must also be remembered that, in the name of negating white hegemonic discourses, one cannot assume polygyny is beneficial for all black women as the African feminists seem to postulate. The existence of patriarchy in African societies and among black men cannot be denied. Therefore, as Nnaemeka states, African feminists must be wary of essentialism when "building on the indigenous" or "shared values that can be used as organizing principles" (361).

Like Black feminists in America, black British feminists have also been actively challenging the stereotypical notions of black women's bodies and sexuality imposed by patriarchy and the white hegemonic structures. Organisations like the OWAAD or Organization for Women of African and Asian Descent (1978) and Southall Sisters (1979) have been focusing on the increase in opportunities and development in the quality of life of black women and their families in Britain. For such feminists, the term 'black' incorporates an inclusive understanding where women of all ethnic minority groups in Britain are considered. The experiences of these racially and ethnically marginalised women have been extensively discussed in Beverley Bryan, Stella Dadzie, and Suzanne Scafe's *The Heart of the Race: Black Women's Lives in Britain* (1985), Delia Jarrett-Macaulay's *Reconstructing Womanhood, Reconstructing Feminism: Writings on Black Women*(1996) and Heidi Safia Mirza's *Black British Feminism: A Reader* (1997), from which the thesis too largely borrows for the formulation of its conceptual frameworks on race and gender in a British context.

However, black British feminists considerably relate to the issues addressed by black feminists in America as well. For instance, black feminists and black British feminists uniformly critique mainstream (white) feminists and their tendency to either universalize women's oppression or study black and Third World women as "'subjects' for 'interesting' and 'exotic' comparison" (Amos and Parmar 54). In their essay, "Challenging Imperial Feminism", Valerie Amos and Pratibha Parmar examine their distinction from (white) feminists particularly in terms of "family, sexuality and the women's peace movement" (55). To explain the use of the phrase "imperial feminism", Amos and Parmar cite the instance of Asian girls in Britain who are separated from their families with the pretext that they are being saved from the "horrors" of the "arranged marriage system" (56). In terms of sexuality, black women's role as mothers is seen as a sign of their vulnerability and a part of the oppressive patriarchal system of which black men are the primary perpetrators. Amos and Parmar, however, state in opposition to this by citing examples of the history of violence, like lynching and incarceration, meted out to black men. They believe that a reiteration of these images, instead of liberating the black women, further perpetuates a racist ideology. Similarly, feminists consider that there needs to be an equal division of labour between men and women, as the latter is overburdened with responsibilities in both the domestic and public spheres. This observation holds true for black women in most situations, but the (white) feminists have not contextualised the socio-economic conditions of these black women who would prefer to be in that position than be 'liberated' from it. Firstly, black women of the working class have more job opportunities in the health and care industry than black men; the only field where blacks are readily taken in. Secondly, women have to support more family members since the men remain jobless. Thirdly, black women want to negate the myth, created by the welfare state, of black people being lazy. The universalizing tendency of white feminists, as Razia Aziz points out, comes from their "denial of difference" with other racially and ethnically marginalised women (70). Aziz gives an instance of the abortion rights that feminists fought for in the 1970s. For black women, the "right to *keep* and *realize* their fertility" was more important during a period when they became easy victims of forced sterilization and medical experimentation of products like Depo Provera, a contraceptive injection with severe side effects (emphasis added 70). Moreover, many of these medical processes were undertaken by unskilled professionals that caused black women to further suffer from life-long health issues. The logic behind the involuntary sterilization also comes from the assumption that these

women come from regressive cultures. Family structures, kinship, marriage, and men-women's domestic and social roles have different degrees of implications for different communities and Britain is yet to grapple with and embrace this reality, despite decades of advocating for cultural diversity.

Black feminists have often argued that such racialised constructions also come from the Western notion of the 'body' and 'difference'. For the West, difference means a "deviation from the original type" either from the perspective of science or morality, which can be used as a weapon to assert superiority over 'others' (Oyěwùmí 1). Hence, it can be pointed out that just as the images of Africa had been constructed by the West, even the idea of a woman and the control of the body was established for social order. Oyéronké Oyěwùmí, in her book *The Invention of Women* (1997), elaborately deals with the relationship between the body and the notion of society as a means of perpetuating hegemony over marginalized groups of people. She believes that since the body is "always *in* view and *on* view... it invites a *gaze*, a gaze of difference, a gaze of differentiation – the most historically constant being the gendered gaze" (emphasis original, 2). Biological determinism, which cannot be referred to in disassociation from rational thought, is the founding ground of social thought too. So, all those social and gendered divisions that have been 'othered' are deemed to be "embodied, dominated therefore by instinct and affect, reason being beyond them" (3). In this sense, terms such as 'white', 'European' and 'men' are emblematic of "bodylessness" and from this construction, two categories emerge – one, is the "man of reason" and the other, is the "woman of the body" (3). As an example, Oyěwùmí points out that "because 'woman' is a body-based category, it tends to be privileged by Western researchers over 'traders', which is non-body based. Even when traders are taken seriously, they are embodied such that the trader category... is turned into 'market women'" (17). These two categories are not only placed in oppositional and dichotomous terms but are also subjected to ontological changes. The primary cause of such a construction and focus on the body, Oyěwùmí observes, is due to the tendency of the West to perceive reality through sight. The gaze is given a paramount space with respect to other senses. In context to this, Thomas Riccio's *Performing Africa: Remixing Tradition, Theatre and Culture* (2007) and Minna Salami's *Sensuous Knowledge: A Black Feminist Approach for Everyone* (2014) can be referred, which also deals with Africa's connection with sensuality instead of sight. In the Yoruba tribe, the "multiplicity of sense anchored by hearing" occupies

