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Denise Amy-Rose Forbes-Erickson

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**PERFORMANCE OF FLUID IDENTITIES AND BLACK LIMINAL
DISPLACEMENTS BY THRESHOLD WOMEN**

Committee:

Joni L. Jones, Supervisor

Jennifer M. Wilks, Co-Supervisor

Charlotte Canning

Deborah Paredez

Hannah Wojciehowski

**PERFORMANCE OF FLUID IDENTITIES AND BLACK LIMINAL
DISPLACEMENTS BY THRESHOLD WOMEN**

by

Denise Amy-Rose Forbes-Erickson, B.A.; M.A.

Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Texas at Austin

December 2013

Dedication

Mama Granny

Julie Isabella Stewart

Isabella McPherson (nee Forbes)

and

Amybelle Roselda Forbes

Acknowledgements

For the many detailed questions, comments, critiques, clarifications, responses, generous time and labor, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my esteemed dissertation supervisor and co-supervisor, Dr. Joni L. Jones/Omi Osun Olomo and Dr. Jennifer M. Wilks. Special thanks to Dr. Jones for her brilliance, expertise, insights, care and guidance in my work over the years. I am deeply grateful and appreciative of my co-supervisor Dr. Wilks's keen intellect, eagle-eyed comments, clarity, and focus throughout my dissertation. To my dissertation committee members Dr. Charlotte Canning, Dr. Deborah Paredez and Dr. Hannah Wojciehowski, thank you all for your responses and mentorship in my graduate career at the University of Texas at Austin, including your nurturing guidance in graduate and conference courses. I would be remiss if I did not thank my Director of Graduate Studies Dr. Pamela Christian for navigating me through administrative hurdles and red tapes this past year toward some clear direction and strong support. I owe a debt of gratitude to all my professors, colleagues and friends in the Performance as Public Practice program and the College of Fine Arts. I am truly grateful for the rigor in lively and engaging debates in classrooms and studios that have shaped and honed some of my research interests for years to come.

Many thanks to my fabulous Caribbean artistes Trinidad carnival performer par excellence Denise "Saucy Wow" Belfon, Jamaican dancehall artiste extraordinaire Carlene "The Dancehall Queen" Smith, and the illustrious Jamaican performance poet

Staceyann Chin for their lived experiences, embodied knowledge and theories that so enriched my dissertation. Thanks to Belfon, Smith and Chin for the many hours of great conversations we had in *Patois* and Creole, and their generosity and outpouring of wisdom that further the work in Anglophone Caribbean performances. Without you, this project would not have been possible. I would like to specially thank photographer Lee Abel¹ based in San Francisco, California for permission to use her photographs of Carlene “The Dancehall Queen” Smith at Reggae Sunsplash in my dissertation.

Sincere thanks to Dr. Barbara Gloudon and the late Professor Rex Nettleford of the Little Theatre Movement (LTM) National Pantomime Company of Jamaica. Thank you for giving me my first break in theatre as a designer, and for believing in me to go further. Throughout the years you have supported every dream, every endeavor, and longing hope, and there are not enough words to express my gratitude.

This past year, I received an American Association of University Women (AAUW) Dissertation Fellowship 2011-2012, and am truly grateful for the support from the AAUW that allowed me to research, draft five chapters, and facilitate the three interviews contained in this study. Special thanks to AAUW members that I have become acquainted with including Marsha Endahl Kramer and Mary Ellen Scribner for their wit and kind words of encouragement. I look forward to even more robust conversations about issues affecting women in the United States and internationally.

¹ For further information, contact photographer Lee Abel at <http://www.leeabelphotography.com/reggae-portraits/jamaican> and telephone: (415) 821-2271.

To my friends and colleagues who read various versions of this project, and to those who never tired from listening to me talk through ideas about fluid identities and Creole culture. I thank you for your insights and ears. Sincere thanks to Heather Barfield Cole, Maria Andrea Dos Santos Soares, Gustavo Melo Cerqueira, and my sisters Diane Forbes Berthoud and Dawn Yee who continue to inspire me with their excellence. My close friends, Vivian Ojogun, Abigail Ramsey, Annette Harris, Camille Stewart, Camille Jacks Morgan, Margot Rodway Brown, and Jeanette Whyte Birtles were there with me over decades, and deserve special note for their undying friendship, long conversations, laughter, and too much coffee at times.

Honorable mention to my parents Baron Forbes and Hyacinth Forbes, who raised and supported me through thick and thin. I love you forever. Special thanks go to my loving husband Larry Erickson for supporting me through what seemed like insurmountable obstacles. I love you without end. And to the joy of our lives, little Isabella, thank you for teaching me play and patience. It literally takes a “village” of close and extended family, and those who became “family” to help me up along the way. I am deeply grateful for aunts and uncles, well-wishers, too many to mention here; some of whom have passed during the writing of this dissertation. Thanks to my mother-in-law June Erickson who died tragically too soon, for all her loving support and incredible inspiration. Thanks to Bob and Margaret Erickson, Dave and Roberta Erickson, Tim and Kristy Smith, Ryan and Cory Keefe, Jane Erickson and Christine Howard for cherished holiday memories and unwavering love.

When I think about all the gifts, generosity, words of encouragement, and conversations at the kitchen table, I would like to thank my late Aunt Cynthia Forbes; and Aunt Kathleen Brown, affectionately called “Aunt Pinnie,” holder of family histories right back to slavery days, to remind me never to forget. Heartfelt gratitude to my late Grandmother Enid Chin for her unselfish love and kindness in giving me whatever she had just to see me to succeed. Thank you to my late Grandmother Amybelle Roselda Forbes, affectionately called “Miss Amy,” my namesake and inspiration who passed away during the writing of this dissertation just weeks shy of her 101st birthday. I will never forget you. *Tenky-Tita*.²

² *Tenky-Tita* is an old *Patois* (English Creole) expression for “Thank you, Father” or “Thank God for small favors” (Cassidy and Le Page 440).

PERFORMANCE OF FLUID IDENTITIES AND BLACK LIMINAL DISPLACEMENTS BY THRESHOLD WOMEN

Denise Amy-Rose Forbes-Erickson, Ph.D.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2013

Supervisors: Joni L. Jones and Jennifer M. Wilks

Many scholars in the field believe that identities are fluid without question. Butler's "fluidity of identities," for instance, describes the numerous variations in gender identities that denaturalize gender, but not consider its racial dimensions (179). Butler analyzes drag performance as a model to show how gender identities are fluid, suggesting agency and social mobility in everyday life. But what is most striking to me about fluidity of identities is the assumption that everyone has fluid identities with scarcely any regard for how racialized stereotypes fix identities (Hall 1997, 258). Fixity is the repetition of colonial power over racialized subjects rendering them without agency and access (Bhabha 94). Fixity uses stereotyping, which is a process of constructing "composite images" about groups of people, and that hold certain identities within "symbolic boundaries" (Brantlinger 306).

As a result, this dissertation challenges the universality in a fluidity of identities by examining three case studies in Caribbean racialized gender identities, often thought to be fluid because of multi-ethnicity, but discriminate against, and erase blackness or "Africanness," in race theories of "whitening" (*blanquemento*),

“darkening” (*negreado*), color-casting, and colonial stereotypes of “miscegenation” throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Through performance analyses of three black and “miscegenated” Anglophone Caribbean performers Denise “Saucy Wow” Belfon in Trinidad carnival crossdressing, Carlene “The Dancehall Queen” Smith in Jamaican dancehall transvestism, and Staceyann Chin in American performance poetry with racialized “androgyny,” I examine the figures of Creole, *La Mulata*, *Dougl*a and “half-Chiney” by these women in their performance genres in order to investigate whether identities are as fluid as Butler suggests, and to chart their fixities. Focusing on fluidity alone risks denying inequalities and the lack of social mobility restricting access to marginalized people. Belfon, Smith and Chin manipulate racialized “drag” by simultaneously crossing race and gender in masquerade traditions of Trinidad carnival, Jamaican dancehall, and in the orality and embodiment in American performance poetry in performances I call black liminal displacements, defined as self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing. However fluid racialized gender identities may appear to be, I argue that racialized gender identities are not definitively fluid because racial stereotypes fix identities.

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Glossary

Blanquemento: *Blanquemento* (“whitening”) refers to an idea across Latin America and the Caribbean in the pursuit of becoming “whiter”(Whitten and Torres 13). For example, some people who are *mestizo* or “mixed” refer to themselves as *blanco* (“white”) in the sense of “becoming” more “civilized” and “conscious” than dark-skinned blacks and indigenous peoples who are considered to be “uncivilized” and “unconscious” (Whitten and Torres 13).

“Browning,” Brown (*La Mulata*): Caribbean people of European and African ancestries are referred to as “brown,” and specifically, “browning” for women (Mohammed 2000, 25; Stolzoff 163; Kempadoo 2004, 80). The term, “browning” in Jamaican society comes from the historical reference, “mulatto woman” or *La Mulata* in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Mohammed 2000, 25).

Calypso: The Trinidadian term *Calypso* is from the Hausa word, *caiso*, which refers to a praise and critical singer in West African traditions. *Caiso* is closely associated with a call-and-response song called *lavway*. *Caiso* was transcribed into English in the mid-twentieth century and its reference was changed to *calypso*, the Greek muse of music and daughter of the Titan Atlas (Martin 285).

Carnival: Trinidad carnival is held from Christmas Day on December 25 to Ash Wednesday, which is the first day of the forty days of Lent in the Catholic Christian tradition (Riggio 45). Trinidad carnival festivities include fetes or balls, costumes, music, carnival king and queen competitions, all culminating in masquerades consisting of dancing in the streets for two days, Carnival Monday and Tuesday, before the solemnity of Ash Wednesday (Riggio 45).

Caribbean: (See West Indian below)

Chutney: Chutney is a spicy Indian condiment, and a name given to the bawdy folk music from Bihar and Bhojpuri-speaking villages in India. Chutney is derived from *lachari*, women’s Hindu wedding songs and dances performed by intergenerational Indian women in private wedding tents called *maaticoore* or *matikor* in India. In traditional Hindu weddings, *lachari* begins on Friday nights and lasts all weekend until Sunday, the day of the wedding ceremony. Over the weekend, women of all ages prepare young brides by initiating sexual knowledge before their wedding day. Performances include sexually explicit songs and dances depicting crossdressing, simulated sex acts, marital advice, fun, games, and laughter. For example, crossdressed women would twist their skirts or saris in phallic forms, or use long eggplants between their legs to simulate penetration in performances (Mehta 220). Indian indentured laborers brought *lachari* to the Caribbean in the mid nineteenth-century. In later years, *lachari* was called chutney,

like the spicy condiment, because explicit performances were considered “hot” and “spicy” like chutney. The term was later popularized in Trinidad by East Indian singers James Ramsewak and Cecil Funrose in the 1970s (Niranjana 95). Today, chutney is a popular musical form, performed publicly by East Indian men like Adesh Samaroo, Rikki Jai, and Sundar Popo, but with much outcry from conservative Hindu groups (Niranjana 95). The most controversial chutney performer is East Indian woman, Drupatee Ramgoonai because of her public displays of sexuality.

Chutney Soca: Chutney soca or soca chutney is a mix of chutney and soca music in Trinidad and Tobago that uses Hindi words and Indian instruments such as the harmonium and hand drum, and Indian dance steps (Martin 286).

Color-Casting: Color-casting is the privileging of light-skinned blacks or other groups over dark-skinned blacks, and derived on slave plantations throughout the Americas (hooks 127; Brathwaite 167). Color-caste hierarchy, sometimes called “shadism,” looks at the “shades” or gradations in skin color. Shadism replaces other demeaning categories including mulatto, quadroon, sambo, octoroon and others (Thomson 5; Brathwaite 167-168; hooks 127-128).

Creole: Caribbean Creoles are people born in the Caribbean, whether white or black, and especially for people “mixed” with African and European backgrounds (Berkeley et.al. 265; Brathwaite 306). Some scholars include Caribbean Creoles in any combination of “mix” between African, European, Asian, Middle Eastern, Indigenous peoples in the Caribbean (Bernabé et.al. 87).

Creolization: Creolization, according to Brathwaite, emerged as “a cultural process that took place within a creole society – that is, within a tropical colonial plantation polity based on slavery. As a colonial polity, the island was attached to and dependent on the British raj for its economic well-being, its protection and (from the point of view of the whites), its cultural models” (Brathwaite 306).

Dancehall: Dancehall music is an upbeat dance music with rhythmic percussions and deejaying. It is an off-shoot of reggae music that emerged in black working class communities in Kingston’s inner city from the 1970s (Niaah 2010a, 1-3). Dancehall music is more than a musical genre; it is a lifestyle, referred to as “dancehall” with its distinctive fashion, hairstyles, film, theatre, modeling, dance moves and choreography by and for black working class Jamaicans (Niaah 2010b, 132; Stolzoff 2).

Dougl: *Dougl* is the term used for “mixed” people of African and East Indian descents in the Eastern Caribbean. *Dougl* is derived from Bhojpuri Hindi word *dogla* (without the “u”), which means “bastard” (Reddock 1999, 573; Puri 127). The literal interpretation of *dogla* is an “illegitimate/ son of a prostitute,” and does not even appear in the *Dictionary*

of *Common Trinidadian Hindi*, revealing the shame and exclusion of people of East Indian and African backgrounds (Reddock 1999, 573; Puri 128).

Douglarization: The term “douglarization,” coined by Trinidadian Hindu religious and East Indian leaders, refers to a perception that the African-led political party, People’s National Movement (PNM), promotes “intimate relations between African men and [East] Indian women in order to ‘Africanize/Creolize’ the population, and in this way, deal with the problem of ‘race relations’” (Reddock 1999, 573). Just as *mulatización* (darkening) is perceived as “impurity” across Latin America and the Caribbean, douglarization in Trinidad is viewed as a threat to East Indian culture and “purity.”

Dub Poetry: “Dub Poetry” is a Jamaican oral poetry tradition which emerged at the Jamaica School of Drama, Kingston, Jamaica in the 1970s (Morris 93). Dub poetry is spoken word and performed poetry in *Patois* (English Creole language) along with original reggae music with themes of black consciousness, poverty, and racial exploitation. Dub poets include Linton Kwesi Johnson, Noel Walcott, M’Bala, Jean Binta Breeze, Oku Onuora, Mutabaruka, and the late Micheal Smith (Johnson 155).

East Indian: The term “East Indian” refers to descendants of Indians from India who migrated to the Caribbean to work as indentured laborers from the mid-nineteenth century (Khan 2004, 166; Reddock 1999, 573; Martin 286).

“Half-Chiney”: “Half-Chiney” or black Chinese refers to a person of Chinese and African ancestries. In Jamaica, the pejorative Chinese Hakka expression *ship-yit (t)diam* literally means “half-brain” or “half literate/educated,” not “pure” and not “whole” Chinese (Shibata 2013, 370). “Half-Chiney” people often suffer abandonment and exclusion in Jamaican Chinese communities (Shibata 2013, 370). On the other hand, in Jamaican Creole culture, “half-Chinese” has light-skinned privilege (Cooper 2010a, 282).

Jam: *Jam* is a Creole word for a dance with forward thrusting pelvic movements either alone or with other dance partners. It is a type of *winin’* dance. See Creole words, *Wine* or *Winin’*.

Junkunnu or Jonkunno: Junkunnu is a masquerade, similar to carnival, performed in Jamaican, Belize, Bermuda, St Kitts and Nevis, Guyana and the Bahamas during the Christmas season (Richards 254). Junkunnu was also performed during the antebellum period in North Carolina in the United States (Richards 267-268). Jamaican Junkunnu dates back to the late seventeenth century when people from West Africa were taken to Jamaica as slaves. At that time British planters and slave owners gave all slaves a few days off before harvesting season in to celebrate Christmas (Senior 84; Richards 254).

Negreado: *Negreado* (“darkened,” “blackened”), implies a lack of civilization and culture. It is applied to black “people without consciousness (*a los que les falta*

consciencia)." (Whitten and Torres 13-15). The effects of *negreado* are manifested in carnival performances throughout the region, as well as the lack of social mobility among blacks (Whitten and Torres 23). See *Mulatización*, which means "darkening."

Négritude: *Négritude* is a Caribbean literary movement started by Martiniquan Aimé Césaire, Léon Gondron Damas, and Senegalese Léopold Sédar Senghor in the 1930s. *Négritude* is about valorizing Africanness and blackness. In the late 1980s, Caribbean writers Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant reacted against *Négritude's* focus on only Africanness that denied other cultural elements in Caribbean culture. Bernabé et.al responded with *Creolité* (Creoleness) with "We declare ourselves Creoles" incorporating all "mixes" as a key component in Caribbean Creoleness (87).

Mas: *Mas* is the Trinidadian word for "masquerade." The expression "to play mas" is to wear costumes and participate in carnival as "characters" in traditional costumes, including Devils, Dragons, Midnight Robber, and Fancy Indian among others (Martin 289, 292). A pretty *mas* (or fancy *mas*) is a masquerade developed by the middle- and upper-classes with elaborate bikini-styled costumes, decorated with sequins, feathers, and glitter.

Mestizaje: *Mestizaje*, an ideology of racial intermingling, is a master symbol in Latin America and extended throughout the Caribbean manifesting in ideas of "whitening" and "darkening" in rigid color-caste hierarchies (Whitten and Torres 7-13).

Mulatización: *Mulatización* means "darkening," sometimes called ("mulattoization") and has negative connotations of "mulatto" as impurity, or in sullyng white purity (Whitten and Torres 20).

Performance Poetry: Performance poetry is a performed poetry with text, orality, embodiment and energetic stagings. It involves full audience participation with audience members talking back and actively responding to poets on stage (Kraynak and Smith 5).

Slam: Slam is a type of competitive poetry and considered part of performance poetry with three-minute poems reviewed by a panel of judges on a scale of 1 to 10 with eliminations to a "face-off" in the finals (Halberstam 40; Kraynak and Smith 5). Slam emerged in 1984 at the "Get Me High" Jazz Club in white working class neighborhoods in the north-west side of Chicago by a group of white poets who called themselves "Ill-Bred Poets of the Get Me High" (Smith and Kraynak 9; Somers-Willet 4-5). Later slam attracted people of color in the 1990s (Halberstam 40).

Soca: Soca is a fusion of East Indian rhythms and African musical structure of calypso with influences from North American soul music (Martin 293). Soca is short for "soul" and "calypso," hence the term "soca" coined by the originator of the sound, Ras Shorty I (Martin 293).

West Indian: The term “West Indian” is interchangeable with “Caribbean” to refer to people from the islands of the Caribbean Sea, also called the West Indies or Antilles (Ashcroft et.al 2007, 27-28; Holger xviii). “Caribbean” refers to all areas and nations in the region including Guyana and Belize. However, “West Indian” is specific only to people from former British colonies, for example, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Antigua, Dominica, Guyana and Belize (Ashcroft et.al. 2007, 27-28).

Wine and Winin’: *Wine* and *Winin’* are Creole words for an African-derived “dancing emphasizing fluid pelvis rotations, either alone or in full physical contact front or back with another person, including heterosexual, homoerotic or lesbian sexual expression (Martin 294). The dance can be traced to several African dances (Martin 294). Manuel considers African-derived *winin’* as “autosexual” and “asexual” because he observes that dance partners are not necessarily lovers (27). Dance partners often *wine* from person to person, or from group to group, in fetes and masquerades (Manuel 27). The expression, “*winin’*,” comes from the circular movement of “winding of the hips in a circle” (Martin 294; Ryman 110-111; Niaah 2010b, 135).

Chapter One: Performance of Fluid Identities and Black Liminal

Displacements by Threshold Women

“Dark skin is stereotypically coded in the racist, sexist, and/or colonized imagination as masculine. Hence, a male’s power is enhanced by dark looks while a female’s dark looks diminish her femininity. Irrespective of people’s sexual preferences, the color-caste hierarchy functions to diminish the desirability of dark-skinned females” (hooks 127).

“This terrain of ‘drag’ wherein the distinctly black-looking female is made to appear in a constant struggle to transform herself to look like a white female in a space only a brown-skinned black woman can occupy” (hooks 128).

Ever since the emergence of “identity” as a social science concept in the 1950s, scholars have vigorously debated about it (Gleason 1983; Wetherell 2010). The term “identity” comes from the Latin *idem et idem* which means “the same and the same” (Gleason 1983; Wetherell 2010). “Identity,” as a noun, suggests an object or fixed essence of a person, thing or place, or as an essentialized label (Wetherell 5). In contrast, some scholars describe identity as “elusive,” “confusing,” “blurred,” “slippery” and claim that identity is so indefinable (Wetherell 5). However, it should be no surprise that identity studies in the 1950s coincides with the turmoil of post-World War II, the global decline of European colonialism in Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America and Eastern Europe; to the formation of new nations, continuing agitation for civil rights in the United States, feminisms, and queer movements worldwide. “Identity” is about those who have access and those who do not; and is not about some abstract concept of blurry slippage.

In reality, identity requires “work,” according to human resource scholar Robyn Thomas in “Critical Management Studies on Identity: Mapping the Terrain” (2009), especially in intersecting social categories of gender, race, sexuality and class. The

“work” in identity involves “an element of choice and intentionality in making up the self” (Thomas 169). Therefore, identity “work” is about fighting for choices to become a “self.” As sociologist Erving Goffman in The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life (1959) theorizes, the “self” as a series of “theatrical performances” that adjusts to various everyday “settings” and “plots” during interactions with others (Hawk and Gardner 104). For example, individuals as “actors” perform differently at work than they do at home or at a concert. People may present different versions of “selves” in any number of events (Hawk and Gardner 104). Identity, therefore, involves selves with intentions to “act” on everyday “stages.” At the heart of identity is agency, which is “the thinking subject possessive of intentional actions”(Thomas 169). But despite the most arduous “work” in garnering agency and in creating “the self,” identity depends on whether individuals or groups are perceived as “active/or acted upon in the crafting of self.” And this, according to Thomas, is at the core of all debates in the study of identities (169).

The crux of my dissertation is the “active/or acted upon” theory which studies how some individuals are perceived as having choices, agency, the ability to transform oneself as desired, and are considered as having “fluid identities” (Thomas 169; Butler 179; Conquergood 36; Hall 2006, 435). Others are perceived as being “acted upon” through the social effects of discrimination and marginalization, and are referenced as having “fixed identities” due to imposed limitations (Newman 3; Hall 1997, 258). Fluidity in this sense is defined as self-concept or self-image, which is how one sees oneself. Fixity is in the realm of stereotyping, which is how others see another group as reductionist and essentialized, and is about power and control. Postcolonial scholar Homi

Bhabha in The Location of Culture (2004) defines fixity as “a sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism” (94). Bhabha refers to the dynamics of power in colonialism, which involves experiences of being politically, culturally and socially subordinate to imperial power from the point of contact to the present, for example European colonialism and American policies in Third World countries (Ashcroft et.al 2). He explains that fixity is a mode of representation that repeats its domination by holding and fixing subjects “in place” in what Bhabha calls a “daemonic repetition” (Bhabha 94). Fixity is, therefore, a repetition of power in actions done to subdue and oppress. Bhabha explains that stereotypes are strategies of fixity and is “a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always ‘in place’, already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated” (94-95). Stereotypes are “composite images,” “pictures” or codes for how others see groups of people, and are used to “fix” certain identities “in place” (Hall 1997, 258; Peterson and Runyan 1999, 35). Stereotypes exist only where there are gross inequalities used to control others (Kratz 109). Therefore, to say that stereotypes can be positive is a misnomer. Stereotypes are always negative because they are strategies used by a dominant group to view differences as essentialized and reductionist characteristics in order to fix them “in place” (Bhabha 2004, 94).

Just because an individual sees herself in multiple ways as fluid, does not necessarily follow that others will. Fixity does not cease being “fixed” simply because fluidity is enacted. In recent years, the study of identity has shifted to a debate in a fluidity/fixity binary with scholars taking definitive stances on identities as being either

fluid or fixed. Third world feminist Avtar Brah, for instance, in Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities (1996) insists that identities are “not fixed” because they are shaped by multiple experiences (3). Cultural studies scholar Stuart Hall in “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” (2006) contends that identity is a “production,” or an ongoing process of “becoming” (435); and political theorist Saul Newman in From Bakunin to Lacan: Anti-Authoritarianism and The Dislocation of Power (2001), maintains that identities are fixed in what he calls “essentialist identities” that prevent or limit individuals from constructing their own realities toward their “becomings” (3-4). Fluidity and fixity are mutually exclusive. One cannot exist without the other. However, fluidity does not get rid of fixity especially in marginalized identities. My point is not to ignore fixities as if they do not exist for some. To deny that identities can be fixed is to deny the power relations that keep subjects subordinated and within borders. If the knowledge of fixity is denied, then racialized subjects are further denied recourse and remain silently fixed, and power is maintained.

In Gender Trouble: Feminism and The Subversion of Identity (1999), philosopher Judith Butler theorizes that gender is indeed fluid in her concept of “fluidity of identities” as the unhindered and numerous variations in gender identities to counter fixity and to denaturalize sex and gender through performance, but while ignoring stereotyping (179). Sex refers to the biological and anatomical distinctions between males and females; and gender is a set of “socially learned” prescribed behaviors and expectations to distinguish between masculinity and femininity (Peterson and Runyan 1999, 5). Social behaviors, expectations, gestures, movements on and by bodies are

“performances,” but also power relationships in the sense of how authorities and subjects behave. By performance, I refer to an inclusive term involving theatricality, everyday life with social issues including identities (Roach 1995, 46). As referenced earlier for example, Goffman uses theatrical language of the “stage” to show how people perform themselves in everyday life (Hawk and Gardner 105). Performance theorist Richard Schechner in Between Theatre and Anthropology (1986) further explains that “performance means: never for the first time. It means: for the second to the *n*th time. Performance is twice behaved”(36), which describes repetitive acts in social behaviors like gender, for example gestures considered masculine and feminine. Therefore, in using performance theory, Butler suggests that “gender ought not be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized *repetition of acts*,” and visually embodied in and on the “surface of the body” (178-179).

Debates on performativity suggest that marginalized groups are culpable in reiterating their own status quo in power relations. Butler puts the onus solely on the subject to “perform” away discrimination without addressing the source of power that holds marginal groups in place. Butler’s “fluidity of identities” encapsulates the neat divide between performance and performativity. “Performance” is theorized as having choices and intentionality, and “performativity” is viewed as a reiteration of hegemony, status quo, stereotypes and caricatures (Butler 175; Chinn 107). The term “performativity” derives from philosopher J.L. Austin’s speech-act theory, which distinguishes between performative and constative language. Constative language is

descriptive, for example, “the sky is blue” (Chinn 107). This descriptive language does not affect or alter anything that it describes. Performative language, on the other hand, causes something to happen or change its state, for example, “let there be light” (Chinn 107). Performative language can be seen to maintain power, dominance and subordination through constant repetition. It implies going along with the status quo, conforming to hegemonic culture that essentializes identities, and reiterates norms. Butler argues that the naturalizing effect or the “illusion” of gender performativity can be broken and denaturalized in the deliberate and conscious act of performance producing a “fluidity of identities” (175). But if “performance” is considered intentional to denaturalize gender as “fluid;” and “performativity” is the reiteration of norms, then marginalized groups will appear to reiterate and reify stereotypes and cannot ever be considered “performance.”

“Performance of Fluid Identities and Black Liminal Displacements by Threshold Women” challenges Butler’s fluidity of identities because of its universal claim in gender as definitively fluid, and its denial of stereotypes created by dominant culture that fix racialized gender identities in place. A fluidity of identities assumes that everyone has or can have fluid identities, without considering inequalities that restrict racialized gender identities in symbolic and real borders. Racialized gender identities refer to the intersectionality of race, gender, sexuality and, more specifically, how racial stereotypes construct gender just as gender stereotypes characterize race. Anthropologist Shirley Fedorak in Anthropologist Matters! (2008) argues that “the concept of race is culturally constructed according to economic, political, and social agendas, rather than a biological

reality” (53). Peterson and Runyan observe how race “marks” gender constructions as much as gender shapes racial stereotypes (29). They explain that “gender is typically racialized (models of masculinity and femininity vary among Africans, Indians, Asians, Europeans) and race is gendered (gender stereotypes shape racial stereotypes of ‘Africans’, ‘Indians’, ‘Asians’, ‘Whites’)” (Peterson and Runyan 1999, 29). Women’s and gender studies scholar Sally Kitch in The Specter of Sex: Gendered Foundations of Racial Formation in The United States (2009), further explains how “theorists also agree that ideologies of race and gender are strongly, or even inextricably, interconnected, so that it is more helpful to think about *genderized race or racialized gender* than to think about the two terms separately” (2). Furthermore, Caribbean scholars argue that race was, and still is sexualized in the Caribbean. According to gender and sexuality scholar Ruth Fincher, sexuality is defined as “a society constructed set of processes which includes patterns of desire, fantasy, pleasure, and self-image. Hence, it is not restricted solely, nor indeed mainly, to sexual relations” (323). Being sexualized, on the other hand, is outside of sexuality; it is about stereotyping sexuality and projecting this stereotype on another. However, Butler questions whether performativity can be transposed unto race, and whether race could be constructed like gender (xvi). Butler undermines how gender is raced and how race can be gendered for people of color (xvi).

Although Butler claims that sex and gender are denaturalized in a “fluidity of identities,” she overlooks if, or how, race could be “denaturalized” in *racialized* gender. I argue that racialized identities are not solely and definitively fluid because stereotyping still “fixes,” essentializes, and reduces racialized identities, so that any performance can

be simultaneously fluid and fixed. To avoid the chance that my analyses might be interpreted that racialized identities are not fluid at all, I must first explain that I view fluidity of identities as self-directed and consciously performed by the performer. Fixity, on the other hand, is derived in dominant culture whether it is an audience or not. Fluidity is measured by the ability for social mobility. Some may have some social mobility, therefore having limited fluidity. To think of racialized identities as fluid without awareness of stereotyping, is to deny that stereotyping exists; and there would be no need to contest the power. Therefore, racialized identities are neither definitively fluid nor fixed, but performed simultaneously. Identities are not only what people think of themselves, which is having fluidity; identities are also what people think about others.

My task in this dissertation is to defamiliarize fluidity of identities because it is a façade which obscures the issue of race, stereotyping with disparate impacts on racialized gender identities. It is my intention to show that everyone does not have a fluidity of identities because of the lack of access. Philosopher David E. Cooper in Existentialism explains the liminal space between how one is perceived, that is, “ ‘the Look’ of others” or “ ‘my possibility becomes a *probability* which is outside me’,” versus how one perceives oneself (121). Cooper illustrates that “others cannot stand to my decisions and commitments in the way that, if authentic, I myself do. For me, these are the taking up of ‘possibilities’ which lends meaning to my existence. For others, they are only indicators of my probable future behaviour” (121). Therefore fluidity is always in the realm of the performer and subject position (first person); and fixity is in the realm of the audience/spectator in the object position (third person). I am not saying that every single

audience member or spectator will view performances as stereotypes, but it is more likely for some audiences to see certain performances as such because of their power to stereotype. Stereotyping is always outside of the performer. I am more concerned about “audience” as colonial audience and “performer” as colonial subject and power dynamics. The perspectives of the performer (1st person) and the audience (3rd person); the subject and object positions constitute identities.

In this study, I examine the liminal space between the perspectives of fluidity as first person, and fixity as stereotypical perspective in three case studies. I have selected Trinidad carnival performer Denise “Saucy Wow” Belfon, Jamaican dancehall artiste Carlene “The Dancehall Queen” Smith, and Jamaican performance poet Staceyann Chin in order to investigate whether their racialized gender performances are definitively fluid or fixed. I have chosen Belfon, Smith and Chin because of their black and mixed backgrounds as Creole women for exploration of fluidity and fixity in their performance genres Trinidad carnival, Jamaican dancehall and American performance poetry or slam. Creoles are people born in the Caribbean, whether white or black, and especially for people “mixed” with African and European backgrounds in the Caribbean (Berkley 265). Although Caribbean Asians are often excluded, and even fear erasure, in models of Caribbean creolization (Puri 127-128; Munasinghe 2006), Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant include Creoles in any combination of “mix” between African, European, Asian, Middle Eastern, Indigenous peoples (92). The question of Creolization, East Indians, and Chinese will be further discussed in performance analyses of Belfon, Smith and Chin.

Across the Caribbean, many claim ancestry from one or more people that settled in the Caribbean (Amber 4). In this way, black experience for many is on a continuum or “cultural milieu” (Terborg-Penn 9). In “Through an African Feminist Theoretical Lens” (1995), feminist scholar Rosalyn Terborg-Penn states that Caribbean people of African descent, “regardless of skin colour, have been identified and often have identified themselves as black. In this sense, black symbolizes a cultural milieu more than colour”(9). Belfon identifies as black, but also as “French Creole mix” which is of French and African ancestry (Belfon Interview, Appendix C). Smith identifies as black with an African Jamaican mother and a white German father (Smith Interview). Chin identifies as a black woman, with African Jamaican mother and a Chinese Jamaican father (Chin Interview, Appendix E). Belfon, Smith and Chin see their mixed ancestries as informing their blackness as Creole, *Dougl*, *La Mulata*,” half-Chinese” or Black Chinese.

Creole refers to people of African and European backgrounds born in the Caribbean and will be discussed more fully in relation to other categories. The term *Dougl* refers to people of African and East Indian heritages. Belfon’s performance raises the ambivalence of *Douglas*. Like Creole, *La Mulata* or Browning refers to woman of African and European background. Smith is considered a browning and I elaborate on the reemergence of *La Mulata* in Jamaican society and in her performance as The Dancehall Queen.” “Half-Chiney” refers to Chinese and any other ethnicity, but especially, African. Chin is of African and Chinese heritages. All three African-descent women self-identify as “black,” and acknowledge their other ancestries as “mixed.”

A discussion of these categories is essential to Belfon's, Smith's and Chin's performance genres: Trinidad carnival, Jamaican dancehall, and American performance poetry. Performances of "mixed" categories of *Creole*, *Dougl*, *La Mulata* and "half-Chiney" have historically, and still today, engaged in issues of color casting, discrimination, inter- and intra-racial and ethnic tensions, stereotypes, caricatures and their fixities that emerged in performances during slavery to this day. And although these figures of "miscegenation" may appear to be fluid, sliding from black to white, to Chinese, to East Indian and back again; they are still fixed in colonial stereotypes of "miscegenation" that fix these categories.

Various sources indicate how these figures of *Creole*, *La Mulata*, *Dougl*, and "half-Chiney" are historical and contemporary stereotypes that affect the ways in which racialized gender identities are socially constructed and performed. I analyze these identities as performances in their respective genres to locate instances of fluidity and fixity in racialized gender. I will show specificities that do not fit neatly in Butler's universal claim of a fluidity of identities. It is very easy to assume that with diversity, multi-ethnicity, and even color casting, that gender identities are fluid entities. But once there are inequalities, then there are fixities that hinder racialized identities at the bottom of the racial hierarchy ladder.

Performances by Belfon, Smith and Chin address denied stereotyping in fluidity of identities by self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing to critique the source of stereotyping. I refer to these performances as black liminal displacements. According to social psychologist David Schneider in *The Psychology of Stereotyping* (2004) self-

stereotyping is “the tendency to see oneself as similar to other group members or to endorse ingroup stereotypes” (242). Schneider explains that “self-stereotyping also tends to be strong for those who identify strongly with the group when group identity is threatened” (242). Black Caribbean women use self-stereotyping to bolster ingroup stereotypes especially after intense criticism of the group, individual or performance genre. Caricature and caricaturing are exaggerations of stereotypes in staged performances. Similarly, self-caricatures are not about making fun of stereotypes, although they can be comedic. Self-caricaturing is about subversively exaggerating stereotypes in grotesque representations in “excess.”

Overview of Blackness and Africanness

The Caribbean is a diverse area with islands of the Caribbean archipelago, the Guianas in South America, including Cayenne, Guyana, and Suriname; and Belize in Central America (Reddock 2001, 202). African-descent people consist of the largest group in the region, but may differ in each country (Reddock 2001, 202). For example, in Guyana descendants of Indian Laborers comprise the largest group. In Cuba and Puerto Rico European-descent peoples are the largest group in the population. Other countries have more descendants of Chinese, Lebanese and Europeans, and a range of ethnic intermixtures forming new groups (Reddock 2001, 202). According to Reddock, despite the large African-descent population, anti-African discrimination and racism are rampant throughout the region, in addition to self-denial of Africanness in many cases (2001, 202). Reddock states that in spite of a denial of Africanness, it is coupled with a

resistance against discrimination and racism (2001, 199). If discrimination exists, then identities cannot be fluid alone.

Blackness has been discussed as both fluid and fixed. In the United States, performance theorist E. Patrick Johnson in Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity (2003) explains that blackness is “slippery - ever beyond the reach of one’s grasp. Once you think you have a hold on it, it transforms into something else and travels in another direction” (2). Johnson explains that “the mutual constructing/deconstructing, avowing/disavowing, and the expanding/delimiting dynamic that occurs in the production of blackness is the very thing that constitutes ‘black’ culture” (2). Johnson suggests that blackness and black experience are not homogenous. Black feminist Michelle Wright in Becoming Black: Creating Identity in the African Diaspora (2004) argues that “‘Blackness’ as a social category produced in relation of both gender and sex categories. In line with this critique, it is only when we see Black subjectivities that we do arrive at theories of the Black subject that successfully negotiate the ideal and material formations that must predicate Black subject formation” (7). Wright argues that blackness is not confined to nationality, cultural or linguistic border, and is not separate from gender and sexuality (4-5). Even though blackness is not homogenous, stereotypes of blackness still abound. Ignoring stereotypes that impede and constrain racialized identities will not make them disappear; but addressing them at its source is one of the ways to combat dominant culture’s representations of stereotypes.

Blackness and the concept of “Africanness” in the Caribbean and Latin America are as complicated as they are complex. Although blackness is in a white/black

dichotomy in the region, it is conceived of very minutely and differently from race and blackness the United States and Europe. The white/black dichotomy can even be transposed on other ethnicities and blacks, for example, Asian/black (Puri 127; Reddock 1999, 573-574). This says something about how race is constructed on other groups, not just whites and blacks across the region. “Africanness,” used throughout the Caribbean, refers to pride in all things “African,” and in claiming an original “homeland,” much like Chinese, East Indian, Syrians and European peoples claim connections with China, India Syria and Europe (Cooper 2010a 280-282). Because of colonialism and slavery, blackness and whiteness in Latin America and the Caribbean were historically “measured” and legally classified by skin gradations and applied in color casting. Whiteness was, and still is at the top of the skin color hierarchy with gradations of skin coloration down to blackness.

In all accounts, blackness was and is reviled throughout the Caribbean and Latin America. Interestingly each skin gradation has its stereotypical reductionist characteristics described in gendered language of “masculinity” and “femininity.” In the introduction of Blackness in Latin America and the Caribbean (1998), anthropologists Norman E. Whitten Jr. and Arlene Torres explain that blackness in the region is “the dialectic between the darkening influences of white domination in the African diaspora and the enlightened cultural, social, and economic creativity produced and reproduced in the eternal fires of black rebellion (4). Blackness or “darkening” is often characterized as measure to whiteness or “whitening” to the extent that individuals and groups choose to self-identify. Whitten and Torres argue that from the point of contact between Europe and

the Americas, “‘whitening’ and ‘darkening’ have been dual symbolic processes of classification and identity” (20). They further explain that

The phenomenon of “lightening” is well known in Venezuela, Columbia, and Ecuador, where it is called *blanquemento*, or “whitening.” Those pursuing a course of becoming “whiter” (people classes as *mestizo*, mixed, usually refer to themselves as *blanco*, white) refer to their “whiteness” in “cultural” terms as becoming more civilized and conscious than their darker black and indigenous congeners. They classify some individuals, groups and aggregates as *negro* (black), or *negreado* (darkened, blackened), implying lack of civilization and lack of culture – people without consciousness (*a los que les falta consciencia*) and hence unself-reflective and stupid (13).

Although Whitten and Torres refer to Latin America, these racializing ideas extend across the Caribbean through color casting, skin bleaching to become “brown” or white (Barnes 102). Whitten and Torres explain that two main racial ideologies in Latin America and the Caribbean are *mestizaje* and *négritude* on a spectrum of either “whitening” or “darkening,” sometimes called *mulatización* (“mulattoization”) (20). *Mestizaje*, an ideology of racial intermingling, is a master symbol in Latin America that is towards “whitening” or *blanqueamiento* in sometimes national attempts to erase blackness (Whitten and Torres 7). *Négritude*, on the other end of the spectrum, is a concept of self-identifying as “black” and highlighting the positive features of Africanness (Whitten and Torres7). Conceived by Martiniquan playwright Aimé Césaire in 1947 and continued by Frantz Fanon, *négritude* is one of the strongest assertions of blackness and black consciousness in the region (Whitten and Torres 7). In the 1990s, proponents of Caribbean Creole culture, Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël

Confiant, reacted against négritude because they claimed that négritude focused solely on Africanness and disavowed other heritages in multi-ethnic groups (Bernabé et.al 87).

The word, “creole” is derived from two Spanish words, *criar* and *colono*. *Criar*, means “to create, to imagine, to establish, to found, to settle.” *Colono*, means “a colonist, a founder, and a settler.” The two words form *Criollo* that means “a committed settler, one identified with the area of settlement, one native to the settle meant though not ancestrally indigenous to it.” The term “creole” is also applied differently in other countries in the region. For example in Peru, the term “creole” refers to people of Spanish descent born in the New World. “Creole” is also applied to enslaved Africans born in Brazil. The term was also applied to white francophone population in Louisiana, while in New Orleans, it applied to “mulattoes.” The term is also applied to whites of French descent in the Caribbean, and later to blacks who claimed French descent. Linguists also use the term creole for a mixed language or “pidgin.”

However Brathwaite uses the term in the original Spanish meaning, *Criollo*, for people who are born or native to an area, and applicable to both whites and enslaved Africans in the region (306). He argues that creole and the process of creolization are concerned with a metropolitan European power and a plantation system where the society is multiracial but designed to benefit the minority European. It is set up as a master and slave relationship in the idea of a plural society, however, not in separate nuclear units, but as a whole (Brathwaite 307).

Creolization, according to Brathwaite, emerged as “a cultural process that took place within a creole society – that is, within a tropical colonial plantation polity based on

slavery. As a colonial polity, the island was attached to and dependent on the British raj for its economic well-being, its protection and (from the point of view of the whites), its cultural models” (306). Brathwaite further explains the Creole relationship as “fixed within the dehumanizing institution of slavery, were two cultures of people [British and African], having to adapt themselves to a new environment and to each other. The friction created by this confrontation was cruel, but it was also creative” (307). Such “creativity” under unequal circumstances should not be misconstrued as fluidity. Even as there is creativity in Creolization, it exists within fixed boundaries. Creolization then leans toward whiteness and white colonial rule that dominates, “fixes,” and erases blackness. However, whereas *mestizaje* carries a negative psychological effect of “enforcing” the “whitening” of races across Latin America, Creolization in the Caribbean could be viewed as mandating mixed-raced-ness. But it is more about valorizing miscegenation or “mixed-raced-ness,” especially after it was historically devalued during and after slavery, and not necessarily foregrounding one ethnicity over another (Bernabé et.al. 87-88).

Therefore, despite the diversity, multi-ethnicity and meticulous racial categorization in the region, racialized identities are not as fluid as they appear. Brathwaite, however, claims that Creole identity is not fixed and monolithic, and that there are infinite ways of asserting identity in the creole society (307). But inherent in Creole identity is light-skinned privilege, and the privileging of multi-ethnicity over dark-skinned blacks coupled with the fact that white colonial culture still maintains dominant rule over all black and indigenous peoples in the region despite a clear majority of blacks

in most places. In fact, a black majority does not necessarily translate to freedom or independence from white colonial domination. Discrimination and disproportionate opportunities impede any fluidity of identities (Whitten and Torres 23).

Staged *Transvestism*: Drag, Racialized Crossdressing, Racialized “Drag”

In order to show how gender is done or “performed” in and on the body, Butler analyzes staged *transvestism*, for example drag performance, as mode of analysis for staged and everyday life (175). *Transvestism*, according to sexologist Vern L. Bullough and humanist Bonnie Bullough in Cross Dressing, Sex and Gender (1993), is the Latin for “crossdressing,” a term coined by Magnus Hirschfeld in 1910 (vii). Bullough and Bullough define *transvestism* or crossdressing as “a simple term for a complex set of phenomena. It ranges from simply wearing one or two items of clothing to full-scale burlesque, from a comic impersonation to a serious attempt to pass as the opposite gender, from the occasional desire to experiment with gender identity to attempting to live most of one’s life as a member of the opposite sex” (vii). Anthropologist Charlotte Suthrell in Unzipping Gender: Sex, Cross-Dressing and Culture (2004), further observes that *transvestism* includes creating persona of the same gender and does not require a “crossing” of genders to be considered *transvestism* (8). Staged *transvestism*, therefore, is “staged” crossdressing, whether from “femininity” to “masculinity” or vice versa; or in any variation of gender play to create personae. Staged *transvestism* is an umbrella term for other stagings in drag queen performances, carnival crossdressing, burlesque and others. Drag, according to sociologist Judith Lorber in the preface of The Drag Queen Anthology: The Absolutely Fabulous But Flawlessly Customary World of Female

Impersonators (2004), is the exaggeration of “gendered dress and mannerisms with enough little incongruities to show the ‘otherness’ of the drag artist” (xv). Lorber further explains that the so-called “joke” in drag is the exaggeration of gender mannerisms across the binary of “masculinity” and “femininity” (xv-xvi). In “Chicks with Dicks, Men in Dresses: What it Means to Be a Drag Queen” (2004), sociologists Leila J. Rupp and Verta Taylor clarify the term “drag queen” and other categories and performances (114-15). According to Rupp and Taylor, “drag queens are gay men who dress and perform as but do not want to be women or have women’s bodies (although some drag performers are ‘tittie queens’ who require breasts through either hormones or implants)”(114-115). They further explain that not all men who crossdress as women are drag queens, and that transvestites or cross-dressers are usually straight men who wear women’s clothing (114-115). Rupp and Taylor explain that transgender people display and embrace gender identities other than the social and psychological pressures to conform to expected roles in biological sex (114-115).

More broadly, the term “drag” is used widely in Eastern and Western societies, and is often used for “crossing” lines and boundaries in sex and gender. Lorber contends that drag “plays with the forbidden” (xvi). For example in India, hijras³ go against gender and sexual norms; and in Western society, it is more acceptable for women to wear a tuxedo to a formal event, and unacceptable for men to wear an evening ball gown to the same event (Lorber xvi). No culture or group has any real ownership of “drag;” and

³ Hijras belong to a community of (male to female) transvestite and transgender singers and performers who perform at weddings, baptisms and religious ceremonies in South India (Reddy 2-3).

the concept of “drag” can be used metaphorically or as models that play on gender (Schacht and Underwood 13). For example, in “The Absolutely Fabulous but Flawlessly Customary World of Female Impersonators” (2004), sociologists Steven P. Schacht and Lisa Underwood apply “drag” as a metaphor for moving along a hierarchy society and social statuses (13). Schacht and Underwood argue that “we are all drag queens. We live in a hierarchical society where, dependent on the social statuses we have been seemingly ascribed, we are continuously expected to undertake performances that demonstrate our gender, race, class, sexual orientation, and so forth. ...The stratification system ultimately makes metaphorical drag queens of us all” (13). Schacht and Underwood refer to a metaphorical “drag” in negotiating crossing lines and boundaries (13-14).

Similarly, Butler analyzes drag as a metaphor and model to theorize how gender is performed as a fluidity of identities in everyday life (175). In “fluidity of identities,” Butler observes three elements on the drag performers’ bodies: “anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance” instead of just crossing from male to female in drag queen performance (175). Anatomical sex is the biological distinction between male and female (Peterson and Runyan 1999, 5). Gender identity is assigned according to sex, and is socially learned, although one’s gender identity may not conform to sex (Peterson and Runyan 2010, 2). Butler explains that anatomical sex can be distinguished from gender identity, and gender identity is distinct from gender performance. Butler determines that gender is fluid when multiple shifts or displacements occur between anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance in staged *transvestism* (175). Butler calls these shifts on the “surface of the body,” “perpetual displacement,” “parodic proliferation,” or

a “fluidity of identities” because of the possible numerous shifts seen on the body (179). In this way, according to Butler, sex and gender are denaturalized.

Even though Butler claims that sex and gender are denaturalized in drag performance, there are still some contradictions about whether gender meanings are really denaturalized. The main contradiction that I find in Butler’s argument is that while she agrees that gender meanings are the same in hegemonic and misogynist culture as they are in drag performance, she still claims that gender meanings are somehow changed in drag performance without providing evidence of how the meanings are changed. Butler argues that “although the gender meanings taken up in these parodic styles are clearly part of hegemonic, misogynist culture, they are nevertheless denaturalized and mobilized through parodic recontextualization – As imitations which effectively displace the meanings of the original, they imitate the myth of originality itself” (175). Butler insists that gender and its meanings are denaturalized in drag performance, as she states they are “clearly part of hegemonic, misogynist culture,” by the multiple shifts between anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance through “parodic proliferation.”

On the other hand, some feminist scholars consider the “parodic proliferation” in drag to be “degrading” because it stereotypes, mocks, derides, essentializes and fixes identities (Butler 174-175; Spade and Valentine xv). Drag involves the exaggeration of masculinity and femininity as distinguishable repetitions of gestures and movements. Drag is inherently gendered and raced for people of color and white performers alike with the performance of blackness and whiteness (Rhyne 182). Performance theorist José Esteban Muñoz in Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics

(1999) argues that people of color, queers of color perform drag to “dis-identify” from mainstream culture. Muñoz theorizes that “disidentification is meant to be descriptive of the survival strategies the minority subject practices in order to negotiate a phobic majoritarian public sphere that continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship” (4). For Muñoz, identity is a “fiction” that only “majoritarian subjects” can easily access (5). Majoritarian subjects refer to dominant culture that can create and recreate their identities (Muñoz 5). “Minoritarian subjects,” on the other hand lack the access to identities, and therefore “interface with different subcultural fields to activate their own senses of self” (Muñoz 5). Minoritarian subjects refer to the poor, people of color, and queers of color who cannot readily access “identity” in dominant culture and instead “dis-identify” with majoritarian normative structures (4-6). Muñoz indicates that the “fiction” of identities is fixed for “minoritarian subjects” and that everyone certainly does not have “identity,” let alone a “fluidity of identities.”

In this study, I am not focused on the practice of crossdressing or *transvestism* in everyday life per se. But I am concerned with models of staged *transvestism* to explore racialized gender identities along color caste lines on black and “miscegenated” women’s bodies, and to interrogate Butler’s claim of a fluidity of identities. Butler analyzes drag performance as a metaphor and model for how gender is performed as fluid. Here, I use hooks’s concept to “drag” as a model for color caste hierarchies with “masculinity” for dark-skinned black women and white “femininity” for light-skinned black or white women in Caribbean masquerades to explore if these racialized gender identities are fluid

as Butler claims, or fixed (hooks 127-128; Kempadoo 2004, 36). Black feminist scholar bell hooks in Killing Rage: Ending Racism (1995) explains that in the United States “dark skin is stereotypically coded in the racist, sexist, and/or colonized imagination as masculine. Hence, a male’s power is enhanced by dark looks while a female’s dark looks diminish her femininity. Irrespective of people’s sexual preferences, the color-caste hierarchy functions to diminish the desirability of dark-skinned females” (127). Racialized codes for “masculinity” and “femininity” on the black female body are derived from historical and contemporary color-casting (hooks 127).

Models of Drag, Racialized “Drag” and Carnival Crossdressing

Muñoz analyzes a specific genre of drag which emerged during the punk era in the 1980s (95). He focused on superstar drag performers of color including Vaginal Crème Davis, Ela Troyano and Carmelita Tropicana (Muñoz 96). My focus here is on the concept of “drag” which critiques race and color caste hierarchies in Caribbean masquerades in Trinidad carnival and Jamaican dancehall, and as models to investigate racialized identities. I use the term racialized “drag” as a metaphor to explain the crossing of race and gender, or the play on race in same gender personas in historical and contemporary Caribbean masquerade traditions of carnival *transvestism* or crossdressing that use color casting hierarchies. Racialized “drag” refers to the crossing or blurring of stereotypical codes for blackness or Africanness as “masculinity,” and whiteness or Europeanness and other non-African groups signify “femininity.” hooks explains that “this terrain of ‘drag’ wherein the distinctly black-looking female is made to appear in a constant struggle to transform herself to look like a white female in a space only a brown-

skinned black woman can occupy” (128). These performances, though fluid, still hold fixities as long as inequalities persist. hooks discusses racialized “drag” as “internalized racism” (128), and this may be so. But hooks’s analysis takes away from blacks’ ability to think when using racialized “drag” - staged or otherwise. hooks’s view of racialized “drag” risks policing blacks’ diverse aesthetic choices towards an acceptable one, whatever that may be.

Other postcolonial and Caribbean scholars have observed stereotypical gendered language, “masculinity” and “femininity” to further sort races/ethnicities. Color casting, “whitening” and “darkening” are ingrained throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, and constructions of gendered language of “masculinity” and “femininity” to describe racial characteristics of skin color very often cathected on black female bodies. In the Caribbean, “masculinity” in racialized language refers to dark-skinned stereotypically viewed as uncivilized, close to nature, unbridled sexuality (Kempadoo 2004, 36, 80; hooks 127-128). “Femininity,” on the other hand, is measured by light-skinned through to whiteness at the “pinnacle of femininity” (Kempadoo 2004, 36, 80; hooks 127).

Caribbean masquerades may be viewed as commentaries on constructions of racialized gender in staged and everyday life. Caribbean feminist Rosamund King in “Dressing Down: Male Transvestism in Two Caribbean Carnivals” (2005) suggests that blacks in Caribbean carnival crossdressing have always simultaneously “crossed” gender and race/ethnicity as an interrogation of historical and contemporary constructions of racialized gender on black bodies (2005, 30). For example, a black woman may cross-dress in both gender and race in the persona of a white man or white woman in popular

stagings like carnival, a festival of costumed pageantry and masquerades at various times of the year (King 2005, 30). In another example, a white Creole woman may perform same gender *transvestism* as a “slave girl” or “Mulatresse” (Hill 1997, 28).

Racialized “drag” or racialized staged *transvestism* provides a clue to how race and gender are simultaneously “crossed” or same gender persona. Stereotypical codes for “masculinity” and “femininity” on black female bodies may seem contrived; but they are nevertheless real and encoded in everyday life, documented in historical and contemporary writings, viewed through popular culture, and worth investigating as racialized gender constructions on Caribbean black bodies. I examine the liminal space between the performer as subject and audience as colonial. I consider fluidity as a self-directed act by a performer or first person; and fixity as stereotyping by some audiences in dominant culture as third person. I analyze the “perpetual displacements” Butler poses between anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance on the Caribbean black bodies of Belfon, Smith and Chin.

Although I interrogate Butler’s fluidity of identities, I use only Butler’s conceptual framework which distinguishes anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance in drag performance in order to analyze the racialized dimensions on black female bodies of Belfon, Smith and Chin. I borrow Butler’s precise model of “anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance” to address questions of agency and fluidity to discover how and why Belfon, Smith and Chin negotiate racialized identities in the ways they do.

Just as Butler uses drag performance as a model for how gender identities are performed as fluid, I employ Butler's schema to investigate whether racialized gender identities are fluid or fixed. Because Butler's methodology is analyzing the gender binary of "masculinity" and "femininity" in drag performance, I explore racialized "drag" in racialized gender binaries to investigate whether racialized identities are fluid or fixed, and to interrogate the universal claim in Butler's fluidity of identities. In each performance, I analyze how Belfon, Smith, and Chin cross or blur stereotypical codes for "masculinity" and "femininity" on the black female body in a kind of racialized "drag."

Based on historical and contemporary stereotypical codes, I have devised three racialized gender binaries to analyze racialized "drag" in the Trinidad carnival crossdressing by Denise "Saucy Wow" Belfon, Jamaican dancehall *transvestism* by Carlene "The Dancehall Queen" Smith, and a model of racialized "drag" in Staceyann Chin's performance poetry. I observe then, the codes of African masculine/East Indian feminine performed by Denise "Saucy Wow" Belfon; black or African masculine/white or European feminine performed by Carlene "The Dancehall Queen;" and African masculine/Chinese feminine performed by Staceyann Chin. Racialized stereotypes for "masculinity" and "femininity" on the Caribbean black female body may seem only symbolic, but congeal in race, sexuality, class and gender relations. Besides, if gender is socially learned and based on racial stereotypical codes on the black female body, then it presents clues to how racialized gender is performed. I study how racialized gender simultaneously resists and seems to reify stereotypes. Specific racialized and sexualized meanings of "masculinity" and "femininity" are used as racial characteristic on black

female bodies. The black female body is disciplined to be made “feminine,” specifically white femininity considered to be the ideal according to Kempadoo (2004, 80). The black female body is already assumed to be “masculine,” signifying “uncouth” and “close to nature,” and must be made “feminine” (Kempadoo 2004, 80- 83). Caribbean staged *transvestism* by black Caribbean women explores the idea of racialized and sexualized masculinity and femininity on the black female body.

Using the historical evidence of stereotypical codes for “masculinity” and “femininity” on the black female body, I examine contemporary Caribbean women’s performances about the black female body as racialized “drag” or staged *transvestism* to investigate Butler’s “fluidity of identities” in racialized and sexualized gender identities. Butler analyzes drag performance with the schema “anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance” (175). I apply Butler’s schema to the racialized gender performances by Belfon, Smith, and Chin. I examine the “repetition of acts” in gestures and movement on the body, and through costumes, set/space and audiences in Trinidad carnival, Jamaican dancehall and American performance poetry. I show the combined racialized, sexualized, and gendered stereotypes in staged *transvestism*. Then I explain black liminal displacement as self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing with costumes, gestures, repetition, and audience displacement.

Performers	Anatomical Sex	Gender Identity	Gender Performance	Genre	Stereotypes/ Caricaturing	Black Liminal Displacement as Self-stereotypes and Self-caricatures	Costumes, Set/Space, gestures, repetition, audience displacement
Trinidadian Denise “Saucy Wow” Belfon	Female	Creole, Black or French Creole Mix, Black woman	East Indian woman cross to Black woman	Carnival	East Indian femininity and Black woman as “masculine,” hypersexual, “exotic,” “erotic”	African masculine/East Indian feminine	Indian sari for East Indian woman. Skin-tight orange tights and top for African woman (African) <i>Winin’</i> (Indian) Classical dance steps
Jamaican Carlene “The Dancehall Queen”	Female	Browning, Black woman	Black woman cross to white femininity	Dancehall	White femininity as “ideal femininity” Black, brown or “mixed” woman as hypersexual, “exotic,” “erotic”	African masculine/European feminine	Blond wigs and for whiteness; “Hypersexual” costumes for blackness (African) <i>Winin’</i>
Jamaican Staceyann Chin	Female	Black, Asian, Caribbean woman	Racial and gendered androgyny	Performance Poetry	Black and mixed as “hypersexual,” “exotic,” “erotic”	African masculine/Chinese feminine	Afro symbol for blackness, Bare feet, Androgynous style with cargo pants and camisole top Wide arm gestures Stomping Running Loud talking, Scream

Table 1: Performance Analysis Chart Applying Butler’s Schema on Racialized Gender Performances by Belfon, Smith and Chin

Black liminal displacement is self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing by black and “mixed” performers: Belfon, Smith and Chin. Black liminal displacement analyzes blackness in mixed groups and considers the liminal space between fluidity (performer) and fixity (audience) on the body’s displacement between anatomical sex, gender identity

and gender performance. Self-identifying as “black” is necessary in black liminal displacement because of the stereotypical gender constructions of “masculinity” and “femininity” in Africanness, Europeanness East Indianness and Chineseness that stereotypically characterizes races and ethnicities in gendered terms. Because all stereotypical codes are debasing and extremely urgent to address, I focus on the racial and gendered stereotypes of black Creoleness because it involves prescribed behaviors towards “femininity” as non-African. It is assumed that the black female bodies are “masculine,” signifying behavioral characteristics of being uncouth, “vulgar,” “oversexed,” and “hypersexual” (Kempadoo 2004, 34-36; Cooper 1995, 8). Europeanness or whiteness, including gradations of light skin color, signifies “femininity,” which is gentility, civility, and being “ladylike”(Kempadoo 2004, 36). On the other hand, Kempadoo states that “black femininity was often represented as naturally ‘hot constitution’d’, and sensuous in an animal-like way, lacking all the qualities that defined ‘decent’ womanhood or women of ‘purity of blood’” (2004, 31). Therefore “black femininity” is devalued and, in many cases, not even recognized and does not exist in colonial cultures. East Indianness and Chineseness have been associated with whiteness, and therefore signify femininity as some kind of ideal on black female bodies (Reddock 1999, 574).

By using these racialized gendered binaries in staged *transvestism*, I investigate whether identities are fluid or not, and because of their distinctive racialized and sexualized gender stereotypes and caricatures with racialized gender constructions. In Caribbean staged *transvestism*, Belfon crosses races/ethnicity from “Africanness” or

black to East Indian, knowing that “black” signifies masculinity and the stereotypes associated with race and gender; and “East Indian” represents femininity and the racial and gendered stereotypes given to East Indians. Smith, on the other hand, creates a persona of white femininity. As a brown woman, considered in the range of blackness in the Caribbean, Smith crosses race/ethnicity from “Africanness” or black to European or white femininity to create “The Dancehall Queen.” Chin’s play on the racialized, sexualized codes in “masculinity” and “femininity” in stage *transvestism* is in racial androgyny, which is a combination of Africanness or black and Chineseness in performance poetry. However, racialized gender meanings are not all changed by staged *transvestism* because of racialized and gendered stereotypes. Caribbean women use self-caricaturing to confuse and disrupt hegemonic and misogynist culture, but without agency to actually change racialized and gendered meanings in stereotypes.

The concept of performing race with gendered language is illuminated when viewed as a performance of a power relation, that is, in representations of stereotypes. Performance scholar Harry Elam and literary theorist Michele Elam insist that performing race is about power and agency between institutional power and subordination. In “Race and Racial Formations” (2010), Elam and Elam contend that their methodology of performance is transformative for change both institutional and social. They explain that “the dynamics of the performance encounter – the productive interaction between audience and performer that has a potentially transformative impact on both – can function as a critical site to examine the practices, behaviors, cultural codes that produce racial difference and meanings” (Elam and Elam 197). Therefore performing

race is a performance encounter where “it is not simply a matter of how race is done, but how this doing is received and who sanctions its performance. Power, privilege, and agency are critical to the performance encounter, as they are crucial to racial formation” (197). In other words performing race is an interaction between institutional and social power and subordination, which is restricting for both the dominant power and the subordinate.

Two research questions guide my study. My first question explores whether racialized identities can be fluid when viewed as racial stereotypes coded as “masculine” and “feminine” on black bodies. My second question addresses how and why Belfon, Smith and Chin perform racialized gender as fluid while seeming to reiterate stereotypes. Instead of putting the onus on racialized gender identities to “denaturalize” racialized gender and to cease reifying its stereotypes, I consider black liminal displacement as self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing racist, sexist or nativist stereotypes that locate the source of stereotyping in colonial culture. In doing so, Belfon, Smith and Chin address fixities even as they attempt fluidity of identities. I present the racial/ethnic backgrounds of Belfon, Smith, and Chin through categories of *Creole*, *Dougla*, *La Mulata* and “half-Chiney.” My participants’ racial/ethnic background, multi-ethnicity, black, white and Asian are all integral to their performances of fluidity and fixities, and in the masquerade traditions in Trinidad carnival, Jamaican dancehall, and embodiment in American performance poetry.

Denise “Saucy Wow” Belfon: Black, Creole, “French Creole Mix” and *Dougl*

Trinidadian carnival performer Denise “Saucy Wow” Belfon is one of the most popular entertainers and radio personalities in the Caribbean. Belfon is known as “Soca Diva,” “Soca Dancehall Queen” and “Saucy Wow” for her energetic and provocative carnival performances seen across the Caribbean and its diaspora in North America and Europe. The traditional time for Trinidad carnival from Christmas day on December 25 to Ash Wednesday with varying dates according to the Judeo-Christian calendar. Carnival is then followed by Lent, which is forty days before Easter, also in the Judeo-Christian calendar (Riggio 45). However, carnival is a secular festivity, and in fact is performed all year round across the Caribbean. Trinidad carnival consists of syncretism of African, European, Asian and Indigenous people masquerading in costumes through the streets to music (Riggio 93). Belfon performs in the musical genres of calypso, soca and chutney soca in Trinidad carnival, all indigenous to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Calypso is closely associated with *lavway*, a call-and-response form. The term *calypso* is from the Hausa word *caiso*, a praise and critical singer in West African traditions. *Caiso* was transcribed into English in the mid-twentieth century and its reference was changed to *calypso*, the Greek muse of music and daughter of the Titan Atlas (Martin 285). Soca, another indigenous musical form, is a fusion of East Indian rhythms and African musical structure of calypso with influences from North American soul music (Martin 293). Ras Shorty I is one of the originators of the music, and describes soca as the “soul of calypso,” with *so* for *soul* and *ca* from *calypso*, hence the term “soca” (293). Chutney is a bawdy folk music from India brought to Caribbean by

indentured laborers from the mid-19th century. Chutney soca or soca chutney is a mix of chutney and soca music in Trinidad and Tobago that uses Hindi words and Indian instruments such as the harmonium and hand drum, and Indian dance steps (Martin 286).

Belfon describes her identity as Creole woman, and more specifically, “French Creole mix” which is of French and African heritages (Interview Aug. 26, 2011). Belfon refers to herself interchangeably as “Black,” “mixed,” “Creole” (Belfon Interview, Appendix C). Sociologists Sonya Berkley, Brenda Marshall and Mary C. Sengstock in Voices of Diversity: Multi-Culturalism in America (2009), state that the term “Creole” refers to one who is born in the Caribbean or of African background from the Francophone Caribbean (265). Berkley et.al further explains that “Creole” refers to French Creole, which is “a mixture of White, and African Trinidadian. ... Hence Creole is a mixture of African elements with Spanish, French, and English colonial culture” (265). “Creole” in this context is synonymous with the terms, “African,” “Afro-Trinidadian” or “African-Trinidadian,” “Negro,” and “Black” (Berkley et.al 265; Martin 286; Reddock 1999, 574; Schechner 2004, 4; Walsh 2004). Trinidad is often referred to as the “Calaloo Nation” because of its highly diversified multi-ethnic culture (Berkeley et.al. 265). Such mixes include, but not limited to “European and East Indian, White and Black, European and Chinese; Black and Chinese; and Indian and Chinese” (265). However, light-skinned Trinidadians share more power and privilege and are middle class, compared to dark-skinned blacks relegated to the lower classes (Berkeley et.al. 265).

Caribbean writers Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant in In Praise of Creoleness (1990), declare *Creolité* or Creoleness as “the *interactional or transactional aggregate*” of African, European, Asian and Levantine cultures as Caribbean culture (87). They state that “we declare ourselves Creole. We declare Creoleness is the cement of our culture and that it ought to rule the foundations of Caribbeanness”(87). For Edward Kamau Brathwaite in The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820 (1971), Creole culture was the interaction between West African and British cultures in Jamaica that resulted during slavery and specifically during the American Revolution when British colonials and enslaved Africans relied on each other (306). Creolization is a cultural process in Creole society based in slavery (Brathwaite 306). No matter how fluid racial signifiers may be between African, European, and Asian, and Levantine cultures, Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant argue that Creole performance, gestures, movement are erased, negated and stereotyped as “exoticized” by colonial culture (76, 88). They explain that “our ways of laughing, singing, walking, living death, judging life, considering bad luck, loving and expressing love were only badly considered in literature, or in the other forms of artistic expression” (87).

Brathwaite however, does not focus on “the ‘East Indian’ problem, since it introduces new complexities, and does not (yet) significantly relate to Jamaica.” He explains that that the “East Indian problem” refers to the fact that East Indians arrived in Jamaica after slavery, and therefore not figured in the creolization between British and enslaved Africans. While some Indian scholars reject creolization, other Indo-Caribbean

scholars argue that Brathwaite excludes East Indians from his model of Caribbean creolization. East Indians have been marked as outsiders of Caribbean creole culture since they arrived in the Caribbean around 1838 after the Emancipation of slavery of Africans. Freed Africans perceived East Indians as taking away scarce jobs after slavery. Furthermore, British officials pit both groups against each other by comparing them with racial stereotypes including Africans as “masculine” which was not only physique, but as negative racial characteristics. British colonials stereotyped Africans as “lazy” because planters resented freed Africans who refused to work on plantations after slavery. They viewed East Indians, both men and women, stereotyped as “feminine” as a weaker “race” than Africans, but were at least “hardworking” and “thrifty.” East Indians were seen as agrarians, rural, newcomers, and backward; and Africans were seen as urban and modern.

Resentments between East Indians and Africans escalated since East Indians arrived, particularly in Trinidad and Tobago, and are played out in carnival performances year after year with calypsonians parodying East Indians and particularly East Indian women in dress, language and culture. When Belfon performed her song “Indian Man” costumed in an Indian sari as an East Indian woman in Trinidad Carnival 2004, she caused a stir among East Indians and Africans alike that resurfaced racial resentments. For weeks the controversy escalated in editorials and other media about Belfon’s racialized drag in an East Indian sari. Because of the stereotypical codes of blackness as “masculinity,” even “hypermasculinity,” “vulgarity,” and being “oversexed” are so pervasive, some East Indians are offended by Belfon’s “crossdressing” to an East Indian woman in a sari, and some Africans are offended by Belfon’s embrace of East Indian

culture (Khan 2004, 166; Niranjana 212). Others scholars theorize this racialized drag as “erasure” or “rape” by, what they view as, mocking East Indian culture and womanhood (Puri 122; Munasinghe 555; Khan 2004, 166).

Even though Belfon is Creole – African and French, and does not have an East Indian heritage, she still claims an intimate knowledge of East Indian culture through language, film, dances, gestures, movement foods and dress (Belfon Interview, Appendix C). She would like to dismantle the divide between Creoles and East Indians. Belfon’s presence as a Creole woman in a sari disturbs the notion of *Dougla*, which is a term for a person of African and East Indian heritage. *Dougla* is a pejorative Hindi word meaning “bastard” or “outsider” (Puri 122-129). Even though there are various mixes in Trinidad and Tobago, *Douglas* suffer social rejection from both Africans and East Indians, but more so from East Indians (Berkeley et.al 267). Because of ethnic tensions, many *Douglas* live with African or Creole communities, but are still considered *Douglas* (Berkeley et.al. 267). Belfon’s embodiment of Creoleness and East Indianness in her performances raises the question of the *Dougla* as pariah in East Indian culture. As a Creole woman wearing a sari, Belfon also evokes the lost *Dougla* in between both Africanness and East Indianness and East Indian fears of creolization. David Lowenthal argues that for East Indians, “Creolization is unacceptable... because it requires Indians but not Creoles to forgo their identity... Integration cannot and must not be interpreted to mean assimilation.” (Lowenthal quoted in Puri 129). Historically, creolization was not any more acceptable to Africans in the Caribbean. Some black scholars, like historian William Green, refer to creolization as “forced” on enslaved Africans (3). Green argues

that creolization was devastating for Africans because it erased their culture (3). Literary theorist Shalini Puri theorizes a Douglas Poetics as a way to navigate the prejudices against *Douglas* without a cultural “home.” Puri reasons that “since the term ‘Creole’ historically has not included Indians, and, as a result, would stand for a unilateral accommodation. But several questions arise: If these are the problems of creolization, can douglarization overcome them?” (130). First of all, Creole culture is open and inclusive of whoever wants to be part of it. It is really East Indians’ resistance of creolization because it is perceived as “assimilation.” Puri does not really consider that East Indians have excluded Creoles in East Indian culture. Her proposal of Douglas poetics is an alternative to Creolization of *Douglas*.

Through Douglas poetics, Puri attempts to include *Douglas* in East Indian culture who are otherwise “creolized” in Creole culture. At the same time, Puri upsets East Indians who resist “assimilation” or douglarization and creates a space for *Douglas*. Historically, East Indian culture has excluded *Douglas* and Creoles alike. Belfon embodies the messiness of historical resentments and exclusions between Creole and East Indian cultures that persist still today. Belfon is a substitute and stand-in embodiment of Creoles, East Indians, and *Douglas* as the debates raged on for weeks after her performance of “Indian Man” in 2004.

Belfon’s performance has been compared with Jamette women because of its sexual horseplay and “degrading” displays. Brereton states that Trinidad carnival was “an elegant affair” before the Emancipation of Slavery (55). After Emancipation of Slavery (1838), freed Africans were allowed to participate, but only on the fringes. Jamettes were

much more of a disruptive force against the pomp and pageantry of colonial carnivals (Brereton 55). They created their own bands of masqueraders, among them were Jamettes who lived in the depressed urban areas in the back yards in Port of Spain, Trinidad. They were Creole men and women considered outcasts consisting of “prostitutes,” “pimps” and “bad johns” (Brereton 54). Historian Bridgette Brereton in “The Trinidad Carnival in the Late Nineteenth Century” (2004) states that

Bands of Jamettes roamed the streets making indecent gestures and singing “lewd” songs. There were also traditional masques with explicit sexual themes. The most notorious was Pissenlit – “wet the bed,” usually translated as “stinker.” It was played by masked men dressed as women in long transparent nightgowns; some carried “menstrual cloths” stained with “blood.” Their dance was rapid shifting of the pelvis from side to side and back and forward, and they sang obscene songs. There was a lot of horseplay, including a poui stick held between the legs (55).

Transvestism and sexual horseplay outraged white elites. In 1877 the Port of Spain Gazette editorial reported that “it were better to deny recreation to outlawed ruffians, than to have pollution and obscenity exhibited naked before the eyes of our wives and daughters” (quoted in Brereton 55).

Although Belfon does not perform *Pis-en-lit*, she invokes the Jamettes in her shows that involves racialized “drag,” sexual horseplay and sexually explicit lyrics inherent in Trinidad carnival genre. In our interview, Belfon explains that her shows are for adults only (Belfon Interview, Appendix C). Her legions of Caribbean fans enjoy her stage antics, but her critics decry her performances as the usual “vulgar,” ironically in the same way that nineteenth century Jamettes were described as “obscene” (Edmondson 2004, 55). Some scholars contend that Belfon’s so-called “degrading” dance involves

reifying racist and sexist tropes. But, degradation is expected in any carnival, whether in Jamette or in any other contemporary Caribbean carnival performance. I contend that Belfon exaggerates reified racist and sexist tropes in black liminal displacement, which is self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing these tropes. Through exaggeration of these tropes, Belfon mimics the source of the stereotypes in colonial culture. Bakhtin argues that “carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order” (10). This degradation destroys colonial elitism, boundaries, and tears down walls of any decency as prescribed for black Creoles. However, degradation too is still seen as stereotypes created by white colonial culture, and not by Belfon and her fans. It is only in a carnival space and time that racist and sexist tropes between ethnicities like African and East Indian Trinidadians can be aired.

Carlene “The Dancehall Queen”: Black, Creole, “Browning” and *La Mulata*

Jamaican popular entertainer Carlene Smith is a popular dancer, radio and television personality. Smith was born in Kingston, Jamaica on May 1, 1971 to a white German father and an African Jamaican mother. In Caribbean parlance, Smith is Creole by virtue of African and European heritage (Brathwaite xv). In Jamaica, as in many parts of the Caribbean, people of European and African ancestries are referred to as “brown,” and specifically, “browning” for women (Mohammed 2000, 25; Stolzoff 163; Kempadoo 2004, 80). Caribbean feminist historian Patricia Mohammed in “‘*But Most of All Mi Love Me Browning*’: The Emergence of Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Jamaica of The Mulatto Woman as Desired” (2000), states that the term, “browning” in Jamaican society comes from the historical reference, “mulatto woman” or *la mulata* in eighteenth and

nineteenth centuries (2000, 25). Terms like mulatto for men, mulatress or *la mulata* derive from the Spanish word for mule, which is a cross between a horse and donkey, and used as debasing terms for an individual of both African and European backgrounds (Mohammed 2000, 25).

Historically, “colored” usually refers to “mixed race” in Jamaica including mulattoes (Richards 256). Brathwaite states that color casting was highly stratified in Jamaica. He observes that “legally, all coloured people were ‘mulatto’ and the ‘corruption of blood’ was visited upon ‘not the sins of the [white] father but the misfortune of the [black] mothers unto third and fourth generation of intermixture from the Negro ancestor exclusive’. An octoroon was therefore legally white and so automatically free in Jamaica and the British West Indies” (167-168). Today, there are no “legal” categories of color, but skin color privilege still exists. “Brown” and “Browning” replace “mulatto/mulatress,” and are used for light-skinned blacks to distinguish from dark-skinned blacks in a color casting continuum.

Jamaica inherited a particular racial complexity and rigidity as a result of Creolization. In Wake the Town and Tell The People: Dancehall Culture in Jamaica (2000), anthropologist Norman Stolzoff states that according to Jamaica’s rigid class hierarchy, a “brown” person is considered middle- and upper-class (Stolzoff 163). Drawing on a 1986 study by Evelyn Huber Stephens and John D. Stephens, Stolzoff reports that from the 1960s, Jamaican society has been highly stratified by class, race, ethnicity, and culture. Stolzoff observes that more than 75 percent of the population was made up of black urban working class, small farmers, employed and unemployed

(Stolzoff 163). He notes that even though blacks had progressed beyond working class to professional ranks, the “capitalist class” as he states, was predominantly white, Chinese, and brown, which is a category for people of African and European ancestry. Smith is considered a “browning,” or as Ulysse describes her as “almost white” which means she is middle-class or of the “capitalist class” (Stolzoff 163; Ulysse 162-163).

The category “white” consists of several ethnicities including Lebanese, Syrians, Jews and Europeans. Stolzoff notes that among the “white” class, only twenty one families are known to control Jamaica’s economy (163). Ulysse adds that “Jamaica has been polarized between black and white since colonialism despite the presence of the colored, Chinese, East Indians, and Syrians who populate the island” (152). So Smith reflects the polarity of black and white in the structure, as well as being brown. A majority black population of over 75 percent is controlled by a minority ruling class of whites. In contrast, the black population in the US is in the minority, while the dominant majority group is white. The dynamics of racism is the same on Black people whether in a majority or a minority group, and is particularly complex in the Caribbean with historical and contemporary color-casting.

On one hand, as a brown woman, Smith is “respectable” as middle class, yet on the other she is “socially despised” as a “symbol of the prostitute” (36-37). Caribbean feminist Kamala Kempadoo in Sexing The Caribbean: Gender Race and Sexual Labor (2004), the combination of European and African backgrounds produces “notions of light-skinned women who could almost pass for white yet [retain] a tinge of color as well as a hint of wantonness and uninhibited sexuality of exotic cultures” (Kempadoo 2004,

36-37). Furthermore, Kempadoo argues that “the mulatto woman emerged thus during slavery as the symbol of the prostitute – the sexually available socially despised, yet economically profitable body” (1999, 6). As a colonial stereotype, contemporary scholars use the trope of *La Mulata* in descriptions about Smith’s light-skinned body, along with assumptions about her (hyper) sexuality.

As a brown woman, Smith is known throughout the Caribbean as “Carlene, The Dancehall Queen” for her persona as a dancehall dancer since the 1990s. Smith emerged as a dancehall dancer and model in the early 1990s. Cultural studies scholar Sonjah Stanley Niaah in *Dancehall: From Slave Ship to Ghetto* (2010a), states that dancehall is a genre in reggae music which is upbeat with rhythmic percussions (138). Dancehall was born in the black inner city in the late 1970s, and is considered by many to be a culture and lifestyle, generated by the black working class, with its sub genres of dancehall fashion, hairstyles, film, dancehall theatre, choreography, and modeling (Niaah 2010b, 138; Stolzoff 2). Niaah states that the title of the “Dancehall Queen” emerged in the 1970s for black women’s dance competitions in black working class areas known as “downtown” where a winner was crowned (2010a, 138).

However, very little attention was given to black women’s dance in the media. Black women’s dance and dancehall were considered to be on the fringe of Jamaican society, and in many cases, is still marginalized from middleclass polite society (Niaah 2010a, 136-138). But when Smith, as a brown woman, was declared “The Dancehall Queen” in the media in 1992, she brought dancehall and title of “The Dancehall Queen” to national and international attention (Niaah 2010a, 138). Dancehall, known for dark-

skinned black women, suddenly had a light-skinned “Queen.” Scholars account for Smith’s fame as being due to her “light-skin,” and give scarce attention to Smith’s significance in historical and contemporary racialized gender constructions (Niaah 2010a, 138; Edmondson 2003, 7; Cooper, The Sunday Gleaner, January 13, 2002, 1E). Even after her dance career in the 1990s, she is still referred to as the original “Dancehall Queen.”

Smith emerged in dancehall by organizing fashion competitions known as “fashion clashes” between dancehall dancers from “downtown,” and fashion models in modeling agencies from “uptown.” The terms “uptown” and “downtown” in dancehall parlance are more than geographic locations. Downtown represents lower classes and dark skin, while uptown represents middle and upper classes and light skin tones. Stolzoff states that “while Carlene [Smith] is a browning (a light-skinned person of mixed African and European ancestry), a racial category usually associated with uptown, middle-class social standing, she is seen as a representative of downtown culture because of her social background and her involvement in dancehall” (242). As Stolzoff points out that the term “uptown” is associated with light skin which equates to middle-class, while “downtown” represents dark skin and lower class. Ulysse states that uptown/downtown is a geographical division in central Kingston with uptown located north of downtown (162). Stolzoff argues the geographical division indicates racial and class lines where light-skinned middle class and upper class people as uptown people, and they are usually against dancehall culture. Black lower class people are generally called “downtown” people and are supporters of dancehall (6). However, Stolzoff notes that significant

numbers of upper- and middle-class and lower class blacks live in and around so-called uptown neighborhoods. Stolzoff observes that uptown is associated with “the ruling establishment, the government, official nationalism, Euro-American cosmopolitanism, mainstream Christian morality, a belief in education and hard work, respect for the older generations and a disdain for black lower-class culture” (231). While downtown, according to Stolzoff, is a “geographical metaphor for the inner-city slum areas and poor rural districts where the darker-skinned lower classes live. Downtown is associated with the downpressed masses, the flatlands along the Kingston harbor and the vast sprawl of ‘concrete jungles’ to the west, black nationalism, Afro-Jamaican culture, Rastafari, the informal economy, criminality, gangsterism, respect for the younger generations, and a disdain for uptown culture and political leadership” (231).

In a dancehall fashion clash, downtown and uptown models would dance and model down a runway to out-perform each group. Stolzoff states that dancehall women, including Smith, are known as dancehall “divas” or “donnettes” because they are known for designing and wearing “x-rated” bare-as-you dare costumes to dances (110). Fashion pieces include wigs of all colors, large gold jewelry, mesh tops, and “batty riders,” that are pairs of shorts that show more of the buttocks than it covers (Stolzoff 110). Another signature piece is the “puny printer” which is a pair of pants showing the outlines of women’s genitalia (Stolzoff 110). Stolzoff observes that dancehall women join together in “crews” as dancehall models to compete among themselves and against professional fashion models in Kingston night clubs (110). Uptown models would be prim and proper in wearing “tasteful” fashions associated with the upper classes. As a brown woman,

Smith would not be expected to participate in dancehall. Codes of behavior dictate that Smith would distance herself from certain elements of dancehall culture, especially in dancing and wearing skimpy outfits usually associated with dancehall and black lower classes. However, Smith claims that she wants to bring dancehall to uptown audiences, and to erase what she says is the rigid race and class divisions of “uptown and downtown” in Jamaica (Smith Interview, Appendix D).

As a dancer, Smith performed across the Caribbean, United States, Japan, and Europe for dancehall fans. She performed at dancehall events and Jamaica Carnivals, including numerous music videos for dancehall and carnival artistes. She danced at private parties, and made public appearances for promotions, advertisements, and campaigns. She is a passionate advocate for safe sex and HIV/AIDS awareness including being the model and face of Slam condoms. Even after her dance career, she is still referred to as the Dancehall Queen. Smith’s dancing includes popular dancehall steps and *winin’*, which refers to pelvic rotations associated with certain African dances (Martin 294). She is credited with popularizing the butterfly dance, which involves bent knees with opening and closing of knees and thighs to mimic butterfly wings while moving pelvis forwards and backwards. Another signature dance is the head top dance, which involves *winin’* upside down with the top of the head and one foot on the floor.

Even as *La Mulata* slides from black to white with “light-skinned” privilege, and appears fluid for some, *La Mulata* is a racialized and sexualized category fixed in historical and contemporary stereotyping. Brathwaite observes that “although there is white/brown/black, there are infinite possibilities within these distinctions and many

ways of asserting identity” (310). To deny knowledge of the sexualized *La Mulata*, is to pretend that it does not exist and therefore is a fluidity of identities. However fluid *La Mulata* may be in asserting self-concepts, the figure of the mulatress carries pejorative stereotypes of hypersexuality, “oversexed,” and “prostitute” that still fixes identity with sexualized stereotypes in contemporary society.

La Mulata as “socially despised” is pervasive in Smith’s case (Kempadoo 1999, 6). In an editorial in the Jamaica Gleaner, Cooper is cited describing Smith’s body using the trope of *La Mulata* (The Sunday Gleaner, January 13, 2002, 1E). Cooper’s contention is Smith’s supposed light-skinned privilege in society and then in taking over dancehall culture. Anthropologist Gina Ulysse in “Uptown Ladies and Downtown Women: Female Representations of Class and Color in Jamaica” (1999) observes that Smith is “phenotypically almost white and has a full body with large hips and a big bottom – a figure that is more often associated with the woman as opposed to the physical characteristics of the lady”(162). Despite Smith’s denial of ever simulating orgasms in her shows, Ulysse claims that “Carlene even went to the point of simulating an orgasm, much to the delight, shock, and surprise of the audience, and the show ended with Carlene’s downtown crew *winin’* on their heads while wearing minimal pieces of fishnet, lace, and nylon lingerie” (162). Caribbean studies scholar Belinda Edmondson in “Public Spectacles: Caribbean Women and the Politics of Public Performance” (2003) argues that Smith’s dancehall fashion and dancing, usually expected of black working class women, are now even more of a spectacle when performed by “eroticized brown women” like Smith (2003, 7). Edmondson explains

Jamaica's famed dancehall queen is a brown woman, whose decade-long reign is unheard-of in a contest where the queens do not usually last longer than a few months and whose tenure is usually determined by the approval of the black working class. Despite overwhelming disapproval expressed by the respectable classes toward female dancehall participants, Queen Carlene is feted in the newspapers and even made an appearance in a recent tourist-oriented video. Thus the 'vulgar' spectacle of black working class dancehall women dancing obscenely in lewd outfits is transformed into 'decorous' spectacle when performed by eroticized brown women (2003, 7).

Edmondson remarks that the brown body of *la mulata* is so sexualized that it is an erotic spectacle. She goes on to suggest that "dancehall moves" are somehow more acceptable on dark-skinned bodies, perhaps these "moves" are expected of black women. Edmondson states that "the dancehall moves of black working class women, descendants of the nineteenth century jamenttes, can therefore mean something entirely different, depending on who is performing them, and to what purpose. (2003, 7) As mentioned earlier, the jamenttes were black Creole women living on the outskirts of nineteenth century colonial Trinidadian society. Known for sexual horseplay, "indecenty," and carnival *transvestism* in carnivals, the jamenttes have been cited in Jamaican dancehall performance because of its supposed "vulgarity" performed by black working class.

However, historians and dance scholars assert that Jamaican dancehall's roots are in Jamaican Junkunnu (Ryman 110, Niaah 2010b, 135). Junkunnu is a masquerade, similar to carnival, performed in Jamaican, Belize, Bermuda, St Kitts and Nevis, Guyana and the Bahamas during the Christmas season (Richards 254). Junkunnu was also performed during the antebellum period in North Carolina in the United States (Richards 267-268). Jamaican Junkunnu dates back to the late seventeenth century when people

from West Africa were taken to Jamaica as slaves. At that time British planters and slave owners gave all slaves a few days off before harvesting season in to celebrate Christmas (Senior 84; Richards 254). Enslaved Africans took their rest days for merriment and Junkunnu from Christmas Day through to the New Year. Historically, Junkunnu characters were all played by men in masks and costumes included cow head or horsehead, king and queen, the devil, a pregnant woman, “Red Indians,” pitchy-patchy, and a mock policeman to “keep order” (84). Ryman states that there are at least seventy characters recorded and in recent times women have joined in masquerading (112). The groups or bands of masqueraders were accompanied by musicians playing drums, fife or flute and rattles. The bands danced long the streets scaring onlookers and if they spoke, it was in a hoarse voice so as not to reveal their identities. The term “Junkunnu” refers to the sound of words from the Ewe language in East Ghana and Togo including *dzono*, which means sorcerer, *kunu*, which means deadly, and *nu*, which is man. Therefore, Junkunnu could mean “deadly sorcerer” or “sorcerer man” which originated in secret societies (Senior 85). Ryman concurs that Junkunnu is derived from masquerade traditions of West African male and female secret societies of the Egungun, Popo and Sande (112).

The most fascinating feature in the creolization of Junkunnu was the gradation of skin colors in Junkunnu parades that left a legacy of color casting in contemporary Jamaican society at large. This reveals how fixity is a process of the repetition of power over the time during slavery through to today. Jamaican society, then and now, is highly complex and stratified in racial classification and skin color (Richards 255). It was as if

nineteenth Junkunnu had deteriorated to kind of parade that sorted women and men in skin color “sets” who were then in competition for favors from *Massa Buccra or Buccra Massa*, which is Creole for “Master white man” (Scott 6638-6639). As early as 1776 to the John Canoe Riots of 1841, each “set” of women were divided by the shade of skin, and were dressed in the same lavish costumes with lace, beads and frills. The groups were given colors like the Yellow Set, Blue Set and Red Set, but the most outstanding groups were the rival Blue and Red set girls of Kingston. Blue and red colors represented the “mixed” women who were born as a result of “parties” hosted by British and Scottish admirals at the Jamaica Station. Quite literally, the Red Set Girls were the off-springs of English Admirals; and Blue Set Girls were off-springs of Scottish Admirals. One can only imagine such “parties” involving enslaved women and English and Scottish Admirals at a time when slavery in the Caribbean was known, not only for forced labor, but for sex slavery and concubinage that was an inexhaustible sex haven for Europeans (Kempadoo 2004, 40; Green 20; Smith 2011, 8).

Scottish writer Michael Scott, who lived in Jamaica from 1806 to 1822 observed a dazzling array skin colors “sets” in Junkunnu:

I had never seen more beautiful creatures that there were amongst the brown sets – clear olive complexions, and fine faces elegant carriages, splendid figures, - full, plump, and magnificent. ... But the colors were never blended in the same set – no blackie ever interloped with the browns, nor did the browns in any case mix with the sables – always keeping in mind – black *woman* - brown lady (6638-6639).

To this day, Jamaican dancehall parlance refers to a black woman, that is dark-skinned, as “black woman;” and a brown woman is referred to as “brown lady.” This is

integral to Smith's performance as *La Mulata* or browning as "The Dancehall Queen," and shows a process of racializing and sexualizing that fixes identities in a colonial gaze. Ulysse argues that contemporary Jamaican society is "invested in maintaining this black/white dichotomy with its specific gender dimensions," especially in prescribed racialized gender roles (151). Ulysse cites anthropologist Lisa Douglass saying "Jamaicans expect 'any female who is white to be a lady and exhibit a consistent feminine demeanor. ... the fairer the female the greater likelihood that she is indeed a lady'" (151), therefore associating femininity with whiteness. In other words, to be feminine, one had to be white. Ulysse's definition of a lady deserves to be quoted at length:

A lady is, by definition, educated and refined. She should always be a wife. Her status derives from matrimony and the extent to which she is devoted to her husband and family. Other characteristics ascribed to her include the femininity that she exudes: diminutive size and unobtrusive manner, high heels and exquisite grooming, soft voice and careful diction. She does not use vulgar language or even patois. She distinguishes herself from all men and common women through body language. A lady knows her place; when she goes out socially by night her husband escorts her; she avoids public transportation and must never walk... A lady stands and sits with her legs together and when she dances she does not "wine."⁴ That is, she avoids the expansively/explicitly sexual hip movements of the dance style associated with ghetto women. For the middle and upper classes, the quintessential lady is still the queen of England (151-152).

This follows that the dark skinned black women, especially those in dancehall, are stereotypically defined as "ghetto women," to mean unrefined, and which translates to upper- and lower-classes (151).

⁴ To "wine" is an African-derived dance with rotating waist and hips often denigrated as "vulgar" (Martin 294).

Many of the so-called “debased and vulgar” Junkunnu-derived dances have found their way to contemporary Jamaican Dancehall (Ryman 110-112). Some scholars suggest that the sexually charged dances in Jamaican dancehall are derived from Junkunnu masquerades (Ryman 110, Cooper 1995, 19-35). Dance historian Cheryl Ryman in “When Jamaica Dances: Context and Content” (2010) refers to men who cross-dress as women as “‘masks’ or characters” in dancehall (110). Ryman observes in Junkunnu that

two characters (obviously male) engage in simulated copulation, either with the male standing behind the bent-over female character, sometimes ending the ‘act’ being performed on the ground, or the simulation being acting out entirely on the ground. The fact that this is not seen as vulgar and is laughed at, and the fact that the two males in Junkunnu performing this kind of act is tolerated by a partially homophobic audience speaks volumes about this particular aesthetic. This aesthetic spills over into perceive bastion of Jamaican homophobic sentiments – the dancehall, where men cross-dress as women in the context of specific ‘masks’ or characters. These characters are not only tolerated but also celebrated and captured by the video light in the live dance event and in music videos (110).

Ryman compares dancehall *transvestism* to homoeroticism in Junkunnu with cross-dressed male performers “engage in simulated copulation, either with the male standing behind the bent over female character, sometimes ending with the ‘act’ being performed on the ground, or the simulation being acted out entirely on the ground” (110). Ryman’s observation of “simulated copulation” in Junkunnu *transvestism* is similar to what Ulysse says she observed in Smith’s “simulated orgasm” in dancehall fashion clash. Although Smith vehemently denies simulating organisms in fashion clashes, her performance is characteristic of the sexual horseplay, “vulgar and debased” dances observed in Junkunnu

and in contemporary Dancehall dances (Ulysse 162-163; Senior 85). Ulysse and others who witness the spectacle of dancehall's "simulated copulation" and masquerades are very much part the Junkunnu aesthetic (Ulysse 162-163; Ryman 111).

Dancehall women, like Smith's fashion clashes and competitive modeling are reminiscent of nineteenth century Junkunnu Set Girls in competition and in reminiscent of color casting (Ryman 111). As mentioned earlier, dancehall culture distinguishes between "uptown" as light-skinned middle classes; and "downtown" as dark-skinned lower classes, much like the contemporary dancehall women groups called "crews" (Ryman 111). In Smith's 1991 dancehall fashion clash between "uptown" and "downtown" "crews" competed in fashion, modeling, and dancing down a runway. However, the skin coloration for the fashion clash was subverted. Uptown women are usually associated with light-skinned "ladies," and downtown women are signified as dark-skinned "women" (Stolzoff 163, 242; Ulysse 148-149). But in Smith's fashion clash at the Cactus Nightclub, she and the other downtown women had gradation of light-skinned, while the uptown women were now the dark-skinned fashion models from elite modeling agencies. Smith and her downtown crew were overtly sexualized with "x-rated" costumes and wining dances down the runway. Like the Set Girls of the nineteenth century, Smith and her downtown crew are known for their sexual rivalry in virtual *winin'* competitions among themselves. The uptown did not dance or *wine*. They modeled down the runway in covered up fashionable clothes, and were so shocked at the downtown women's sexual display that they left the stage. Smith's dancehall crew won

the fashion clash with x-rated fashions and wining dances much to the delight of cheering crowds.

In Jamaican dancehall, Smith performs racialized *transvestism*. I analyze how Smith performs Jamaican dancehall *transvestism* by creating a persona of “The Dancehall Queen.” She crosses the stereotypical codes of African “masculine” to a European “feminine” in wigs and costumes and with the implications of being a “brown” woman in the black working class space of dancehall culture. I apply Butler’s “fluidity of identities” to Smith’s crossing of stereotypical codes for “masculinity” and “femininity” on the black and brown body, and discuss performative dimensions in racialized gender identities.

Staceyann Chin: Black, Chinese Creole, “Half-Chiney”

Jamaican performance poet Staceyann Chin was born on December 25, 1972 to Jamaican parents: a Jamaican African-descent mother and a Jamaican Chinese father in Montego Bay, Jamaica (Chin Interview, Appendix E). Chin is a performance poet who competed in performance poetry competitions called slams in New York City in the 1990s. Performance poets Mark Kelly Smith and Joe Kraynak in Take The Mic: The Art of Performance Poetry, Slam and The Spoken Word (2009), states that “slam poetry is *performance* poetry, the marriage of a text to the artful presentation of poetic, words onstage to an audience that has permission to talk back and let the performer know whether he or she is communicating effectively” (5). Originating in the white working class areas in Chicago in the 1980s, performance poetry and slams have garnered an international appeal embracing marginalized voices and immigrants like Chin. Chin first

performed at the Nuyorican Poets' Café in New York where she received acclaim and standing ovations in the mid-1990s (Olsen). Chin is the co-writer and performer in the Tony award winning Russell Simmons's "Def Poetry Jam on Broadway" (2003), and in the HBO series, "Def Poetry" hosted by Mos Def (2006). Chin held three one-woman off-Broadway shows including "Hands Afire" (2000) at the Bleecker Theater; "Unspeakable Things" (2001), which toured Copenhagen, London, Helsinki, Sweden, and Norway (Chin). Chin's third one-woman show is "Border/Clash: Litany of Desires" (2008), opened at the Culture Project in New York City to critical acclaim and rave reviews (Theatre World 94).

Although Chin emerged in American performance poetry in the 1990s in New York City, she pays homage to Jamaican dub poetry. Dub poet Linton Kwesi Johnson coined the term "Dub Poetry" for a Jamaican oral poetry tradition that emerged at the Jamaica School of Drama in the 1970s (Morris 93). Dub poetry is spoken word in *Patois* (English Creole language) along with original reggae music. Themes include black consciousness, poverty, and racial exploitation. Dub poets include Linton Kwesi Johnson, Noel Walcott, M'Bala, Jean Binta Breeze, Oku Onuora, Mutabaruka, and the late Micheal Smith (Johnson 155). Jamaican dub poets and Chin credit the late Louise Bennett as the foundation for contemporary oral dub poetry spoken in *Patois*, and not colonial English (Johnson 155).

Chin's performance poetry is deeply autobiographical about her intersectionality of identities as Black, Chinese, Jamaica, immigrant, "half-Chiney" or "black Chiney," and lesbian. Being "half-Chiney" is significant to her articulation of identities in

performance poetry. According to Caribbean studies scholar Yoshiko Shibata in “Changing Identities of the Chinese in Anglophone Caribbean: A Focus on Jamaica” (2013), “‘Half Chiney and ‘Part Chinese’ have been the most commonly used terms both inside and outside the Chinese community. These appellations many sound fairly neutral but the negative connotation is deeply ingrained from ‘pure’/‘full’ Chinese points of views; ‘part’/ ‘half’ Chinese can never be ‘full’ or ‘whole’” (370). Just as the derogatory Bhojpuri Hindi word *Dougl*a means “outsider” and “bastard” for those born of African and East Indian parents, the Chinese Hakka expression *ship-yit (t)diam* for “half-Chinese” in Jamaica literally means “half-brain” or “half literate/educated,” not “pure” and not “whole” Chinese (Shibata 2013, 370). Shibata explains that “to ‘pure’ Chinese and China-born, this has disdainful undertones indicating the imperfect and degraded intellect, knowledge and culture of these mixed-roots” (2013, 370).

The measure of Chineseness in an African and Chinese “mix” is judged metaphorically with the hours on a clock. Shibata explains that,

In addition to ‘Half Chiney’, the local [Jamaican] Chinese have called them ‘Eleven O’ Clock’, ‘Eleven Point’, and ‘Half Past Eleven’. The clock has been used as a metaphorical scale to access ‘purity’ of the mixed-race Chinese; twelve o’clock represents ‘full’ or ‘completeness’. The number eleven signifies ‘not quite full’, or ‘not twelve yet’ (2013, 370).

Meanwhile, “half-Chinese” and other “halves” in Creole culture are considered with degrees of light-skinned privilege, even as these terms are simultaneously derisive. In “African Diaspora Studies in the Creole-Anglophone Caribbean: A Perspective from the University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica” (2010a), Cooper explains that “mixed-race Jamaicans are half-Indian, half-Chinese, half-Syrian, half-white, but never half-

African. This un-naming of the black “half” may signify that “African” is grudgingly recognized as the norm. But, much more likely, the silence many speak eloquently of the unresolved question of race and the contested status of African people in Jamaican society” (2010a 282). Cooper highlights that in Jamaican culture, African-descent people are the only group who do not define their racial/cultural identity to a homeland. She notes that Europeans, Chinese, Syrians and Indians refer to their respective ancestral homes. She states that displaced “Africans” are designated as “locals” (2010a 282).

Cooper suggests a privileging of the “half,” instead of “Africanness.” She is rightly concerned about light-skinned privilege over dark-skinned blacks, and critiques the Jamaican national motto “out of many one people” which celebrates a so-called multi-ethnic culture that seems to erase Africanness especially in Miss Jamaica beauty contests (Cooper 2010b). As a legacy of slavery and colonialism, light-skinned people and other ethnic groups enjoy middleclass status with relative wealth and privilege over blacks. Thomson explains though that “Jamaicans are not all black; many gradations – Chinese, Indian, Lebanese – can exist within a single Jamaica family” (2). Even so, and especially because of inter-family ethnicities, there are ethnic tensions among groups in families and in the wider society as mentioned earlier in the articulation of *Douglas* and “half-Chiney” people. The derision of “miscegenation” or in being “lemonade” continues to be a contemptuous backlash against these categories.

Cooper points to Jamaican names for mixed-raced categories: “royal,” for example “Chiney Royal” or “Coolie Royal” defined as “offspring of a Chinese and (usually) a negro, or (sometimes) a white or East Indian,” or a “person of mixed East-

Indian and negro stock.” (2010a, 282). Cooper, however, assumes that the “royal” signifies privileging the “African” heritage without actually naming it (2010a, 282). Shibata, on the other hand, explains that “royal,” pronounced with a distinctive drawl, *Raa-yal*, is used contemptuously or sarcastically by African Jamaicans against the mixed-raced-ness, for example like “Royal Highness,” a pun on “high” skin color for light-skinned blacks (Shibata 2013, 370). Shibata further explains that a “royal” was “a coin of low value,” and used in compounds like *Chiney-Raa-yal*, *Indian-Raa-yal*, *Mule-Raa-yal* as “devalued,” impure categories. Shibata states that there is never an African *Raa-yal* (2013, 270). The term is in direct reference to light-skinned privilege who may think they are “better” than “Black” Africans, hence the cynical drawl – *Raa-yal* (“coin of low value”). Although light-skinned privilege is clearly a lingering problem in Jamaican color-casting, Cooper belies the historical and contemporary stigma of miscegenation for cultural performers like Belfon, Smith and Chin.

Even as a Chin is of Chinese and African descents, assumed to be fluid to somehow slide from one to the other, Chin is referred to as “half-Chiney” or “Black Chiney” that can be used pejoratively on people of African and Chinese backgrounds. Like *Dougla*, half-Chinese is an ambivalent state of being an outsider in Chinese culture and not considered black, Creole or Chinese in Caribbean culture (Mohammed 2006; Shibata 2013, 370). The ambivalent state of mixed-raced-ness, especially with blackness, has its particular fixities. Colonial writers found it necessary to differentiate races by “masculinity” and “femininity” with physical traits, to behaviors, and habits that make a composite racialized gender stereotypes. Interestingly, colonial stereotype about

Caribbean Chineseness is the stereotype of gender ambiguity – neither “masculine” nor “feminine.” Kingsley is perplexed and confused about his inability to distinguish men and women among Chinese people (111). He exclaims that “as they approach, their doleful visage betrays them. Chinese they are without a doubt; but whether old or young, men or women, you can not tell, till the initiated point out that the women have chignons and no hats, the men hats with their pig-tails coiled up under them beyond this distinction, I know none visible” (111).

In my study, I analyze Chin’s performance poetry as racialized “androgyny” because she self-stereotypes and self-caricatures in performance to unsettle her audience. Using stereotypical codes of racialized “masculinity” and “femininity,” Chin blurs African “masculinity” and Chinese “femininity” in her performance poems. She embodies intersectionality in race, gender and sexuality most powerfully, and understands the mark of race/ethnicity in shaping and constructing stereotypes and caricatures in performance. Racialized androgyny suggests fluidity because Chin is self-directed; however, the performance is fixed because of lingering stereotypes that fixes identities at least for a period of time. As long as inequalities persist for racialized identities, stereotyping still exists (Hall 1997). In my study, I apply Butler’s “fluidity of identities” to Chin’s performance poetry to consider the ramifications for racialized gender identities.

I examine how Belfon, Smith and Chin complicate ideas about fluidity and fixity in racialized gender. Even though *Dougla, La Mulata* “Half- Chiney” may seem to move between both groups as fluid, and even have some light-skinned privilege in color casting

among black, white and Asian cultures, they still carry stereotypical codes that fix these identities through stereotyping. Racialized gender in a spectrum or milieu of blackness is already assumed to be fluid identities because it is neither one nor the other. But racialized gender is unequivocally coded in stereotypes, and does not stop from being fixed in stereotypes just because fluidity is enacted in performance. However fluid these categories may be, identities are also fixed because they are historical and contemporary stereotypes. Across Latin America and the Caribbean white colonials painstakingly measured “mixed-raced-ness” with gradations and legal categories with specific and reductionist meanings (Brathwaite 167-168). Today the categories are loosely applied in color casting hierarchies, and stereotypes about them prevail since colonialism and slavery in popular entertainments in the Caribbean. Racialized gender performances have always performed under racializing regimes of slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism and always under the colonial gaze that construct stereotypes.

Postcolonial Theories and Feminisms

Because the women’s racialized gender experiences and performance genres are shaped by a colonial past in the Caribbean, I draw on postcolonial theory which “involves discussion about the experience of various kinds: migration, slavery, suppression, resistance representation, difference, race, gender, place and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe such as history, philosophy and linguistics, and the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which these come into being” (Ashcroft et.al. 2). Therefore a history of enslaved Africans, indentured East Indians and Chinese people – all under imperial colonial rule, has left complex contemporary

underpinnings of inter- and intra- racial, gender, sexuality released in popular entertainments. Postcolonial performances are ongoing debates about how experiences of colonialism, slavery, indentureship, migrations impact on contemporary issues of race, gender, sexuality, and especially in color casting hierarchies. In Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics (1996), postcolonial theatre scholars Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins argue that post-colonialism's agenda is "to dismantle the hegemonic boundaries and the determinants that create unequal relations of power based on binary oppositions such as 'us and them', 'first world and third world', 'white and black', 'colonizer and colonized'" (3).

As a researcher, my positionality is as postcolonial feminist, born and raised in Jamaica, West Indies. Postcolonial feminism "draws upon economic critiques but are especially distinguished by their emphasis on the *interaction* of oppressive dynamics and on race/ethnicity as a primary axis of oppression" (Peterson and Runyan 28). Peterson and Runyan states that postcolonial feminists "put into sharp relief how gender, race, class, nationalist, and imperialist hierarchies are interwoven in ways that particularly undermine the lives of Third World women – physically, politically, economically, and culturally" (28). In many ways my research is indirectly autobiographical through Belfon, Smith, and Chin because of their frame of identities that expose some of the held-over hierarchies, and it is my task to explain these structures through performance analyses. With Belfon, Smith and Chin, I share my performances as a black woman – Creole, *Dougl*, *La Mulata*, and "half- Chiney." Unlike the racial divide of black/white in the United States, the Caribbean poses several "divides" with multiple ethnicities,

gradations of skin and color casting all constructed under imperialism. One should not assume, as Whitten and Torres warn, that Caribbean multi-ethnicities signal fluidity for racialized subjects (23). It is anything but fluid for blacks and indigenous people at the bottom of the hierarchy without social mobility. White elites continue to rule, though a minority, over blacks and indigenous peoples. My focus here is not intended to exclude other groups and histories in the Caribbean. Explorations of other groups will follow in later projects. For now, I zero in on Belfon, Smith, and Chin because they represent specific histories in my study used to challenge the universalities in Butler's fluidity of identities.

Significance

The difference between Belfon, Smith and Chin is their performance genres. Belfon and Smith come from the music, costume masquerade, and *winin'* dance traditions in carnival and dancehall. Both Belfon and Smith share distinctive roots in Trinidad carnival, including Jamette carnival, and Junkunnu and Burro. Chin, on the other hand, is from the oral and spoken word traditions in performance poetry and dub. However, Belfon, Smith and Chin share similarities in Caribbean performance aesthetics in self-stereotyping whether from masquerading to orality. Another difference between Belfon, Smith and Chin is their sexualities in performances. Belfon's and Smith's performances display heterosexual desires in Trinidad carnival and Jamaican dancehall, even as they are aware of their LGBTQ fan base. However, within the performance genres of carnival and dancehall are well documented LGBTQ spaces for homoeroticism, despite homophobic sentiments. This speaks to Caribbean Creole folk culture not making

distinctions in black sexualities, and that divisions of heterosexuality and homosexuality are imposed by imperial colonial culture (King 2005, 163). Chin's performance poetry on the other hand is about lesbian desire and activism in the spoken word and dub traditions. Despite differences in sexual practices and performance genres, Belfon, Smith and Chin are seen as hypersexual which considers all black and "mixed" sexualities as suspect and "queer" (Smith 2011, 8; Kempadoo 2004, 80).

Belfon, Smith and Chin are my most significant Caribbean performers because they are postcolonial performers on the outskirts of the mainstream as threshold or marginal women performers – black, "miscegenated" and "queer" (Smith 2011, 8). Schechner explains that in the United States (and in other places), "they are a minority within a minority within a minority within a minority ... admist 'islanders' amidst 'African-Americans' admist 'people of color'" (4-5). Their position as "minority within a minority" shows them to be actively engaged in historical and contemporary stereotyping and to reflect them back to the source in dominant culture (Ashcroft et.al, 3).

Performances by Belfon, Smith, and Chin are significant because of their mixed heritages and multi-ethnicities as Caribbean black women. As black and miscegenated bodies, Belfon, Smith and Chin embody surrogate and memory performances of Africanness, Europeanness, East Indian, and Chinese in Caribbean culture. Surrogation, according to performance theorist Joseph Roach, is "the theatrical principle of substitution of one persona for another" (53). Roach explains that surrogation reenacts the "historical sense of the shared experience of peoples from two continents" (54). In Trinidad carnival performance, Belfon substitutes her Creole identity with East

Indianness in “Indian Man.” Smith in Jamaican dancehall substitutes her Creole identity with her brand of Europeanness as “The Dancehall Queen.” Chin’s performance is not within the carnival genre of music, costume, and masquerading. Nevertheless, Chin’s performance poetry is carnivalesque with “vulgar” speech. Chin spews stereotypes about miscegenated bodies and (hyper) sexualities, and shatters “first” world audiences’ stereotypes. Roach argues that collective memory “requires public enactments of forgetting, either to blur the obvious discontinuities, misalliances, and ruptures or more desperately, to exaggerate them in order to mystify a previous Golden age, now lapsed” (3).

Like staged *transvestism*, which is a play on crossing genders and/or in creating personae, surrogation is a play on crossing races/ethnicities and/or in creating personae. Staged *transvestism* and surrogation are metaphors for how racialized and sexualized gender is performed as subversive in everyday life. Belfon, Smith and Chin are significant because they perform surrogation and memory of Caribbean women’s experiences with races and ethnicities from West Africa, Europe, India and China converging in the Caribbean region. The women substitute one race/ethnic persona for another in their performances to bring attention to the complex nature of racialized gender identities in Caribbean women’s performances. Even as they change as fluid, the performances are also seen as fixed in historical and contemporary stereotyping depending on audiences.

Methodology

My methodology is a close reading of performance texts. Theories of performance and performativity are particularly useful, especially what Madison and Hamera call, “subversive performativity” (xix). I am using Butler’s schema for staged *transvestism* to apply to Caribbean women’s staged *transvestism* on the black female body in order to critique “fluidity of identities” and to present the performances of self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing called black liminal displacements. Through close readings and performance analyses, I unearth evidence of stereotypical codes for “masculinity” and “femininity” on the Caribbean black female body in Trinidad carnival crossdressing by Belfon, Jamaican dancehall *transvestism* by Smith, and racial androgyny in American performance poetry by Chin. I employ Butler’s schema for staged *transvestism*, including anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance, to apply to Caribbean women’s staged *transvestism* in order to critique “fluidity of identities,” and to present the performances of self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing called black liminal displacements.

Research in this project is informed by the field of performance studies which involves interdisciplinary practices and free borrowing from performing arts, popular entertainments, postcolonial theory, theatre semiotics, ethnographic interviewing, Caribbean aesthetics, cultural studies, literary studies, psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, philosophy, black feminisms, women’s and gender studies. Performance scholar Nathan Stucky in “Fieldwork in the Performance Studies Classroom” (273) states that “performance typically requires an engagement with ‘the

other', frequently involving communication among multiple cultures. Such engagements may problematize the subject/object relationship; and they may be intra- as well as inter-personal, intra- as well as intercultural" (273). I have taken on intercultural and cross-cultural communication among races/ethnicities in Caribbean and the racial dimensions of gender on black female bodies. I closely look at each woman's performance knowledge in embodiment which is in and on the body through gestures, dance, movement, and voice.

I have done archival research in Caribbean and American newspapers including The Jamaica Gleaner, The Star, The Trinidad Guardian and The New York Times, including photographs and posters of performance events. Historical accounts are rich with references and accounts of stereotypical codes in Charles Kingsley's At Last: A Christmas in The West Indies (1871), James Anthony Froude's The English in the West Indies Or The Bow of Ulysses (1888); Edward Kamau Brathwaite in The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820 (1971). I rely on Caribbean feminist Kamala Kempadoo for her invaluable work on the particular intersection of race, sexuality, gender and class in Sexing the Caribbean: Gender Race and Sexual Labor (2004); and in her edited Sun, Sex and Gold: Tourism and Sex Work in The Caribbean (1999). I employ postcolonial theory to assess historical lineages of stereotypical codes in contemporary Caribbean life used in staged and everyday performances (Ashcroft et.al. 2-3). In this study I use theatre semiotics to locate stereotypical codes for "masculinity" and "femininity" on the black female body. Theatre scholar Kier Elam in The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama (2002) states that semiotics is "the study of the production of

meaning in society” (1). Hall’s “semiotic approach” in Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices (1997) is about

sound, words, notes, gestures, expression, clothes – are part of our natural and material world; but their importance for language is not what they are but what they do, their function. They construct meaning and transmit it. They signify. They don’t have any clear meaning in *themselves*. Rather, they are the vehicles or media which carry meaning because they operate as *symbols*, which stand for or represent (i.e. symbolize) the meanings we wish to communicate (5). To use another metaphor, they function as *signs*. Signs stand for or represent our concepts, ideas and feelings in such a way as to enable others to ‘read’, decode or interpret their meaning in roughly the same way that we do (5).

I consider signs and symbols in the repetition of gestures, movement, costumes, space, voice, accent, and emphasis in stereotypical codes.

For performance analyses, I have studied live performances both in mediated formats in DVD and VHS as well as immediate in attending staged performances; and have conducted interviews with Denise Belfon, Carlene Smith and Staceyann Chin about their identities and performance genres that use, what I propose as, black liminal displacements that are performances of self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing as their mainstay. I conclude with presenting the characteristics of black liminal displacements, and in applying them to the racialized gender theatre and performance art by American theatre and performance artists Anna Deavere Smith, Adrian Piper, Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña.

Chapter Outlines

In each chapter, I apply Butler's schema for fluidity of identities in drag performance: anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance. I investigate the measure of fluidity to fixities in racialized "drag" by Belfon, Smith and Chin. In the same way that Butler uses drag as a model to demonstrate a fluidity of identities. I use racialized "drag" as a model for how racialized gender identities are performed as both fluid and fixed. Fluidity in racialized identities cannot exist without fixities constructed by colonial culture. I contend that each shift between anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance is already "fixed" in stereotypical meanings because drag of any kind is inherently a performance of stereotypes and caricatures. Caribbean black women perform black liminal displacement which is self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing in carnivalesque space and as subversive performativity to disrupt the source of power.

Chapter Two investigates whether Belfon's racialized identities in carnival crossdressing are fluid when read as colonial stereotypes. I analyze how Belfon crosses from African "masculine" to East Indian "feminine" in an Indian sari in the performance of her song "Indian Man" in Trinidad Carnival, 2004. I explore Trinidad carnival tradition of racialized crossdressing; the racial tensions between East Indians and Creoles, to the trouble with *Douglas* caught in the middle. Using Butler's schema for staged *transvestism*, which includes anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance, I analyze Belfon's racialized carnival crossdressing in "Indian Man" to interrogate Butler's universality in her concept of fluidity. Butler assumes that gender is denaturalized with shifts between anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance in staged

transvestism. However, gender meanings are “fixed” in stereotypical representations in staged *transvestism*. Instead of fluidity, what is left is a series of stereotypes and caricatures. I propose black liminal displacement which is a performance of self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing as carnivalesque, and shows how as subversive performativity in staged *transvestism* and in Caribbean life.

Chapter Three explores fluidity of identities and lingering fixities in Smith’s persona as *La Mulata* as “The Dancehall Queen” in Jamaican Dancehall. Smith crosses the stereotypical codes of African “masculine” to a European “feminine” in wigs and costumes and with the implications of being a “brown” woman in the black working class space of dancehall culture. I apply Butler’s “fluidity of identities” to Smith’s play on racialized “masculinity” and “femininity” on the black and brown body to discuss the implications of racialized gender. I explore the significance of the skin color gradations in Jamaican Junkunnu and the Set Girls in Smith’s dancehall performance. Concepts of colonial mimicry and ambivalence in Smith’s performances show how *La Mulata* is a stereotype that fixes. I examine Smith’s dancehall dance from a reggae and dancehall showcase, and a poster for Slam condoms. In both performances, Smith performs self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing of blackness as “masculinity” and whiteness as “femininity” in staged *transvestism*. I employ Butler’s schema for staged *transvestism* including anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance to investigate whether Smith’s performance is fluid. I argue that Smith’s performance is not fluid because it involves a series of racial and gendered stereotypes about the black Caribbean female body. However, Smith takes on the stereotypes and caricatures about blackness and

whiteness by self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing. Black liminal displacement is a carnivalesque space to perform stereotypes and caricatures. Smith performs black liminal displacement in response to the idea of disciplining of the black female body, already perceived to be “masculine” which means “vulgar,” toward “white femininity” as ideal.

Chin’s racialized drag as racialized androgyny in American performance poetry is the subject of **Chapter Four**. Using stereotypical codes of racialized “masculinity” and “femininity,” Chin blurs African “masculinity” and Chinese “femininity” in her performance poems. I explore her identities in ambiguities and ambivalences as “half-Chiney,” black, Chinese, lesbian, Caribbean and the roots of performance poetry in the United States and Dub Poetry in Jamaica. I show that even though racialized androgyny is fluid when performed by the performer, it does not escape how dominant culture chooses to stereotype. Fluidity is self-directed in the realm of the performer, Chin. But stereotypes and fixity are constructed by colonial power structures and therefore fixed. Because of inequalities in representations, racialized gender performances should be read as both fluid and fixed. I apply Butler’s “fluidity of identities” to Chin’s performance poetry and analyze racialized gender performances. I discuss racialized androgyny within Butler’s schema of staged *transvestism* of anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance that play with stereotypes and caricatures of “masculinity” and “femininity” in her performance poetry, “Cross-Fire” and “Poem for the Gay Games.” In Chin’s performance, I consider her play on an African masculine/Chinese feminine in Caribbean racialized and sexualized gender codes. I examine how “masculinity” is racialized as blackness; and that “femininity” as “Chinese” or white femininity. Even though Chin

seems to blur identities in racialized androgyny, I will argue that identities are not fluid in her performance poetry because of the circulation of stereotypes and caricatures in racialized androgyny. The use of stereotypes and caricatures is a process of fixing meaning. Black liminal displacement is about exposing and subversively exaggerating gender meanings in stereotypes and caricatures by self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing.

In **Chapter Five**, I conclude with the characteristics of black liminal displacements that are performances of self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing by black and miscegenated female bodies like Belfon, Smith and Chin. I further apply black liminal displacements to racialized performances in American theatre and performance works by Anna Deavere Smith, Adrian Piper, Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña. These theatre and performance artists play with racialized gendered stereotypes in their performances as self-stereotypes and self-caricatures in many cases. I identify black liminal displacements beyond Caribbean black women's performances in carnival, dancehall and performance poetry to show how self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing are performed by other marginalized identities as a strategy and how these construct identities as both self-directed as fluid and externally constructed.

Chapter Two: *Tah-ticky-tah/ Tah-ticky-tah-te:*

Racialized Carnival Crossdressing from African “Masculinity” to East Indian “Femininity” in Denise Belfon’s “Indian Man”

“...a stereotypical African sexual irresponsibility and promiscuity threatening [East] Indian womanhood and Hindu religion alike. Through this translation, a feminized [East] Indian culture – the ‘Mother Culture’ – is portrayed as being besieged by the potential threat of violation by a masculinized and predatory African culture” (Puri 133).

“Carnival has always licensed the crossing of many kinds of boundaries - between classes or estates, gender, races, ethnicities, carefully guarded geographical territories or neighborhoods” (Riggio 13).



Figure 1: Denise “Saucy Wow” Belfon on the cover to the Trinidad Sunday Express, Photo by Jermaine Cruckshank.

For the past twenty years, Trinidadian carnival artiste Denise “Saucy Wow” Belfon has been one of the most popular Caribbean entertainers, renowned throughout the Caribbean and its diaspora in Latin America, the United States, Canada, and Europe. Over the years, Belfon’s carnival performances have earned her the undisputed titles of

“Saucy Wow” and “Soca Dancehall Queen” because of her scintillating and energetic staged performances. When I interviewed Belfon in 2012, she identified as a “French Creole mix,” which is both of French and African heritages, and refers to herself interchangeably as “Black,” “Negro,” “mixed,” “Black Creole,” and “Creole.” With Belfon’s multi-ethnic complexity, she plays with race, ethnicity and gender in her performances that reflect the melting-pot culture of The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Like the rest of the Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago consist of a mixed population with descendants from West Africa, China, Europe, Middle East, India, and Indigenous Amerindians (Schechner 2004, 4; Reddock 1999, 573-574). As a former beauty queen, Belfon grew up in Trinidad fascinated by Indian films on local television including *Mastana Bahar*, an East Indian talent showcase (Niranjana 189). As a child, Belfon was interested in Hindi Cinema, popular in Trinidad since the 1930s. She watched and learned Indian melodies and dance styles from Bollywood films. As a result, Belfon speaks Hindi and Bhojpuri fluently from films, music and moving around East Indians in Trinidad and Tobago (Belfon Interview, Appendix C). Belfon’s first soca hit was “Ka Ka Lay Lay” in 1990; and since then, she has had a number of hit singles including “Hard Wuk,” “De Jammette,” “Saucy Baby,” and her smash hit remake of Sonny Mann’s “Lotay La” in which she sings in Hindi and Bhojpuri (Niranjana 189).

Belfon performs as a Trinidad carnival singer and masquerader. Trinidad carnival, held from Christmas on December 25 to Ash Wednesday, which is forty days before Easter in Catholic Christian tradition (Riggio 45). Trinidad carnival festivities include fetes or balls, costumes, music, carnival king and queen competitions, all culminating in

mas or masquerades and dancing in the streets on Carnival Monday and Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday (Riggio 45). *Mas* is the Trinidadian word for masquerade and carnival (Martin 289). Belfon performs calypso, soca, and chutney soca, all indigenous to Trinidad and Tobago. *Calypso* is from the Hausa word, *caiso*, which refers to a praise and critical singer in West African traditions. *Calypso* or *caiso* is closely associated with *lavway*, a call-and-response in song. *Caiso* was transcribed into English in the mid-twentieth century and its reference was changed to *calypso*, the Greek muse of music and daughter of the Titan Atlas (Martin 285). Soca is a fusion of East Indian rhythms and African musical structure of calypso with influences from North American soul music (Martin 293). Soca is short for “soul” and “calypso,” hence the term “soca” coined by the originator of the sound, Ras Shorty I (293). Chutney is a type of folk music from India brought to Caribbean by indentured laborers from the mid-18th century. Chutney soca or soca chutney is a mix of chutney and soca music in Trinidad and Tobago that uses Hindi words and Indian instruments such as the harmonium and hand drum, and Indian dance steps (Martin 286).

In the 2004 Trinidad carnival season, Belfon performed her song “Indian Man” costumed in a glittering blue sari and in what appeared to be an orange top underneath. At the beginning of the song, Belfon danced with detailed Indian dance steps with head and neck movements to the beat of the Hindi film *Takshak* (1999), directed by Govind Nihalani (Niranjana 189). However, Belfon’s choice of a sparkling blue sari costume, and “undressing” to reveal skin-tight, one-piece orange leotard tights, sparked outrage among some African Trinidadians and East Indians. Belfon’s spectacle raised concerns about

black woman's body wearing an Indian sari on stage to "disrespect" East Indian women; and about whether a black woman could desire an East Indian man especially costumed and masqueraded as an East Indian woman. Some African Trinidadians thought Belfon had done her "race" a disservice by singing about an interracial liaison with an "Indian man" (Khan 2004, 166-167). Other East Indians thought Belfon had "degraded" East Indian women simply by wearing a sari, seen as a symbol of East Indian womanhood (Niranjana 2006, 212).

Belfon enters the carnival "stage" as the first woman in a long line of Creole men, to sing about an East Indian man and to be fully costumed as an Indian woman. Belfon states in Creole that the song "Indian Man," was "*a song about unity. I don't know why no one realize what it is I was tryin' to say. Negro guys always sayin' they want a Indian woman, so I decided Negro gyul cyan say she want an Indian man!*" (quoted in Niranjana 200, 212). Belfon concurs in our interview, spoken in Creole that "*Creole man was always singin' about how is Indian gyal they want... how is East Indian gyal they like ... and no female has ever taken it upon themselves to sing about ah Indian man. So when it started, I was like, okay, they want bacchanal – I gonna give them bacchanal*" (Belfon Interview, Appendix C). However, Myers argues that these performances by Creole or black calypsonians are caricatures of East Indian culture (375).

This chapter investigates whether Belfon's racialized identities are a fluidity of identities when viewed as colonial stereotypes and caricatures. Butler's "fluidity of identities" describes the numerous variations in gender identities, and counters fixity to denaturalize gender through performance (179). I argue that Belfon's *racialized* gender

identities cannot be viewed as solely fluid in her performance of “Indian Man” (2004) because of colonial stereotypes that fix identities (Sibley 1995, 5; Bhabha 1994, 94-95). If racialized gender identities are not solely fluid, it is because they are viewed as fixed in colonial stereotyping amidst inequalities in a colonial gaze. In Caribbean performance, non-Europeans have been historically stereotyped and therefore fixed in colonial constructs with blacks at the lowest rung. Non-Europeans are historically and still gendered, sorted, and racially coded in communities of color and multi-ethnic nations like Trinidad and Tobago. I conceive of fluidity and fixity as being performed simultaneously to constitute identities. This interpretation challenges Butler’s fluidity of identities that assume that identities are fluid by denying the real impact of stereotyping in racialized gender. Fluidity in racialized gender is self-directed and performed by the subject although with some limitations. Fixity on the other hand, is constructed externally by dominant colonial discourse and where inequalities exist. The gap between fluidity and fixity constitutes racialized identities.

Although I address racial conflicts between East Indians and Africans in Trinidad, I am not attempting to resolve these issues, but to show Belfon’s embodiment of the conflict between East Indians and Africans in her performance of Indian Man (2004). Mohammed in “The Asian Other in the Caribbean” (2004) explains that “Asian populations [including East Indians] occupy a position in the Caribbean of being neither, black nor white, nor brown for that matter” (60). East Indians have been, and are excluded from Creole culture, already established in a white/black continuum. I explore accusations of erasures, exclusions, and continuities of East Indian and African cultures. I

show how racialized gender identities are not only fluid, but fixed through colonial stereotyping in what Belfon's performance says about identities (Pinto 153, Mohammed 2009, 60).

In the Caribbean's long history of concepts of race which includes "whitening," "darkening," creolization, and *négritude*, black and indigenous peoples have continued to suffer discrimination, and lack of social mobility. Many may assume that the multi-ethnicity and "mixed" or "miscegenation" cultures in the Caribbean mean that identities are fluid. Sander Gilman in "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature" (1986), states that "miscegenation was a fear (and a word) from the late nineteenth century vocabulary of sexuality. It was a fear of not merely interracial sexuality but of its results, the decline of the population" (quoted in Kempadoo 2004, 33). Therefore "mixed-raced-ness" is stereotyped in images of racialized gender identities. While some people may be so self-directed to be fluid, whether in image, social mobility, others are still fixed through colonial stereotyping.

I explore the roots of the controversy and performs in what I call Belfon's *racialized* carnival crossdressing using stereotypical codes for Africanness as "masculine" and East Indianness as "feminine" in her song, "Indian Man" in the 2004 carnival season. During colonial rule of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, gendered language of "masculinity" and "femininity" was used as racial characteristics for Africans, Asians and Europeans. The term Asian is used for descendants of those who migrated from India and China indenture work in British colonies in the Caribbean

(Mohammed 2009, 60). Africans, women and men, are assumed to be “masculine,” meaning uncivilized, backward, oversexed, dominant, violent (Kempadoo 2004, 36; Niranjana 131). East Indians, women and men, are “feminine,” “weak.” In the Caribbean, for example, Africanness or blackness is stereotypically coded on both women and men as “masculine,” which signifies “vulgarity,” “uncouth,” uncivilized, oversexed, dominant and violent (Kempadoo 2004, 36; hooks 129; Niranjana 131). East Indianness in both women and men is stereotypically coded as “feminine” which means “weak.” East Indian women are thought to be carriers of culture, expected to maintain East Indian culture as an ideal and “proper femininity” to be protected from erasure (Niranjana 131). Reddock states that until Trinidad’s and Tobago’s independence from European colonial rule in 1962, “the European/African dichotomy dominated social relations” (1999, 573). She argues that after a 1956 election, the Afro-Trinidadian⁵ Peoples’ National Movement (PNM) led by Eric Williams “brought to the fore a new dualism that was superimposed on the original White-Black one, that of African-Indian” (Reddock 1999, 575). As Trinidad and Tobago moved towards independence from European colonial power, Africans and East Indians fought for political representation and dominance and played out in the cultural performances of carnival (Reddock 1999, 574). This was exacerbated by the equal populations of both groups by the 1962 Independence with Africans at 40.8 percent and East Indians at 40.7 percent of the population (Puar 1053).

⁵ “Afro-Trinidadian” and “African” are used interchangeably with “Creole” in current scholarship and in this project.

Even though the criticism against Belfon's "Indian Man" is from both Africans and East Indians alike, the backlash has been more from East Indian conservatives who consider blackness and creolization as impurity, sullyng East Indian culture (Puri 127; Khan 2004; Niranjana 131). African criticism is against Belfon's willful exposure to East Indian attacks. Although both Africans and East Indians have suffered racism and discrimination under British colonial rule, Africans have historically suffered from lack of social mobility compared to other groups including East Indians. Reddock states that East Indians and other non-African groups in Trinidad were able to access social mobility over blacks. She accounts for East Indians' economic success in Trinidad and Tobago

in spite of being outside of the social system or maybe because of it, certain members of these groups were able to accumulate wealth and to become economically mobile, using methods nor normally accepted by respectable classes, such as participate in petty trading or operating 'rum shops'. This contrasted with the majority of the black or 'coloured' population, who following rules of 'respectable' economic and social behavior, were limited in the avenues open to them (Reddock 1999, 574).

Reddock further claims that the social mobility of East Indians and other groups over blacks has a lot to do with "the degree of phenotypical similarity with the white group. Skin color and hair quality were important factors in facilitating mobility into the lower fringes of white society for Chinese, Syrian, and Indian groups" (1999, 574).

What was once a European/African binary in Trinidad and Tobago is now an East Indian/African competing for social and economic space (Reddock 1999, 573). But the European/African social relation still exists through historical contact and throughout the region. I am concerned here about East Indian conservatives' emphasis on impurity of race and fears of creolization (miscegenation) and blackness (Puri 133, Khan 2004, 166-

167). Belfon's performance opened the wound of long-held historical and contemporary tensions between African and East Indian peoples under European colonial rule and subsequent independence from European power in Trinidad and Tobago (Niranjana 82; Khan 2004, 167).

Belfon's performance is then a racialized "drag" or racialized crossdressing with African "masculine"/East Indian "feminine" to analyze the fluidity in Belfon's performance and the existing fixities in colonial stereotyping. Drag and carnival crossdressing are performances of staged *transvestism*, which is Latin for staged "crossdressing" coined by Magnus Hirschfeld in 1910 (Bullough and Bullough vii). As a performance of inherent stereotyping, staged *transvestism* involves wearing one or two items of clothing from another gender identity to full costume in burlesque or comic impersonation on stage (Bullough and Bullough vii). I have used the gendered language of "masculinity" and "femininity," constructed in colonial discourse, for racialized characteristics on black and mixed female bodies in a kind of racialized "drag" in Belfon's carnival crossdressing.

A black liminal displacement is a montage of stereotypes and caricatures performed in self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing to reflect back to dominant culture that create stereotypes for a raced group. "Black" because Belfon is identified as black. "Liminal" because gender performance lie in-between anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance. As a black, Creole and specifically "French Creole Mix," Belfon is in-between races/ethnicities. Bhabha argues that the stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the

connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white. The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities” (Bhabha 1994, 5). Although Belfon is in between black and French as a Creole, she seems to defy fixity, yet at the same time, Belfon’s performance is viewed as fixed through a colonial gaze.

In colonial domination, categories in “miscegenation” have always been fixed as colonial stereotypes and are not as fluid as some would like to think (Bhabha). A denial of colonial fixities leads to an erasure of the power structure that put fixities in place. “Displacements” are the multiple shifts between and on the surface of “anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance” in Butler’s fluidity of identities. I analyze the shifts on the body to look for fluidities and the underside of fixities through stereotyping. In the self-stereotyping and the self-caricaturing of black liminal displacements, racialized gender meanings are exaggerated and reflected back to the dominant culture or “master discourses” that first created the stereotypes, but only to reflect them back to dominant culture that denies knowledge of its construction of stereotypical codes on black female bodies (hooks 120). hooks explains that this denial is an erasure and lack of acknowledgement that stereotypical codes exist, thereby not taking responsibility.

I watched the film of Belfon’s performance of “Indian Man” at the 2004 International Soca Monarch competition. Belfon enters the stage wearing a blue sequined sari and orange blouse to the beat of the music from the Hindi film *Takshak* (1999),

directed by Govind Nihalani (Niranjana 189). Her hair is pulled back in a chignon with glitter on her hair, eyes and forehead.



Figure 2: Denise Belfon in “Indian Man” Film Still from the DVD of the International Soca Monarch 2004 and in Niranjana’s Mobilizing India , 213.

I observe Belfon dancing to the music from *Takshak* beginning with what Niranjana explains are “intricate head movements from classical Indian films” (189), and “head movements typical of Indian classical dance” (212). Belfon sings to the *Takshak* beat: *Tah-ticky-tah/Tah-ticky-tah-te / Tah-ticky-tah/Tah-ticky-tah-te / Tah-ticky-tah/Tah-ticky-tah-te*.



Figure 3: Denise Belfon in “Indian Man” Film Still from the DVD of the International Soca Monarch 2004 and in Niranjana’s Mobilizing India, 213.

Belfon is surrounded by East Indian dancers dressed in pink and gold Indian-inspired costumes. Then Belfon takes off the blue sari to reveal her voluptuous body in a sleeveless and full orange skin-tight leotard with part of her black bra showing underneath. It is as if she bursts out of the sari and begins to *wine* with high energy, while surrounded by East Indian dancers doing Indian dance steps. Performance theorist Carol Martin states that *wine* and *winin’* refers to “dancing emphasizing fluid pelvis rotations, either alone or in full physical contact front or back with another person. The expression comes from winding the hips in a circle. The erotic movement can be traced to various African dances” (294). Known as the “champion winner,” Belfon does two of her signature African *winin’* movements with pelvis and buttocks, including telling the audience to “move your waist like a snake!” (212).



Figure 4: Denise Belfon in “Indian Man” Film Still from the DVD of the International Soca Monarch 2004 and in Niranjana, Tejaswini. Mobilizing India 2006, 213.

Belfon dances and sings in Creole:

*Tonight ah lookin' for ah Indian man
Yes, ah callin' for ah Indian man
Ah want yuh hold on me an jam
Inside de session
Yes, you Mr. Indian man
Ah really lookin' for ah Indian brute
Rough and tough and sexy, smart and cute ... (2004).*



Figure 5: Denise Belfon in “Indian Man” Film Still from the DVD of the International Soca Monarch 2004 and in Niranjana, Tejaswini. Mobilizing India , 213.

Then an African Trinidadian man jumps up on stage to *wine* with Belfon. The audience roars. He is wearing baggy pink trousers with bear torso and a floral fitted cap. It is not clear if he is part of the act, or an enthusiastic fan. Then he takes off his pink trousers revealing boxer shorts while *winin'* behind and in front of Belfon. The audience roars. Then Belfon stands aside with her hands akimbo or on her hips, as she watches the man dance. Then she tells him to bend over and stands over him. Belfon and the man *wine* on the ground with Belfon on top of him during the dance. In our interview, Belfon defends *winin'* as an African-derived dance and as “an art form.” Our conversation is very informal in mostly Caribbean English Creole:

DFE: I read something as well about *winin'*. *Winin'* is a typical dance all across the Caribbean. I mean – everybody - everybody *wines*, but this comment was more like some people thought it was “disrespectful” to

wine? Do you know anything about that?

Belfon: My whole career – I’ve been hearing that. I’ll be celebrating twenty years in the business this November and in Carnival coming next year. And from the time I start performing till now, I’ve always heard how wining is this - this bad thing, and so disrespectful and so degrading to women and blah blah blah blue blue blue – and honestly speaking that’s just a handful of people who’s saying that. The majority – the majority of people from over the years has now joined me – and has now started to respect and understand me – and understand that what I do onstage is one thing, and when you offstage, it is something else. You have to differentiate and accept that it [*winin’*] is an art that I do.

DFE: So what do you feel about *winin’*’?

Belfon: *Winin’* is an art! It is an expression of you being artistic and creative. The Arabs do it. The Africans do it. One time I performed in London, and the base of the crowd that was there – there was – a lot of people from Nigeria – Two Nigerian people came up to me and asked me, “what part of Nigeria am I from?” I said, “I’m from Trinidad and Tobago.” It was because of the bicycle *wine* that I created, what they expressed to me - the move that I do – a certain part of the peddling of the dance – they say that is part of their mourning – whether it is mourning for a son or whoever died in the family. They do that dance! I was shocked! I was shocked! In certain parts of African tradition, they do that dance too.

DFE: Yes, because *winin’* is actually a West African tradition. Did you do any dance lessons over the years?

Belfon: From the age of seven, I’ve done every type of dance you can think about – modern, tap, jazz, ballet – I’ve been in the dance arena from as early as seven years old. That is why when I do what I do onstage – it’s *winin’*, yes, but, but a lot of people compliment me and tell me “It’s *winin’*”, but *winin’* with a difference, bwoy. ... (Excerpt from 2011 Telephone Interview with Denise “Saucy Wow” Belfon, Appendix C).

African-Derived *Winin’*

Belfon performs black liminal displacement by exaggerating the stereotypes about *winin’* through self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing. *Winin’* is an African-derived dance form associated with fertility, procreation, life-giving and child-birth in all aspects of life and death, and in secular and religious life (Niaah 2010b, 135; Ryman 110-112; Martin 294). *Winin’* has been censored by white colonials in Caribbean carnivals, Junkunnu and

other masquerades for centuries, and even more recently in Barbados (Harewood and Hunte 277). Debates center on the winin' black female body objectifying all women's bodies – black, white, Asian; and on the legitimacy of African retentive dance forms. It is both a fluid performance because it is deliberate, self-directed, and African-derived; and fixed in colonial stereotypes of “frenzied” black bodies as “lewd” and “vulgar.”

Winin' has been stereotyped as black hypersexuality in Caribbean culture. Hypersexuality refers to excessive, pathologized, and unruly sexuality, and is applied to black and “miscegenated” Caribbean bodies since the point of contact with Europeans who constructed race through sexualized terms (Kempadoo 2004, 33; Smith 2011, 8). Racializing is a historical process with repetition of fixity over time in racial regimes. Because of this history, hypersexuality is applied to Caribbeans regardless of sexual preference not limited to “lesbians, gays, transgender, prostitutes, and other ‘sexual deviants’ are cast not only as oversexed Caribbean subjects but as outlaws and noncitizens” (2004, 9). Hypersexuality then is a colonial lens to voyeuristically view black and “miscegenated” bodies. So “shameful” is the stereotype of hypersexuality for Caribbean purveyors of colonial culture that Sharpe and Pinto suggest that even the study of sexuality in the Caribbean is taboo because of the fear of reproducing stereotypes of black hypersexuality that derived from a history of European colonialism and slavery (247). