Did it Work? Re-enacting the maternal body as a site for ancestral memories: photography and oral history as vehicles for reconstructing history in the re-embodiment of Black Matrilineage

Marcia Michael

September 2023

Did it Work? Re-enacting the maternal body as a site for ancestral memories: photography and oral history as vehicles for reconstructing history in the re-embodiment of Black Matrilineage

By

Marcia Michael

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

University of the Arts London
London College of Communication

September 2023

Did it Work? Re-enacting the maternal body as a site for ancestral memories: photography and oral history as vehicles for reconstructing history in the re-embodiment of Black Matrilineage

Marcia Michael

ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks a contextual framework that helps me understand the way in which I utilise my mother's body and my own as a site for evoking ancestral memories. Through collaborative conversational practice, I use photography and the oral to identify Black literary matrilineage as the framework through which I interact with my mother. Using photography through a visceral enactment to understand her embodied oral and physical language, I was able to locate a literary framework named Black literary matrilineage. Through this, I clarified the components that enable me to utilise its methodology as the act I am in with my mother.

In re-structuring this hybrid methodology through photography, I acknowledge the tradition of Black literary matrilineage by navigating a re-interaction with my maternal ancestors, starting with my mother. In acts of translation and participation, I gain access to my mother's embodied language. This language intertwines with my ancestral narratives in a code I learn to decipher through a process of search, discovery, and recovery. This embodied approach is personal and reflective, respecting the nature of my family's history and my mother's body as the archive of this history. By defining the components of Black matrilineage, I engage in a process that asserts photography and the oral tradition as repositories of history that can be engaged within this form. I then use these forms as sites of reclamation and resistance, positioning photography's use in the act of Black Matrilineage to affirm a reconnection with the literary tradition by removing the literary form. This research adds to the discourse of Black Matrilineage and is my contribution to knowledge, demonstrating photography as a way in which familial histories can be recovered.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following people for all their help and support throughout my research journey.

My supervisors during this journey, were Anne Williams, Dr Wiebke Leister, Dr Michael McMillan, Dr Mark Ingram, and Prof. Sonia Boyce. This would not have been possible without their insights, thoughts, feedback, and encouragement.

I would l also like to thank the academic support team members at UAL, who have encouraged and helped to instil a love of writing during this journey. I would also like to thank Angelina Hewitt for their dedication to aiding my goals along this journey.

I could not have done this research without my mother, whose spirit kept me going throughout this enquiry. I am also indebted to my friends and family who supported me and encouraged me as I made work that opened up my practice to so many wonderful possibilities. Thank you for listening.

ABSTRACT – v

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS - **vii**

Contents

Preface - 1

Glossary and other phrases – 3

INTRODUCTION – 7
Chapters Overviews
Did it work? – 23
Literary matriliny- the literature of Black matrilineage – 24
What's that thing that mummy does? The roles of speakerly text and signifyin(g) in this practice – 27
Speaking, hearing, seeing – 29
Generational Transmission: photography – 31

CHAPTER 1 - The Gesture of Participation, *Did it Work?*
Introduction – 34
Did it work? – 35
Conclusion – 63

CHAPTER 2 - Claiming the Practice of Black Matrilineage: An Exploration
Introduction – 65
Developing Black (literary) matrilineage – 68
Conjuring – 79
A brief explanation of Conjuring -80
Caribbean Mothers and daughters – 83
What am I doing, what I am doing - 87
What makes Black Matrilineage an act – 90
Conclusion – 93

CHAPTER 3 - Signifyin(g) and speakerly text – what it is and how I use it
Introduction –95
Outlining Signifyin(g) and speakerly text – 97
The Ritual of Signifyin(g) – 103
Signifying in Words, Music and Pictures – call and response – 108
How is signifyin(g) enacted in my practice – 112
Familial Text and Photography – 114
Creative Blends: blending acts and processes with photography – 121
Conclusion – 135

CHAPTER 4 – Hurston Photography and Rememory
Introduction – 138
Writing photography into a Signifyin(g) act – 139
Rememory, photography and Black Matrilineage – 142
Rememory and the body -145
Daughters siginfyin(g) – 147
Carrie Mae Weems -151
Lorna Simpson – 158
Conclusion – 160

CHAPTER 5 - Searching for Visual Matrilineage - **Artist Case Studies**
Introduction – 162
Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons – 165
Chantal Ackerman – 169
Amanda Heng – 176
Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust* - 184
Martina (Judah) Attille – 191
Conclusion – 196

CHAPTER 6 - Gestural Preservation, Generational Transmission: Photography
Introduction – 199
Partus Sequitur Ventrem – The Photographs - 207
Exploring Black Matrilineage and Photography – 214
The act
Mother's voice – 219
Responding to mother – 224
I, daughter, am Signifyin(g) – 232
Claiming mother's heritage – 236
Using the body as my voice – 240
Another way of knowing – 247
Conjuring: creating, bringing about – 248
Jamaica – 255
Walking in my Mother's Garden: I Am Now You- Mother – 260
Conclusion – 274

CONCLUSION – Did it Work? - 276

REFERENCES - 290

BIBLIOGRAPHY – 309

FIGURE LIST – 328

PORTFOLIO – 338

The Study of Kin (2009) – 329
The Family Album (2009) – 336
I am now you – Mother at Autograph ABP. 27 April - 7 July 2018. Installation images – 343
Blood Mothers (2022) – 345
Life Between Islands Caribbean-British Art 1950s – Now, at Tate Britain, 1 December 2021 – 3 April 2022. Installation Images – 348

Preface

Central to my thesis is the idea of Black literary matrilineage, which has been established in the works of Black women authors whose themes and structure are informed by a mother and daughter relationship. In understanding and learning what Black literary matrilineage was and how it fitted in within the development of my practice, I began a journey that was not linear. My journey commenced because of a shared experience with my mother. In order to share this experience and use in as a part of my practice, there was a need to investigate what it was and what it meant. Especially as the interaction with my mother primarily used photography to connect.

Documenting her aging body, as a symbolic representation of mothers. I was looking at her, with awareness that I was looking at those in my matrilineal line, including myself. it became important to listen to her voice in the various modes of expressions, such as, pain, laughter and storytelling. I had some sort of hope that they would reveal narratives that were not her own. This thought was possible only because I had heard her voice, whilst she was in pain and I became aware that amongst the sounds she made, there were other sounds that required deeper and perhaps different listening.

I did not know the question at the beginning and I certainly had no anticipation of the answers. I had at the start no methodological structure to follow.

My aim was to gain an understanding of what this act between my mother and myself could be and this could only be understood and named by embarking on a journey. The methodology I used in this process with my mother would become known to me through the literary concept Black literary matrilineage. My search and later my investigation of this literary concept, led me to enquire about its structures. It would be in the way that I utilise and connected these structures with photography, that would

enable me to shift the literary concept that I came upon, to the physical, identifying the fundamental elements of the literary structures and seeing them in the practice I was in with my mother as Black Matrilineage.

It is important to note that the repetition that exists in both the writing as well as in the photographs in this practice forms part of the reflective methodology. It is used in the writing as a tool that allows me to speak with my parent's voice. My mother would repeat things, when asked why, she would say, "so you could hear". I began to understand from my own experience that hearing did not always come on the first listening. This consideration I understood, was an important aspect of learning that I encountered on the journey I was on in this research. Its use in the writing for me was a way to practice how I would speak in my mother's tongue. It is also important to note that the externalizing of my thoughts and processes, as the subjective voice I use throughout the thesis in parts, is presented so that I can bring you into my thoughts as I relay this journey that I was on.

The focus of this research lies in the video *Did it work?* (2015) that I identified as being the catalyst that positioned me to begin the search and participate in a journey of discovering Black matrilineage. It is this that I share in this thesis.

Glossary and other Phrases

In making clear some of the terms that are used throughout this thesis, it is important to make clear distinctions here as to how I use them.

- **Black** is always capitalized in this thesis (except when used in a quote) when I refer to racial groups or when used to define cultural terms, such as in the case of Black matrilineage.

- **Black Feminist Theory** – A critical thought construct that centres on the experiences of Black women and their intersectional positioning of gender, sexuality, race and class. Through this they empower themselves and 'value their own subjective knowledge base' by taking elements and themes of Black women's culture and traditions and infusing them with new meaning. (Collins, 1989, p.750).

- **Black literary matrilineage** – where a group of literary works in which Black female authors, through themes of mothering, mother and daughter, maternal lineage and self-acknowledgement, use this as a process to reclaim histories. By doing so, their works are added into a discourse of Black maternal lineage.

- **Black literary matriliny** – mentioned by Dianne Sadoff in reference to Alice Walker:
  'The historical burden of black matrifocality and motherhood-slavery, sexual exploitation, forced loss of children, and economic marginality-also creates the special "duty," as Walker defines it, of black literary matriliny' (Sadoff, 1985, p.11). Black literary matriliny means the same as Black literary matrilineage.

- **Black literary tradition** – A shared experience of Black culture that, through literature, encompasses a Black aesthetic that continues and develops the experience of this Black culture from the point of view of the author who is part

of that culture. Fundamental to this tradition is the move from the oral to the written page.

- **Black matrilineage** – Without the literary in its title, though being expressed within the framework of Black literary matrilineage, Black matrilineage refers to Black literary matrilineage, the notion of an inherited black maternal lineage. Outside of the literary framework, Black matrilineage refers to a lineage of maternal ancestry of African descent.

- **Black Matrilineage** – refers to the *how* of the search and the processes involved in the recovery of Black literary matrilineage, thus in its separated from becoming a transferable act.

- **Conjuring –** is to create. The notion of its use in and from Black women's perspectives sees it as a way of being, doing and bringing about. It is an act that, in its use, becomes a tradition that can be passed on. Walker (1983) refers to acts such as gardening, cooking, sewing as conjuring. These acts can be expressed as an unrecognised memory that belongs to the past, also in any and all areas in which women find themselves.

- **Matriarchal** – Defines a position in which women are at the head of this positioning.
- **Matrilineage** – Refers to a maternal lineage, a line of descent through the maternal line.
- **Matrilineage** – With reference to the literary - defines the notion of inheritance through the form of womanhood. There is a focus on the mother and the tracing by the daughter of her ancestry (also meaning precursor) through the mother's line. The mother in this instance does not have to be a blood relative but can be a mother figure, a metaphor; this includes considering authors themselves and their works respectively within this.
- **Matrilineal** – a line of enquiry through the notion of the maternal line.

- **Matriliny** – Matriliny is a way of reckoning descent and belonging through the female line and is used interchangeably with matrilineal.
- **Partus Sequitur Ventrem** – translated from Latin, it means 'that which comes forth follows the womb'.

  In naming this series of photographs, Partus Sequitur Ventrem (2015-2017), I subvert the notion of mothering that this term carried for the enslaved mother and their children. Black literary matrilineage as an act itself subverts this rule of inheritance with a familial discourse that positions the daughter, the one who came forth from the womb in partus sequitur ventrem, as the one who reclaims what is inherited from a mother. She claims her inheritance by searching and recovering, not just her mother, but the notion of mothering and self-love.

  In identifying the mother's symbolic role in Black literary matrilineage, the mother 'appears to be slavery's ultimate victim' (Hochberg, 2003, p.2). The term partus sequitur ventrem embodies the mother as the site where boundaries are made and generated from, and the child she produces as being born into this same site, hence the phrasing (that which comes forth follows the womb). Used during the period of enslavement, it regulated the child born from a slave, as a slave. Using this term in its subverted state allows me to reposition the dignity and power of the Black maternal body and reclaim their children, which includes the aspect of mothering. In Black literary matrilineage the mother has been bestowed a power in that her body becomes a symbol for, amongst other things, the power of inheritance. United with a daughter figure (who searches the troughs of history for her mother), her inheritance becomes such that she is influenced in the rewriting of history: 'history becomes in Toni Morrison's hands a mother and child union' (Rody, 2001, p.41).

- **Rememory –** A term coined by Toni Morrison (1987) in the novel *Beloved*. In this thesis, it is understood to be an act that combines itself as both a noun and verb simultaneously. Rememory can be experienced as a form of remembering, repetition and recovery; a tool that uses imagination and

memory to disallow the notion of forgetting by seeing the threat of repetition through its term shift into a notion of embodiment.

- **Signifyin(g)** – a ritual of use in Black literary matrilineage that sees women utilise an antecedent's work through a process of revision. It is this act and the manner in which it is done that is defined as signifyin(g).

- **Speakerly text –** a component within signifyin(g) that sees the way in which someone speaks (e.g. intonation, dialect, pronunciation etc) transferred to the written word.

INTRODUCTION

> 'It seems to me that the best art is political and you ought to be able to make it unquestionably political and irrevocably beautiful at the same time' (Morrison, 1984, p. 345). From the essay *Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation)*.

"I do not strive to make the images appear to be a certain way, for what I do is capture a moment of expression. Yet, within what is documented is a sense of serenity, a sense of being and, in some way, a sense of knowing. This definitely has a therapeutic effect on the relationship between my mother and myself, but I hope it also affects what images can do as a way to heal the memory of the past and the future where memories made can be considered."

My History

I began taking photographs to fill in my timetable whilst I was studying my A levels in London. Photographing nudes and the landscape, I studied BA photographic studies at Derby University where landscape and the body became a significant influence on my photographic development.

Moving back to London my interest shifted towards fashion photography and I began to understand my presence in this genre. A book edited by Joy Gregory[1] (2023), called *Shining Lights: Black Women Photographers in 1980s–'90s Britain* displays some of the images I took for magazines at this time.

In 2008 I returned to study an MA in photography at the University of the Arts London. By this time, I had two small children who became the centre of my photographic

[1] Joy Gregory, b.1959, is an artist of Jamaican heritage who works across various disciplines, navigating culture through aspects of race, identity and gender.

attention as I navigated the notion of presence and absence within the auspices of a black family album. This was a significant time for me as before this I had not searched for a past. I believe that, because I now have children, my practice stems from a need to reclaim a past and to archive the information in order to address the questions I have had, and also those my future family may have of me.

Mother's Day

I began taking photographs of my mother's body on March 15th, 2015. In the UK this day was known as Mother's Day.

My mother had been experiencing pain in her body for some time, from many different ailments, so on this day, her day, I decided that I would dress her in her favourite clothes and photograph her to make her feel special. At the end of the session, both my sister and I could see a clear difference in our mother. The notion of pain had redirected itself from her body, it was forgotten. I therefore realised that my mother could benefit from this interaction with me and the camera as a way to alleviate her physical pain. In later discussions, I was informed that she also wanted to see how her body looked as she aged, and these photographs allowed her to observe herself.

This interaction between my mother and myself continued and, as I questioned what was taking place in the photographs, a research question emerged that concentrated solely on her. She agreed and we extended this capture of her body to also include the collection of oral stories, songs, and histories. I hoped that, through this approach and participation, she would offer me a glimpse into a past I yearned to know about. What this looked like was completely free to develop without any preconceived ideas from me.

As I was photographing my mother, it was the sounds I heard from her that made me question what we were experiencing. Her voice was melodic. In re-listening to the

episodes that I recorded whilst she was crying out in pain, something was triggered in me. These sounds made me question what I was supposed to hear. What was taking place here? The sound I heard was more than pain; there was something that in my imagination drew me back to a different world, to a person trying to communicate to me and so, through the research, I began to investigate what I was hearing, who I was hearing, why and when.

In October 2015, being fed up with the camera's attention on her, my mother asked me if I could do what she was doing - being in front of the camera. She asked me just after my birthday, and I wondered if my maturity placed me in this act (as my mother was to pass away 1 and a half years later) to foster matriarchal roles? It was a challenge I none the less accepted.

In this interaction, I thought perhaps my mother could take pictures of me, but it was clear after talking with her that this was something she would not be able to do due to the pressure this would place upon her. I needed to find other ways in which to connect to her. Taking her up on the offer to photograph myself, thus becoming her, I decided to take the photographs only when I was on my menstrual cycle – a connection for me to my matrilineal mothers. My mother also had to be present, either in the same room or close by. This allowed me to show her, as I used a digital camera, what I had taken and hopefully catch comments that would influence me in how I photographed myself. Her comments, such as “that looks good”, were usually very simple and encouraging. This interaction between my mother and myself would be the beginning of my search and a developing of a methodology that I would only fully understand from the literary works held under the term Black literary matrilineage.

For example, sometimes I tried to get a deeper response from her about the images I had already made and was able to build on such fleeting comments as “that looks like a sculpture”. Responses like this led me to other ways of making representations of my mother's body and my own through other disciplines such as clay and metal. I was in this instance able to make a 3D scan of my mother’s body and from this create a 3D print which allowed me to fabricate a cold cast bronze sculpture (See Fig. 1), It was in

these extended forms of creative making that led me to further formulate what it was that we were doing in the recovery our matrilineal ancestry. Acts like these warranted my attention as ways in which my matrilineal heritage can be embodied but also re-presented.



Figure 1: The Object of My Gaze, Installation image at Tate Britain (2021) Life Between Islands: Caribbean - British Art 1950s – Now. Sculpture: Remembering you. Cold cast bronze with patina. (© 2015-2021, Marcia Michael).

My mother's voice and me with my camera

I found meaning through authored works such as Toni Morrisons *Beloved* (1983), Zora Neale Hurston's[2] *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), Alice Walker's[3] *The Color Purple* (1982), and Gayl Jones's[4] *Corregidora* (1975), in the inquiry I was beginning with my mother. I located the presence of Black literary Matrilineage. In navigating this personal theme in literature by Black women my interaction with my mother began to make sense. There was a familiarity in the stories, that gave me the courage to explore its existence in other genres such as photography.

Black matrilineage was established in literature and represented in a handful of films successfully. To my knowledge, at the time when I started this research in 2015, it had not been utilised in photography or performed as a corporeal act. There were certainly crossovers and connections between artists' works and the literary, as discussed by Caroline Brown[5] (2012). However, what was missing in her discussion was the physical presence of the act as encountered by an artist daughter and her mother, which narrated the structures of a process that could be defined and claimed as Black matrilineage. Would this claim have ethical repercussions? Is this why Black Matrilineage was not expanded outside of these fields? It was the practice and the reflection of my use of photography, instigated and encouraged by my mother, that not only began the research but laid open the question once this definition had been found: *can photography transpose the literary?* This act of transposition for a visual exploration of Black Matrilineage derived from the literary is an aspect of the new contribution to knowledge I make in this thesis.

[2] Zora Neal Hurston b. 1891, an African-American author, essayist, anthropologist, folklorist and filmmaker.
[3] Alice Walker b. 1944, an African–American author of fiction, poems, essays who won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1982 for the novel, *The Color Purple*.
[4] Gayl Jones, b. 1949, an African-American author whose works consist of fictional narratives that shape the canon of African-American literature through language and collective memory.
[5] Caroline Brown is an African American writer on African-American and diasporic literature, 20th century U.S. literature, and women's studies.

This would allow me, through the framework and methodology contained in Black literary Matrilineage, to demonstrate that visual images can be used as a form of performative autobiography to influence and connect in cultural practices. This is achieved through an embodiment that re-enacts the maternal body as a site for ancestral memories. It is one that can act, like the narratives of Black literary matrilineage, as a vehicle for re-evaluating historical narratives developing the concept. These narratives are thus, reclaimed through this embodied process between mother and daughter, and become an aspect of the contribution to knowledge that I make through this practice.

This interactive learning was for me a ritual of mother and daughter connection, one in which knowledge and cultural wisdom would have been passed on at certain times. Yet the questions I was asking my mother concerning my matrilineal history, who these women were and what they did in their lives, could only be activated and answered through my mother's body. It was also possible because I was doing the searching.

In December 2020, five years after I started the research with my mother, I had an interesting late-night talk with Cultural producer & photo educator, Lesley Deschler Canossi[6] and Zoraida Lopez-Diago[7]regarding definitions of the term Black matrilineage, aside from the literary. As part of their collaborative work *Women Picturing Revolution,* they had presented a paper at the Tate Modern conference *Fast Forward: How Do Women Work*, December 1st, 2020. They were editing a book called *Representation of Black Motherhood & Photography*, where works by women photographers and the theme of motherhood were being considered.

Our conversation included my research and photographic practice with my mother and my referring to this as an act of Black matrilineage. I was asked to write a chapter for their edited book which changed title in 2022 and was published as *Black Matrilineage,*

[6] Lesley Deschler Canossi, based in the USA, is a Cultural producer & photo educator.
[7] Zoraida Lopez-Diago, based in the USA, is the founder and co-leader of Conservationists of Color (an affinity group for people of colour who believe in protecting the air we breathe, the water we drink and the land we love). She is also a cultural strategist.

Photography, and Representation: Another Way of Knowing (Lopez-Diago & Deschler Canossi, 2022).

The chapter I wrote, *The Impossibility of Breathing When the Sun Covers Your Face,* succinctly explores the journey of my encounter with Black literary matrilineage, and later the act of Black Matrilineage with my mother. Here I was able to express myself in a style of recollection that, for me, contained a sense of what Black Matrilineage is – that is, speaking with and in my mother's voice.

The process of this research was more than just locating a framework of inquiry for a very personal encounter. I had also learnt to speak in my mother's voice, telling stories and sharing histories and expressing them when the moment was right.

The practice in this research, through enactment, showed how and what I had learnt about Black literary matrilineage through the process of understanding it, and how I would develop my understanding in other ways. I was able to practice this at talks by discussing my work in this form, for example at Tate Modern, MFON: Women Photographers of the African Diaspora in London UK (2018); Black Portraitures V, Memory and the Archive, USA (2019); Maud Sulter: The Centre of the Frame, The New Hall Art Collection Murray Edwards College, University of Cambridge (2021).

I was able, in my chapter*, t*o practice this type of dialogue also in writing, for example:

> Looking back now, I understand the connection between Hurston and Walker, who are held to be the mother and daughter of Black matrilineage (Sadoff, 1985). And how through them, what I was to re-experience, as a tradition, was a ritual. My mother's voice and me with my camera, would become the tools of tradition that would begin and hopefully affirm my place in the tradition of conjuring, but also as a storyteller. (Michael, 2022. p. 264).

In this edited book, the term Black matrilineage was clearly being used alongside photography. This was regarding a maternal lineage and representation of a black maternal subject through the use of photography. The use of the term and acknowledgements of its conception and structures from the literary is not that which

guides the contents of the book. What does is the approach to a Black Body, Black motherhood and Black artists. The editors of the book ask,

> …. how the Black female body, specifically the Black maternal body, navigates the interlocking Western socio-political structures that place a false narrative on her body and that of her mother, her grandmother and so on. (Lopez-Diago & Deschler Canossi, 2022. p. 21).

As this was a debate that had been at the forefront of my own research when I started, it was interesting that this was still the guiding framework for the term Black matrilineage. However, through discussion before the book was published regarding its title and use of the term, they argued that Black Matrilineage referred to a maternal lineage referencing mothering and the maternal. The chapter I wrote explains the use of the term. This finding, as well as this research, assures me that, as I argue, Black Matrilineage within the use of the visual requires a definition and critical reflection of its use.

It made sense to me that, for an act outside of the literary (for example a visual act) to be classed as Black matrilineage, and thus a development of it, it would have to follow and acknowledge the fundamental features found in its establishing framework. Such a framework has been advocated by Marianne Hirsch[8] (1989), Nan Maglin[9] (1979), and Mary Helen Washington[10] (1980), to name a few, through their respective works.

My research at that time was not about the existence and development of black female artists, whose presence as both Black and female acknowledge a 'maternal' lineage, but sought to expand the use of Black matrilineage to another genre. Thus, Black literary matrilineage needed clarifying, and Black matrilineage, as a term with its own

[8] Marianne Hirsch, b. 1949 is a research writer, centring on memory from a feminist and cultural perspective. She is a Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University and Professor in the Center for the Study of Sexuality.
[9] Nan Maglin a teacher in the70's and 80's taught developmental writing, composition, and women's literature. She is editor and co-editor of nine books that centre on women telling their stories as they age.
[10] Mary Helen Washington b. 1941 is an African-American author and researcher whose work explores Black Women experiences through literature.

interpretations, needed a practice that could redefine it as an act that could see Black Matrilineage appear in different genres. In this research, photography became the focus.

The work for a matrilineal recovery began because I could not find evidence of my matrilineal past, a past I searched the paper archives for, and could not find.

I probably typed into the search bar on the internet during 2015, 'Black mother's and daughter's photography' and 'ancestral history', coming up with nothing spectacular. Having read Toni Morrison's[11] *Beloved* (1987), I remembered the significance of the daughter named Beloved. Further reading into this allowed me to examine not just Beloved but Denver a daughter figure, as the significant person in the act that takes place between mother and daughter, and this led me to Dianne Sadoff's [12](1985) essay *Black matrilineage: The Case of Alice Walker and Zora Neale Hurston.*

After reading this text, there was still something missing for me in the understanding of the term Black matrilineage, as discussed by Sadoff (1985). Here there was no explanation for dropping the literary connotations of Black matrilineage, and yet I saw a need to fill the gaps made by this. My search for a clearer understanding became also research for an understanding of the term in other forms, specifically in this context to discover whether photography could be used in place of the literature.

The practice that I was in with my mother made me question *what it was that was taking place*, especially when my mother asked me to include myself in this process - *what did this act of participation mean*? The act became something that needed defining and, through searching, I came to understand and define it as practice of Black Matrilineage.

[11] Toni Morrison b.1931 an Africa America author of fiction. She won in 1993 the Nobel Prize in Literature.
[12] Dianne F Sadoff, b.1945 an American inter disciplinary author, teacher of English and essayist who has written books on film and cinema Studies, as well as Victorian literature.

Gil Z Hochberg's[13] (2003) use of Guy Dugas's (1990) quote at the start of her essay confirmed for me that the practice with my mother was a formal expression of recovery, that could be associated with acts of Black matrilineage found in the Literary.

> It is by her and through her, through "mother as a source of memory," that one is rooted in a genealogy, a past, a people, a tradition. "Mother" is often represented as a valuable source of unmediated, direct memory. (Hochberg, 2003, p. 1).

It was through the use of my mother's body and oral memories that I acknowledged this connection. However, what was Black matrilineage, without the notion of the literary? There was a need to separate and define the process of Black literary matrilineage. To clarify the term as an act, a method and a discourse that could be used corporeally and not as a speech or written act, I capitalised the term 'Matrilineage'.

Writing this at the end of my research, the search I undertook and the practice I was involved in was analogous with the search and discovery that takes place within the literary constructs needed to achieve a Black matrilineage.

The aim of this research was to locate the underlying definition and working mechanism of the term Black Matrilineage as an act. To demonstrate with the use of photography how I enacted the constructs of Black Matrilineage with my mother, and then enabling me to demonstrate a transposition of the literary concept to a physical act.

To do this I searched the literature for the development and understanding of Black literary matrilineage. I used this to ascertain the constructs that constitute the theme Black matrilineage, extracting the narrative strategies as components of a methodological structure. This allowed me to locate the act and then separate it from the literary discourse, identifying the quintessential formations of Black matrilineage as

[13] Gil Z Hochberg is an American researcher in Hebrew and Visual Studies, Comparative Literature and Middle East Studies.

an act, that can also be used outside of the literary sphere. This took place whilst I searched for an understanding of the act I am in with my mother.

By observing my own search and discovery with my mother's use of oral expressions and my photographic responses, I transferred the orality of Black literary matrilineage to photography. I connected and situated our collaboration within the themes demonstrated within the literature of Black matrilineage and claimed this enactment with my mother as Black Matrilineage.

I had wondered if, through this process, my mother would uncover and release information about her maternal past that she did not realise was encoded in what she was saying or doing. I wondered what would be revealed and how would I know what it was and what it meant. I was unsure of how I would form meaning of this experiential journey. In asking for a way to connect to my ancestors through my mother's body, my only remit was to be honest and respond to what came forth.

In defining this act as Black matrilineage, I contribute this means of transference as new knowledge in the field of photography and in the field of Black literary matrilineage as a method of reconstructing an archive of familial, historical, and cultural connections, utilising photography.



Figure 2: The Object of My Gaze, Installation image at Tate Britain (2021) Life Between Islands: Caribbean - British Art 1950s – Now. Digital Photographs, Partus Sequitur Ventrum Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl, Single images 30" x 20" inches Wallpaper images, various sizes. Video, Mi Soon Come, Likkle More, Single channel video 4.48 mins, Full HD: 1920 x 1080, Aspect Ratio 16.9 (1080p) Codec: h.264. Sculpture: Remembering you remember me. Cold cast bronze with patina in various sizes. (© 2015-2021, Marcia Michael).

From 2015 to 2017 my practice of photographing myself and my mother continued. My mother passed over to the ancestors in May 2017 and I am pleased to say that my mother saw and vetted all the photographs, sound recordings and videos I had taken of her.

During the month of October 2017, I made the last photographs of myself for the series. In becoming (metaphorically) my mother photographing myself in her clothes with a backdrop of a curtain that was patterned with flowers, as a reminder of the patterns she loved around her home, I named the series, *I Am Now You – Mother (2017)*.



Figure 3: I am Now you – Mother Digital Photographs and Video: Remembering You, Remember me. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl 15 x 22.5 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

By this time, I had come to a clear understanding of what this process was. I called it a practice, but it felt, maybe because it was personal, like I was experiencing rite of passage. It changed me, and it also changed the way I made art. I was compelled to speak through other disciplines, reaching and connecting to a familial heritage of creativity. I no longer referred to myself as photographer with a single discipline, but as an artist, due to this multiplicity. I allowed myself to speak in more than one way and this for me was a distinct and significant difference.

In using my practice as the search for Black matrilineage, as I embodied the process, my hope was always about revealing my familial heritage. Through the practice that developed between my mother and myself, I felt compelled to write stories and poems. I collected these and created a book, *My History is in Her(e),* (2021). These reflected, for me, stories about an ancestor's life, in their voice.

A poem from the collection:

I go away

I was going to run away.
Surrounded by water, I did not care, I had been here before,
surrounded by water, my birth, all births, remember.
I was set free, then, again and again.
Why should this one be any different?

—Marcia Michael, *I go Away* taken from *My History is in Her(e),* 2021 (p. 136).

In also using my mother's recorded voice, I worked with composers to extract the voices I had heard from her sounds, transposing them into soundscapes. Here, in this way, and as part of a process of familial connection, I was able to have a connection with histories. In creating the soundscapes, I was speaking to the past. I was also listening to the voices and narratives that I believed to be projected from what was made. This personal exchange of response to the 'calls' are waiting for the appropriate time to be shared. Making them in this process, allowed me to connect with my mother's body as the archive I had yearned to discover.

Black Matrilineage

I first used the phrase Black Matrilineage publicly in 2018 at an exhibition in London, *I Am Now You – Mother* at the Autograph ABP gallery, (see Fig. 4 and Section iii of the portfolio for more images). It was clear through this exhibition that the term contained

a notion of inheritance that comes from the discovery of an articulate black maternal lineage.



Figure 4: I am Now you – Mother. Installation image at Autograph ABP. Digital Photographs and Video: Remembering You, Remember me. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl 15 x 22.5 inches. Wallpaper images. 12.53 mins. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

As this was not the Black matrilineage that was being written about and announced through the discourses of Black literary matrilineage, it would be the literature of Black literary matrilineage that was indispensable in assisting me in my search and along my experiential journey. As the term was derived from literature, this was the only route for me to follow. It was necessary to see its wider implications as an art practice once the understanding in its primary home was understood.

Locating a tradition – signifyin(g)

The term Black matrilineage was an approach that saw the authors (as daughters) utilising each other's literary works through the process of signifyin(g) (Gates[14], 1988a).

It is in Geraldine Smith-Wright's[15] description of signifying that a clear view of its double meaning is explained. Signifyin(g) is a style of speaking/writing; it is also a process of utilising antecedent texts by other others in one's own writing. Both take place within Black literary matrilineage, with Speakerly text becoming the signifying approach that is harnessed.

> Two writers' subjects might not be parallel with regard to content and tone. When the later writer re-sees the antecedent work through her artistic imagination, the result is a new text that responds creatively and sympathetically to its predecessor. (Smith-Wright, 1987, p.21).

It would be Alice Walker's (2005) search for Zora Neale Hurston and her signifying upon Hurston's novel *Their Eyes were Watching God* (1937), through the novel *The Color Purple* (1982), that unified the search and discovery, as well as the mother and daughter connection in the literary tradition.

> Walker has signified upon Hurston in what must stand to be the most loving revision and claim to title, that we have seen in the tradition. Walker has turned to a black antecedent text to claim literary ancestry, or motherhood, not only for content but for structure. (Gates, 1988a, p. 255).

I did not understand what signifyin(g) was, nor was I aware that my mother in the video was signifyin(g). Signifying needed my understanding, for its use in this research was significant.

[14] Henry Louis Gates Jr., b. 1950 is an Africa American literary critic, professor, historian, and filmmaker. He has written numerous essays on the African American experience.

[15] Geraldine Smith-Wright is a teacher and writer on African American literature, women's studies and ethnic autobiographies.

Chapters Overviews

Did it work?

Chapter One introduces the video *Did it work? (2015)*. This piece forms part of my early groundwork, drawing attention to the sounds of my mother's voice. It was made to listen to, an extension of a sound I heard before from my mother, allowing me in the recording of this experience to repeatedly listen over and over. My aim was to fall into a trance, where the voices I imagined would manifest themselves to the surface, allowing me not only to hear them but to feel them.

This was my imagination and in finding a way to understand my mother's voice I had the impression that perhaps, through this, I would encounter something else. This something else was revealed to be the practice of Black Matrilineage that I was already engaged in. These sounds from the past I had heard previously, from her sounds of pain, needed interpreting. This video became the preliminary tool needed to discuss the process. It was the central work that held an articulation of my mother's thoughts and my own in a dialogue that would encourage me to search and discover. Thus, practicing the fundamental structures of Black literary matrilineage, it became a search for me, through my mother.

In this first chapter I explore the contents of the video *Did it work?* (2015). It is titled such, as it was the phrase at the end of the video that has, in her expression, projected two possible meanings. It worked! or did it work? As this double meaning (as I had interpreted it) was an indication of the use of signifyin(g), its title reflected my lack of understanding of the comment and the content.

Exploring my mother's speech and bodily patterns as she talks and makes sounds whilst I rub pain relief cream onto her leg, I'm met with an embodied history I do not have access to. I come to understand that simply by my presence and in my

acceptance of my mother's charge (can you do what I do), I am offered insight into a world I should belong to but do not fully understand. My hearing and knowledge of this language is immature. I could say that it was lost to history, due to the nature of the lost language and Black bodies that, during the cruel Atlantic slave trade between the 15th and 18th century, took away and forbade Black people from speaking their language, from acknowledging their heritage, and claiming their family.

I had hoped to find a world in my mother's voice, connecting me to these things. A reclamation, a recovery of the mother (tongue) which I later realised was embedded in the signifyin(g) of my mother's words and actions but was also the recovering aspect of Black literary matrilineage.

Yet the names that I needed to find came and gave an understanding that encouraged me to continue. Morrison's (1987) character Sethe[16], Julia Kristeva's[17] use of the primordial voice (Lemma, 2009), and Hurston's (1981) work on vocal sounds were concrete connections that would enable me to understand my mother's world. Here I would participate in her world with a different vocabulary, one that used photography as I maneuvered this way of being to become a way that I could then utilise myself.

Literary matriliny- the literature of Black matrilineage

Chapter Two addresses writings on Black literary matrilineage, exploring the manifestation of this term and comprehending its status as a black literary tradition which centres on motherhood and female authors, creating a framework described as Black literary matrilineage. The distinguishing terms associated with other culture-naming of matrilineage are discussed with reference to identifying Black matrilineage. These are matrilineage (from a white perspective and without any prefix), and

[16] Sethe is a character in Toni Morrison's (1987) *Beloved*. She is the protagonist of the novel and one of many mother figures in this novel that, through Morrison, demonstrates a multifaceted view of motherhood and the maternal.

[17] Julia Kristeva b. 1941 is a Bulgarian-French philosopher, literary critic, semiotician, psychoanalyst, feminist, and novelist. She won the Hannah Arendt Award in 2006.

transnational matrilineage, as purported by Sylvia Schultermadl[18] (2009) in *Transnational Matrilineage.*

There can be a common belief in a sisterhood that stems from the mother. Virginia Woolf's[19] (1957) remark, written in 1929, 'For we think back through our mothers if we are women' (p. 79) helps us now to position the development of a literary matrilineage, in the way daughters as authors acknowledged their connection to their mothers. Yet in expanding this notion to Black Matrilineage it was also about the daughters' writing, through themes and metaphors, and about the ways in which these connections are formed, developed and regulated.

The term transnational refers both to the distance and sense of disconnectedness of the daughters who situates their identity in relation to their Asian mothers, have Asian American and Asian Canadian women, as they investigate their matrilineal heritage in order to reconcile and close the gap in their cultural inheritance caused by time, movement and language barriers. Through a sub-genre of mother and daughter thematic literature, they claim their self-definition through the search for their maternal history.

For Black women authors, the literary past is read for clues. The literary voice, as a reconfigured presence of the spoken orality, is embedded in the literature of its author and through the daughter's engagement with this maternal voice, which becomes awakened. Black women authors write with both daughters and mothers having a voice, thus moving the mother figure from object to subject, both reconnecting to heal and reclaim the past. Thus, literary works become acts of survival and revival. We are reminded through the discourse of Black Matrilineage that it is 'women who are versed in the oral tradition, frequently minority women, who have shown us the way back to our mothers' (Davidson and Boner, 1980, p. 254)[20].

[18] Sylvia Schultermadl is a researcher and writer with interests in transnational feminism, literary theory, critical race theory and visual culture.

[19] Virginia Woolf b.1882 in the UK was an author in the Bloomsbury group.

[20] Esther Broner, b. 1927 was a Jewish American feminist author and playwright who used autobiography and feminist critique. Cathy Davidson b. 1949 is an American scholar, professor, and educator.

Because of my cultural heritage, my own search and interest was in Black Matrilineage. In my reading of the formative essays and edited books concerning Black Matrilineage, such as those by Dianne Sadoff (1985), Madhu Dubey[21] (1995), Gil Hochberg (2003) Mae G Henderson[22] (1991), Molly Hite[23], (1989), Mary Washington (1980) Nan Maglin, (1980), Carole E Henderson[24], (ed) (2010) and Verena Theile[25] and Marie Drews[26] (2009). The literary relationship between Nora Neale Hurston (1937) and Alice Walker (2005) through Sadoff's (1985) essay is made clear. It was understood that these women represent the mother and daughter dyad associated with Black literary matrilineage. Alice Walker's collection (1983), *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens,* demonstrated the search for the mother figure. In *Looking for Zora* (written 1975) she discovered the mother figure in Hurston (as author) and in the essay *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens,* written in 1972 through her own maternal connection with her mother, there is a discovery of self. This discovery of self is a crucial feature within works that fit into the framework of Black literary matrilineage. It is also a critical development for the daughter who practices and unearths this discovery as they simultaneously present both mother and daughter through themselves in the authored works they write as a way to reclaim history.

There was something unusual in the way that the essays on black matrilineage were utilised within these collected essays. They became of, and were used as, historicised voices, declaring who they were and what had happened to them. What I was witnessing was, I argue, a form of feminism in which the patriarchy was left out of the

[21] Madhu Dubey is a professor of English and Afro-American Studies. She writes on African American women's fiction.
[22] Mae Gwendolyn Henderson, b. 1945 is a black feminist thinker who is also a professor of English in the USA. She has also been a contributing editor for Callaloo: A Journal of African American African Arts and Letters.
[23] Molly Hite b.1947, is a professor of English. She concentrates her writing on Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Group.
[24] Carol E Henderson is an African American professor of English, teacher, and scholar, centres her research on literature, film by Black women.
[25] Verena Theile is an English professor who has coedited a selection of books on women's position in literature.
[26] Marie Drews is an English professor whose has interest in 19th and 20th century American women's literature.

discourse. This was where figurative Black daughters spoke in their metaphoric mothers' tongue, where histories spoke to each other, recoveries were made within the family, and a symbolic time travel between mother and daughter was achieved. As an art practice, this search and development is open-ended. The practitioner enters the flow of progression and lets the inquiry lead her to her destination.

Black literary matrilineage's methodology is framed within a black literary tradition, one that explores the power of narrative through a black feminist discourse. Jewel Amoah's[27] claim that 'Narrative is both the theory and the practice' is fulfilled in her own acknowledgment that 'narrative is the basis of the sustenance of Black Feminist Theory. '(Amoah, 2013, p. 97).

Situating Black literary matrilineage as theory, methodology and practice, Amoah's suggestion that 'theory, must be developed in dialogue with experience and practice' (Amoah, 2013, p. 95) allowed me to position myself within an act that was a process of discovery. Hard to describe yet essential in this practice, my act was a search for the process whilst it was being enacted.

The journey in this chapter, of locating the works that discuss and form an understanding of Black literary matrilineage, allows me to see what maternal lineage means within this literary sphere. It is necessary for me to do so in order to claim a commonality. I can then claim and transfer the act of Black matrilinege from a literary field to one that involves photography.

What's that thing that mummy does? The roles of speakerly text and signifyin(g) in this practice.

Signifyin(g) as a means and purpose is explored in Chapters Three and Six respectively. In Chapter Three I explore signifyin(g), detailing what it is and how it is used, while

[27] Jewel Amoah is a Trinidadian Canadian Feminist and Human Rights lawyer, activist and scholar.

Chapter Six addresses how I utilise signifying through and with my use of photography.

The process of recovery and self-knowing emerged through a search in which the mother and daughter exchanged a dialogue which allowed histories to resurface, these were acknowledged by the daughter. This was the act I focused on, and that I wanted to define through my photographic practice. Locating signifyin(g) in literature did not sway my search. It allowed me to encounter a family of narratives from which the novels and poems held under this theoretical concept, permitting me to fill the gap and read these works as histories told by these authors. I understood that this was one way to tell a story and how the story came about. My interest in my search was by what means the daughter used to extract it from her mother. This thesis is about locating the process of this extraction, which in so doing becomes the contribution to knowledge that I claim for this search.

The significance and positioning of Zora Neale Hurston is identified by Henry Louis Gates Jr (1998a) as the originator of speakerly text. 'Hurston's …invention of…speakerly text' (Gates, 1988a, p. 174). As it sounds, speakerly text refers to text that it written in the manner of speech. Hurston according to Gates (1988a) had the skill to mimic in her writing the ways in which people around her spoke.

Seeing this as a component of signifyin(g), Gates also names Hurston as the 'first author of the tradition to represent signifying (g) as a vehicle of liberation and as a rhetorical strategy in the narration of fiction' (Gates, 1983. p. 692). He additionally explains how Hurston's signyfin(g) imitates the expression of customs in that she 'record[s] and explicate[s] female signifying rituals' (Gates, 1983, p. 692).

The chapter on signifyin(g) also explores its movement as an act into various musical forms, art genres, sports and architecture. My journey in this chapter is an important one as, without gaining the proof that is required here, I would not have been able to locate a signifyin(g) kindred sister.

Speaking, hearing, seeing

Chapters Four and Five find me moving from the literary and musical to the visual. Once the notion of matrilineage had been identified, I now knew what to search for through the works of other artists. It is here that I also see how photography can be used in the process. Both Elizbeth Edwards[28] in *Photographs and the Sound of History* (2005) and Paul Stoller[29] in *Sensuous Scholarship* (1997) help me understand the use of photography from the standpoint of Zora Neal Hurston (1937), and also in Toni Morrison's (1987) use of rememory.

In chapter four the search involving Carrie Mae Weems[30] (2012) and Lorna Simpson[31] (2013) allowed me to see where these thresholds can be reached and crossed. Black female artists who practice the act of signifyin(g) are close to actualising Black Matrilineage.

Along this part of the journey, writings by Cheryl Wall[32] (2005) and Caroline Brown[33] (2012) proved influential, not only in identifying how artists' works traverse and converge with the literary, but also in how artists practice signifyin(g) acts. This included being able to identify the signifyin(g) my mother was using.

As this chapter also allowed me to see how Black artists practice signfyin(g), I was able to also see if these were acts that could be considered acts of Black Matrilineage. The importance of locating these artists was in allowing me to shift the practice from the literary to the visual. Julie Dash had done this with her film, *Daughter of the Dust* (1991) even developing the approach of her use of Black Matrilineage further in a book

[28] Elizabeth Edwards is a British visual and historical anthropologist.
[29] Paul Stoller is an American cultural anthropologist. He was awarded the Anders Retzius Gold Medal in Anthropology, and is a recipient of the Robert B Textor Award for Excellence in Anthropology.
[30] Carrie Mae Weems, b. 1953 is an African American multi-disciplinary visual artist. She is recipient of a Hasselblad Award, a MacArthur Fellowship, and the BET Honors Award for Visual Arts.
[31] Lorna Simpson, b. 1960 is an African American photographer and multimedia artist.
[32] Cheryl Wall 1948 -2020 African American, teacher, researcher and literary critic specialised in black women's writing. Her interest included the Harlem Renaissance and Zoran Neale Hurston.
[33] Caroline Brown specializes in African-American and diasporic literature, 20th century U.S. literature, and women's studies.

which she subsequently published (1997). This established her command over the framework and its components in a field outside of the literary, and then within the literary.

In Chapter Five, I explore the work of artists who collaborate with their mothers and use the mother as a metaphor to reclaim notions of the past. Their reclamation is deeply personal, and methods relying on the oral are used by Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons (2007), Chantal Ackerman (2015) and Amanda Heng (2017) Julie Dash (1991) and Martina Attille (1988) utilise the concept of mother by using the maternal as a theme of reclamation.

This personal arrangement of a mother and daughter interaction beautifully sits in line with the notion of Black literary matrilineage. Amanda Heng uses photography as a communicative tool between herself and her mother, finding that, through this medium, the mother transverses history on behalf of her daughter. Chantal Akerman uses video to connect with her mother, while Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons uses photography and the oral. The daughter experiences this and communicates her findings.

In previously locating the components that enable and confirm an act of matrilineage, in this chapter I am able to associate with the artists' works which components are and are not being met. This helps me as a visual artist to position myself within a framework that aims to cross boundaries between the literary and the visual.

My search had been for a definition of Black literary matrilineage and the process involved in attaining a Black literary matrilineage, through the act of Black Matrilineage. In chapter five, I demonstrate my use of photography as a medium in the process of Black Matrilineage practice.

Generational Transmission: photography.

I turned to the literary to search for a tradition of mother and daughter exchange, in order to identify our own mother and daughter interaction. This process began with my mother's oral and, for me to understand this, I turned to photography. How I used photography in this process as a product of signifyin(g) is shown and discussed in this Chapter Six.

In my search for the process, I searched for the creativity that resides in my matrilineal family. This is achieved through the enactment of Black Matrilineage. Through my mother's initial act, as discussed in Chapter One, I am provided with suggestions that my foremothers found similar ways of instructing their daughters in redeeming and locating their histories. The video *Did it Work?* (2015) encapsulated the contextual framework from which I was introduced to this act of enacting a Black matrilineage. My embodiment of this through the use of photography and the newly learnt language of signifyin(g), read through my mother, offered me another way of knowing. Actually, for me it was the only way of knowing. I had learnt that I could and should rely on other ways to receive the information I needed. I was to use feeling, intuition and my hearing to push past the absence of written words.

Exploring in this chapter my ability to transpose the literary and photography itself by signifyin(g) my mother's oral (sounds and utterances), I show how I use the tools my mother introduced to me through the video. They assist me in demonstrating the powerful and majestic qualities of mothering that lie within the Black body. They also demonstrate my ability to transform language – to conjure. That is to transfer the oral to photography. This notion of transforming language is one that, I argue, resonates with the history of many Black enslaved people, whose primary language was severed, misplaced, not heard and thus forgotten. Many artists and writers try to reclaim their words through another's memory, which is spoken through another way of knowing in a different language and in a different time, (re) connecting a familial lineage through, I believe, presence and memory. Marlene Nourbese Philip (2008) does this in *Zong!: As Told to the Author by Setaey Adamu Boateng.*

> Zong! tells the story that cannot be told yet must be told. Equal parts song, moan, shout, oath, ululation, curse, and chant, Zong! excavates the legal text. Memory, history, and law collide and metamorphose into the poetics of the fragment. Through the innovative use of fugal and counterpointed repetition, Zong! becomes an anti-narrative lament that stretches the boundaries of the poetic form, haunting the spaces of forgetting and mourning the forgotten. (Nourbese, 2008).

Practicing this conversation in exhibitions, the images on show reveal components of the visual conversation that forms part of the process. This was the case, as in 2018 at Autograph ABP with the show *I Am Now You – Mother*, and as part of a wider conversation on art that reflected the Caribbean diaspora and the UK in *Between Islands*, Tate Britain (2021-2022).

The story which becomes the narrative on which black matrilineage is formed, and then retold, has yet to be shown. The work here is instead a documentation of elements in the discovery of the processes, not a presentation of a definitive enactment of Black matrilineage.

In my practice I have positioned the bodies of my mother and myself in a historic and contemporary dialogue that was only made possible because my mother's language shifted time and space through locations and generations, in an act of signifyin(g). It was in and amongst these translations of the process outlined through the previous chapters that instructed me to reclaim histories in the expanded tradition of our foremothers. This act of Black Matrilineage reaffirmed not only a mother's love, but that historically Black mothers have always been instructed in using creative ways to pass themselves on to their daughters.

The story between mother and daughter, in which the daughter realises their self-identity as well as the maternal histories, culminates in this act of Black Matrilineage. The processes involved within this dialogue between mother and daughter must include signifyin(g), conjuring (an act of creation and doing), and the oral in order for it to be acknowledged as and within the framework of Black Matrilineage. I have come to

understand at the end of my journey that the story of the search between the daughter and the mother, the journey, the findings of discoveries: this is the act of Black matrilineage.

What follows in this thesis is an exploration of my journey and search for the processes involved in defining Black Matrilineage through personal practice.

Chapter One:

Did it Work? The Gesture of Participation

> 'The dispossessed … are embodied in objects, song, movement and the body'. (Stoller, 1997, p. xvi).

INTRODUCTION

In this opening chapter I explore the 3-minute 10-seconds audio/visual recording of my mother 's reaction, whilst I rubbed pain relief cream onto her leg. Later I named this recording, *Did It Work?* A re-view of this recording triggered something in me that enabled me to see and hear something I had not previously paid attention to. I will explore, examine and explain in depth my encounter with this recording, referencing connections to cultural rites, mainly in literature, that assist me to explore what it is I am witnessing and participating in. This pushes my experience into a practice I later claim through a series of works.

I present this explanation as the narrative unfolds, drawing on the research I have already recognised as belonging to a Black literary Tradition, this being Black Matrilineage.

As I explore and pronounce my findings, I ask that you take consideration of the act I will now describe, and follow in the ensuing chapters the why's, who's and what it is I am searching for and where it is placed. In some way, I am asking you to listen and then look, rather than look and listen, going against the formula that many of us are familiar in doing, in order to reach an understanding of an alternative way of seeing.

This is, however, the way that I understood and learnt about Black literary matrilineage, and I, therefore, would like to show you in the same way. The practice that developed enabled my Jamaican-born mother to inform me of a maternal history that came forth

from the very existence of one of its descendants and to claim another way of knowing my history, through and because of the body of my mother.

Did it Work?

My mother's question at the end of the video titled "I'h work", translated by me as *Did it Work?* (2015) cemented in me the need to re-watch and understand this experience very carefully. For it brought awareness for me of the creation and drama of the tacit dialogue formed by the embodying impressions that take place between mother and daughter, in the act identified in Black literary Matrilineage.

I wondered if this is what I was experiencing and witnessing. My aim when I started my research was to find ways of unearthing the repressed or forgotten histories of my ancestors through my mother. Her audible pain had been a connection that was engrained within this enquiry, as though pain was a place, and I wanted to observe this in closer proximity, as a way to reconstruct a personal ancestral history.

The video captured with a digital camera on automatic setting, placed upon my mother's bed to stabilise movement under the tungsten light of an energy bulb, is shown unedited, with no direction from me, in its entirety at three minutes and ten seconds long. It is June 16th 2015 at 23:35, in London.

The act in the video of my mother's reactions to me rubbing pain medication on to her aging arthritic body is customary between us. My recording of it, however, was not. Living with my mother as her carer, I was already photographing and capturing my mother's body and voice in various situations around her home on video. This was at her request, to provide a document of herself to her future great-grandchildren. I had previously recorded a scene where my mother during a moment of intense pain had called out to me to help her: "Help me Marcia, help me". Here, I found myself in a difficult position, wanting to record (as I was holding the camera), and also wanting to help (which meant putting down the camera). It was the calling out of my name that

made me realise the importance of the act I was observing. In hearing my name, I experienced a polyvocality of other voices I believed were part of my maternal history. This aural witnessing jarred me; my mother's pain was an authentic representation of something I was supposed to hear, and not something I had assembled with this research in mind.

Here my mothers' body, amid a negotiation, was presenting me with 'something' that I had to see, hear and feel in order for this research to be realised. I understand this now. I felt very deeply that I needed to find a way to hear these sounds again, to qualify the memory that had been imprinted during previous experiences, but also to expand on my inner understanding of this moment (and the ones before that I had not paid attention to), that pain was a carrier for language. Discussing this reflection with my mother, I kept my camera close to me hoping to witness again the voices contained within my mother's pain. She agreed to tell me when the time would be right.

I came to understand that pain for some is said to be undeniably marked on the fabric of the African diasporan body. This is predominately because of the forced labour and imprisonment that Black bodies were subjected to, during slavery. In relation to my mother's pain, Julia Kristeva's statement about the mother struck a chord: the mother (a term defined by the act of mothering and not biology) 'is also marked by pain, she succumbs to it' (Kristeva and Goldhammer, 1985, p. 138). Describing how the mother is marked by her ability to transpose herself across multiple dimensions, participating in complex connections affiliated with motherhood, in order to challenge and disturb the hierarchy of symbolic order and disrupt the patriarchy, Kristeva states, the mother is:

> A constant alternation between time and its 'truth', identity and its loss, history and that which produces it: that which remains extra-phenomenal, outside the sign, beyond time. (Kristeva, 1984, p. 156).

I also had a need to understand more about the process I was seeing. I positioned myself to learn through my mother's voice, enquiring through Kristeva's approach, the

mother and child paradigm, to see how and if this encounter could support this relationship.

> The mother and child paradigm necessitates listening, [and] creates a negative space for listening to the unspoken in all discourse, making room for dissident voices, giving credence to "that which disturbs the mutual understanding of the established powers". (Kristeva, 1974, p. 156 cited in Lemma, 2009, p. 101).

This was me and my mother.

In finding a way to disturb the hierarchy of symbolic order (for that was the underlying reason in Black literary matrilineage) Kristeva showed me how my experience with my mother revealed the ability I needed to activate the enquiry. My mother's voice and her tones of rhythmical gesturing Jennifer Lemma (2009) explains as the 'transformative power of love, using the mother tongue [as ways] to engage in productive ethical dialogue' (Lemma, 2009. p. 101), that helped me to acknowledge the placement of this act in Black literary matrilineage and thus Black Matrilineage.

Rhythmic, and Unfettered- Mother

Late one evening, my mother instructed me to get my camera to record her sounds as I rubbed cream into her body. Perhaps experiencing pain throughout the day, this was to be her release. I did not anticipate the experience I was to encounter. I did, however, want to control the environment so that the recording could be used, unlike the last one. The television had been on in the previous video, interlocking with the significant sounds I needed to recover. I was mindful that an audience may have difficulty in separating her voice from the background.

The camera, a digital slr with its built-in microphone (when used as video), was positioned towards her face so that the sound could be recorded clearly. My intent was on capturing the sound only. My mother, wearing a leopard print head tie, lays on her right-hand side, face positioned as if gazing towards her favourite south London

markets, on a flower-patterned white pillow. Visible in the frame, taking up the central lower half of the right side of the frame is her neck and part of her right shoulder, where a white vest strap can be seen. The white cotton vest which appears in my earlier photographic series (2009) *The Study of Kin*, as seen in Fig. 5, was an item of underwear that my mother wore frequently around her home (see section I of the portfolio for more images in this series). In the background, hanging from a piece of furniture, are two plastic shopping bags filled with items, whilst behind her is a patterned indistinguishable object.



Figure 5. Profile of an old Woman from the series The Study of Kin. Analogue Black and white photograph of My mother Myrtle sitting with head turned to the side, in her home in London. Silver Gelatin Print on Ilford Multigrade IV FB CLASSIC. 15 x 15 inches (©Marcia Michael, 2009)

I am positioned out of the camera's view, placed next to my mother's legs, ready to participate, to help ease her pain, but also knowing that the action would elicit a response - it always did. Being aware of my intentions through this act of recording her sounds, my hearing was attuned for 'another way of knowing'. I was wondering if pain was the catalyst I was searching for, to retrieve the narratives of the past I needed to locate, to help me understand the past that my mother and I belonged to. I wanted to be able to share this discovery with her.



Figure 6: Still image from Did it Work?, (time, 0 seconds) Video. (© 2015, Marcia Michael)

Interpreting my mother's expressions.

What takes place next is my imaginative interpretation of a narrative that, in relation to my inquiry into Black Matrilineage, enables me to see how it served a deeper purpose.

This allows me to understand the experience and how it connects to my development of transforming the literary heritage of Black Matrilineage.

It is the encounter with my mother's voice, (‘rhythmic, unfettered’), her pain (‘irreducible to... verbal translation’ (Kristeva, 1984, p. 29), and her body as an element in ways of making change, that takes shape through my practice as a mode of translation.

Listening to my mother’s voice, through Lemma’s understanding of the mother tongue as ‘‘the communication that precedes, transcends and surpasses verbal or written exchange’ (Lemma, 2009, p. 98) means that I do not concentrate on the words, but on the sounds and how these make me feel. Lemma states, ‘It is the sacred communication that protects the other, elevates the self and creates connectedness’ (Lemma, 2009, p. 98). Finding that the mother tongue creates a space and form that surpasses and predetermines language resonates, and this is the only way, at this stage, I can encounter it. Its understanding is defined by Kristeva as ‘rhythmic, unfettered, and irreducible to its intelligible verbal translation; it is musical, anterior to judgment’ (Kristeva, 1984, p. 29).

This exploration informs me that she shares with me an act that is borne out of love and not simply tradition. She shows me the methods of alternation and adaptability that she encounters in her body, enabling her to redefine each ancestral matrilineal relationship as they surface. And due to my presence, my mother, in her giving, helps me understand a personal perspective of identity formation and historical social interaction. In particular, it is Kristeva’s use of another way of knowing, and by my interpretation, Kristeva’s use of this way through the mother figure, that my encounter with my mother’s language provides a glimpse of these intersections that motherhood makes possible; this being a connection between united souls (Lemma, 2009, p. 102). Lemma, in exploring the mother and daughter paradigm by Kristeva, concludes that ‘motherhood does not accept the recidivism of language; instead, it creates connections and harbors the source of words’ (Lemma, 2009, p. 102). It is the source of my mother’s words as sounds (she speaks but I hear them as sounds), that are to be

decoded by me, that instigate my search through her body, for historic maternal bodies.

"why, doe, don't do that"

Awaiting the onset of this experience I am retelling as, an act that I presume only she knows, will release memories of others through her body to her mind, she searches with her eyes around the room, eyes averted upwards (Fig. 6) perhaps searching for one ancestor in particular to draw inspiration from. Gazing and smiling directly into the camera, for a moment (at 7 seconds, Fig. 7), her childlike essence is seen and felt by me (especially re-watching the video), awakening a playfulness as she prepares to stir in me questions that will eventually enable me to fill fissures in our family inheritance. I wonder (as I write this) if she has at that moment decided how she will pass on this information to me. Pausing the video here, to discern her gaze, I see her staring right at me, lovingly, knowing (perhaps) that as I gaze upon her in the video, through the act we are about to commence, she will offer a gift that reverberates a maternal presence in both of us. A presence that may be able to transcend our respected cultural heritages and also the generational forces that shape us, bringing us both back to a tradition in mothering.



Figure 7: image from Did it Work?, (time 7 seconds) Video. (© 2015, Marcia Michael)

Anticipating my hands on her body, perhaps upon hearing me take the wrapper off the cream, at 9 seconds, my mother's exhale is audible and charged with a release. Responding to my touch, pain immediately emerges, and my mother elicits a sound which lays on that cusp between pain and laughter. Seeing her squeezing her eyes tightly, I can only imagine that she is negotiating her pain threshold or witnessing a rememory, she screams. This sound lays on the boundary between a yelp and a cry. Manoeuvring her mouth to make a smile she says "why, doe, don't do that". She is not speaking to me, for as she finishes this statement, raising her head she turns her smiling face to me, and says "no, keep rubbing, but don't pay me no mind, but mi, mi have to". Her words, charged with purpose, are tinged with 'another way of knowing' (Kristeva and Morrison's), and determination.

You got to learn to listen an hear, gal, Listen!'

As a mother she is placing herself in this situation in order to help me. Her words strike a chord of familiarity of strength, stereotypically ascribed to the Black female body, that carries on (for her family and those that she loves) regardless of her own feelings. I observe her side-ward glances, which for me expose a shiftiness, trickster like approach in her meaning. I understand from her statement that she is telling me to ignore what she is saying, that these words are not meant for me, they are meant for something or someone else. There are more than two people present in this act. I also understand that I have my role and she hers. My role of rubbing in cream is no longer just that, I become a witness, an instigator involved in a collaboration, for without me this would not be taking place. My view of this encounter now takes on a different meaning. Is this private or is this something I can share with others? For a connection, I turn to Dash's sequel novel *Daughters of the Dust* (1997), where Amelia, studying anthropology, decides to photographically document the intimacies of her family's life and pursuits. She makes the decision to choose which images she will share with her professors as part of her thesis and which she will show to her family:

> Contrary to everything that she had started out to do, she did not want their culture, their ways, how they talk with each other described in academic terms that would leave out this spirit and overlook the common heritage and stories that bound them so closely. (Dash, 1997, p. 283)

I know that I will do the same. Within this personal and private encounter, I am aware that I must decide what is shared and what is solely for me, to understand in this process. The vulnerability on show from myself and my mother must be guarded and protected. Along this journey of finding the methods of Black Matrilineage I begin to understand that there are things unsaid, hidden in the lines of the narration and in the spoken voices, that are only for me to discern as I bore out an understanding through practice. Again, turning to *Daughters of the Dust*, it is the warning that one is given against the sole use of the camera:

> "And you better be careful with that". She pointed to the camera…you got to learn to listen an hear, gal, Listen! to what they say, and hear what they don't say". (Dash, 1997, pp. 86-87).

I have to make a decision. It is my mother's voice here that is passing on information. It is also her pain, and her body.

This interaction with Dash's novel, which she writes as a sequel to the movie she made, bearing the same name Daughters of the Dust (1997), significantly relates to my own work. The exercise of having full control of the representation and authorship assigned to the images of my mother and myself, and in my decision as to decide what is seen publicly and what is held solely for the family; a decision with my mothers' approval. In knowing full well that the research of our relationship was to be on show, my mother and I went through all the images, video and sound recordings after every act of participation. She would inform me which was to be made public and which were meant to be private.

I also believe that she took decisions over what information to give to me. Whether all was conscious, I cannot say. I have only been able to expand on their meaning and revelations through a re-connection of her voice to the past and mine to the future, by translating through practices of embodiment with my mother's voice through soundscapes and making short films such as *Remembering you, Remember me* (2016) that was shown at Autograph ABP in 2018. (see Fig 8)

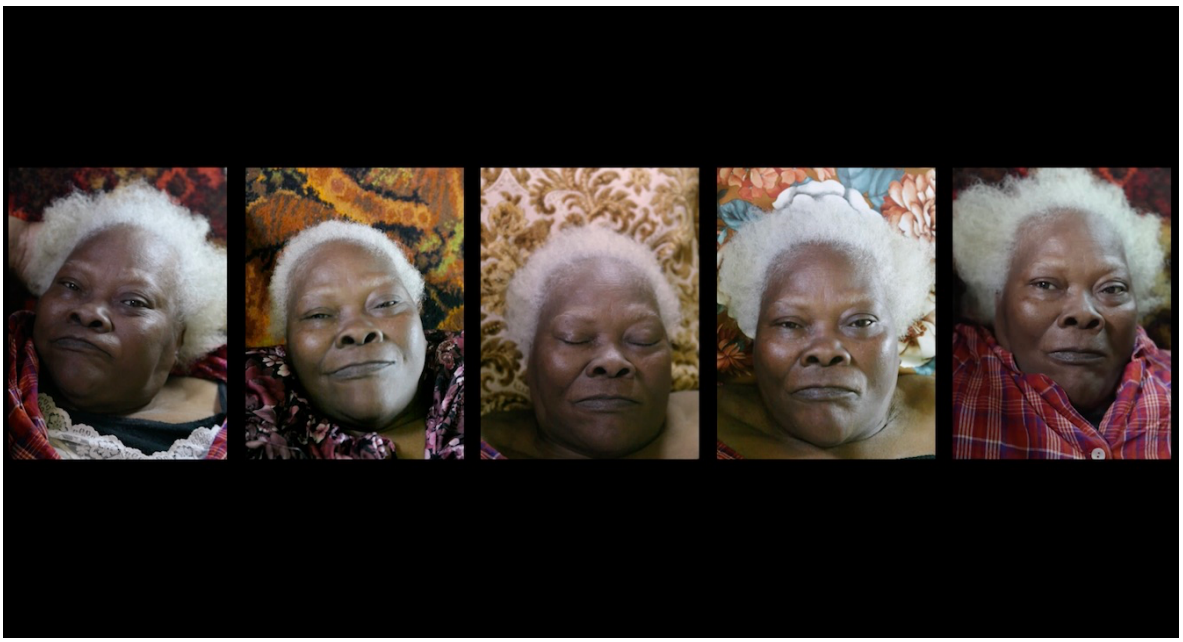


Figure 8: Still from Remembering You, Remember me. Video (© 2016, Marcia Michael). A video of My mother in 5 different frames where is retelling the story of the birth of her 5 children.

Dash's double voice through a signifyin(g) lens allows me to understand what I have been told differently, and how the act of translating is a quintessential feature needed to unearth history and to participate in it, as the act of Black matrilineage.

The sounds she makes because of the pain she is experiencing continues throughout the video.

Metaphoric shifts in narratives

Placing her head back on the pillow at 22 seconds, she sounds out "why", which is elongated and stops on the h. Repeating this, her gaze shifts slowly back and forth to the camera's focus point. Comforting the pain by intensifying "ooooooooooh" in pitch and range, she then extends the sound made when speaking "why". Her voice in carrying this sound, ends with two short humming resonances, which, vibrating on the "mmm" is followed by a sharp cry of "yeah" in the key of A, ending at 36 seconds. Locating her gaze directly towards the camera, she then exclaims "in there tough!" Contradicting the suppleness of the interior of the human body, it becomes clear that my mother speaks and is speaking in metaphors. In this video, my mother influences

my understanding of Black Matrilineage. Her sounds and use of metaphoric shifts in narratives influences the definition, demonstrating to me the ritual use of signifyin(g), not only in words but also musically (Floyd, 1995).

Listening

As I listen to the melodic sounds emanating from her voice, I acknowledge Kristeva's view that a voice can be: 'musical, anterior to judgment' (Kristeva, 1984, p. 29). I enquire about this ownership by searching for a connection in African language, to position my embodied interpretation, and to choose listening first, that is, to place the memory of what I was hearing as significant and not what was being said. I had made this connection with the video *Remembering You, remember me* (2016), where I refused to offer translation asking those who could not understand my mother's voice, due to her dialect, to listen instead to her tones.

I don't want to confuse this interpretation with the dialect of creole that my mother inherited from her place of birth. It is, from my listening perspective, that her notion of voice (in her way of talking) transpired to me always as my mother's voice (for I know no other), and this is the position I hear it from and discuss in this thesis.

It was the historian and professor of American drama, theatre and dance Jacqui Malone's[34] (1996) account of the natural affinity that music and language has with African people that enhanced my understanding of my mother's sounds. For Malone, music and language are synonymous since music grows out of the rhythmic onomatopoeia as well as the intonations of speech. Malone suggests that: 'the musicality of many Bantu words is so precise that they can be transcribed on a stave' (Malone, 1996, p. 12).

[34] Jacqui Malone is an African American scholar and a historian of American dance.

Was this how I was to understand my mother's sound? Could I transcribe them as notes and encode what she was communicating?

Somehow, I understood I should not ask her what she meant, or translate the way she speaks. This extends to not providing the audience with her words written down. This is not the way as they too have to listen and find their own meaning. The impression I receive is that this journey we are on is where I will find answers through another way of knowing. My mother, central to the methodology, I believe gives me clues from which I am to investigate the recovery I am searching for.

In observing my mother emit a melody through the sounds she elicits from her body, emerging from the pain she experiences, I imagine that these phrases construct a timeline of events that in her own witnessing, she communicates with them her ancestors, forgetting that I am present, witnessing her also being a witness. I form an understanding of this by observing Télumée, in Simone Schwarz-Bart's[35] (1982) *The Bridge of Beyond*, in which she, mother, is witness and also vessel, the one 'through which the memory of the past is transmitted' (Hochberg, 2003, p. 7). As I take consideration of this notion in *The Bridge of Beyond*, I argue that I am the storyteller, the one 'through which memories gain meaning only through their re-integration in the present' (Hochberg, 2003, p. 7).

This idea, that I am the daughter who tells the story, confirms for me the act of Black Matrilineage.

It is in the tone of her sounds that I sense familiarity and interpret this as a language that belongs to my ancestral mothers. Her enactments, for me, anchor codes of the past. To uncover the histories that I am searching for, I have to absorb that they are codified through her body.

[35] Simone Schwarz-Bart b. 1938 is a French novelist and playwright of Guadeloupean heritage. Her 1972 book *The Bridge of Beyond* described as incantatory prose, interwoven with Creole proverbs and lore, recalls the family history of the Lougandor family in 1848.

In re-watching the experience with my mother, Morrison's 'rememory' (1987) employed as a signifyin(g) code is developed and utilised within this thesis and practise. This thesis records how the process takes place. Lorraine Liscio's[36] (1992) claim, that an 'alternate mode of signifying is achieved and understood through the mother and daughter dialogue' (Liscio, 1992 p. 34), emphasises the significance of what is taking place. It makes sense as I do not initially understand what I am witnessing. I require other approaches and relational discoveries (explored through art practice) for it to become clear what my mother is signifying. In asking such questions, I become more aware that this act is part of what takes place in Black Matrilineage. As I searched for further understanding, Morrison's application of imagination as a meaningful method utilised by the daughter in the repositioning of memories as histories, enabled me to 'establish a key to constructing untold histories of black experience' (Liscio, 1992. p. 32). I understood that I had to witness and learn signifyin(g) to decipher the codes, in particular, discerning from my mother, 'rememory' in the form of pictures and 'worrying the line' in order to retrieve successfully, through 'another way of knowing.'

In Morrison's (1987) *Beloved*, Sethe's re-understanding of a memory that was connected to her possible Grandmother elicited in her an awakening of being aware of the connection this brought. Explaining that 'she was picking meaning out of a code she no longer understood' (Morrison, 1987, p. 37), Sethe later locates the meaning by remembering how it was the language that connected her mother to her grandmother, and then I believe to herself. Morrison states:

> What Nan told her she had forgotten, along with the language she told it in. The same language her ma'am spoke, and which would never come back. But the message – that was and had been there all along. (Morrison, 1987, p. 37).

[36] Lorraine Liscio is an American scholar, author and *playwright. She concentrates her writing on womens authors.*

Memory therefore for me was also a code. A way in which history could be hidden. Was this voice that I heard through my mother the code I had been longing to find, enabling me to unlock the histories of our familial past?

'Worrying the line'

Cheryl Wall's (2005) definition of '*worrying the line' as* a form of signifyin(g) explores the precise nature of how Black literary matrilineage was seen. This was where the meanings of the words and expressions used considered 'the line as a metaphor for lineage and the line as a metaphor for the literary traditions in which these texts participate' (Wall, 2005, p. 8).

In looking at Sherley Anne Williams' (1979) definition of worrying the line, Williams states:

> 'Worrying the line' includes changes in stress and pitch, the addition of exclamation rephrases, changes in word order, repetition of phrases within the line itself, and the wordless Blues cries that often punctuate the performance of the songs. (Williams, 1979, p. 127).

These are the same sounds, words and vocal cries I was hearing from my mother. This procured the same ideals of Black matrilineage. Yet it was also Wall's questioning, 'what happens at those moments in literary text when their genealogical search is frustrated by gaps in written history and knowledge?' (Wall, 2005, p. 8) that allowed me to reflect upon its use.

The answer, I argue, is that female authors revise and extend previous works to form a literary tradition and, through this, navigate a method of filling in the gaps of history by relying on 'worrying the line' as another way of knowing.

In worrying the line, my mother was informing me of 'another way of knowing'.

As I gaze at my mother in this act, acknowledging that she gives herself and her body to recover history in this manner, I recognise my mother as an archive of history and thus, 'the mother of history' (Rody, 2001, p. 3). The importance of the mother in matrilineage may be obvious but what she stands for and how she operates in Black literary matrilineage is further explored in Chapter Two. Black Matrilineage therefore, as an act, reveals the monumental journey that transpires, by a mother becoming her daughter and vice versa, reclaiming in the process historic bodies and the myth of the mother (and thus herself) (Moore and Billingsley, 2017, p. 188).

"in there tough"

My mother's statement at 42 seconds, "in there tough", secured for me the strength of the numerous narratives that my mother had access to. It also warned me that the histories I wanted to know would be challenging to hear and may be difficult to recover. She was also 'worrying the line'. Blinking excessively and eyes off centre, focusing perhaps on something seen from the corner of her eyes, she utters: "Yeah" and makes a little laugh. I am clear that she is not talking to me. This is followed by a sharp cry which immediately turns to a number of self-soothing rhythmic hums produced with her mouth closed; she needs comforting.

It is here in the effable exchange between my mother and myself that meaning evolves and is also modified. Embodying the exchanges witnessed through my mother, an encounter transpires that gives me an unprecedented interpretation of a past I did not participate in but called for. Placed on the side lines, out of the frame, my presence is acknowledged by my mother. She is not alone; they that reside in her flesh, are not alone. I am both present and absent; her body, in this patriarchal world we were born into, is a marker of the history bequeathed to the future children by the mother's position in the enactment of history on our bodies, as in the rule, partus sequitur ventrem (that which is born follows the womb). Through this understanding of this past, I am transported.

I have not yet achieved a full understanding. The process is still taking place but here, halfway in my reflection on this encounter, I observe my mother conjuring the intonation to both awaken them (in the past) and me (see Glossary and Chapter 2 for further explanation of this concept). Conjuring is what I want to learn to do. This, I believe, she learned from the mothers before her. I wondered (in my repetitive encounter with the video) if I would ever be able to do what she does; speak and move across time. This was not about her spoken creole, but something mesmerizing. I came to an understanding through my emotions that I was here to learn a rite of passage. In finding my own way, which includes their ways and my mothers', I continued to observe and find ways to return and remember them. I utilise what I have witnessed, embodied and re-experienced through the various ways I acquired the information explored in this research. There is still more for me to learn about my 'mother's' language and in the way she gives voice to those I am to recover.

I realise she has been signifyin(g). Signifyin(g) here is expressed as a manner of communication and not as the communication itself. Her messages and style hold themselves in embodied gestures of movement and dramatization that one sees in the written text. That is, a 'drama that permeates the entire self, and it is the dramatic to which black narration aspires' (Gates, 1998a p. 199). Gates generates an expression of embodiment that the literary carries through the vocal and bodily mannerisms so proficiently for an understanding of a Black narration. I have seen the differences in my mother's body, as a Caribbean Black woman, to that of other bodies in the UK, where she lives. Returned to the home of her birth, or with her people (and this includes family), she responds with a familiarity in her body and voice. Hurston's understanding of this, as addressed in her essay *Characteristics of Negro Expression* (written in 1934), is that for Black folk, in reference to talking, 'Everything is acted out, unconsciously' (Hurston, 1994, p. 79). There is then a significant understanding that the transference of the behaviour and way of talking into a literary form became a way in which history was sustained and that Black folk not only talked with their voice but with their bodies in a particular way which could also be embedded in the literary. Confirming Hurston's essay as instrumental, DeFantz and Gonzalez (2014) state that the essay:

> Established that black performance styles and sensibilities were not merely verbal or aural, but also included visual symbolic codes that communicated and commented in-group. (DeFantz and Gonzalez, 2014, p 2).

What was my mother doing? Her words so precise and purposeful, coming from her body, had to mean something. In Morrison's (1987) *Beloved,* I encountered the sounds of women whose spoken incarnations seemed powerful enough to split worlds apart. Morrison explains these sounds are:

> Where the voices of women searched for the right combination, the key, the code, the sound that broke the back of words. Building voice upon voice until they found it, and when they did it was a wave of sound wide enough to sound deep water and knock the pods off chestnut trees. It broke over Sethe and she trembled like the baptized in its wash. (Morrison, 1997, p. 261).

It all made sense as part of the process. The voices were a way in, but here I was also lucky to have a body willing to participate in the act.

In *Beloved* (1997) there are words spoken, that on the page appear as forms made with spaces and words, and those that provide figurations and reveal a visual performance of the oral that contain codes of meaning. In generating a code, Morrison addresses the use of interior soliloquy through which sounds of poetic renderings of a narrative suggest ways in which the 'trope of memory' reveals itself as a 'timelessness of…presence as well as the unlived spaces of life' (Mobley, 1999, p. 24).

I argue that this is what was taking place in the video. As I listened in the spaces as well as through the sounds and words of my mother's response, this was her soliloquy, three minutes and ten seconds long.

In exploring the process of this re-inscription, I experienced how language and visual imagery in *Beloved* became an embodiment, where spaces were filled with silenced voices. It provided me with extra tools (in the form of rememory) for appreciating how to listen to my mother's voice and the narratives that were being recovered. I also

began to understand her use of spaces, as layers of absence presented as dialogue. This understanding became clearer later, when I introduced photography into this act, and used this understanding to interpret how to position the images. This is explored further in Chapter 6.

> How can I say things that are pictures I'm not separate from her there is no place where I stop her face is my own and I want to be there in the place where her face is and to be looking at it too a hot thing. (Morrison, 1987, p. 210).

Expressing dialogue that presents simultaneously to itself and to another is conveyed in *Beloved*. Many of my mother's interactions follow this patterning. For me this is a most powerful re-encounter of call and response, for the response has to be retrieved. By presenting a monologue as the mother and daughter negotiation, it becomes one that is available when searched for and found simultaneously.

> You rememory me?
> yes, I remember you.
> you never forgot me?
> your face is mine.
> do you forgive me? will you stay? You save her now.
> (Morrison, 1987, p. 215)

This process, which I hear in my mother's recitation, represents a relic being unearthed, a tradition as a ritual being prepared. Stephen Evangelist Henderson's[37] *Understanding the new Black poetry; Black speech and Black music as poetic references* (1973) provides me with examples of the oral experienced through physicality in places such as: folk sermons and the spiritual, folk poetry, street poetry, ballads and blues. Imagining that these modes of expression give meaning and substantiate proof of the polyvocality of my mother's sounds, and thus my maternal history, I knew I had to listen deeper to hear her sounds, to navigate an embodied re-experience as evidence of recovery. Thus, the purpose, as in Black literary matrilineage, is to rewrite histories.

[37] Stephen E. Henderson (1925 –1997) was a professor of African American literature and culture. His 1973 book about black poetry was one of the first to give an in-depth interpretation of the subject.

I begin to see how the connection between voice and bodies permits my mother's body to be presented as a living and active archive.

The words my mother speaks matter during this interaction. Spaced out between sounds, the to and fro, the call and response and then the return of words, signal for me a history of coded language. It serves as a reminder that, for many women of a diaspora, these words were and are 'chanted rhythmically, in cadences, off cadences' (Minh-ha, 1989, p. 122).

Observing my mother in the video, caught up in the moment she becomes aware that I have stopped touching her body. Somewhat startled she turns to me and asks, "you done?'' Here my presence is noted and, though at this point I try to undermine my presence by keeping silent, I understand now how it was essential that it was noted. The act of Black Matrilineage does not happen without me. Trinh T Minh-ha, an author whose work is situated within a literary matrilineage, defines matrilineage as one which is evoked by the oral, over the written. She explains the connection that I embody as a daughter within this act, and thus why my presence is significant and must be noted as such.

> In this chain and continuum, I am but one link. The story is me, neither me nor mine. It does not really belong to me, and while I feel greatly responsible for it, I also enjoy the irresponsibility of the pleasure obtained through the process of transferring. Pleasure in the copy, pleasure in the reproduction. No repetition can ever be identical, but my story carries with it their stories, their history, and our story repeats itself endlessly despite our persistence in denying it. (Minh-ha, 1989, p. 122).

My mother realises that the connection has been severed, exclaiming, "It bruck! it bruck!". This double-layered repetitive phrase could also be referring to the cracking of the tough part she mentioned previously, meaning that we have broken into the process! The raised pitch of her voice during this exclamation is a mixture of shock and excitement, helping me to recognise and thus determine its role as urgent. I am urged to continue "gwan do it!" she laughs a little, only to begin again the sounds (of pain)

needed to complete the task at hand. As I resume the touching of her body, she resumes the excavating journey.

The use of laughter must be acknowledged. Through this piece her laughter, which in combination with the expressions that produce laughter, can be seen as a form of satire: 'even the most satirical imitation is displayed to encourage better participation' (Malone, 1996, p. 17). It is in this understanding of her laughter that I gauge, especially in the moments she turns her head towards me, she anticipates that I will participate, but I don't.

I haven't understood yet what was actually taking place. I haven't understood yet what my role attained.



Figure 9: Still image from Did it Work?, (time1 minute and 25 seconds) Video. (© 2015, Marcia Michael)

As I continue to rub cream on her body, the intensity of the pain amplifies the sounds she makes. Pausing for a short breath and to tell me to "gwan", blinking tightly (a few

times) with purpose (as if to draw out tears, or to clear her inner gaze), she slows down the rhythm, makes a pause and calls out “d’doctor”.

Everything stops. She raises her head towards me and informs me directly that she was calling for the doctor: “doctor me say” (Fig. 9). We can both be heard laughing. I try to control the level and duration of my laughter. She returns her head to the pillow, laughing and making crackling noises from her mouth due to her mirth and resumes her previous position by calling out again for the doctor and also the nurse: “oh doc, please doc, nurse!”

Instantly my presence is shifted to that of a witness. Having called for those that are supposed to relieve pain with precision and accuracy, whilst supporting the transition of pain from the body, I feel excluded. I begin to wonder if this has a purpose and if in calling for particular figures at this time, someone else is to become visible or is she metaphorically stating that the act is reaching its pivotal moment. My role as daughter is to witness and to retell the story.

Cheryl Wall (2005) explores *'worrying the Line',* a trope utilised by my mother here and related to repetition with a difference. This correlates to, and is referred to by Gates, as a feature in signifyin(g) (Wall, 2005, p.16). As my mother calls out for the Doctor and Nurse, she utilises the technique of ‘*worrying the line',* which is seen primarily in blues music and literature. Emphasising my position and the possibility that someone else is coming forward to assist my mother, there is an understanding that what is taking place is possibly pertinent in my search for the key to an interpretation. My mother’s call for assistance affirms, in the way she constructed this information, in the way I felt and later believed that this was a part of a maternal learnt tradition passed from mother to daughter, that these were other ways of knowing. I can now see that she did this in order to communicate with me.

I was thus beginning to understand that the process between us consisted of the many features that drew similar connections with the defining concepts of Black Matrilineage

that I acquired from the essays to will be discussed in Chapter Two, Searching Black literary Matrilineage to claim Black Matrilineage - developing my practice?

My mother's reaction after calling for the Doctor and nurse confirms for me that this inclusion was part of her methodology. Informing me of what is taking place, or perhaps what she sees or remembers, she expresses after a shout of "Oi", that "It's wicked, wicked, I don't' know?" This is followed by more screams, through which the experience of pain seems to be powerful enough to move her body. For she exclaims "it bruck, the bone in there bruck, it bruck, it bruck". There has been a narrative running through this all along.



Figure 10: Still image from Did it Work?, time 1 minute and 29 seconds. Video. (© 2015, Marcia Michael)

As if inhaling for breath, the sound that responds and escapes as a shriek in this act is the sound made from the word "high", though the first h is silent, and the pitch level is raised as she makes the sound. Raising her head towards me to tell me that "the bone

stick me", and then resting her head back on the pillow, bringing her left hand up to caress above her left eye socket, she laughs (a form of satire) at her response to what just took place, "ah lard!".
This was intense, she had experienced severe pain that was strong enough to move the bone that had been broken. Calming herself, catching her breath to control the pain, her breath shortens and on exhale sounds of relief are released.

The event has taken place.

Continuing the releasing sounds, she smiles into the camera. Her head raises, noting my presence once again. She tells me that "tears are come to me eyes". Resuming the exhale of her breath, head back on the pillow, I am informed "you better look if it a do", meaning I presume that I should check to see if the camera is recording. I don't move.

This small episode is hugely revealing in its metaphoric alliance to storytelling especially as, in Black literary matrilineage, storytelling is seen 'as symbolic mothering' (Herrera and Sanmartin, 2015, p. 129). Something dramatic has taken place, of which I am only partially informed, and this is significant. It is also about my lack of reputation to the historical notions harboured in my mother's voice. I am unable to mimic the dialect and tones of my mother's Caribbean tongue. The absence of *authentic* Caribbean and African diasporic history instructed in my UK based education meant that information was obscured and lost in the translation of growing up in Islington, London. As bell hooks states:

> I suggest that we do not necessarily need to hear and know what is stated in its entirety, that we do not need to "master" or conquer the narrative as a whole, that we may know in fragments. I suggest that we may learn from spaces of silence as well as spaces of speech, that in the patient act of listening to another tongue we may subvert that culture of capitalist frenzy and consumption that demands all desire must be satisfied immediately, or we may disrupt that cultural imperialism that suggests one is worthy of being heard only if one speaks in standard English. (hooks, 1994, p. 174).

At this point I am not involved in the story, only there to witness and, as I am doing now, to retell with a purpose through the observations of signifyin(g) that I have learned.

As I listened to my mother's sounds, I searched for an understanding within the construct of Black literary matrilineage and found Hurston's presence continually. Here the breaks, silences, humming and breaths all had meaning. I refer to Hurston's observations of the breath which includes the use of chants, hums and shouts of 'emotional explosion' (Hurston, 1981, p. 91). Noticing that it is women that shout more than men (p. 92), Hurston exclaims that these orators are artists, 'consciously creating - carefully choosing every syllable and every breath' (Hurston, 1981, p. 81). In *The Sanctified Church (1981)*, Hurston determines the importance of this breath that is heard, and with her explanation I am in agreement, for to understand these is to understand their language spoken. Hurston states:

> The audible breathing is part of the performance and various devices are resorted to to adorn the breath taking. Even the lack of breath is embellished with syllables. (Hurston, 1981, p. 81).

I was witnessing the ways my mother was able to show me whose history we belonged to.

Since these sounds which are not words 'worry the line', it is through their use, stressed by Tracey's (2005) in her review of Wall's approach, that reiterates this methodology as a tool reconnecting the mothers' language to the mythical power of Black Matrilineage as an act of reclamation. She states:

> Black women writers represent the multi dimensionality of cultural identity by reconstructing family genealogies through the variety of available [and unavailable], oral, visual and written records of existence. (Tracey, 2005, p. 251).

Noticing the use of rhythm in works that adhere to a Black literary matrilineage, and how these methods are used to pass on history (changing form and/or style with each

generation), humming plays an important function. '"Humming" which has as much meaning as singing... is guttural, primordial, the "key" that unlocks... the mystery and the source of her being' (Howard, 1993, p. 141). I had believed she was soothing herself; instead, I have to be aware that it could be a carefully constructed tool for unlocking the past. Looking again at the video where these hums are produced, I now understand that it is probably at pivotal moments in the act that she makes these sounds and unlocks parts of herself that are open to allow other histories to come forth.

In furthering this understanding of rhythm and sounds, Alice Walker's *signifyin(g)* transference to photography, in *The Temple of My Familiar* (1989), explores how the reader understands that these sounds are also part of a document which, when heard, become ways for one to understand a past and ourselves:

> These passages speak a language many will understand; they strike dormant chords inside the deep passages of ourselves. Like the keys they metaphorize, they open us up to ourselves and the wonders of those selves, and they send us searching...for the others who are, who must be, like us, though perhaps they do not yet have the keys or even know that they exist. (Howard, 1993, pp. 141-142)

Deploying another way of knowing located in Black Matrilineage, my mother uses her voice to deliver this information to me, introducing and immersing me into a discovery of my heritage. Her responsive sounds to pain are melodic, to draw you in and remember the tune, so able to repeat it, the way stories are told. Telling the listener that "you can't tender with pain you know; you have to make him know say he no boss," she suggests that her communication involved more than two people and possibly that pain and boss are male in character. She tells me "me tongue dry": does she need a break or does she need water? Or is this just information. This notation, which is not a request for water but a sense that this journey has been long and has exhausted her, allows me to observe the situation where, in defending the pain which exposes the severe actions of the boss, she does not barter with it, despite it trying its best to overpower her. With this visual metaphor allowing me to relate her phrase

possibly to harsh treatment, the dryness of the mouth could also be related to the longevity of punishment.

This understanding can be seen as a way in which the master's narrative is defied, and this defiance is one of the fundamental acts of Black literary matrilineage. This is in regard to Black literary matrilineage's connection with slavery in the way that the act of black matrilineage permits women to speak about their past treatment. It is also in the fact that this is passed on to a daughter, who then gains knowledge of this history and uses it with the act to support and encourage the mother's voice.

I locate my understanding in relation to Hortense Spiller's (literary critic, and Black Feminist scholar) response (1989) to Ishmael Reed's work on slavery (cited in Rushdy, 1992), seeing that we 'construct and reconstruct repertoires of usage out of the most painful human/historical experience' (Rushdy, 1992, p. 568).

I, therefore, learn rather quickly in this act to redefine the reading of imagery my mother expresses, as historic revisions, thus a utilisation of Morrison's rememory.

In the last few seconds of the video, my mother's breath slows and eventually becomes silent. Ceasing the act and I believe breaking the 4th wall, my mother states "ih work?" Whether a question "Did it work"?, or a statement, "it worked" its use confirms the inquisitiveness of her presentation. Did it work for me to see that I am part of this act? Did what was shown work in its effectiveness to stir me into an understanding of the past that I was searching for? Did the recording work? Did the recovery that I took you on in this act work? By asking, confirming, or suggesting directly to the camera (and not to me) I'h work (either meaning did it work or it worked), my mother can no longer observe me gazing at her in the past, anticipating the answering of her question/statement. If her statement was fact, then she was able to see the future. If a question, she can only imagine the future. But this may also be a code. I believe that, through this witnessing she introduced me to the further work we did during this research, in that we extended the literary form of Black Matrilineage; that not only have I found answers that I was searching for. I was able to confirm the roles of mother

and daughter, and the act as a form of search and discovery that was needed to define Black Matrilineage as an act. This also included the notion of call and response that is represented both by mother and daughter, and search and discovery. It is in this acknowledgment that I understood how I was able to separate the literary tradition into a methodological concept of retrieval.

In making sure that I understood what can be transferred in this process, my mother brought me into another act of participation, encouraging me to document my body alongside hers through photography, understanding that this was my preferred method of communication as embodied cultural language and her Jamaican diction were not my strong points. I believe she wanted to make sure that I had an understanding of what was taking place, to make sure that I had learnt the tradition, to be able to pass it on. In this way, I was to learn in my way an expression of histories that I believe she learnt from her mothers, so that I should pass them on.

Everything that took place and was shared with me in this video pertains to my mother's cultural heritage and is a reflection of how she decided to convey this personal re-encounter, to me. This encounter is an experience of the process involved in Black Matrilineage.

It was to be this act, observed in the video *Did It Work?,* that brought me full circle, to an understanding that through Black literary matrilineage mothers found ways in their daily lives to pass on histories and ways of being, enacting conversations between mother and daughter. My mother's instructive soliloquy in the video encouraged me into her dialogue and introduced me to a discovery of my heritage. It also raised questions, such as did she know what she was doing? Was it something she was taught? Later in the video, I also wondered if I could do what she did, as she introduced me into the photographic frame, but also become a way for me to enact her bodily gestures back to her, like a mirror. This led me to enquire into a fuller understanding of the act I was participating in and, through definition, to identify its purpose. I became aware that what I had seen was not what it was at face value, and the questions that encapsulated this discovery have assisted me in producing works that introduced me to

various disciplines from which to understand and recover my personal matrilineal history. Doing so whilst engaging in a practice that is itself based on a heritage of participation and embodiment allowed me ways in which I could practice this embodiment through vocal renditions of enhanced storytelling when asked to explain Black Matrilineage.

This is developed as a mother and daughter encounter, held within the maternal relationship of Black literary matrilineage. Exploring this maternal relationship through Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), Liscio (1992) locates the evidence of the journey (as I am doing through this practice) by stating that this act between mother and daughter is ultimately about love. Lisco states,

> Naming/loving themselves anew requires a different sign system originating in the mother/ […] daughter bond. […] thought pictures [as]expressions of need and desire, the rhythms of the female body, and sensations that constitute meaningful exchange between mother and [daughter] become … an alternate code for reading and inscribing self-identity, connection, and even survival. (Liscio, 1992, pp. 39-40).

Yes, such an act (and that which she later gives me) is most definitely borne out of love and this becomes the theme of expression that carries the manner in which I approach my mother and myself with photography.

CONCLUSION

In claiming as I have that this interaction with my mother encapsulates aspects of the act of Black Matrilineage, I primarily turned to the literature by black women authors to find a connection with this term and to understand more of its usage. The sounds from my mother were, for me, all about finding a form of communication, a re-encounter of an inherited/familial language. I am sure that I was not the first to hear these sounds coming from their mothers, and yet the experience I encountered had to be and was explored by Black female authors. The accidental filming of this encounter added another form of motif for my explorations. There was something in her bodily

characteristics I had seen before and, as her grown daughter, wanted to repeat in my own way. Yet, unlike my two elder sisters, who were born in Jamaica, I was not. My mannerisms were different, yet the language beyond what I was hearing captivated me. When showing this piece to my peers to help me understand, I stated always, “don’t look but listen”. But by nature of the sounds being made, they wanted to look. What was important in the looking would become something I explore later in this thesis through using photography.

In the following chapter I expand on the listening of the women who have spoken and claimed the term Black Matrilineage from writing under a Black literary tradition. I explore what the term means for them and for me and how I will continue to use this understanding through the thesis and my practice.

Chapter Two:

Claiming the Practice of Black Matrilineage: An Exploration

The search for a mother and daughter interaction that resembles my experience and understanding gained from my mother's interaction, as in the previous chapter, forms the basis of this chapter. I was to begin a search to locate the centre of what I witnessed with my own mother. The memory of reading Toni Morrison's (1987) novel *Beloved* gave me an impression of daughters who use their mothers' body to search, not just for themselves, but also the history of who they belong to. The revelation was an emotional one and yet the search I knew would be through literature. As I located and connected these moments of discovery, I began to see how this was a journey that would echo the search for this type of matrilineage.

In the first part of my search, I had to understand the term Black matrilineage and its usage. Then I had to define the term for myself and with this locate a possibility of not finding, not understanding my own experience in this way. I had to also consider if this was all just in my imagination?

In this chapter I explore the development and understanding of matrilineage. It is these authors and essayists as daughters who, in their literary works, search for the mother before, the mother in attendance and the mother figure in themselves. They inform the reader along the way what matrilineage is and does. It would become the mother's voice and the daughter's voice, who speaks through the new written works as an act of matrilineage, that I explore to understand how I will come to use my own voice. I would also explore how this voice can be reclaimed and defined. This chapter is a guide to the fundamental structure of the term as the act of Black Matrilineage and how it differs from the shortened version of the term from which it is taken - black literary matrilineage. 'Black feminists describe their literary lineage as matrifocal in nature, terming it Black matrilineage' (O'Reilly, 2010, p. 736).

In clarifying the term and concept of Black matrilineage whilst discussing its development, for me it was vital to determine what it is not, and how it differs from the other forms of matrilineage. The distinction between the (white) literary matrilineage that is normally associated with the term 'matrilineage' and other derivates of its use, such as *Transnational Matrilineage* (as well as its understanding as a matrilineal lineage of inheritance) I contend must be acknowledged and disentangled.

It is claimed that the 'The feminist study of literary tradition seeks…to reenvision female possibility, and to right (or rewrite) the wrongs of literary history' (Sadoff, 1985, pp. 4-5). Matrilineage (as a definition) in the sense of a literary inheritance has commonly been defined and ascribed from a White perspective. Nan Bauer Maglin (1980), in the essay *Don't never forget the bridge that you crossed over on: The Literature of Matrilineage,* and her previous paper of which this essay is an extension, '"*Full of Memories": Teaching Matrilineage'* (1979)*,* examines this idea of a literary matrilineage, through the themes she found:

> 1. The recognition by the daughter that her voice is not entirely her own;
> 2. The importance of trying to really see one's mother in spite of or beyond the blindness and skewed vision that growing up together causes;
> 3. The amazement and humility about the strength of our mothers;
> 4. The need to recite one's matrilineage, to find a ritual to both get back there and preserve it; (...)
> 5. and still, the anger and despair about the pain and the silence borne and handed on from mother and daughter. (Maglin, 1980, p. 258).

Marianne Hirsch (1989, p. 136) clarifies the function and role of motherhood from the white mother/daughter perspective, and claims that a daughter's 'other' is her mother, creating for herself a position of subjectivity that maintains a separation between themselves and their mother, because they become trapped by the institution they create for themselves. This is coalesced in Vivian Nice's (1992) collection, *Mother and Daughters: The Distortion of a Relationship,* where the development of women authors writing about their relationships with their mothers, and as mothers themselves, questions how in coming to terms with the 'history' of their severed relationship(s), a

unique bonding occurs between the two. How this is experienced by the mother/daughter is revealed in their writings from which matrilineage itself is critiqued.

In clarifying this position Nice (1992) states:

> The importance for women of tracing back and reciting their matrilineal is becoming increasingly evident. For example in collections of letters, prose and poetry, biographies and autobiographies, matrilineal is not only about the daughters need and desire to know about her heritage but also about the mothers and grandmothers need to pass this knowledge on through her daughter and granddaughter so that it will not be lost. (Nice, 1992, p. 190).

The term highlights the looking back through our mothers that matrilineage is known for.

Transnational matrilineage is separate in some ways from the previous definitions. Silvia Schultermandl (2009) in *Transnational Matrilineage* and Marina Heung (1993) in *Daughter-Text/Mother-Text: Matrilineage in Amy Tan's "Joy Luck Club,* explores this in more detail. Here the daughter, in feeling a disconnectedness and ambivalence towards her mother's unknown heritage, can only enquire about it from and within a different cultural perspective. The difficulty lies in not knowing her mother's cultural, and at times oral, language. Thus, it is only through a reconciliation with her maternal heritage (often achieved through the creation of new 'fictionalised' narratives) that closure in her search for identity is achieved. (Schultermandl, 2009, p. 10).

Interestingly, Transnational matrilineage's use of literature by women from their associated cultures in order to define and enquire about their maternal lineage, is also utilised in the understanding of Black matrilineage. This dedicated use of one's own literary culture is also a defining aspect in naming the different matrilineages.

Hirsch (1989) in her exploration of literary works by Black women, such as Toni Morrison's *Sula* (1973) and *Beloved* (1987) and Alice Walker's essay, written in 1973, *Everyday Use (2006),* discovers that for women of colour it is both mother and

daughter that have a voice which yields 'multiple consciousness' (Hirsch, 1989, p. 161). This engagement with voice is significant amongst women of African descent as an oral heritage and one that is determined fundamental in Black literary matrilineage (as speakerly text – explained later in this chapter). Confirming this orality, Schultermandl (2009) acknowledges that this is commonly found in the 'literature of matrilineage by African American women writers' (Schultermandl, 2009, p. 42). The premises of matrilineage, being the evidence of our mothers' existence, affirms the power of its use in achieving a return. The nature of the act becomes a powerful solution to right the wrongs on the collective past, and for Black women this may be the only way this can be done. 'It is women versed in the oral tradition, frequently minority women, who have shown us the way back to our mothers' (Davidson and Broner, 1980, p. 254). Thus, it is the novels and poems written between 1960 and 1990 by women of African descent that inform a literary tradition. They do so by rewriting the past, and thus 'render[s] …history in a symbolic structure of *daughterly engagement with the maternal past*' [author italics] (Rody, 2001, p. 6). This process, which expands upon previous literary mothers, is *Black Matrilineage.* It is as a concept away from its usage in discussing family genealogies, hereditary and inheritance and its development into the process, that encapsulates the act this paper focuses on.

I needed to be aware of the development and use of the term Black matrilineage in order to conceptualise the *act* of Black Matrilineage. When defined as an act it will be capitalised as Black Matrilineage, which I see as different but connected to the term Black matrilineage.

Developing Black (literary) matrilineage

In *These self-Invented Women: A Theoretical Framework for a Literary History of Black Women* (1980), Mary Helen Washington writes that she notices a subculture of Black women's writing which she explains is 'achieved under the influence of a nurturing female precursor' (Washington, 1980, p. 5). Picking up on the influences the mothers

of the authors had as a 'powerful source of aesthetic' in their daughters' works and in defining self, Washington, as she understands what is developing, procures recollections of written experiences from Alice Walker and Dorothy West. Seeing that these writers express mother and daughter bonds, whilst also recovering heritage and family expressed in the creation of narratives, Washington questions the correlation between the themes of the works and the authors relationship have with their mothers in defining these contents for the finished works.
Washington has identified what takes place within the act of signifying. She has noticed the tendencies but has yet to name them - I am sure this was on the tip of her tongue. By acknowledging Washington's assumptions in this field of women's writing, it suggests to me that the search and discovery process is ingrained more than we think in women's understanding of each other and our mothers.

This process becomes vital in understanding literary matrilineage as an activity and not just the literary precursor in a female lineage of Black women. It is in West's recollection of her statement, 'all my mother's blood came out in me, I was my mother talking…I became me' (Washington, 1980, p. 5) that I began to reconnect its fundamentality in the understanding of Black matrilineage's construction, and also to myself. I named my photographic self-portraits in this series after my mother's passing: *I am Now You – Mother.* At the time in 2017 I had acknowledged her influence but did not fully appreciate the connective nature of enquiry African diaspora daughters had with their African diasporic mothers. Holding on to this encounter, Alice Walker's (1983) *In Search of her Mothers' Garden* carries further an understanding of *who* our mothers are and what our searching is really about (within the literary field). This personal identification at the end of West's statement and the connection to the mother is precisely what we hear from Walker in 1973, when she affirms, 'Guided by my heritage of the love of beauty and the respect for strength – in search of my mother's garden, I found my own' (Walker, 2005, p. 243). This notion of self-identity through a mother figure becomes centralised in the work of Zora Neale Hurston (before Walker and West), whose connection with Walker is soon to bridge the term Black matrilinege and where notions of its process as an act also commences.

The influence of the mother's presence and resurgence in the daughter's identification of self and in their creative works, is the prominent feature that establishes the mother's and daughter's role in the Black literary tradition and also in the act that creates it. Yet, Washington's questioning and seeing of this pattern earlier in 1980 does not fully acknowledge what it is seeing, though the awareness of its presence is very much noted. Perhaps what was missing was the personal touch. Her own and visceral understanding of this process and interaction with her own mother was an act she either misplaced or did not connect with.

However, what she asks resonates within a Black literary matrilineage development and defines for me her position in its development.

> There are many areas that need to be investigated as we begin the process of reconstructing the literary history of black women. We need to know: what rituals and symbols are essential to the black woman's self-discovery? By what means does she come to know her own voice? What black and female stories are central to her history? What are the unique forms and purposes by which her literary tradition can be identified? (Washington, 1980, p. 6).

Read without the literary, the rendition packs a powerful concern for the presence of Black women authors. In asking these questions which encapsulate the search and discovery in this process of actualisation (both in the works and by the authors), Washington's notion births a tradition that bequeaths the process of Black matrilinege as a concept. It is from this that I begin to form its development in order to understand and fulfil my practice.

For me, understanding Hurston's authorship through Henry Gates is vital to comprehend the making of the Black literary tradition and thus Black literary matrilineage which use structures by which we come to know them, such as siginifyin(g) and speakerly text (explored in Chapter Three). Hurston's *Her Eyes Were Watching God* (1937*)* becomes a text connecting them together, but significantly this understanding of Hurston's work, in the formation of a literary tradition, is her search

for a black language, that, as stipulated by Gates, 'defines the search for the self'. (Gates, 1988a, p. 183).

Gates also acknowledges the relationship between Walker and Hurston, through Walker's signifyin(g) on Hurston. He positions Hurston as the mother of a tradition. As Gates says,

> Walker has signified upon Hurston in what must stand to be the most loving revision, and claim to title, that we have seen in the tradition. Walker has turned to a black antecedent text to claim literary ancestry, or motherhood, not only for content but for structure. (Gates, 1988a, p. 255).

This tradition that involves motherhood as or and ancestry becomes known as Black matrilineage or in view of its literary placing, Black literary matrilineage.

Black matrilineage

In *Black Matrilineage: The Case of Alice Walker and Zora Neale Hurston* (1985), Dianne Sadoff, a Professor Emerita of English who writes about psychoanalysis in the literary, explores the historical background of the Black literary tradition specifically Hurston's (1937) and Walker's (1982) role in this. Sadoff states:

> In numerous and diverse ways Walker proclaims Hurston her precursor and appears to find that precedence a source not of anxiety but of nurturance. (Sadoff, 1985 p. 5).

It is in this essay I came across the first instance of the term Black matrilineage. Here Sadoff confirms and explores Zora Neale Hurston and Alice Walker as the epitome of a mother and daughter connection, from which all future writings of Black matrilineage would develop. The term Black literary matrilineage is based upon their themed maternal relationship of search and discovery, and the process of this becoming known as Black Matrilineage through my research. Perhaps it is somewhat claimed and

addressed in the title of Sadoff's essay, as the literary is simply dismissed without any explanation. Hence my need for clarification.

> Hurston becomes not only predecessor but originator, her work, archetypal. Walker's essays on and editorship of Hurston designate the Renaissance writer precursor and obscure the Second Renaissance writer's fear of her cultural marginality, her own deep need for a foremother (Sadoff, 1985, p. 7).

It is Walker's search for Hurston, in L*ooking for Zora* (written 1975), that she is named (literary) mother and Hurston's literary concepts and constructs are redeveloped within her own works, which sees this precedent in motion. Expanding this notion of maternal lineage to that of a history from which the authors write from and against, Sadoff positions the maternal search as one that also seeks to reclaim historic mothers and its interconnecting facets, such as mothering and motherhood.

> The historical burden of black matrifocality and motherhood-slavery, sexual exploitation, forced loss of children, and economic marginality also creates the special "duty," as Walker defines it, of black literary matriliny. (Sadoff, 1985, p. 11).

By introducing this term Black matrilineage into the discourse of Black feminist theory, Sadoff explores the repositioning of the maternal as a tradition between Black women, a discourse that allows the author to reclaim their 'lost literary matrilineage' (Sadoff, 1985, p. 9).

In understanding this necessary subtext in women's authored works that share more than a theme, I began to gain an understanding of what Black matrilinege aims to procure for the authors who write into a Black literary matrilineage, personally. Black matrilinege has a double meaning. It possesses more than one function, in more than one way, but both need to be intact. The antecedent lineage becomes second placed and the role the works take in recovering histories is repositioned. Thus, through this approach, meanings such as tradition and reclamation of the lost become defining attributes of personal recoveries and new narratives that seek to stand as evidence of a past.

Sadoff, in her exploration, turns to a statement held in matrilineage, made by Virginia Woolf in the extended essay *A Room of One's Own:* 'We think back through our mothers if we are women' (Woolf, 1957, p. 79). For women writers of differing cultural diasporas, Sadoff claims they strive to find a place of their own through their mothers, stating it is the 'link to the oral as well as a written tradition' (Sadoff, 1985, p. 5) that this is found. As speakerly text connects back to Hurston, here we begin to see how the development of the oral in their works is part of a tradition which Black women utilise as magical tools that will lead them to their 'mothers'. This notion of searching and thinking back through their mothers is exemplified in Alice Walker's essay 'Looking for Zora', from her compilation 'In Search of Our Mother's Garden', and in her signifyin(g) of Hurston's text in *The Color Purple* (1982). This verification of the connection between the oral and the body (through the symbolic presence of the mother figure, biological or not – as an embodied process) cements this use of signifyin(g) as what constitutes the construction of Black matrilinege into an act that I reference as Black Matrilineage.

These new works become novels and poems from which a tradition is formed, but also, histories and examples of relationships in their own right, in which searches can themselves take place. The papers and anthologies of these authors' works, such as Gayl Jones's (1975) *Corregidora*, Toni Morrison's *Sula* (1993) and *Beloved* (1987), and Alice Walker's (1977) *Meridian,* offer an exploration into how these works sit within a Black literary matrilineage, and how they develop the concept of the term whilst shining a light on the processes the authors use. The latter is my interest in this thesis and in developing my art practice.

Knowing which texts fulfil a Black literary matrilineage, Dubey's (1995) essay *Matrilineal Metaphor of Tradition* sets out to test the model by:

> Reading the theory of black literary matrilineage both with and against Corregidora and Song for Anninho, in the process perhaps elucidating the possibilities as well as the hazards of using the

> matrilineal metaphor to naturalize the black feminine literary tradition. (Dubey, 1995, p. 245).

In this example, Dubey locates ‘the matrilineal model of tradition’, announcing ‘the mother as the origin of the black woman literary tradition’ (Dubey, 1995, p. 245), who ensures its temporal continuity (Dubey 1995. p. 245). In her deft examination of the texts that infer a Black literary matrilineage, she determines that through them they ‘portray […] the mother as the medium of an alternative fictional invention of history’ (Dubey, 1995, p. 247). Hochberg, similarly, names the mother as one who ‘appears to be slavery's ultimate victim, [but] also functions as a medium for the transcription of an alternative narrative to this history of oppression’ (Hochberg, 2003, p. 2). In affirming her power, stance, and transformability, she is propelled into a symbol of mediumship, carrier, and vessel.

> ‘The centrality of the maternal figure as the originator of women’s alternative voice and as a transmitter of memory is an outcome of the particular history of black enslaved mothers’. (Hochberg, 2003, p. 2).

It is to Washington (1984) that I return for confirmation of these statements concerning the mother, where she affirms that black women writers are ‘immersed into …ways of making meaning through their mothers’ (Washington, 1984, pp. 148-149).

It has become clearer for me why mothers, motherhood and their related connections to the authors’ collective past, through the constructs of signifyin(g) and speakerly text, are so defined in their exploration of these themes. What they succeed in producing is the emotive effect of nurturing in their way, communicated through their narratives. They are not just writing fictious narratives; they are rewriting history, through presences of both mother and daughter. Thus motherhood, as with the mother, becomes a symbolic structure that history has unwritten for the Black daughters, in their need to search, recover and reclaim, which has also been a similar theme running through Black literary matrilineage. Black Matrilineage is thus an act that assists in reclaiming because of the reverberation of enslavement, motherhood and mothering.

This is also why the mother's body and voice can be used to symbolically and metaphorically address the enslaved past.

> The historical mythology of the slave mother as a way of envisioning and defining motherhood maintains the importance of understanding motherhood in its political context. It challenges the fiction of mother and daughter hostility and the traditional ways of seeing mothers as powerless in the world of many men. (Washington, 1984, p. 160).

Detailed by Washington, the texts carry and fulfil more than expected. The texts of which the maternal figure is fundamental on multiple levels of narration to the construction, conclusion and continuity of self, aims to fill the gap.

> The black feminist discourse on matrilineage seeks to unwrite a brutal history of rupture and dislocation and to write an alternative story of familial and cultural connection…The black feminist appropriation of the metaphor of literary matrilineage acquires its special resonance from the peculiar history of black motherhood. (Dubey, 1995, pp. 245-246).

And:

> African American and Caribbean women writers figure their creative relationships to the past by means of the unconventional, feminist story of a daughter's return to repair a severed matrilineage. Asserting daughterhood to history in the form of a feminist family romance, these writers claim a most intimate, authoritative relationship to a maternal past, declaring themselves history's legitimate heirs. (Rody, 2001, p. 6).

The act itself is symbolic. It is able to hold itself as a mode of healing. A way to heal the past within us now and the parts that cannot be tangibly reached by us, except through imagination and another way of knowing.

For me, understanding the relationship between the act and the term is key to understanding the differences.

Relationships Be-love'd

A novel that encapsulates the fundamental elements of Black matrilineage is *Beloved* by Toni Morrison (1987). This transitions Black matrilinege into an act so poignant that it achieves the aim of seeing how creativity in one's own reality can be altered through a mother and daughter experience. Morrison's book dramatically affected change in Black literary fields as many new novels have been shaped by it, according to Wagner-Martin (2014), through the 'comprehension of the role of mother' (p. 10). Central to the narrative is the multiple mother and daughter relationships and the shifts between them. These define its aim to search, discover and recover through the mother's body, not only history but the future. It achieves the aim that Washington sets out in her quest that:

> No black writer has been able to reveal the black experience in all its range and complexity without the sense of unity - of oneness with his or her people. For black women writers, the mother is often the key to that unity. (Washington, 1984, p. 148).

This indicates that there is a process within the narrative structures of the author's process that enables the presence of metaphor to shift 'from an actual to a metaphorical familial genealogy' (Dubey, 1995, p. 247), whilst also shifting 'from history to literature and from biological to figurative motherhood' (Dubey, 1995 p. 246) and be identified. These themes were expressed by Maglin (1979), and have been expanded upon by Marianne Hirsch (1989) who, in observing Alice Walker's and Paule Marshall's works, suggested that writers of African descent situate themselves amongst three maternal traditions:

- The black oral invisible lineage in which their own mothers were artistic, storytellers and gardeners,
- the Black written tradition of Phyllis Wheatley, Harriet Jacobs, and Zora Neale Hurston among others, and
- the white written tradition of Virginia Woolf's A Room of One's Own, which does describe the contradictions of the woman writer, but must be revised to include as well the different story of the black writer. (Hirsch 1989, p.178).

Interestingly and significantly for me, Hirsch, like Maglin, applies the same methodology of using novels and poems written by women of African descent, including Hurston's and Walker's signifyin(g) works in order to understand the authors' development within the structure of Black matrilinege.

> Theorists of black matrilineage, by bestowing an imaginary unity on a previously diffused body of texts, have created an enabling critical context in which these texts may be read and interconnected. (Dubey, 1995, p. 248).

This is also cemented by Cristina Herrera and Paula Sanmartin (2015), in *Essays on Caribbean Women's Writing*, where they see the effect of this use of the fictional novels and poems in gaining an understanding of their culture. Thus, the underlying political and psychological experiences of black mothering help define the term.

Following from Hirsch, it is Dubey's (1995) paper, *Matrilineal Metaphor of Tradition,* which offers themes that help define what elements enable the act of Black Matrilineage. I understand that these properties are as follows: mothers, all mothers, the oral and conjuring.

I. Mother, all mothers.

Said to be the founding gesture of matrilineage 'the mother is the medium of the daughter's access to history' (Dubey, 1995, p. 252), both evidence of the past existing and of the future taking place. For her rightful place in this act '… is by her and through her, through "mother as a source of memory," that one is rooted in a genealogy, a past, a people, a tradition'. (Hochberg, 2005, p. 2). It must also be acknowledged here that roles can be shifted, and kinship in symbolic mothering chosen and experienced, not just inherited, including other forms of female 'connection, such as mother-daughter bonds, friendships between women, sisterly ties and lesbian love' (Dubey, 1995, p. 256). It is also acknowledged that male authors can turn to a mother author.

II. **The use of the oral,**

A medium that enables one to travel through time and that empowers the construction of a new Black feminist history, is understood by the daughter, who must accept the mother's stories unequivocally.

These stories of the past are needed for the daughter to locate her position to speak.

As with all histories, one is to be careful as the mother's past may be too painful for the daughter to speak of. Literary works that fit into the Black literary matrilineage framework and fall under this assumption include those by Gayle Jones (1975), Ntozake Shange (1980), Frances Chung (2000), Esther. M. Broner (1985), Margaret Walker (1993), Nikki Giovanni (1974), Lucille Clifton (1976) and Alfonsina Storni (1976) However, their works prove the necessity and collective sisterhood of tackling the past by writing their lifelines through a mother/daughter relationship, which at times can be problematic. Dubey (1995) and Worsham (1996) articulate problems that can occur if many of the values are not met or if tensions arise. There are concerns about the maternal journey through the mother and daughter relationship, and the oppressive nature this can bring, fuelling the danger of reliving painful (collective) experiences which can 'perpetuate a generational cycle…[that] bears the traces of the oppressive history it seeks to replace'. (Dubey, 1995, p. 259). For Worsham, it is Audre Lorde's (1996) *Coal poem* and Alice Walker's (1986) poetry collection, *Horses Make a Landscape Look More Beautiful* that highlight the difficulties faced between the stark reality of many unwelcoming experiences that are part of the mother and daughter relationship. It is interesting to note that the 1970's and 1980's saw a surge of Black women writers articulating themes of loss, strength and motherhood, as facts that are either explored through the works themselves or affected in the character's development.

III. Conjuring

Conjuring, a folk art which is passed on by mother to the daughter is an acknowledgment of the spiritual, 'provides an alternative, unofficial basis of cultural authority'. (Dubey, 1995, p. 254). It is also as described by James A and Lerhonda S Manigault-Bryant as 'a mechanism of survival that Black women literally and metaphorically deploy to transcend the limits of their contexts'. (Manigault-Bryant and Manigault-Bryant 2016, p. 233). As an act that carries with it a yearning to be passed on to the daughter, learning the act becomes the 'medium of temporal wholeness and continuity, countering the daughter's traumatic experience of historical dislocation' (Dubey, 1995, pp. 254-255). This act is described by Kinitra Brooks, Kameelah L. Martin and LaKisha Simmons. (2021) in *Conjure Feminism: Toward a Genealogy:*

> And at the end of her stories, she looked up at Kinitra, her oldest daughter, and proclaimed, "I want to learn how to do this again. Can you teach me?" This moment completes the circle, as Kinitra's mother reveals her yearning for some of the peace that the spirit work has provided her daughter's soul. It is healing. This is knowledge. This is Myrtle's medicine, spirit work as a conduit for memories and a vulnerability between mother and daughter—descendants with a complicated, loving, and fiery relationship all their own.
> p.455).

My mother asked if I could do what she could. This, for me, indicated her need to teach me the act of conjuring. The act I witnessed in *Did it work?* (2015), was also an act of conjuring, in which my mother, also called Myrtle, gave me the fundamental push I needed to understand who I was and where it is that this understanding came from. Conjuring was one of the maternal inheritances, explored in Chapter Six, and also in my chapter for *Black Matrilineage, Photography, and Representation: Another Way of Knowing* (Deschler Canossi and Lopez-Diago, 2022).
Here, as an example, I state:

> Turning always to mummy when things got tough, I told her that I could not locate any information about her mother in the Jamaican archives. To find out about my mother's grandmother, and so on and so forth, this information was crucial to me: when was my

> grandmother born? How else was I to begin the search for the mother of all mothers, *my* African Queen? As the years went by and still no information surfaced, my mother drew me into an act which I had only ever experienced through reading the novels of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), Gayl Jones's, *Correigdora* (1975), and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982). This was an act that between mother and daughter, somehow, some way, recovered histories: this act was Black matrilineage. I never knew at the time what it was but, years later, I now understand everything. For it taught me so many things, through it I was shown and heard so many things. Turning to Morrison to find an attachment, I became familiar with "another way of knowing" (Morrison 1984). This is because there simply was no other way. My mother opened her archived body to me and, through this, guided me in my search, through the ritual art of conjuring. (Michael, 2022, p. 263).

Conjuring, which serves as the title of the anthology edited by Marjorie Pryse and Hortense Spillers (1985), is surveyed in the introductory essay *Zora Neale Hurston, Alice Walker and the Ancient Power of Black Women* by Pryse (1985). It is this paper that Dubey remarks is 'an essay that offers perhaps the most influential articulation of matrilineal theory' (Dubey, 1995, p. 256), and Hurston is named as one who 'took conjuring a great leap forward and with it, transposed the terms of literary authority for women writers' (Pryse and Spillers, 1985, p. 10).

A Brief Explanation of Conjuring

The ritual art of conjuring is what Hurston, Walker and many other authors situated in Black literary tradition utilise in the act of Black matrilineage. It is not the conjuring associated with the notion of magic. It is Walker's (2005) clarity in her extended essay, *In Search of our Mothers Garden,* that in defining quotidian acts of living, such as storytelling, singing, cooking, sewing, quilt making and gardening, that we begin to acknowledge these as moments of conjuring. Tasks such as 'rootworking, herbal medicine...and midwifery' (Wisker, 1993, p. 88), are also claimed as acts of conjuring.

Also referred to as Conjure Feminism, in the essay by Brooks, Martin, and Simmons, (2021), these authors include the acts of mothering, motherwit, spirit work and food as ancestral memory (p. 453). In naming many of the authors associated within Black

literary matrilineage, including Walker (2005), Hurston (1937) and Morrison (1983), in *Conjure Feminism* (2021) Brooks, Martin, and Simmons (2021) declare that these acts of conjuring demonstrate how these women were privy to an intellectual and theoretical tradition that predates literacy and the written word altogether: (2021, p. 453)

Conjuring, as introduced by Hurston and expressed in *Tell My Horse Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica* (1935/1990), came from the conjure woman whose location is often placed in Voudoun and was present in a ceremony she witnessed for the Goddess Erzuile (see Waddell, 1993 for more on this subject). Rooting her experiences of this in her writing style as a self-claiming central facet of the sovereignty of women, in Hurston's relational understanding through Voudoun she designates this theme through her mother and daughter characters. As Dutton confirms, Hurston acts 'as a kind of bridge for an imaginative matrilineage extending from the tradition of conjure to the literary genius of Black women writers' (Dutton, 1993, p. 148).

The significance of understanding conjuring's connection in Black literary matrilineage is as the centralised theme that Hurston developed in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, (1937). This Hurston achieved through the metaphoric use of photographic imagery signified upon extensively by other authors.

> Not only is photography the vehicle for the central moment of self-recognition in the novel – Janie's discovery of her own blackness but photographic discourse is crucial to the novel's exploration of black identity. (Burrows, 2001, p. 435)

As it this self-discovery that shaped the foundational framework for the Black matrilineal literary tradition as Black female subjectivity, conjuring (as a way of knowing self) becomes an influential aspect of identifying Black Matrilineage. This is amplified by Clarke who states of Hurston:

> Her concern goes beyond presenting an individual woman's journey to self-awareness; her accomplishment is nothing less than redefining

> African American rhetoric, rendering it verbal and visual. (Clarke, 2001, p.611).

Morrison also understands how the role of a conjuring woman in Black literary matrilineage works, and defines her presence as one who is able to 'blend the acceptance of the supernatural and a profound rootedness in the real world at the same time with neither taking precedence over the other' (Morrison, 1984, p. 342). These women who conjure are our mothers.

Conjuring is a feature that is used as a means by which the daughter, and subsequent mother authors, write their stories in the way that they do. Alice Walker's (2005) search for mother artists found women who claimed their stories through activities such as gardening, cooking, needlework and the like.

I practised not only in the photographs that I made for this series, *Partus Sequitur Ventrem* (2015-2017) and *I am Now You - Mother* (2017) but also in writing the collected poems *My History is in Her(e),* (2022) that emerged from the act I was in with my mother. These works revealed that my foremothers, including my own mother, were creatives. The works enabled me to tell our story. I also practised in words, speaking and writing, as expressed in the chapter in wrote in *Black Matrilineage, Photography and Representation*: Another Way of Knowing, (Michael 2022):

> I am a woman who conjures.
> I can offer a vision of that which cannot be seen.
> Like Douglass's revenant, a return from a social death, (Wexler 2012: 33), a task which the photograph performs, wilfully, now through me, created by a Black mother behind the camera.
> I aid them to return.
> I am a conjuring woman.
>
> (Michael, 2022, p. 265).

As conjurers these women have ability to create something out of nothing, to shift purpose and to bring forth the unimaginable. A conjurer may be used in a metaphoric

understanding of Black women who, in their daily lives, utilise resistance and survival to counter the effects of histories.

Conjuring is a complex term and, while a vital component of Black literary matrilineage as a whole, the development of its use in the Black literary tradition is outside the remit of this thesis and will not be discussed in depth. For further reading on this concept, I recommend Volume 36 - Special Issue 3 - Summer 2021 of *Hypatia journal of feminist philosophy*, Manigault-Bryant (2016) and Kameelah L. Martin. (2012).

Caribbean Mothers and Daughters

In exploring Black literary matrilineage, I realised its content is heavily occupied by authors who identify as African American. It was necessary to understand the construct of this tradition through an articulation of motherhood and the use of signifyin(g) from the Caribbean Vantage Point. This became clearer for me through essays, such as those by Kuwabong (1999) or works edited by Herrera and Sanmartin (2015). The latter argue that it is 'the tropes of motherhood and daughterhood [that] become the means by which to legitimize the legacies of Caribbean women that have been silenced, erased, hidden, and untold' (Herrera and Sanmartin, 2015, p. 5), and not the dissemination of our foremothers by their geographical location.

The tradition conceived in Black literary matrilineage possesses some sort of cultural memory which locates its heritage in motherhood. Dannabang Kuwabong's (1999) essay, *The Mother as Archetype of Self: A poetics of Matrilineage in the poetry of Claire Hudson and Lorna Goodison*, introduces the reader to Caribbean women's writing, using the works of Goodison and Hudson to explore an enactment of matrilineage through the research that has been already presented on mother and daughter relationships of African descent, by Vivien Nice (1992), Marianne Hirsch (1989), and Patricia Hill Collins' seminal book *Black Feminist Thought* (1990). Affirming from the onset that the mother and daughter relationship is vital in the theory of identity construction for Afro-Caribbean women:

> Afro-Caribbean daughters develop their voices and identities through recognition and celebration of their matrilineage by celebrating their mothers. (Kuwabong, 1999, p. 105).

Kuwabong gives the reader the knowledge necessary to move forward through the text, grounded in that understanding of what matrilineage means for Caribbean mothers and daughters.

Mother-daughter relationship, therefore, is central to the development of Afro–Caribbean poetics of matrilineage, identity and voice among Afro-Caribbean women. As expressed by Herrera and Sanmartín (2015) in their introduction:

> The tropes of motherhood and daughterhood thus become the means by which to legitimize the legacies of Caribbean women that have been silenced, erased, hidden, and untold. (Herrera and Sanmartín, 2015, p. 5).

Rody (2001) and Herrera and Sanmartín (2015) openly express concerns for the daughter during her search. These aspects of difficulty are also shared in the literature of Black literary matrilineage. The romantic notion of the mother and daughter reunion becomes challenged when histories are applied to the Black mother's body, as trauma needs to be made visible for the daughter in order not only to understand herself, but as the author of her own writing. This is due to the matrilineal ruptures and conflictive relationship caused by colonial legacy. These concerns include, for Caribbean writers (also African American authors), the mixing of racial cultures, inter-generational cultural tensions and the familial stories that surround these. All can be problematic for the search and thus the writing of new narratives under a Black matrilineage tradition. such as in Andrea's Levy (2010) The Long Song as explored by Charlotte Beye (2015) in Herrera and Sanmartín (2015, pp. 121-142), tell of the author's distress in having to write about a subject whilst also forming her characters to deal with the hurt this subject also carries.

Beye (2015) mentions an interview with Levy and discusses Levy's form in using the son to write down the mother's story.

> Indeed, the difficulty for Levy herself of writing about the subject of slavery is evident in an interview discussion of the book. She says, "It's a story no-one wants to hear.... It's upsetting, miserable, not a pleasant subject" ("Andrea Levy"). The novel's narrative structure foregrounds these challenges by highlighting the problems of telling July's story and presents Thomas's editorial reflections as part of this negotiation. (Beye, 2015, p. 133).

I have found through my research and my life experiences that it is through mother daughter bonding that Afro-Caribbean women can develop a collaborative feminist consciousness of struggle against multiple oppressions. This is achieved from the retelling of stories, living life vigorously, self-representation and exploration of a mother and daughter relationship, which is passed on and observed in the daughter.

Herrera and Sanmartín (2015) also acknowledge the many ways in which the mother and daughter dyad is infused within structures that share commonalities with the islands that are connected with the African diaspora through slavery, stating that these authors aim to 'revise history through their literary works', (Herrera and Sanmartín, 2015, p. 4). They, like the other women who write through a Black literary matrilineage, reimagine and reclaim the past, as noted also by Rody:

> African-American and Caribbean women writers figure their creative relationships to the past by means of the unconventional, feminist story of a daughter's return to repair a severed matrilineage. Asserting daughterhood to history in the form of a feminist family romance, these writers claim a most intimate, authoritative relationship to a maternal past, declaring themselves history's legitimate heirs. (Rody, 2001, p. 6).

In examining the novels that construct and develop our understanding of Black literary matrilineage, it is the power of the mother and daughter bond as a site of 'transhistorical contact' (Liscio, 1992, p. 11) that navigates the process of the intricacies that we witness into an act that claims and reclaims mothering. Rody's observations of

this marks crucial declarations of values that one can subscribe to Black matrilineage, this being the female body, imagination, desire, inheritance, and myth.

> African American and Caribbean women writers re-enter the menacing realm of their inheritance in fictions fuelled by daughterly desire, conviction, lament and rage. Devising new forms in which to meet the past, they mythify both the history -generating power of the female body and the birth of female imaginative power from a traumatic historical matrix. (Rody, 2001, p. 16).

I argue that the position of the Caribbean mothers and daughters is in alignment with the same desires of African American authors that have been used to develop the Black literary tradition. This understanding for me grounds the representations of motherhood and maternal relationships through the joint expressions of identity, motherland, history, memory, voice, and the archive. The Black British author Andrea Levy's novel, T*he Long Song* (2010) portrays a journey through structures of motherhood, from the UK and the enslavement of foremothers in the Caribbean. It retells a cultural history of bodies that have been removed and thus emerges from a similar method of recovery that refers back to Black literary matrilineage (Herrera and Sanmartín, 2015, p. 132-133). Levy uses conjuring, and through this approach she demonstrates the fluidity of themes that place and locate conjuring as a tradition of Black mothering. I also use this as a means to legitimise my use of predominantly African American authors and artists as I explore Black Matrilineage's use in my theoretical and practical work, and in research.

Clarifying the description of the act as Black Matrilineage, and not with the literary attached as in Black matrilineage, Hite (1989) states that in the interchange between mother and daughter we see a 'collaborative model of maternal influence'. By exploring what Black literary matrilineage achieves and conceptualises as a revision enables a recovery to be literal, and it is a re-interpretation and transformation of words to the body that the previous essays referenced in this chapter have shown to be achievable. Black Matrilineage is concerned with reclamation through the methods ascribed from the literary tradition through the mother's body, culminating in a reconstructed view of histories that the daughter makes in her world, as a new

narrative that is a product of herself. The process of this interaction in the search and discovery occurring between the mother and daughter is the act of Black Matrilineage.

The works I have read which reflect the development through the literary begin to coalesce the impetus of the mother's role and the daughter's, both in the literary narrative and as part of that which constructs it (their own personal story). This double meaning, previously mentioned where I discuss how it defies the master's narrative, creates a shockwave of self-understanding and reflection for me, and the readers of Black literary matrilineage narratives, that together 'unseat[s] the father's law, [and] white language' (Liscio, 1992, p. 39). Thus, what the *act* achieves and the way it does this, is what was normally impossible during slavery for mothers and daughters, that being to speak their histories using their own voices in their own way.

What am I doing, what I am doing

In order to situate this act between my mother and myself as an enactment of Black Matrilineage, I had to locate the foundational structures in the framework of Black literary matrilineage. These structures consisted of:

- The mother figure.
- The relationship between the mother figure as demonstrated by the use of signifyin(g) which in the literary form is expressed through, the use of the oral.
- Conjuring, and
- Rememory (a form of nostalgic visual narrative that works as a connection to memories and stories derived from the experiences of other people).

In my transference of the oral, photography was used as a signifyin(g) motif that demonstrated the relationship between the mother figure, signifyin(g), rememory and conjuring. This allowed me to conclude that this was an embodiment of the act of Black Matrilineage that could enhance the Black literary matrilineage canon. How I did this is explored shortly, in the section, 'What make Black Matrilineage an act'.

Why Black literary Matrilineage?

The narratives in Black literary matrilineage were life stories, experiences shared and ways in which histories could be reclaimed. As explored by Izabella Penier (2014)

> [for] postcolonial cultures, affected by ruptures of history, forceful dislocation and erasure of collective memory, matrilineal narratives have become one of the most popular methods of reclaiming and reimaging the past. (Penier, 2014, p.164)

These narratives, therefore, included discourses of race and representation such as in Hurston's (1937), T*heir Eyes were Watching God*, where Janie Crawford, upon seeing herself in a photograph with her white friends, does not recognise herself as Black. They also shared narratives and slave narratives from a women's perspective, such as in Walker's (1982), *The Color Purple.* These narratives also explored elements of memoir such as in Gayl Jones's (1975) *Corregidora*. The daughter undertaking the search has a right to decide what theme her exploration will take. Her story could consist of postcolonial experiences of displacement, migration, identity, performance, creolization, or cultural fusion of the self.

Yet Black literary matrilineage does not separate these factions but encapsulates them in a common ground of experience of motherhood and mother and daughter roles, encapsulated under the theme of the self being found. Demonstrated through the use of signifyin(g). It takes us on a journey that explores the many ways in which a person can be impacted by their own history. It displays intersectionality as a way to give the future readers a glimpse into a past that has not been fractured by a single problem, instead showing the varying ways solutions can be met.

My choice in focusing on African American authors derived from the principal identification of Alice Walker (1983) and Zora Neale Hurston (1937), as the source for this mother and daughter framework. They were writing from an African American Black feminist literary tradition.

It must be recognised that writers outside of African American authors have also been informing this literary matrilineage. Caribbean heritage authors such as Andrea Levy (2010) and Michelle Cliff (1995) have been writing their own mother and daughter stories as a way to reconnect paths to themselves that are shaped by their foremothers; including the ambivalence of this motherhood as discussed in the previous section, 'Caribbean daughters and mothers'. Acknowledgment must be addressed for African and African diasporic writers such as Florence Onyebuchi 'Buchi' Emecheta (1979), Maryse Condé (2010), and Mariama Bâ, (1989) and works written in a language I am unable to read and not yet translated that follow and inform a Black matrilineage framework.

In tracking the trajectory of the development of Black literary matrilineage from the African American authored starting point, the extraction of the methodological approach from the literary was an appropriate origin point in this research. This not only allowed me to position my research from this founding stage but add validity in situating my practice with photography in Black Matrilineage.

It was also about language and understanding the how, of what was being said by these authors, which follows the same problem I had with my own mother's language in the understanding of her African and Caribbean dialect. Hence, my search for an understanding of this in this research.

By allowing the works of Africa American authors to guide my way, I offer a starting point and exploration that also illuminates the matrilineal writing by African and Caribbean authors. Not every Black female writer who deals with matrilineal and motherhood, can be acknowledged in this thesis. Acknowledging the anthologies that explore their works, such as: Pamela Mordecai and Betty Wilson (1989), Stewart Brown (1990), Selwyn R. Cudjoe (1990), Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido (1990), Carman C Esteves and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, (1991), Nasta, S. (1991), and mentioned previously, Herrera and Sanmartín (2015), there is now a greater accessible range (many due to translations into English) from women of the African diaspora in

which to explore and develop the framework required for constructing Black Matrilineage.

What makes Black Matrilineage an act

Expanding on the elements that Dubey (1995) surmises in their paper and locating strategies as metaphors by observing maternal art practices and the uses of visual imagery located in the practices that have used photography and text, I have been able to identify the following elements that will be used to define Black Matrilineage as an act. Confirming these as elements that help identify a text as part of Black literary matrilineage, I adhere to these as I continue to explore the connection with these in my practice, and if this act I am part of can be identified through these components of Black Matrilineage practice, and thus claim these elements as identifiable markers in the transference:

- **The mother (mother figure)**

The act that takes place within the literature of Black matrilineage occurs between mother and daughter. Both are needed as this is a matrilineage, that is being searched for and discovered. There is a realisation that as the daughter searches for the mother within their own work, the daughters' (and the mothers) role possesses the ability to shift, that is to change places.

The mother as predecessor and as the figure that is searched for or communicated with is vital. However, in reading mothering as an act and a position, the mother figure can also be read in metaphorical terms. In Black literary matrilineage, the mother can be seen and utilised as the author, the novel, or the protagonist in the novel. In extending this notion of mother, it allows an inter-generational and intercultural conversation to take place.

In this instance, I utilise the mother role literally, by using my mother. I am in this role the daughter. I search for my maternal mothers through and by the body of my mother.

It is this crucial act performed by the daughter that encapsulates the meaning of the term Black Matrilineage as an act.

- **The relationship - participation**

In some respects, this act of Black Matrilineage can be genderless. Due to the metaphorical nature of the mothering concept, the importance lies in the 'mothering' relationship. That is the use of the author's work, or the novel as mother, or in the role and narrative the protagonist plays. It is the relationship between the one doing the searching that is fundamental. Without this, the search, discovery and recovery could not happen.

With this observation of my mother and then myself, it became clear that, in this relationship, not only would I be allowed to participate in the act of learning what Black Matrilineage is and meant for me, I was also able to use this understanding in the physical act as one that is an act in itself and could, therefore, be moved from the literary into other disciplines.

- **The oral**

How the mother speaks, communicating by holding within her speech a pattern of historic existence, is an identifying aspect of the mothering figure in Black literary matrilineage. How the oral is reflected in participatory and performative forms such as 'songs, poetic language, formulaic features, the language of ritual and oral epic' (Middelton, 1993 p. 64), is how the presence of the oral is identified. As I have said before, the tonal aspects of the sounds I heard from my mother's voice fascinated me. In fact, I was mesmerized by this notion of listening and interpretation, which I came to understand through the literature of Black literary matrilineage.

Listening and interpretation determined the use and reach of the oral. The oral in Black literary matrilineage was speakerly text, the signifyin(g) act of the mother's heritage. With my mother, I witnessed this in the video *Did it work?* (2015). This act began my quest and helped me shape my understanding of the importance of listening and interpretation. My own use of visual communication as another way of knowing

instigated a form of listening and interpretation, transferring the oral (which I could not understand) into that which could and would become understood through my photography.

- **Rememory**

Utilising Morrison's (1987) term 'rememory as a way of visually and/or emphatically seeing/feeling/hearing stories as histories, allowed me to use the photograph instead of written or spoken words, thus moving them away from the page. As rememory incorporates the use of imagination and is formed as 'another way of knowing', its use as a language and metaphor, based upon the oral, allowed me to see how photography would work in this way (explored in-depth in Chapter Six).

- **Conjuring**

Expanding upon Morrison's (1987) reference to rememory as another way of knowing, the idea of conjuring, explored briefly in this chapter, sees the daughter gathering information by other means during her search. These are the ways in which authors reveal their searches for self-understanding and connection, and also how information is known and passed on. Brooks, Martin, and Simmons (2021) state that conjuring marks 'an important moment in Black feminist literary criticism [where]... permission to link Black women's storytelling to the intangible, to other ways of knowing that Black women have inherited from their mothers, "other mothers," and foremothers before them.' (Brooks, Martin, and Simmons. (2021, p. 452).

In claiming photography as my mode of conjuring, I inherit from my mother's oral this way of being that I could only understand and reconfirm through photography. This allowed it to become the medium through which I could experience 'another way of knowing'. My understanding of how this works is through the act of doing it - it is personal to me. Yet photography's approach as a visual narrative in the tradition of Black matrilineage is to find out if it can be passed on.

Conclusion

As I search for my voice, the understanding of the voices who have come before me have proved significant. An emotional tug at the heart to my own understanding is that Black mothers and daughters previously had felt a need to speak their voices of history. This chapter and the reading around it, was for me the space where we women as daughters come together to listen, to share, to cry and to help each other. The last line of Alfonsina Storni's (1976) poem *It May Be,* discussed by Maglin (1979) in *Full of memories,* reminded me of the silence's mothers had to endure in the past and the roles that daughters undertook in confronting and challenging this history. By this I understood that, as daughters, we try to reclaim, to release and find a way to love our mothers through our works. As literature and poetry was the way I understood what Black literary matrilineage was determined to do, quoting this poem in full allows me to pass on this understanding to you.

It may be

Maybe all that my verses have expressed
is simply what was never allowed to be;
only what was hidden and suppressed
from woman to woman, from family to family.

They say that in my house tradition was
the rule by which one did things properly;
they say the women of my mother's house
were always silent - yes, it well may be.

Sometimes my mother felt longings to be free,
but then a bitter wave rose to her eyes
and in the shadows she wept.

And all this-caustic, betrayed, chastised-
all this that in her soul she tightly kept,
I think that, without knowing, I have set it free.

(Storni 1976, p. 20).

I came to recognise that the daughters believed they would be the ones that would be able to set their mothers free. Not only is this what takes place within Black literary matrilineage in the novels written by the daughters as new histories, it is also these new works that become the key that unlocks the past mothers and, for some, the daughter's understanding of self. The expression of this was sometimes, for me, achieved by one poem, or one novel or a set/collection of writings. The expression of this literary matrilineage did not change only because of the cultural location of the mother. In fact, by looking at both Afro-American and Caribbean positions, I was able through such readings to confirm Matrilineage as the process I was encountering. As a Black British-born daughter of Caribbean parents, I position myself in a discourse of Black Matrilineage as an act and process that is developing. My inclusion in the book *Black Matrilineage, Photography, and Representation: Another Way of Knowing (*Deschler Canossi and Lopez-Diago, 2022) makes me aware that this discourse is developing worldwide. I started in 2015, and since then the term and its application to and within photography has been acknowledged.

As Black matrilineage has the added characteristic of signifyin(g), its understanding of the other equally important features such as 'conjuring', 'the oral' and 'the mother', enabled me to see that, as a network of telling their stories, it is Black Matrilineage's presence that allows daughters to hear the words of the daughters before. This act of repetition through signifying in this way acknowledges that they have been heard, to the extent that the conversation is continued in a different voice with undertones of the original speaker present. Signifyin(g) adheres to the lineage that comes from this, as a component of Black literary matrilineage, and thus Black Matrilineage. I had to understand this fully to see if it was something that connected with the work I was making with my mother and myself.

The following chapter addresses the development and usage of signifyin(g), and includes an explanation of speakerly text, which as a form of signifyin(g) needs to be understood as a determining aspect of oral translated in Black Matrilineage.

CHAPTER 3.

Signifyin(g) and Speakerly text – What is it and How I use it

As a way for the reader to gain an understanding of my mother's voice, which is explored in-depth during Chapter One, Chapter Three analyses signifyin(g) as an approach. This approach enables me to transfer the understanding developed from my mother's voice, as the literary component of Black literary matrilineage, that will be transferred to the visual medium of photography.

Signifyin(g) and speakerly text is an underpinning literary concept used within a Black literary tradition, as explored by Gates (1988a) in *The Signifying Monkey,* and later utilized in Black literary matrilineage through an understanding of Hurston's position and literary works.

> The second mode of signifyin(g)-"the speakerly text" is exemplified in the peculiar play of "voices" at work in the use of "free indirect discourse" in Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God. (Duan, 2012, p. 146).

Based upon oral mannerisms influenced by a way of talking, it is transferred and transformed to a form of literary strategy. Signifyin(g) also holds another meaning: the use in particular ways of a predecessor's work, to show a relation and as an act of continuation, influencing the writing of new work 'black texts "talk" to other black Texts' (Duan, 2012, p. 146).

In this chapter I explore signifyin(g)'s use as a Black literary tradition, its use in Black literary matrilineage and how I understand its meaning through the notion of its musical alignment as call and response. I also explore the use of Mark Turner's (1996) creative blend as a way in I utilise signifyin(g) with photography.

Henry Louis Gates' writing on Signifyin(g), in *The Signifying Monkey* (1988), expanded upon the works of Roger D Abrahams (1976), Geneva Smitherman (1977) and others.

Referencing this writing, I bring fragments of signifyin(g) to the surface in order to gain a clear overview of its definition and use. The book and vast subsequent literature offered on this subject provides a rich understanding of Signifyin(g) that I can only touch on in my thesis. To gain an adequate understanding of its usage, and thus mine, I explore the requirements of enacting Black matrilineage (from the standpoint of the literary) in order to determine if this act is an act of Black Matrilineage.

Signifyin(g)

The notion of a Black literary tradition, as shaped by a subculture of Black female authors, was identified by Mary Helen Washington in 1980 as being 'achieved under the influence of a nurturing female precursor' (Washington, 1980, p. 5). Later, in considering Hurston as the mother figure in this literary discovery, and Alice Walker as the daughter figure, Henry Louis Gates Jr. (1988), under his theory of signifying developed in The Signifying Monkey (1988a), names Hurston as 'the first scholar to have defined the trope of Signifyin(g) but also the first to represent the ritual itself' (Gates, 1988a p. 226). To note 'the parenthetical 'g' denotes the African American vernacular practices' (Caponi, 1999, p. 22), and has also been written as, Signifyin'. Gates states:

> I have selected to write the black term with a bracketed final g ("Signifyin(g)") and the white term as "signifying." The bracketed g enables me to connote the fact that this word is, more often than not, spoken by black people without the final g as "signifyin'."…The bracketed or aurally erased g, like the discourse of black English and dialect poetry generally, stands as the trace of black difference in a remarkably sophisticated and fascinating (re)naming ritual graphically in evidence here. Perhaps replacing with a visual sign the g erased in the black vernacular shall, like Derrida's neologism, serve both to avoid confusion and the reduction of these two distinct sets of homonyms to a false identity and to stand as the sign of a (black) Signifyin(g) difference itself. The absent g
> is a figure for the Signifyin(g) black difference. (Gates, 2014, p. 51).

The significance of this identification (for Black literary matrilineage) is made apparent when Gates (1988a) names Alice Walker's novel *The Color Purple* (1982) as a defining

textual moment in intertextual (re)consideration, ie signifyin(g). Demonstrating a form of inheritance in her use of signifyin(g) which incorporates elements of Hurston's literary presence into her own work, Walker's undertaking bridges the maternal association (later harnessed as one the fundamental features in Black literary matrilineage) and finds in this act of signifyin(g) a line of inheritance between mother and daughter.

> Walker has signified upon Hurston in what must stand to be the most loving revision, and claim to title, that we have seen in the tradition. Walker has turned to a black antecedent text to claim literary ancestry, or motherhood, not only for content but for structure. (Gates, 1988a, p. 255).

Outlining Signifyin(g) and speakerly text

According to Claudia Mitchell-Kernan (1972), Geneva Smitherman (1977), and Gates (1988a), as a cultural discourse of Black oral and literary expression, Signifyin(g) represents a playful, often satirical encounter with words, phrases and speech, which is indebted to particular mannerisms of the black oral.

Gates (1988a) diligently traces the roots of this type of oral expression and traits from the stories of the signifying monkey and Esu in African folk tales, to its use by enslaved Africans on the plantations, and to the creole and patois of the everyday talk in the Caribbean and in many of the African American diaspora communities, developing it into a theory of black tradition. As Pascale De Souza (2003) states:

> It is in the language itself as it is practised by the African diaspora that one must look for the origins of Signifyin(g). African slaves may have lost their ability to use their native languages but never their skills in Signifyin(g). (De Souza, 2003, p. 343).

In commenting on Gates's approach, Robert Wasler (1993) affirms that signifyin(g) as a theoretical concept of conveying meaning is harnessed and placed into various disciplines.

> Signifyin' is not exclusive to African-American culture, though it is in that culture that signifyin' has been most fully articulated theoretically, not only by scholars but also in folklore and song lyric. (Wasler, 1993, p. 346).

His statement acknowledges that there are other discourses and cultures that it sits within. Gates states that, in black discourse, signifying is the 'modes of figuration themselves' (Gates, 1988a, p.52), that (quoting Smitherman,1977) states 'can be employed for insult, "to make a point," or "just for fun"' (Gates, 1988a p. 96).

Signifyin(g) in its understanding through the use of antecedent texts by other authors, is considered through the notion of blm as a method of inheritance, and as a repository of historical narrative. This is an instrumental feature of claiming and actualising a Black literary matrilineage. For in its methodology of use it acknowledges (by claiming a line of descent as an act of literary familial bonding) a mannerism that sees the author search, discover, ingest and claim components of a previous author through their antecedent text. It does so using rhetorical strategies of signifyin(g) as a type of homage, or critical dialogue to redeliver, in their own works, an act of cultural extension. Walker's signifyin(g) upon Hurston is described by Gates:

> Walker has Signified upon Hurston in what must stand to be the most loving revision, and claim to title, that we have seen in the tradition. Walker has turned to a black antecedent text to claim literary ancestry, or motherhood, not only for content but for structure. Walker's turn to Hurston for form (and to, of all things, the topoi of medieval romance known as "The Incestuous Father" and "The Exchanged Letter" for plot structure), openly disrupts the patterns of revision. (Gates, 2014, p. 274).

These signifyin(g) acts utilising speakerly text (an author's use of signifyin(g) rituals that speak back to a black oral), are considered by Gates (1988a) who, referring to the works of Sterling A Brown (1996), describes speakerly text as 'profoundly lyrical, densely metaphorical, quasi-musical, and thus privileged as a form of black oral tradition' (Gates, 1988a, p.174).

Gates names Zora Neale Hurston as the forerunner of its use, ‘Hurston's text is the first example in our tradition of "the speakerly text," ‘(Gates, 1988a, p. 181). His explanation of its use as a signifyin(g) mode, permits the multiple attributions of signifyin(g), as we gain an understanding. The use of these black rhetorical rituals as devices through which the story is told allows us to think of it as an oral narration on the page, and not as integral aspects of plot or character development. (Gates, 1988a, p. 194). Continuing the explanation of speakerly text, Gates states that:

> This tension between the oral and the written surfaces as finding a voice in writing… [the search for this voice,]…surfaces as a free indirect discourse of what I am calling the speakerly text, in which third and first person, oral and written voices, oscillate freely within one structure’ (Gates, 1988a, pp. 21-22).

In Black literary matrilineage, this oscillation becomes the process of the search that the mother and daughter participate in through notions of call and response, which I analyse later in this chapter. It is also the methods of the daughter’s search for self in the process of signifyin(g) that are used to bring her to that point. This is what becomes the quintessential act in Black Matrilineage. Understanding this, as a characteristic of Black literary matrilineage, acknowledges the oral features of speakerly text as an expression of signifyin(g).

This rhetorical strategy of expression and learning, entailing aspects of oral dialogue transferred into an inflexion of literary stylized mannerisms, has developed from Signifyin(g). The intention of my own practice is to transfer these inflexions into photography, so that, in combination with photography content (in this aspect of the narration), it becomes a strategy that verbalizes a history I am part of, but do not know. My mother’s body and her actions, which amazed me, were registers of this. In my need to learn and mimic, it was through practising and failure that allowed me to eventually find a voice, and to reclaim this in a metaphorical and tangible sense, as my mother’s voice. This act was defined for me by the process I am engaged in, and by defining what that process is.



Figure 11: Still image sequences 1.24, 1.25, 1.27 and 1.28 from Did it Work? Video. (© 2015, Marcia Michael). My mother's bodily movements as captured in her London home 2015.

Gates explains this by acknowledging that this takes place with the signifyin(g) used in writing. He states how,

> revision manifests itself as a literal representation of a protagonist creating her self by finding her voice…[Walker] inverts Hurston's effect of creating an invisible writing that speaks, by creating an invisible speaking voice that can only write. (Gates, 2014, p. 143).

I, however, revise my mother's oral with photography.

This signifyin(g) act, in its verbal approach, includes properties such as 'the use of rhyme, rhythm, incremental repetition, interlaced with improvisation and phonetic manipulation for emphasis and syncopation as mannerisms' (Gates, 1988, p. 66). Others include repetition, revision, indirection, parody of forms, pastiche, or irony, and

entails many other characteristics, such as 'marking, loud-talking, testifying, calling out (of one's name), sounding, rapping, [and] playing the dozens' (Gates, 1988a, p. 52).

It is these motifs that are transposable. For example, aspects such as breaks in composition where visually text can be seen to break from contrived ordering systems, like lines and boundaries, where silences and elongated breaths become spaces and gaps on a page, methods of shifting, skipping, jumping, fragmenting, and repeating, are elements that, in the transformed state, disrupt and are congruent with the motifs used in the ritual of signifyin(g). For example, Senghor (1956) explanations of rhythm below, demonstrates the transferable nature of Signifyin(g) use and how it is able to shift amongst different genres because of its rhythmic quality.

> Rhythm is the vibratory shock, the force which at our senses, grips us at the root of our being. It is expressed through corporeal and sensual means; through lines, surfaces, colours, and volumes in architecture, sculpture or painting; through accents in poetry and music, through movements in dance...in the degree to which rhythm is sensuously embodied, it illuminates the spirit. (Malone, 1996, p. 32, citing and translated Senghor, L, 1956).

This idea of rhythm being more than just movement permits me to see how the photograph's use and placement becomes a way in which the musicality of my mother's voice is re-interpreted.

Indeed, the list that Gates summarises and extends upon is taken from Geneva Smitherman (1977) *Talkin and Testifyin*, where she notes the characteristics of verbal signifyin(g) as:

> indirection, circumlocution; metaphorical-imagistic (but images rooted in the everyday, real world); humorous, ironic; rhythmic fluency and sound; teachy but not preachy; directed at person or persons usually present in the situational context (siggers do not talk behind yo back): punning, play on words; introduction of the semantically or logically unexpected. Signifyin(g) can be a witty one-liner, a series of loosely related statements, or a cohesive discourse on one point. It can exhibit all, or a combination of characteristics just cited. (Smitherman, 1977, p. 121).

In understanding signifyin(g), we see it used as a way of encoding and denoting new meaning metaphorically, aspiring towards meaning to be understood in an indirect way. This posits itself as another way of knowing something, an alternative message. In a verbal interaction, but also in its transposition through other creative forms, this way of detecting meaning can also include facial expressions, tones of voice, changes in gesture and posture and speed of speech. (Mitchell-Kernan, 1972, p. 179).

'Worrying the line', is a signifyin(g) phrase (and blues trope) addressed by Cheryl Wall (2005) and utilised in Black literary matrilineage. It acknowledges from the blues 'the technique of breaking up a phrase by changing pitch, adding a shout, or repeating words in order to emphasize, clarify, or subvert a moment' (Wall, 2005, p. 332). These are tools that women authors use to find 'another way of knowing'. Correlating the use of 'worrying the line' as a feature in signifyin(g), Wall (2005) states:

> "Worrying the line" is inevitably a trope for repetition with a difference. It owes much to Gates "Signifyin(g)" because it is tropological and congruent with his assertions that "black formal repetition" always repeats with a difference". (Wall, 2005, p.16).

Its use destabilises and yet enhances the construction of meaning, through a 'process that [brings] memories to consciousness' (Wall, 2005, p. 2). It is this process of bringing memories to consciousness that achieves the fundamental aim of Black Matrilineage and needs to be emphasised as the aim of the act of Black Matrilineage that is achieved by enacting signifyin(g) rituals. Its use as a signifyin(g) ritual is to identify and to reclaim, within the field that it is being used, the metaphorical inheritance and tradition the term encapsulates.

This explanation offers a deeper insight into the components of the video *Did it Work?* (2015), discussed in Chapter One. As my understanding of worrying the line came much later, after the video was made, I explore the definition of the act later in this thesis. My intent is to give the reader a sense of the process I was in myself as I developed an understanding of the process I was searching for.

The use of signifyin(g) rituals, which are in themselves elements from an inherited source, becomes an act that identifies within its encounter and participation a performative construction. This performance is the use of the signifying ritual, an act that is thus seen and acknowledged by those in the same cultural housing, as a form of cultural interaction and expression. It is not what is done but the way it is done.

> It does not refer primarily to the signified; rather, it refers to the style of language, to that which transforms ordinary discourse into literature. Again, one does not Signify some thing; one Signifies in *some way*. (Gates, 198a8, p. 78).

The Ritual of Signifyin(g)

Like any ritual, comprehending its meaning requires that the 'participants first understand the context within which the ritual takes place' (Gourdine, 1998, p. 16). I have come to understand that the act of signifyin(g) becomes the *means* by which the person signifyin(g) conveys their meaning. Through an uninterpreted eye, and one that I experience from people judging when viewing aspects of my mother's filmed behaviour, this is mis-read as a performance. This act, for me, honours the playful interaction of an embodied communication sequence (an offer of participation) that has offered, in its transference, an act of performativity in its shift to the page and other disciplines. It happens for a reason: to convey meaning through the metaphorical notions of its implied nature. That also entails heritage in a cultural form.



Figure 12: the Still image from Did it Work?, (time 2 minute and 6 seconds) Video. (© 2015, Marcia Michael)

Despite the many definitions and interpretations that could be offered for signifyin(g), its theoretical standpoint as a strategic methodological act of constructing meaning through a form of revision that is culturally relatable (a form of expressive creativity) means that it moves beyond the oral and the literary (including poetry). This move into other conventions such as blues music, architecture, sermon preaching, theatre, painting, dance, rap, basketball, fashion, music sampling, quilt making and film to name a few, sees people of the African Diaspora manoeuvre to express their experience and heritage through this unconscious or conscious use of signifyin(g). In some ways it is so commonplace that it is no longer identified specifically as an act of signifyin(g), but as simply a way of culturally being. This is easy to see in hip-hop music.

> Nas has sampled more than five hundred songs in his remarkable career and in turn has been sampled by other artists more than six hundred times. If this isn't the essence of signifying, then I am not sure what is! (Gates, 2014, p. xxxii)

In these ways, with the understanding of its heritage, it is used as an embodied way to reclaim and rewrite history. A vital realisation is that, as an act, it offers a sense (for those who can read it) of Black presence. In talking about the use of hip hop in signifying rituals, Gates shows us that awareness is vital if one is to understand not only how signifyin(g) works but where it leads back to. Gates states,

> The next time you pull up to an intersection and instantly dismiss the hip-hop music blaring from the car in the next lane, give it a few seconds. You just might rediscover some old Chi-Lites song, or something from the Stylistics, something you'd thought you had forgotten, now resurrected and a pivotal part of the never-ending intertextual conversation …of repetition and revision… For it is in the break and its repetitions that signifying upon musical forms that came before both sustains and alters what was said—how it sounded then and how it sounds today—just as signifying does in literary texts (Gates, 2014, p. xxxii-xxxiii)

This stirs a conversation that what is being experienced probably has another meaning and has to be read in the right way to comprehend the actual meaning. Thus signifyin(g) is also a way in which histories are encoded and reclaimed. Mitchell-Kernan, (1972) argues that,

> To correctly decode the message, a hearer must be finely tuned of values which he observes in relation to all other components of the speech act. He must rely on his conscious or unconscious knowledge of the sociolinguistic rules governing this usage. (Mitchell-Kernan, 1972, p. 176).

The use of signifyin(g) in other disciplines, such as dance, music, clothing and sports is explored in *Signifyin(g), Sanctifyin', & Slam-Dunking* edited by Caponi (1999). In dance for example, Thompson (1999) cited by Caponi identifies West African dances as 'key documents of aesthetic history…they are nonverbal formulations of philosophies of beauty and ethics' (Thompson, 1999, p. 12). Further, noticing the 'the dominance of a percussive concept of performance; multiple meter; apart playing and dancing; call-and-response; and, finally, the songs and dances of derision' (Caponi, 1999, p. 12-13), are traits used in West African dance. This is noticed and expanded upon by many

other authors, such as John Miller Chernoff[38] (1979) and Jacqui Malone (1996), and here we see the shift in use that the rituals play. Thomas DeFrantz and Anita Gonzalez (2014), in their edited book *Black Performance Theory*, state that 'these traits became the foundation for an aesthetic ideology surrounding Africanist performance as a family of practices' (DeFrantz and Gonzalez, 2014, p. 4). Later, I noticed how Samuel Floyd's (1995) explanation of the multiple meters reflects the way in which I had naturally configured these works together to allow them to make meaning for me.

It is here that I noticed the shift from a verbal signifying into an embodied act. As I learned more about the derivates of signifyin(g), its significance and presence in Black Matrilineage and my mother's actions, these can be utilised by me within photography. As I search for other ways in which Signifyin(g) is used within Black culture, I locate disciplines to support my argument that it can be used within photography.

Finding signifyin(g)'s presence in architecture, a discipline that Scott Ruff[39] (2009) describes as 'less personal', Ruff states that 'the principles of disruption, play, and ambiguity [as signifyin(g) rituals] are harder to discern' (Ruff, 2009, p. 67).
Within my photography, it will be the case that for some people my use of play and disruption as a signifyin(g) motif, cannot be seen; as in Ruff's (2009) observation, it is harder to distinguish, but still present and viable.

Ruff sees Walter Hood 's (2020) uses of 'counter geometry' 'thresholds', [and] scarification' (Ruff, 2009, p. 68), as a way in which Hood maintains a visual access to the past through the physical and metaphoric fissures of perceptual growth. The connection with my own use of photography and the use of scars (explored in Chapter Six) within the work, and the way in which thresholds in the sense of spaces and framing is used, allows me to draw a stronger connection to the role of signifyin(g) in my photography.

[38] John Miller Chernoff is a percussionist, author and ethnomusicologist studied drumming in Ghana for several years. He has been awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for Humanities.
[39] Scott Ruff is a professor of Architecture who specializes in the African American space.

Finding many of these strategies at play in the form expressed through musical genres blues and jazz, Hood's work demonstrates the use of signifyin(g) rituals which shapeshift themselves into any expression of culture by members of the African diaspora if this is their desire. As described in the introduction to *Blues and Jazz Landscape Improvisation's* a book about Hood's designs, Garrett Eckbo[40], (1993) states:

> "Walter Hood inhabits a lively, inventive, and socially constructive landscape…he explores, develops, and applies a design vocabulary based on, or derived from, blues and jazz. It is constructive and challenging to use the sequential patterns of this special music as a source for spatial design." (Hood, 1993).

As musical repertoires, blues and jazz convey a significant correlative relationship with signifyin(g), as well as with its interpretative use as a literary style. Acknowledging Mezz Mezzrow[41] (1946) as 'one of the first commentators to recognize that Signifyin(g) as a structure of performance could apply equally to verbal texts and musical texts' (Gates, 1988a, p. 69). Gates proceeds to illustrate how works by Ishmael Reed, Langston Hughes, and Ralph Ellison fall into this category. With this understanding, works situated in Black literary matrilineage by Toni Morrison and Gayl Jones are also acknowledged to be within this field. (Lars Eckstein 2006 and Pettis, 1990). In some ways, I am proposing here that a next step in this field of growth away from the literary would be in photography.

For further reading on the structural use of blues and jazz as a materialisation of signifyin(g) strategies, see Houston A. Baker, Jr., (1984) *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory;* Smith (2005) *Blues, Criticism, and the Signifying Trickster*; Burrows, (2007) *'Black, Brown and Beige' and the politics of Signifyin(g)*; Walser (1993) *Out of Notes: Signification, Interpretation, and the Problem of Miles Davis*; and the chapter in (Machlin, 2001) '*You got me walking talking and squawkin: What Waller signifies*'.

[40] Garrett Eckbo (1910- 2000) was an American landscape architect.
[41] Milton Mesirow (1899 -1972), known as Mezz Mezzrow, was an American jazz clarinetist and saxophonist. He wrote "Really the Blues" and embracing African-American culture through music.

Signifying in Words, Music and Pictures – call and response

My reason for identifying music so strongly in this discussion is that, as a signifyin(g) ritual, call and response is considered the 'master trope'. As a structural device used in the guise of speakerly text but also as a rhetorical strategy in the novels of Black literary matrilineage, call and response becomes a symbolic and metaphorical site for the mother and daughter interchange. A signifyin(g) ritual in which I, as the daughter in this practice, converse with my mother as a way to learn the mother's orality. I am not learning the 'what' of the act but the 'way' of the act.

Blues, jazz, classical, hip hop and rap are musical genres that in their making and reinterpretation can utilise forms of signifyin(g). As works which, in their performance and construction, can be expanded upon, repeated, given a little something extra, cut into pieces as a form of amusement or irony, intersected with other works and/or improvised upon in the making of new compositions, these are considered as forms of signifyin(g) or troping. Recalling that, according to Gates citing Claudia Mitchell-Kernan[42], that 'Signifyin(g) [is] the black trope for all other tropes, the trope of tropes, the figure of figures. Signifyin(g) is troping' (Gates, 1988, p. 81).

> Musical Signifyin(g) is troping: the transformation of preexisting musical material by trifling with it, teasing it, or censuring it. Musical Signifyin(g) is the rhetorical use of preexisting material as a means of demonstrating respect for or poking fun at a musical style, process, or practice through parody, pastiche, implication, indirection, humor, tone play or word play, the illusion of speech or narration, or other troping mechanisms. (Floyd, 1995, p. 8).

Signifyin(g) is a form of collective cultural history and resistance, suggesting that it is a congruent form of valid expression for people of the African diaspora. '[S]ignifyin' respects contingency, improvisation, relativity— the social production and negotiation of meanings' (Walser, 1993, pp.345–346).

[42] Claudia Mitchell-Kernan's early work during the 1960's and 70's was in linguistic anthropology. She centred her research on speech patterns of African Americans.

In specifying what characteristics of music are held as signifying rites/acts, Samuel Floyd's (1995) definition of the vocal sounds, the functioning of these forms, and the ways in which they are explored, acknowledges the multidisciplinary ways in which these tropes can be applied and carried over.

> Musical Signifyin(g) refers to the rhetorical use of the musical tropes subsumed under the master trope of Call-Response: calls, cries, whoops, and hollers; call-and-response, elision, pendular and blue thirds, musical expressions, vocal imitations by instruments, and parlando; multimeter, crossrhythms, and interlocking rhythms; and all the rest. (Floyd, 1995, p. 96).

I use signifyin(g) rituals in their simplest form, such as imitation with repetition to balance the process of play in the process of learning an encounter that is needed to enter not only the mother's world but the matrilineal past. I utilise gestures of complete contradictions, which are actually rites of mimicry through my encounter with photography, these uses are explained in Chapter Six. It is in this use as an act that opens a gateway for discovery in the symbolic field (of inheritance) to be grasped, acknowledged and utilized in the writing of new work in the actualization of self. As Cheryl Wall stated in response to the process, it is in understanding 'the process that brought those memories to consciousness and elicited the stories that opened up a past I had not imagined' (Wall, 2005, p. 2).

In referring to its use in music but seeing how this corresponds to its interpretation as a metaphorical structure, Caponi (1999) explores the use of call and response as a form of 'ensuring interdependence through participation' (Caponi, 1999 p. 11). He suggests that the interaction of the act involves a participation, and thus an inclusion, in the conversational dialogue, and the repetition of this to and fro in the structure of Black literary matrilineage becomes an act that unlocks the code of understanding and meaning. This in turn becomes part of the process of Black Matrilineage and releases the information needed to fulfil the task of actualising it, owning it and passing it on.

> ‘The call and response structure assures that responsibility for the music will be exchanged constantly from individual to group, and back again. (Caponi, 1999, p. 11).

Citing Floyd’s (1995) explanation of call and response to better understand signifyin(g)’s ability to ‘carefully and skilfully manipulate …components of the… act in order to create new meanings’ (Mitchell-Kernan, 1972, p. 179), allows me, knowing that signifying rituals are changeable within disciplines, to see if on this journey of photography can be used as a method in the enactment of Black Matrilineage. As a concept that is inter-changeable yet holds within it a link to my African ancestors, signifyin(g)’s role in Black literary matrilineage becomes significantly appropriate for representing the search and discovery of my maternal history. It is in this way that signifyin(g) triggers the opening up of a symbolic field that becomes the place where I both understand meaning (by identifying) and convey a new approach to meaning (through my use of photography) and defines the process as significant in the act of Black Matrilineage.

This symbolic field is where inherited information resides as histories encoded, instincts belonging to a previous ancestor and intuitions used and reprocessed for the future. It is the act of signifyin(g) and speakerly text itself, that permits entry to the symbolic field.

In laying out Floyd’s (1995) explanation at length, I saw an account of how I saw call and response working. I was aware somehow that the movement of the act itself was important and not purely what was being said or done. The movement carried and undid something. There was a spiritual connection it used that also ties to me the notion of its ritualistic habits with my mother, but I could also be taking photographs of flowers and the responsive effect of the to and fro would be the same. Samuel A Floyd Jr (1995) states:

> These tropes are only the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Beneath the surface on which they play is the realm of the unconscious, where the cultural memory functions and from which comes the internalized and remembered cultural perspective that gives deeper meaning to works

> and performances of music. Put another way, the execution of Call-Response tropes opens the symbolic field, where reside the long-standing, sublimated conflicts, taboos, and myths of personal and group emotional experience and our relationships to them. (Floyd, 1995, p. 230).

The way I interact with the images I make and how these are made in the act of signifying enables this proverbial iceberg (Floyd, 1995) to be significant in my understanding of what it means to signify with photography. It is also how the photographic content marks a significance as becoming, for me, the symbolic field. Calling out the use of call and response which is enacted with the photographs I make with my mother, but also in how they are positioned when displayed, formed for me a level of symbolism I had not yet fully understood (as demonstrated in Fig. 13). Floyd's explanation of creative impulse, intuitions and the location of these, was information that I needed to locate to further understand what this process was I was in and how it could be explained. From Floyd's text, I replaced the music with photography; it made sense. My mother's rhythmic voice was replaced by photographs using the concept of signifyin(g), which is a fundamental component in Black literary matrilineage and thus also in the process of Black Matrilineage.

My act of using photography with my mother's voice, and later her body, is an act of call and response. The images that are made in this interaction appear because of the symbolic field that has been opened. Thus, the images that are revealed from this symbolic field bear fragments of histories that are fuelled with 'long-standing, sublimated conflicts, taboos, and myths of personal and group emotional experience' (Floyd, 1995, p. 230).



Figure 13: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A trans-temporal diptych that shows mother and daughter sitting on the same chair. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches, (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael)

How is signifyin(g) enacted in my practice

I use my mother's body and my own as structural containers that hold and carry meaning and history, that participate in an act of call and response to explore an understanding of my mother's linguistic use of sounds and words. I have witnessed in my practice the identification of signifyin(g) the past it belongs to and comes from. It is my response, both through and with photography, which I acknowledge as a signifyin(g) act. This is where I generate meaning, which is necessary for me within a Black literary matrilineage framework. This unlocks the gates of my mother's symbolic field and that of my own. In exploring the video *Did it Work* (2015), I explained how my mother tried to get me to participate in her act, but I did not. It was only when she engaged me in a battle of sorts, a play with her own words, which was signifyin(g), that, by using photography I did participate.

The need for me to find and locate this shared point of access allows the photographs to be a bridge that connects my own interpretation of the ways my mother communicated with me. In this way, I endeavour to not lose the fundamental aspects of heritage contained in her chosen approach to me and yet, in this approach, to forge an alternative concept of passing on history. This involves seeing how photography can transpose literature, as a medium that carries the process, with the potential to redefine and realise the task of searching, (for the mother), discovering (the language in which the mother is contained), and reclaiming (allowing the mother to speak, through her), as well as positing a reclamation of history through this visual medium.

This activity is a criteria in establishing black (visual) matrilineage, and this is what my research has discovered. Firstly, I ask whether photography can be a suitable substitute in place of text. Secondly, the process of enacting methodologies pertinent to Black Matrilineage through an art practice that holds itself in a Black literary matrilineage framework, although this is not what I discuss in this thesis, has become the process I have used to understand photography's use within the Black literary matrilineage framework.

Why and how this works in my work…

I have found out through my research that, within the concept of Black literary matrilineage, the daughter's search in the act instigates a call, which in the writing of the new works becomes imbued with the mother's presence or voice. This act becomes a response. The way in which the daughter responds becomes a signifyin(g) revision, but the daughter's act in repeating her mother's form with revisions is also a signifyin(g) act.

The revising of my mother's orality with photography I consider an act of signifyin(g). I use photography to search for an understanding of my mother's orality, utilising what I heard and the sounds from her voice in the video *Did it work?* (2015) i.e. her use of signifyin(g). I have come to understand that in her own way she invited and

encouraged me to participate in a signifyin(g) conversation. I use photography as the reconfigured cultural expression of call and response (a signifying trope), to mediate my mother's signifying acts (and my mother's matrilineal past), embodied in her. This was an act that, between us, would allow me to gain meaning and learn a methodology I can pass on to others through my artistic practice and in my speaking and writing about this series.



Figure 14: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A combination of images of mother and daughter nude bodies. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches and 11.25 x 7.5 inches (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael)

Familial Text and Photography

Cheryl Wall (2005) analyses the writing of Lucille Clifton[43] (1976) in *Generations – a memoir,* stating that she uses photography not as the response but as the call and choosing. This is her preferred way to communicate, to respond through text. 'Clifton's

[43] Lucille Clifton (1936 -2010) was an African America Poet. She was also an author and teacher focusing on the African American experience.

album of family photographs acts as the call to which her narrative responds' (Wall, 2005, p. 64). What Clifton executes due to her mediation and meditating on the photograph of her great-grandmother is, as Wall describes, 'able to summon her ancestor's story, even as she remains painfully conscious of the gaps in her knowledge and the limitations of her imagination' (Wall, 2005, p. 17). Clifton uses her preferred mode of communication transposing from photography to the text. I use mine, transposing from the oral to photography.

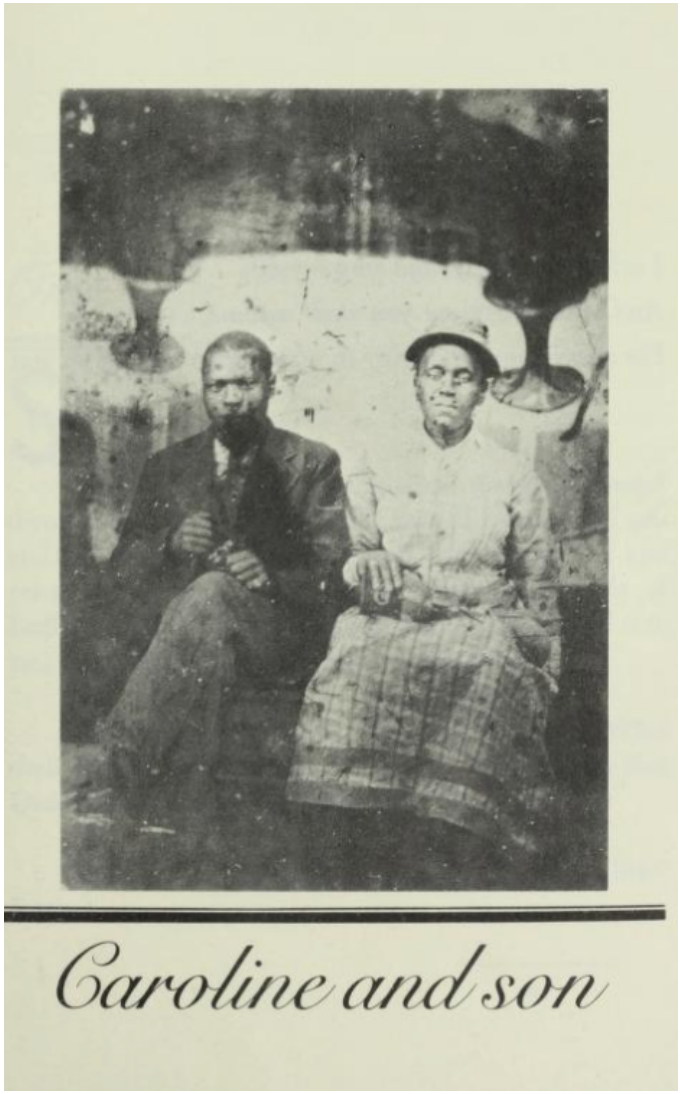


Figure 15: Caroline and Son. p. 3 Photographic image from Lucile Clifton's book Generations, black and white photograph of a man in a black suit sitting next to a woman who wears a checked shirt, hat and white blouse. (©1976, Lucille Clifton).

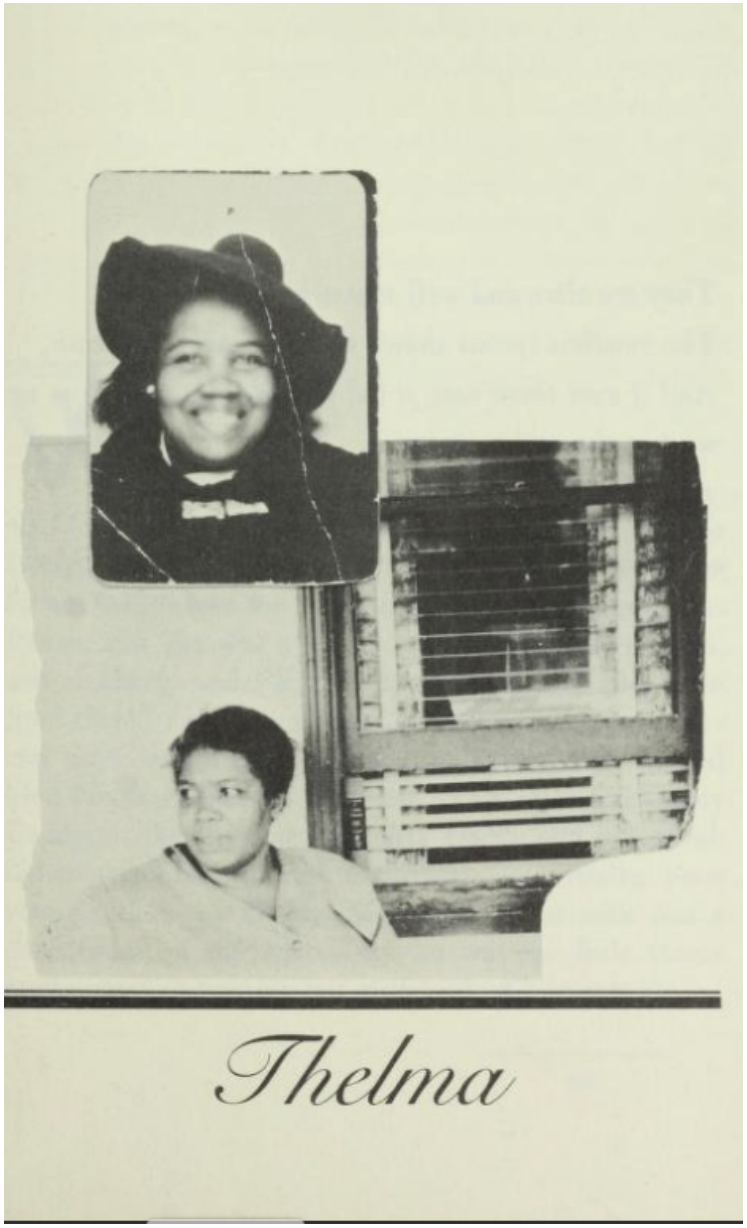


Figure 16: Thelma, p. 61 Photographic images from Lucile Clifton's book Generations. Two black and white photographs on a page. One is a Photo Booth size portrait of a woman in black clothing wearing a black hat. The other image shows a woman standing next to a window that has blinds, she is looking sidewards. (©1976, Lucille Clifton).

An extract from Clifton's (1976) *Generations:*

> Who remembers the names of the slaves? Only the children of slaves. The names are Caroline and Lucy and Samuel, I say. Slave names.
>
> Oooh she cries. Oh that's just awful! And there is silence.

> Then she tells me that the slave cabins are still there at the Sale home where she lives, and the graves of the slaves are there, unmarked. The graves of my family. She remembers the name Caroline, she says, her parents were delivered by the midwife, Mammy Caroline. The midwife Mammy Caroline. (Clifton, 1976, p.6).

I looked within the framework of Black literary matrilineage for answers as to what the encounter with my mother was. The troping strategies used with the intention of rousing an engagement to aid me in uncovered the key to my ancestral past and implied, for me, the process of signifyin(g). I was searching also for some kind of non-verbal formulation. Author Caryl Phillips[44] (1993), discussed by Tomeiko Ashford Carter (2014), establishes the female protagonist in his book *Crossing the River* to explore the way she conveys and interprets meaning with emotion, rather than using words. Proclaiming through the title of the essay that signifyin(g) can be a non-linguistic act, Carter (2014) explores how Phillips (1993) 'demonstrates that the black (female) subject must transfer meaning through non-linguistic cues' (Carter, 2014, p. 250). Carter states that in using her senses to claim meaning over words, 'she is reconfigured when she is able to create meaning, especially in a subconscious state' (Carter, 2014, p. 250).

I was also able to see how the use of photography could enable a to and fro, the call and response. As I have previously stated, the revision of my mother's oral as the principal nature of signifyin(g) becomes a generator that unlocks the code for entry to the past, as an act of Black Matrilineage. Therefore, by revising the strategic purpose of photography, through the notions of Paul Stoller (1997) and Elizabeth Edwards (2005), photographs can be used as retrievals of inherited histories. I practice signifyin(g), that is, in the way I play with the making of my images and the construction of the visual compositions. Thus, responding and interpreting my mother's call, photography in my practice becomes both the process and the content of the signifyin(g) act.

[44] Caryl Phillips (b. 1958) is a Black British author and playwright of St Kittitian heritage.

Stoller (1997) and Edwards (2005) believe that photography and photographs can be explored beyond the visual and utilised as, and in, another way of knowing. This aspect connects to features of Black Matrilineage, especially conjuring and rememory (explored previously in Chapter Two and in the upcoming Chapter Four) which procures these activities, and the generative use of signifyin(g), as other ways of knowing.

> Photographs operate not only simply as visual history but are performed…as a form of oral history, linked to sound, gesture and thus to the relationships in which and through which these practices are embedded. (Edwards, 2005, p. 29).

So here my interaction with the transference becomes a way in which embodiment moves us 'beyond the text' (Stoller, 1997 p.61).

Arguing that the histories of the 'dispossessed … are embodied in objects, song, movement and the body', Stoller, (1997, p. xvi) discusses that learning does not only take place through the reading of texts, but through the body also, 'through the mastery of the body – [and] through the vicissitudes of pain and illness' (p. xvii). He anchors and associates the body in all its movements, with the oral, as the way in which embodiment moves us 'beyond the text' (Stoller, 1997 p.61). Replacing as I do the text with photography, Stoller's positioning permits me to engage in an embodiment process with the body through photography, and through the process itself of signifyin(g). This leads me to an alternative way of using photographs and of procuring meaning through the framework of Black literary matrilineage.

To connect my body back to my mother's use of the oral (i.e., her sound expressions), I play as a child would, practising different ways of understanding until I or someone else gives me an indication that I am on the right path. Doing so, I developed an understanding of how to identify the paradigm my mother uses in the video *Did it Work* (2015), as signifyin(g). My aim in achieving what she does, and what she wants me to achieve, opens the symbolic field. In this way my mother can assist me in finding out about my matrilineal past. I do so by illuminating the use of the photographs (in their construction and content) as the medium that carries the information of the

body, making this visible. My mother's oral signfyin(g) demonstrates the use, amongst others, of musical traits such as rhythm, call and response, calling out, trifling, breaks etc. These would be the same elements as in the transposition of Floyd's (1995) use of thirds and two measure instrumentals in the use of call and response, and the use of rhythmic polyrhythms and multi metres which I apply in the use of diptych and triptychs as motifs of display. An example of the diptych and triptych can be seen in Fig. 17-19.

This reflects back on Floyd's understanding of African drumming's use, known historically as a form of communication. Thus, this aligns my practice and my mother's oral with an African heritage, supporting the ways in which memories of the past are embedded in the oral, acknowledging that the past can be reclaimed in this way. Floyd states:

> polyrhythms and cross-rhythms derived from Africa most obviously manifested themselves. Two-against-three and three against- four combinations were common, and the hemiola and additive patterns of 2 + 3 and 3 + 4 were ascendant… To the unpractised and uninformed ear, these additive, multimetric configurations appear to be mere syncopations, but they are not. (Floyd, 1995, p. 66).

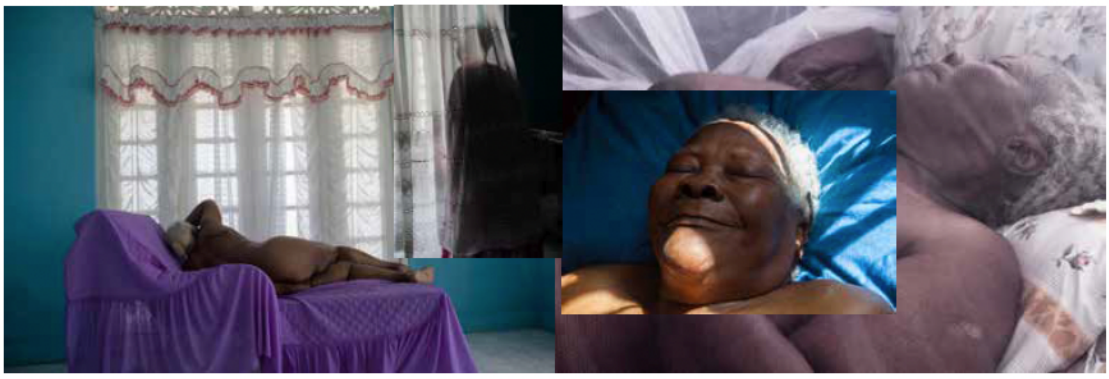


Figure 17: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A combination of images of mother and daughter images. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches and 11.25 x 7.5 inches (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael)

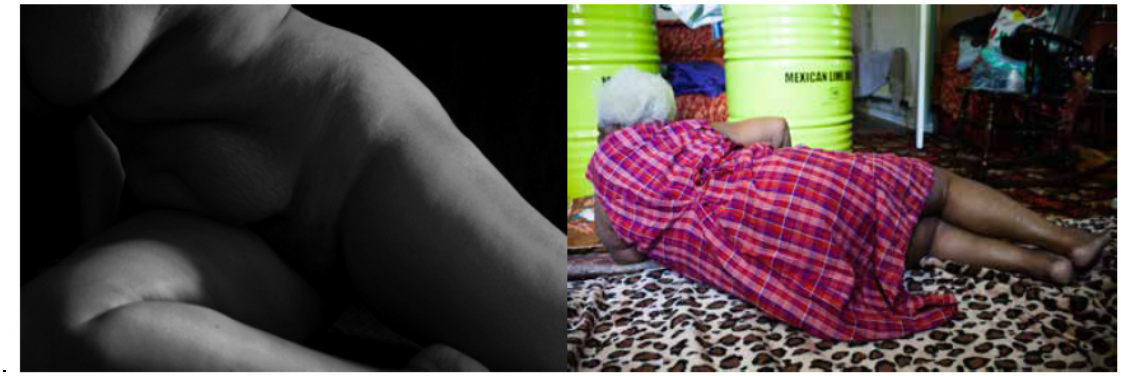


Figure 18: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A Diptych of mother and daughter images. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. Each image is 30 x 20 inches (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael)



Figure 19: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A triptych of mother and daughter images. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. Each photograph 30 x 20 inches (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael)

These images represent different aspects of our conversations and histories. The approach experienced in the construction of film and text situated within Black literary matrilineage allow the parts to be read accordingly –parts that make a whole. Photographs which by nature are seen in fragments become part of the process from which the whole story can be narrated and passed on as a series of artworks.

Creative Blends: blending acts and processes with photography

The influence of Mark Turner's [45] (1996) creative blends (as discussed by Lauri Ramey (2014) through the works of Paul Laurence Dunbar's (1903) signifyin(g) use holds importance as to how I formulate the construction of my images through the premise of signifyin(g).

> A creative blend takes place when two or more dissonant input spaces are mapped over each other, and the resulting metaphor contains features not present in either of the input spaces…these inventive metaphors generally occur when no conventional way exists to describe a new idea'. (Ramey, 2014, p. 51).

I began to understand the interchangeable aspects of signifyin(g) and speakerly text that resurface and transfer from the text to the visual. This occurred as I negotiated how the images, as parts of conversations, expression and symbolic themes, are put together.

As demonstrated in Fig. 20, the main image on the left does not show the bottom half of the body, yet an image displaying the lower half of the body has been positioned upside-down, just coming off the frame. This image connects its ending with the larger image on the right, which is also presented upside down. The inserted image in this right-hand picture is levelled so that it ends with the larger image on the left, thus connecting the two.

The image on the left shows the left side of the person, whilst the image on the right shows the right side. In each of the four images, a different body part is revealed. The smaller image on the left obscures part of the larger image on the left, whilst the images on the right do not do this.

[45] Mark Tuner (b. 1954) is a professor of cognitive science. He co-founded the theory of conceptual blending with Gilles Fauconnier, (1944-2021), a French linguist, researcher in cognitive science. Mark Turner won the Anneliese Maier Research Prize from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation in 2015.



Figure 20: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A combination of images of mother and daughter images. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches and 11.25 x 7.5 inches (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael)

In this way with these blends, the bodies speak to each other, holding conversations that potentially support each other when the fragmented parts are combined.
There is for me a clear distinction as to who is calling and who is responding. The body in the image on the left has a head, which is visible in the small image on the right. Though the face is hidden, the arm is raised enough so to allow the emittance of sound that is to be carried from the mouth. It is a sound that I believe is responded to by the body of the right as an embodied response; one that is silent, and this is why there is not a head showing with this body.

In explaining the smaller inverted image on the left. I have positioned my body so that it represents symbolically a bow, one that is used to carry the sound of my mother to my body.

In the image on the right, my body is crouched as if to soften the blow, but what this also does is connect from the body of the left (not fully) in order to position themselves.

In demonstrating how I am to be positioned, the inserted image on the right shows the posture. It also reveals more of how this conversation should be understood and here the use of light, tonality and contrast are used to further understand the direction of the conversation, which is repositioned in the larger image of my body as a reflection. This image for me in this use of creative blends is as a moment of reflection, a pause. Knowing when and how to make pauses in a conversation of signifyin(g) is important as noted previously by Hurston (1981) in *The Sanctified Church* in Chapter One.

> The audible breathing is part of the performance and various devices are resorted to to adorn the breath taking. Even the lack of breath is embellished with syllables. (Hurston, 1981, p. 81).

How I signify using photography was influenced by Lauri Ramey[46] (2014) and their interpretation of Turner's list on blending spaces. Ramey (2014) discusses Turner's work on blending and, upon discovering this, I ventured to the source of the meaning of creating blends. Turner's (1996) list of what blending is, and what it offers is essential in knowing how I perform signifyin(g) rites through the creation of the multiple blends of image construction. Turner (1996) defines blending as:

> … a dynamic activity. It connects input spaces; it projects partial structure from input spaces to the blend, creating an imaginative blended space that, however odd or even impossible, is nonetheless connected to its inputs and can illuminate those inputs. A blend can produce knowledge. It is not constructed by union or intersection of the inputs. It is not a skeletal or static mock-up of a few elements from the inputs but has a life of its own. (Turner, 1996, p. 82).

In stating, for example that blends can be multiple, as many as can be 'mentally juggled... can also be recursive, happening in steps, so that a blend can be an input space to another blend' (Turner, 1996, p. 76). This allows my pattern of interaction with

[46] Lauri Ramey is a writer, professor, and literary activist. She has written books on African American poetry and fiction.

photography, in my quest for practicing signifying in this way to be aligned within the practices of and as a signifying act. One that by the use of creative blends, also, procures the transferable nature of speakerly text.

Here, in acknowledging my role in creating these blended spaces, I can layer the images on top of another, and at times, position them on boundaries as part of the process formed in call and response. I can rotate, duplicate, hover over each other, overlap and shift in tonality through the using of black and white and colour simultaneously, to convey meaning and transpose functions and features to acts of signifyin(g).

The blended space, according to Turner (1996), possesses a sense of freedom and its own understandability in its developed construction, and thus 'will conform to its own logic, [and] is free of various constraints of possibility that restrict the input spaces' (1996, p. 61). It is the definitions of the compositional and elaboration mechanisms involved in the development of the blend, that reinforce a way it can be conveyed and sees me begin to understand my process. Imagination and hence creativity, plays a huge part in the way that creative blends can be used to break boundaries, concepts and structures, thus creating new meaning. This transference to photography sees this use of creative blends as a signifyin(g) ritual in itself, and one that allows me, in its formation to do it, it my way.

> Composition and completion often draw together conceptual structures previously kept apart. In this way, blends yield insight into the conceptual structures from which they arise. (Turner, 1996, p. 84).

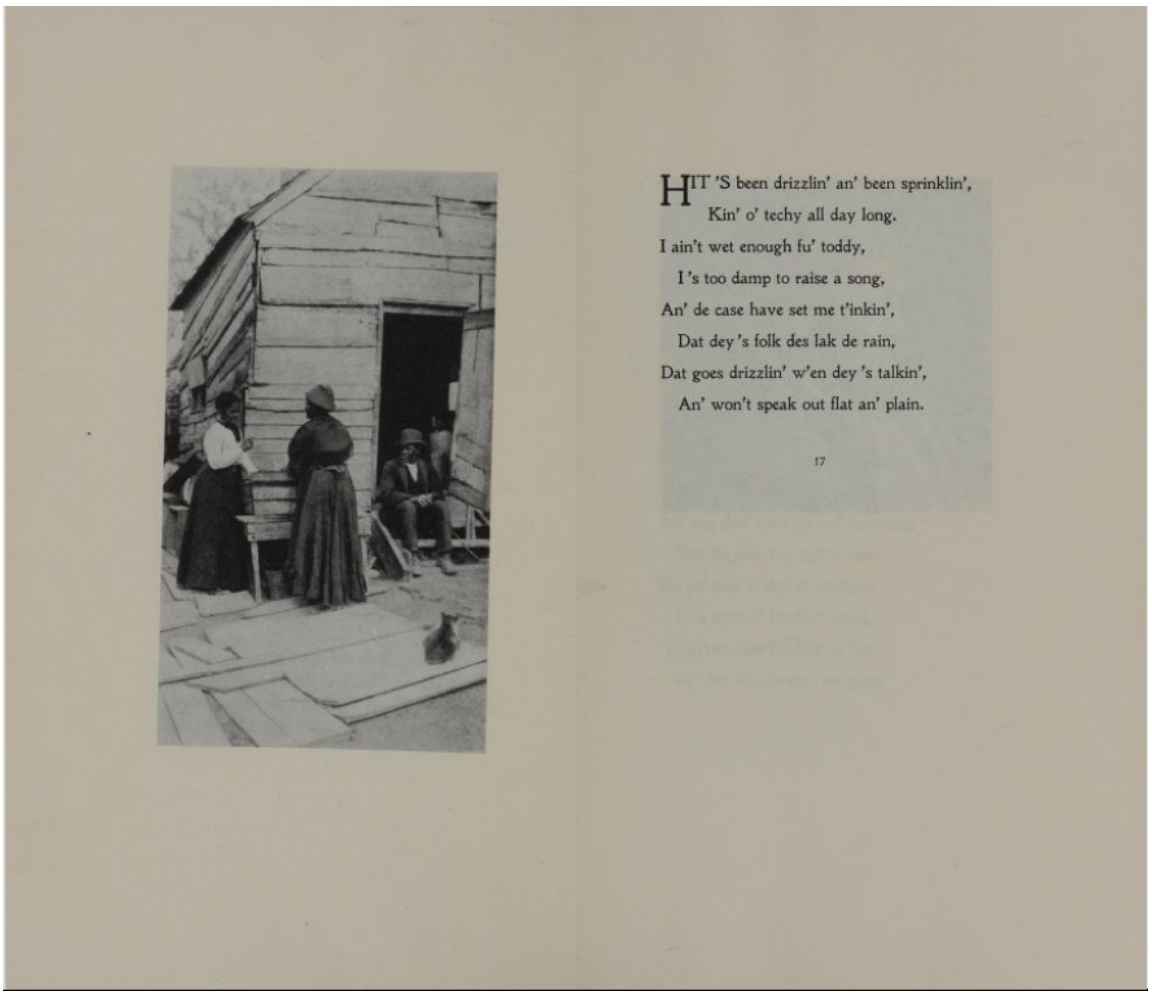
Therefore, in my approach to communication through creative blends, I create phrases and narratives, that in their existence may or may not work, as that which unlocks the symbolic field. However, in the process of finding the coded sequence that opens the field, these blends in the act are where I either learn the rules of the game or fail.

Gaining further understanding of the visceral interpretation behind the way I participated in the signifyin(g) act, the amalgamation of the photographs as diptychs,

triptychs and the like, as instances of Turner's (1996) creative blending, permitted me to not only understand the process of that which came from my mother, but affirmed for me my ability in constructing another way of seeing and initialising meaning. Turner's interpretation of parables, which I saw reflected in my mother's use of her creole sayings, gave me an understanding of my use of blending with the way I laid out the photographs.

> Parable gives us a different view of meaning… meanings are not mental objects bounded in conceptual places but rather complex operations of projection, binding, linking, blending, and integration over multiple spaces. (Tuner, 1996, p. 57).

This connected for me with Ramey 's (2014) expression of Dunbar's (2018) signifyin(g) in spiritual slave songs. This is the orality and speakerly text we find in Black literary matrilineage. Interestingly, Dunbar (1903/1972) in some of his poetry collections, pairs photography with his poetry - see (Sapirstein, 2012) for further reading on Paul Dunbar's connection with the Hampton Institute camera club. Though this use of photography has no relation to the use of signfyin(g) in his poetry, or in my own photography, its importance for me is in the use of combining photography and text to convey meaning, identity and information. Dunbar uses photographs (see Fig. 19-21) in such an interesting way that I am reminded that the availability of both allows the audience (if they cannot read) to gaze upon images of themselves, and if they enjoy the use of a speakerly text, to enact by spoken words the passing on of history from one to another, in the way that they speak.



HIT 'S been drizzlin' an' been sprinklin',
Kin' o' techy all day long.
I ain't wet enough fu' toddy,
I 's too damp to raise a song,
An' de case have set me t'inkin',
Dat dey 's folk des lak de rain,
Dat goes drizzlin' w'en dey 's talkin',
An' won't speak out flat an' plain.

17

Figure 21: Drizzle. 1903/1972, Poem and black and white photographs in Malindy Sings, illustrated with photographs by the Hampton Institute camera club. pp. 16-17 of 15-20 (© 1903 Paul Laurence Dunbar).



Ain't you nevah set an' listened
At a body 'splain his min' ?
W'en de t'oughts dey keep on drappin'
Was n't big enough to fin' ?
Dem 's whut I call drizzlin' people,
Othahs call 'em mealy mouf,
But de fust name hits me bettah,
Case dey nevah tech a drouf.

Dey kin talk from hyeah to yandah,
An' f'om yandah hyeah ergain,
An' dey don' mek no mo' 'pression,
Den dis powd'ry kin' o' rain.
En yo' min' is dry ez cindahs,
Er a piece o' kindlin' wood,
'T ain't no use a-talkin' to 'em,
Fu' dey drizzle ain't no good.

19

Figure 22: Drizzle. 1903/1972, Poem and black and white photographs in Malindy sings, illustrated with photographs by the Hampton Institute camera club. pp.18-19 of 15-20 (© 1903 Paul Laurence Dunbar).

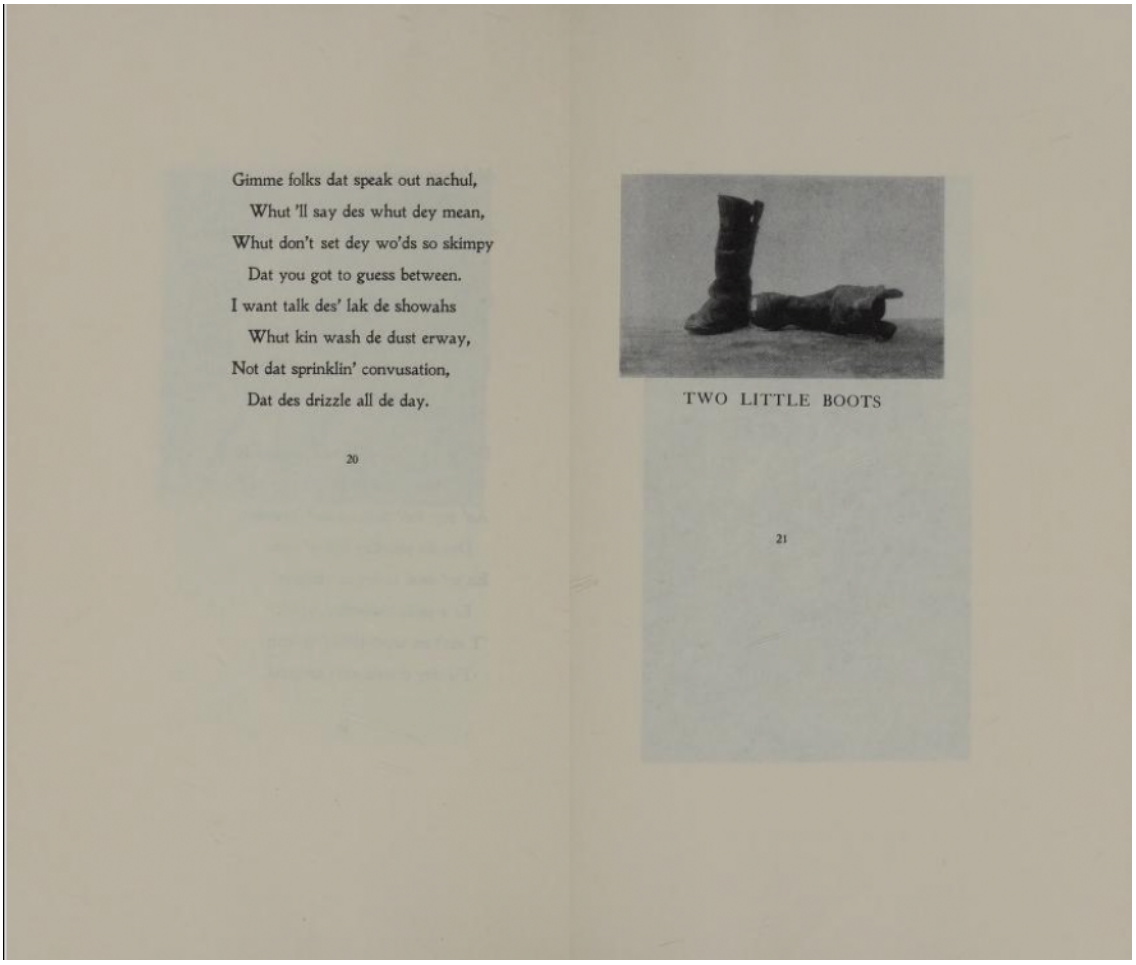


Figure 23: Drizzle. 1903/1972, Poem and black and white photographs in Malindy sings, illustrated with photographs by the Hampton Institute camera club. pp. 20-21 (© 1903 Paul Laurence Dunbar).

In identifying the use of creative blends through the signifyin(g) Dunbar utilises, Ramey (2014) defines some of the expressions as 'asymmetrical or conflicting input spaces' (Ramey, 2014, p. 51). Finding in my playful constructions with the photographs the 'how' of what I do, Ramey's explanation that it is how they are put together that makes meaning and confirms its purpose, amplified not only what I felt I was engaged in, as a signifyin(g) act, but that my engagements were acts of signifyin(g). As these assemblages resemble the art of collage, it is worth noting here that artists such as Romare Bearden (Gelburd and Golden, 1997) Fig. 22, Maud Sulter (2015) Fig. 23, Deborah Roberts (2022) Fig. 24 and Lorna Simpson (2021) Fig. 25, practice a form of rhythmic syncopation that, through its interpretation from jazz, exhibits a form of signifyin(g) that can be identified through the visual process of collage.

‘These juxtaposed input spaces are brought together in the blend in order to generate new coded meanings.’ (Ramey, 2014, p. 51).



Figure 24: Romare Bearden Evening 9: 10 461 Lenox Avenue, 1964. Photostat mounted on fiberboard. 50 1/2 x 66 inches. Collection Pérez Art Museum Miami, museum (© 1964 Romare Bearden)



Figure 25: Maud Sulter Duval, from the series Syrcas (1993) © 1993 Maud Sulter, courtesy the Estate of Maud Sulter.



Figure 26: Deborah Roberts, Portraits: When They Look Back (No. 3). Mixed media collage on canvas. 45 x 35 inches. Artwork © Deborah Roberts. Courtesy the artist; Vielmetter Los Angeles; and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London. (© 2020 Deborah Roberts)



Figure 27: Lorna Simpson. The meaning of power and physical world, 2021 (detail) collage and pastel on handmade paper (7/8 x18 5/8 x1 5/8 inches) (©2021 Lorna Simpson)

This concept, which compliments my interaction with the photographs, is enriched by Lisa Mansell[47] (2014) who explores 'the how' and the purpose of movements between

[47] Lisa Mansell is a viola player. Lisa is also a researcher and scholar in contemporary poetry.

signifyin(g) rites in the works of poet Harryette Mullen (2009). Noticing Mullen's signifyin(g) use of languages, the motifs of bodies in her poetry and lyricism as 'colliding, shifting, and blending notions of identification' (Mansell, 2014, p. 145), Ramey finds, a new kind of key that shifts the symbolic field. This is 'where the long-standing, sublimated conflicts, taboos, and myths of personal and group emotional experience and our relationships to them [reside]' (Floyd, 1995, p. 230), from a different rendering of expression. This is one that in its production permits opportunities for discoveries from every act that Mullen, for example, performs in her work.

> A new musical instrument that can accommodate and attempt to represent new complexities in identity construction, post-identities, and the sounds that creak in between... [where the] blend[ing] of boundaries opens the possibility for influences to arrive from new directions. (Mansell, 2014, p. 145).

It is precisely such an act of the opening of the symbolic field that I have been proposing is possible by the approach I take in signifyin(g) through and with photography. Its use permits the crossing of boundaries and opens a space when anything is possible.

> Mullen demonstrates the same conceptual fragmentation of the visual to allow alternative sensory interpellations to manifest. (Mansell, 2014, p. 143).

Fragments of history

What signifyin(g) also does for me is recover and resurrect. It does not do it in its entirety; it can and must be done it parts. Each Novel/poem in Black literary matrilineage is a fragment of history that has been retrieved. This is best explained by Toni Morrison in a conversation, cited by Rushdy, that Morrison had with Gloria Naylor, in which she explains how this is achieved.

> That bit by bit I had been rescuing her from the grave of time and inattention. Her fingernails maybe in the first book; face and legs, perhaps, the second time. Little by little bringing her back into living life. So that now she comes running when called-walks freely around the house, sits down in a chair; looks at me.... She is here now, alive. I have seen, named and claimed her. (Rushdy, 1992, p. 593).

By locating the ritual of signifyin(g) in my mother's communication I apply the signifying principles of revision towards a way of generating meaning. I have found that photography can carry the content and takes on 'another way of knowing' through the act of signifyin(g) meaning through call and response. My photographs are used in place of some of the features used, such as rememory and the oral, that establish this as an act of Black literary matrilineage, as found in the writings.

The reason I have decided to practice with photography and not through text, has been explored through the previously mentioned discussions of Lucille Clifton (1976) and Caryl Phillips (1993). I have also found that Toni Cade Bambara's [48] response to Kalamu's Ya Salaam's[49] question about placing 'calls 'in text, is the answer that also justifies my 'why'. "Do you think that fiction is the most effective way to do this?" Bambara replies, "No. The most effective way to do it, is to do it!" (Holmes and Wall, 2007, p. 63). Furthering her explanation as to why she decided to make a call in the approach she did and not speak through an essay format, Bambara replied 'Literature is what I do.' (Holmes and Wall, 2007, p. 63).

Photography is what I do, and is my preferred method of communication, whilst my mothers was the oral. And for me to learn about the process, I had to engage with it in the way I believed I could do so effectively. My purpose is not only to form an impression through its use in the act of its construction, but also to be able to pass it on.

[48] Toni Cade Bambara (1939-1995) was an African American author, civil right activist and filmmaker.
[49] Kalamu Ya Salaam (b.1947) is an American poet, author and film maker.

Conclusion

For me, listening to my mother's voice was the most important part of the video. *Did It Work*? My intention was not to record her movements, only the voice.

Having heard the sounds she made when she was experiencing pain before, I knew there was something about it that enticed me to hear more. This time, unlike the other times when I heard her pain, it was different. I heard melodies and tones that enabled me to imagine that what I was hearing was someone's language. My imaginative encounter with the oral enabled me to see how this journey I was on with my mother, searching for an answer to the question of what she was doing and if she knew what she was doing, brought me closer to understanding what took place in Black matrilineage. Positioning the oral and the mother as important factors in the act of Black Matrilineage, I was able here to reflect upon my mother's uses of signifying and how, through the use of photography, I too would be signifying.

In locating a connection through music, the musical connotation of my mother's act became slightly more understandable. The sounds I heard teased me to listen further.

It was not the familiar blues of John Lee Hooker (1966) or the jazz of Ella Fitzgerald (1963). This was the literary blues and jazz (Thompson, 2014), (Sarangi, 2016) and (Grandt, 2005) to be found in poetry (Harris, 2004) such as that by Langston Hughes (Chintz, 2014), and in Black literary tradition such as in Morrison's (1992) *Jazz.* Yet there was a sense that further discoveries would uncover its meaning and purpose, correlating with my own experiential practice.

I trusted the space that I was in, and I was open to investigating whether this experience I was having with my mother equated to the enactments I discovered in Black literary matrilineage.

In knowing now that this was something that would bring me closer to an understanding of my maternal history, I found Floyd's (1995) descriptions of polyrhythms and cross-rhythms appealing. The use of call and response channelled an act between mother and daughter. The multi rhythms correlated with my uses of diptych, triptychs and other layout formations that I used in photography. I asked, how

could this be? The connections and the clarity of what this signifyin(g) act was, and is part of, made me reflect on my upbringing within the UK and the cultural gaps this created between myself and my parents' Caribbean heritage. I wondered why this knowledge was missing for me. I can imagine now that there were things that my mother needed to tell me, let me know and pass on. Perhaps, as I have said before, she had tried previously, and I just was unable to hear. This time, however, she was able to connect her voice with my creativity in photography. Yes, photography became the way that I would understand my mother's way of signifyin(g), enabling me, I hoped, to do this myself and pass on not only through my practice in acknowledging photography's role in Black Matrilineage, but also as a cultural way of being that I could pass on.

My delight also in recognising Turner's (1996) creative blends, as the means by which I manoeuvred and shifted the images of my mother and myself, was in the discovery that shifted my opinion on what I was doing. This transference of a literary mode to an enactment of the signifyin(g) that takes place within Black literary matrilineage was what I had been practising. This was a moment of clarity, understanding and acceptance.

Paul Laurence Dunbar's (1903) use of photography and text struck a chord that, upon reflection, directed my search to contemporary Black artists who utilised these two elements within their work. I questioned why he paired the two together, and though this is a question I cannot commit to answering in this thesis, neither is the development of books by black artists, including works by Roy DeCarava and Langston Hughes' (1967) *The Sweet Flypaper of Life*, that combine photography and text. I do, however, look towards authors who utilise photography as a conceptual metaphor in their writings, and artists who gain influence from these authors perceptions in their practice. As Dunbar's (1903) excitement for photography bridged a connection to Zora Neale Huston's (Henniger, 2003) use of photography, I chose to follow the maternal lineage and concentrate on female artists, including Hurston, who pair text with their photography both literally and figuratively.

These authors, including Hurston (1937), Carrie Mae Weems (2012) and Lorna Simpson (2013), will be discussed in the next chapter as I determine how photography could work in the transference of the literary to the visual.

CHAPTER 4:

Hurston, Photography and Rememory

Introduction

Before proceeding, it is necessary to clarify, as a reminder for the reader, the use of the terms Black matrilineage and Black Matrilineage.

Black matrilineage is the term applied to literatures that fall under the term Black literary matrilineage shortened to Black matrilineage in Sadoff's (1995) essay. In contrast, I capitalised the M of matrilineage, when I am describing the act that takes place within the literature of Black matrilineage between mother and daughter, as a process.

Signifyin(g), as explored in previous chapters, is a means of expression. It is an essential feature that I have understood from the use of speakerly text and the explanation given by Gates (1988) in relation to Hurston and Walkers' act, as used within Black literary matrilineage (Black literary matrilineage). Hurston's role in its development and use as a literary tradition opens a much wider discourse on how this has been achieved. It has become clear for me, as I research her influence through the use of photography as a metaphor, that her role as 'mother' (determined by Alice Walker (2005) in the act of Black literary matrilineage) has become significant to my thinking and practice.

In her role as anthropologist, Hurston utilised video, sound and film to gather and record information that became the basis of her enquires. Elaine Charnov[50] (1998) and Hannah Durkin[51] (2021) explore her position as a filmmaker. My encounter with

[50] Elaine Charnov is an anthropology scholar. She is the director of the Margaret Mead Film Festival at the American Museum of Natural History.
[51] Hannah Durkin is a scholar in Black Atlantic history.

Hurston sits firmly within her use of the photographic constructions she uses within her writing to convey her signifyin(g) encounter.

In this chapter, I will show how photography connects with Zora Neale Hurston and her writing. I examine how Morrison's (1987) use of rememory from *Beloved* can be observed through the photographic prism of Black Matrilineage (Black Matrilineage), and how this use of rememory is something I carry through in my photography, as I search for correlations to uphold my view that photography can be an equivalence for writing in the act of Black Matrilineage.

Focusing on the works of Carrie Mae Weems (2018) and Lorna Simpson (2018), who both cite Hurston as an influence in their photographic practice, I explore uses of signifyin(g) in their works. These artists extend the work of Paul Laurence Dunbar (1903), Roy DeCarava and Langston Hughes (1967), using imagery and text to practice forms of speaking to and from the black experience.

Writing photography into a Signifyin(g) act

I use Alice Walker's signifyin(g) on Hurston's (1937) *Their Eyes Were Watching God* through her oeuvre. In particular the novels *Meridian* (1976*)* and *The Temple of my Familiar* (1989*)* utilise photography as the vehicle from which the epitome of the maternal figure's identity is configured. 'Walker builds on Hurston's use of the camera to assert and provide real evidence of the unreal of African history and its living presence in African American culture' (Henninger, 2007, p. 133).

In the construction of Black Matrilineage, establishing and affirming its presence, the camera's use in Alice Walker's (1976, 1989) novels becomes a methodological tool from which insight of who we are and who we can become is made possible. Hurston's position on the use of the photograph, through Stuart Burrows' [52](2008) explanation,

[52] Stuart Burrows is assistant professor of English, American Literature, Photography, and Photography Theory at Brown University.

gauges an understanding of its transformative use. This explains how, within the context of Black narrative, 'metaphor is ... identified with visuality. Black speech changes the meaning of words by treating them as pictures' (Burrows, 2008, p. 162). Burrows continues to explain that Hurston has an interest in how these images are used by the people she observes in her role as an anthropologist.

> What interests Hurston about images is not whether they are like their subjects so much as how subjects use images to define their relation to the world. (Burrows, 2008, p. 162).

As Janie Crawford (the main character in Hurston's (1937) *Their Eyes Were Watching God*), develops an understanding of herself, a photographic metaphor is used and culminates in the allegory of the novel, which is the seeing and knowing of oneself. In telling her life story to a friend Pheoby, Janie recalls the moments of her life, from the time she first discovers that she is a "colored" little girl by searching for her face in a group photograph. This retelling of her life provides the structure for the book's narrative.

> "So when we looked at de picture and everybody got pointed out there wasn't nobody left except a real dark little girl with long hair standing by Eleanor. Dat's where Ah wuz s'posed to be, but Ah couldn't recognize dat dark chile as me. So Ah ast, 'where is me? Ah don't see me.'
>
> "Everybody laughed, even Mr. Washburn. Miss Nellie, de Mama of de chillun who come back home after her husband dead, she pointed to de dark one and said, 'Dat's you, Alphabet, don't you know yo' ownself?'
>
> "Dey all useter call me Alphabet 'cause so many people had done named me different names. Ah looked at de picture a long time and seen it was mah dress and mah hair so Ah said:
> " 'Aw, aw! Ah'm colored!'
>
> "Den dey all laughed real hard. But before Ah seen de picture Ah thought Ah wuz just like de rest. (Hurston, 1937, pp. 19-20).

What this achieves turns a 'discovery into a rediscovery and transforms the photograph into a moment of remembrance rather than recognition' (Burrows, 2001, p. 443). With

this understanding, using the photograph as both metaphor and prop, Hurston reformulates the photograph's use, from a Black historical perspective of stereotypical use, transforming it into a site of remembrance, then into a way to remember and another way of knowing. Here, for Burrows, the photograph is seen to be utilised against the grain of the white racist southern tradition and used by black folk in their way.

> '...[for] many Black folks rooted in southern tradition'… pictures were and remain a mediation between the living and the dead'. (Morrison, cited by hooks, 1995, p. 63).

It becomes clear, through my primary research and reading of the secondary literature, that photographs are significantly read and utilised differently by the black community. When I observed how black women writers have addressed their opinions of photography, ideas such as bell hook's in *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics* (1995) have been useful. She argues that photography 'has been, and is, central to the aspect of decolonisation that calls us back to the past and offers a way to reclaim and renew life affirming bonds' (hooks, 1995, p. 64).

In approaching the possibilities and transferences of photography's use as a construct of Black Matrilineage, I take heed of the practices of the artists such as Chantal Akerman (2015) and Amanda Heng (2011). These artists and others will be discussed further in Chapter Five, artists who, in collaboration with their mothers, have used photography as a tool to engage in matrilineage.

In further exploring this, I gained an understanding from Edwards (2005) and Stoller (1997), who challenge social theorists and cultural critics using Western methodologies of textual interpretation with cultures that do not see or use text in that way. Both Stoller and Edwards, researching anthropology and photography, see that meaning and embodiment through photography can be different from what is normally ascribed in Western perspective. Edwards states:

> Photographs operate not only simply as visual history but are performed…as a form of oral history, linked to sound, gesture and thus to the relationships in which and through which these practices are embedded. … photographs are made to tell history can be extended beyond the visual in ways that heightens the understanding of the visual itself. (Edwards, 2005, p. 29).

For Stoller, photographs do not just represent but can also evoke emotions and or understandings, through another way of knowing. Considering the body as a text that can be read and questioned, Stoller's (1997) belief that photography should be explored beyond the visual connects directly to the features of Black matrilineage, especially through the act of conjuring (Pryse and Spillers, 1985: see Chapter Two for more details about conjuring). I questioned through my research and practice whether photography would be a suitable vehicle for rememory, wondering whether metaphors constructed using photography in the realm of actualising a Black Matrilineage could be read as cultural markings on the body. If so, this would extend the use of texts and challenge the reliability of the documented and recorded versions of history.

To understand how the notion of rememory is achieved through a metaphoric symbolism of photography, I explored rememory's definition in *Beloved*. I then turned to photographic works by Carrie Mae Weems (2012) and Lorna Simpson (2013), whose practise encodes historical and cultural information through a visual connection, developing ideas of female Black subjectivity to test the learnt elements of rememory.

Rememory, photography and Black Matrilineage.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the methods Morrison uses in *Beloved* (1987), such as 'rememory' and the oral, assist in expanding and defining themes that construct the act of Black Matrilineage. For my research, an understanding of what rememory is and how it works is essential for placing its use as a methodology within this act. it then becomes for me the way in which I transfer the notion using photography.

To understand it, I first have to express my thought pattern.

re- memory - I remember again to not forget. I show you my memory, so you don't forget that it is mine and not yours, rememory is in fact ours. A memory shown again, repeated, re-membered, returned. Memory as an object is there again but not, it's only in the past. but what separates memory from thought. I am remembering you, remembering you, remember me.

In this way, my awareness of the photographic practice I am in with my mother forms the connections to the pasts I search for and have embodied during and because of this process.

There is extensive writing on the notion of rememory and its meaning. I have chosen to concentrate on how it works in Morrison's *Beloved* (1987). Hirsch's explanation also offers a reflection on how it is used in this thesis.

> 'Morrison calls Rememory: repetition + memory, not simply a recollection of the past, but its return, it's re-presentation, it's re-incarnation, and thereby the revision of memory itself. (Hirsch, 1994 p. 107).

It is from my own reading of *Beloved* that I see rememory being explored as a 'thought picture' which, acting like a photograph, contains imagery in which its tangible presence connects to the past and awakens a form of reality for the viewer. This is not as a direct memory, but as a glimpse of somebody else's memory, so close that its emotive connection is sensed. I also see how rememory echoes memory and goes beyond it. Rememory functions as a way of preserving the past. Its presence as a concept offers a tangibility that reaps reconnection and reclamation (Marks, 2002).

Seeing photography as a medium in which stories of transmission utilise the notion of rememory as a form of repetition and re-enactment, the intimate familial space between mother and daughter permits rememory to be utilised as a tangible reality of how intergenerational pasts can re-surface. In my own need as a daughter to know my mother's history, in the act of rememory I, as the daughter, can identify and reposition myself in order to do that which rememory is, to recover and speak to the past.

It is through one of the main mother figures in *Beloved,* Sethe, that Morrison positions the expression and symbolic rendering of rememory. I quote at length below to give an insight into how Morrison uses rememory and its connections to images…

> "I was talking about time. It's so hard for me
> to believe in it.
> Some things go. Pass on. Some things
> just stay. I used to think it was my rememory.
> You know. Some things you forget. Other
> things you never do. But it's not. Places, places
> are still there. If a house burns down, it's gone,
> but the place--the picture of it--stays, and not
> just in my rememory, but out there, in the
> world. What I remember is a picture floating
> around out there outside my head. I mean,
> even if I don't think it, even if I die, the picture
> of what I did, or knew, or saw is still out there.
> Right in the place where it happened."
>
> "Oh, yes. Oh, yes, yes, yes. Someday you
> be walking down the road and you hear
> something or see something going on. So clear.
> And you think it's you thinking it up. A
> thought picture. But no. It's when you bump
> into a rememory that belongs to somebody
> else.
> Where I was before I came here, that
> place is real. It's never going away. Even if the
> whole farm- -every tree and grass blade of it
> dies.
> The picture is still there and what's more,
> if you go there--you who never was there--if
> you go there and stand in the place where it
> was, it will happen again; it will be there for
> you, waiting for you. So, Denver, you can't
> never go there. Never. Because even though
> it's all over--over and done with--it's going to
> always be there waiting for you. That's how

> come I had to get all my children out. No matter what". (Morrison, 1987, pp.35-36).

This explanation of rememory is essential to my understanding, as I argue that its role in Black Matrilineage was present but never identified. The daughter acknowledging their mother's voice in themselves was one way it was evidenced in Black literary matrilineage, also the search for the mother through self-enquiry. Rememory functions by being a 'trope for the reimagination of one's heritage' (Rody, 2001, p. 28), a form of 'self-discovery through memory' (Rushdy, 1990, p. 302). It is an act in the unifying of narratives of people's past, recognising traces of surviving connections to that past as images, feelings, experiences etc. This makes it possible for these to be shown, as a photograph can be shared. Placed in the family album, it is also passed on to future generations.

Rememory and the body

As a metaphor, Rody claims that 'rememory postulates the interconnection of minds, past and present' (Rody, 2001, p. 28). In understanding rememory's emotive and embodied state, I learnt from Lynda Koolish[53] (1995) that rememories 'acknowledg[e] one's very skin as the vast, permeable membrane that it is - a receptor that literally embodies the memories of others' (Koolish, 1995, p.426). In my practice with my mother, our bodies would touch as I photographed them. My hands, as in the video *Did it Work* (2015), would touch my mother's skin. The photograph became an extension of a body and of touch and is, therefore, able to represent a thought picture whilst maintaining the receptibility of this close interaction, even when the images are on the wall.

A photograph also shortens the search and discovery that normally would take place as a narrative strategy in the literary tradition of Black matrilineage. In seeing the

[53] Lynda Koolish, a photographer and a scholar of African American literature. She is a teacher of post colonial literature and poetry.

photograph as a tangible object, its presences represent a thing that is seen, rather than a thing that is created over time as is what happens through words in a book.

Rememory is a tool that has helped me define Black Matrilineage, merging memory and the movement of memory into the need to learn another language, carrying and remembering someone else's language. For me, rememory does this by containing codes for reading the past, present and future in its ability to conjure a picture that returns, to linger and be seen by others. My understanding comes from Sethe's description of rememory in *Beloved,* where she explains:

> 'It's when you bump into a rememory that belongs to somebody else.'
> …
> The picture is still there and what's more,
> if you go there--you who never was there--if
> you go there and stand in the place where it
> was, it will happen again; it will be there for
> you, waiting for you. (Morrison, 1987, pp.35-36).

With this encounter of rememory, I see and feel that it is in the negotiation between cultural and historical worlds that mother and daughter, who symbolise past and future simultaneously, become separated in their roles and are then classified from this position. I see that the daughter, who searches for connectiveness, understands unconsciously that togetherness and collaboration are essential, and then through the search and recovery process reclaims this togetherness and is thus classified as the one who signifies history. This is a feature of Black literary matrilineage and what takes place in the daughter who searches for the mother (and in the journey of this) reclaims a new version of history that is achieved in the remit of Black literary matrilineage through the writing. I argue for a recovery of personal histories using photography.

From my reading of *Beloved*, and through my research, I became aware that what I was experiencing with my mother, before, during and after '*Did It Work?* (2015), was something that required investigation. This approach through a literary journey, that led me to a visual understanding, provided me with cultural information I would never

have found if this was a purely visual investigation. Learning about signifyin(g) brought me closer to understanding my parents and siblings' behaviour. I am also now able to participate in cultural situations I did not previously understand, not having this information.

So many things about myself now make sense, and this fundamental aspect of self-knowing, achieved through Black literary matrilineage, could only be achieved for me through the steps I took to come to the conclusion I did. The practice of making was my way, and the multiple strands of disciplines that I encountered to claim this as an act of Black Matrilineage are yet to be written as examples of the Black Matrilineage I witnessed. In fact, the only way it can be held accountable is if my works are in turn signified upon to reveal another's daughter's history.

Daughters siginfyin(g)

In claiming that the daughter (not the mother) signifies history, Ashraf Rushdy, in *Daughters Signifyin(g) History: The Example of Toni Morrison's Beloved* (1992), has effectively demonstrated the intricacies of the relationship that Black Matrilineage aspires to. This is a role reversal, with the daughter becoming mother and the act instigated by the daughter, in her search for the mother. This significant contribution of Rushdy's inquiry, in defining what I explore as the act of Black Matrilineage, has been useful in my thinking and practice. Its significance also lies in the term I have used to name my photographic series *partus sequitur ventrem*, in which Black Matrilineage has a role. I explore this series in detail in Chapter Six.

In *Beloved*, Morrison gives us the act of Black Matrilineage that has been in development through Walker's first utterance of Hurston as her mother. The significance of the daughter Beloved's discovery of her history is what many people initially believe to be Morrison's demonstration of Black Matrilineage (Black Matrilineage). However, it is Sethe's living daughter, Denver, who finds the courage to communicate with the past (the ghost and embodiment of Beloved), in order she

believes to connect with her mother but, as it transpires, it is to find herself. She does this in order to be present in the future, thus recovering a history from the past which comes from the mother's body. The recovery of the mother's body by the daughter is the quintessential act of Black Matrilineage that I have performed with my mother during this research. Black Matrilineage refers to the "way" of the search and the processes involved in the recovery, thus becoming an act, whereas Black matrilinege refers directly to the inherited notion of a black maternal lineage.

Through this act Denver, in relation to the literary genre that expresses the mother as history, becomes the 'daughter of history' (Rushdy, 1992, p. 571), and the 'signifying daughter' (p. 579). It is the daughter who revises history and formulates Black Matrilineage as a constructive act from which to claim herself, her mother and mothers before her. As this is the notion discovered in Black literary matrilineage, I find that my photographic interaction with my mother exposes the same thing - to be present in the future. I go into more detail about this in Chapter Six. This is the connection to the maternal lineage, but only through active search and recovery.

The daughter's act, the search for history through the mother, is what constitutes Black Matrilineage (Dubey 1995). I have found that in the act of Black Matrilineage, it is the daughter's need to locate her maternal lineage that intersects with the notion of a search which trumps the inheritance. It does so by finding history through the intricacies of the search realised through maternal relationships. Signifyin(g) tells us that it is the way it is done that is influential in the act. I posit that it is only the mother and daughter interaction that takes place in the spaces of the creative blends which Turner talks about (referred to in Chapter Three) that makes possible a recovery of self and family. Additionally, I consider how my use of photography, in which conjuring as a component of Black Matrilineage, and rememory, become the methods that unite and untie the constraints of a Black literary matrilineage into a visual rendition of its namesake Black Matrilineage. Doing so is forms an aspect of my contribution to knowledge.

It is this visual rendition that I explore in Chapter Six, one that perhaps becomes only applicable to me in my explanation of it.

As it is my own history I am recovering, its meaning in relation to my mother and myself makes sense to me. I argue however, that in the presentation of my works, some viewers may gain a sense of familiarity or be able to experience rememory through my imagery.

Remembering memory

Morrison places significance on the oral as a tradition of Black literary matrilineage, and, noting this, Rushdy highlights a section from Sethe's discourse that realises its embodied meaning in Black Matrilineage, this being the reclaiming and recognition of the ancestral voice. I mention this because the maternal ancestor, who denotes a maternal lineage, is the mother (and daughter) being sought and recognised in the voice of the signifying daughter. This takes place in my practice as I seek an understanding of my mother's voice. It is this kind of claim that allows me to connect with the process of Black Matrilineage, and the aim of my thesis. As Morrison (1987) articulates so well, 'she was picking meaning out of a code she no longer understood' (Morrison, 1987, p. 37).

As in my identification of signifying as a code, one understood by those who know its meaning (as explored in previous chapters), Morrison uses the mother's voice, and the memory of the voice, to extract one's ancestral history. The sense of this is not wholly understood until Sethe relates the story in which it is situated, a story where the connection of the heard voice becomes remembered as an encoded history:

> What Nan told her she had forgotten, along with the language she told it in. The same language her ma'am spoke, and which would never come back. But the message – that was and had been there all along. (Morrison, 1987, p. 37)

This showed me that the mother becomes and 'is key to the unity' of the daughter in this act. As Washington states,

> In assuming the voices of their mothers, these writers assure that charac-ter, culture, and creativity are interlocking systems in their works. This oneness with the community which these writers express is profoundly connected to creativity. No black writer has been able to reveal the black experience in all its range and complexity without that sense of unity — of oneness with his or her people. For black women writers, the mother is often the key to that unity. (Washington, 1984, p. 148).

She is, therefore, present in assisting the daughter's search for an understanding of herself, in which ever form this may bring.

Rushdy, observing the way in which Morrison achieves this, explores Sethe's role as mother and how the codes of visual and oral language belonging to her maternal heritage correlate to an understanding of herself through her own mother and daughters:

> Now, in remembering her own relationship to her two daughters, she is able to understand her mother's acts and her grandmother's code. By situating herself within a communal narrative of grandmother-mother-daughter relationships, Sethe is able to understand herself. The code becomes unlocked and available for her hearing. (Rushdy, 1992, p. 590).

By demonstrating the creation of a tradition through this act, a child is united with a mother, a village, and her tradition. It is here that Washington's wish comes to pass: that women of African descent, through the tradition of learning from the past and by reclaiming the stories one learns from, are now able to be 'maker and keeper' (Washington, 1980, p. 6) of one's own traditions. Sadoff affirms this in her essay by understanding that in this search, which defines an act, the daughter becomes herself a tradition keeper who creates, 'a tradition that restores to her people their forgotten culture' (Sadoff, 1985, p. 11).

In negotiating photography's use alongside the verbal enactment and the enactment of Morrison's rememory, I realised that I must examine photography as a visual metaphor. Through Hurston and Walker's use of photography I began to see how Morrison's novel *Beloved* sits firmly in a BLT, narrating quintessentially the act of Black Matrilineage. It is then through what Angela Laflen[54] describes as decisive 'meta fictional and self-referential narrative strategies' (Laflen, 2014, p. 11) that the metaphoric move from the oral to imagery is possible, by replacing the oral with photography. This understanding is what I intend to unearth by examining artists such as Carrie Mae Weems (2012) and Lorna Simpson (2013), whose practices utilise a method of photographic imagery that reassigns the metaphors of Black literary matrilineage to a visual field, and to the maternal.

Carrie Mae Weems

Carrie Mae Weems, who declares in an interview she had 'decided [she] was going to be a folklorist' (2014), challenges documentary photography by preferring to engage like a 'participant-observer anthropologist' (Wong, 2018 p.172), narrating the stories from both perspectives as well as shifting subjectivity with her camera. This is similar to Hurston's method, as mentioned by Elaine Charnov (1998) in regard to film made during her field research:

> She approached film making the same way she approached the literary form, experimenting with different methods and stances. The parallels between her written work and her film work are striking. Sometimes she stands as the objective outsider, other times as the participant of the community, and the other times as an unabashed experimental. In all these roles she adopts, Zora Neale Hurston is involved in capturing the dynamics of ritualised performativity on the level of daily, commonplace occurrence. (Charnov, 1998, p. 41).

Weems belongs to a group of women artists such as Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe (2007), Tina McElroy Ansa (1989), Julie Dash (1991), Toni Cade Bambara (1980) and Paule

[54] Angela Laflen is English professor whose writing confronts visuality in multi-ethnic women's writing.

Marshall (1983), that have drawn on Hurston's exploration of the Gullah region as a signifying landscape.

The Gullah people, living off sea islands and coastal districts of South Carolina, Georgia and north-eastern Florida in the USA, are descendants of African slaves who laboured on plantations of mainly rice, indigo and cotton. The Gullah people during slavery were able to create and maintain a connection with their Africa heritage.

In her 2014 interview Weems declares Hurston's works as influential in her own work, and in her work on the Gullah region. In Weems's *Sea Island* series (1992-1993) (Figures 28 and 29) photographs depict the area, including timeworn architectural buildings. Exploring how Weems navigates her journey using photography and the use of text in the Sea Island (1992-1993), a sense of collaboration and participation emerges.

In the variations and refigurations of display that Weems offers for this series (see Figures 28 and 29), showing diptychs, triptychs, quadriptychs and polyptychs, not only can the conversations around history shift but our position in these conversations can also move. In producing a rhythm through the visual installation, Weems's employment of figurative text (recalling that Gates describes signifying as modes of figuration itself' (Gates, 1983, p. 686) plays with the intention for the suspected audience as a double voiced character. There will be those who understand and those who do not.



Figure 29: Woman in White/Pan of Water from the Sea Island series. Four panels, with two silver gelatin prints and two screen-printed text panels. 19.8 x 19.8 in. (©1992, Carrie Mae Weems).



Figure 30: Woman in White/Pan of Water from the Sea Island series. Gelatin Silver prints and text panels. Four parts each 20 x 20 in. (©1992, Carrie Mae Weems).

Using text which resembles folklore talk to reconnect to history, Weems maintains a way of seeing and hearing that repositions the female Black body in a historic setting and the literary tradition of speakerly text.

> [Weems's] images are often ambiguous, polyvalent, allusive, witty, and punning…we should be wary of any reading of her work that limits it to the most obvious or literal meanings. (O'Brien, 2004, p. 72).

In placing her body within this historical landscape, Weems sees 'that participation of the body is crucial to understanding…history' (Hara, 2014, p. 9). The connection with matrilineage and rememory is supported through Marianne Hirsch's (2012) understanding, where she explores 'the [body] [a]s a privilege site of memorial transmission' (Hirsch, 2012, p. 32).

The fact that Weems has chosen a female body which, through many of her other series, she places in situ as the maternal presence is announced and, with the plurality of times and places that we are able to locate her symbolised body, she also enacts the act of conjuring.

Kathryn Delmez[55] (Weems, 2012) explains her thoughts on Weems in an interview with D. Dominick Lombardi:

> Through the actual performance, with our own bodies, we are allowed to experience and connect their historical past - to the now, to the moment …we live the experience; we stand in the shadows of others and come to know first hand what is often only imagined, lost, forgotten. (Lombardi, 2012).

This notion of embodied performance is an act I connect to, not in the doing but in how I hope an understanding of the process I have encountered may be viewed. The awareness of the enactment I do with my mother is not the final art piece. Yet the

[55] Kathryn Delmez is a curator at the Frist Center for the Visual Arts in Nashville.

enactment is what allows me to position what it is we are doing within the scope of Black Matrilineage, and this I argue for as the premise of my thesis.

It is my belief that Weems demonstrates the signifyin(g) that Gates applies to speakerly text (also present in Black matrilinege), that can also be attributed with photographs. This Weems demonstrates by including text alongside images she makes in the *Sea Island* series, navigating a connection that adds narratives of oral history, mythology, and songs of the black experience (see Figs. 30 and 31).

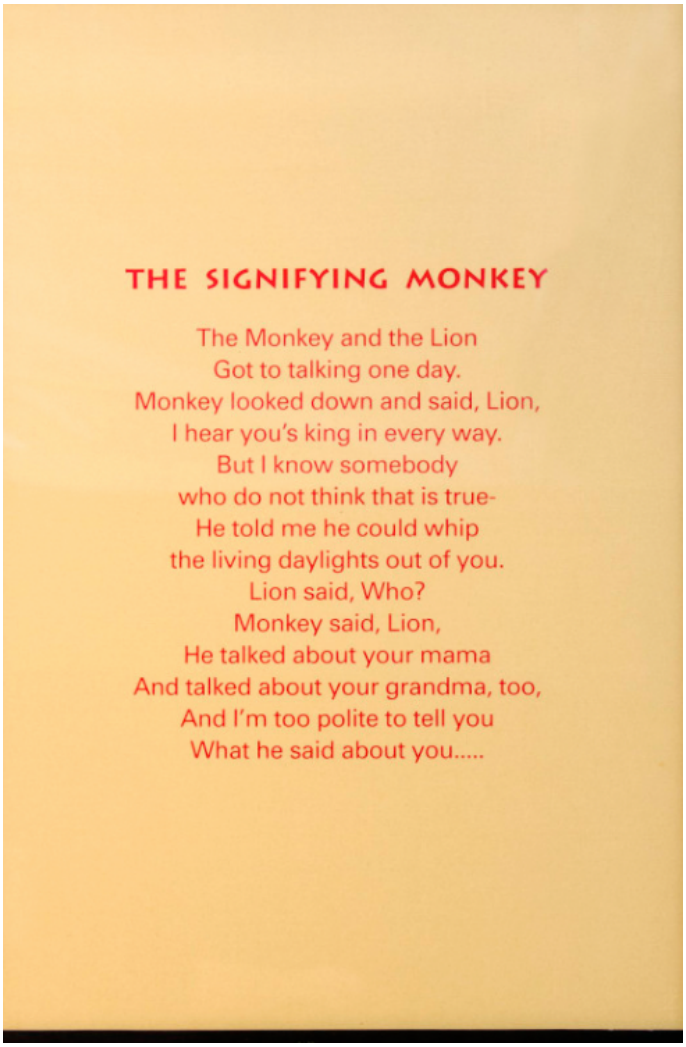


Figure 31: Untitled. Signifying Monkey text panel. Lithograph. 37 1/2" x 25". (©1992, Carrie Mae Weems).

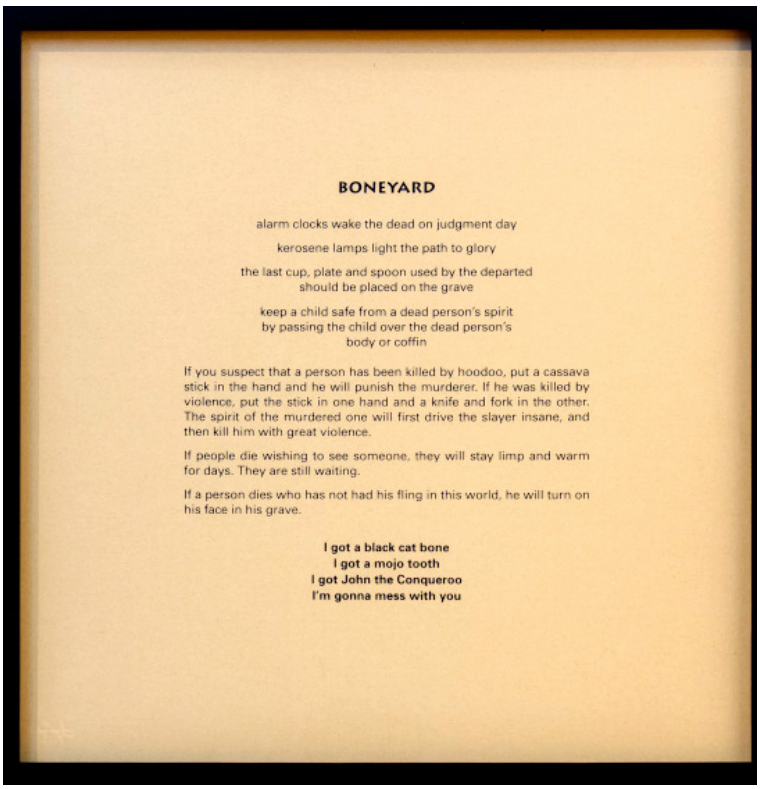


Figure 32: Untitled. Bone yard text panel - detail. screen printed text panel. 20 x 20 in. (©1992, Carrie Mae Weems).

Caroline Brown (2012) in *The Black Female Body in American Literature and Art, Performing Identity,* connects the works of literary women writers to the works of women artists (all of African Descent), as a way to symbolically engage with the past (p. 21). They find, through their engagement with the black female body, that they enact gestures of embodiment and revisions of history which create, through evocation, the 'African-Diasporic performance tradition' (p. 22).

In exploring this notion of African-Diasporic performance tradition' it is to Hurston's *Negro Characteristics* (1994), that I go for a deeper understanding. Here she draws attention to the 'Negro think[ing] in hieroglyphics' (Hurston, 1994, p. 80). These words through pictures, which have a personal history for people of African descent, are our ancestral primary language. A reconnection that is formed in speakerly text becomes, for Deborah Clarke (2001), a 'linguistic performance which affirms bodily presence' (Clarke, 2001, p. 611). This notion of embodiment addresses the continued misconception of performance that those unfamiliar with the bodily characteristics of signifyin(g) tend to attribute to users of this and speakerly text.

Caroline Brown (2012) marks a position which is directed from the authors' use of the female body by concluding that they do so by making this body signify an ancestral presence. To better argue her position, Brown 'generalis[es] the ancestral presence into a 'symbolic Mammy figure' (Brown, 2012, p. 21). In this way, Brown makes aware the connection not simply with the female body but with the maternal figure from slavery through the subversion of the stereotypical mammy who, in her position as a slave in the 'New World', experiences the Black body from this conjuncture. Confirming the reclamation of Black matrilinege from this historic point and confirming the mothering body as a site and as a marker, Dubey, 1995 and Rody (1995) offer a way in which artists can begin to form their own matrilineage of maternal recovery.

In discussing Lorna Simpson, an American photographer and multimedia artist, Brown states:

> Simpson's visual text reiterates what the writers are doing in literary texts, which is to inscribe counternarratives of power and identity into the official archives of hegemonic epistemological systems. (Brown, 2012, pp. 19-20).

Like Weems, Simpson disrupts master discourses by utilising text and image. This engages the black body in a manner that is simultaneously intimate in its sensual immediacy and also, in this way, deconstructs itself with itself. 'These authors [including artists] become contemporary Scheherazade's, telling postmodern tales and invariably destabilising and dismantling themselves' (Brown, 2012, p. 20). My choice in using Weems and Simpson is in the perspectives and presence of their being black women artists whose work is part of a maternal lineage that permits new artists to draw on them for 'siginfyin(g)'. There are many artists who do not disrupt master narratives in such ways; however, my concern is with how these black women artists construct their visual narratives, with the sense of the oral.

Lorna Simpson



Figure 33: Waterbearer. Silver gelatin print, vinyl lettering. 149.9 x 203.2 x 5.7 cm (©1986, Lorna Simpson)

> The interplay of word and image, on references to Afro -diasporic culture within Western postmodern formats, and on the deconstruction of those formats in the very process in which it uses them to authenticate itself'. (Brown, 2012, p. 20).

Analysing Lorna Simpson's use of text, Okwui Enwezor[56] (2009) suggests how it goes 'where the gaze may not meet or where the images cannot go'. Resembling the

[56] Okwui Enwezor (1963 -2019) was a Nigerian curator, writer, and art critic in art history.

speakerly text embedded in some slave narratives and immersed in BLT, the voice works like a lever to pry open the unconscious, triggering memories to metaphorically awaken the dead and represent these as memories. Photographs, on the other hand, are for Enwezor the event of what is, providing a representation that is analogous to reality, but is not reality. In claiming that the camera is a tool, which can be used to deconstruct the very foundation of the scene of representation, Enwezor announces that, in Simpson's use of text and images, the words are never supplementary to the image and the image does not supplement the text. Thus, demonstrating a clear example of speakerly text, with trickster-like dialogue in flow, Enwezor declares that he sees Simpson's work as audio-visual.

In locating through Simpson's work styles of a BLT in photography, for me confidence is gained in using photography as a visual metaphor to expand the notion of Black Matrilineage. This means that its use as a narrative motif has enabled me to apply it as a methodology in this act.

In highlighting photography's role as the shaper of subjectivity and the role of text (as voice), Enwezor describes photography and text as self-knowing and self-effacing. This we see reappear in the central actualisation of Black matrilinege that Hurston creates. We also see that photography and voice can be and are used in reclaiming elements of historical and imaginary reality.

It is through bell hooks' *Art on My Mind* (1995) description of Simpson's *Waterbearer* (1986) that I search for a photographic metaphor of signifyin(g) and for the maternal metaphor in the image which may not be visible unless one is able to read the correct codes. In a simplistic connection with water to the sea islands, and as water that transported many of our ancestors from Africa to islands that were not their home, water was not simply the carrier, it was embodied within language.

For hooks, this *Waterbearer* in the image is:

> The keeper of history, the griot, the one who bears water as life and blessing, is a black woman. Her knowledge threatens, cannot be heard. She cannot bear witness. She is refused that place of authority and voice that would allow her to be a subject in history… by the woman's defiant stance. By turning her back on those who cannot hear her subjugated knowledge speak, she creates by her own gaze an alternative space where she is both self -defining and self-determining. (hooks, 1995, pp. 94-95).

This woman becomes Rushdy's (1992) signifying daughter who, as a woman of African descent, is 'reclaim[ing] a place in history to connect with ancestors past and present' (hooks, 1995, p. 95) through the only means available to her – embodiment. Describing herself as both 'an observer and the listener' (Simpson, 2013, p. 9), the artist through the practice of text and image, becomes both daughter and mother through this re-incarnation.

CONCLUSION

As photography's use becomes understood as, and in, the act of Black Matrilineage, I have become aware how my conversations with my mother's body and my own navigate a vocabulary of mothering and motherhood that is not widely disseminated through the visuality of black experience in the UK. And yet, it is my mother who, in perhaps seeing and hearing me not speaking her *language,* calls for me to use the camera.

Conjurer of the oral and of her body, she urges me to do what she does.
My observations through the photographic prism are a must. The photographic conversations that arise during our visual conversation harnesses, for me, the precise notion of rememory that Morrison (1987) explores: an exchange of memories through imagery. This connection is enough for me to see that it works, especially as the visual conversation occurs continually, and my mother encourages me to keep on speaking, practicing the language through my practice as I connect to my past through her.

At times I wonder if the photography matters. Do I need it? Would I be able to do this without it, and the answer I come up with is 'no, it is my language'. I do wonder about the use of text and how it never occurred that I should use both together. I understood somehow that the rhythm used in their creation was important and yet did not connect to this use. Weems (2012) and Simpson (2013) show me that text is possible alongside photography. Morrison (1987) shows me that photography, through the remit of rememory, is the text.

Shifting from the oral to the visual, the next chapter explores how visual artists utilise the features of Black Matrilineage I have determined, such as the mother, the relationship, rememory, conjuring and the oral.

CHAPTER 5.

Searching for visual matrilineage - Artist Case Studies

Introduction

In the video *Did it work?* (2015), I believe my mother knew what she was doing. I have now searched and researched beyond my mother to locate artists who, in a visual form, communicated with their mothers as a way for their mothers to pass on information.

Knowing what I already knew about the nature of literary matrilineage (the use of the mother, the oral and conjuring), it would be these elements that would allow me to identify the process of matrilineage with these female artists. Turning to the visual, I searched to find an approach or practice of matrilineage that would help me clarify the transference of the literary to photography. This allows me to establish whether photography can be regarded as an effective medium in enacting Black Matrilineage (Black Matrilineage). Thus, I analyse the works of Maria Magdalena Campos-pons (2007), Chantal Ackerman (2015), Amanda Heng (Heng 2017), Julie Dash (1991) and Martina (Judah) Attille (1988).

My Search

My search for artists who shape the visual elements of their practices according to elements used in the matrilineal literary tradition such as the oral, and the need to reclaim history from their mothers, permits me to look for insights and interpretations of the same literary themes and codes within their works, which could assist me to determine the act of Black Matrilineage. My search is concerned with locating and defining the process of enacting a Black Matrilineage.

In a search that connects to the landscape Hurston and Walker (Howard, 1993) symbolise, I sought methodologies within the artists' practices, ones in which themes concentrating solely on mother/daughter relationships, examined through their own search with their mother/figure, provide me with access and insight into a framework of a matrilineage that could be considered in Black Matrilineage. I am searching for their approaches in connection and collaboration with their mother figure, that succeeds in redefining their relationship, and that of self, which supports and maintains the features that the literary form has revealed.

I open the scope of my enquiry to locate female artists who have been dealing with mother and daughter relationships (similar to the areas covered in Black literary matrilineage, Black literary matrilineage) and who work collaboratively with their mothers. Therefore, for me in some ways, this search for artists is in similar form to the search for a literary matrilineage and its theorising development, by the likes of Nan Maglin (1980) and Vivien Nice (1992), as I have previously discussed in Chapter One. Examination of practices of matrilineage by women of various cultures introduced the difference between matrilineage, transnational matrilineage and black matrilineage. In locating these artists' works, and deciding upon whom to concentrate, narrowing the elements of cultural practises and critical examples of how I may extend the literary tradition, my aim is that I look to artist practices that will nonetheless provide a benchmark of correlating features. These can then be used to reaffirm and shape the elements that construct Black Matrilineage. My ability to do this rests on the fact that the literary model has provided me with the benchmark to ascertain if these artists anchor, and are indebted to, a maternal tradition. The inclusion of their mothers through collaboration and/or thematic negotiation provides the means by which this tradition is passed on through alternative mediums.

The Artists

I turn to the practice of female identifying artists, Maria Magdalena Campos-pons (2007), Chantal Ackerman (2015) and Amanda Heng (2017), to discern the literary crossovers, observing and taking note about the methods they use to rewrite their

embodied histories through the mother/daughter discourse. I then turn to the films of Julie Dash (1991) and Martina (Judah) Attille (1988), whose themes utilise a mother and daughter discourse (children in the case of Attille) to investigate the metaphors and symbolism of the Black maternal figure that belong to a BLT.

In positioning Dash and Attille here, they enable a reading of the features of Black Matrilineage through the lens of Black women. I also, like Dubey (1995) who, tasked with Gayl Jones's[57] work (1975) and (1986), used these films to define the media and determine the films' suitability as belonging to a BLT of Black Matrilineage.

> [Dubey] read the theory of black literary matrilineage both with and against Corregidora and Song for Anninho, in the process perhaps elucidating the possibilities as well as the hazards of using the matrilineal metaphor to naturalize the black feminine literary tradition. (Dubey, 1995, p. 245).

I will consider if and how any of the other features of Black Matrilineage carry over, paying attention to the remit of the act to create within itself a new narrative. This will allow me to observe the possibilities of transferring a Black literary matrilineage into a visual field, effectively utilising the components understood from the artists and their respective media.

[57] Gayl Carolyn Jones in her book *Corregidora* tells the story of Ursa, a Kentucky blues singer called Ursa, who confronts her maternal history, which includes the Brazilian slave master who fathered both her mother and grandmother, Corregidora. In her book Song for Anninho, a book length poem, a love story set in colonial Brazil, tells the story of former African slaves.



Figure 34: Replenishing (in 7 parts). Large format polaroid. 80 x 55.9 cm. (©1998, Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons).

Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons (2007), born in Cuba (1959), explores, because of her African and Chinese ancestors, her familial connection with enslaved Africans and indentured workers. In this way, many of her works offer a multi-disciplinary aspect and deal with ideas surrounding culture, identity, history, gender and spirituality.

Campos-Pons' practice embraces the consequences of a cultural diaspora, caused by the trans-Atlantic slave trade, that many people of African descent find themselves in. She does this through a thematic discourse of 'cross cultural, and cross generational; race and gender expressed in symbols of matriarchy and maternity' (Campos-pons, n.d.). This enables Campos-Pons to have a dialogue with the past, crossing paths with the misplaced and forgotten. It is a dialogue that is fused with memory, imagination, symbolism and things her mother told her, as explored in her works *The History of People who were not Heroes* (1990)- (Bell, 1998), *Spoken Softly with Mama* (1998), *(Koh, 1998)*.

It is these conversations between mother and daughter that are key to Campos-Pons' understanding of her heritage and identity, and the contextualisation of the mother figure in Black literary matrilineage I am searching for in an artist's practice. She embeds her mother's presence and being in her work, by using these past conversations through her figurative and embodied representation, such as in *Replenishing* (1998) - (Campos-Pons, 2007) (see Fig. 33). In this way she addresses her history through her mother's image and notes that this representation affirms Hochberg's analysis of Black matrilineage that 'it is by her and through her…that one is rooted in a genealogy, a past, a people, a tradition' (Hochberg, 2003, p. 1).

Here, in *Replenishing* (1998) (see Fig. 35), Campos-Pons' mother, standing alongside her daughter, are both presented in fragments. The significance of their presence is held in the meaning given by Campos-Pons of the letter H, which the images form, establishing the importance of home (MOCRA Voices, 2013). This, in relation to her mother, is where she finds comfort. Talking about her mother's role in her life, *Replenishing* reveals the connection (literally) in how the African beads that are held by both mother and daughter, tied in a knot on the bridge of the H, are the ties that bind,

showing the strength of the mother's connection to the daughter and vice versa. The symbolism of the colours she uses in their clothing generates an acknowledgement of the use of spirituality in her work and how this reflects her maternal heritage and need for her mother's presence next to her as she works. Campos-Pons stresses that her mother is her spiritual life-force which allows her to continue the work she does.

Campos-Pons also takes this mother principle and, in using it as a metaphorical symbol, she transforms and moves the linearity of the mother's presence into her work about the ocean. She recognises that the sea can be considered a site of loss and memory, as also a mother. This is explored in her exhibition *Seas and Self (*2021), as shown in the work *Nesting IV* (Fig. 34), at the Haggerty Museum of Art, whose accompanied catalogue has essays written by Tatiana Flores and Elizabeth Deloughrey in which this theme is discussed. (Haggerty Museum of Art, (2021).

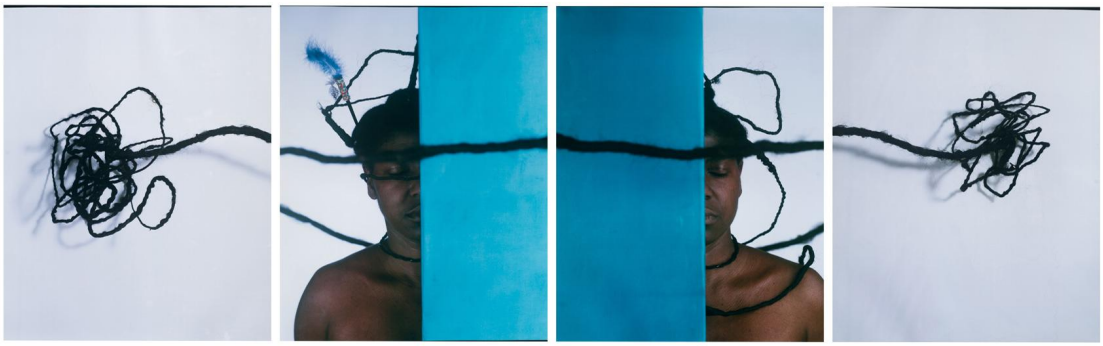


Figure 34: Nesting IV Composition of 4 Polaroid Polacolor Pro Photographs, 29 x 25 in each, 29 x 100 in overall. Museum purchase with the Avis and James K. Heller Art Acquisition Endowment, Collection of the Haggerty Museum of Art, Marquette University. (©2000, Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons).

In seeing Campos-Pons (2007) use her own body, and thus her own historical story to discuss memory, identity and personal history, she autobiographically creates fragmentary multi-layered works. These, for me, interweave the past and present into an understanding of her personal history. Through her practice of sharing this individual journey, she works towards displaying a collective shared history of memories that many people observing can appreciate.

Though Campos-Pons' work displays a connection with mothering and slavery, my research did not dwell on this connection but instead focused upon her use of photography in the discourse of identity and history construction.

By mounting a re-expression of histories, her transdisciplinary works form connections with the multi-layered ways in which conversations between mother and child can be had. There are versions of new narratives told from both the mother and daughter perspective in her works, which include sculpture, performance, video, poetry, painting and photography. In this way, the works produced lead ultimately to an understanding of self and others.

I found this to be the same for me. The description above comes from my own understanding of my experiences with this practice over the years, as I explored through disciplines other than photography what it means to participate in an act of a Black Matrilineage. Campos-Pons' practice in particular revealed to me the ways in which the mother can be transformed symbolically. Her presence is held and unchanged, in a metaphorical sense in that she can speak to one, but also to all.

I was also able to connect through my practice with how the mother's presence influenced the daughter's actions and how this, in turn, manifested in her art series. I wondered if conjuring was involved and noted that the telling of stories by her mother could be taken as such. The words of her mother stayed with her and spoke back to her when she needed to hear them and continue the conversation through her works. I see this as a method of conjuring and saw that the mother's voice in the daughter's acknowledgment of this tied into the concept that Washington (1984) mentioned, and is a fundamental notion in matrilineage: the daughter's acknowledgement of the mother's voice within themselves.

I noticed also how we find through-practice not just another way but other ways to tell our stories, using other disciplines to reclaim narratives. This allowed me to see that this was also a way in which my own matrilineal histories could show their presence.

Making note of this connection, when they did appear in other disciplines, as I made note of their connection to my matrilineal history.

Chantal Akerman

Chantal Akerman (1950 – 2015) was a Belgian screen writer, film director and artist. Akerman's feminist practice started in 1968, through films, documentaries, plays and fiction. As an installation artist Akerman's work has been shown in the UK at Camden Arts Centre (2008), and at Amrika P3 (2015) in a solo show called *NOW* (Ambika P3 Exhibitions).

Chantal Akerman's oeuvre has been nourished by her relationship with her mother Natalia (2015). 'In the promotional materials to *No Home Movie* Akerman explicitly foregrounds that the film: *"is above all about my mother, my mother who is no longer with us. About this woman who arrived in Belgium in 1938, fleeing Poland, the pogroms and the violence. This woman who is only ever seen inside her apartment […] A film about a world in motion that my mother does not see'* (Akerman, 2015b).

No Home Movie (2015), in which Akerman converses with her mother in person and also through the computer using Skype, is a 113-minute documentary of mother and daughter communication. Using a hand-held camera to capture the moments of their conversation via skype, the intimacy of the space is explored through Akerman's role as a visual documenter. She is the one searching, pointing and framing with the camera, making her position clear by bridging the communication between place, time and familial relationships as she navigates her mother's history, which is also her own.

> *No Home Movie uses* the familial relationship at its centre as a prism through which the issues of collective history, remembrance, and alienation may be explored. Combining material archival records (photographs, Skype calls, domestic spaces) with abstract records (direct testimony and verbal recollections) enables Akerman to contemplate the mechanisms through which our relationships with others and our relationship with the past are mediated. (Slaymaker, 2020).

The boundaries between fiction and autobiographical works have crossed extensively within Akerman's portrayal of lives; in so much that her mother's voice, although silenced through the years, of her own choosing, not only shaped Akerman's imaginary by inventing false memories to produce an alternative biography, but presents her mother's voice within her own. This is said to be in the 'autobiographical first person, [Akerman was actually speaking] from the perspective of her mother'. (Lebow, A, 2003, p. 47).

This act of transference navigates a similar connection to the act in Black literary matrilineage that the daughters uncover as they search and reclaim their maternal history by speaking as their mother.
This ties in with Washington's (1984) understanding that 'black women writers are immersed…into ways of making meaning through their mothers' (Washington 1984, pp. 148-149).

Akerman's Jewish heritage contains an anguish of loss and unknowingness: her mother Natalia was a Holocaust survivor, and her grandparents were killed in German concentration camps during World War Two. This discomfort of a traumatic familial history is a notion of which Black literary matrilineage is aware, when such a search for the mother by the daughter commences.
Morrison's (1987) novel *Beloved*, as noted by Hirsch, 'allows the daughters to find themselves in their mother's story' (Hirsch, 1994, p. 101). It is hoped that, through the journey of the search, a renewal and recovery of self is achieved at the end. The fear is that the burden of history, as explored by Morrison in *Beloved*, is that the trauma of the discovery is too much to tell again. As Morrison states at the end of the novel, 'It was not a story to pass on…This is not a story to pass on' (Morrison, 1987, p. 275).

After the death of her mother in 2014, Akerman edited and made *No Home Movie* (2015), a series of conversations she had with her mother before she died, the first time the mother had spoken openly about her past. Akerman died by suicide in 2015.



Figure 36: Still from No Home Movie. Video. 113 min. (©2015, Chantal Akerman).

This description of how she speaks in her mother's voice yet knowing that her mother's voice has not been revealed by herself, lets us imagine the other ways in which communication takes place between mother and daughter. I wonder if, in this instance, Akerman's imaginary is based upon a symbolic referencing in which heritage and cultural understanding was enough to conjure for Akerman what she believed was the maternal voice. Her mother's presence was thus in Akerman. This resemblance recalls the statement Dorothy West[58] made about her mother (as expressed by Washington (1980), see Chapter Two) and begins to reveal similarities to a Black literary matrilineage.

> 'all my mother's blood came out in me, I was my mother talking…I became me'. (Washington, 1980, p. 5).

As the daughter, Akerman successfully demonstrates her use of imagination to enquire about herself and her history. This is achieved by making films whose themes of the maternal presence or daughterly relationship fill the gap, such as L'enfant aimé ou Je joue à être une femme mariée, (Akerman, 1971), Je, tu, il, elle (Akerman, 1974),

[58] Dorothy West (1907- 1998) was an African American author associated with the Harlem Renaissance. She was at the forefront of Black Women writers in which race class and gender became important themes.

Aujourd'hui, dis-moi (Akerman 1980). In her personal need to fill these gaps, we become witnesses to relationships that are psychologically charged. Her Jewish heritage exposes a complexity that, in identifying with her mother's presence, history, and memories, she takes on board this cultural memory as her own. Through art, this is represented many times, charging the emotionally and problematic stance this history had for her mother, knowing that this is the reason for her mother's silence. (Blackhurst 2018).

Yet Akerman demonstrates the need to shift between the identity of the narrator as herself, as the daughter, and herself, as the mother. As Alisa Lebow (2003) writes in 'Memory Once Removed: Indirect Memory and Transitive Autobiography',

> In Akerman's process of "return," a self-(re)discovery occurs, … the filmmaker eventually finds herself … in the revisitation of a recurrent theme—her "primal scene"—that runs, unwittingly yet consistently, throughout the body of her work Akerman's oeuvre is marked by a set of tropes—rootlessness, obsessiveness, the quotidian, the body, repetition… These tropes, along with her exploration of duration and prevarication, comprise the formalist tools with which she creates work of intense personal. […] revelation. (Lebow, 2003, p. 38).

I have considered that this act of historical recovery, which Black women have generated as a tradition, comes from those whose descendants were the nearest to slavery. I believe that they have encoded within their bodies, voices and gestures, information that is charged and active, though perhaps lying in the subconscious. I wondered how to access this information for it seemed that many within the Black literary matrilineage used imagination and acts of conjuring as another way of knowing. Akerman's mother's act of speaking to her daughter, sharing stories but also time and showing love through this encounter, is one that deeply connects to my own work with my mother. Natalia is aware she is being filmed. Used to her daughter holding a camera perhaps, she asks, "Why are you filming me?" (see Fig.35). Akerman's response when asked is, "I film everyone of course, you especially more than others". (Akerman, 2015).

This act of access, observed by Akerman, is one of the fundamental aspects of enacting a matrilineage. The search for the mother outside of the literary is not only embodied; it is real and becomes part of our human experience. This connection of the move from the literary strengthens my position in declaring this process both as an act and in the act of attaining a Black Matrilineage. Locating Akerman's matrilineal search through her mother and utilising her mother's voice within her work allows me to see how, outside the literary fields, mother and daughter conversations can lead to a discovery of some sort. This discovery I understand is personal to the artists but, in this way, as I observe the act between Natalia and Chantal, I am drawn into a familial world where histories and women are silenced. Where the only way back for the daughter is through their mothers. This understanding mimics Virginia Woolf's 1929 statement that: 'We think back through our mothers, if we are women' (1957, p. 79).



Figure 37: Still from No Home Movie. Video. 113 min. (©2015, Chantal Akerman.)

The mother in matrilineage needs to be constructed somehow. Whether in a symbolic appearance or with a presence, she needs to be able to talk back, as in the film and book *No Home Movie (2015)* (see Figs. 35 and 36) and in *My Mother's Laugh* (2013). She also needs to have her own reason to bond with the daughter. Due to her silence,

Akerman empowers her mother within her practice, utilising 'another way of knowing' by imagining a method in the act of Black Matrilineage, where mothers chose to speak to their daughters, and the daughters listen. I suggest that this is a significant, intentional aspect of mothering and need to pass on information at a specific time (as in my own experience with my mother in the video *Did it work?* (2015).



Figure 38: Image from Did it Work?, (time 3 minutes and 10 seconds) Video. (© 2015, Marcia Michael).

Akerman's mother, perhaps seeing the way in which her daughter struggled with her past, finally spoke: a recovery made visible by her mother acknowledging her daughter's need to know her history. This resonates with my own practice. I do understand now that my mother showed me this way of speaking with the past. My attempts to locate paperwork about our maternal heritage left me disappointed. I don't know if she knew what she was doing by allowing me to interact with her in this way. However, it is my belief that she did, and the heritages of the past became present in the act she offered to me, as explored in Chapter One of this document. It was a

tradition that I was to search for and find, not in visual media but in literature. This makes sense to me, as photography was invented in 1839, while writing and storytelling has been how many histories were originally passed on.

This also allowed me to reconnect with Amoah (2003), who was mentioned in the introduction concerning her views on the power of narrative for black women. She emphasises that not only is narrative part of the Black literary tradition, but its importance with women and non-European people is often dismissed.

Amoah states:

> Narrative is a methodological form of scholarship that Euro-American males have cited for generations. It is interesting that those whose province historically included narrative are now so intent on discrediting it. (Amoah, 2003, p. 92).

Amanda Heng

Amanda Heng Liang Ngim b.1951 is a Singaporean artist and curator. Through her multi-disciplinary art practice, which includes performance of social activism, she discusses feminist issues. Heng was awarded the Cultural Medallion for Visual Arts in 2010 and inducted into the Singaporean Women's Hall of Fame in 2023 (Singapore Council of Women's Organisations (SCWO)).

Amanda Heng's cultural position in her Confucian family as female, meant that her relationship with her mother was not one that was given importance in her family of brothers. (Carroll, 2014).

As curator Kaimei Wang writes in her article, 'Amanda Heng Art of the Everyday Life',

> Finding this cultural positioning challenging, as she aged Heng made the effort to reconnect with her mother, her history and her identity. Her communication with her mother was limited as they did not share the same vocabulary. (Wang, 2010).

A similar encounter has been identified in transnational matrilineage, as mentioned in more detail in Chapter Two. The term transnational refers both to the distance and sense of disconnectedness that the daughter who situates her identity as Asian American, and Asian Canadian women, have towards their Asian mothers as they investigate their matrilineal heritage. They do this through literature, to reconcile this and close the gap and breaks in their cultural inheritance caused by time, movement and language barriers, by claiming their self-definition through the search for their maternal history.

After her mother (knowing her daughter was an artist) asked Heng to produce a portrait that would be used when she passed away, Heng experienced an emotional difference in her mother through this interaction. She initiated more interactions

between her mother and herself as part of her practice and, by using the camera, she was able to explore a reconnection of memory, history and mothering. This allowed Heng's mother to surpass the historic voices of the past that her culture instils in her, that disallowed her to connect with her daughter. The works are titled *Another Woman* (1996-1999) (see Figs. 38 and 39). This interaction between mother and daughter connects to Akerman and myself in this reflection of how a practice of recovery through the dialogue between mother and daughter is achievable outside of the literary framework.



Figure 39: Another Woman No 5. Photograph. w101.6 x h76.5 cm. (©1997, Amanda Heng).



Figure 40: Another Woman No 2. C Type Photograph. w101.7 x h83.1 cm. (©1996, Amanda Heng).

Heng instigated a closeness through bodily contact, one which she envisaged necessary to connect with her mothers' past. This was a participatory practice that included looking at old family albums and reinterpreting the images with present bodies, positing an exchange of a vocabulary, history and culture. This reinstated not just the emotional bond but a visual scene of matrilineal lineage and a matrilineage that was absent in her Confucian family.

Heng's nude and clothed body, with that of her mother, became the dialogue through which both mother and daughter found an understanding. It was here that unexpected conversations took place and revealed themselves through the art works, expanding into performance pieces. Heng's mother was present because she wanted to be. Deciding that her body would be on show, she was fully engaged with the act. It is through this participatory practice that the conversations of women and mothers unheard began to appear from their bodies, enabling a cultural recovery for each other.

This is the same experience I had with my mother, dialogue that was revealed in the novels of Black literary matrilineage and in the construct of Black Matrilineage as call and response. Heng's bodily dialogue confirmed the possibility of this interaction outside of literature.

This intimate re-connection with motherhood, womanhood and self, cultivated through a mother and daughter practice, has been said by Ushiroshoji Masahiro[59] to 'restore communication that had been lost between mother and daughter, using a method of collaboration between mother and daughter'. (Masahiro, 1999, p. 16). This close observation of the workings of a literary matrilineage sees Heng use methods that demonstrate the use of her mother's body as a carrier of memories, and how an embodied participation may enable recovery. This not only benefits the daughter's view of herself, but also produces another way of viewing the past she did not belong to but is yet a part of. Heng centres this outcome on the participation of her mother and infuses her maternal presence with power and love. This is also a notion of Black Matrilineage that is understood through Toni Morrison's (1987) *Beloved* as rememory, as discussed in Chapter Four.

It is in this defining engagement with the mother that I see many of the attributes which define a literary matrilineage cross over into an art practice. Heng's use of photography, and the touch that she enacts in these photographs to restructure the multi-layered cultural vocabulary, and thus stimulate the recovery of multiple histories, provides an understanding that both could metaphorically speak from. Amanda Heng used photography as a means for language when the actual voice was not possible. The visual strategies used, such as the close up of the body, body contact, the use of text (as in Figs. 38 and 40) and the use of performance, point towards a vocabulary that the subaltern body fosters in order to be heard. Composed by Gayatri Charkravorty Spivak (1989), the subaltern is a postcolonial theoretical concept that sees certain groups of people, based on, race, class, gender, or ethnicity displaced to the margins of a society.

[59] Professor, Faculty of Humanities, Kyushu University, and Chief curator of Fukuoka Asian Art Museum

(This exploration of the subaltern continues in chapter six). Kim (2017) makes the point that,

> Quiet photos are not necessarily speaking in the terms that we want to understand photographs. So, they are not necessarily narrating a story, and they are not necessarily documenting a story … They have to be engaged obliquely through another register, which I say is sound. Contact. Vibration. Frequency. (Kim, 2017).

This allows me to draw parallels with the transcribe-able nature of the tradition which Black literary matrilineage utilises as signifyin(g) and speakerly text, and the use of photography in its place. That is in the shift from the written to the visual, which many artists have utilised, including Heng (as in Fig. 40). Heng added text after the original photographs were originally shown as *Hands on Front Body and Hands on back from Another Woman* (1996-1999). She uses photography with her mother to communicate with her mother, to allow her mother to understand her through her senses, including touch, and through art works (as shown in Fig. 41). For both mother and daughter this act of collaboration is, I believe, an acceptance for the mother to know it is okay for their child to be loved and touched. Heng's mother's belief system is still attached to her Confucius upbringing, so this act becomes a reclamation of and for the mother, but also the daughter's search for the mother to achieve this reclamation of love between mother and daughter.

It has also been this transfiguring of voice, such as the mother speaking through her daughter's voice (and that of her foremothers) that recaptures the recoverability of self that is seen in Black literary matrilineage. The collaborative art practice between mother and daughter establishes with authority the capability of the literary crossover to an art practice, shifting between the metaphor and symbolic to a form of historical renaissance.

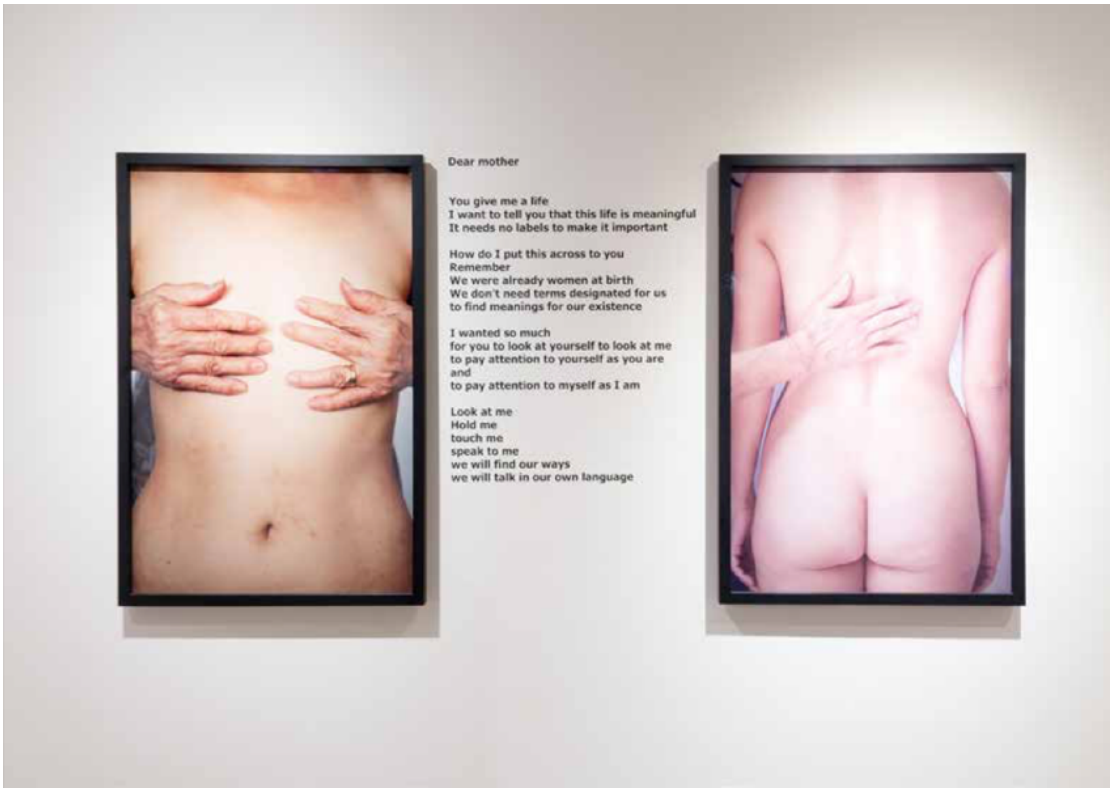


Figure 41: Amanda Heng (1996-1999) Hands on Front Body and Hands on back from Another Woman.



Figure 42: Narrating Bodies [installation image]. Photography and mixed media sculpture. Sizes unavailable. (© 1998-1999, Amanda Heng).

There is for Heng an importance in the nude body of her mother, which connects to the use of photography in my practice. As I observe Heng's practice with her mother, I become aware of our differing needs in connecting with our mothers in this way. I am sure if Akerman's mother were able to do this, touch would have followed. In reflecting on Akerman's video there is a moment when Akerman tells her mother how happy she was when she was picked up from kindergarten by her mother (See Figs. 42 and 43). "When you came to pick me up at the kindergarten, I'd hold your hand, and I was proud to walk by your side. And to everybody, I would say, this is my mother" (Akerman, 2015). After hearing this, her mother laughs (See Fig 44).

Watching this, I reflect on the love between mother and daughter and the need to communicate that touch, even if it could not be physical. I see the same emotions experienced through the novels of Black literary matrilineage, in which through the very act of signifyin(g) mothers from the past are reached out for and metaphorically touched by the daughter. It is a closeness not only in the act between mother and daughter but by the very act of the daughter in Black literary matrilineage and Black Matrilineage. She claims that her position comes from her mother's womb, and despite this condition that her mother's status bequeaths to her, she wants to 'touch' her mother and speak with her about the past. It is this encounter that is utilised in the phrase I use, partus sequitur ventrem - that which is born follows the womb.



Figure 43: Still from No Home Movie. Video. 113 min. (©2015, Chantal Akerman).



Figure 44: Still from No Home Movie. Video. 113 min. (©2015, Chantal Akerman).



Figure 45: Still from No Home Movie. Video. 113 min. (©2015, Chantal Akerman).

Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust*.

Julie Dash (b. 1952) is an African American filmmaker, music video and commercial director, and author. Her film *Daughters in the Dust (1991)* which she wrote, directed and produced herself over a period of 10 years*, r*evises and utilises *Zora Neale Hurston*'s role as anthropologist and photographer. Dash wrote a sequel novel to the film, also called *Daughters of the Dust (1997).* The film's production designer was Kerry James Marshall (b. 1955), an African American artist known for painting dense Black figures in family and urban settings. The director of photography, cinematography and lighting was Arthur Jafa (b.1960) an African American video artist and cinematographer. The music designer was John Barnes (1932 -2022), an influential African American composer, arranger and musician who worked with artists such as Marvin Gaye and Michael Jackson.

A brief synopsis of Daughters of the Dust…

Written to reimagine how people of the African diaspora are shown in film in period dramas and historic contemporary life, Dash created this film to show a different type of Black family and heritage, separate to Blaxploitation and scenes of urban African American life (Specter, 2022).

The story of the Penzant family, who live on one of the Gullah 'sea' islands off the East coast of the USA, is set in 1902. The story centres on the choices that women in the Penzant family (Haagar, Viola, Yellow Mary, Nana and Eula, who is pregnant) need to make regarding migrating to the mainland of North America. This all takes place over a period of one day.
Haggar wants to move, Nana wants to stay. Both Viola (now a Christian) and Yellow Mary (a lesbian and prostitute) are returning to the island (having migrated already) to assist the family in the move. To document the migration of the rest of the Penzant family, Viola has brought along Mr Snead, a photographer.

Told in a Gullah dialect, narrated by the unborn daughter of Eula, the scene being set is the preparation of a family meal before the move. The story centres around black womanhood and the intimacy of family drama, past and present. Family members of different generations question each other about what will be lost and gained personally and culturally if they leave the islands. On the day after the dinner, it is time to leave; some family members go, and others stay.

Dash's signifyin(g)

Personal narratives of Hurston's life including the canonical central thematic discovery of self-empowerment of the female form derived from *Their Eyes were Watching God* (Hurston, 1937), *are* transferred into Dash's film. Signifyin(g) is a prerequisite of Black literary matrilineage. In *Daughter in the Dust*, both Hurston's *Their Eyes were Watching God (1937),* the book that laid down the framework for the search through the mother for a self-identity and acknowledgement of history and its author as the 'mother' of Black literary matrilineage, and Paule Marshall's (1983) *Praisesong for the Widow* is also utilised as a signifyin(g) text. Joel Brouwer[60],(1995) points out that,

> Dash doubles the reference to Marshall's work, since a flesh-and-blood Esu-Elegbara is a guide-figure in that novel. Additionally, she provides a point of reference which connects Nana, Eli, and Eula in Daughters of the Dust with an African world view. (Brouwer, 1995, p. 9).

The films' thematic sustenance employs conjuring use of the oral/written as speakerly text, and visual symbolic references of the mother being the daughter's access to history (Dubey, 1995, p. 252). These centre the work in the Black literary tradition and anchors Dash's *Daughters* amongst other works, such as Morrison's, *Beloved*, Walker's, *The Color Purple*, and *Jones's Corregidor*a to which the term Black Matrilineage has been ascribed.

Dash's Imagery

[60] Joel Brouwer is an American poet, scholar and critic He is a professor in creative writing.

Dash's imagery provides a negotiation with the dialogue that reveals a lyricalness that is represented in the cinematography, which works to transport the oral and visual history we witness beyond a version of realism. It is one that I believe aspires to be an alternative version of history that is believable, worthy to be passed on. It is in this notion of making and passing on, that acts of signifyin(g) and speakerly text can be found by those who are aware of these motifs and can identify them. It is the same case with my photographic work. The combination of the oral and the visual allowed me, in communication with my mother, to produce a version of history I could pass on. I have always known that there will be those that see the approach and others that do not see the connections from where it was made. During this search, I knew that it was a story being constructed for me. I had hoped that the story would work the way that some stories do: by being told, passed on and with moments connected to.



Figure 46: Still from Daughter of the Dust. Video. 112 mins. (© 1991, Julie Dash).

Centring women as recoverers of stories, and including herself in this act, Dash's relationship with Nana positions them both as maternal figures that produce the past. Nana's indigo dyed fingertips and indigo garment (indicating nearness as a reminder of her closeness with slavery - see Fig. 45), Nana belongs to the past and embodies it. Her body and voice become worthy symbols of the visual vocabulary that we see in

Black Matrilineage. It is this combination which connects us to her past. ‘I am the first and last, I am the whore and the holy one.... many are my daughters. I am the silence you cannot understand. I am the utterances of my name’ (Dash, 1991). And as Julia Erhart says in, *Picturing What If: Julie Dash's Speculative Fiction*,

> Nana is both a part of the older traditions and the one who transmits them. Because she has lived through the time of "conjure and magic," she is the incarnation of African customs; because she practices these customs,
> she is the generative conduit through whom they are passed on.
> (Erhart, 1996, p. 128).

As a link to the family of the past, presented as a conjure women and descendent of a griot, Nana the matriarch, is the mother of the future and present daughters, symbolically. She is understood to be the medium, the carrier of both histories, to and fro. She is both the mother and the daughter that resides in Black literary matrilineage for she accepts the stories of the past as her own and embodies them.

As a conjure woman in the act of conjuring, Nana summons the unborn child, who narrates the story. This repositioning of the daughter as author in Black literary matrilineage links the past, the present and the future as a feature of tradition that is utilised through the relationships between mother and daughter, one that situates the journey of recovery and who is involved as central. It is also present in the writing of the story. The unborn child’s presence is one of invisibility to many, but not to the photographer (in the film), and acts as a re-embodiment of the future that holds a presence to the past, that has the capabilities to supplement the oral record of history. Emphasising this through the use of visual aids, Dash, for example, enables the narrator to see moving images through a stereopticon, that was made to view only still images.

Dash reaffirms the principle feature of Black literary matrilineage: that women’s stories are versions of history.

Understanding this from Gayl Jones' novel *Corregidora* (1975), a text which maintains a Black literary matrilineage, it is the women's role and what their words convey, that confirm the agency of women's narratives. Jones, (1975) describes how,

> As agents of historical preservation, the Corregidora women perform the crucial task of sustaining the past and transmitting it to future generations. Their incantatory, repetitive narrative serves as "a substitute memory". (Jones, 1975, p. 11)

In giving them this power, the mothers' and daughters' symbolic form, in being sources for nourishing memory, is cemented.

The film is able to construct a history that reveals the search and the recovered histories as evidence for what the works in the literary tradition are able to achieve. Erhart (1996) says of this film,

> *Daughter*s is nothing less than a re-presentation of the process of envisioning, in its relationship to identity, community, family, and history. Its point… is to articulate a new way of seeing both by refiguring formal, visual conventions and by reclaiming real, historical apparatuses of vision for a community's, specifically an African-American community's survival. (Erhart, 1996, p. 118)

Daughters of the Dust is about a family of women who are carrying their cultural traditions into the future. The women as daughters carry their stories and tradition over to their daughters, as we see in the sequel novel. It is clear that to understand who they are, tradition and family conquer the present day. These women carried scraps of memories from the past, and then, they carry these same scraps of memory into the future. (Davis, 1991, p. 3).

The images constructed by Dash link us back to a past through a matrilineal gaze via a multiplicity of senses and rememories. Doing so through the mothers' and daughters' relationship and dialogues, the daughters remember and reclaim the past, rewriting history for the viewer. In providing a new narrative from which to tell the past, history is charged and rewritten. This recovery, according to hooks (1992), gives the reader an

understanding of the value gained by this tradition: 'we give ourselves back memory, we acknowledge that the ancestors speak to us and are placed beyond written history' (p. 193). Therefore, in placing the story as she has in the intersection of matrilineal and maternal self-discoveries, Dash's renewal of Hurston's and Walker's search is brought to the screen.

> Dash rewinds the camera … and begins another film history, from another beginning. This is history as a becoming, where the photographs are brought to life, made to speak, and surrounded by context. (Mellencamp 1994, p. 90).

hooks (1992) in *Black looks, Race and Representation* reminds us that as a people who must rely on oral memory for our history, we have a heavier burden of proof. It is hook's suggestion that 'to bear the burden of memory one must willingly journey to places long uninhabited, searching the debris of history for traces of the [unimaginable] unforgettable, all knowledge of which has been suppressed' (hooks, 1992, p. 172). This allows me to locate in Dash's (1991) *Daughter of the Dust* the multiplicity of narratives and tools that the tradition of Black literary matrilineage as an act offers.

Hooks' statement reflects in my own work the necessary search and discovery that the daughter must undertake, not knowing what this will bring forth. Not knowing how they will react upon the information revealed or the information that is not revealed. Black literary matrilineage offers this journey of uncertainty and unimaginable encounter with experiences, in an effort to share not just what was found but the impact and ways in which the journey was performed and administered. Bringing histories to the surface through an embodied approach permits hooks's burden of memory to be visible and felt and, through the rewriting of the journey, passed on.

The women in the film depict various types of relationships, daughters that I can connect with. My need to see a history I was not part of but connected to is manifest in this film. Not only can I see the past, but I can also hear it through this medium. Collectively as I am a child of the African diaspora, I can imagine a past in which my

family belonged. It is this freedom to imagine that allows me in this practice to experience how it is that the metaphorical positioning of the mother (her history and body) is central to the daughter's construction of identity and the recovery of histories. It is also how I reflect on the meaning behind the images created in this series, infused as they are with imagination.

My mother's role was not fictional. Her presence was chosen. She offered me a way to know. Both our imaginations were used to recreate a world in which women as carriers of tradition could remember and pass on these traditions. It had to be imagined before it could become real. My mother's story, expressed through the video *Did it Work?* (2015), relied on my imagination to understand. The film engages with the side of imagination that in my practice allows me to not only create worlds but be in worlds of my creation: to navigate my mother's body and voice as a map to our world. Dash's film allowed me to see what a version of a world created by a daughter could look like.

Dash's film also allowed me to reflect on the connections with death. The mother figure Nana engages a presence with the mothers of artists Amanda Heng (2017), Chantal Akerman (2015) and Maria Magdalena Campos Pons (2007): that they tell what they believe the children need to hear before they are no longer available to pass on this history.

I wonder do these mothers, who represent the past, give themselves, knowing that they will not be available for much longer?

Martina (Judah) Attille

Born in St Lucia in 1959, Martina (Judah) Attille was a member of the Sankofa film group of Black British filmmakers, a Film and Video Collective active between 1983 and 1988. *Dreaming Rivers* (1988) is a 33-minute film set in Britain. The set, a one room apartment, was designed by Sonia Boyce (b.1962) with music composed by British Jamaican composer Shirley J. Thompson (b. 1958).



Figure 47: Still from Dreaming Rivers. [The Three children]. Video. 33 mins. (© 1998, Martina (Judah) Attille).

Dreaming Rivers (1988) offers a British Black view of maternal experience reconfigured through the visual narrative of film. It creates an archive beyond its materiality of a Black female's voice about migration, family, children's love and loss.

Miss T, the protagonist, is dead. On her death bed, lingering in the afterlife, she waits for her three children who, along with her husband, left the family home to explore their own lives. As they come to mourn their mother in the room where she lived, the mother (who narrates most of the dialogue) tells us her hopes, her dreams, but also

her sadness. The children present reflect on their mother, however, too late. This oral reflection on both sides is not a conversation.



Figure 48: Still from Dreaming Rivers. [The Mother]. Video. 33 mins. (© 1998, Martina (Judah) Attille).

Attille's *Dreaming Rivers* (1988) centres the conversation of the diaspora by and through the mother's body (see Fig 47). The mother is central to the dialogue of her children's vocabulary, their self-identity. We see and hear evidence that this identity has become marked and placed within the boundaries of her journeying from the Caribbean to the UK. The notion of history is plagued in this mother's body. Her body, indicated by the presence of her three children (in the different colour of their skin colour tone - see Fig. 44), invokes the insight for me of a mother whose body sits on both horizontal and vertical borders, and whose children (under the slave law, *partus sequitur ventrem*) are themselves evidence of these borders (Dolye, 1994). This positioning of the mother has become a central concept of reclamation in the

discourse of Black literary matrilineage. Rare to hear the mother's voice as the one who wants to be reclaimed, here it is. Calling from the past trying to reach the child she gave birth to.

It is through this understanding that the role of the mother's body positioned amongst the dialogue of the children, and the way the children utilise their mothers' body as a metaphor, harnesses the dialogue of the need to reclaim the mother(s), and thus herself, from the past. This is significant in Black literary matrilineage. However, in *Dreaming Rivers,* the children do not have a desire to participate in an act to reclaim their mother's heritage and history, they are presented against their mother's Black body, as a 'barrier between Britain and the Caribbean' (Diawara, 1991, p. 287). Informed from the previous literature of Black literary matrilineage that the roles can be reversed; what we see in *Dreaming Rivers* is this mother's desire to tell her story, so that her history and culture are remembered.

Signifyin(g) from its 'obvious reference to the opening passage of [Hurston's] *Their Eyes were Watching God*' (Diawara, 1991, p. 295), Attille's signifyin(g) transference from the literary sphere of Black matrilineage, found in novels by African American identifying authors, must be acknowledged in its use by and within a British/Caribbean framework. Its use by Caribbean women such as myself, causes no uneasiness in the construction and centring of works which utilise narratives that are culturally and collectively rememoried as stemming from the fragmentary diasporic experience of enslavement. For ultimately, despite this relocation of the African body, according to Herrera and Sanmartin 'the tropes of motherhood and daughterhood [that] become the means by which to legitimize the legacies of Caribbean women that have been silenced, erased, hidden, and untold' (Herrera and Sanmartin, 2015, p. 5). Not the dissemination of our foremothers by their geographical location. It is clear from this interpretation that Black Matrilineage includes all mothers who claim the understanding of their heritage as being part of the African diaspora.

In declaring the importance of the maternal aging body as a way to introduce into the dialogue differences of acceptance, identification and inclusion of Britishness for the children and the Caribbean mother (see Fig. 46), the maternal subject according to Malik (1988), 'is central to the film's examination of an intergenerational dialogue of Black British identity' (Malik, 1988, p. 244). This validity is employed not only through the body of the mother, who undertakes the rituals herself to claim her heritage as a way of inciting the children to remember not just her, but the culture from whence she came, through the singing creole voices of Attille 's and Isaac Julien's mothers, used in the film. Here we see how Attille remembers the ability of the mother voice to be used as a tool for reclamation.

> 'Challenge the young people to step outside of Britishness and look at Caribbean culture to understand her language and rituals'. (Malik, 1988, p.295)

This voice not only connects to the language instilled in a BLT but also in this way enhances its uses as a staple of Black literary matrilineage. Thus, the maternal symbolism applied to past women, and in particular Julien's use of his mother's voice in his work, cements the usage and continuation of this field of enquiry by black British artists; (see Ickes, 2014).

In creating an archive beyond its materiality of one voice by conjoining the separate conversation between the children and their mother, I find myself searching for an authoritative voice, or an act of conjuring. The film ends with its aim to reclaim self, unfulfilled for the children, but achieved by the mother. The tension that this offers in the search for artists who explore concepts of Black literary matrilineage is an interesting one. The presence of the mother, whether it be via voice, body or both, is essential and central. Whether the story defines her children's presence or just a daughter's is unimportant: it is the story that must be told. Attille demonstrates this successfully, however, in allowing the mother to give to the children what would normally be searched for, and the search lingers. It remains in the mother's mind, longing for something, someone else to lift the burden. Perhaps this is the lack of desire from the children who, due to the migratory experience of their mother,

experience differently the search and thus what is lost and what is to be found. How this is utilised in the film bears associations with how the dead mother finds a way to come back and converse with her children in order to give them information that will help them reclaim and assist in identity formation. Yet the mother cannot be heard, and thus this information is not learned and is not therefore something that can be passed on. It is in this particular nexus that Attille's film demonstrates an aspect of Black Matrilineage as the realm of the mother, and how she is able to metaphorically and symbolically continue to be mother, through an act of her own conjuring. It is this that I draw from and affirm within my own work, this being my mother's role. It is also my role in the process that is affirmed through the approach (as described in Chapter One) that my mother utilises.

In some ways, I shift my experience with my mother by listening, and showing that I have listened, by repeating what I have heard in order to make sure that I have understood. It is also learnt to teach others and thus pass on. I am reminded here of Morrison's last words at the end of *Beloved* (1987). She states: 'This is not a story to pass on' (p. 275), which garners for me a similar connection with the ambiguity of my mother's statement at the end of the Video *Did it Work?* being, "Ih! Work?" Morrisons phrase has two meanings depending on the emphasis: "this is *not* a story to pass on" or "This is not a story to *pass* on".
To hear the story, you have to be listening. In Attille's film, the children do not and can no longer hear their mother, therefore cannot pass it on.

As the majority of works of Black literary matrilineage offer African American-centred views and few Caribbean views, as addressed in Chapter Two, it is important for me as a British Artist of African and Caribbean heritage to locate and add this research and my practices of it to the Black British discourse. This is not only because of the breadth of histories that need to be reclaimed due to the migratory experience but also to gain knowledge about the relationship between Caribbean mothers and their British daughters. There is a need to be present in the greater discourse of Black Matrilineage.

Conclusion

In researching artists whose practice utilises many of the motifs inherent in the literary matrilineage that their culture positions them into, there is a need to define or identify this use. This is so I may position myself into the lineage of such artists. These artists use their practice to extend the notion of reclamation and connection that is found and formed in the literary realisation of matrilineage and redefine it through their visual chosen mediums. Whether or not there is a need to define or identify this as separate or to allow the extension to be part of the literary tradition, is a question that I have considered during this research.

However, finding that my practice is situated within the tradition of Black literary matrilineage, from the observations I have made of the artists mentioned in this section, I can see how as visual artists we do extend the premise of the literary, maintaining connections that, as practitioners, we utilise. There is something also in the reclaiming of the literary, so redefining its name is not necessary, although defining the components that actualise it are.

I find it fascinating that in some instances of the practices of Heng and Akerman, it has been the mother that has instigated the works. For Akerman, it was her mother's absent voice that determined the production of her work until her mother spoke.

While for Campos-pons it is the relational encounter with mothering that had an effect on the necessity and depth of what types of work was brought to the fore. In many of her interviews, she makes it known that she got her strength from her mother, in order to accomplish many things in the artworks. Seeing the importance of the mother and mothering through these works in which the daughter has an active role, I do believe that the daughter acknowledges how this instigates the repetition of these themes within their works, thus continuing what has been learnt through their experience with their mothers as pertinent themes and discourses in their practice.

The themes and aspects of signifying inherent in achieving the requirements of Black Matrilineage must be intentional or brought forth by the subconscious communication between mother and daughter. Dash's *Daughters of the Dust*, both film and novel, succeed in achieving these requirements. Attille work succeeds partially, in that it presents a view on the significance of the maternal voice in the dialogue of history, this being how the mother converses with their child/daughter, drawing its significance from witnessing this 'internal dialogue'.

I have understood through many of the artist's constructions of matrilineage that these form the basis of a preparatory process, where information is gathered allowing them to produce works that are yet to be determined through and in their future practices. Heng, for example, uses performance and sculpture to continue the conversation she had with her mother, Dash (1993) wrote a sequel and Akerman (2019) was able to finally tell the story she had always wanted through her book, *My Mother's Laugh* which was written in 2013, when her mother was still alive and in the film, *No Home Movie* (Akerman, 2015). Akerman's mother dies April 2014, Akerman dies 2015, and the book written in 2013 is published 2019. The medium, whether photography, video, literature, sculpture or performance does not matter. It is the identifying and using of the components of 'their' respected literary matrilineage that is crucial, if artists' works are to be placed into a matrilineage framework.

Black Matrilineage is about the search and discovery process by the daughter towards the mother. The journey is the artwork, and this for me has revealed a story about my personal history.
Once this story has been made, it cannot be performed again with the same people. Another story needs to be told through the search process. This has been made very clear to me from the literary works of Black literary matrilineage and it is my belief that this structure should follow suit, keeping it aligned within the tradition of Black literary matrilineage. For this is where it came from.

If there was to be another story told by me in regard to a matrilineage, it would be about teaching my daughter what I have learnt that should be passed on. This will

procure new sensibilities, but the notions I have learnt and identified from my own mother and my search, would be the things that I have learned and will pass on. This will enable my matrilineage to be formed of my inherited maternal signifying roles.

As I now turn to photography and pull together the experiences I have reflected upon in this journey, I have come to a clear understanding as to how my practice using photography can be claimed as an act of Black matrilineage. The following chapter takes you on a journey into the world I had to exist in, to understand the connections of the act with my heritage, but also to explain my discovery and use of photography.

This is a journey of self-discovery that has altered the way I understand how photographs can work. It is a means to an end, another way of knowing. Photography is the carrier, changing its mode of understanding in different hands. This is something that both Stoller (1997) and Edwards (2005) speak about. Seeing how photographs work from a differing cultural perspective introduces me to a world in which I belong through my ancestral heritage, but could not speak; an understanding I have gained through becoming aware of signifyin(g) (Gates, 1988). The following chapter explores my use of signifyin(g) with photography.

Chapter 6:

Gestural Preservation, Generational Transmission: Photography



Figure 49: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. Mother and daughter both lay on their front nude on a sofa that is covered with a fake fur blanket. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Introduction

Over the course of the previous five chapters, I have navigated the understanding of the act contained within the Black literary matrilineal tradition and extracted from it features that enable me to engage photography in the act of Black Matrilineage (Black Matrilineage). It is identifying and connecting the structural moments and movements of a Black literary matrilineage (Black literary matrilineage) framework with the video of my mother *Did it Work?* (2015) that enabled me to separate the act within the term.

This allowed me to place the act of Black Matrilineage outside its initial literary framework.

In this chapter I explore how I use photography to bring together the defining elements that structure the act of Black Matrilineage, such as the mother, the oral translated through the ritual of signifyin(g) and the creative act of conjuring, in order to define photography as a methodology that can be used not only in the act of Black Matrilineage, but also as a signifying tool. I also explore how I used photography as the medium that allowed me to participate in the act Black matrilineage.

From my previous work in the series The Family Album (2009) (see Figs. 49 and 50 and Section ii of the portfolio section), I had developed the habit of observing the bodies of my family at home, with my camera on standby.



Figure 50: The Family Album. The Object of My Gaze. A person's legs lying on top of a patterned sheet. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 4 1/2 x 2 1/2 inches and (11.4 x 6.3 cm). (© 2009, Marcia Michael.)



Figure 51: The Family Album. The Object of My Gaze. A person's legs lying on top of a patterned sheet. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 4 1/2 x 2 1/2 inches and (11.4 x 6.3 cm). (© 2009, Marcia Michael.)

My mother had given me an insight into my need for understanding my matrilineal history, as explored in the video *Did it Work*? (2015), in that her body was the place where the histories of many of our ancestors reside. Learning that understanding of the past does not only take place through the reading of texts or listening to memories but also, as Paul Stoller states, '...through the mastery of the body - through the vicissitudes of pain and illness' (Stoller, 1997, p. xvii). I can acknowledge that for me, my mother's pain and illness was how I began to learn about my past. It was a way in which her communication with me, as she communed with her own pain, gave me an insight into the presence of others. Here I wondered if in this interaction that I was witnessing, these others, the ancestors, also found ways to leave marks on her body, as proof, as if hearing the sounds that only she gave in pain were not enough. This search led me to understand how my mother's formation of sounds, (re)connected me to my ancestors but most of all to my mother. It was also a way in which I was able to acknowledge how I engaged with photography to repeat and re-enact my mother's body.

This notion is sedimented in theories of 'rememory', as posited by Toni Morrison (1987), and 'postmemory' as posited by Marianne Hirsch (2012). For Hirsch, postmemory is an emotion that is generated through an identification with persons or events that one is affected by but not always necessarily generationally connected to. In relating this concept to Morrison's use of rememory in *Beloved* (1987), Hirsch examines the notions of scars, wounds, trauma and pain and identifies this within her own exploration with the children of holocaust survivors.

> I see a range between what Morrison has called "rememory" and what I have termed "postmemory"—between, on the one hand, a memory that, communicated through bodily symptoms, becomes a form of repetition and reenactment, and, on the other hand, one that works through indirection and multiple mediation. (Hirsch in Miller & Tougaw, 2002, p. 74).

Claiming that rememory is used to identify a shift of these notions that seemingly (within the novel) transpose time, place and histories, Hirsch explores specifically how history can be reembodied, and even replaced, as markers on the skin representing points of remembrance: 'The mark on the skin is the focus of her discussion' (Hirsch in Miller & Tougaw, 2002, p. 75).

In noticing how these marks can be transmitted, Hirsch (2012) in her work on Postmemory generations, allows me to see how it is that I feel able to connect photography, rememory and my positioning as daughter in the act of Black Matrilineage.

> Daughters become paradigmatic insofar as they enable us to define the range of identificatory practices that motivate the art of the familial and the affiliative postgeneration. And yet, even as we consider bodily connections and bodily marks, identities need not be literal or essential. Indeed, as we shall see, identifications can cross lines of difference, and the daughter can function as a familial position or identificatory space. (Hirsch, 2012, p. 87).

I am fully aware that it is my interpretation that brings about this feeling of identification and reclamation. My consideration of the use of bodily marks and the

body itself in the act allows me to consider what stage of development I am in as I learn the ritual of signifyin(g) and position this research as an act of Black Matrilineage. Hirsch's observations of the daughter's role encourage me to assert my role in this embodied act and in the fact that I use photography and not words as my identificatory space, through which to gauge a positioning of familial dialogue in order to experience a recovery. I am able to claim the process as something real, out of the literary, and utilise these experiences between myself and my mother as contributing new knowledge in the act of Black Matrilineage.

My mother's behaviour as witnessed in *Did it Work?* (2015) was an embodied expression of culture and history expressed through the notion of Gate's (1988a) signifyin(g), analysed in Chapter Three. Here briefly, I take note of Elaine Charnov's (1998) use of video in her exploration of Zora Neale Hurston (Hall, 2021) and how this was approached in the same manner that she wrote. Charnov observes how 'Zora Neale Hurston is involved in capturing the dynamics of ritualised performativity on the level of daily, commonplace occurrence' (Charnov, 1998, p. 41). In this way, I came to understand more and more that the manner of my mother's everyday expressions could be recognised as a signifyin(g) language.

As the maker, I was placed perfectly on the margins to listen via my video, through my own body, to the translation of my ancestors that my mother was passing on. From here, I interrogated the existence of these embodied gestures through various practices that were elicited due to conversations with my mother that occurred during the research. I also explored this in the explanation of the act as found in the video Did it Work, (2015), which can be found in Chapter One.

I wondered if she consciously understood what she was doing whist I was recording her? Was it something that she was taught, and can I do it? She asked me to reflect my own question back to me by reflecting her question, in which asked me to do what she did. She asked me to photograph myself. Approximately 8 months before this, she was central to the photographs that I had begun to make. My inclusion came only because she asked. It is this process that would be her re-evaluation of my understanding of

historic voice as code, emerging from her body and memory. These re-embodied and re-vocalised aspects of speakerly text and signifyin(g), discussed in Chapter Three, captivated me, and drew me in, so yes, I wanted to learn and prove to her that I could do what she could.

There was something more to discover in this new act that she brought me into, of using a camera. Caroline Rody's (2001) exploration of how the authors of Black literary matrilineage frequently 'stag[e] dramatic, often fantastic encounters with the past, …[and] foreground the mother-daughter relationship as the site of transhistorical contact' (p. 3), as I mentioned and explored in Chapter Two. This enabled me to recognise the historical connection and undertaking that I was being asked to give, by accompanying my mother. It was the contribution of my own body in this process. I felt like I was establishing a form of continuity and connection with my body, and I soon came to see how this in itself was a metaphor for memory and rememory.

As I began this visual research, I started to gain an understanding of what Black Matrilineage meant for me. In applying the other aspects of Black literary matrilineage that denote a Black Matrilineage, and thus the way in which photography activates its transference, I acknowledged and reclaimed photography's role in the process of the development of the Black literary tradition within which it was previously sublimated. It also permitted me to indulge in a private expression of image-making between mother and daughter. It would be this that provided an alternative means to that which I identify as Black embodied expression. The use of photography had a purpose, to generate codes of familial connection that could be passed on. How this was done is expressed by Lorraine Liscio, (1992) a playwright who has written essays on female literary figures such as Toni Morrison, Marilynne Robinson, and Nadine Gordimer. She says,

> The rhythms of the female body, and sensations that constitute meaningful exchange between mother and [daughter] become … an alternate code for reading and inscribing self-identity, connection, and even survival, where this mode of communication [most significantly] is the image. (Liscio, 1992, p.40).

This allowed me to wonder if in the images I created of my mother and myself, there were codes of cultural meaning that sustained and performed generational transmissions, which revealed the histories of my foremothers. I had this intention in mind as I set about photographing myself.

As I explored this encounter with photography reflectively and imaginatively, I did so through a selected group of images that explained how I have understood their making and meaning as instrumental in the process of discovering Black Matrilineage. The process itself between my mother and myself, from March 2015 to March 2017, produced hundreds of images. These express different parts of our conversations in order to encourage memories of others to surface. In this chapter I use a selection of these images to give an in-depth view of their construction and heritage. I chose the images that made me question who and what was in the image, which reminded me of my mother and which helped me to answer questions that I thought may be asked from future descendants, questions referring to body type, face shape, hand length etc. these were images that I both hoped to find in a family album and others that I would intentionally place so that these same questions I asked of the past could be answered as I and my mother become the past.

I have found that photography's use in Black Matrilineage offers an act of participation that is a close replication of the dialogues that I aspires to adapt from Black literary matrilineage. Photography offers a layering of dialogues through its ability to communicate with and between cultures, but also intergenerationally. This changeable mode of communication comes from the idea of Signifyin(g) and its ability to shift from language to text, to music and into sports (Caponi 1999), as explored in Chapter Three. It is here that I understood signifyin(g) as an act that encapsulates cultural histories which are carried through and revised during each encounter. Manifesting their form as a concept of being and presence for that community and that generation, I saw that the vocabulary would be able to grow and shift, always with the underlying notion of its primary existence held under the breath that it is spoken or utilised. But this, I had to remember, was only if you knew what signifyin(g) was and when it was being used.

Acknowledging this as I write about my mother and myself, I reflect how photography enabled me to become my mother by taking on her self-confidence in the showing of her body. When she asked me if I could do what she could, as with so many of her sayings, this had multiple meanings.

As seen in Fig. 51, I demonstrated that I could do what she could by being photographed and by showing my nude body in the photograph as she did. I can recall her telling me, as we talked over many of the images, that she didn't think I could do it. She didn't realise that I learned from her how to love my body and how to show her that I loved her.

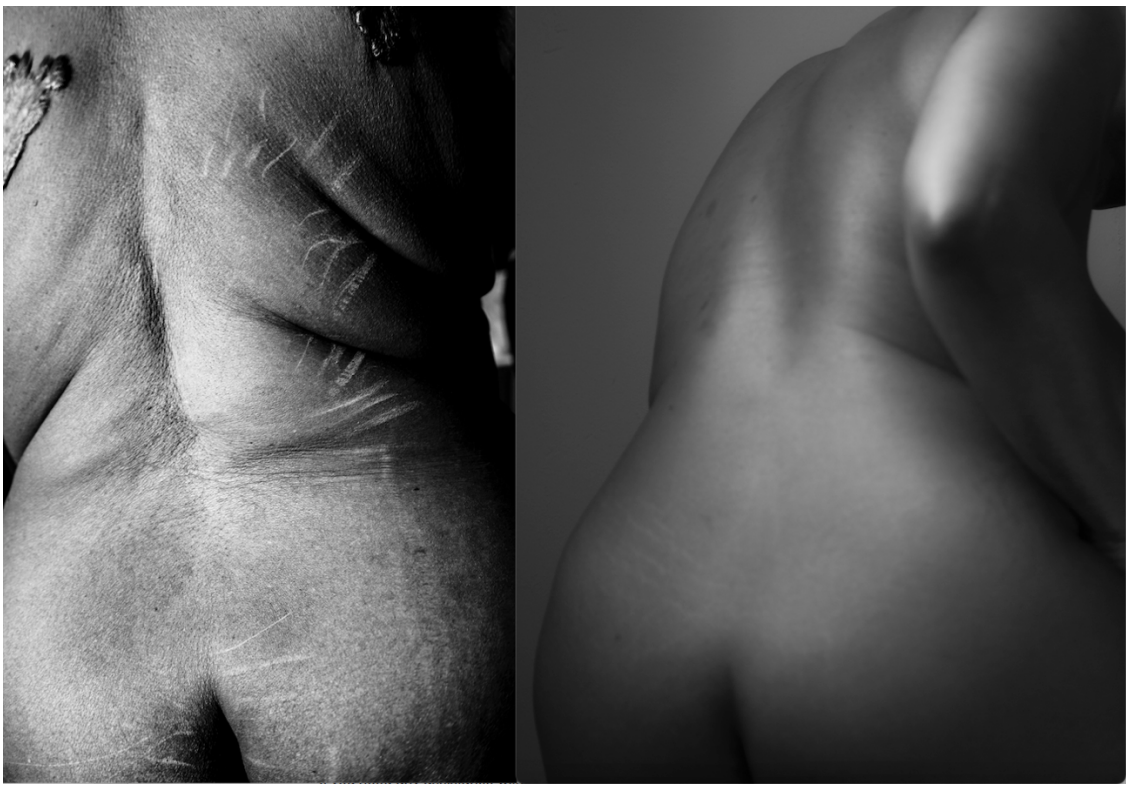


Figure 52: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A Diptych showing the backs of the body. One of the mother and the other of the daughter. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Partus Sequitur Ventrem – The Photographs

In this section I will look in detail at a selection of images from the series *Partus Sequitur Ventrem* made between 2015-2017. This work consisted of over 500 images taken with a digital camera. The digital photographs were printed with Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl paper, printed at individual sizes of 30 x 20 inches, using the full frame of the digital image with the camera I was using. When I inserted an image on top of another image, to add a layer, these were sized 11.25 x 7.5 inches, utilising a suitable ratio in which the larger image still held more of the space.

My exploration of selected images takes into account how, through signifyin(g), conjuring and rememory, photography is used as *another way of knowing*. It offered an indication of my process in this transference from the literary to the visual, but also in how I practised through this transference what I learned from my mother. It is this process that enabled me to define and explore photography's use in Black Matrilineage.



Figure 53: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A black and white close-up of my mother's back with scratch marks. Her keloids are partially visible. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015 – 2017, Marcia Michael).

The pain coming from my mother's body settled in the depths of her flesh, sometimes making itself visible, so that I could see that our communication had been successful (see Fig. 53). This process will be explained later in this chapter. The sounds I heard through the video *Did it Work* (2015) and explored in Chapter One as an awakening of

Black Matrilineage, expressed for me the polyvocality of the histories that were accessible through my mother. I saw and felt that these histories resided in her flesh. Flesh suspended in time transferred to a body, flesh that remembered and sustained itself and could reconfigure, more than words, through an embodiment of being. For me this flesh that precedes embodiment, and can create embodied performative interventions, is the body that I saw in front of me as my mother's. Resurfacing from the marks I saw on my mother's body, here in a 'hieroglyphics of the flesh' (Spillers 1987, p. 67), are the ways in which histories are transmitted and read as inscriptions, and this flesh is what I was able to photograph. By doing this I was able to understand the ancestral codes and linguistic symbols of this language. In this way I was able to transform them along my journey into an aesthetic presence.



Figure 54: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A colour image showing the right-hand side of my mother's back. Her keloid (overgrown scar) is visible. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (©2015 – 2017, Marcia Michael).

Scars as a motif are explored through many of the novels that are situated in the literature of Black literary matrilineage such as *Corregidora* (Jones, 1975), *Dessa Rose* (Williams, 1986), *Beloved* (Morrison, 1987*)* and S*tigmata* (Perry, 1988), as a way in which authors, 'rewrit[e]... the legacy of slavery' (Patton p. 60). In *Stigmata* by Phyllis Alesia Perry[61] (1988) it is acknowledged that the scars on the body do not belong to the person who presents them. 'These scars, the ones that bled, are the marks of that

[61] In *Stigmata* by Phyllis Alesia Perry, an African American author, Perry talks about generational trauma that affects the matrilineal family line. The experience of slavery is embodied and expressed through motifs of quilt making, storytelling and the body.

woman. (p. 183). In *Corregidora* (Jones, 1975) the scar is seen and held accountable as a witness,

> They burned all the documents, Ursa, but they didn't burn what they put in their minds. We got to burn out what they put in our minds, like you burn out a wound. Except we got to keep what we need to bear witness. That scar that's left to bear witness. We got to keep it as visible as our blood. (Jones, 1986, p. 68).

In discussing Morrison's (1987) Beloved and Stigmata (Perry, 1988) Corrine Duboin (2008) explores how scars are seen as maps that reveal the past to the present. Seeing how this also affiliates with Morrisons rememory (1987) and Hirsch's Postmemory (Hirsch, 1999, p. 8),

> 'The maze of scars, from neck to waist and beyond, permanent remembrance of the power of time folded back upon itself. Proof of lives intersecting from past to present" (205). Perry thus extends Morrison's rich concept of "rememory" which, as defined by Timothy Spaulding, "asserts the ability of the past to maintain its surface traces in the physical world of the present". (Duboin (2008, p.287).

Here, in its association within the mother and daughter dialogue, scars become a language through which it works as a rhetorical narrative device. The scar as sign, read as hieroglyphic evidence, provides proof of a wound and trauma to the body, whilst also signifying its ability to heal: 'the dual functionality of scars as simultaneously signs of wounding and signs of healing'. (Henderson, 2002, p. 7).



Figure 55: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A colour image showing the back part of nude bodies of both mother and daughter. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (©2015-2017, Marcia Michael)

Finding dialogues in the novels that resemble the phrases I have used in relation to the marks and scars seen on my mother's body, I wondered if I could replicate what she did, in relation to what I witnessed in the video *Did it work?* (2015) and her question to me, if "I could do what she could ". I found I was able to draw associations in the act of Black Matrilineage that I saw in the works of black literary matrilineage. A connection to the past that I am part of and how it was to be through my mother's body that this

mark of remembrance and connection was manifest. As Perry (1988) writes, 'Maybe you're marked so you won't forget this time, so you will remember' (Perry, 1988, p. 213) and 'Can you teach me how to do that' (Perry, 1988, p. 175)[62].

These findings did not surprise me; they secured my understanding of the way in which cultural connections are passed on. However, I had not imagined it would be so literal. In declaring that this act was Black Matrilineage, the way in which my own familial world connected to elements in the novels allowed me to demonstrate for myself how, by bringing it to my attention, signifyin(g) through a literary prism connected to the past. This for me was a clear possibility, demonstrating the shift from the literary to the visual. Signifyin(g), used as commanded by Hurston (as a reminder), is where the use of previous authored work is revised, acknowledged or utilised as a form of repetition. (Gates, 1988).

Finding the scars as a motif allowed me to observe how the body can display signs that enable me to imagine them as belonging to someone from the past. What this means for me is that I am finding a way in which the past is recovered. Can I say that this is literal, even as it is made with a photograph? It seems almost impossible to imply that photography can capture the past from the present, as this would have to enable a form of time travel, as in the case of Alice Walker's (1989) maternal storyteller Lissie in *The Temple of My Familiar*. (1989).

Lissie Lyles has lived many lifetimes before, reincarnated into and experiencing the lives of her ancestors through the history of the African Diaspora, slavery included. Remembering each of her lives, Rody (2001) describes Lissie as a 'living history in a transhistorical body' (p. 85). Through the act of being photographed Lissie gains the ability to see the selves she had been in the past, thinking they were only in her memory, but photography exposed their presence.

[62] The discourse of scars in relation to the Black body can be further explored through Henderson (2002) as she explores 'the literal and metaphysical meanings of the markings on the Black body' (Henderson, 2002, p. 7).

> The Selves I had thought gone forever, existing only in my memory, were still there! Photographable'. (p. 92).

Photography's role in allowing the multiple presences of the women within Lissie's remembrance (and we learn later men also) to exist as a polyvocal rendering of her own histories becomes known. Fragmented because of time, photography's use as the carrier became the vehicle from which Lissie's life could be shared. This notion is explained well in literature, where imagination takes over. Photography's role through Walker's (1989) eyes allows me to see that these photographic manifestations can also be from the past. I take note of this in my own work and come to an understanding that many of my self-portrait images are not of me. They are of the past I am connected to and embody. They are, for me, visual renditions of my matrilineal ancestors.

Exploring Black Matrilineage and photography

In the images that I discuss in relation to this, and in the previous section, the scars and marks form the motif in my photographs, present always on my mother's body (see Fig. 55). With photography, and through this act of Black Matrilineage, I have found a way, through my embodied response, to communicate with the bodies that reside within, teasing them out to the surface. This response is photographic self-portraiture.



Figure 56: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A black and white close-up of my mother's back with scratch marks. Her keloids are partially visible. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015 – 2017, Marcia Michael).

In Fig. 56, marks on my own body can been seen, where the handprint, which becomes prominent in the image, is a clear mark of presence, a residue that can be seen as an indicator of embodiment. It seemingly does not belong to me but is on me. This echoes the words in *Stigmata* by Phyllis Alesia Perry (1988).

> I think it's all in your mind in the sense that this person, the ancestor, is with you in some way […] the merging of the spirits and all that. (Perry, 1988, p. 213).



Figure 57: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A black and white close-up of the lower part of a nude body sitting on a leather stool. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael)

The body, as in its flesh, is where these markers became visible. The visual connection between my mother's body and my own bore the practice of a conversation. To understand further how this connection with our bodies situated itself within a Black literary matrilineage framework, the notion of flesh became clear through my understanding of Morrison's *Beloved.* In situating a testimonial soliloquy through a mother figure who infuses love through her powerful yearning to reconnect flesh to love, my body trembled at its similarity to my own mothers' soliloquy in *Did it Work*

(2015). This bodily connection coalesced my need to pay attention to its significance, as I had done before, and to do so as I moved forward in my practice meant that nothing happened by chance.

I present at length this excerpt from Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) in order to make what I read and felt fully understood. The aspects of love from the mother figure who speaks these words is a poignant example of how I encompassed the act my mother and I were participating in. It is from Morrison's inscription that I appreciate how flesh (from the gaze of a mother) is to be desired, touched and gazed at lovingly.

> "Here", she said, in this here place, we flesh; flesh that weeps, laughs; flesh that dances on bare feet in grass. Love it. Love it hard. Yonder they do not love your flesh. They despise it. They don't love your eyes; they'd just as soon pick em out. No more do they love the skin on your back. Yonder they flay it. And O my people they do not love your hands. Those they only use, tie, bind, chop off and leave empty. Love your hands! Love them. Raise them up and kiss them. Touch others with them, pat them together, stroke them on your face 'cause they don't love that either. You got to love it, you! And no, they ain't in love with your mouth. Yonder, out there, they will see it broken and break it again. What you say out of it they will not heed. What you scream from it they do not hear. What you put into it to nourish your body they will snatch away and give you leaving instead. No, they don't love your mouth. You got to love it. This is flesh I'm talking about here. Flesh that needs to be loved. (Morrison, 1997, p. 88).

This association connects to my belief in the usefulness of the move from the literary to the visual. It is also supported by a statement that Hortense Spillers[63] (2018) makes in her talk titled *To the Bone: some speculations on Touch* at Studium Generale Rietveld Academie (2018). She states, referring to the way in which Morrison (1987) writes about gestures of love towards the flesh that the mother figure is asking her people to reconnect with, that 'what we regard as bodily gesture/ become in Morrison's writing, passages to be negotiated upon a corporal surface' (Spillers, 2018, 13.33).

[63] Hortense Spillers (b. 1942) is an American literary critic, and Black Feminist scholar. Her work focuses on Race, gender, history and the experience of black women through a postcolonial, poststructuralist and psychoanalytic approach.

As Morrison uses the symbolic appearance of the 'conjure woman' and mother figure through Baby Suggs, it is her narrative, sermon-like soliloquy that configures the reclamation of the fragmented Black body, calling out to each one, in turn, to know love. Identifying the significance of each part over the whole, this was a love I could appreciate. Baby Suggs encourages her audience, many who lived through slavery, in an effecting drama of bodily acknowledgement, restoring each other through this form of self-love. It is here that in defining and reclaiming the flesh, this sermon repositions for itself and kin its importance in the act of historical recovery and self-ownership. My mother's soliloquy had the same effect on me. It shifted my whole presence to begin this search and introduced my body to a spiritual understanding and acceptance. My gaze back to my ancestors through my mother became a reflection of myself in my mother's eyes.

In my approach to deliver a visual language that my mother(s) and I can commune with, I aimed to combine the loving gaze with the touch and seeing of the flesh in images, a bonding without words that connects mother and daughter. A connection that requires a signifyin(g) act to loosen the histories I needed, a way in which the symbolic field that is expressed in Chapter Three is opened. This would be call and response, which is classed as a master trope, and becomes a motif by which the dialogue between mother and daughter is carried. As expressed by Samuel A Floyd Jr, (2002),

> Call -Response---this master trope, this musical trope of tropes – functions in black music as Signifyin(g) functions in black literature and can therefore be said to Signify. It implies the presence within it of Signifyin(g) figures (Calls) and Signifyin(g) revisions (Responses, in various guises) that can be one or the other, depending on their context. (Floyd, 2002, p. 61).

The act

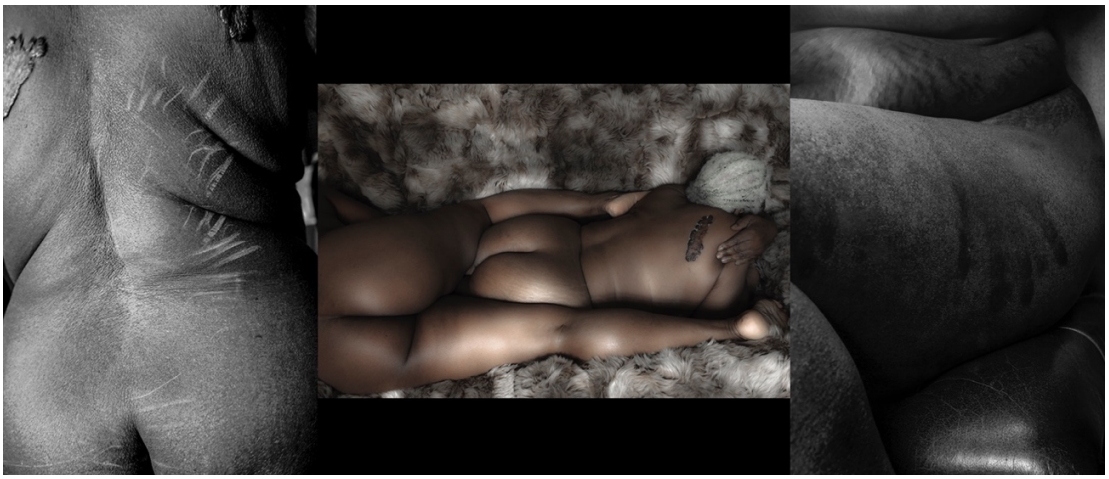


Figure 58: Untitled Configuration one. Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. A selection of 3 images are shown. Two black and white images are placed on either side of the central image, which is in colour. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015 -2017, Marcia Michael).

Mother's voice

Photographing my mother in her London home, the conjuring that I saw in this process was in my recording of her body during everyday activities. It is this that allowed me to acknowledge this as a component of Black literary matrilineage, but I realised that more was to come.

The first image I will discuss is the image on the left of Fig. 57 and seen in Fig. 55. It was taken as I set about to cream my mother's body after her bath, as her body was drying in the heat of her home, which was hot due to the need to warm her arthritic body. Her skin dried quickly as I set up the tripod to video record this event. Responding to this dryness by scratching herself, and due to the nature of her skin type needing moisture to replenish the loss of natural oils that came from bathing, her scratching left marks on her body. These marks positioned themselves forcefully on the right side of

her body. The was the side that the keloids[64], continuous scar growth, where most of her pain came from, also marked her back.

Thinking about these marks on her back, it crossed my mind that, because mine was a caesarean birth, and because I was trying to find my place in the chain of transference, my own birth scar on my mother's body (See Fig. 58) had symbolically moved and re-placed itself on her own back as a symbolic reminder of our ancestral trauma. Maybe this is so that she, as a mother figure, can carry it, so she is identifiable, but maybe it is on display for me to see and for me to remember, a way for me also to unearth our histories and to become a signifying daughter.



Figure 59: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A close-up of image of my mother's stomach are. Her right hand is visible as she indicates where her caesarean scar should be. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015 -2017, Marcia Michael)

My mother's keloids were not there all the time. They grew as I also grew, attached to her body, waiting, I believe, for me to remember. Was this remembering that I was

[64] A keloid scar is a scar which due to the levels of collagen around the site keeps growing. The scar, in a way to heal itself, continues to grow and forms a tough leathery skin that can be uncomfortable and painful.

experiencing reflecting the idea described by Morrison as rememory? I argue that the scratch marks made by my mother herself could be marks of subconscious intention, revealing marks of awareness and presence, connecting to the marks one often sees when people trapped in an enclosure try to scratch their way out. I argue, as evidenced by this photographic practice, that, in the context of matrilineal transference, the ancestral mothers positioned their marks on the surface of my mother's flesh in their desire to be acknowledged and remembered. It is a place that makes us take notice.

My mother was standing when I took this picture (Fig. 59) and the tension in her body, is shown by a meandering line down the indentation of her spine. Also visible are marks to the right side of her body, a side which, in cultural contexts, symbolises sacred power, beauty and, being on the right-hand of God, offers the person a place of honour: 'the right hand or side of the body often signified "pure, powerful, or superordinate"' (Palka, 2002, p. 419).



Figure 60: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A black and white close-up of my mother's back with scratch marks. Her keloids are partially visible. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015 -2017, Marcia Michael)

This image of my mother was like a conversation, formed for me to decipher what was being revealed by the marks on her body. I understood that my body had to respond, as my mother had asked of me, as part of the act of Black Matrilineage. By asking me she was directing me into this embodied lineage. The camera, participating in fulfilling this negotiation, allowed me during my menstrual flow to respond, maintaining a connection to the past and the future. In this way I acknowledged the process of learning and understanding what I believed was the primal mother tongue. I understood that this act between mother and daughter was a language I was learning. I gained an understanding much later of why I acknowledged my connection to the past and future in this way, when I began to use my menstrual blood in my works (see Fig. 60 and Section IV of the portfolio for more of these images) and could confirm the presence of my ancestors from the time before. They who marked the walls of caves

with their blood reminded me to remember, despite what a society forgets, that they (as in we) have always been present.

> 'Menstrual blood... was supposed to contain the soul of future generations. This was a central idea in the matrilineal concept of the clan'. (Walker, 1983, p. 638).

It was also the notion of its power, in that its use is said to be the conduit that aids spirits in other worlds to 'manifest and communicate' (Durdin-Robertson, cited in Noble, 1991, p.27).



Figure 61: Blood Mothers from the series The Object of My Gaze. Splatters of menstrual blood belonging to Marcia are displayed on a piece of paper. Menstrual blood on paper. 11.7 in x 16.5 in (© 2020-2021, Marcia Michael).

As menstrual blood offers a symbolic reference by producing the effects of a deep wound without pain, its understanding for me through this work was that I was able to use this as a symbolic mode of connection to my past and future descendants, without the use of pain as a way in. Menstrual blood is, 'life-essence shed without pain' (Walker, 1983. p. 635). My mothers' use of pain was effective, but extremely difficult

for me to witness and not something I wanted to have passed on to me, or for me to ignite, to pass on to others. I had subconsciously found another way.

Responding to mother



Figure 62: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A black and white close-up of the lower part of a nude body sitting on a leather stool. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

In replicating the events that bought about the marks on my mother's drying body, I did not moisturise my skin after my own bathing. (See Fig. 61). I had noticed, as I looked at my body (from the image, not the actual event) that my stretch marks on my post birthing stomach spoke to the scratch marks on my mother's back. In configuring the images, I took this as a way in, a way to connect and begin a conversation with the body that was presented through my mother's image, as discussed in the section 'Mother's Voice'.

In this image, the fold of my belly, enhanced by my sitting down, highlighted by the natural light coming from the south-facing window of my mother's London home, imitated the sheen that is seen in the tightness of skin created by the overgrowths of her keloids. These marks on my body glistened prominently allowing them to be read as hieroglyphics of my flesh. The fold of my belly also maintained the absence of my mother's caesarean scar which (in my imagination) had symbolically relocated to her back (seen in Fig. 59). As I sat on the stool, (also utilised in this series, as shown in Fig. 62). I knew that these bodies who shared in a scarification rite, were mother and daughter. The leather stool, whose skin-like cover imitated and extended the scars and marks of my mother's body, marked my connection and willingness to join and commune.



Figure 63: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A Diptych of mother and daughter unclothed sitting on a leather stool in profile. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

In taking these images the intention in their final appearance was not fully known. It was felt. I did not directly set out to respond to my mother's images. I did however set out to explore my ancestor's presence through my own body, supported and directed by the loving gaze of my mother, who was present in the room or space whilst I took the photographs of myself.

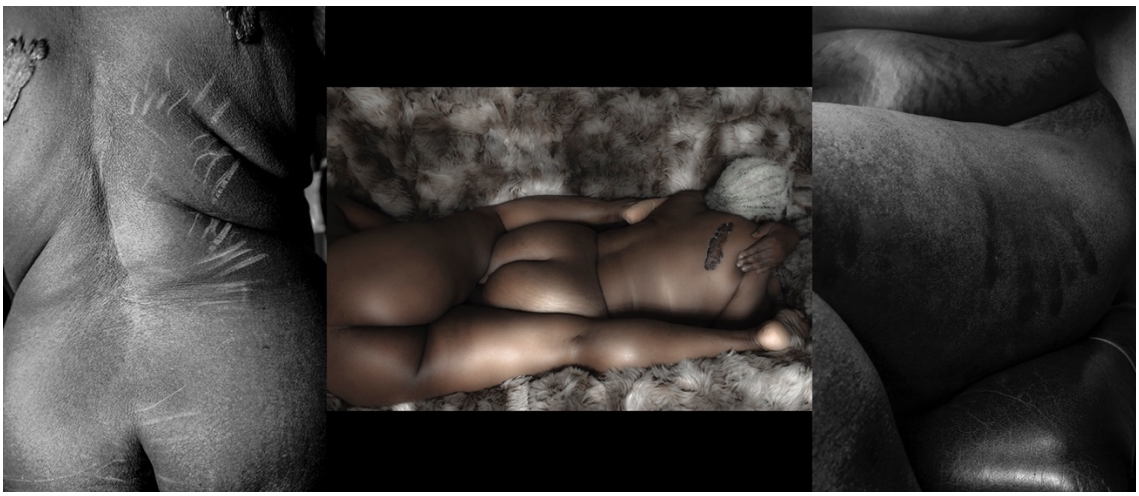


Figure 64: Untitled Configuration one. Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. A selection of 3 images are shown. Two black and white images are placed on either side of the central image, which is in colour. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2107, Marcia Michael).

As I look at the black and white images in Fig. 63, though made at different times, my mother's and my own fragmented bodies proportionately hold the same space. The tonal range and contrast declare for me a connection. The scratch marks on my mother's body reveal a nearing of the surface, an impression of marks made from an ancestor who could only reach this far. On my body, this has now been replaced with a handprint. A marker of ancestral presence is evident now on my body. The shiny leathery keloid's on my mother is no longer flesh, no longer attached. Sitting on the shiny leather stool it has moved, covered by my body, or maybe replaced. Yes, these images can have more than one conversation and have more than one meaning.

In determining this language of the flesh from Morrisons's *Beloved*, it was Akilah Oliver's[65] (1999, republished in 2021) poetry collection, *the she said dialogues*: *flesh memory,* and the essay about Oliver's poetry by Laura Trantham Smith (2010), that offered me a definition of flesh which resonated with the body I had been observing through my photography. Oliver states:

> Flesh memory (flesh mem 'e re) 1. a text, a language, a mythology, a truth, a reality, an invented as well as literal translation of everything that we've ever experienced or known, whether we know it directly or

[65] Akilah Oliver (1961 -2011) was an African America Poet. The she said Dialogues: flesh memory received a Pen Beyond Margin award in 2009. Oliver also collaborated with numerous artists and musicians.

> through some type of genetic memory, osmosis, or environment. 2. the body's truths and realities. 3. the multiplicity of language and realities that the flesh holds. 4. the language activated in the body's memory. (Oliver, 1999, p. 86).

My mother's flesh held worlds of the pasts and futures in her body, worlds that had an ability to commune with each other. The flesh held onto this tightly, waiting for a ritual of sorts, a ceremony of activation that permitted memory to be visible, believable, and corporal – time to travel to a new world.

I understood that if a search is to admit a recovery (in this act), the daughter has to embody the task at hand, transferring it to her body, stimulating the histories that are loosened, present and possibly birthed from her flesh. This, in practice, is how embodiment can occur, though imagined and willed. It is also how signifying constructs can evolve. As Paul Connerton (1989) argues in his book *How Societies Remember*.

> If ceremonies are to work for their participants, if they are to be persuasive to them, then those participants must not be simply cognitively competent to execute the performance; they must be habituated to those performances. This habituation is to be found ... in the bodily substrate of the performance. (Connerton, 1989, p. 71 cited in Stoller, 1997, p. 58).

Acknowledging my mother's call, (Fig. 59) with my body (Fig. 61), I reflect on how I apply methods from the literary fields of Black literary matrilineage to this visual one – I tell a story of connection and revision. I concentrate on how particular parts of our relationship enable this interaction of unseen communication, normally divulged in the spaces between the literature in Black literary matrilineage, and how photography provides a space to construct stories that aid in shifting the boundaries of the photographs themselves, allowing them to be read with a fluidity that connects directly to the features of Black Matrilineage. Elizabeth Edwards (2005) and Paul Stoller (1997) appreciate that photography should be explored beyond the visual, and this is precisely where sites of memory and sounds can be crossed and intersected into a vocabulary of

personal embodiment, that can if it needs to, include the visual. Edwards (2005) argues that.

> Photographs operate not only simply as visual history but are performed…as a form of oral history, linked to sound, gesture and thus to the relationships in which and through which these practices are embedded. (Edwards, 2005, p. 29).

Stoller, in *Sensuous Scholarship* (1997), continues this line of thought when he argues that it is

> … representationally and analytically important to consider how perception in non-western society devolves not simply from vision (and the linked metaphors of reading and writing) but also [through the senses, which] are central to the metaphorical organisation of experience; they are also triggers for cultural memories. (Stoller, 1997, p. xv-xvi).

This process was partly about me wanting to show my mother the flesh she had made, to reveal the daughter that will speak not just for her but reclaim our matrilineal history and her role in this reclamation. To explain this, I turn to the photograph in Fig. 64, of my mother and myself, laying head to foot in close proximity to one another.



Figure 65: Mother and daughter both lay on their front nude on a sofa that is covered with a fake fur blanket. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Revealed in glorious colour, these bodies, now moisturised (in contrast to the black and white images) are luminous. My mother, placed on the right-hand side of the frame, is naked and lying on her stomach making her back visible. The keloid (which bears the pain) on the right side of her body is clearly visible. Her left-hand reaches over the front of her body and elegantly rests itself on her right shoulder, gesturing to the mark, her hand also aids in denoting its size. Her head, naturally grey and white in canerows (plaits), rests comfortably in the space created by the back of her neck. It too glistens like the bodies, not competing, but held in a mellow timbre, that is highlighted by the sun. The sun's rays coming through the south-facing window rests on the fleshy part of our buttocks highlighting the right side of my mother's body. I am also in this image, naked and lying on my front, head out of the framed image. The back of my thighs, calves and the bottom of my feet are visible.

My mother's plaited hairstyle replicates the stretchmarks seen on her bottom and reminds me that during slavery, messages of escape were concealed in the style of how

one's hair was plaited. These messages of and on the body are ones I have to pay attention to.

The hair strands that form at the base of her neck direct one's gaze towards the middle of her back, highlighting the placement of her spine. Following this down to the folds of skin that separate her buttocks, I notice that her body here is divided into parts, top and bottom. Whether this is the fold of skin or the way the light transforms this space, her body is seen in fragments. There it is met by the lower half of my body, in a playful abstract design of triangular shadows of flesh. This is also considered a fragment as my upper body is not seen. With my legs open, holding my mother's body in this place, it appears as though I am giving birth to my mother. My mother's body becomes mine. Is this a re-enactment of my birth, is the visible dividing line a symbol and repositioning of the cut that was made, in order to pull me out? Or am I (in a role reversal of being symbolic mother) the one that holds us all together? This act is surely some sort of conjuring. As birth precedes being mother, the significance in my fragmented body revealing the lower part, the symbolism evoked from this image (and also the theme of this sequence) leads directly to the formation of this act becoming a visual metaphor for bringing forth and recovery.

Contained in this mellow rendition of browns, grey and creams, a scene so real, so near, it yearns to be touched. Are we seeing another level of existence where this flesh is present, or are we revisiting a scene in hand painted colour that was often constructed by colonial photographers on their trips to 19th century Africa and the Orient, reseen as erotic postcards? (Alloula, M., Godzich, M., Godzich, W., & Harlow, B. 1986).

The fur which we lie upon protects the bodies that are in the act of birth, it reveals a protective skin that has been shed. But yet, in this image in its placement between the black and white photographs, the bodies allow themselves to be gazed upon, for they are the makers of this gaze and, as expressed by Deborah Clarke, 'the possibility of reclaiming the visual as a means of black expression and black power, [where]

controlling vision means controlling what we see, [and thus] how we define the world'. (Clarke, 2001, p. 600).

These women position themselves so that their bodies become the manner in which they return and, in reading the codes that have summoned this image (from the two black and white images already discussed Figs. 59 and 61) they are returned in the flesh. Placed in the centre, its location acts as a suggestion that it holds in its narrative positioning, a centralised theme in this expression of Black Matrilineage.

But this could all change.

I, daughter, am Signifyin(g)

As I transfer the signifyin(g) aspects of embodied gestures realised through my mother's speech, as experienced in the video *Did it work?* (2015), to the layout and positioning of the photographs. Not only do I listen carefully to her approach, but I indulge my playful learning of mimicking my mother's daily mannerisms, thus signifyin(g), through the way I use layering, upturning, colour, black & white, duplication, shifts in colour and juxtaposing the images themselves (see Fig. 65). These are where I demonstrate the skills I have developed and that, when laid out, their constriction allows me to observe a conversation that I previously was not privy to. They also allow me to construct a visual language that is deciphered by and through the layout of the images, but also respectively, through the representation of our bodies.



Figure 66: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A selection of two black and white images show the lower nude body of mother and daughter. Layered over these are two smaller colour images that display nude fragmental images of the daughter's body. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches and 11.25 x 7.5 inches (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael)

With photography becoming a conduit through which the mother's oral language and memory is carried, I placed the 'speakerly text' back onto the body. I rewrite history through reassigned metaphors of matrilineage, which groups together, hereditary, mother and daughter relationships, the oral and the gestures of the body experience, into denoting Black Matrilineage as a signifyin(g) act through these exchanges.

I juxtapose the images to make awareness of the conversation, exploring the repetition and mimicking that takes place within signifyin(g), but also when a child learns their mother's behaviour, including the use of rhythm. I layer in a different colour to show irony, metaphoric suggestions, symbolic cultural-historic referencing, and/or as breaks in the conversation. These are aspects of signifyin(g), as explored in Chapter Three.

> Signifyin(g) is a trope in which are subsumed several other rhetorical tropes, including metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony (the master tropes), and also hyperbole, litotes, and metalepsis… To this list we could easily add aporia, chiasmus, and catechresis, all of which are used in the ritual of Signifyin(g). (Gates, 1988a, p. 52).

The photographs that I make and present in these layouts are both part of the process and a means of directing that process. I use the photographs interchangeably, as process and direction. They are preparatory, made (for and in the act) as the medium in which search and discovery take place. It is from this process that understanding comes and new histories as new narratives are resurfaced through the images. These photographs play a significant part in the process of enabling me to define Black Matrilineage.

The images that manifest and that are constructions through this process are the dialogue between mother and daughter actualised. The configurations I make, therefore, offer a visual insight into the method that enables and constructs Black Matrilineage, as well as revealing parts of our relationship that I want to show. This means that there will be moments where there is no need for symbols or marks which have to be identified through the forms of speakerly text or signifyin(g). The configurations then, are clear forms of narration that act as the story that is told and remembered, searched for and discovered, in attaining a Black Matrilineage. They are also insights into a mother and daughter relationship that, on view, reveal a process of image construction whilst simultaneously obscuring the reader and the audience from in-depth knowledge of how the images were formed. I am reminded of Floyd's (1995) explanation of call and response, as expressed at length in Chapter Three, and how this act encourages the symbolic field to be revealed.

> Put another way, the execution of Call-Response tropes opens the symbolic field, where reside the long-standing, sublimated conflicts, taboos, and myths of personal and group emotional experience and our relationships to them. On this level—the symbolic field—reside the musical instincts and intuitions that drive the creative impulse, and it is from this level that we interpret the appropriateness and effectiveness of the works and performances of Call-Response. (Floyd, 1995, p. 230).

As this process encounters subconscious and unconscious developments, it is particularly challenging to explain how some of the images come to be. At times it is a feeling, and at others an effort, to take the time in certain spaces to photograph oneself, or my mother.

A part of this process was to ask her questions. Was there anything she wanted to dress up in, or something that she wanted to see in the photograph I took of her? For example, my mother informed me of a habit she has which began when she was pregnant with her first child. She would consume corn flour. I too had this habit, though not active at this time. So, I video recorded and photographed her indulging in the act of enjoying the corn starch (Fig. 66).

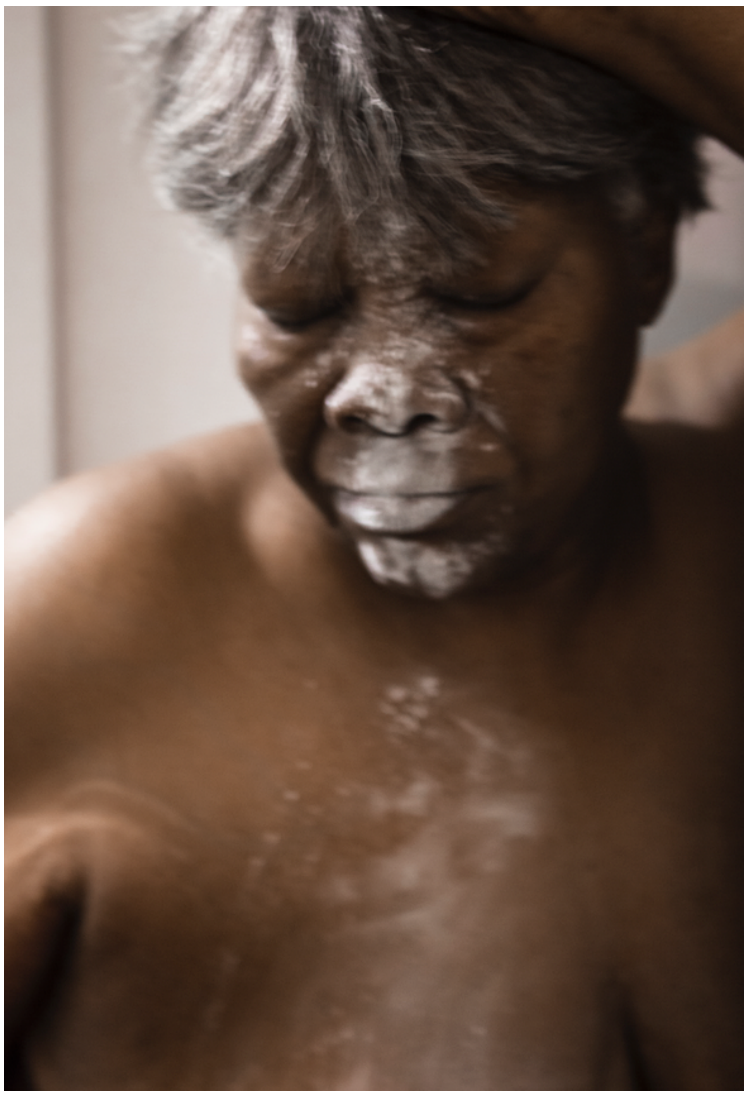


Figure 66: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. Image of my mother Myrtle wearing a grey wig, shown on her face and part of her upper nude body are white dust marks from corn starch. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Claiming mother's heritage

Another example of this questioning is in the portrait I took of both my mother and myself in Jamaica (Fig. 67). I had asked my mother in passing if she had anything that belonged to her mother. She informed me that the bed frame had. I included this in the picture, allowing in some form three generations of our women to be present. I found this quite sad that this was the only way this could be possible. The garments we are both wearing are symbolic. The Colour Purple, that represents royalty. The patterns and type of the clothing which reference African heritage. The blue in the background, referred to as Caribbean blue is referencing the making and use of indigo, the light

coming through the window, which offers a spiritual connection, and our almost symmetrical postures, symbolising our unity.



Figure 67: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. Mother and daughter sit on a sofa in Jamaica wearing purple patterned clothing. Behind the sofa is part of a bed frame, that belonged to my mother's mother. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Looking for understanding as to what types of language can be used to define signifyin(g), and how these may be used in the crossover to photography, I turned to Carol Lee's (1991) work *Big Picture Talkers/Words Walking Without Masters: The Instructional Implications of Ethnic Voices for an Expanded Literacy*). Lee's paper explores how one learns to identify signifyin(g) in text and speech. Lee cites *Geneva Smitherman (1977),* summation of 'the formal properties of signifying', as:

> '…indirection, circumlocution; metaphorical-imagistic (but images rooted in the everyday, real world); humorous, ironic; rhythmic fluency and sound; teachy but not preachy; directed at persons or persons usually present in the situational context … punning, play on words, introduction of the semantically or logically unexpected'. (*Smitherman* (1977, p. 121 cited in Lee, 1991, p. 295).

> This kind of signifying might best be viewed as an alternative message form, selected for its artistic merit, and may occur embedded in a variety of discourse. Such signifying is not focal to the linguistic interaction in the sense that it does not define the entire speech event'. (Mitchell-Kernan 1999, p. 309).

Lee's paper talks about signifying's history, its uses as a metaphor and as a mode of expression. Lee draws from Gates' (1984) definition of signifyin(g) as 'marking, loud-talking, specifying, testifying, calling out (of one's name), sounding, rapping, and playing the dozens, (Gates, 1984, p. 286). Lee also identifies signifyin(g), from Claudia Mitchell-Kernan, as a 'way of encoding messages or meanings which involves, in most cases, an element of indirection' (Mitchell-Kernan, 1999 p. 309). From this standpoint, Mitchell-Kernan also informs the reader, that one must not rely on the dictionary definition for effect or understanding. Signifyin(g) 's ruse, is that in its use, it has to be acknowledged as maybe not implying what one thinks.

> The properties of signifying may be broadly classified under the scope of metaphoric or figurative language and ironic talk. (Lee, 1991, p. 296)

This is exactly the notion found in Lorna Simpson's work *The Waterbearer* (1986), as discussed in Chapter Four and seen in Figs. 32 and 68.

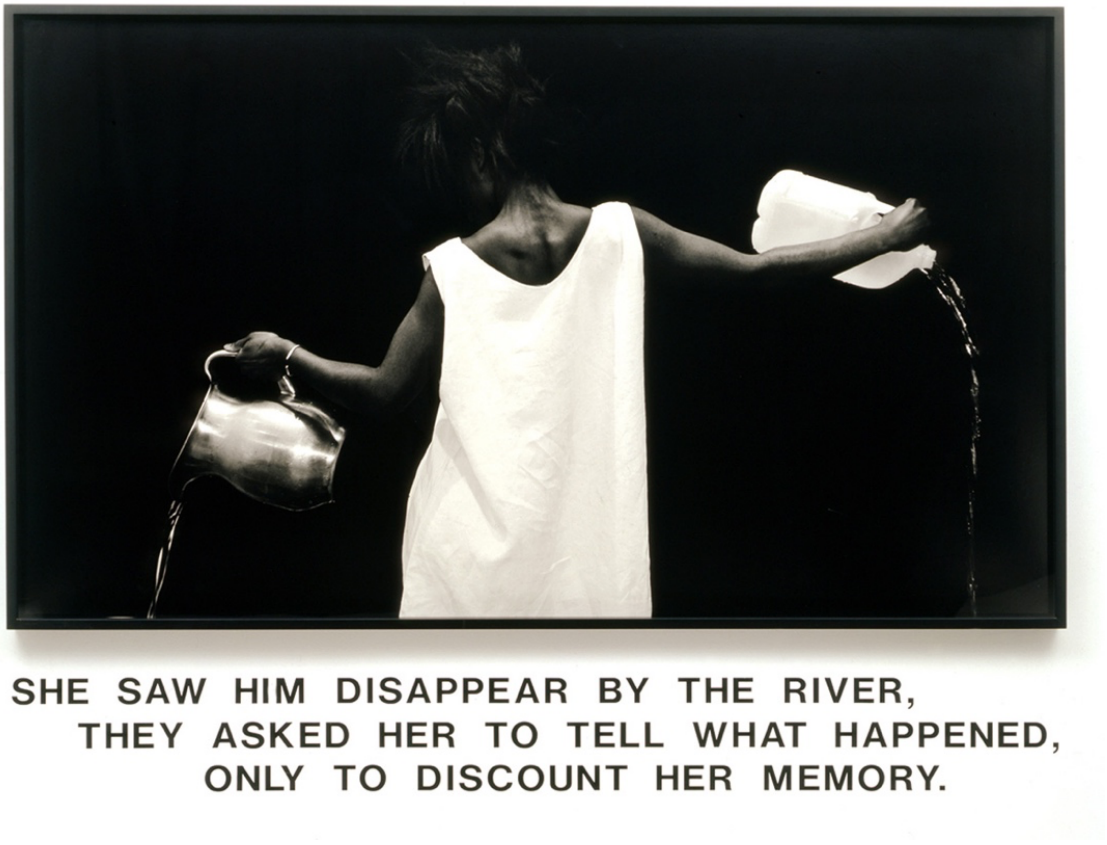


Figure 67: Waterbearer. Silver gelatin print, vinyl lettering. 149.9 x 203.2 x 5.7 cm. (©1986, Lorna Simpson).

I can see how I playfully reconfigure the images in the layout with these notions of irony, metaphor and response in mind. I also understand that these images in both photographic series, *Partus Sequitur Ventrem* (2015-2017) and *I am Now You – Mother (*2017), have been made for my understanding of my familial heritage. They are visual workings of a dialogue that I am having with my mother and with those ancestral memories that reside in her body. These images, like the video *Did it Work* (2015), form a preparatory mark into the act of Black Matrilineage, yet in the process of defining Black Matrilineage there was a need for me to explore our bodies in this way and offer these images to an audience (as in the exhibition, *I am Now You Mothe*r shown at Autograph, London in 2018). See Fig. 69 and Section iii of the portfolio section for more of these images.

This was part of a way to introduce to audiences the concept of Black Matrilineage through the intimate conversation between mother and daughter.



Figure 68: I am Now you – Mother Installation image. at Autograph ABP. Digital Photographs and Video: Remembering You, Remember me. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl 15 x 22.5 inches. Wallpaper images. 12.53 mins. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Using the body as voice

Weems (2012) and Simpson's (2013) work, explored in chapter four, draws me to explore the spoken dialect of my mother's history, through the hearing of speakerly text and the embodiment of signifyin(g), by observing how texts works within their images. I find that, even though there are cultural codes in the text that can be understood by a select cultural group, I had a need to rely heavily on the image for my understanding. The familiarity that resided in my mother's body and my own, and not the spoken vernacular of my heritage, permitted me to utilise our bodies replacing the text of the literary in Black literary matrilineage.



Figure 69: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. Digital photograph. A selection of 3 images, one image of the mother's hand on nude chest is in colour and repeated inverted in black and white. In the middle of this is an inverted black-and-white image of the daughter's nude upper body. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

As I constructed my visual responses to my mother's image, in the photographs I had already taken, this was not dis-similar to the way I would flick through a family album. Scrutinizing the body parts of my ancestors, looking for similarities from which to connect my body and theirs. This is a form of reclamation.

The main arguments in Black literary Matrilineage are the reclaiming of the mother figure, the reclamation of narratives that have been silenced, and the reclamation of self. The search to recover and reclaim is the fundamental element in Black Matrilineage, which results (within the works of the literary) as novels or poems accomplished by daughter authors.

As I worked with my photographs, I looked for connections and ways in which the images procure a search and recovery through the call and response of the bodies depicted. This is needed for Black Matrilineage to be determined. I took note of the style and tone in the layout, and my own fluidity in signifyin(g). When I do this, I aim to acknowledge the way in which my mother and I communicate and thus show a part of our relationship through these images. This is seen in the image (Fig. 70) which shows ways in which I try to compliment the conversation. Ways in which I place myself,

signifyin(g), with a difference. I also try to connect the narratives as I form an understanding of the images and how they also become portals (of dialogue) to and from an imagined past. These images then have more than one meaning, function and purpose.

Further exploring this idea of portals as dialogue through images, I turn to the configuration of upper bodies, as in Fig. 70, where side by side flesh is impressed upon flesh. Here my mother, who was willing to turn her world upside down by reproducing aspects of herself in a body which she represents, does so to give the central image a body and a voice.

This central upside-down image in Fig. 71 reveals an alternative perspective on a body. One that in its restructuring appears as if compressed within a restrictive space, placed between two mothers. Is this another type of birth? In this view, the figure appears to be in the act of being pulled through a threshold, the top light grey area. The figure is being pulled into an existence that, though unseen, is presumed to be connected to a head and body that may reveal the female organs from which I could be born. This pulling together from fragments as a whole, in this instance represents mothering for me in this context. This existence that one is being pulled into and from is mothering. The tightness of the space, and the linear placement of the images, reflects the notion of not wanting to let this body go. The title partus sequitur ventrem relates to legal doctrine used during the period of slavery, indicating that that the child of an enslaved mother is also classed as a slave (as explained in the section partus sequitur ventrem in this Chapter Six, and in the Glossary section). The title pays reverence to all the works depicted under this title. That is to say that the role of the 'mother' presence is both central and marginal within the daughter's retelling of the story.

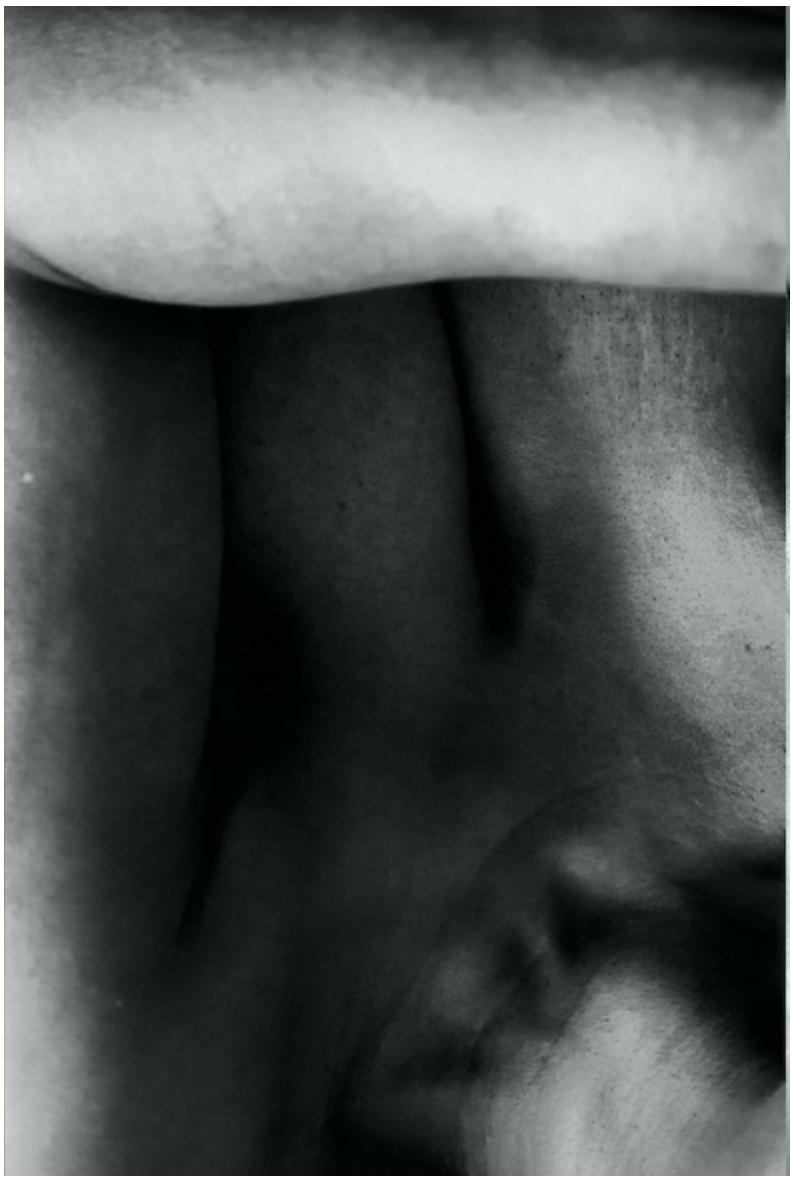


Figure 70: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. Digital photograph. A image of the mother's hand on nude chest is in inverted and in black and white. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

She (in the image of the mother during slavery – for I presently am a descendant of these ancestral mothers) is and becomes a powerful symbol in the fact that her body during slavery was 'a maker and marker of boundaries, a generator of liminality, both vertically and horizontally'. (Doyle, 1994, p. 27). According to Venetria Kirsten Patton[66] (2000) the mother,

[66] Venetria K Patton an African American author of: "The Grasp That Reaches Beyond the Grave: The Ancestral Call in Black Women's Texts" and "Women in Chains: The Legacy of Slavery in Black Women's

as the creator of boundaries, is neither within nor without the border, but on the border (p. 124). Yet, like Patricia Felisa Barbeito, (1988), I see her signifyin(g) body as one that 'generates both a repetition and [a]revision of that history' (Barbeito, 1998, p. 365). This is demonstrated in the child she gives birth to, who at the time would repeat history by being a slave and also revise history by knowing the past and changing it. The enslaved mother finds herself in a position that the child she gives birth to also becomes that which she is. Washington (1984), Dubey (1995) Rody (2001) and Hochberg (2003), as previously identified in Chapter Two, discuss the symbolic positioning of the mother in Black matrilineage.

> The centrality of the maternal figure as the originator of women's alternative voice and as a transmitter of memory is an outcome of the particular history of black enslaved mothers'. (Hochberg, 2003, p. 2).

She symbolically and metaphorically references the enslaved mothers who, through the condition of *partus sequitur ventrem*, pass on their status to their children. These mothers, who could not speak for their child, who could not raise their child, who could not live with their child, who could not show and share love with that child - many become lost and displaced by history. The search which the daughters participate in, signifyin(g) as they search, reclaims a history. It is in this act that these mothers, who had their motherhood controlled at the hands of the patriarchal establishment, produced children that not only reclaimed them through these works of Black literary matrilineage but revise the notion of mothering and motherhood forced onto their Black bodies. In revising this act by reconnecting their separation, through the search and thus by the act of Black Matrilineage, the term *partus sequitur ventrem* not only shows how the daughter forges a bond with the mother but also how in this act the mother creates a bond to her child. This act demonstrates that ownership has shifted to both the mother and the daughter. What this means now is a declaration of love and mutual ownership, concepts that enslaved mothers could never possess.

> For...a slave who could not own her own children or herself, love means ownership. (Patton, 2000 p. 126).

Fiction, writes about the nature of generational trauma experienced by women of the Africa diaspora whose families experienced slavery.

This refers to the enslaved mother, and the child is then born into enslavement.
In some instances, I switch between colour and black and white images to represent the structural levels of the conversations. When in colour, this can refer to current narratives I have had with my mother, narratives I have had with myself, or it can represent a visual presence with the acuity of an image reflected from the past, or an imagined future. The black and white images are the same as the colour except in the way that I use them. These not only can refer to direct and present narratives, but they can also reflect those that are embodied from past ancestors in the codes, signs and symbols that are revealed, but also through presence. They can also represent the future, disregarding the assumed trope that black and white images reference the past. This understanding of course can change, depending on the emotional connection of the image (at the time) and of the images that are placed in the surrounding field.

In looking at the image, noticing that my mother places her hand on her heart, as seen in the outer two images of Fig. 74, this dialogue is close, personal and genuine. As a way of symbolising that she is giving evidence, the body is bare, hiding nothing, revealing everything, the hand is removed from the bible and instead placed on her heart. In these images, there is nothing more that can be given to reveal the sincerity of her approach. This testimony she gives for her is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. This belongs not just to my mother but to the other mothers who are represented through the black and white image, those who have come before (represented in the black and white upside-down image). The central image of the daughter is proof of their evidence. The body is proof.

This ability to read the body as a text that holds its own discursive exploration, is discussed by Gayatri Charkravorty Spivak[67] (1989) as the female 'subaltern [that] cannot be heard or read' (Spivak, 1988, p. 308). Revising this statement, she now 'accept[s] the body as a legitimate text which can be used to inscribe itself out of

[67] Gayatri Charkravorty Spivak (b. 1942) is an Indian scholar, literary theorist, and feminist critic on postcolonial discourses.

multiple conscription' (Busia, 1989, p. 103). Abena Pokua Adompim Busia[68] (1989) implores Spivak to reassess her previous statement, stating that the body re-inscribed gives 'another way of reading the woman's body'. (Busia, 1989, p. 103). With this revision, this statement renegotiates the construction and materiality of the female body as an archive, and permits suggestions from Pierre Nora (1989), who has introduced a historiographic interpretive concept of sites of memory in regard to cultural and social politics, and Alan Sekula (1986), a documentary photographer who wrote on the relationship between word and image., to see the body as an archive and images of this archive as testimonial, where the aim of 'polyphonic testimony' is to 'prevent the cancellation of testimony' (Sekula, 1986, p. 64).

> The archives of the past are no longer the store houses of memory:
> the body is. (Nora, 1989, p. 16),

As I said, the layout can change.

Change here is a part of the visual conversation, like the recollection of memories that alter slightly every time they are told, and the repetitive nature of conversation that, though repeated, will have a difference attached to it. Change as revision, is also part of the ritual of Signifyin(g).

[68] Abena Pokua Adompim Busia (b. 1953) is a Professor of Women's and Gender Studies, and co-editor/director of Women Writing Africa Project, published by the Feminist Press at CUNY) is a Ghanaian writer, poet, feminist, lecturer and diplomat.

Another way of knowing



Figure 72: Untitled Configuration two. Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. A selection of 3 images are shown. Two black and white images are placed on either side of the central image which is in colour. 30 x 20 inches. (© 20115 -2017, Marcia Michael).

In the next configuration, Fig. 72, I have taken out the central image discussed earlier (see Fig. 57) and have instead inserted an image that shows two figures, slightly silhouetted side by side, as if posed for a formal standing portrait in front of a backdrop of orange flowers with green leaves on a cream background. Within my understanding of how Black Matrilineage is formed, I understand that I am able to repeat my sentences with variations if I so desire. This is partly because I am in a learning process, but also because I may be speaking to a different audience. The way I talk to my mother is not how I would talk to my friend. I am, therefore, able to gesture as much as I want in order to get my point across.

The concept of signifyin(g) attracts the embodied nature of cultural gestures. Dwight Conquergood[69] (1995) explains performance through the use of signifyin(g) concepts as

[69] Lorne Dwight Conquergood (1949 -2004) was an ethnographer and a professor in performance studies

a metaphor, as a mode of inquiry, one that also includes embodied experiences. This allows me to further understand how I can utilise these concepts with photography as I construct the configurations. Specifically, it gives me permission to move around images and not often keep to the same sequence and act out in the same way that tricksters and jokers do. I utilise the idea of performance inherent in the aspects of speakerly text and signifyin(g), (as discussed in the introduction and Chapter Three) through the construct of how I organise the images. Conquergood argues that 'performance privileges threshold-crossing, shape-shifting and boundary-violating figures' (Conquergood , 1995, p. 138).

At the end of the video *Did it Work?* (2015), as I have suggested in Chapter One, my mother's last words, "I'h work" was mostly implied as a question. If I reimagine her statement within the understanding of signifiyin(g), then her words were indeed a statement, meaning "it worked."

I, therefore, within the configuration of images I make (as expressed in this chapter), had to understand how, through my mother's use of speakerly text, such as noticing syntax, pauses, mishearing, mis-seeing and absences, could be understood differently. This meant that there was a possibility of alternative meanings. At the time I asked myself. how was I to further understand? Transforming the text to the visual through an embodied interpretation allowed me to practice what was heard or misheard. This meant that this was also a signifyin(g) trope and one that I had failed to acknowledge, until the images brought my attention to the use of misheard sounds in my visual responses. Thus, in this way, I began to understand how I could make images that brought me into a Black Matrilineage framework.

Conjuring: creating, bringing about

In the ritual of signifyin(g), the response made becomes revised. In practicing this notion of revision through photography, I replaced the central image in Figure. 55. Through the embodiment of this practice, I have now been able personify the act

sufficiently so that, in my mother's absence, I was able to utilise a component of Black Matrilineage: conjuring. What I needed to do was to write the narrative with my own body or provide another way of knowing. I had now grasped the ways in which it was possible for me to use myself within the structures of Black Matrilineage now that my mother was absent, using all that had been revealed through this practice.



Figure 73: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. Two silhouettes stand Infront of a flowered curtain. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

My role in this image (Fig. 73) was to enact the presence of a mother figure, a role reversal that, in my mother's absence, and through my learning during this practice, I could now claim. Conjuring a presence to present to the viewer, in order to tell a story from a different perspective, focuses the use and understanding of its use through a spiritual African cosmology that Morrison (1987), Dash (1991) and Attille (1988) utilise, but also from the act that my mother and I have participated in. I have found myself many times thinking that this was some sort of ritual. In analysing *Beloved,* Barbara Christian[70] (1993) states:

> By exploring the novel from the point of view of African cosmology, one sees it for what it could be in the world: a prayer a ritual grounded in an active remembering which might result first of all, in our understanding why it is that so many of us are wounded, fragmented, and in a state of longing. (Christian, 1993, p. 14-15).

Carolyn Martin Shaw[71] (1997), Barbara Christian (1993), Venetria Patton (2013) and Kokahvah Zauditu-Selassie[72] (2014) give further insight into this exploration that has a breadth of discourse that run outside the boundaries of this thesis.

Trickery, a feature of Signifyin(g), is used as a deliberate artistic act. It offers variations of meaning specifically within the culture that Black Matrilineage comes from, in this way enabling those, like myself, who have been unable to read the codes. We do not always know what we are seeing or hearing. However, this form of symbolic referencing, held within my familial codes, recovers meaning for me in such acts of decoding. The presence of the same sort of Black Matrilineage decoding in *Beloved* is marked by Morrison's use of activating visceral witnessing.

The centralised image in the configuration in Figure. 73 depicts the presence of two figures that, in their position, commands the gaze. My mother's bodily shape, which

[70] Barbara Christian (1943 -2000) was an African American author, feminist literary scholar, critic and professor of African American literature. Her books and essay helped establish black women's literary criticism and theory.
[71] Carolyn Martin Shaw (b. 1944) is Black feminist anthropologist.
[72] Kokahvah (koko) Zauditu-Selassie is an author and a priest of Obatala in the Lukumi/Yoruba tradition.

stands on my right, as seen throughout the series, is maintained in this image, although she herself is not present apart from her outline. She is dressed in an outfit that resembles many of the others she and I have worn throughout this work. It is also the style of her favourite design for a dress. For example, she loved peplums – a style of ruffle on clothing that is usually found on dresses as ways to emphasise the waist and hips of the wearer., as shown in Fig.74

As I stand close to my mother's figure my touch is unseen, but the closeness of the bodies reveals a connection as I lead the viewer to believe that this is an image of my mother and myself. My flesh is slightly revealed, indicating that the use of this within the meaning of the photographs, is now only partial (as previously discussed in the beginning of this Chapter). However, the chest flesh is still relevant as the part of the image that emerges from the shadows.

Here the indication that the breast area is exposed marks an act of resistance. An act in which an inherited state of generational force and survival is explored by Tina Campt as 'acts or refusal' (Campt, 2019a). These acts of refusals are acknowledged as personal enactments recovered from the glimpses of archival discourse that have been reclaimed, as stated by Timothy Huzar[73] (2021) from the 'archive of the transatlantic slave trade and its ongoing legacies' (Huzar, 2021, p. 2).

This establishes that, during the period of enslavement, black bodies found ways of their own choosing, in which they were able to perform gestural acts of resistance. The seeing of these acts, as a form of resistance, lies in the fact that to be able to read the gestures, which is similar in the act of signifyin(g), their code of making has to be understood.

> These narratives … they manifest a sense of practices of fugitive refusal that one can apprehend if one learns how to hear, see, and write differently. These are not only methodological issues but are also profoundly political issues. (Huzar, 2021, p. 2).

[73] Timothy Huzar is a cultural theorist, researcher at the Centre for memory, narrative and histories in Brighton UK.

I wondered if these gestures of acts of refusal are embedded in the early theorising of signifyin(g). Their presence would make sense, in that signifyin(g) gestures carry the past with them. This understanding has been made possible because I now understand what signifying is, and specifically, how it relates to my cultural heritage and memories of my parents. It is also about my mother allowing me, trusting me, with this cultural heritage of signifying to utilise photography.

It is in relation to these inherited structures that these acts I perform are constructed and developed to enter back into the historical act and engage from an empowerment (with the Black female body) that shift ideologies of black female stereotypes, those of sexuality, the maternal, the emotive and sensual nature of the Black female body. These stereotypes include the naming of black women as 'jezebels', 'mammies' and 'sapphires' (West, 1995, 2008, 2018).

Some of the images I make, and in the way I present the works, utilising the aspects of signifyin(g), have the marks of resistance within them. Many do this by displaying a naked body, and others in the fact that these images display a relationship between a Black mother and daughter. This enables me to have a dialogue and negotiation with this historical period, in some instances through slavery. This occurs through the same gestural structures of cultural embodiment, this being my mother's body and my own as the daughter that inherits her status – *partus sequitur ventrem*. I have learnt to adapt, reclaim and subvert the term though my mother's signifying body.

Tina Campt (2019a, 2019b) and Sadiya Hartmann (1997, p. 13-14) explore what these acts look like, as 'acts of everyday resistance' to the historic treacherous gaze of whiteness upon Black bodies. These forms of resistance by Black bodies had to have multi-layers of conscriptions, producing what they saw fit as construing meaning and which, in their own way, produce moments of joy, satisfaction and become central singular acts that are able to influence a collective (Moten, Harney and Shukaitis, 2021, p. 8). This is also mentioned by Donna Weir Soley (2009) an author and editor of *Black Women's Writings* who states:

> ‘Forms of resistance had to be multi-layered, multidirectional, multifaceted precisely because white domination took place upon multiple discursive and material planes’. (Weir-Soley, 2009, p.3).

Campt defines the phrases she uses to explore acts of refusal in ‘Black visual frequency: A Glossary’ (2018). She names these as *Frequency, Still -Moving Images, Slow Walking, Refusal and Black Visuality,* as these descriptions assist artistic practices, including images made by and containing Black people, to be read through these notions of understanding. What this understanding does in my practice, through these acts, is bring clarity to how I utilise the layout constructions with enactments of historic resistance in mind, and this includes utilising signifyin(g) concepts/constructs. These helped me, through this personal encounter, to express a Black aesthetic that is brought forth through a recalling of the spirit and flesh of the female body. This is what takes place through the encounter of defining the act with my mother.

It seems to me that a language of resistance through the body is conveyed through the notions of testimonial witnessing. I see this as a way in which artists create practices and practice methodologies to reclaim the structures of oppositional, classifying and differentiational aestheticism. This is also the way my work refers to and continues in my wider practice to consider the Black Gaze and the Black image. Confirming this, Campt (2021) states:

> Black artists are choosing to look after, care for, and reclaim an uncomfortable Black visual archive that makes audiences work through and toward new ways of encountering the precarity of Black life. Their artistic practices mobilize Black precarity as a creative force of affirmation that cannot simply be seen or viewed. It is a Black gaze that shifts the optics of “looking at” to a politics of looking with, through, and alongside another. It is a gaze that requires effort and exertion, (Campt, 2021, p. 8).

Part of this act of resistance is that I know that my legs are also uncovered, indicating that I give myself the freedom to walk amongst the past and present freely. I am as free here as I am in my home. The figures in the image (see Fig. 73) are shrouded in darkness posed together, showing a strength in this double portrait. This offers an understanding through the title of the series, *Partus Sequitur Ventrem*: that which follows her womb stands beside her mother.

The background of blooming flowers could be said to reflect the journey of Black literary matrilineage initiated by Alice Walker (2005), in in her mother's garden. Whilst the long shapes, resembling the symbolist hooded masks of the Ku Klux Klan (an American white supremacist terror group that was established after the Civil War in the US to repress the rights and freedoms of African Americans), covering the faces of both myself and my mother substitute, are there to represent passages of time – how long, and when? Remembrances of a history in which I ask the viewer to remember that we, our family members, were there, present in that time. Though a simple acknowledgement of presence, this is one that, as a Black person growing up in the UK, was led to believe that the start of Black history was from the period of slavery, and before that there was nothing of significance in Black history.

As this image is positioned between the two images that marked the identification of the Black Matrilineage process in action, this new centralised image as a narrative exhibits a testimony of histories, told through the body. Whether this configuration is used at the beginning or at the end of a sequence, it is a narrative that makes up part of the story in which marks on the body read as symbols have been embodied by these two women, who stand always to be gazed upon, but who also gaze back.

These photographs of mine, acknowledging their use through the framework of Black Matrilineage, are positioned to become images that can be relatable in other contexts, for example, incorporated into someone else's history, as well as to be reflections of the history described here. The images aim to activate a response that positions itself as a rememory and offer, in their historical construction between mother and daughter, remembering and reclaiming a union that holds its place as a method of passing on

information. the way that my mother instigated through our photographic collaboration was in the form of a ritual act, and how she taught me to remember who she and the other mothers in our matrilineal heritage were, because I asked. As Marianne Hirsch, (2002) theorises,

> If identifications learned and practiced within the family can be expanded to cross the boundaries of gender, family, race, and generation, then the identification between mothers and daughters forms a clear example of how a shared intersubjective transgenerational space of remembrance, based in bodily connection, can be imagined. (Hirsch, 2002, p. 77).

The point of this particular practice of mine has been to claim a methodology of practice with photography that allows me, within the framework of Black literary matrilineage, to unearth histories and also to name photography as part of the process.

Jamaica

I have come to believe that my body in Jamaica needed to remember my maternal ancestors and bridge the connection with them through my actual presence. There in Jamaica, a tangibility occurred. I was transposed from a thought to a feeling and then to a body. I Marcia, daughter of Myrtle, daughter of Melsie my grandmother, could now be seen, proof of my ancestors and my mothers' imagination, (Fig. 75).

I had already determined that all the images made for this research would be made in my mother's home, meaning that when my mother crossed boundaries, returning to her home in Jamaica, I would continue to photograph her and myself where she stayed.

My mother moved to her London home in Islington, where I took the majority of the photographs for this research, in 1983. The carpet, which she still had in her front room, was from this time. After my mother's passing in 2017, this carpet connected the

past to me in such a visceral way. Everyone who had entered the family home had left their trace here. This space, therefore, contained many histories and this would include the conversations, the events and the bringing together of friends and family far and wide that had taken place there. Home, therefore, was a space where histories were already present, waiting to be claimed. (Fig. 76).



Figure 74: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. Standing portrait of my mother Myrtle in London, wearing a purple dress and hat. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).



Figure 75: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. Standing portrait of Marcia in Jamaica wearing a purple dress and head wrap. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Home, as the place where all these images took place, was significant, for in my mother's construction of the family home, it resembled the definition Elizabeth Abel (1999) gave, writing about race and visuality, this being a 'gendered space of female expression' (Abel, 1999, p. 131). In paying attention to bell hooks's (1990) *home place:*

A site of resistance, once the threshold was crossed one learns that the home was the space where Black people ceased to be constrained as an object within an oppressive society. For it was in their home that they became subjects, and the home-place a space of resistance. Women's roles in this space are said by hooks to be revolutionary political gestures of resisting oppression:

> I want to remember these black women today. The act of remembrance is a conscious gesture honouring their struggle, their effort to keep something for their own. I want us to respect and understand that this effort has been and continues to be a radically subversive political gesture. (hooks, 1990, p. 43).

This made sense to me as my mother's expressions through her voice and body was given to me (and my other siblings), with such freedom I never questioned its effort or construction.

This collaboration has indeed changed all of that, for I now see how the weight of the past affected how my mother carried her body in and outside of the home. It is these aspects of memory, of everyday movements found in her mannerisms, that contained our ancestors within her, which I captured through photography. My connection with home and my mothers' presence in her home is seen in the way she was able to be undressed, allowing her body to be naked in her home. This space was not only private and comfortable but filled with love and acceptance of one's body. Her upbringing by her own grandmother in Jamaica was where she had received and learnt this. (See Fig. 76).



Figure 76: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. Two images side by side. one of my mother Myrtle and the other of Marcia both sitting nude on a purple-covered chair. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Exploring the process of photographing my mother, it is important I explain there was not always a direct 'set up' that was used in making the images. I do acknowledge that it is about me accepting and utilising an intuitive response in making the photographs. I acknowledge that I am the one who is looking at my mother and deciding what images will be taken constructed and used, I am also the one doing this to myself. This vantage point enables me, as author, similar to the construction of the novels that developed Black literary matrilineage, to tell my story of coming into a Black Matrilineage through the practice-based series I have produced for PhD.

Whilst in Jamaica, using my mother's proximity to the place of her birth to invoke the memories I believed that, through this close interaction a differing or a deeper fuller connection would be discovered. This enabled me to reclaim, through the use of my images, something I had not seen before, I knew now how to will my ancestors to appear (see Fig. 77).

Using my body with its flesh fully accessible to receive and to be engrossed in the act, this image (and there are others that act in the same way) reveals the moment I am receiving the embodiment of my ancestors. My body here becomes part of the process of the act that is not normally seen; however, photography has given me another vantage point by being the medium through which the process is carried and embodied.

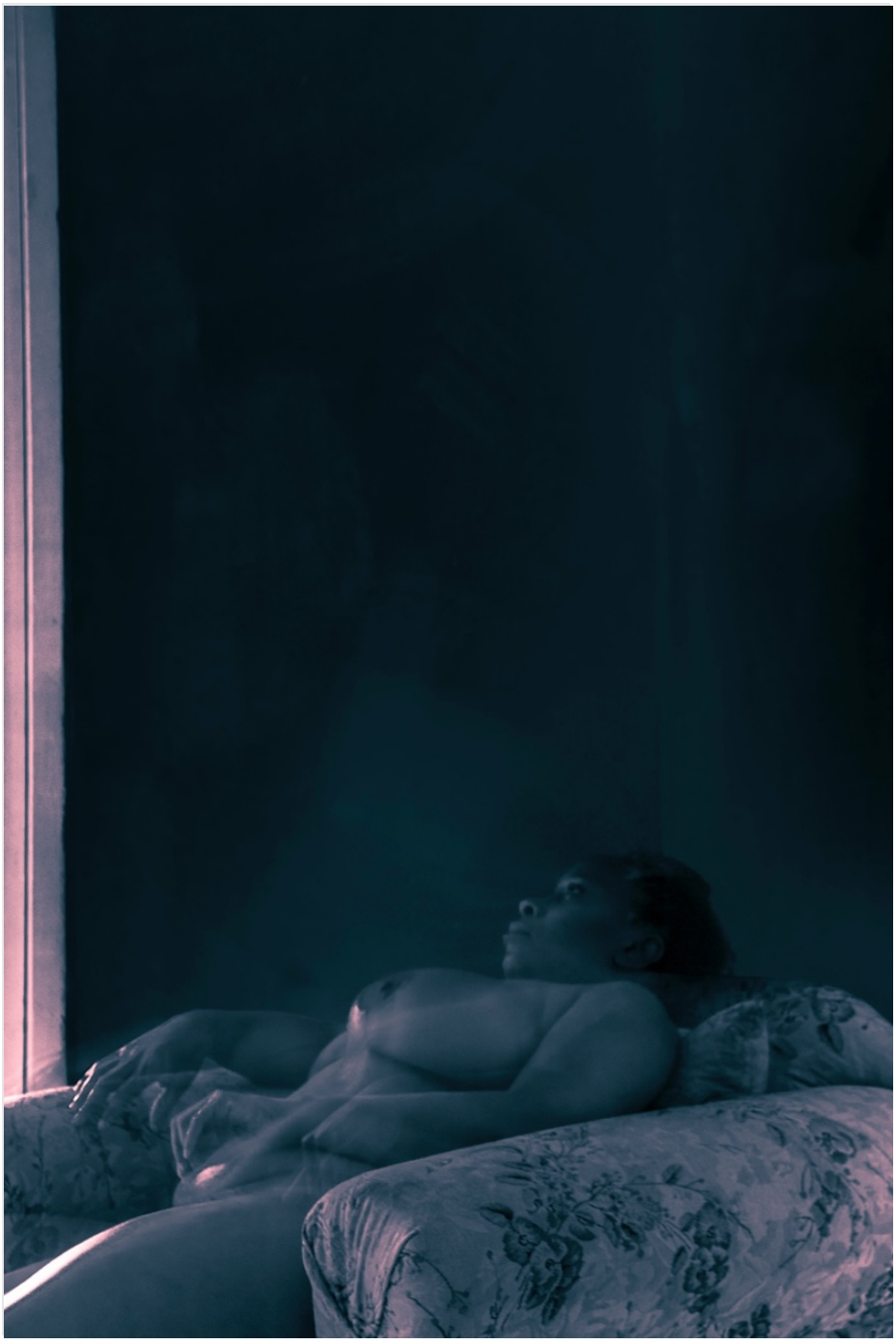


Figure 77: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. Marcia, who is nude, is resting back in a chair in Jamaica looking startled. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20inches (©2017, Marcia Michael).

The colour and tonality of the images are made to express the idea of a liminal space. I am neither here nor there, but placed in a space where my gaze is transfixed on something outside of the image at the upper right corner. I appear to be somewhat aware and lost in the moment. I am seated on a chair whose patterned cover comprises various types of fauna. I have placed myself in Alice Walker's Garden. I find

that, in wearing my mother's clothes or amongst her choice of furniture covers, I am encased or adorned with flowers. This motif that sits within the understanding of its use in Black literary matrilineage, comes from Walker's essay *In Search for my Mother's Garden* (2005), where the mother whose creativity was present in her daily acts, positions the flower as the daughter. As explained by Laurie McMillian (2004):

> "In search" begins with an epigraph that pictures the relationship between the mother and daughter as that of a plant…the mother acts like a nourishing root that eventually helps the flower (daughter) blossom.
> (McMillian, 2004, p. 118-119).

My role in learning the language and speaking is part of the understanding that I acquire through this practice. The intensity of our bodies in Jamaica has a shift of focus, in which I took prominence. Our bodies had been connecting in the manner that I had developed previously, and this expression of dialogue in the configurations of my images= did not change, as I was still learning with my mother overseeing. This included a spirituality of seeing, feeling and sensing what the act entailed. In my need to tell a story, and in my need to allow photography to carry my body into this act, my expectations of what I would experience and retrieve in Jamaica was highly imagined and became prominent as I reviewed and placed the images into their configurations.



Figure 78: *Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. My mother photographed in Jamaica my mother is seen positioned at the veil of the threshold. (Shimmering voices singing.) A sequence of four images of my mother walking through a curtain divide. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. Each image 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).*

In Fig. 78 my mother is seen positioned at the veil of the threshold. She stands in the middle of an opened doorway in which a diaphanous net curtain marks the divide. The distinctive play of colour and abstract forms highlights the sensual evocation that is taking place within this space and the works. The space contained in the images has light and dark parts. Where the light is seen, where my mother looks towards, revealed in increments the colour blue that frequents the painted walls of many Caribbean homes. This blue could reference the haint blue (historically cultivated from indigo) that was toiled over in the Gullah plantations during slavery, whose residues were added to white paint in many Caribbean homes as a way to connect back to their ancestry. Indigo is mentioned in Dash's *Daughters of the Dust* (1991), in which the maternal figure, Nana Peazant, not only wears indigo but her fingers are stained from the making of indigo.



Figure 79: Still from Daughter of the Dust. Video. 112 mins. (© 1991, Julie Dash). Available from: https://krullmag.com/blog/julie-dash-on-daughters-of-the-dust-and-speculative-fiction-part-2/

In the book *Daughters of the Dust: the making of an African American Woman's Film,* Dash (1992) explains the use of the colour. She states,

> The indigo stain, the blue stain, would not have remained on the hands of the old folks who had worked the indigo processing plant…but I was using this as a symbol of slavery, to create a new kind of icon around slavery rather than the traditional showing of the whip marks or the chains. (Dash, 1992, p. 56).

The use of Indigo in paint was also a way in which to mimic the blue sky and was said to be used to ward off spirits. 'The color's supposed to ward of haints – spirits and ghosts '. (Butler, O. and Jennings, J. and Duffy, D. 2017, p. 242).

In crossing this threshold, as seen in the sequential images (being read right to left), the last image shows my mother placed on the other side where the light is stronger and reaches enough to touch her face. This light emits an aura that spreads so that it seems she is enclosed by this light. This presence beams. Is this a spiritual encounter? There is a presence of someone who wants to enter, have they been asked, to enter, yes, have they been conjured? and my mother who stands at the veil of this entrance, perhaps acknowledging that she will soon cross, she observes maybe keeping guard, and when seeing who it is, crosses the threshold, passing beyond the veil, where my mother welcomes me in.

The poet Lucille Clifton (1980) embeds within her works a personal relationship with spirituality. In the *Two Headed Woman* (1980), the poem titled 'In Populated' placed at the end of the collection in the section titled 'the light that came to Lucille Clifton', she informs the reader that her spiritual ancestors have been seen and heard.

> In populated air
> our ancestors continue
> I have seen them
> I have heard
> their shimmering voices singing
> (Clifton, 1980, p.60).

Clifton, and many authors who write from a Black literary tradition, such as 'Dolores Kendrick…Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Tony Cade Bambara, Audre Lorde, Paule Marshall, Gloria Naylor, Octavia Butler, and Sonia Sanchez' (Hull, 1997, p. 332), express according to Gloria Hull (1997) the use of spirits that manifest in their physical bodies and how it is applied through their works.

> Acknowledging the reality of ghosts and spirit possession, honoring "superstition" and the unseen world, giving credence to second sight and other supersensory perception, paying homage to African deities, practising voodoo or hoodoo, rootworking, and so on. (Hull, 1997, p. 332).

Clifton also expresses in her writings an understanding towards her female ancestors, that as a woman she may have inherited a connection to spirits and how 'transmission of female ancestral energy' (Hull, 1997, p. 332), allows her and other authors such as those named above, to appreciate its use in their creativity.

> The ancestor comes from a specific family group or lineage, and the invocation of the ancestral spirit is itself an act that contributes to the construction of the group for whom it has power. (Shaw, 1997, p. 360).

Zora Neale Hurston, in her visits to Haiti and Jamaica to write about Voodun in her book *Tell My Horse* (1938), explores many rituals in which the female body takes precedence (pp .30-33 and pp. 138 -145). This work which develops and exercises her understanding through a 'diasporic rather than a single African American perspective' (Weir-Soley, 2009, p. 3) allows black female subjectivity, to reclaim the use of spirituality as a way in which resistance and presence are nurtured and examined as metaphors. 'Hurston's warning against taking voodoo "too literally" alludes to the idea that voodoo functions as a metaphor. (Trefzer, 2000, pp. 305-6).

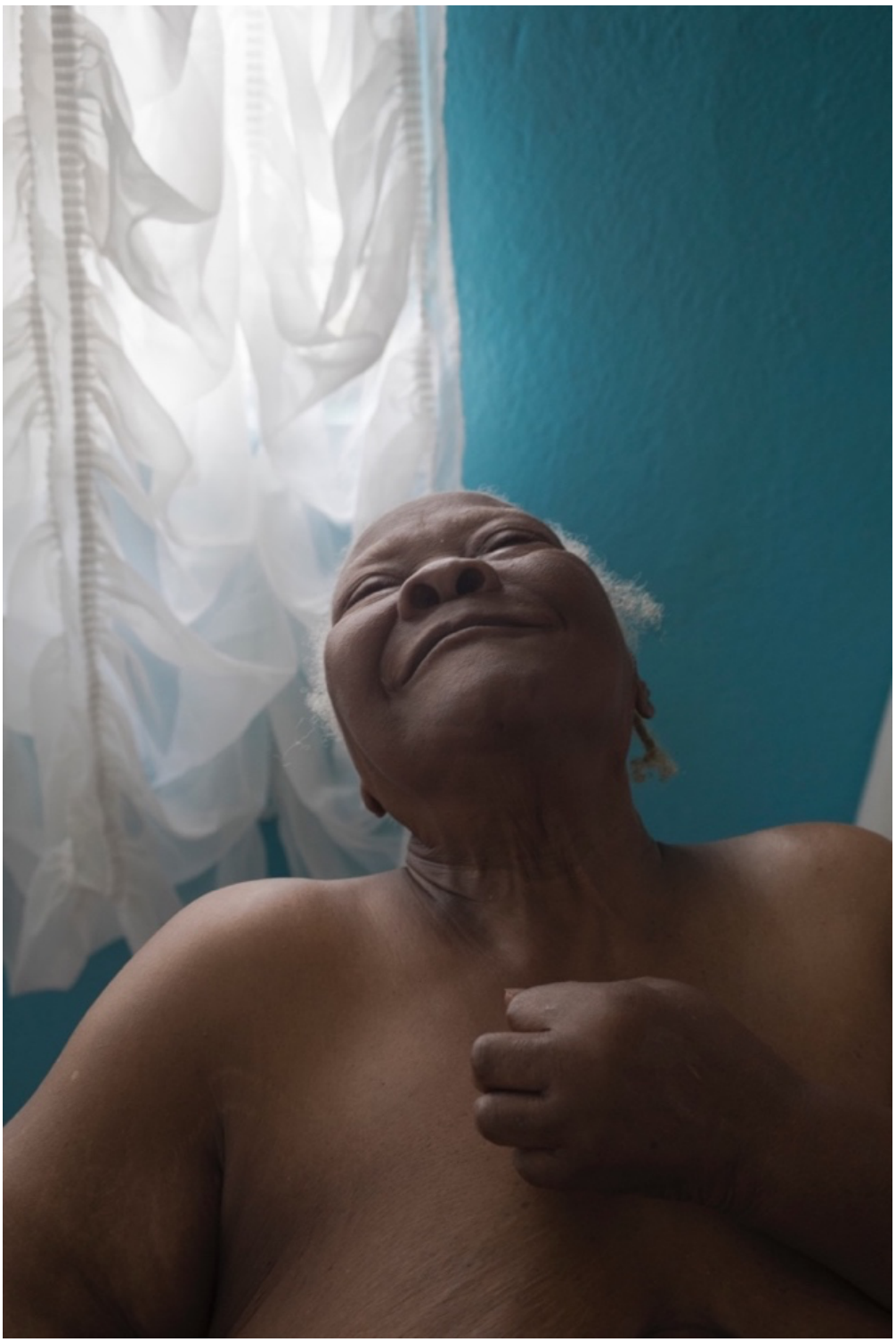


Figure 80: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. My mother photographed in Jamaica. She stands against a blue background where she is touching the base of her neck, her head is tilted back, eyes closed, as though she is experiencing pleasure. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

In Jamaica, I paid fuller attention to my dreams, and fuelled my embodied response with my imagination, enhanced by the places my mother took me to and the stories she told me, of these places and her life in Jamaica. I willed my Jamaican ancestors to come. My approach in listening and responding to my mother's body with my own did not change during these encounters. Perhaps, this response was stronger as was my need to gain information on this journey. I had noticed that my embodied response spoke with a fluency that brought forth more of the stories I needed to reclaim. The heat of Jamaica also meant that I dressed differently, adapting to my mother's way of showing more of my flesh and being free in this way, more so than I did whilst I was in the UK. The heat helped my mother's body. Her flesh here was different, self-lubricating by the sweat, no marks presenting themselves, there was a freedom and joy in her presence, as claimed in Fig. 78.

The claiming of photography, in defining this act and in claiming Black Matrilineage, for me had been successful. Through the images I made of myself during this visit to Jamaica in 2017 and after my return to the UK, the marks, signs or symbols I read as my ancestral language no longer reside on my body; I saw them in me (see Figs.81- 85).

Walking in my Mother's Garden: I Am Now You- Mother



Figure 81: I am Now you – Mother from the series The Object of My Gaze. Marcia photographed in Jamaica wearing dresses that belong to her mother. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 15" x 22.5" (©2017, Marcia Michael).

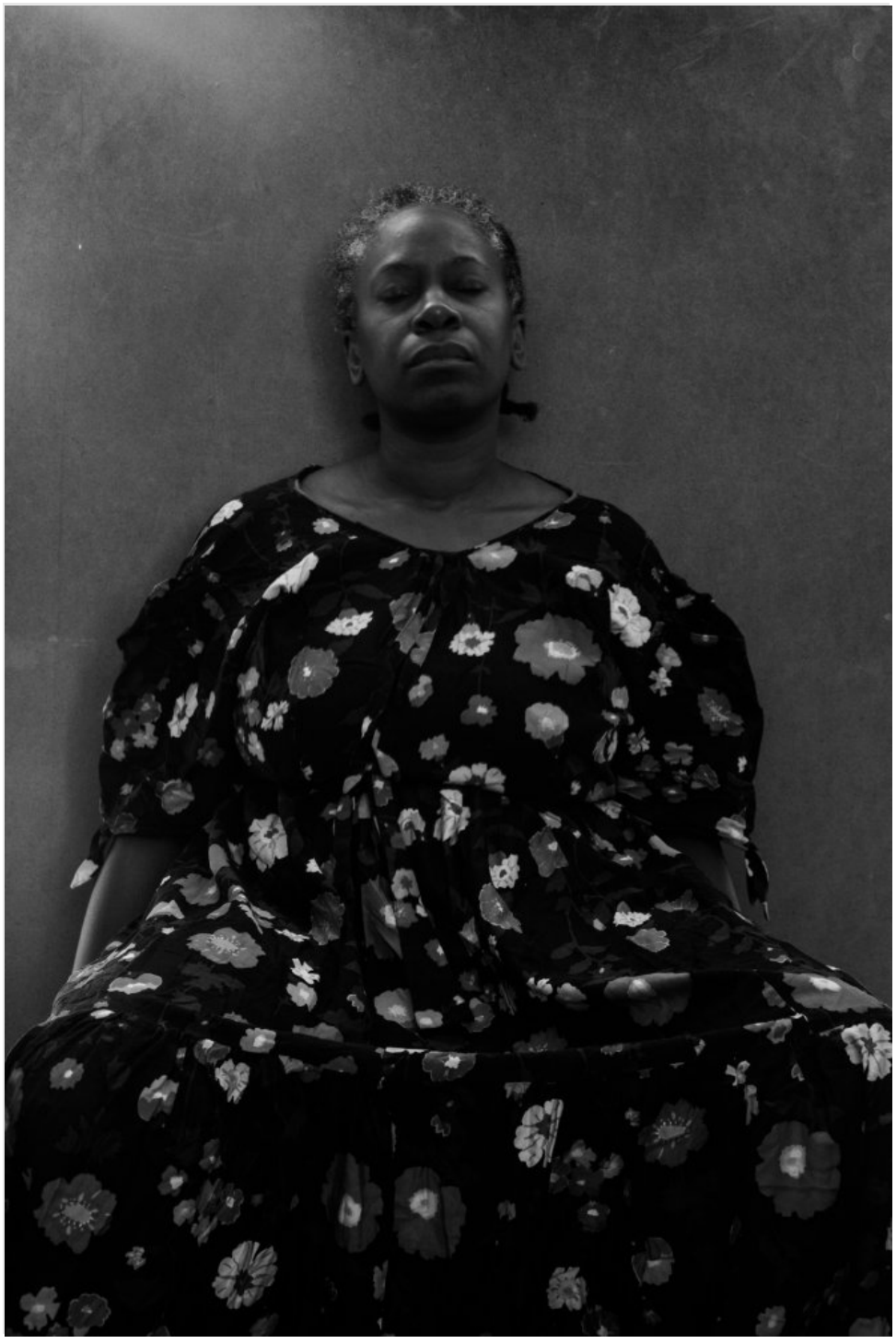


Figure 82: I am Now you – Mother from the series The Object of My Gaze. Marcia photographed in London, UK wearing dresses that belong to her mother. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 15" x 22.5" (©2017, Marcia Michael).

Exploring this notion through imagery and reading the images I have made, my body in Jamaica becomes a representation of my maternal ancestors'. I appear in these images (see Figs. 82 –83) symbolically in front of a door, where I have crossed the threshold. I

present myself wearing clothes that belong to my mother and have stories of their own, but interestingly these items of clothing seemingly all have flowers in their design. This coded familial connection of flowers has only been noted after the event.



Figure 83: I am Now you – Mother from the series The Object of My Gaze. Marcia photographed in Jamaica wearing dresses that belong to her mother. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 15" x 22.5" (©2017, Marcia Michael).



Figure 84: I am Now you – Mother from the series The Object of My Gaze. Marcia photographed in Jamaica wearing dresses that belong to her mother. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 15" x 22.5" (©2017, Marcia Michael).

As I look back over some of the images in this series, I see that my mother wears flowered dresses or finds ways to place herself amongst flowers when I photograph her (see Figs. 85 and 86). In creating this prominent and repetitive motif, I acknowledge that she is most likely a daughter whose mother (or grandmother as this is whom she was raised by) had ways to hone their creativity in their daily acts of living. The search for my maternal family, which instigated my mother to allow me to use her body to remember, makes sense to me now. The flowers (again similar and referencing Alice

Walker's (2005) realisation in, *In Search of her Mothers Garden*) has been an overlooked symbol on my part.

As I acknowledge this, I also understand not only that this was an act of Black Matrilineage, I was able through my mother's call in *Did it work (2015),* to perform the ritual of signifyin(g) in the photographic self-portrait series *I am now you mother (2017)*. In responding to my mother "ih work" with a revision and acknowledgement, that became embodied and represented as me in the series, I Am Now You – Mother, I became proof of the understanding to my mother's statement "ih work. My response, *Yes, it did!* for it answers both sides of the question or statement.



Figure 85: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. Digital photograph of My mother Myrtle, resting with eyes closed, head on cushion that has flowers pattern on it. There are multiple patterns and textures around her. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).



Figure 86: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. Digital photograph of My mother Myrtle standing in the garden, in her home in London, amongst her flowers. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Conclusion

In constructing these images as I have, I demonstrate the way these visual images can be used as a form of performative autobiography, to influence, like the narratives of Black literary matrilineage cultural practices act as vehicles for revaluing historical narratives, which are reclaimed through an embodied process.

This process of understanding and defining the act of Black Matrilineage, extracting the elements from the literary and placing Black Matrilineage in a visual field, has been much more than research intended for a discourse of photography. It has always been personal. The use of my body and my mother's made it personal. Listening to the sounds of my mother's pain made it personal. Through all this, my intention was to learn about my maternal ancestry.

In this process of ritual and cultural reclamation, I was in an act that directed me towards my matrilineal ancestry. I had learnt how to conjure. I had learned how to enact a call and respond, utilising photography to enable me to practice these rites of signifyin(g). I have understood how my family connected with each other through touch, through flesh and through an embodied rhythm of voice and signifyin(g). The tradition of Black literary matrilineage offered me the inclusion of photography, so that I, as a descendent who thrived on images over text, could also communicate to them. This was another way of knowing.

The images I have made all intertwine to tell a story. The process of defining Black Matrilineage, the acts, allowed me to use photography to retell the conversations I have had with my mother's body and myself in this act. At other times photography acted as the carrier of the message, constructed through and needing to be deciphered through the understanding of Black literary matrilineage.

Through an act of simultaneous learning and the discursive layouts, this process offered me spaces to practice my own speakerly and signifyin(g) that I had observed from my mother. The process began in 2015 and concluded in 2017. The images, in my construction of learning and practising, formed an understanding of the process of

Black Matrilineage, that are in themselves reflections, repetitions, revisions, and composition of my mother's voice reconstructed. The narrative reassembled includes my own voice which, having learnt what and how signifyin(g) works, permits me to tell my version of the story. It is in this way that my mother is able to share a story with me, that holds words, phrases, and stories of my maternal ancestors in her presence, allowing me to acknowledge, reclaim and reuse in order for the multiple histories of our maternal heritage to be passed on.

My mother's offering of her body and voice in this way assists me to search my history, to acquire with the camera (through video, sound and still imagery) an interpretation of recovery. This was also about our relationship and not about my siblings who, in knowing about our photographic endeavours, were not invited to be included. What the photographs offer is a way in which this intimate space, that inhabits the ineffable dialogue of exchanges between mother and daughter, is carried through in the fragmental expression of images made, and later seen as artworks. Showing how photography operates metaphorically as a rhetorical visual metaphor of voice becoming, through the mother's orality and body, a conduit that transforms the speakerly and signifyin(g) unscripted language to a visual recounter that is only observable by the daughter. It is the daughter's act that becomes significant as she signifies through the act of photography, responding and imitating by revising a performative way of learning that, in its discourse, acts as the means by which the embodied histories resurface and re-emerge in a visual form. The daughter signifyin(g) through and by photography becomes a powerful assertion of proof, dignity, and love, of that which comes forth from the womb, becomes a mother's heritage.

Conclusion – (Did it Work?)

I was drawn to Morrison's (1995) explanation on what instigated her research for writing Beloved. She explained that it could be something that affects the senses that would start her journey,

> So, the nature of my research begins with something as ineffable and as flexible as a dimly recalled figure, the corner of a room, a voice. (Morrison, 1995, p. 95-96).

I took from this that there is no set method as to how the search is to commence or develop. What the search offers are inspiring principles that allow an exploration and discovery of oneself. I started with my mother's voice in pain.

I learned that it would be this act that metaphorically unlocked the key to the past and the symbolic field of matrilineal history. I understood that the process, in the search, was to not only read the images of her body but to make them as well. I do not offer a formula but a guide of how I came upon and instigated my journey.

The essays concerning the literary works and poems written by women that, in their endeavour to discuss history, memory and recovery through a figurative mother and daughter association, revealed the formation of a tradition that became known as matrilineage. With the assistance of essays by Maglin (1980) Hirsch (1989) and Schultermandl (2009) (as discussed in Chapter Two), I was able to observe the characteristics that highlighted the construction of a literary matrilineage and distinguish Black literary matrilineage from matrilineage and transnational matrilineage respectively. Concentrating on Black literary matrilineage, I was able to identify the thematic notions that constructed its framework, such as the **mother figure** and the relationship with the **mother figure** using **oral, conjuring** and **signifyin(g).** Connecting this with the photographic interactions I was having with my mother, I was able to include the use of Morrison's **Rememory**, and isolate Black Matrilineage as an act and

not a position. Here, by identifying the act as an enactment of transformation, I was able to call upon photography as a suitable exchange of the oral and the literary text.

It would be this act of transposition that forms part of the new contribution of knowledge I am claiming in this thesis.



Figure 87: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A combination of images of mother and daughter nude bodies. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches and 11.25 x 7.5 inches (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Mother

Hochberg (2003) re-articulated Guy Dugas's statement: affirmed my intention in utilising my mother in an intimate participatory enactment of Black Matrilineage as a way for history to be revealed.

> 'it is by her and through her, through "mother as a source of memory," that one is rooted in a genealogy, a past, a people, a tradition' (Hochberg, 2003, p. 1).

I was unsure how my mother's role would be fulfilled without the use of pain. I anticipated memories that were not her own, coming forth during the search, and yet,

I was searching for our history, that I knew included painful experiences, through her body.
We had trust in and for each other, and this is an essential attribute that needs to be present if someone is to take on this type of search. Trust for yourself, for others, but also for the past and for the future that may surface because of your actions.

Many of these questions, concerning what this act I was in with my mother, were answered in the works of Black literary matrilineage. I seemingly needed affirmation of what I was doing. It was the similar notions of thoughts, experiences, and exchanges I found within the textual narratives of Black literary matrilineage that connected with me on an ethereal level the confirmation that I needed. I was shifting the imaginary and figurative into a tangible expression. Finding these affirmed the process of the search, and so I continued not knowing what I would discover, understanding that this may be all I was to experience. I cannot stress enough the importance of finding connections to the works that speak alongside your familial and personal experiences as you explore a Black Matrilineage. It connects you to the work as kin - sisters. The familial nature of Black literary matrilineage is made possible due to the close nature and openness of the dialogue being shared.

Upon reflection, my mother and I were curious about the outcome of the research. We both participated equally in this encounter. It bonded us closer, especially as she knew this act we were in, searching for her and her family, demonstrated love. It was also about the formation of a spiritual connection to those family members that exist both in the past and the future. As the photographer, the translator, the searcher, and the subject, both I and she were carriers of each other's history. I understand now the importance in her teaching me this method of embodying and recovering matrilineal history. Photography permitted me to display my version of polyvocality like my mother's display in her oral renditions during the video *Did it work?* (2015). In some way she allowed me to believe that my way, with photography, was just as useful as the oral or the written word to be able to embody and recover matrilineal histories.

As a form of expression this act had a meaning that, in the beginning, I could not name. I could, however, feel the weight of its presence. I understood that I was waiting for the vocabulary to articulate what I was doing and what I had found. The search was the practice, and Walker's (1983) *In Search of my Mothers* Garden, encouraged me to connect with the works situated in Black literary matrilineage as a form of journey. As Walker had found her own garden, in the search for her mothers, I had found this process of search and recovery through my mother's body. Black Matrilineage was how I could enact and embody a familial heritage that would lead me not only to myself but to the understanding of my mother and the creativity in my family. Fundamental was the way the search took place, unique to me, but shareable as the notion of openness. The process must be embodied. Utilise your sense to understand and move in the direction it is intended for you to go, trust the process. As Morrison (1995) addressed in her interview about writing *Beloved*, it is important to acknowledge what comes up in the process and trust it.

> ... images … surface first, and they surface so vividly and so compellingly that I acknowledge them as my route to a reconstruction of a world, to an exploration of an interior life that was not written and to the revelation of a kind of truth. (Morrison, 1995, p. 95-96).



Figure 88: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A combination of images of mother and daughter nude bodies. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches and 11.25 x 7.5 inches (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

I found encouragement from authors and critics named in this thesis, through the telling of their narratives and observations. I had faith in the structures associated in the framework of Black literary matrilineage and in the practicing I was in as a version of Black Matrilineage with photography.

Toni Morrison's (1983) *Beloved* was an important text for me. It expressed that there was something in the mother and daughter relationship (Sethe and Denver, Sethe and Beloved, and Sethe and Baby Suggs respectively) that explored a process of search and recovery from the mother's body by the daughter. As daughters, their interactions exhibited embodiments of the past, present, and future. I came to realise on this journey that I was to become this daughter who could and would embody. What this meant for my art practice was a development into disciplines I never thought possible. This is not something that I expected.

I did not know how answers regarding my matrilineal heritage would show themselves. For me it was in the disciplines that surfaced during this journey. These were creative writing, drawing, painting, sound, performing, and sculpture making. I paid attention to my own personal experiences at the time, particularly dreams.

Oral

Black literary matrilineage relied on language, and my mother's language as experienced in the video *Did it work?* (2015) was my barrier. Her way of speaking I identified as speakerly text, a form of signifyin(g). Signifyin(g), would be the essential consideration that must be present in the literature of Black matrilineage for Black Matrilineage to occur.

> Signifyin(g)… rather, it refers to the style of language, to that which transforms ordinary discourse into literature. Again, one does not Signify some thing; one Signifies in *some way*. (Gates, 1988a, p. 78).

The identifying of signifyin(g) from Gates (1988) encapsulated the answers to my questions regarding how my mother did what she did. "Where did it come from, did she know what she was doing, and if I could do what she was"? allowed me to explore the roots of my mother's embodied connection to her own familial and collective cultural histories. It provided me with a definition, a reasoning, a way, an outcome, and a connection. I was embarrassed by this notion of not understanding what it was, yet, finding it now, in this way enabled me to recognise this process of recovery we were in, her mode of communication, and discover another way of connecting to a culture I am part of. I also learnt as my research developed that signifyin(g) was both the way and the how of Black Matrilineage.

The origins of its conception were not important to her, learnt perhaps from her grandmother who raised her. Her playful command of the communication was captivating and learning about its origins were important to me. To understand what it was and to imitate it, I needed to know its origins. I had to understand this connection

before I could comprehend how I was utilising photography. It would be the signifyin(g) motif of repetition with a difference which enabled my use of photography to become a symbolic and metaphorical site for the mother and daughter interchange. The interconnections of performing repetition with a difference, as an act of response, was firmly claimed through black spirituals, jazz and blues – this was my mother's voice. It was her voice in pain that initially directed me into this search. A voice that responded to the embodiment in her body. It made sense. I found these in her tonal presence when she would sing around her home and also in the memory of the records she played. I recognised that her vocal expressions were melodic and powerful. Acknowledging the elements of 'conjuring' 'another way of knowing' and Rememory from her voice, I was now able to converse with my mother's *way* with photography as a carrier and claim this act as a signifyin(g) ritual and thus a practice of Black Matrilineage.



Figure 89: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A combination of images of mother and daughter nude bodies. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches and 11.25 x 7.5 inches (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Signifyin(g)

I gained a clearer understanding that the way my mother voiced herself became the means by which the transition and transformation of her sounds, along with my participation, and the use of photography, unlocked the path to the recovery of our ancestors. The signifyin(g) process allowed a precursor's work to be acknowledged and continued. This was how history was embedded, legacy marked and later retrieved. My mother was showing me how to 'reconstruct family genealogies' (Tracy, 2005, p. 251).

The process of search in this thesis and practice would be instrumental in using this as a method to understand how information can be planted so it can be both remembered and found, forming a recovery. Through this I acknowledged that I would become a conduit as the daughter and also the protagonist in this research, where others could gain a perspective and emotional insight into what it is that I have done, and how they can do this too. But the real notion of a development from this practice and new found knowledge, is not a copy, but a furtherance. The next researcher does not start at the beginning where I did. They start from me, signifyin(g) by acknowledging me in the ways they repeat with a difference: an act of Black Matrilineage itself.

Ultimately, this exploration was a personal search of who I was to become, away from my mother and because of my ancestors. This exploration was a search for the act and I found it. Black Matrilineage became an expression of all the elements that were used and constructed to enable the daughter to conclude, in the way she does, an understanding of herself because of her journey. Thus, unique to every daughter and story being retold, there would be a difference in the journey that was enacted, and the recoveries found. If our mothers are not present to hear or see the resulting conclusion to our search, we are left to acknowledge our mother's lived creativity and the creativity she brought to use (as an art practice) in creating this lineage of matrilineal discovery. This is also revealed in the works we produce along the search, as I have done. If our mothers are not present, then their imagined or tangible substitute is enough to fulfil the role. It is the act that matters. I come to this understanding

through the practice but also by reflecting on Alice Walker's search for her mother's garden. We search to find ourselves, to find that we are proof of the matrilineal connectivity,

> 'Perhaps she was herself a poet-though only her
> daughter's name is signed to the poems that we know'
> (Walker, 2005, p. 64).

Photography

Within the novels of Black literary matrilineage, the use of photography and photographs by the daughter (as author or protagonist), to reimagining history were noticeable enough for Rody (2001) to explain that:

> These texts draw upon the photograph's paradoxical nature as a record of presence under the sign of mortality, its mediation between the ephemeral and the permanent, to represent imaginative transcendence of time. (Rody (2001, p. 85).

Confirmation from hooks (1995), Stoller (1997) and Edwards (2005), through their respective research on anthropology and photography, presented to me how photographs become acts of conjuring and another way of knowing and how I was using them as such. Confirmation allowed me to feel that I was in the correct direction for me. This was all that could be used to realise a validation.



Figure 90: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A combination of images of mother and daughter nude bodies. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches and 11.25 x 7.5 inches (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Stoller's (1997) argument that, 'the evidence [of memories] is sedimented in the bodies of black women' (Stoller, 1997, P. 60), made so much sense to me that my mother was this place of retrieval. My use of photography, of her, was a way in which embodiment, enactment and retrieval was possible through this medium to find a way to understand the past. For Edwards (2005) photographs could be equated to oral history and its corresponding body language (Edwards, 2005, p. 29).
My belief had support. It had been used successfully in literature where the authors could weave together imaginative ways of being with words and styles of narration that mimicked gestures. Yet, here was I negotiating with the literary to move it away from the book, and I found allies.

In some respect I had no other alternative method at my disposal to use in place of photography, so I needed to find evidence of its use in Black literary Matrilineage. Alice Walkers (1989) connection with Zora Neale Hurston has been made clear throughout

this thesis, so when Walker writes about a mother figure Lissie Lyles and her use of photography, in *The Temple of my Familiar,* I paid attention. It is when she explains the importance for this Black woman to locate someone who could not only read the histories through the photographs but could create the images as well: a photographer (Walker, 1989, pp. 89-91).

I connected with Lissie and how photography was being used by her. It is important for the artist to have a connection to the medium they are using so as to successfully enact a Black Matrilineage, in the way it should for them.

Using photography and practicing signifyin(g), forming a connection to the methodology through Stuart 's Hall's (1984) statement in *Reconstruction Work,* allowed me to be confident in my use of photography and the methodology I was using.

> When such histories do come to be written, the photographic evidence is likely to play an extremely important role in their construction. One hopes that by then the historians will have gained some experience in 'how to read' it. (Hall, 1984, p.252).

Though Hall cautions against the 'exercise in interpretation' (Hall, 1984, p. 252) of the photographs, I realised from his previous statement in the essay that 'the past cannot speak except through its archive' (Hall, 1984, p. 252); that the literature of Black literary matrilineage was an archive and in this form, that the body of the mother (in its actual and metaphorical terms) was also an archive. Hall did not explain what these images will look like, yet in my interpretation of reading around his statement, my role as an artist was to make the images I created able to reimagine a version of history. It was in my understanding through this research that my mother bore the notion of being and containing the documents that had to be read. Black Matrilineage in its offering from Black literary matrilineage, presented another way of accessing the past.

Rememory

The personal nature of engaging in an art practice that includes one's mother, in such an intimate expression, was vital in knowing that this experience was worthy of artistic investigation. The works of Akerman (2015), Campos-pons (2007), Heng (2017), and Dash (1991/1997) helped to answer questions I had concerning: why me, why my mother and why an art practice? In an act comparable to that which takes place in Black Matrilineage, the need to understand one's mother and her history sustains the daughter's search to decode and form meaning. Simultaneously, the journey of the search is what is shared and used to inform other artists who may decide to go on a journey of recovery.

Through Akerman's and Heng's work, I noticed the struggle they had with their mother's silent voice. Akerman needed to present herself in her mother's place, to voice a version of history that will either propel her mother to speak or bring to the surface her mother's voice in her own. I observed the release it gave Akerman, in *No Home Movie* (2015) and in the book *My Mother's Laugh* (2013), to claim a recovery made visible and possible by her mother's presence and heard voice; at last. Heng's cultural and language barrier between her mother and herself, allowed Heng to utilise photography as the medium to speak on her behalf to her mother, and return with a message back to herself photographically. I saw a return to the use of the mother's body to bridge a gap of communication, metaphorically and literally between the past, present, and future using photography. Doing so, Heng achieved a form of historical renaissance that, in the male-dominated society she was born into, brought forth the capabilities of a mother and daughter dyad to find the means to search, recover and reclaim parts of themselves and connections to their family. This spoke to me of matrilineage and the correlation with my own search was paramount in exploring and testifying that the shift from the literary to the physical was possible with photography.

In returning to the discourse on Black literary matrilineage, Washington's (1980) observation that the mother was the '…key to the release of the creative powers' (Washington, 1984, p. 144) led her to search for Black women authors, who had this

idea instilled in their work, thus forming the beginning of a literary matrilineage. This told me that in Heng and Akerman's use of their mothers, through this personal and intimate encounter, I had found kindred sisters.

Dash's (1991) film and novel *Daughters in the Dust c*orroborated my claim that there are structures that construct a Black matrilineage and that these structures once put into place, can be used to procure an enactment of Black Matrilineage. Dash created a visual embodiment of Black Matrilineage that seamlessly crossed over from the literary to a visual form of moving imagery.

My crossover may not have been successful if my mother was not willing to offer me her body as she did. It may not have been successful if I was not willing to use my own body as I did in my need to converse with my mother. There could have been stumbling blocks along the way, interfering, like a falling out of our relationship. If my mother had passed away before the research was over, or if my father or other siblings had wanted to participate in a similar way alongside my mother, the outcome would be different. I believe that there is a possibility that Black Matrilineage can be performed by multiple people simultaneously. Within literature, the author is able to make this flow elegantly. This is something that new researchers in this field could explore.

Perhaps I may not have found the act in the literary or the possibility of utilising photography; then what would it have been? A different discipline or perhaps an expression of maternal lineage or a maternal representation of Black women through the uses of photographic representations. Examples of these works are explored in the book*, Black Matrilineage, Photography, and Representation* (Deschler Canossi, and Lopez-Diago, 2022).

Photography was my medium. The ability to use any other discipline that connects mother and daughter, I believe, can be used in the same way if signifyin(g) is utilised in the search. Cooking, recipes, quilt making, sewing, all the ways in which mothers makes something seemingly out of little or nothing – conjuring, comes to mind. Conjuring is also central and must be present in Black Matrilineage. It is the doing and

being that forms a connection with signifyin(g) that infuses and negotiates the journey during the search and is part of the framework that constructs Black Matrilineage.

Conjuring

Elements which connected the sound of my mother and my visual use of photography, were punctuated with the clarity of what took place within signifyin(g), the use of call and response. I had begun to layout and construct the photographs, unknowingly following the rules of call and response as described by Floyd (1995) (mentioned in Chapter Three in the sections *Signifying in Words, Music and Pictures – call and response* and *Familial Text and Photography*). I gained evidence that my own use of photography was something to be noted. This was also a fundamental acknowledgement in my enacting a Black Matrilineage and proof for me of how the oral was being replaced by photography – but my mother must have known as she instigated my use of photography.

My mother showed a path to me. She was able to assist me in better understanding myself and the creativity that resided in the family I was born into - *Did it Work?*
I was shown how to conjure, signifyin(g), another way of knowing, (parts of her legacy that saw an inheritance of doing and ways of being passed on as seen in the series *Partus Sequitur Ventrem* (2015-2017), and it was this path of learning that connected me to my maternal lineage by enabling me to practice Black Matrilineage.
I gained self-awareness that has been a fundamental concept in identifying Black Matrilineage, through the act of mothering. Replacing my mother through the series *I Am Now You - Mother* (2017).

References

Abel, E. (1999) ‘Domestic borders, cultural boundaries: Black feminists re-view the family’, in Hirsch, M. (ed.) *The Familial Gaze*. Hanover: Dartmouth College Press, pp. 124-152.

Abrahams, R. D. (1976) *Talking Black*. Rowley Massachusetts: Newbury House Publishers.

Adams, J. H. (1904) ‘”Rough Sketches: A Study of the Features of the New Negro Woman” *Voice of the Negro* (1904)’, in Patterson, M. H. (ed.) (2008) *The American New Woman Revisited: A Reader, 1894-1930*. Rutgers University Press, (pp. 168–171). Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5hhxr8.43

Adams, J. H. (1904) ‘Rough Sketches: The New Negro Man’, in Jarrett, G. A., and Gates, H. L. (eds.) (2021) *The New Negro: Readings on Race, Representation, and African American Culture, 1892-1938*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. pp. 67-69.

Akerman, C. (2013/2019) *My Mother's Laugh*. Silver Press.

Alloula, M., Godzich, M., Godzich, W., & Harlow, B. (1986). *The Colonial Harem*. University of Minnesota Press. Available at: https://doi.org/10.5749/j.cttth83

Ambika p3. (2015) Chantal Akerman, www.p3exhibitions.com/past/2015/

Amoah, J. (1997) 'Narrative: The Road to Black Feminist Theory', *Berkeley Women's Law Journal*, 12, pp. 84. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326753366_Narrative_The_Road_to_Black_Feminist_Theory (Accessed: 9 April 2023).

Ansa, T. M. (1989) *Baby of the Family*. William Morrow & Company.

Aujourd'hui, dis-moi (1980) Directed by C. Akerman [Film].

Bâ, M. (1989) So Long a Letter. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann

Baker Jr., H. A. (1984) *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory*.

Bambara, T. C. (1980) *The Salt Eaters*. Random House.

Barbeito, F. B. (1998) ‘Making Generations in Jacobs, Larsen, and Hurston: A Genealogy of Black Women's Writing’, *American Literature*, 70(2), pp. 365-395. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/2902842 (Accessed: 31 March 2020).

Bell, L (1998) "History of People Who Were Not Heroes’, *Third Text*, 12(43), pp.33-42. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/09528829808576732

Beye, C. (2015) '"My Mama Had a Story": Mothers and Intergenerational Relations in Andrea Levy's Fiction', in Herrera, C. and Sanmartín, P. (eds.) *Reading, Speaking, Writing The Mother Text*. Bradford, Canada: Demeter Press, pp. 121-142.

Blackhurst, A (2018) 'Ordinary Devotion: The Seduction of Normalcy in Chantal Akerman's 'No Home Movie''. Available at: https://www.anothergaze.com/ordinary-devotion-seduction-normalcy-chantal-akermans-no-home-movie/. (Accessed 07 Feb 2023).

Boyce Davies, C, and Savory Fido, E. (1990) *Out of the Kumbla: Caribbean Women and Literature*. Trenton NJ: Africa World Press

Brockmeier, J. (2015) *Beyond the Archive: Memory, Narrative, and the Autobiographical Process*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brooks, K., Martin, K. L., and Simmons, L. K. (2021) 'Conjure Feminism: Toward a Genealogy', *Hypatia*, 36(3), pp. 452–461. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1017/hyp.2021.43 (Accessed 05 Feb 2023).

Brouwer, J (1995) 'Repositioning: Center and Margin in Julie Dash's Daughters of the Dust', *African American Review*, 29(1), 5-16. Available at: https://doi.org/ 10.2307/3042423.

Brown, C. (2012) *The Black Female Body in American Literature and Art: Performing Identity*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Brown, S. A. (1996) *The Collected Poems of Sterling A. Brown*. Edited by M. S. Harper. North Western University Press.

Brown, S (1990) *Caribbean New Wave: Contemporary Short Stories*. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann.

Burrows, G. (2007) 'Black, Brown and Beige' and the politics of Signifyin(g): Towards a critical understanding of Duke Ellington', *Jazz Research Journal*, 1(1), pp. 45-71. Available at https://doi.org/10.1558/jazz.v1i1.45 (Accessed 06 Feb 2023).

Burrows, S. (2001) '"You heard her, you ain't blind": seeing what's said in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*', *Novel: A Forum of Fiction*, 34(3), pp. 434–452. Available at: https://doi.org/ 10.2307/1346075 (Accessed 10 June 2020).

Burrows, S. (2008) *A Familiar Strangeness: American Fiction and the Language of Photography, 1839-1945*. University of Georgia Press.

Busia, A. (1989) 'Silencing sycorax: on African colonial discourse and the unvoiced female', *Cultural Critique*, 14, pp. 81-104. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/1354293 (Accessed: 14 March 2019).

Butler, O. E., Jennings, J. and Duffy, D. (2017) *Kindred: A Graphic Novel Adaptation*. United States: Abrams.

Campos-Pons Feminist Artist Statement. Available at https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/eascfa/about/feminist_art_base/maria-magdalena- (Accessed 04 March 2022).

Campos-Pons, M. M. (2007) *Everything Is Separated by Water*. Indianapolis Museum of Art. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Campt, T. (2018) 'Black Visual Frequency: A Glossary', Fotomuseum. Available at: https://www.fotomuseum.ch/de/series/black-visual-frequency-a-glossary/ (Accessed 24 July 2023).

Campt, T. (2019) 'Black Visuality and the Practice of Refusal', *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory*, 29(1), pp. 79-87.

Campt, T. M. (2021) *A Black Gaze: Artists Changing How We See*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA: MIT Press.

Caponi, G. D. (1999) *Signifyin(g), Sanctifyin' and Slam Dunking: A Reader in African American Expressive Culture*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.

Carroll, A (2014) *A Journey Through Asian Art*. Episode 2, Snodger Media. Available at: https://vimeo.com/107550626 (Accessed 15 August 2022).

Carter, T. A. (2014) 'Signifying (non) linguistic and subliminal spirituality: Caryl Phillips Crossing the River', *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature*, 45(1), pp. 247-260. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1353/ari.2014.0006 (Accessed 17 August 2022).

Charnov, E. S. (1998). 'The Performative Visual Anthropology Films of Zora Neale Hurston'. *Film Criticism*, 23(1), pp. 38–47. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/44018929 (Accessed 15 August 2022).

Chernoff, J. M. (1981) *African Rhythm and African Sensibility: Aesthetics and Social Action in African Musical Idioms*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Cherry, D. (2015) *Maud Sulter: Passion*. London: University of the Arts.

Chinitz, D. (2014) 'A Real, Solid, Sane, Racial Something: Langston Hughes's Blues Poetry', in
Thompson, G. E. (ed.), *Black Music, Black Poetry, Blues and Jazz's Impact on African American Versification*. City College of New York, USA: Ashgate Publishing Limited, pp. 67-75.

Christian, B. (1993). "Fixing Methodologies: Beloved." *Cultural Critique*, 24, pp. 5-15. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/1354127 (Accessed 17 March 2020).

Chung, F. (2000) *Crazy Melon and Chinese Apple: The Poems of Frances Chung*. Wesleyan University Press.

Clarke, D. (2001) 'The Porch Couldn't Talk for Looking: Voice and Vision in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*', *African-American Review*, 35(4), pp. 599–613. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/2903284 (Accessed 01 June 2020).

Cliff, M. (1996) *No Telephone to Heaven*. New York: Plume.

Cliff, M. (1995) Abeng. New York: Plume

Clifton, L. (1976) *Generations: A Memoir*. New York: Random House.

Clifton, L. (1980). *Two-headed Woman*. University of Massachusetts Press.

Collins, P. H. (1989) 'The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought', *Signs*, 14(4), pp. 745-773. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/3174683 (Accessed: 23 April 2023).

Condé, M. (2010) *Victorie, My Mothers' Mother.* New York, London: Atria International.

Connerton, P. (1989) *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Conquergood, D. (1995) "Of Caravans and Carnivals: Performance Studies in Motion." *TDR (1988-)*, (39) 4, pp. 137–141. Available at: www.jstor.org/stable/1146488. (Accessed 9 April 2020).

Cudjoe, S. R. (1990) *Caribbean Women Writers: Essays from the First International Conference*. Dartmouth: University of Massachusetts.

Danticat, E. (1994) *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. Soho Press. USA.

Dash, J (1992) *Daughters of the Dust: The Making of an African American Woman's Film*. New York: New Press.

Dash, J. (1997) *Daughters of the Dust*. New York: Dutton.

Daughters of the Dust. Directed by Julie Dash [film]. USA: BFI Video.

Davidson, C. N. and Broner, E. M. (eds.) (1980) *The Lost Tradition: Mothers and Daughters in Literature*. New York: Frederick Ungar.

Davis, Z, I, (1991) 'An Interview with Julie Dash', *Wide-Angle: A Quarterly Journal of Film, History, Theory, Criticism and Practice*, 13(3-4), pp. 11-13.

DeCarava, R. and Hughes, L. (1967) *The Sweet Flypaper of Life*. New York: Hill and Wang.

DeFrantz, T., and Gonzalez, A. (2014) *Black Performance Theory*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Demez, K. E. (2012) (ed.) *Carrie Mae Weems: Three Decades of Photography and Video*. Nashville: Frist Center for Visual Arts.

De Souza, P. (2003) 'Creolizing Anancy: Signifyin(g) Processes in New World Spider Tales', *Matatu—Journal for African Culture and Society*, 27(28), pp. 339–63.

Diawara, M (1991) 'The Nature of Mother in Dreaming Rivers', *Black American Literature Forum*, 25(2), pp. 283-298. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/3041687 (Accessed 04 March 2020).

Doyle, L (1994) *Bordering on the Body: The Racial Matrix of Modern Fiction and Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Dreaming Rivers (1988) Directed by M, J, Attille. [film]. UK: Sankofa Film.

Dubey, M. (1995) 'Gayl Jones and the Matrilineal Metaphor of Tradition', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 20(2), pp. 245-267. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/3174949 (Accessed: 19 September 2020).

Duboin, C. (2008). 'Trauma Narrative, Memorialization, and Mourning in Phyllis Alesia Perry's 'Stigmata', *The Southern Literary Journal*, 40(2), pp. 284–304. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/20077919 (Accessed: 19 September 2020).

Dugas, G. (1990) *La littérature judéo-maghébine d'expression française: entre Djéha et Cagayous*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

Dunbar, P. L. (1903/1972) *When Malindy Sings*, *illustrated with photographs by the Hampton Institute camera club*. Reprint of 1903 New York First AMS. New York: Dodd Mead and Company.

Dunbar, P. L. (2018/1922) *The Complete Poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar*. Adansonia Press.

Dutton, W. (1993) 'The Problem of Invisibility: Voodoo and Zora Neale Hurston, *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 13(2), pp. 131–152. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/3346733 (Accessed 25 Jan 2023).

Durkin, H. (2021) 'Zora Neale Hurston, Film, and Ethnography', in Farebrother, R. and Thaggert, M. (eds.) *A History of the Harlem Renaissance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 290-306. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108656313.018 (Accessed 14 Feb 2022).

Eckstein, L. (2006) 'A Love Supreme: Jazzethic Strategies in Toni Morrison's Beloved', *African American Review*, 40(2), pp. 271-283. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/40033715 (Accessed 13 Feb 2022).

Edwards, E. (2005) 'Photographs and the Sound of History', *Visual Anthropology Review*, 21, pp. 27-46. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1525/var.2005.21.1-2.27 (Accessed: 2 June 2020).

Enwezor, O. (2009) *Repetition and Differentiation — Lorna Simpson's Iconography of the Racial Sublime* [recorded lecture/podcast]. Art & Identity: The Artists Lecture Series 108, Center for Creative Photography, The University of Arizona, 15 October. Available at: https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/repetition-differentiation-lorna-simpsons-iconography/id413133857?i=1000090183158 (Accessed: 20 June 2020).

Emecheta, B. (1979) *Joys of Motherhood.* London: Allison & Busby.

Erhart, J (1996) 'Picturing What If: Julie Dash's Speculative Fiction', *Camera Obscura*, 13(2 (38), pp. 116–131. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1215/02705346-13-2_38-116 (Accessed: 07 April 2020).

Esteves, C, C. and Paravisini-Gebert, L. (1991) *Green Cane and Juicy Flotsam: Short Stories by Caribbean Women.* New Brunswick, New Jersey: *Rutgers* University Press
Fitzgerald, E. (1936) *These are the Blues* [Vinyl]. Germany, Verve records.

Floyd Jr, S. A. (1995) *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Floyd, S. A. (2002) 'Ring Shout! Literary Studies, Historical Studies, and Black Music Inquiry', *Black Music Research Journal*, 22, pp. 49–70. Available at: www.jstor.org/stable/1519943 (Accessed 5 April 2020).

Frank, C (2019) 'On Dreaming Rivers, the Possibilities of Becoming', in Aikens, N. and Robles, E. (eds.) *The Place Is Here - The Work of Black Artists in 1980s Britain*. Sternberg Press. pp. 145-160.

Golden, T., Beckwith, N., Iles, C (2022) *Lorna Simpson:* Phaidon.

Gates, H. (1983) 'The "Blackness of Blackness": A Critique of the Sign and the Signifying Monkey', *Critical Inquiry*, 9(4), pp. 685-723. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/1343378 (Accessed: 31 March 2020).

Gates, H. (1988a) *The Signifying Monkey*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gates, H. (1988b) 'The trope of a new negro and the reconstruction of the image of the black', *Representations*, (24), pp. 129-155. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/2928478 (Accessed 06 June 2020).

Gelburd, G. and Golden, T. (1997) *Romare Bearden in Black-And-White Photomontage Projections 196*. New York, Whitney Museum of American Art: Harry N Abrams.

Giovanni, N. (1974) *My House*. New York: William Morrow and Co.

Gourdine, A. K. (1998) 'Hearing Reading and Being "Read" by Beloved'. *NWSA Journal*, 10(2), pp. 13–31. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/4316576 (Accessed 02 Feb 2022).

Grandt, J. E. (2005) *Kinds of Blue: The Jazz Aesthetic in African American Narrative*. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press

Gregory, J. (ed.) (2024) *Shining Lights: Black Women Photographers in 1980s–'90s Britain*. London: Autograph, Mack.

Hall, S. (1984) 'Reconstruction Work: Images of Post War Black Settlement' [1984]', *Ten-8*, 16, pp. 2–9.

Hall, S. (2021) *Zora Neale Hurston: A Resource Guide*. Available at: https://guides.loc.gov/zora-neale-hurston (Accessed: 24 April 2022).

Hara, R. (2014) 'Memory and Landscape in the Sea Island Series by Carrie Mae Weems', *Diffractions: Graduate Journal for the Study of Culture*. Available at: http://www.diffractions.net/documentos/3_Rumi_Hara_Carrie_mae_weems.pdf (Accessed: 24 April 2017).

Hartman, S. (1997), *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery and Self-making in Nineteenth Century America*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Harris, W. J. (2004) '"How you sound??": Amiri Baraka writes free Jazz', in O'Meally, R. G., Edwards, B. H. and Griffin, F. J. (eds.) *Uptown conversation: The New Jazz Studies*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 312-325.

Henderson, C. E. (2002) *Scarring the Black Body: Race and Representation in African American Literature*. University of Missouri Press.

Henderson, M. G. (1991) 'Toni Morrison's Beloved: re-membering the body as historical text', in Spillers, H. J. (ed.) *Comparative American Identities: Race, Sex and Nationality in the Modern Text*. London: Routledge, pp. 63–86.

Heng, A. (2011) *Speak To Me, Walk With Me*, [exhibition catalogue], Singapore Art Museum.

Heng, A. (2017) *We Are the World: These Are Our Stories*. Singapore: STPI Creative Workshop & Gallery.

Henninger, R. K. (2003) 'Zora Neale Hurston, Richard Wright, and the Postcolonial Gaze', *The Mississippi Quarterly*, 56(4), pp. 581-595. Available at: www.jstor.org/stable/26476807 (Accessed June 5, 2020).

Henninger, K. (2007) *Ordering the Façade*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina

Herrera, C. and Sanmartin, P (eds.) (2015) *Reading/Speaking/Writing the Mother Text: Essays on Caribbean Women's Writing*. Demeter Press.

Heung, M. (1993) 'Daughter-Text/Mother-Text: Matrilineage in Amy Tan's "Joy Luck Club"', *Feminist Studies*, 19(3), pp. 596-616. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/3178102 (Accessed 16 March 2017).

Hite, M. (1989) 'Romance, Marginality, Matrilineage: Alice Walker's "The Color Purple" and Zora Neale Hurston's "Their Eyes Were Watching God"', *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 22(3), pp. 257–273. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/1345522 (Accessed 23 February 2020).

Hirsch, M. (1989) *The Mother/Daughter Plot*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Hirsch, M. (1994) 'Maternity and Rememory: Toni Morrison's Beloved', in Bassin, D., Honey, M., and Kaplan, M. (eds.) *Representations of Motherhood*. New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 92-112.

Hirsch, M. (2002) 'Marked by Memory, Feminist Reflections on Trauma and Transmission', in Miller, N and Tougaw, J (eds.) *Extremities: Trauma, Testimony, and Community*. University of Illinois Press, pp. 71-91.

Hirsch, M. (2012) *The Generation of Postmemory*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Hirsch, M. (2012) *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory*. United States; Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

Hochberg, G. (2003) 'Mother, Memory, History: Maternal Genealogies in Gayl Jones's *Corregidora* and Simone Schwarz-Bartis *Pluie et vent sur Telumee Miracle*', *Research in African Literatures*, 34(2), pp. 1-12. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1353/ral.2003.0033 (Accessed: 7 March 2020).

Hood, W. (1993) *Blues & Jazz Landscape Improvisations*. Available at: http://www.poltroonpress.com/book/blues-jazz-landscape-improvisations/ (Accessed 28 Jan 2023).

Hood, W. and Tada, G. M. (eds.) (2020) *Black Landscapes Matter*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.

hooks, b. (1990) *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*. Boston, MA: South End Press

hooks, b (1992) *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston, MA: South End Press.

hooks, b. (1994) *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge, pp. 167-175.

hooks, b. (1995) *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics*. The New Press.

Hooker, J. L. (1966) *And Seen Nights* [Vinyl]. US, Verve Folkways.

Howard, L. P. (1993) *Alice Walker and Zora Neale Hurston: The Common Bond*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press.

Hull, A. (1997) 'Channelling the Ancestral Muse: Lucille Clifton and Dolores Kendrick', in Abel, E. (ed.) *Female Subjects in Black and White: Race, Psychoanalysis, Feminism*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hurston, Z. N. (1937/1986) *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. London: Virago.

Hurston, Z. N. (1935/1990) *Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica*. New York: Perennial Library.

Hurston, Z. N. (1981) *The Sanctified Church*. Berkeley: Turtle Island Foundation.

Hurston, Z. (1994) 'Characteristics of Negro Expressions (1934)', in Mitchell, A. (ed.) *Within the Circle: An Anthology of African American Literary Criticism from the Harlem Renaissance to the Present*. Duke University Press, pp. 79-94.

Huzar, T.J. (2021) 'Toward a Fugitive Politics: Arendt, Rancière, Hartman' *Cultural Critique*, 110, 1-48. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1353/cul.2021.0001 (Accessed 17 June 2021).

Ickes, C. (2014) 'Sonic Stitches: Isaac Julien, His Mother, and Her 'Creolized' Sound', *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory*, 24(2-3), pp. 258-262.

Je, tu, il, Elle (1974) Directed by C. Akerman [film].

Jones, G. (1975) *Corregidora*. New York: Random.

Jones, G. (1986), *Corregidora*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Jones, G. (1981) *Song for Anninho*. New York: Random.

Joyce, J. A. (2008) 'A Tinker's Damn: Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and The Signifying Monkey Twenty Years Later', *Callaloo*, 31(2), pp. 370-380. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1353/cal.0.0098 (Accessed 8 Feb 2022).

Kim, G. (2017) ‘Unheard Frequencies: Engaging Photographs in the Eyes of Tina Campt’, *Columbia Daily Spectator*. Available at: https://www.columbiaspectator.com/arts-and-entertainment/2017/09/19/unheard-frequencies-engaging-photographs-in-the-eyes-of-tina-campt/ (Accessed 6 September 2020).

Koh, G. (1998) ‘Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons’, *Crossings*. Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, pp. 94-101.

Koolish, L. (1995) 'Fictive Strategies and Cinematic Representations in Toni Morrison's Beloved: Postcolonial Theory/Postcolonial Text', *African American Review*, 29(3), pp. 421-438. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/3042392 (Accessed 21 November 2019).

Kristeva, J. (1984) *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Translated by M, Waller. New York: Columbia University Press.

Kristeva, J. and Goldhammer, A. (1985) ‘Stabat Mater’, *Poetics Today*, 6(1/2), pp. 133-152. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/1772126 (Accessed 26 March 2020).

Kuwabong, D. (1999) 'The Mother as Archetype of Self: A Poetics of Matrilineage in the Poetry of Claire Hudson and Lorna Goodison', *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature*, 30(1), pp. 105-129. Available at: https://journalhosting.ucalgary.ca/index.php/ariel/article/view/34212 (Accessed 19 September 2020).

Laflen, A. (2014) *Confronting Visuality in Multi-Ethnic Women's Writing*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Lebow, A. (2003) ‘Memory Once Removed: Indirect Memory and Transitive Autobiography in Chantal Akerman's Diest’, *Camera Obscura*, 18:1(52), pp. 35-82. Available at: https://muse.jhu.edu/article/42076 (Accessed 09 April 2020).

Lee, C. D. (1991) ‘Big Picture Talkers/Words Walking Without Masters: The Instructional Implications of Ethnic Voices for an Expanded Literacy’, *The Journal of Negro Education*, 60(3), pp. 291–304. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/2295483 (Accessed 24 March 2021).

L’ Enfant aimé ou Je joue à être une femme mariée (1971) Directed by C. Akerman [film].

Lemma, J. (2009) 'Language Acquisition, Motherhood, and the Perpetual Preservation of Ethical Dialogue', *Dublin Perspectives: International Postgraduate Journal of Philosophy*, 2(1), pp. 102-115. Available at: https://www.ucd.ie/philosophy/perspectives/resources/Jennifer_Lemma.pdf (Accessed: 09 April 2020).

Levy, A. (2010) *The Long Song*. Headline Publishing.

Lewis, E. (2014) 'Carrie Mae Weems: Sea Island Series'. Available at: https://www.thegundgallery.org/2014/01/carrie-mae-weems-sea-island-series/ (Accessed 05 February 2023).

Liscio, L. (1992) 'Beloved's Narrative: Writing Mother's Milk', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 11(1), pp.31-46. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/463779 (Accessed 06 Feb 2018).

Lopez-Diago, Z. and Deschler Canossi, L. (2022) *Black Matrilineage, Photography, and Representation: Another Way of Knowing*. Leuven: Leuven University Press.

Lorde, A. (1996) *Coal*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Lorde, A. (2017) *Your Silence Will Not Protect You: Essays and Poems*. Silver Press.

Machlin, P. S. (ed.) (2001) *Thomas Wright Fats Waller: Performances in Transcription 1927-1943 (Music of the United States of America)*. Middleton, Wisconsin: American musicological society. A-R Editions Inc. 10.

Maglin, N. B. (1979) 'Full of Memories: Teaching Matrilineage', *College English*, 40(8), pp. 889-898. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/376525 (Accessed: 16 March 2017).

Maglin, N. (1980). 'Don't never forget the bridge that you crossed over on: The Literature of
Matrilineage', in Cathy N. Davidson and E. M. Broner (eds.) *The Lost Tradition: Mothers and Daughters in Literature*, pp. 257-267. New York: Frederick Ungar.

Malik, A. (2007) 'Migratory Aesthetics, (Dis)placing the 'Black' Maternal Subject in Martina Attille's 'Dreaming Rivers' (1988)', in Arana, R. V. (ed.) *Black British Aesthetics Today*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 243-261.

Malone, J. (1996) *The Visible Rhythms of African American Dance: Steppin' on the Blues: The Visible Rhythms of African American Dance*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois

Manigault-Bryant, J. A. and Manigault-Bryant, L. S. (2016) 'Conjuring Pasts and Ethnographic Presents in Zora Neale Hurston's Modernity', *Journal of Africana Religions*, 4(2), pp. 225–235. Available at: https://doi.org/10.5325/jafrireli.4.2.0225 (Accessed 22 May 2021).

Mansell, L. (2014) 'Hearing a New Musical Instrument: Harryette Mullen's Critical Lyricisms', in Thompson, G. E. (ed.), *Black Music, Black Poetry: Blues and Jazz's Impact on African American Versification*. City College of New York, USA: Ashgate Publishing Limited, pp. 127-145.

Margaret, W. (1993) *How I Wrote Jubilee: And Other Essays on Life and Literature*. New York: Feminist Press at The City University of New York.

Marks, K. (2002) *Toni Morrison's Beloved and the Apotropaic Imagination*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press.

Martin, K. L. (2012) *Conjuring Moments in African American Literature: Women, Spirit Work, and Other Such Hoodoo*. Palgrave Macmillan, NY.

Marshall, P. (1983). *Praisesong for the Widow*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.

Masahiro, U. (1999) 'Communication/Community/Collaboration', in *The First Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale 1999*. Fukuoka, Japan: Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, p. 16.

McMillan, L. (2004) 'Telling a Critical Story: Alice Walker's 'In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 28(1) Indiana University Press, pp. 107–23. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/3831781 (Accessed 19 June 2020).

Mellencamp, P. (1994) 'Making History: Julie Dash', *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 15(1), pp. 76-101. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/3346614 (Accessed 19 June 2020).

Mezzrow, M. and Wolfe, B. (1946) *Really the Blues*. New York: Random House.

Mitchell-Kernan, C. (1972) 'Signifying and Marking: Two Afro-American Speech Acts', in Gumperz, J. and Hymes, D. (eds.) *Directions in Sociolinguistics: The Ethnography of Communication*, pp. 161-179.

Michael, M. (2021). *My History is in Her(e)* [Artist book]. London

Michael, M. (2022). 'The Impossibility of Breathing When the Sun Covers Your Face', in Z. Lopez-Diago and L. Deschler Canossi (eds.) *Black Matrilineage, Photography, and Representation: Another Way of Knowing*. pp. 262-217 Leuven: Leuven University Press. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1353/book.102917.

Middleton, J. (1993) 'Orality, literacy, and memory in Toni Morrison's Song of Solomon', *College English*, 55(1), pp. 64-75. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/378365 (Accessed 30 March 2020).

Mihailescu, D. (2014) 'Photography and Prose Pictures in *Beloved*: The Frames of Emotional Memory', in Kekeh-Dika, A. A., Graham, M. and Mayes, J. A. (eds.) *Toni Morrison, au-delà du visible ordinaire = Toni Morrison, beyond the ordinary visible*. Saint-Denis: Presses universitaires de Vincennes.

Minh-ha, T. T. (1989) *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Mitchell-Kernan, C. (1999) 'Signifying, Loud-Talking and Marking (1972)', in Caponi, G, D. *Signifyin (g), Sanctifyin', and Slam Dunking*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press. pp. 309-330.

Mobley, M. S. (1999) 'A Different Remembering: Memory, History and Meaning in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*', in Bloom, H. (ed.) *Modern Critical Views: Toni Morrison, Beloved*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, pp. 17-26.

MOCRA Voices (2013) *Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons: The Kristen Peterson Lecture,* [recorded lecture/podcast]. Saint Louis University's Museum of Contemporary Religious Art, 02 March. Available at: https://vimeo.com/68868336 https://www.slu.edu/mocra/voices-podcast/campos-pons-peterson-lecture.php (Accessed 23 April 2023).

Moore, G., & Billingsley, A. (2017) *Maternal Metaphors of Power in African American Women's Literature*. Columbia (S.C.): The University of South Carolina Press.

Mordecai, P. and Wilson, B. (1989) *Her True-True Name: An Anthology of Women's Writing from the Caribbean*. Oxford, Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann.

Morrison, T. (1987). *Beloved*. New York: Albert A. Knopf.

Morrison, T. (1984) 'Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation', in Evans, M. (ed.), *Black Women Writers (1950-1980): A Critical Evaluation*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday.

Morrison, T. (1992) *Jazz*. New York: Knopf.

Morrison, T. (1993) *Sula*. New York: Knopf.

Morrison, T. (1995) 'The Site of Memory', in Zinsser, W. (ed.) *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir*, 2nd Edition. Boston; New York: Houghton Mifflin, pp. 83-102.

Moten, F., Harney, S. and Shukaitis, S. (2021) 'Refusing Completion: A Conversation', *e-flux journal*, #11. Available at: https://www.e-flux.com/journal/116/379446/refusing-completion-a-conversation/ (Accessed 17 May 2022).

Mullen, H. (2009) *Recyclopedia: Trimmings, S*PerM**K*T, and Muse & Drudge*. Graywolf Press.

Nasta, S. (1991). *Motherlands: Black Women's Writing from Africa, the Caribbean, and South Asia*. London: The Womens Press.

Nice, V. (1992) *Mothers and Daughters*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan.

No Home Movie (2015) Directed by C. Akerman [Film]. France: Zeugma Films.

Noble, V. (1991) *Shakti Woman: Feeling Our Fire, Healing Our World: The New Female Shamanism*. San Francisco: Harper Collins.

Nora, P. (1989) 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', *Representations*, (26), pp. 7–24. Available at: https://doi.org/ 10.2307/2928520 (Accessed: 16 June 2016).

NourbeSe Philip, M. and Adamu Boateng, S. (2008) *Zong!: As Told to the Author by Setaey Adamu Boateng*. Toronto: The Mercury Press.

O'Brien, D. (2004) 'The African Diaspora in Carrie Mae Weems's Sea Island Series', in Turino, T. and Lea, J. (eds.) *Identity, the Arts, and Diaspora Communities*. Warren, MI: Harmonie Park Press, pp. 69-80.

O'Reilly, A. (2010) *Encyclopedia of Motherhood*. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications.

Oliver, A (2021) *The She Said Dialogues: Flesh Memory*. Nightboat Books.

Palka, J. (2002) 'Left/Right Symbolism and the Body in Ancient Maya Iconography and Culture', *Latin American Antiquity*, 13, (4), pp. 419–43, Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/972224 (Accessed 30 June 2022)

Patton, V. K. (2000) *Women in Chains: The Legacy of Slavery in Black Women's Fiction*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.

Patton, V. K. (2013) *The Grasp That Reaches beyond the Grave: The Ancestral Call in Black Women's Texts*. SUNY Press.

Penier, I. (2014) 'Postcolonial Nation and Matrilineal Myth: Social Construction of Maternity in Michelle Cliff's "Clare Savage" Novels'. *Alicante Journal of English Studies,* 2014:(27), pp. 163-178.

Perry, P. A. (1988) *Stigmata*. New York: Hyperion.

Pettis, J. (1990) 'She Sung Back in Return: Literary (Re)vision and Transformation in Gayl Jones's Corregidora', *College English*, 52(7), pp. 787-799. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/377633 (Accessed 02 April 2020).

Phillips, C. (1993) *Crossing The River*. New York: Vintage.

Pryse, M. and Spillers, H. J. (1995) *Conjuring: Black Women, Fiction, and Literary Tradition*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Ramey, L. (2014) 'Paul Laurence Dunbar and the Spirituals', in Thompson, G. E. (ed.), *Black Music, Black Poetry: Blues and Jazz's Impact on African American Versification*. City College of New York, USA: Ashgate Publishing Limited, pp. 39-54.

Roberts, D. (2022) *I'm*. Pentagram.

Rody, C. (1995) ‘Toni Morrison's Beloved: History, 'Rememory,' and a 'Clamor for a Kiss', *American Literary History*, 7(1), pp. 922-119, Oxford University Press. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/489799 (Accessed: 09 October 2019)

Rody, C. (2001). *The Daughter's Return: African-American and Caribbean women's fictions of History*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Ruff, S. (2009). ‘Signifyin': African-American language to landscape’, *Thresholds*, 35, pp. 66–69. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/43876570 (Accessed 04 March 2021).

Rushdy, A. (1990) '"Rememory": Primal Scenes and Constructions in Toni Morrison's Novels’, *Contemporary Literature*, 31(3), pp. 300-323. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/1208536 (Accessed 16 January 2019).

Rushdy, A. (1992) ‘Daughters Signifyin(g) History: The Example of Toni Morrison's Beloved’, *American Literature*, 64(3), pp. 567-597. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/2927752 (Accessed 13 February 2020).

Sadoff, D. (1985) ‘Black Matrilineage: The Case of Alice Walker and Zora Neale Hurston’, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 11(1), pp. 4-26. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/3174284 (Accessed 29 Feb. 2020).

Sapirstein, R. (2012) 'Out from Behind the Mask: Paul Laurence Dunbar, the Hampton Institute Camera Club, and Photographic Performance of Identity', in Wallace, M. O. and Smith, S. M. (eds.), *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 167-203.

Sarangi, Dr. Itishri (2016). 'Jazz Music: Its Influence on Literature'. Available at: https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.2312.9848 (Accessed 18 June 2018).

Schmid, M. (2016) ‘Self-Portrait as Visual Artist: Chantal Akerman’s *Ma mère rit*’, *MLN (French Issue)*, 131(4), pp. 1130-147. Available at: https://muse.jhu.edu/article/637382 (Accessed 4 April 2020).

Schultermandl, S. (2009) *Transnational Matrilineage*. Munster: Lit Verlag.

Schwarz-Bart, S. (1982) *The Bridge of Beyond*. Translated by Bray, B. London, Exeter: Heinemann.

Sekula, A. (1986) ‘The Body and the Archive’, *October*, 39, pp. 3–64. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/778312 (Accessed 04 September 2019).

Shange, N. (1980) *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide / When the Rainbow Is Enuf*. Toronto: New York: Bantam Books.

Shaw, C. M. (1997) 'The Poetics of Identity: Questioning Spiritualism in African American Contexts', in Abel, E. (ed.) *Female Subjects in Black and White: Race, Psychoanalysis, Feminism*. Berkeley: University of California Press. pp. 349-362.

Simpson, L. (2013) *Lorna Simpson*. Munich: Delmonio Books, Prestel.

Simpson, L. (2018) *Lorna Simpson Collages*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.

Slaymaker, J. (2020) 'No Home Movie' in *One Shot*. Available at: https://mubi.com/notebook/posts/no-home-movie-in-one-shot (Accessed 23 April 2023).

Smith, A. (2005) 'Blues, Criticism, and the Signifying Trickster', *Popular Music*, 24(2), pp. 179-191. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/3877642 (Accessed 18 December 2020).

Smith, L. (2010) 'From Rupture to Remembering: Flesh Memory and the Embodied Experimentalism of Akilah Oliver', *MELUS*, V, 35(2), pp. 03–20. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/20720710 (Accessed 04 June 2022).

Smitherman, G. (1977) *Talkin and Testifyin: The Language of Black America*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

Smith-Wright, G. (1987) 'Revision as Collaboration: Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God as Source for Alice Walker's The Color Purple', *Sage*, 4(2), pp. 20-25.

Specter, E. (2022) Director Julie Dash Tells the Story Behind the Making of *Daughters of the Dust*. Available at: https://www.vogue.com/article/behind-the-moment-julie-dash (Accessed 23 April 2023).

Spillers, H. J. (1987) 'Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book', *Diacritics*, 17(2), pp. 65–81. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/464747 (Accessed 23 April 2023).

Spillers, H. J. (1989) 'Changing the Letter: The Yokes, the Jokes of Discourse, or Mrs. Stowe, Mr. Reed', in McDowell, D. E. and Rampersad, A. (eds.) *Slavery and the Literary Imagination*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 25-61.

Spillers, H. (1996) 'All the Things You Could be by Now, If Sigmund Freud's Wife Was Your Mother: Psychoanalysis and Race', *Boundary 2*, 23(3), pp. 75-141. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/303639 (Accessed 7 April 2020).

Spillers, H. J. (2008) 'To the Bone: Some Speculations on Touch, Hortense Spillers', *Studium Generale Rietveld Academie*, Available at: https://youtu.be/AvL4wUKIfpo (Accessed 27 June 2018).

Spivak, G. C. (1988) ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’, in Nelson, C. and Grossberg, L. (eds.) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press. pp. 271–313.

Stoller, P. (1997) *Sensuous Scholarship*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Storni, A. (1976) ‘It May Be’, in Bankier, J. (ed.) *The Other Voice: Twentieth Century Women's Poetry in Translation*. New York: Norton. p. 20.

Tan, A. (2011) 'She and Her Mother's Tongue: Touching on Amanda Heng, in Heng, A. *Speak To Me, Walk With Me*, exhibition catalogue, Singapore Art Museum, pp. 50-67.

Theile, V. and M. Drews (eds.) (2009) Reclaiming Home, Remembering Motherhood, Rewriting History: African American and Afro-Caribbean Women's Literature in the Twentieth Century. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Thompson, R. F. (1999) 'An Aesthetic of the Cool – West African Dance', in Caponi, G. D. (ed.) *Signifyin(g), Sanctifyin’, & Slam-Dunking: A Reader in African American Expressive Culture*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, pp. 72-86.

Thompson, G. E. (ed.) (2014) *Black Music, Black Poetry: Blues and Jazz's Impact on African American Versification*. City College of New York, USA: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

Tracy, S. (2005) ‘Wall, Cheryl A. *Worrying the Line: Black Women Writers, Lineage, and Literary Tradition*’, *Studies in American Fiction*, 33(2). pp. 254-256. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1353/saf.2005.0001 (Accessed 24 Jan 2023).

Trefzer, A. (2000) "Possessing the Self: Caribbean Identities in Zora Neale Hurston's Tell My Horse." *African American Review*, 34(2), 299–312. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/2901255 (Accessed 17 Nov 2021)

Turner, M. (1996) *The Literary Mind*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Waddell, C. C. (1993) *The Conjure Woman and Other Conjure Tales*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Wagner-Martin, L. (2014) *Toni Morrison and the Maternal: From The Bluest Eye to Home*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Walker, A. (1982) *The Color Purple*. Orlando: Harcourt

Walker, A. (1984) *Meridian*. London. The Womens Press.

Walker, A. (1985) *Horses Make A Landscape Look More Beautiful*. London: The Womens Press.

Walker, A. (1989) *The Temple of My Familiar*. Harcourt.

Walker, A. (2005). *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*. London: Phoenix.

Walker, A. (2006) *Everyday Use*. New York: Rutgers University Press.

Walker, B. G. (1983) *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*. San Francisco: Harper and Row.

Wall, C. (2005) *Worrying the Line: Black Women Writers, Lineage, and Literary Tradition*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Walser, R. (1993) 'Out of Notes: Signification, Interpretation, and the Problem of Miles Davis', *The Musical Quarterly*, 77(2), pp. 343-365. Available at: https://doi.org/ http://www.jstor.org/stable/742559 (Accessed 06 May 2019).

Wang, K. (2010) Amanda Heng: Art of the Everyday Life. Available at: https://www.mutualart.com/Article/Amanda-Heng-Art-of-the-Everyday-Life/155B1B5B67CF97C9 (Accessed 19 April 2021).

Washington, M. (1980) 'These Self-Invented Women: A Theoretical Framework for a Literary History of Black Women', *The Radical Teacher*, 17, pp.3-6. Available at: www.jstor.org/stable/20709271 (Accessed 15 May 2020).

Washington, M. H. (1984) 'I Sign My Mother's Name: Alice Walker, Dorothy West, Paule Marshall'. In Perry, R. and Brownley, M. W. (eds.) *Mothering the Mind: Twelve Studies of Writers and Their Silent Partners*. New York, NY: Holmes and Meier, pp. 161-46.

Weems, C. M. (2012) *Carrie Mae Weems: Three Decades of Photography and Video*. Delmez, K. E. (ed.) Nashville: Frist Center for Visual Arts, Yale University Press.

Weems, C. M. (2014) The History Makers® Video Oral History Interview with Carrie Mae Weems. [recorded lecture/podcast]. The History Makers The Digital Repository For The Black Experience, 10 September. Available at: https://www.thehistorymakers.org/biography/carrie-mae-weems (Accessed 04 February 2022).

Weir-Soley, D. (2009) *Eroticism, Spirituality, and Resistance in Black Women's Writings*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.

West, C. M. (1995) 'Mammy, Sapphire, and Jezebel: Historical Images of Black Women and Their Implications for Psychotherapy', *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, 32(3), pp. 458–466. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-3204.32.3 (Accessed 12 November 2019).

Wong, H. (2018) *Picturing Identity: Contemporary American Autobiography in Image and Text*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Williams, S. A. (1979) ‘The Blues Roots of Contemporary Afro-American Poetry’, in Harper, M. and Stepto, R. B. (eds.) *Chant of Saints: A Gathering of Afro-American Literature, Art, and Scholarship*. Urbana, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, pp. 123-135.

Wisker, G. (Ed.). (1993) *Black Women's Writing (Insights)*. London: The Macmillan Press.

Woolf, V. (1957/1929) *A Room of One's Own*. New York: Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Worsham, F. C. (1996) 'Poetics of Matrilineage: Mothers and Daughters in the Poetry of African American Women', in Brown-Guillory, E. (ed.), *Women of Color: Mother-Daughter Relationships in 20th-Century Literature*. University of Texas Press.

Yap, J. (2017) *Heng, A. We are the World: These are Our Stories*. Singapore: STPI Creative Workshop & Gallery.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abbey, S. and O'Reilly, D. A. (1998) *Redefining Motherhood: Changing the Identities and Patterns*. Toronto: Second Story Press.

Alexander, S. A. J. (2001) *Mother Imagery in the Novels of Afro-Caribbean Women*. University of Missouri Press.

Anatol, G. L. (2002) 'Speaking in (M)Other Tongues: The Role of Language in Jamaica Kincaid's "The Autobiography of My Mother"', *Callaloo*, 25(3), pp. 938–953. Available at: https://doi.org/:10.1353/cal.2002.0111 (Accessed: 23 December 2022).

Androne, H. A. (2007) 'Revised Memories and Colliding Identities: Absence and Presence in Morrison's "Recitatif" and Viramontes's "Tears on My Pillow"', *MELUS*, 32(2), pp. 133–150. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/30029727 (Accessed: 23 December 2022).

Angelou, D. M. (1984) *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings*. London: Virago.

Angelou, M. (1993) *Double Stitch: Black Women Write About Mothers and Daughters*. 1st Harper Perennial edn. Edited by P. Bell-Scott and et al. New York: Harper Perennial.

Ankersmit, F. R. (2002) *Historical Representation*. Stanford University Press.

Apgar, E. (1982) 'Generations: Photography', *Woman's Art Journal*, 3(1), p. 11. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/1357911 (Accessed: 23 December 2020).

Araeen, R. (2001) 'Re-thinking history and some other things', *Third Text*, 15(54), pp. 93–100. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/09528820108576904 (Accessed: 02 December 2020).

Araujo, A. L., Candido, M. P. and Lovejoy, P. E. (eds.) (2011) *Crossing Memories: Slavery and*

African Diaspora. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.

Baldwin, J. (1995) *Evidence of Things Not Seen*. 10th anniversary Owl book edn. New York: Picador.

Bambara, T. C. (1998) *The Salt Eaters*. Reprint. London: The Women's Press Ltd.

Bassin, D., Honey, M. and Mahrer, M. (2009) *Representations of Motherhood*. New Haven' London: Yale University Press.

Beauboeuf-Lafontant, T. (2009) *Behind the Mask of the Strong Black Woman: Voice and the Embodiment of a Costly Performance*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Benitez-Rojo, A. (1997) *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*. 2nd edn. Translated by J. E. Maraniss. Durham, N.C: Duke University Press Books.

Banks, M. and Vokes, R. (2010) 'Introduction: Anthropology, Photography and the Archive', *History and Anthropology*, 21(4), pp. 337-349. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2010.522375 (Accessed: 02 December 2020).

Berger, S. and Niven, B. (2014) *Writing the History of Memory*. London; New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Betterton, R. (2014) *Maternal Bodies in the Visual Arts*. Manchester University Press.

Birnbaum, L. (2001) *Dark Mother*. San Jose: Authors Choice Press

Bieze, M. (2008) *Booker T. Washington and the Art of Self-representation*. New York: Peter Lang.

Bilbija, M. (2011) 'Democracy's New Song Black Reconstruction in America, 1860–1880 and the Melodramatic Imagination', *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 637(1), pp. 64–77. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716211407153 (Accessed: 02 December 2020).

Birdsong, D. O. (2015) '"Memories that are(n't) mine": Matrilineal Trauma and Defiant Reinscription in Natasha Trethewey's Native Guard', *African American Review*, 48(1), pp. 97–110. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1353/afa.2015.0000 Accessed: 10 September 2016).

Blier, S. P. (2012) 'Art in Ancient Ife, Birthplace of the Yoruba', *African Arts*, 45(4).

Bois, W. E. B. D. (2021) *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil*. London; New York: Verso.

Bradley, R. (2014) Introduction: other sensualities. *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory*, 24(2-3), pp. 129-133. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/0740770X.2014.976494 (Accessed: 10 September 2016).

Bradley, R. (2016) 'Living in the Absence of a Body: The (Sus)Stain of Black Female (W)holeness', *Hyperrhiz: New Media Cultures*, (29), pp. 1–1. Available at: https://doi.org/10.20415/rhiz/029.e13 (Accessed: 10 September 2016).

Braxton, J. M. (1989) *Black Women Writing Autobiography: A Tradition within a Tradition: A Tradition Within a Tradition*. Reprint edn. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Breger, C. (2012) *An Aesthetics of Narrative Performance: Transnational Theater, Literature, and Film in Contemporary Germany*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

Bressey, C. (2003) 'Looking for Blackness: Considerations of a Researcher's Paradox', *Ethics, Place & Environment*, 6(3), pp. 215–226. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/1366879042000200598 (Accessed 24 October 2019).

Bressey, C. (2003) *Forgotten Geographies: Historical Geographies of Black Women in Victorian and Edwardian London*. PhD thesis. University of London. Available at: https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10100431 (Accessed 24 October 2019).

Bressey, C (2002) 'Forgotten histories: three stories of black girls from Barnardo's Victorian
Archive', *Women's History Review*, 11(3), pp. 351-374. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/09612020200200326 (Accessed 24 October 2019).

Brockmeier, J. and Carbaugh, D. (eds.) (2001) *Narrative and Identity:* Amsterdam. Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Brooks, D. *et al.* (2000) *Recovering the Black Female Body.* Edited by V. D. Dickerson. New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press.

Brown, K. J. (2015) *The Repeating Body*. Durham: Duke University Press Books.

Brown-Guillory, E. (1996) *Women of Color: Mother-Daughter Relationships in 20th-Century Literature*. University of Texas Press.

Bruzelius, M. (1999) 'Mother's Pain, Mother's Voice: Gabriela Mistral, Julia Kristeva, and the Mater Dolorosa', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 18(2), pp. 215–233. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/464447 (Accessed 19 March 2023).

Burrows, V. D. (2004) *Whiteness and Trauma: The Mother-Daughter Knot in the Fiction of Jean Rhys; Jamaica Kincaid and Toni Morrison*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Busia, A. P. A. and James, S. M. (eds.) (1993) *Theorizing Black Feminisms: The Visionary Pragmatism of Black Women*. London; New York: Routledge.

Caruth, C. (1996) *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Childs, M. D. (2005) *The Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World*. Edited by T. Falola. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Christian, B. T. (2009) 'Layered Rhythms: Virginia Woolf and Toni Morrison', *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*, 39(3), pp. 483–500. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1353/mfs.0.0515 (Accessed 19 March 2023).

Clément, C. and Kristeva, J. (2016) *The Feminine and the Sacred*. 2001 edn. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Coleman, L. (2010) *Michelle Cliff's Fiction: Rescuing the Past, Engendering Frontier Consciousness*. Lap LAambert Academic Publishing.

Conde, M. (2009) *I Tituba Black Witch Of Salem*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.

Cortina, G. (1998) 'Review of Women of Color: Mother-Daughter Relationships in Twentieth-
Century Literature', *South Central Review*, 15(3/4), pp. 61–63. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/3189838 (Accessed 19 March 2023).

Crahan, P. M. C. (1980) *Africa and the Caribbean: The Legacies of a Link*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Crane, S. A. (1997) 'Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory', *The American Historical Review*, 102(5), pp. 1372–1385. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/2171068 (Accessed 03 January 2021).

Craton, M. (1978) *Searching for the Invisible Man: Slaves and Plantation Life in Jamaica*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Crémieux, A., Lemoine, X. and Rocchi, J, P. (eds.) (2013) *Understanding blackness through performance: contemporary arts and the representation of identity*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Cubitt, G. (2007) *History and Memory*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Cummings, K. (1990) 'Reclaiming the Mother('s) Tongue: Beloved, Ceremony, Mothers and Shadows', *College English*, 52(5), pp. 552–569. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/377543 (Accessed 03 January 2021).

Cummings, M. S. and Latta, J. M. (2010) 'When They Honor the Voice: Centering African American Women's Call Stories', *Journal of Black Studies*, 40(4), pp. 666–682. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/40648534 (Accessed 1 September 2021).

Cutter, M. J. (2000) 'The Story Must Go on and on: The Fantastic, Narration, and Intertextuality in Toni Morrison's Beloved and Jazz', *African American Review*, 34(1), pp. 61–75. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/2901184 (Accessed 03 January 2021).

Danticat, E. (1996) *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. London: Abacus.

Davey, M. (ed.) (2001) *Mother reader: essential writings on motherhood*. New York; London: Seven Stories Press.

Davis, A. Y. (2011) *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.

Davis, K. (ed.) (2009) *Embodied Practices: Feminist Perspectives On The Body*. London; Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications.

Deakins, A. H., Lockridge, R. B. and Sterk, H. M. (2012) *Mothers and Daughters: Complicated Connections Across Cultures*. University Press of America.

De Kosnik A. & Feldman K. (2019) *#identity: Hashtagging Race, Gender, Sexuality, and Nation*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvndv9md.9 (Accessed 22 September 2020).

Derrida, J. (1996) *Archive fever: a Freudian impression*. Chicago, Ill; London: University of Chicago Press.

Derrida, J. *et al.* (2010) *Copy, archive, signature: a conversation on photography*. Stanford,
Calif: Stanford University Press.

Dery, M. (1994) 'Black to the Future: Interviews with Samuel R. Delany, Greg Tate, and Tricia Rose' in Dery, M. *Flame Wars: The Discourse of Cyberculture*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Diedrich, M., Gates, H. L. and Pedersen, C. (1999) *Black Imagination and the Middle Passage*. Oxford University Press, USA.

Dix, M. (2014) 'A Mother's Voice: The Potency of a Woman in the Jōjin Ajari no haha no shū', *Japanese Language and Literature*, 48(1), pp. 105–127. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/24394376 (Accessed 05 October 2022).

Dobbs, C. (1998) 'Toni Morrison's Beloved: Bodies Returned, Modernism Revisited', *African American Review*, 32(4), pp. 563–578. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/2901237.

Downey, A. (ed.) (2015) *Dissonant archives: contemporary visual culture and contested narratives in the Middle East*. London, England: I.B. Tauris (Visual Culture in the Middle East).

Dubey, M. (1994) *Black Women Novelists and the Nationalist Aesthetic*. Indiana University Press May.

duCille, A. (1994) 'The Occult of True Black Womanhood: Critical Demeanor and Black Feminist Studies', *Signs*, 19(3), pp. 591–629. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/3174771 (Accessed 04 July 2019).

Durkin, A. (2007) 'Object Written, Written Object: Slavery, Scarring, and Complications of Authorship in "Beloved"', *African American Review*, 41(3), pp. 541–556. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/40027412 (Accessed 04 July 2019).

Edmondson, B. (1992) 'Black Aesthetics, Feminist Aesthetics, and the Problems of Oppositional Discourse', *Cultural Critique*, (22), pp. 75–98. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/1354084 (Accessed 03 January 2021).

Edwards, E. (2009). Photography and the Material Performance of the Past. History and Theory, 48(4), pp.130-150. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/25621444 (Accessed September 22, 2020)

Edwards, E (2015) 'Anthropology and Photography: A long history of knowledge and affect', *Photographies*, 8(3), pp.235-252, Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/17540763.2015.1103088 (Accessed 03 January 2021).

Edwards, E and Mead, M (2013) Absent Histories and Absent Images: Photographs, Museums and the Colonial Past', *Museum and Society,* 11(1), pp. 19-38. Available at https://journals.le.ac.uk/ojs1/index.php/mas/article/view/220 (Accessed 24 May 2021).

Elden, S. (2001) *Mapping the present: Heidegger, Foucault and the project of a spatial history*. London: Continuum.

Emery, M. L. (1997) 'Refiguring the Postcolonial Imagination: Tropes of Visuality in Writing by Rhys, Kincaid, and Cliff', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 16(2), pp. 259–280. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/464362 (Accessed 03 January 2021).

Enwezor, O. and International Center of Photography (eds) (2008) *Archive fever: uses of the document in contemporary art*. New York, N.Y. : Göttingen: International Center of Photography; Steidl.

Erna Brodber (1999) *The People of my Jamaican Village, 1817-1948.* StMary; StCatherine, Jamaica, WI: Blackspace.

Eshun, K. (2003) 'Further Considerations of Afrofuturism', *CR: The New Centennial Review*, 3(2), pp. 287–302. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1353/ncr.2003.0021 (Accessed 24 April 2019).

Farrington, L. E. (2003) 'Reinventing Herself: The Black Female Nude', *Woman's Art Journal*, 24(2), pp. 15–23. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/1358782 (Accessed 24 April 2019).

Fleetwood, N. R. (2011) *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness*. University of Chicago Press.

Fleischner, J. B. (1996) *Mastering Slavery: Memory, Family, and Identity in Women's Slave Narratives*. New York: NYU Press.

Foreman, P. G. (1992) 'Past-on stories: History and the magically real, Morrison and Allende on call', *Feminist Studies*, 18(2), p. 369. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/3178235 (Accessed 24 April 2019).

Foster, H. (1995) 'The artist as ethnographer', in G, E, Marcus and F, R. Myers (ed.) *The Traffic in Culture: Refiguring Art and Anthropology*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Frank, A. W. (2013) *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, And Ethics,* 2nd Revised edn. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Fuston-White, J. (2002) '"From the Seen to the Told": The Construction of Subjectivity in Toni Morrison's "Beloved"', *African American Review*, 36(3), pp. 461–473. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/1512209 (Accessed 24 April 2019).

Gluck, S. B. and Patai, D. (2013) *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*. Routledge.

Greene, G. (1991) 'Feminist Fiction and the Uses of Memory', *Signs*, 16(2), pp. 290–321. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/3174512 (Accessed 02 April 2021).

Gregg, V. M. (2002) 'How Jamaica Kincaid Writes the Autobiography of Her Mother', *Callaloo*, 25(3), pp. 920–937. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1353/cal.2002.0127 (Accessed 02 April 2021).

Griffin, F. J. (2007) 'That the Mothers May Soar and the Daughters May Know Their Names: A Retrospective of Black Feminist Literary Criticism', *Signs*, 32(2), pp. 483–507. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1086/508377 (Accessed 02 May 2022).

Griffin, F. J., Jones, M. S. and Savage, B. D. (2015) *Toward an Intellectual History of Black Women*. Edited by M. Bay. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

Grosz, E. A. (2020) *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. London; New York: Routledge.

Guttman, N. (1996) 'Dream of the Mother Language: Myth and History in She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks', *MELUS*, 21(3), pp. 53–68. Available at: https://doi.org/ 10.2307/467975 (Accessed 02 May 2022).

Halbwachs, M. (1992) *On Collective Memory*. Translated by L. A. Coser. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hale, T. A. and Sidikou, A. G. (eds) (2014) *Women's Songs from West Africa*. 1st edn. Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Hall, J. C. (1992) 'Towards a Map of Mis(Sed) Reading: The Presence of Absence in the Color Purple', *African American Review*, 26(1), pp. 89–97. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/3042079 (Accessed 04 July 2019).

Hall, S. (ed.) (1997) *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London; Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Harb, S. (2008) 'Memory, History and Self-Reconstruction in Gayl Jones's Corregidora', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 31(3), pp. 116–136. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/25167557 (Accessed 14 June 2021).

Harris, M. A. *et al.* (2010) *The Black Book*. 35th edition. New York: Random House International.

Harris, T. and Larson, J. (eds.) (2007) *Reading Contemporary African American Drama: Fragments of History, Fragments of Self*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc.

Henderson, C. E. (2002) *Scarring the Black Body: Race and Representation in African American Literature*. Columbia, Mo: University of Missouri Press.

Henderson, M. G. (1991) 'Toni Morrison's Beloved: re-membering the body as historical text', in Spillers, H. J. (ed.) *Comparative American identities: race, sex and nationality in the modern text*. London: Routledge, pp. 63–86.

Hobson, J. (2005) *Venus in the Dark: Blackness and Beauty in Popular Culture*. New York: Routledge.

Holland, S. P. (2000) *Raising the Dead: Readings of Death and (Black) Subjectivity*. Durham, N.C: Duke University Press.

Holloway, K. F. C. (1990) 'Revision and (Re)membrance: A Theory of Literary Structures in Literature by African-American Women Writers', *Black American Literature Forum*, 24(4), pp. 617–631. Available at: https://doi.org/ 10.2307/3041792 (Accessed 04 July 2019).

Hua, L. U. (2011) 'Reproducing Time, Reproducing History: Love and Black Feminist Sentimentality in Octavia Butler's "Kindred"', *African American Review*, 44(3), pp. 391–407. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/23316193 (Accessed 21 September 2020)

Hudley, C. (2004) *The Black Studies Reader*. Edited by J. Bobo. New York: Routledge.

Hudson-Weems, C. (1994) *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves*. Revised edn. Troy, Mich: Bedford Pub.

Huffer, L. (1988) *Maternal Pasts, Feminist Futures: Nostalgia, Ethics, and the Question of Difference*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Huggan, G. (1994) 'A Tale of Two Parrots: Walcott, Rhys, and the Uses of Colonial Mimicry', *Contemporary Literature*, 35(4), pp. 643–660. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/1208702 (Accessed 06 July 2022).

Humm, M. (2010) 'Virginia Woolf, Vanessa Bell, the maternal and photography', *Studies in the Maternal*, 2(1). Available at: https://doi.org/ 10.16995/sim.98 (Accessed 04 July 2019).

Hunter, T. W. (2016) 'Writing of Labor and Love: Gender and African American History's Challenge to Present Day Assumptions and Misinterpretations', *Souls*, 18(1), pp. 150–154. Available at: https://doi.org/ 10.1080/10999949.2016.1162598 (Accessed 04 July 2019).

Irigaray, L. (2012) *In the Beginning, She Was*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Irobi, E. (2007) 'What They Came with: Carnival and the Persistence of African Performance Aesthetics in the Diaspora', *Journal of Black Studies*, 37(6), pp. 896–913. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/40034960 (Accessed 04 July 2019).

Jacobs, A. (2012) *On Matricide: Myth, Psychoanalysis, and the Law of the Mother*. Columbia University Press.

Jansen, E. (2011) 'From Thandi the Maid to Thandi the Madam: Domestic Workers in the Archives of Afrikaans Literature and a Family Photograph Album', *South African Review of Sociology*, 42(2), pp. 102-121. Available at https://doi.org/10.1080/21528586.2011.582351 (Accessed 27 June 2018).

Johnson, E. P. (2003) *Appropriating Blackness:* Durham N.C.: Duke University Press Books.

Keizer, A. R. (2008) 'Gone Astray in the Flesh: Kara Walker, Black Women Writers, and African American Postmemory', *PMLA*, 123(5), pp. 1649–1672. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/25501968 (Accessed 27 July 2019).

King, N. (2000) *Memory, Narrative, Identity: Remembering the Self*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Kingcaid, R. (1999) 'The Mother Mirror: Self-Representation and the Mother-Daughter Relation in Colette, Simone de Beauvoir, and Marguerite Duras (review)', *L'Esprit*

Créateur, 39(2), pp. 85–86. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1353/esp.2010.0069 (Accessed 21 November 2019).

Kirschke, A. H. (2007) *Art in Crisis: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Struggle for African American Identity and Memory*. Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press.

Kolk, B. V. D. (2015) *The Body Keeps the Score: Mind, Brain and Body in the Transformation of Trauma*. Penguin.

Krasner, D. (1995) 'Parody and Double Consciousness in the Language of Early Black Musical Theatre', *African American Review*, 29(2), pp. 317–323. Available at: https://doi.org/ 10.2307/3042310 (Accessed 21 November 2019).

Kreiss, D. (2008) 'Appropriating the Master's Tools: Sun Ra, the Black Panthers, and Black Consciousness, 1952-1973', *Black Music Research Journal*, 28(1), pp. 57–81. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/25433794 (Accessed 17 June 2021).

Kristeva, J. (1980) *Desire in Language:* Revised ed. edition. Edited by L. S. Roudiez. Translated by T. Gora and A. A. Jardine. New York: Columbia University Press.

Krumholz, L. (1992) 'The Ghosts of Slavery: Historical Recovery in Toni Morrison's Beloved', *African American Review*, 26(3), pp. 395–408. Available at: https://doi.org/ 10.2307/3041912 (Accessed 16 December 2021).

Lalami, L. (2009) 'How I Became My Mother's Daughter', *Callaloo*, 32(4), pp. 1120–1122. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1353/cal.0.0572 (Accessed 16 December 2021).

Langellier, K. M. (1999) 'Personal narrative, performance, performativity: Two or three things I know for sure', *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 19(2), pp. 125–144. Available at: https://doi.org/ 10.1080/10462939909366255 (Accessed 16 December 2021).

Langellier, K. M. and Peterson, E. E. (2006) 'Narrative Performance Theory: Telling Stories, Doing Family', in *Engaging Theories in Family Communication: Multiple Perspectives Engaging theories in family communication: Multiple perspectives*. United States: SAGE Publications, Inc. pp. 99–114. Available at: http://sk.sagepub.com/books/engaging-theories-in-family-communication/n7.xml (Accessed: 28 March 2016).

Langston Hughes (1931) *The Negro mother, and other dramatic recitations with decorations by Prentiss Taylor.* New York: Golden Stair Press.

Larson, P. M. (2009) *Ocean of Letters: Language and Creolization in an Indian Ocean Diaspora*. 1 edition. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Lewis, M. C. (1988) *Herstory: Black Female Rites of Passage*. Chicago, Illinois: African American Images.

Linebaugh, P. and Rediker, M. (2002) *The many-headed Hydra: sailors, slaves, commoners, and the hidden history of the revolutionary Atlantic*. London: Verso.

Liss, A. (2009) *Feminist Art and the Maternal*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Low, A. M., Tremayne, S. and Low, A. (eds.) (2001) *Women as Sacred Custodians of the Earth? Women, Spirituality and the Environment*. New York: Berghahn Books.

Lowe, L. (2015) *The Intimacies of Four Continents*. Durham: Duke University Press Books.

Lowinsky, N. R. (1994) *Motherline: Every Woman's Journey to Find Her Female Roots*. New York, NY: Tarcher/Putnam.

Lydon, J. (2010) 'Return:The Photographic Archive and Technologies of Indigenous Memory', *Photographies*, 3(2), pp. 173-187. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/17540763.2010.499610 (Accessed: 07 April 2020).

Machiorlatti, J. A. (2005) 'Revisiting Julie Dash's "Daughters of the Dust": Black Feminist Narrative and Diasporic Recollection', *South Atlantic Review*, 70(1), pp. 97–116. Available at https://www.jstor.org/stable/20462733 (Accessed 16 December 2022).

Madison, D. S. (1999) 'Performing theory/embodied writing', *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 19(2), pp. 107–124. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/10462939909366254 (Accessed 18 December 2022).

Mair, L. M. (2006) *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica, 1655-1844*. University of the West Indies Press.

Mandri, F. C. (2006) *Guarding Cultural Memory: Afro-Cuban Women in Literature and the Arts*. University of Virginia Press.

Marcos, S. (2013) When the Dead Silently Speak Out. Available at: http://www.documenta14.de/en/south/469_when_the_dead_silently_speak_out (Accessed: 15 October 2016).

Marder, E. (2012) *The Mother in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: Psychoanalysis, Photography, Deconstruction*. New York: Fordham University Press.

Mcelya, M. (2007) *Clinging to Mammy the Faithful Slave in Twentieth Century America.* Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

McLaughlin, A. N. and Braxton, J. M. (1991) *Wild Women in the Whirlwind: Afra-American Culture and the Contemporary Literary Renaissance: Afro-American Culture and the Contemporary Literary Renaissance*. London: Serpent's Tail.

McMillan, U. (2015) *Embodied Avatars:* New York: NYU Press.

Meek, A. (2011) *Trauma and Media: Theories, Histories, and Images*. Routledge.

Mehta, B. (2007) *Rituals of Memory: in Contemporary Arab Women's Writing*. Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse University Press.

Meisenhelder, S. (2000) 'False Gods and Black Goddesses in Naylor's "Mama Day" and Hurston's "Their Eyes Were Watching God"', *Callaloo*, 23(4), pp. 1440–1448. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/3300090 (Accessed 14 September 2021).

Middleton, J. I. (1993) 'Orality, Literacy, and Memory in Toni Morrison's Song of Solomon', *College English*, 55(1), pp. 64–75. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/378365 (Accessed 14 September 2021).

Mills, F. and Mitchell, K. B. (2006) *After the Pain: Critical Essays on Gayl Jones*. Peter Lang.

Mirzoeff, N. (ed.) (1999) *Diaspora and Visual Culture*. London; New York: Routledge.

Mobley, M. (1995) 'Call and Response: Voice, Community, and Dialogic Structures in Toni Morrison's Song of Solomon', in V. Smith (ed.) New Essays on Song of Solomon, The American Novel, pp. 41-68. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511624544.004 (Accessed 12 June 2019).

Morgenstern, N. (1996) 'Mother's milk and sister's blood: trauma and the neoslave narrative', *Differences (Bloomington, Ind. Print)*, pp. 101–126.Available at: https://doi.org/10.1215/10407391-8-2-101 (Accessed 09 July 2022).

Morrison, T. (1988) 'Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature', *Michigan quarterly review.* Available at: http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.act2080.0028.001:01 (Accessed 09 July 2022).

Murphy, F. (2011) 'Archives of Sorrow: An Exploration of Australia's Stolen Generations and their Journey into the Past', *History and Anthropology*, 22(4), pp. 481-495. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2011.626775 (Accessed 09 July 2022).

Nancy, J.-L. and Rand, R. (2008) *Corpus*. New York: Fordham University Press (Perspectives in continental philosophy).

Neisser, U. (2009) *The Remembering Self.* Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Nelson, C. A. (2010) *Representing the Black Female Subject in Western Art*. Routledge.

Neubauer, C, E. (1983) 'Developing Ties to the Past: Photography and Other Sources of Information in Maxine Hong Kingston's China Men', *MELUS,* 10(4), pp. 17-36. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/467010 (Accessed September 22, 2020) .

Neumann, E. and Liebscher, M. (2015) *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype*. With a New Foreword by Martin Liebscher. Translated by R. Manheim. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Nice, V. E. (1992) *Mothers and Daughters: The Distortion of a Relationship*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Nochlin, L. (2001) *The Body in Pieces:* London: Thames and Hudson Ltd.

Norman, B. (2009) 'The Historical Uncanny: Segregation Signs in "Getting Mother's Body," a Post-Civil Rights American Novel', *African American Review*, 43(2/3), pp. 443–456. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/41328620 (Accessed 21 June 2021).

Norridge, Z. (2013) *Perceiving Pain in African Literature*. London; New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

O'Reilly, A. (1996) 'In Search of My Mother's Garden, I Found My Own: Mother-Love, Healing, and Identity in Toni Morrison's Jazz', *African American Review*, 30(3), pp. 367–379. Available at: https://doi.org/ 10.2307/3042530 (Accessed 21 June 2021).

O'Reilly, A. (ed.) (2008) *Feminist Mothering*. SUNY Press.

O'Reilly, A. (ed.) (2014) *Mothers, Mothering and Motherhood Across Cultural Differences: A Reader*. Demeter Press.

O'Reilly, D. A. (ed.) (2004) *From Motherhood to Mothering: The Legacy of Adrienne Rich's 'Of Woman Born'*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

O'Reilly, D. A. and Abbey, S. (eds.) (2000) *Mothers and Daughters: Connection, Empowerment and Transformation*. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield.

Osthoff, S. (2009) *Performing the Archive:* Edited by W. Schirmacher. New York: Atropos Press.

Patton, V. K. (2013) *The Grasp That Reaches beyond the Grave: The Ancestral Call in Black Women's Texts*. SUNY Press.

Pettis, J. (1990) '"She Sung Back in Return": Literary (Re)vision and Transformation in Gayl
Jones's Corregidora', *College English*, 52(7), pp. 787–799. Available at: https://doi.org/ 10.2307/377633 (Accessed 04 January 2023).

Pirker, E. U. (2011) *Narrative Projections of a Black British History*. New York: Routledge.

Porter, M. and Kelso, J. (2010) *Mother-Texts: Narratives and Counter-Narratives*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Price, J. and Shildrick, M. (1999) *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader*. Taylor & Francis.

Privett, K. (2007) 'Dystopic Bodies and Enslaved Motherhood', *Women: A Cultural Review*, 18(3), pp. 257–281. Available at: https://doi.org/ 10.1080/09574040701612403 (Accessed 05January 2023).

Pulitano, E. (2016) *Transnational Narratives from the Caribbean: Diasporic Literature and the Human Experience*. Routledge.

Quashie, K. E. (2004) *Black Women, Identity, and Cultural Theory: (un)becoming the Subject*.
Rutgers University Press.

Rabaka, R. (2013) 'W.E.B. Du Bois and "The Damnation of Women": An Essay on Africana Anti-Sexist Critical Social Theory', *Journal of African American Studies*, 7(2), pp. 37–60. Available at: https://doi.org/ 10.1007/s12111-003-1008-3 (Accessed 05 January 2023).

Radano, R. (1996) 'Denoting Difference: The Writing of the Slave Spirituals', *Critical Inquiry*, 22(3), pp. 506–544. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/1344020 (Accessed 25 September 2022).

Rath, R. C. (1997) 'Echo and Narcissus: The Afrocentric Pragmatism of W. E. B. Du Bois', *The Journal of American History*, 84(2), pp. 461–495. Available at: https://doi.org/ 10.2307/2952567 (Accessed 25 September 2022).

Rediker, M. (2008) *The Slave Ship: A Human History*. Reprint edn. London: John Murray.

Reid, E. S. (2000) 'Beyond Morrison and Walker: Looking Good and Looking Forward in Contemporary Black Women's Stories', *African American Review*, 34(2), pp. 313–328. Available at: https://doi.org/ 10.2307/2901256 (Accessed 25 September 2022).

Rich, A. (1972) 'When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision', *College English*, 34(1), pp. 18–30. Available at: https://doi.org/ 10.2307/375215 (Accessed 25 September 2022).

Rich, A. (1996) *Of Woman Born - Motherhood as Experience & Institution*. Norton New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Rich, A. (2013) *Diving into the Wreck: Poems 1971-1972*. Reprint edn. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Robbins, S. (1997) 'Gendering the History of the Antislavery Narrative: Juxtaposing "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and "Benito Cereno", "Beloved" and "Middle Passage"', *American Quarterly*, 49(3), pp. 531–573. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/30041795 (Accessed 14 February 2021).

Rosenberg, K. (2012) 'Mickalene Thomas Rediscovers Her Mother — and Her Muse', *The New York Times*, 27 September. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/30/magazine/mickalene-thomas-rediscovers-her-mother-and-her-muse.html (Accessed: 10 May 2017).

Ruiz, M. I. R. (2012) *Women's Identities and Bodies in Colonial and Postcolonial History and Literature*. Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Rushdy, A. H. A. (1990) '"Rememory": Primal Scenes and Constructions in Toni Morrison's Novels', *Contemporary Literature*, 31(3), pp. 300–323. Available at: https://doi.org/ 10.2307/1208536 (Accessed: 12 May 2019).

Rushdy, A. H. A. (1993) 'Reading Mammy: The Subject of Relation in Sherley Anne Williams' Dessa Rose', *African American Review*, 27(3), pp. 365–389. Available at: https://doi.org/ 10.2307/3041929 (Accessed: 12 May 2019).

Rushdy, A. H. A. (2003) *Remembering Generations: Race and Family in Contemporary African American Fiction*. University of North Carolina Press.

Sale, M. (1992) 'Call and Response as Critical Method: African-American Oral Traditions and Beloved', *African American Review*, 26(1), pp. 41–50. Available at: https://doi.org/ 10.2307/3042075 (Accessed: 12 July 2020).

Sanmartin, P. (2015) *Black Women as Custodians of History: Unsung Rebel (M)Others in African American and Afro-Cuban Women's Writing*. Cambria Press.

Scarry, E. (1987) *The Body in Pain:* New Ed edition. New York: Oxford University Press, U.S.A.

Schapiro, B. (1991) 'The Bonds of Love and the Boundaries of Self in Toni Morrison's "Beloved"', *Contemporary Literature*, 32(2), pp. 194–210. Available at: https://doi.org/ 10.2307/1208361 (Accessed: 12 July 2020).

Scharfman, R. (1981) 'Mirroring and Mothering in Simone Schwarz-Bart's Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle and Jean Rhys' Wide Sargasso Sea', *Yale French Studies*, (62), pp. 88–106. Available at: https://doi.org/ 10.2307/2929895 (Accessed: 12 July 2020).

Scheman, N. (1988) 'Missing Mothers/Desiring Daughters: Framing the Sight of Women', *Critical Inquiry*, 15(1), pp. 62–89. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1086/448474 (Accessed 02 September 2021).

Schuler (1980) *Alas, Alas, Kongo: Social History of Indentured African Immigration into Jamaica, 1841-65*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Schultermandl, S. (2007) 'Writing Rape, Trauma, and Transnationality onto the Female Body: Matrilineal Em-body-ment in Nora Okja Keller's Comfort Woman', *Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism*, 7(2), pp. 71–100. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/40314247 (Accessed 16 July 2021).

Segal, R. (1996) *The Black Diaspora*. London: Faber and Faber.

Sekula, A. (1986) 'The Body and the Archive', *October*, 39, pp. 3–64. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/778312 (Accessed: 06 July 2019).

Selvi, M. A. V. (2012) *Mothering the Margin:The Politics of Motherhood in the Novels of Gloria Naylor, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker*. Saarbrücken: Lap Lambert Academic Publishing.

Sexton, L. G. (2011) *Searching for Mercy Street: My Journey Back to My Mother, Anne Sexton*. Reprint edn. Counterpoint.

Sheller, M. (2012) *Citizenship from Below: Erotic Agency and Caribbean Freedom*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Shire, W. (2011) *Teaching My Mother How to Give Birth*. London: Flipped Eye Publishing limited.

Sidikou, A. (2002) *Recreating Words, Reshaping Worlds: The Verbal Art of Woman from Niger, Mali and Senegal.* Africa Research & Publications.

Sidikou, A. G. and Hale, T. A. (eds.) (2012) *Women's Voices from West Africa: An Anthology of Songs from the Sahel*. Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press.

Simpson, H. M. (2004) '"Voicing the Text": The Making of an Oral Poetics in Olive Senior's Short Fiction', *Callaloo*, 27(3), pp. 829–843. Available at: doi:10.1353/cal.2004.0135 (Accessed 15 September 2021).

Slaves, A. (no date) *African American Studies: Voices of African American Women in Slavery*. Available at: http:///dp/B00P8AWOPQ/ref=sr_1_1?qid=1693596045&refinements=p_27%3AAmerican+Slaves&s=digital-text&sr=1-1&text=American+Slaves (Accessed: 23 June 2019).

Söderbäck, F. (2012) 'Motherhood According to Kristeva: On Time and Matter in Plato and Kristeva', *philoSOPHIA*, 1(1), pp. 65–87.

Sontag, S. (2004) *Regarding the Pain of Others*. London: Penguin.

Spivak, G. (1999) *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Stavney, A. (1998) '"Mothers of Tomorrow": The New Negro Renaissance and the Politics of Maternal Representation', *African American Review*, 32(4), pp. 533–561. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/2901236 (Accessed 05 October 2023).

Stephens, M. (2016) 'Defacing the Gaze and Reimagining the Black Body: Contemporary Caribbean Women Artists', *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, 38(1), pp. 22–30. Available at https://doi.org/10.1215/10757163-3641645 (Accessed 19 October 2022).

Stevens, C. M. T. and Stevens, C. M. T. (2015) 'The Body of the Mother in Contemporary Black Women Narratives: (Re)Writing Immanence Towards Transcendence', *Ilha do Desterro*, 68(2), pp. 93–101. Available at: https://doi.org/ 10.5007/2175-8026.2015v68n2p93 (Accessed 05 October 2023).

Tagg, J. (1988) *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Taylor, D. (2003) *The Archive and the Repertoire:* 2nd edn. Durham: Duke University Press.

Taylor, U. (1998) 'The Historical Evolution of Black Feminist Theory and Praxis', *Journal of Black Studies*, 29(2), pp. 234–253. Available at https://www.jstor.org/stable/2668091 (Accessed 04 February 2020)

Thompson, B. (ed.) (2008) *Black Womanhood.* Hanover, N.H: University of Washington Press.

Tobin, B.F. (2008). Caribbean Subjectivity and the Colonial Archive. Small Axe 12(1), pp.145-156. Available at: https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/235048 (Accessed 04 March 2022).
Traylor, E. W. (2005) *The Black Woman: An Anthology*. Edited by T. C. Bambara. New York: Washington Square Press.

Trethewey, N. (2007) *Native Guard*. Mariner Books.

Visvis, V. (2008) 'Alternatives to the "Talking Cure": Black Music as Traumatic Testimony in
Toni Morrison's "Song of Solomon"', *African American Review*, 42(2), pp. 255–268. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/40301210 (Accessed 04 March 2022).

Voela, A. (2010) 'Locating the M(o)ther', *Studies in the Maternal*, 2(1). Available at: https://doi.org/ 10.16995/sim.99 (Accessed 04 March 2022).

Wallace-Sanders, K. (2010) *Mammy:* Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Wandelt, S. J. (2008) *The Translation fromMmemory to Postmemory: The Mother-Daughter Dialogue in Post-Holocaust Literature*. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Available at: http://gradworks.umi.com/33/47/3347554.html (Accessed: 9 April 2017).

Washington, T. N. (2005) 'The Mother-Daughter Àjẹ́ Relationship in Toni Morrison's "Beloved"', *African American Review*, 39(1/2), pp. 171–188. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/40033646 (Accessed: 9 April 2019).

Weiss, G. (2013) *Body Images: Embodiment as Intercorporeality*. Routledge.

Wilentz, G. (1992) 'Toward a Diaspora Literature: Black Women Writers from Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States', *College English*, 54(4), pp. 385–405. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/377831 (Accessed: 9 June 2018).

Wilkinson, J. (1996) 'A Choice of Fictions: Historians, Memory, and Evidence', *PMLA*, 111(1), pp. 80–92. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/463135 (Accessed: 19 May 2019).

Williams, H. A. (2012) *Help Me to Find My People: The African American Search for Family Lost in Slavery*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

Williams, S. A. (1999) *Dessa Rose*. Reprint edn. New York: William Morrow & Company.

Willis, D. and Williams, C. (2002) *The Black Female Body: A Photographic History*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Woodard, J. B. and Mastin, T. (2005) 'Black Womanhood: "Essence" and its Treatment of Stereotypical Images of Black Women', *Journal of Black Studies*, 36(2), pp. 264–281.

Wyatt, J. (1993) 'Giving Body to the Word: The Maternal Symbolic in Toni Morrison's Beloved', *PMLA*, 108(3), pp. 474–488. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/462616 (Accessed: 29 August 2020).

Young, H. (2010) *Embodying Black Experience:* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Young, H. B. (2005) *Haunting Capital: Memory, Text, and the Black Diasporic Body*. Hanover, N.H.: Dartmouth College Press.

Young, T. in the D. of S. K. (2012) *The Grey Album: On the Blackness of Blackness*. Minneapolis, Minn: Graywolf Press.

Zinsser, W. (ed.) (1990) *Inventing the Truth: Art and Craft of Memoir*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

LIST OF FIGURES

Introduction

Figure 1: The Object of My Gaze, Installation image at Tate Britain (2021) Life Between Islands: Caribbean - British Art 1950s – Now. Sculpture: Remembering you Remember me. Cold cast bronze with patina. (© 2015-2021, Marcia Michael).

Figure 2: The Object of My Gaze, Installation image at Tate Britain (2021) Life Between Islands: Caribbean - British Art 1950s – Now. Digital Photographs, Partus Sequitur Ventrum Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl, Single images 30" x 20" inches Wallpaper images, various sizes. Video, Mi Soon Come, Likkle More, Single channel video 4.48 mins, Full HD: 1920 x 1080, Aspect Ratio 16.9 (1080p) Codec: h.264. Sculpture: Remembering you remember me. Cold cast bronze with patina in various sizes. (© 2015-2021, Marcia Michael).

Figure 3: I am Now you – Mother, Digital Photographs and Video: Remembering You, Remember me. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl 15 x 22.5 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 4: I am Now you – Mother Installation image. at Autograph ABP. Digital Photographs and Video: Remembering You, Remember me. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl 15 x 22.5 inches. Wallpaper images. 12.53 mins. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

The Gesture of Participation, *Did it Work?*

Figure 5. Profile of an old Woman from the series The Study of Kin. Analogue black and white photograph of My mother Myrtle sitting with head turned to the side, in her home in London. Silver gelatin Print on Ilford Multigrade IV FB CLASSIC. 15 x 15 inches (©Marcia Michael, 2009).

Figure 6: Still image from Did it Work?, (time, 0 seconds) Video. (© 2015, Marcia Michael).

Figure 7: image from Did it Work?, (time 7 seconds) Video. (© 2015, Marcia Michael).

Figure 71: Still from Remembering You, Remember me. Video (© 2016, Marcia Michael).

Figure 9: Still image from Did it Work?, (time1 minute and 25 seconds) Video. (© 2015, Marcia Michael).

Figure 10: Still image from Did it Work?, time 1 minute and 29 seconds. Video. (© 2015, Marcia Michael).

Figure 11: Still image sequences 1.24, 1.25, 1.27 and 1.28 from Did it Work?, Video. (© 2015, Marcia Michael). My mother's bodily movements as captured in her London home 2015.

Figure 12: the Still image from Did it Work?, (time 2 minute and 6 seconds) Video. (© 2015, Marcia Michael).

Figure 72: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A trans-temporal diptych that shows mother and daughter sitting on the same chair. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 14: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A combination of images of mother and daughter nude bodies. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches and 11.25 x 7.5 inches (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 73: Caroline and Son. p. 3 Photographic image from Lucile Clifton's book Generations. A black and white photograph of a man in a suit sitting next to a woman who wears a checked shirt, hat and white blouse. (©1976, Lucille Clifton). Clifton, L. (1976) Generations, Random House.

Figure 16: Thelma, p. 61 Photographic images from Lucile Clifton's book Generations. Two black and white photographs on a page. One is a Photo Booth size portrait of a woman in black clothing wearing a black hat. The other image shows a woman standing next to a window that has blinds, she is looking sidewards. (©1976, Lucille Clifton). Clifton, L. (1976) Generations, Random House.

Figure 17: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A combination of images of mother and daughter images. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches and 11.25 x 7.5 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 18: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A Dyptych of mother and daughter images. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. Each image is 30 x 20 inches .(© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 19: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A triptych of mother and daughter images. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. Each photograph 30 x 20 inches .(© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 20: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A combination of images of mother and daughter images. Digital photograph. Archival

pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches and 11.25 x 7.5 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 74: *Drizzle. 1903/1972, Poem and black and white photographs in Malindy sings, illustrated with photographs by the Hampton Institute camera club. pp. 16-17 of 15-20 (© 1903 Paul Laurence Dunbar).* Available at: https://archive.org/details/whenmalindysings00dunb

Figure 22: Drizzle. 1903/1972, Poem and black and white photographs in Malindy sings, illustrated with photographs by the Hampton Institute camera club. pp.18-19 of 15-20 (© 1903 Paul Laurence Dunbar). Dunbar, P. L. (1903/1972). When Malindy Sings, illustrated with photographs by the Hampton Institute camera club. Dodd Mead and Company, New York. (Reprint of 1903 New York First AMS). Available at: https://archive.org/details/whenmalindysings00dunb

Figure 23: Drizzle. 1903/1972, Poem and black and white photographs in Malindy sings, illustrated with photographs by the Hampton Institute camera club. pp. 20-21 (© 1903 Paul Laurence Dunbar). Dunbar, P. L. (1903/1972). When Malindy Sings, illustrated with photographs by the Hampton Institute camera club. Dodd Mead and Company, New York. (Reprint of 1903 New York First AMS). Available at: https://archive.org/details/whenmalindysings00dunb

Figure 24: Romare Bearden Evening 9: 10 461 Lenox Avenue, 1964. Photostat mounted on fiberboard. 50 1/2 x 66 inches. Collection Pérez Art Museum Miami, museum (© 1964 Romare Bearden). Available at: https://www.pamm.org/en/artwork/2015.90/ (Accessed 23rd March 2023).

Figure 25: Maud Sulter Duval, from the series Syrcas (1993) (© 1993 Maud Sulter, courtesy the Estate of Maud Sulter).

Figure 75: Deborah Roberts, Portraits: When They Look Back (No. 3). Mixed media collage on canvas. 45 x 35 inches. Artwork © Deborah Roberts. Courtesy the artist; Vielmetter Los Angeles; and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London. (© 2020 Deborah Roberts). Available at: https://www.stephenfriedman.com/artists/51-deborah-roberts/works/16787/ (Accessed 23rd March 2023).

Figure 76: Lorna Simpson. The meaning of power and physical world, 2021 (detail) collage and pastel on handmade paper (7/8 x18 5/8 x1 5/8 inches) (©2021 Lorna Simpson). Available at: https://lsimpsonstudio.com/collages/collages-2021 (Accessed 23rd March 2023).

Hurston and Photography, Photography and Rememory

Figure 28: Woman in White/Pan of Water from the Sea Island series. Four panels, with two silver gelatin prints and two screen-printed text panels. 19.8 x 19.8 in. (©1992, Carrie Mae Weems). Available at: http://www.artnet.com/artists/carrie-mae-weems/sea-islands-series-0BnO8riP5mP7scVsL6AYEg2 (Accessed 15th September 2020).

Figure 2977: Woman in White/Pan of Water from the Sea Island series. Gelatin Silver prints and text panels. Four parts each 20 x 20 in. (©1992, Carrie Mae Weems). Available at: https://mcachicago.org/collection/items/carrie-mae-weems/2859-woman-in-white-pan-of-water-from-the-sea-island-series (Accessed 12th February 2023).

Figure 30: Untitled. Signifying Monkey text panel. Lithograph. 37 1/2" x 25". (©1992, Carrie Mae Weems). https://www.thegundgallery.org/2014/01/carrie-mae-weems-sea-island-series. (Accessed 12th February 2023).

Figure 31: Untitled. Bone yard text panel - detail. screen printed text panel. 20 x 20 in. (©1992, Carrie Mae Weems). Available at https://www.thegundgallery.org/2014/01/carrie-mae-weems-sea-island-series/. (Accessed 12th February 2023).

Figure 32: Waterbearer. Silver gelatin print, vinyl lettering. 149.9 x 203.2 x 5.7 cm. Available at https://lsimpsonstudio.com/photographic-works/1985-88 (Accessed 12th February 2023).

Searching for Visual Matrilineage - **Artist Case Studies**

Figure 33: Replenishing (in 7 parts). Large format polaroid. 80 x 55.9 cm. (©1998, Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons). Available at: https://www.artnet.com/artists/mar%C3%ADa-magdalena-campos-pons/replenishing-in-7-parts-I2MvHE26XqJYIML6JV5JHA2 (Accessed 12th February 2023).

Figure 34: Nesting IV Composition of 4 Polaroid Polacolor Pro Photographs, 29 x 25 in each, 29 x 100 in overall. Museum purchase with the Avis and James K. Heller Art Acquisition Endowment, Collection of the Haggerty Museum of Art, Marquette University. (©2000, Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons).

Figure 35: Still from No Home Movie. Video. 113 min. (©2015, Chantal Akerman). Available at: https://www2.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/reviews-recommendations/film-week-no-home-movie (Accessed 13th September 2020).

Figure 36: Still from No Home Movie. Video. 113 min. (©2015, Chantal Akerman.). Available at: https://www2.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/reviews-recommendations/film-week-no-home-movie (Accessed 12th February 2023).

Figure 37: Image from Did it Work?, (time 3 minutes and 10 seconds) Video. (© 2015, Marcia Michael).

Figure 38: Another Woman No 5. Photograph. w101.6 x h76.5 cm. (©1997, Amanda Heng). Available at: https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/another-woman-no-5-amanda-heng/lAHfJT3RdE8-DQ (Accessed 12th February 2023).

Figure 39: Another Woman No 2. C Type Photograph. w101.7 x h83.1 cm. (©1996, Amanda Heng). Available at: https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/another-woman-no-2/bgFF6FFUYd45WA (Accessed 12th February 2023).

Figure 40: Amanda Heng (1996-1999) Hands on Front Body and Hands on back from Another Woman. in Cheo, C. (2012) Participatory Practices between Mother and Daughter: The Art of Amanda Heng and Shia Yih Yiing in Buller, R, E. (ed.) Reconciling Art and Mothering. Ashgate Publishing Company, Routledge. p.99.

Figure 41: Narrating Bodies [installation image]. Photography and mixed media sculpture. Sizes unavailable. (© 1998-1999, Amanda Heng). Available at: https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/lifestyle/content/249685/art-review-amanda-heng-artist/story/ (Accessed 12th February 2023).

Figure 42: Still from No Home Movie. Video. 113 min. (©2015, Chantal Akerman.) Available at : https://mubi.com/films/no-home-movie (Accessed 23 April 2023).

Figure 43: Still from No Home Movie. Video. 113 min. (©2015, Chantal Akerman.) Available at : https://mubi.com/films/no-home-movie (Accessed 23 April 2023).

Figure 44: Still from No Home Movie. Video. 113 min. (©2015, Chantal Akerman.) Available at : https://mubi.com/films/no-home-movie (Accessed 23 April 2023).

Figure 45: Still from Daughter of the Dust. Video. 112 mins. (© 1991, Julie Dash). Available from: https://krullmag.com/blog/julie-dash-on-daughters-of-the-dust-and-speculative-fiction-part-2/ (Accessed 12th February 2023).

Figure 46: Still from Dreaming Rivers. [The Three children]. Video. 33 mins. (© 1998, Martina Attille). Available at https://lux.org.uk/event/films-in-dialogue-martina-attille-and-ewuraba-hama-lansiquot (Accessed 13th September 2020).
(Roderick Hart, Nimmy March, Angela Wynter in Dreaming Rivers (1988), by Martina Attille | Sankofa Film & Video. Photo Credit: Christine Parry).

Figure 47: Still from Dreaming Rivers. [The Mother]. Video. 33 mins. (© 1998, Martina Attille). Available at: https://www.wmm.com/catalog/film/dreaming-rivers/ (Accessed 13th September 2020).

Gestural Preservation, Generational Transmission: Photography

Figure 48: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. Mother and daughter both lay on their front nude on a sofa that is covered with a fake fur blanket. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 49: The Family Album. The Object of My Gaze. A person's legs lying on top of a patterned sheet. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 4 1/2 x 2 1/2 inches and (11.4 x 6.3 cm). (© 2009, Marcia Michael).

Figure 50: The Family Album. The Object of My Gaze. A person's legs lying on top of a patterned sheet. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 4 1/2 x 2 1/2 inches and (11.4 x 6.3 cm). (© 2009, Marcia Michael).

Figure 78: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A Diptych showing the backs of the body. One of the mother and the other of the daughter. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 52: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A black and white close-up of my mother's back with scratch marks. Her keloids are partially visible. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015 – 2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 53: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A colour image showing the right-hand side of my mother's back. Her keloid (overgrown scar) is visible. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (©2015 – 2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 54: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A colour image showing the back part of nude bodies of both mother and daughter. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (©2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 55: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A black and white close-up of my mother's back with scratch marks. Her keloids are partially visible. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015 – 2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 56: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A black and white close-up of the lower part of a nude body sitting on a leather stool. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 57: Untitled Configuration one. Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. A selection of 3 images are shown. Two black and white images are placed on either side of the the central image which is in colour. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015 -2017Marcia Michael).

Figure 58: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A close-up of image of my mother's stomach area. Her right hand is visible as she indicates where her caesarean scar should be. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015 -2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 59: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A black and white close-up of my mother's back with scratch marks. Her keloids are partially visible. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015 -2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 60: Blood Mothers from the series The Object of My Gaze. Splatters of menstrual blood belonging to Marcia are displayed on a piece of paper. Menstrual blood on paper. 11.7 in x 16.5 in (© 2020-2021, Marcia Michael).

Figure 61: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A black and white close-up of the lower part of a nude body sitting on a leather stool. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 62: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A Diptych of mother and daughter unclothed sitting on a leather stool in profile. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 63: Untitled Configuration One. Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. A selection of 3 images are shown. Two black and white images are placed on either side of the central image which is in colour. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 64: Mother and daughter both lay on their front nude on a sofa that is covered with a fake fur blanket. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 65: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A selection of two black and white images show the lower nude body of mother and daughter. Layered over these are two smaller colour images that display nude fragmental images of the daughter's body. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches and 11.25 x 7.5 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 66: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. Image of my mother Myrtle wearing a grey wig, shown on her face and part of her upper nude body are white dust marks from corn starch. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 67: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. Mother and daughter sit on a sofa in Jamaica wearing purple patterned clothing. Behind the sofa is part of a bed frame, that belonged to my mother's mother. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 68: Waterbearer. Silver gelatin print, vinyl lettering. 149.9 x 203.2 x 5.7 cm. (©1986, Lorna Simpson). Available at https://lsimpsonstudio.com/photographic-works/1985-88 (Accessed 12th February 2023).

Figure 69: I am Now you – Mother Installation image. at Autograph ABP. Digital Photographs and Video: Remembering You, Remember me. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl 15 x 22.5 inches. Wallpaper images. 12.53 mins. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 70: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. Digital photograph. A selection of 3 images, one image of the mother's hand on nude chest is in colour and repeated inverted in black and white. In the middle of this is an inverted black-and-white image of the daughter's nude upper body. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 71: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. Digital photograph. A image of the mother's hand on nude chest is in inverted and in black and white. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 72: Untitled Configuration two. Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. A selection of 3 images are shown. Two black and white images are placed on either side of the central image which is in colour. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015 - 2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 73: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. Two silhouettes stand Infront of a flowered curtain. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 74: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. Standing portrait of my mother Myrtle in London, wearing a purple dress and hat. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 75: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. Standing portrait of Marcia in Jamaica wearing a purple dress and head wrap. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 76: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. Two images side by side. one of my mother Myrtle and the other of Marcia both sitting nude on a purple-covered chair. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 79 Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. Marcia, who is nude, is resting back in a chair in Jamaica looking startled. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (©2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 78: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. My mother photographed in Jamaica my mother is seen positioned at the veil of the threshold. (Shimmering voices singing.) A sequence of four images of my mother walking through a curtain divide. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. Each image 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 79: Still from Daughter of the Dust. Video. 112 mins. (© 1991, Julie Dash). Available from: https://krullmag.com/blog/julie-dash-on-daughters-of-the-dust-and-speculative-fiction-part-2/ (Accessed 12th February 2023).

Figure 80: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. My mother photographed in Jamaica. She stands against a blue background where she is touching the base of her neck, her head is tilted back, eyes closed, as though she is experiencing pleasure. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 81: I am Now you – Mother from the series The Object of My Gaze. Marcia photographed in Jamaica wearing dresses that belong to her mother. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 15" x 22.5" (©2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 82: I am Now you – Mother from the series The Object of My Gaze. Marcia photographed in Jamaica wearing dresses that belong to her mother. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 15" x 22.5" (©2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 83: I am Now you – Mother from the series The Object of My Gaze. Marcia photographed in Jamaica wearing dresses that belong to her mother. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 15" x 22.5". (©2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 84: I am Now you – Mother from the series The Object of My Gaze. Marcia photographed in Jamaica wearing dresses that belong to her mother. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 15" x 22.5". (©2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 85: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. Digital photograph of My mother Myrtle, resting with eyes closed, head on cushion that has flowers pattern on it. There are multiple patterns and textures around her. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 86: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. Digital photograph of My mother Myrtle standing in the garden, in her home in London, amongst her flowers. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

CONCLUSION - Did it Work?

Figure 87: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A combination of images of mother and daughter nude bodies. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches and 11.25 x 7.5 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 88: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A combination of images of mother and daughter nude bodies. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches and 11.25 x 7.5 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 89: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A combination of images of mother and daughter nude bodies. Digital photograph. Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches and 11.25 x 7.5 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Figure 90: Partus Sequitur Ventrem from the series The Object of My Gaze. A combination of images of mother and daughter nude bodies. Digital photograph.

Archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Pearl. 30 x 20 inches and 11.25 x 7.5 inches. (© 2015-2017, Marcia Michael).

Portfolio

i **The Study of Kin (2009)** – 'As I could not find the images I searched for in the British archives of my family in the 19th century, when photography came into being, I made the images I wanted to see. Beginning to reclaim the images that should appear in my family album, this series accompanies The Family Album.' Marcia Michael

For more in this series please see:
https://www.marciamichael.co.uk/the-study-of-kin

ii **The Family Album (2009)** – 'The album stood for cultural contestation, however, used as a different tool, I aim to dismantling the stereotypes by projecting alternative inclusions of Black bodies and thus Black memory and history.' Marcia Michael

For more in this series please see:
https://www.marciamichael.co.uk/the-family-album

iii **I am now you – Mother (2015-2017)** exhibition at Autograph ABP *27 Apr - 7 Jul 2018. ''We search for our mothers in order to find ourselves. The black mother is the instrument and embodiment of history. My mother is "The Object of My Gaze"' – Marcia Michael*

For more about this work please see:
https://autograph.org.uk/exhibitions/i-am-now-you-mother

iv **Blood Mothers (2022)** from the series The Object of My Gaze. 'This blood, symbolic for it would be the last flow of my womanhood, marked more than my existence, it was a ritual, a remembering of where I had been, come from and was part of. Marcia Michael

For more in this series of works please see:
https://www.marciamichael.co.uk/blood-mothers

v **Life Between Islands Caribbean-British Art 1950s - Now** at Tate Britain 1 December 2021 to 3 April 2022. 'Alongside iconic works from the history of Caribbean-British art, *Life Between Islands* features several works created especially for the exhibition – including work from Marcia Michael's multimedia collaboration with her Jamaican mother, which connects her voice and body to generations of history and memory."

For more about this work please see:
https://hundredheroines.org/exhibition/caribbean-british-art-comes-to-tate-britain/

The Study of Kin (2009) and The Family Album (2009)

These two series are connected and share a common thread. Each accompanies the other.
In exploring how the invention of photography prompted and furthered the creation of stereotypical representations of black people in Britain, these works were made as a way to explore the idea of heredity and its relationship to the notion of stereotyping, classification and social control prevalent within the discourse of photography and race.

In the 19th century, photography was used to classify people. Anthropometric photography, introduced by Alphonse Bertillon (1853- 1914) a French policeman and used by Francis Galton (1822- 1911), a believer of Darwinism, eugenics, and scientific racism, involved compiling composites of types of people as well as of family likeness, both of which linked in with theories of race and eugenics. I felt that this viewing and categorizing of the 'other' was not only an oppressive misuse of photography but could be appreciated as a record of family identity passed on through the generations. This paved the way for me, through my series of small images, to become an ethnographer, looking at myself through my own family and to appropriate the viewpoint and methods of a historically white, male institution, by renewing a claim of ownership of my family and identity through these images. Doing so whilst exploring the authenticity and necessity of a Black British woman to not only collect images of the family but to make them as well.

Placed in a family album, the smaller images are interchangeable and removable. Sized (3.5 2 x 2 inches) to mimic cartes des visites and placed in an album, they are part of the family archive. Extracted and placed in a glassed vitrine, they are objects to be gazed upon, offering notions of classification and difference. However, they are also aspects of beauty and connection.

The Study of Kin - https://www.marciamichael.co.uk/the-study-of-kin



Title: Portrait of Young Woman, from the series The Study of Kin.
Date: 2009
Medium: Photograph: Black and white silver Gelatin Prints
Dimensions: 14.5 x 14.5 inches



Title: Back of older Girl, from the series The Study of Kin.
Date: 2009
Medium: Photograph: Black and white silver Gelatin Prints
Dimensions: 14.5 x 14.5 inches



Title: Studio Portrait of Woman with brooch, from the series The Study of Kin.
Date: 2009
Medium: Photograph: Black and white silver Gelatin Prints
Dimensions: 14.5 x 14.5 inches



Title: Portrait of Woman from the series The Study of Kin.
Date: 2009
Medium: Photograph: Black and white silver Gelatin Prints
Dimensions: 14.5 x 14.5 inches



Title: Profile of Young Boy from the series The Study of Kin.
Date: 2009
Medium: Photograph: Black and white silver Gelatin Prints
Dimensions: 14.5 x 14.5 inches



Title: Back of old Man, from the series The Study of Kin.
Date: 2009
Medium: Photograph: Black and white silver Gelatin Prints
Dimensions: 14.5 x 14.5 inches

The Family Album (2009) –

Title: 'Untiled' - The Family album
Date: 2009
Medium: Photograph: Digital inkjet on paper
Dimensions: 3.5 2 x 2 inches







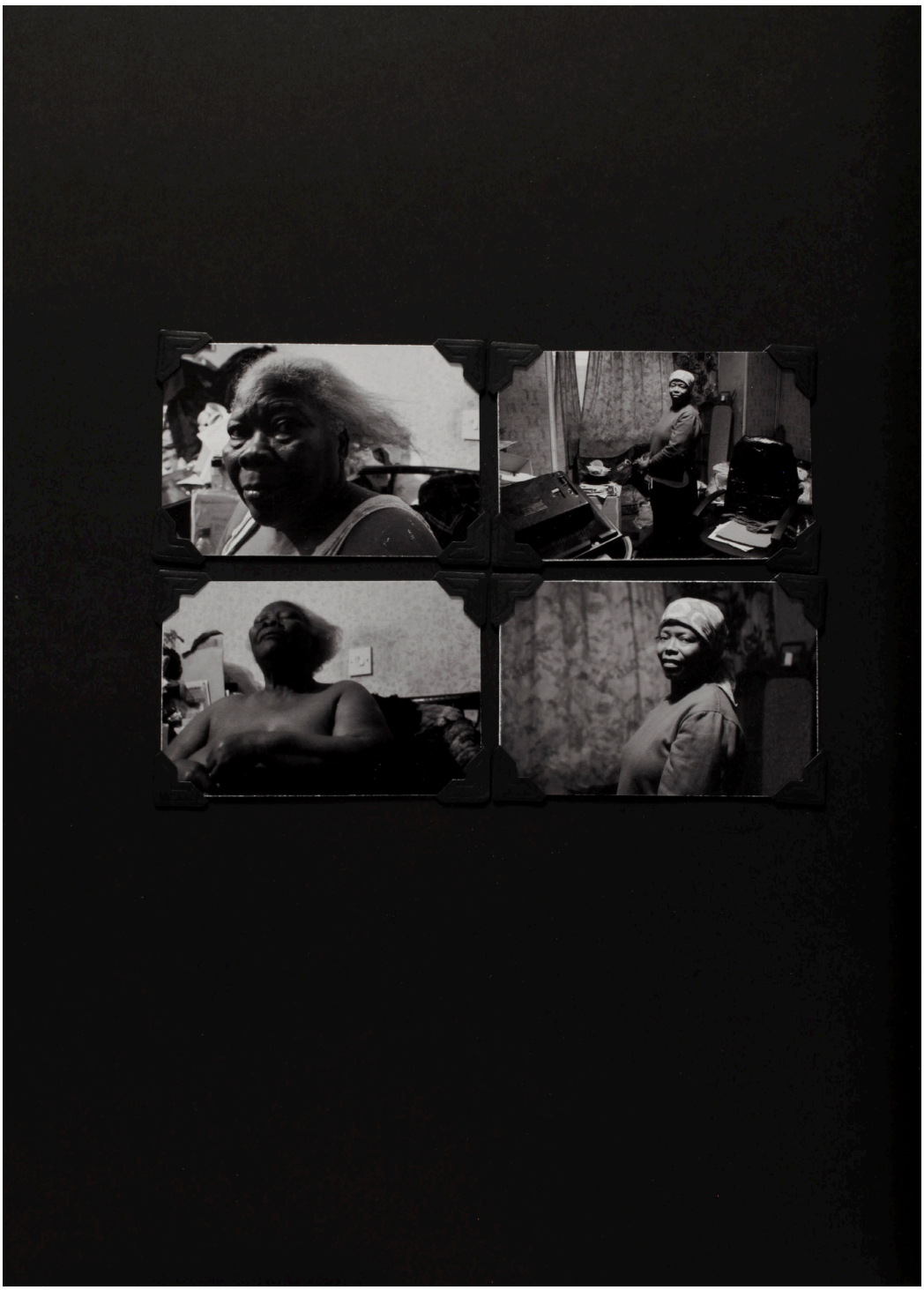


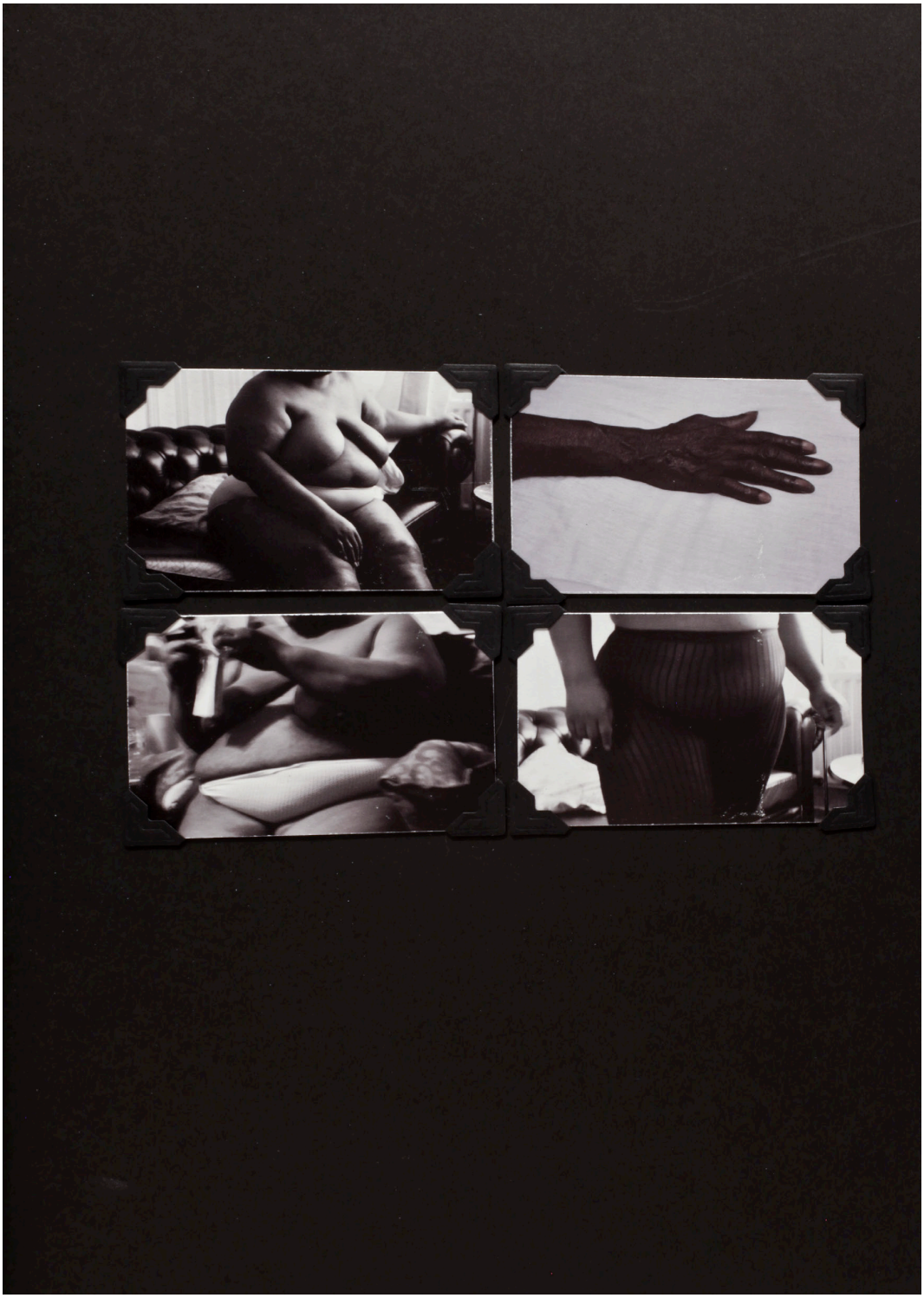








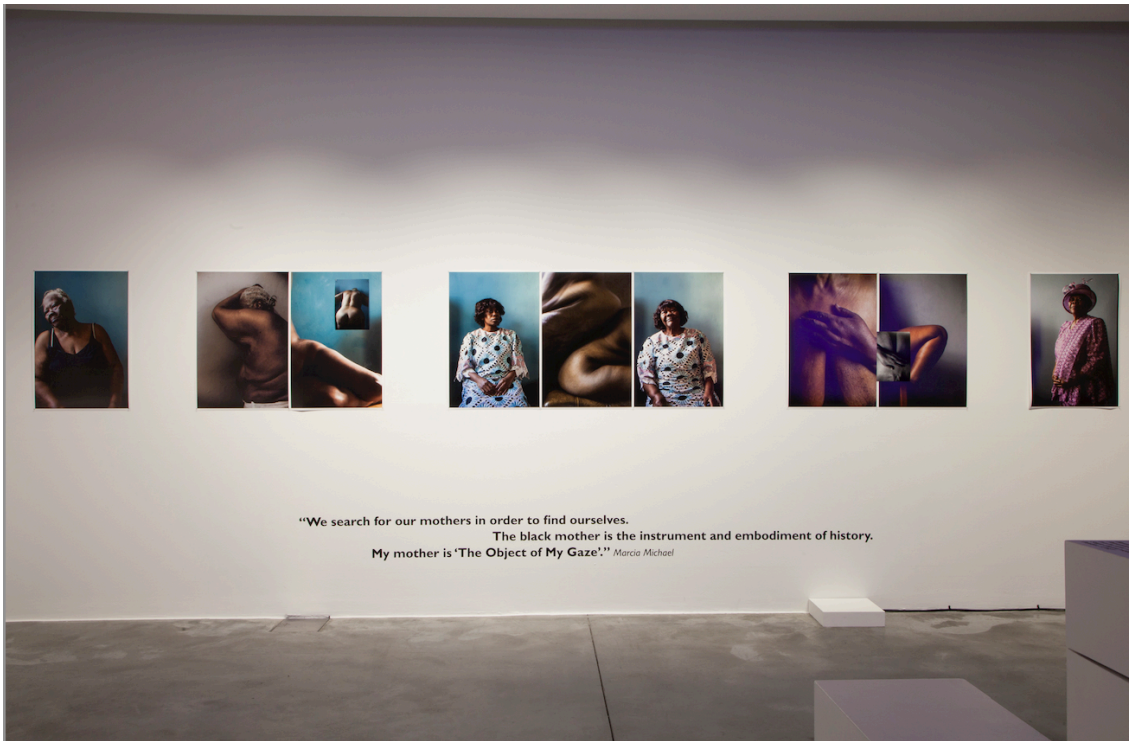




iii I am now you – Mother at Autograph ABP. 27 April - 7 July 2018

Installation images.







iv. Blood Mothers (2022)



Title: 'Untitled' From the series Blood Mothers.
Date: 2022
Medium: Painting, Strands of wool tied together, dipped in menstrual blood and whipped across the paper.
Dimensions: 29.7 x 42 cm



Title: 'Untitled' From the series Blood Mothers.
Date: 2022
Medium: Finger Painting Menstrual Blood
Dimensions: 29.7 x 42 cm

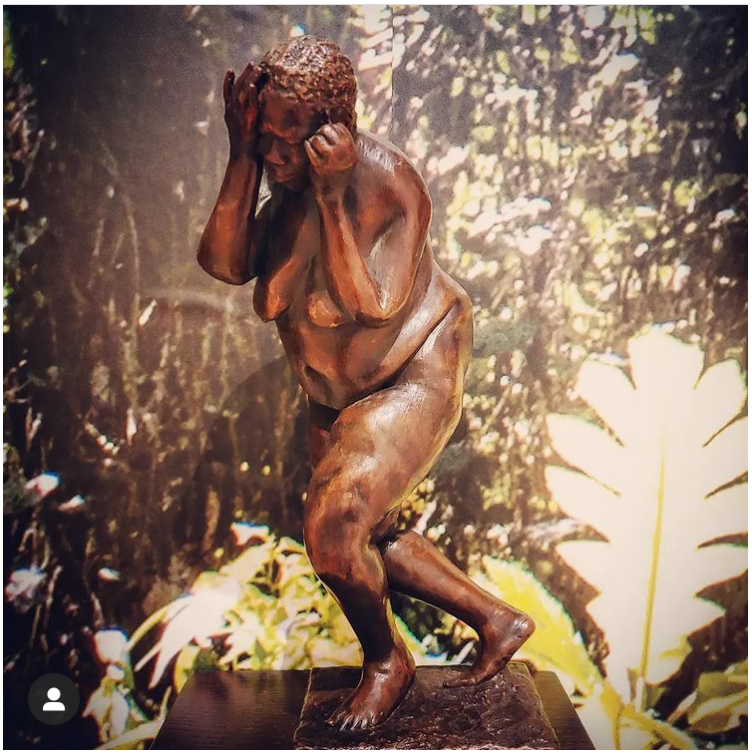


Title: 'Untitled' From the series Blood Mothers.
Date: 2022
Medium: Painting Menstrual Blood
Dimensions: 14.85 x 21cm

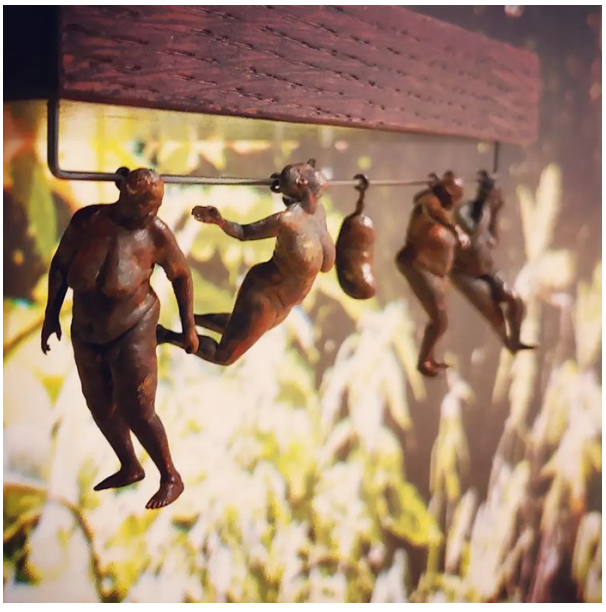
v. Life Between Islands Caribbean-British Art 1950s – Now, at Tate Britain 1 DECEMBER 2021 – 3 APRIL 2022

Installation images





Title: Me Remembering You, From the series The Object of My Gaze.
Date: 2021
Medium: Sculpture, cold cast bronze with patina
Dimensions: object 30 h x 23, 9 cm. Base 11 x 9 x 2 cm and 5 cm H and 2 cm H.



Title: Me Remembering You, From the series The Object of My Gaze.
Date: 2021
Medium: Sculpture, cold cast bronze with patina
Dimensions: object 5 cm H and 2 cm H.

Works on show.

Title: “Mi Soon Come, Likkle More” From the series The Object of My Gaze.
Date: 2021
Medium: Single channel Video 4.48 mins
Dimensions: Full HD: 1920 x 1080, Aspect (Ratio 16.9 ,1080p, Codec: H.264)

Title: Native Resistance From the series The Object of My Gaze.
Date: 2017
Medium: Digital Photograph on Vinyl Wallpaper
Dimensions: Wallpaper

Title: Me Remembering You, From the series The Object of My Gaze.
Date: 2021
Medium: Sculpture, cold cast bronze with patina
Dimensions: object 30 h x 23, 9 cm. Base 11 x 9 x 2 cm and 5 cm H and 2 cm H.

Title: Partus Sequitur Ventrum, From the series The Object of My Gaze.
Date: 2015-2017
Medium: Photograph: digital inkjet on paper
Dimensions: Various sizes unframed, 30 x 20 Diptych 20x 60 inches, Triptych 70x 20, 60 x 20.