more significance and it is reflected in their language and social practices (14). Oyěwùmí gives instances of names and terms such as *oko* and *aya* that does not imply any specific gender but are translated as husband and wife in English respectively (29). Madhu Krishnan's research on contemporary African literature in English justifies the existence of a diverse and complex socio-cultural system that was subverted by "colonialism's epistemic violence" and the consequent creation of rigid ideas on gender and femininity (69). She mentions that "in precolonial Sierra Leone, numerous matrilineal societies persisted, along with a similarly mutable system in which an individual's gender may be shifted or renounced over the course of a lifetime" (Krishnan 69). Aminatta Forna's *Ancestor Stones*, discussed in Chapter Three of our study gives an instance of the *mambores* in the indigenous communities of Sierra Leone and the stories of deities and ancestors shape-shifting, which incorporates the idea of gender mutability. Though Krishnan does not believe that the exploitation of women was non-existent before the colonial intervention, she stresses the fact that there was a wide range of subjective positionalities available to them across the continent. As explained above, since the perception of reality was understood through vision, society was believed to be constituted by a collection of bodies, which were differentiated based on sex, gender, race, nationality, class, colour, and so on. It has also been observed that it is only those marginalized in specific situatedness or positionalities which possess bodies. For instance, an Irish woman may enjoy the benefit of belonging to a dominant race in Britain but may be marginalized based on class and gender. In this sense, she may or may not possess a 'body' depending on specific context and positionality. Hence, according to the discussions cited above, certain terms like 'woman', 'black', 'African', 'coloured', 'mixed-race', 'working-class', and 'immigrant' can hardly escape the 'body' because, in one way or the other, they constitute a 'difference'.

On the subject of body and 'difference', Avtar Brah argues that "the *idea* of 'race' is essentially an *essentialist narrative of sexualised difference*" (emphasis original, 154). Viewed in such terms then, race is not only a social construct but also a gendered construct. This is why the racial constructions of both black men and women work in different ways to devalue their existence. Since black women cannot escape any of these descriptors (unlike black men, who might marginally benefit from the latter descriptor), as "privileged bearers of their race and culture", it is easier for the "patriarchal regimes of power" to constitute and legitimize them into specific stereotypical representations

(Brah 170, 154). Broadly speaking, the body can be conceptualized into three categories, namely, as "nature", as "socially constructed", and "embodiment" (Pilcher and Whelehan 6). By critically engaging with the idea of the body as a social construction, black feminists interrogate how it has led to the emergence of contrasting images of black women. The image of a docile, overbearing mammy, which has roots in the trans-Atlantic slave history, is one. This mammy archetype, also known as Aunt Jemima, was often used to refer to women who served as domestic servants in white people's houses and took care of their children. Victor Fleming's *Gone with the Wind* (1939), reiterates this 'mammy' figure, played by Hattie McDaniel, who is depicted as the loyal servant of her owner, O' Hara. Associated with this image is that of the breeder, which according to Patricia Hill Collins, "was essential to the creation and perpetuation of capitalist class relations" (*Black Feminist* 51). The image commodified "Black women's bodies as units of capital" and legitimized the idea that they could be overworked without any form of retribution unlike black men (Collins 51). Parallelly, the breeder image seemed to have generated the other perception of black women as hypersexual. Terms such as "mistress", "jezebels", "fallen woman", "female evil", etc. were attached to the character of the black woman, who according to the Christian teachings were "the bringer of sin into the world" (hooks, *Ain't I* 33-6, 29). Annecka Marshall points to this in the context of English people, who juxtaposed it to the image of a white English woman, embodying the virtues of purity and innocence. Since Europeans associated excessive 'sexual indulgence' with barbarism and social and cultural backwardness, the conception of Africa and the image of a black woman was inevitably correlated. Thus, the body of the black woman was simultaneously desired as exotic and feared as diseased. Besides, the projection of women's bodies as "curiosities" and a "spectacle" in the nineteenth century sowed the seed in the white man's "sexual unconscious" (Simmonds, "Naming" 232-3). The case of Saartjie Baartman, later popularized by the name 'Hottentot Venus', has been cited as an instance to justify this. The African woman's body parts, which later became a part of a museum in Paris, were out for public display in London and Paris in 1810 – an act that can be traced back to the time of slavery when women were auctioned. In expressing repugnance towards such acts, white women led to the construction of black women as the 'other' women, who posed a threat to the sanctity and self-esteem of her family.

With black women's active participation in feminist and black liberationist movements, two images developed simultaneously i.e., of the Sapphire and the black matriarch. The former represents black women as loud, angry, "masculinized, castrating, ball-busters" (hooks, *Ain't I* 81). The other image represents black women as self-sacrificing and enduring who performed a crucial role in restoring the image of the black family. Black men consolidated the second image in black women's psyche not only by drawing attention to the contribution of black women in their struggle for liberation from oppressive forces but also by taking examples of popular black nationalist and feminist figures like Angela Davis. However, in 1965 the Moynihan Report argued that the matriarchal structure of black culture in America weakened the ability of black men to function as authoritative figures. Similarly in Britain, the presence of the black woman as head of the family and the absence of the black male was read as a 'crisis' in the African and Caribbean community (Reynolds 97). The Scarman Report of 1981, which was commissioned to investigate the causes of the riots in Britain, also held in favour of the existing notions of black women. According to Lord Scarman, black women were responsible for the disintegration of the family structures and ultimately responsible for the unacceptable violent behaviour of their sons. In the presence of the black 'superwoman', the black male is overshadowed and rendered irresponsible, and ultimately the entire black community is figured as 'burdens' to the welfare state. Black British feminists like Tracey Reynolds in "(Mis)representing the black (Super)woman" (1997), condemn this view because it disregards the contribution of a black woman beyond her role of mothering (104). What is ignored in the construction of this image is the post-colonial experiences of black people in Britain i.e., of the poor socio-economic conditions, racial policing (SUS laws), and a higher percentage of black incarceration. In the process, black women and men's roles or relations in the community are also affected. Consequently, this was evident when black men in the liberationist movements blamed black women as 'deterrents' to the growth of the black struggle, despite black women's substantial role in the formation of organizations such as the League of Coloured Peoples (1931), the West African Students Union (1925), and the Pan-African Congress (since 1944). Valerie Amos and Pratibha Parmar in "Challenging Imperial Feminism" also argue against the pathologizing of black families by the state, particularly mothers, in which the former is seen as "unfit" for fostering and adoption while white families can opt for the same (55). Kum-Kum Bhavani and Margaret Coulson state that since power structures operate differently for different groups of

people, the concerns of black women regarding the safety of their children are very different from those of white women. The black community is heterogeneous in nature and therefore, racism affects them differently. Similarly, since the "'dominant/subordinate model' of sexual power relationships" does not function the same way with black people as with white people, black children do not have the same experiences of growing up where the father or the male head of the family protects them (Phoenix, "Psychological" 64). In addition to this, white feminist projects that challenge patriarchy, often target black men as the foremost perpetrators of oppression against black women, as a result, adding to the racist ideology that all black men are criminals and are threats to a white woman's morality. Even for immigration controls, black people's culture, marriage, and family structures are considered with a racialised approach. Such racialised and sexualised means of control not only take away black women's social and civil rights, but also take a toll on their health, both physical and mental.

Going back to the discussions on the black woman as embodied, where embodiment is seen as synonymous to prone to oppression, it can be stated that there arise possibilities for those practicing black feminist sociology to find alternative ways of transforming this embodiment into a space of resistance. Felly Nkweto Simmonds expresses her discomfort at her "embodied reality" while being distanced from her opinions on race issues ("My Body" 237). Like Oyěwùmí, Simmonds points out the privilege of 'bodylessness' that the white European male possesses, and argues that to practice sociology a black woman's body necessarily needs to be 'voiced'. She situates her marginality by stating how her "socialized subjectivity" as a black woman is "at odds with the social world" because of its whiteness, and how it is difficult in such a world to address her blackness because "it contains a problem of relationality to whiteness" ("My Body" 227). Simmonds' explanation of her embodied social reality is also in recognition of the multiple conceptualizations leading to the negative images of a black woman concerning her body and the European *gaze.* The desire for and control of black women's bodies, for labour and 'spectacle' since the slave trade, is intrinsically linked to Europe's colonial desire for capital. The effect of re-telling these stories, as Lauretta Ngcobo states, of "jolly house servants in nurturing roles, sex objects for lustful white males in those puritanical days…would as soon wipe us out along with the shameful memory" (15). In response, Simmonds suggests the act of 'naming' themselves and their

bodies as black women, by analysing the social reality as it has been constructed by the white man's gaze, rather than by avoiding it ("My Body" 237). In other words, since a black woman cannot escape the racial and sexual implications attached to her body, embracing the embodiment of "largeness and continuity far beyond these limiting stereotypes" can be one way of expressing strategic resistance (Ngcobo 1). Hence, as a way of subverting a black woman's subjection to alterity Ama Ata Aidoo in "Literature, Feminism and the African Woman Today" lists out black women soldiers and military strategists like Nzingha, Yaa Asantewa, Mbuya Nehanda, and others, who fought against various foreign invasions in the 17th century, proving the images of passivity and servility of black women as factually inaccurate (158). Likewise, in *Cultures of Babylon: Black Britain and African America* (1999), Hazel V. Carby observes how music has allowed African American women blues singers like Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Ethel Waters, to discover alternative forms of expressing, reclaiming, and celebrating their bodies and their sexuality. Carol Boyce Davies in her article, "Black Bodies, Carnivalized Bodies" (2016), examines how black women negotiate with the commodified representation of their bodies by expressing their sexuality in "circumscribed spaces" (56). Accordingly, Davies brings a distinction between "taking space" and "making space", in which the former relates to street performance in a Carnival and the latter defines performance on a stage-created Carnival (56). This distinction is important to the study and will be further explored in Chapter Five of the thesis.

As stated by Lola Young, "black British women have found a rich source of intellectual sustenance and networks for support and debate in African American feminist scholarship and literature" (48). But the question is to what extent is black feminism "applicable" or viable in a black British context (48). This is not to suggest a rejection of African-American feminist criticism because, as even Young expresses, it is essential for an intersection of race, class, and gender analysis. It rather means that there is scope for appropriation in different contexts. For instance, Helen Charles in "The Language of Womanism: Rethinking Difference" questions the absence of the term 'black' as a prefix in Alice Walker's definition of Womanism, and also that of issues like class and race. Walker's apolitical stance and the tendency to project 'universality', is according to Charles problematic because it bases its foundation on sameness rather than accepting differences. As much as it is important to term a doctrine according to its

necessary principles, it is also important to identify and adapt to diverse needs and changes in society. In the context of Britain, Charles believes, the practice of "homogeneous grouping" based on ethnicity has been more strategic and sustainable for "organized action" (294). It is also important to remember that in contrast to the hyper-visibility of black and African American feminists, black feminists in Britain experience a marginal status in academia and activism. In contrast to African American feminists, black British feminists believe that their experiences and scholarly work are "located in a space of British whiteness" which is very peculiar from the former's experiences (Mirza, *Black British* 3). By elaborately describing and justifying the consciousness of 'black' feminists in Britain as based on "political kinship", Heidi S. Mirza reasons that "to be black (not white), female and 'over here', in Scotland, England or Wales, is to disrupt all the safe closed categories of what it means to be British... To be black and British is to be unnamed in official discourse" (*Black British* 3). Therefore, here we will discuss how black feminists have been contextualising the experiences of black women primarily in the labour, education, and health sectors. Most of the black women who came to Britain during the 1940s and 1950s had higher qualifications than the jobs they settled for. It was mostly nursing and caring institutions that demanded their assistance, with less pay in return and a hostile working environment. Moreover, there was no job security or special provision for sick or pregnant women. The National Health Service (NHS) was formed after WW II with the contributions of many black women. But after the war when their services were required, they were given the posts of State Enrolled Nurses (SENs) instead of State Registered Nurses (SRNs), of which the former was not even a recognised position in their home countries. In the education sector, black children were demarcated as intellectually inferior and, therefore, subjected to 'educationally sub-normal schools'. Hazel V. Carby states this as an instance of the strategic system of exclusion, which again pathologizes the black family and the environment where black children grow up, a typical black community, as the problem. The under-engagement of mothers in their child's development due to work or health-related problems is seen as one of the main reasons. However, black parents have opened up Saturday and Supplementary schools in many parts of the country as a form of resistance against assimilationist policies and exclusionist practices. They have also suggested that schools and colleges renew their syllabus and incorporate multicultural curriculum and Black Studies. They assembled as the Black Parents Movement and Black Trade Unitary Solidarity Movement in 1976 and 1983, respectively.

When resisting or articulating such experiences, the biggest challenge that both black feminists and black British feminists face is the dominance of a "single-axis framework" in anti-discrimination laws (Crenshaw 208). This implies that race and sex discrimination are defined by black men's and white women's experiences, and black women will get justice only if their experiences coincide with either of the two groups. As a way to "destabilise and disrupt such a narrow premise", there was the need for a new approach in feminist politics that would encode and list "differences" instead of sameness (Okolosie 90). It was Kimberlé Crenshaw, who for the first time critiqued the anti-discrimination doctrine on this basis. She used the term 'intersectionality' and sought an intersection of race and sex by using the imagery of intersecting roads. While Crenshaw's initiative emerged from an urgent need to represent the discrimination caused against black women in America, a triply marginalised category in the sector of law, her idea of intersectionality has pervaded the recent developments in black British feminist ideologies too. In equivalent terms, Nira Yuval-Davis notes that in seeking to achieve the "multidimensionality of black women's experiences", black British feminists have added other categories along with race, class, and gender, such as age, sexuality, and disability (Crenshaw 208, Yuval-Davis 159). Amidst this plethora of categories, black feminists also interrogate how each social division becomes more important than the other categories and has an effect on larger sections of people, depending on specific situations. Jessica Ringrose in a roundtable conference on "Intersectionality, Black British Feminism and Resistance", critiques the "overly deterministic structural analysis of crossing roads, or very fixed subject positions that can't account for change" (Ali et al. 648). Here, we can also refer to Avtar Brah, who makes an important point of distinguishing between 'difference' as a process that involves "referring to the particularities of the social experience of a group, from that whereby 'difference' itself becomes the modality in which domination articulates" (91). This distinction is significant because the black feminist political standpoint is often used by hegemonic structures to control marginalised subjects. Therefore, Yuval-Davis draws references from McCall's concept of "intercategorical" and "intracategorical", which the latter uses as two approaches to intersectionality. While the intercategorical approach focuses on the relationship between different social divisions and how it affects individuals, the intracategorical approach examines the problematics of the categories in itself, to understand their inclusion/exclusion dynamics. Yuval-Davis negates McCall's conceptions, particularly the intercategorical approach, by stating an instance of another

sub-category of race as a social division i.e., the mixed race. The instance of mixed-race individuals is significant here to dismantle the homogeneity of family members and their socio-cultural and political affiliations. Concerning this, it has been argued that:

> ...there is no direct causal relationship between the situatedness of people's gaze and their cognitive, emotional and moral perspectives on life. People born in the same families, with the same socio-economic background and geographical location can have different identifications and political views…people can identify themselves as belonging to the same racial or ethnic collectivity and have very different socio-economic backgrounds as well as different political and normative evaluations of these identity categories. (Yuval-Davis 159)

Yuval-Davis' observation demonstrates how "people are simultaneously positioned in multiple categories" (Phoenix 137). In context to this, Yuval-Davis questions in another article titled "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics" (2006), "whether to interpret the intersectionality of social divisions as an additive or as a constitutive process" (195). As a response, she critiques the standpoint of "triple state of bondage" that black British feminists in *The Heart of the Race* seem to postulate (Bryan and et al. 2). Yuval-Davis believes that while the categories 'black', woman and working class can be a source of oppression on individual grounds, "it is always constructed and intermeshed with other social divisions" (such as class, nationality, age, sexual orientation, disability status, etc.). At the same time, these divisions are "autonomous and each prioritize different spheres of social relation" (Yuval-Davis 201). For example, Pragna Patel's forthright expression of her experience as a migrant woman from Kenya with Indian origins in Britain highlights the key factors that further complicate discourses on oppression and justice when seen in terms of specific locations and their respective laws. Being a Hindu, Patel states, "I may belong at one and the same time to an oppressed minority and to an oppressive majority, with all the contradiction that entails" (255). She holds that situating herself within the forums of "victims of racism", other than religion, has also "evaded the need to look critically at the inner dynamics of our communities" (256). It is therefore important to note the positionality of any oppressed member of a category, in the narratives of identity politics and politics of difference. On the matter of identity politics, Avtar Brah also critiques feminists for treating oppression in terms of hierarchies. Here, she uses Hall's 'politics of articulation' to define what intersectionality

'is' instead of what it 'does'. To elaborate on this, both Brah and Yuval-Davis identify four levels based on which social divisions are constructed and normalised through repeated enforcement. According to Brah, the divisions are structural/social relation, subjectivity, experience, and identity. Yuval-Davis categorizes those levels as, organizational, intersubjective, experiential, and representational. Social divisions, according to Yuval-Davis, are materialised in and through the institutional and organizational structures of society, such as educational institutions, law firms, trade unions, state agencies, and the family. Again, Suki Ali mentions, that these structures do not affect every individual in the same way (Ali and et al. 652). The "power and affective relationships" shared between people express the intersubjective social divisions (Yuval-Davis 198). The divisions that exist in society are most expressed through the subjective experiences of people. Avtar Brah identifies this as "*experiential diversity*", where the various "ideological and institutional practices" mark their everyday lives (emphasis original, 89). Based on the categories they belong to, people are either included or excluded, discriminated against or favoured, and represented or not represented. Now, representation through "images and symbols, texts and ideologies" proves to be the most potent factor in internalising these divisions and by extension the separation of each identity as individual entities (Yuval-Davis 198). This explains how the "desire for the racialised 'Other' is constructed and codified in and through the patriarchal regimes of power, even as heterosexual, cultural values and norms are continually disrupted by lesbian, gay, and other sexualities" (Brah 153). Pratibha Parmar and Shaila reveal that even black British feminist organisations such as OWAAD are unsighted to such constructions. In a roundtable discussion among black lesbians, including Gail Low and Carmen, Parmar, and Shaila expressed that in the first conference of OWAAD held in 1981, they felt like they were "under attack" and "there was such a feeling of hostility coming towards us" (55). Again, Gail Low states that during the 1970s and early 1980s, there were a considerable number of lesbians and bisexuals among them who wished to stay unknown. Therefore, publicly identifying with their sexuality allowed them to differentiate their politics from other black feminists, through the formation of the Black Lesbians Group in the 1980s, while also supporting them. Their identity as British complicated their issues as they could not completely resonate with black lesbian feminists in America. Therefore, in a black lesbian roundtable conference titled "Becoming Visible", black British lesbian feminists like Sita Balani rejects an expression of identity primarily based on her allegiance to Britain, and

associate more with the idea of being a hybrid collaboration of British, Asian, queer, and second-generation. Here, Balani dismantles the hierarchal or relative mode of addressing these identities and rather perceives them more in terms of placing them adjacent to each other.

In congruence with Yuval-Davis' observations, Avtar Brah states that ethnicity too is "always gendered in terms of how they construct sexual difference and how they are lived…. This applies to both dominant and dominated ethnicities" (173). Thus, the theorization of the diaspora as a space is essential because it allows for intersectionality or, in Brah's terms, "the multi-axial understanding of power" (186). Brah also suggests that the categories 'black' and 'white' feminisms should be viewed as "non-essentialist, historically contingent practices", which work together to identify "who defines 'differences'" rather than eliminating 'differences' (114). However, Lola Young considers Brah's suggestions with scepticism because the "descriptor 'white' coupled with feminism connotes something similar to the supremacist 'white' in 'white power', and does not suggest emancipatory, progressive politics concerned with equality and social justice" (50-1). Young, therefore, states that while understanding diasporic links is essential, there must also be the recognition that "the victim and oppressor are not always clearly identifiable and may be both inside and outside what seem to be unified communities of interest" (59).

The concept of diaspora as such problematize the discourses of 'home', displacement and, belonging. In this context, it is essential to understand that "while diasporas emerge out of dispersals, not all dispersals lead to diasporas" (Quayson and Daswani 3). Yet, the concept of diaspora does involve conceptualising the "shifting relations between homelands and host nations from the perspectives both of those who have moved, whether voluntarily or not, and of the recipient societies in which they find themselves" (3). Hence, the aspect of 'nostalgia' caused by the rupture from homelands, is recurrent in black British women's writings. Here, it is also important to mention the distinction between 'homing desire' and 'desire for homeland' made by Avtar Brah, which will be examined in the succeeding chapters. The distinctions have enabled our work to explore how black British women writers offer a nuanced perspective to the ideology of 'return'. Again, the multiple historical and cultural affiliations that these black women writers assert also present the transnational influence that is noticed in their

works. Transnationalism, here, is to be examined in terms of intersecting diverse subjective positionalities black women hold. Like in the case of the eponymous protagonist in Bernardine Evaristo's *Lara*, who traces her origins in Nigerian, Afro-Brazilian, English, Irish, and German heritages. In the narrative, Lara holds the subject position of both the oppressor and the oppressed. For instance, she is described as an 'oyinbo' or white person by the locales in Lagos. But, instead of delving into such binary dichotomies, the character explores her transnational identity by returning to the geographical space and cultural memory of Africa and dismantling the inclusion-exclusion, immigrant-native discourses. These physical and metaphorical border crossings in turn reconstitute the idea of Englishness and simultaneously give legitimacy to other diasporic identities such as black Britishness or Afro-Caribbean Britishness. Besides, by presenting the "intersectionality of contemporary conditions of transmigrancy of people, capital, commodities and culture", black British writers like Evaristo also highlight the "entanglement of genealogies of dispersal" (Brah 238). Along with the movement of people, ideas, and communities, Ato Quayson and Girish Daswani add the "notions of citizenships, technology, forms of multinational governance, and the mechanisms of global markets" in the concept of transnationalism (4). Thus, the idea of the "permeability, transcendence or irrelevance" of borders becomes an integral aspect of study in transnationalism (5). In this sense, transnationalism also embodies the idea of 'deterritorialization'. Joss Moody's musical performance in Jackie Kay's *Trumpet*, which is inspired by diverse cultures across borders, allows him a metaphorical transcendence of not only national but also sexual boundaries. In Chapter Five of the thesis, we will explore in detail how Joss undergoes this process and creates alternative ways of understanding black migrant bodies in congruence with other supposedly fixed, essentialised identities. Correspondingly, the concept of 'translocality' and 'transnational urbanism' as described by Ayona Datta, will also be explored in the chapter to present how second-generation black characters from the Ladbroke Grove and Willesden localities, re-imagine the cityscapes of London.

Within this framework of diaspora as a space for intersectionality, the chapter also seeks to focus on a transnational feminist approach, which incorporates the "diverse experiences of women who live within, between, and at the margins or boundaries of nation-states around the globe" (Enns et al. 11). In this approach, the stress is on highlighting the specific 'differences' which connect women across national or cultural

borders. As a consequence, they not only challenge colonial and neo-colonial discourses but also mainstream (white) feminist methods of universalizing women's oppression and the specific socio-political and cultural transformations brought about by 'patriarchal regimes of power'. The emergence of transnational feminist intersectionality itself was caused by a common need to challenge the capitalist exploitation of women across nations. As stated in Carolyn Zerbe Enns' "Transnational Feminist Theory and Practice: An Introduction", the practice of transnationalism (2021), therefore, can operate in "a culture in which one is displaced or an immigrant, or a setting in which one is a temporary sojourner. It also encompasses the experiences of women who live in cultural borderland and spaces between cultures" (12). In relation to the in-between spaces of culture, the example of the Afro-Welsh writer, Charlotte Williams can be mentioned. In her memoir, *Sugar and Slate* (2002), she gives an account of her Welsh mother's complex identifications with being married to a black man and residing alone in a small town in Wales with her mixed-race children. While crossing the Atlantic, Williams states that "it was movement that was Home. Home was not a particular place for us. Home was Ma" (7). This statement is significant because it denotes how crossing borders/boundaries allows both Williams and her mother to challenge their multiple subjective positions. Here, Jayne O. Ifekwunigwe's idea of the female *metissé* or 'borderland women' can be referred to, where she deals with individuals who generally do not fit into the "preordained sociological categories" like 'black' or 'white' or feel a sense of "belonging nowhere and everywhere" at once (128, 131). Raised by biological/surrogate or adopted white English mothers, how the transnationalities of these black *metissé* daughters challenge the very idea of "the English-African Diaspora as a static and unitary formation" lies central to Ifekwunigwe's argument (146). More importantly, Williams' statement also signifies the characteristic of "self-reflexivity" crucial in the practice of transnational feminism (Enns et al. 13). The cross-border links between the marginalised women are formed on the grounds of a collective affiliation to the same religious, ethnic, and cultural identity, or on similar experiences of sexual and racial oppression. The similar political ideologies between black feminism and black British feminism cite an instance of the latter. In that sense, it can also include queer or lesbian communities across the world in a common struggle against the heterosexual structure of families and societies.

Amid these inclusive approaches, black British feminists like Yogita Goyal and Suzanne Scafe are recently directing their attention toward the concept of transnationalism to suggest a "post-racial future" and "post-diasporic space" respectively, by simultaneously critiquing and drawing from the male black British cultural theorists (IX 223). Paul Gilroy's post-racial stance which stresses more on genes than skin colour can be juxtaposed against Goyal and Scafe's attempt to situate their 'difference'. Goyal, in relation to this, offers the alternative of imagining a post-racial future "in a utopic rather than a colour-blind sense" unlike Paul Gilroy (IX). Accordingly, she suggests an option of looking back "across in space – to diasporic and global engagements with slavery and to the different histories of race and empire that African writers bring to the conversation" (IX). Corresponding with Goyal's views, Heidi Safia Mirza in an editorial note titled "Plotting a history: Black and Postcolonial Feminisms in 'new times'" (2009) on a special issue in *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, engages with the problem of recent developments in post-racism and post-feminism. She states that the illusive idea of "freedom and equality" has obscured the significance of intersectionality as a medium of addressing 'difference'(s). Such a notion, she argues, is false and the recent eruption of "#solidarityisforwhitewomen" among young black British women in social media is a testimony to this (2). The rise of these young feminists is significant to the development of black British feminist criticism because they are disrupting the long-established and "sedimented chronology of first, second, third waves that is cemented into the canon of white feminist historiography" (2).

To address the multiple, interconnecting axes of 'difference', Brah suggests the foregrounding of intersectionality or "intersectionalities" or "crossovers" in feminist theories to form a kind of "*theoretical creolisation*" (207). This idea remains central to the theoretical framework of our study, which largely relates it to the notion of black identities as a sum of 'patchworking', 'collaging', 'interweaving', or 'quilting'. To elaborate on this, let us understand how Naz Rasool views the 'black experience' in Britain and the diaspora as a "complex tapestry" that has evolved with time and is constantly seeking a "political self-identification" at the same time (202). Naz Rasool provides three noteworthy observations to this outlook; the first, is the notion that the determination of black identities is rooted in an intricate interweaving of everyday life experiences that has traces in varied historical, social, and cultural contexts, the second is the idea that migrations and dislocations through time along with the racism following

colonial and neo-colonial interactions have regulated the urban 'black experience', and third, is the attestation of the fact that "meanings evolve diagonally in relation to society, culture and the individual", which means that an individual identifies their present predicaments, or shape their subjectivities, in terms of the "collective memory" of "past experiences" that is being continuously assembled through discourse about specific individualized positionalities (188). Cultural hybridity is considered the most significant part of this process of identification, according to Rasool. In contradiction to most scholars, who generally publicize the positive aspects of cultural hybridity as ideal for the future of a multicultural British nation, Rasool examines the conflicts and contradictions that exist in the process of forming a cultural identity. By echoing Stuart Hall's observations, Rasool too highlights "'black' identities" as "flexible and engaged in a constant process of 'becoming'" (200). To add to Rasool's analysis, Gilane Tawadros observes that presently black women are working not only to critique "cultural modernity" or hybridity but also to affirm the "conceptual framework formulated within the diasporan experience, which defies the transcendental, hierarchal, and oversimplistic precepts of modernist consciousness" (251). Similar to Rasool's description of diaspora as a 'complex tapestry', Tawadros explores the work of three black women artists in Britain, namely Lubaina Hamid, Sonia Boyce, and Sutapa Biswas. The creative work of these women, Tawadros argues, "dissolves the fixed boundaries between past and present, public and private, personal and political" (274). One instance can be cited of Lubaina Himid's reappropriation of Pablo Picasso's *Two Women Running on the Beach.* She particularly focuses on the use of a "patchwork of colored fabrics", "mosaic of (pictorial) fragments" or a "collage of visual references", which as a collaboration of "memories, dreams, and cultural signifiers", implies the dynamism of 'blackness' as a political strategy (275). The signification of black identity as fragmented also challenges the monolithic construction of Britishness as a national identity and, in a way, decentres the white, male logic. The creative resistance of these artists embodies the essence of diaspora, which "embraces a plurality of different cultures and discontinuous histories" (275). In "Diaspora and Cultural Memory", Anh Hua also cites the imagery of quilting that functions as a practical approach for feminists to contextualize their experiences of displacement and memory. Making it part of documenting history and aestheticism, Hua builds on the activity of quilting as a resistance against diverse experiences of interlinking forms of oppression. Most importantly, the stress on fabrics, embroidery, and patchwork indicates the emergence of this resistance from domestic and feminized

spaces that seek to defy constructions of racialized and gendered boundaries that are essentialized and hierarchal at the same time.

Our study would posit that the 'self-reflexive' and 'contingent' character of black British feminist criticism is integral to the development of black British women's writing. The multiple contradictions expressed in the radical politics of black British feminists and activists are often projected in the works of black British women novelists as well. The conceptual discussions on the politics of 'return', the critical observations on the embodiment of black womanhood and black motherhood, and the notion of black identities as fragmented and in a constant process of 'becoming', will allow our study to ponder on the representations depicted by black British women novelists. The theories and concepts examined above will also enable the study to comprehend how the women writers deal with the idea of Africa and consequently represent the real or construct metaphorical and imaginary images of Africa, while constantly interrogating and revising their black Britishness. Moreover, there are other nuances beyond the issues discussed here that have been conveyed by the writers. Hence, the following chapters examine other possible ways of imagining or referring to Africa as a 'home' and homeland.

Endnotes:

[1] Louise L. N. Little, Malcolm X's mother, was a notable black woman actively participating in the political activism of Pan-Africanist and black nationalist movements during the 1920s; see Erik S. McDuffie's "The Diasporic Journeys of Louise Little: Grassroots Garveyism, the Midwest, and Community Feminism" (2016).

[2] Critics such as Simon Gikandi, Yogita Goyal, Janine Hauthal, Jean-Phillipe Mathy, and Paul Tiyambe Zeleza have offered their criticism of Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* on the aspect of gender, black Anglophone diaspora, and others.

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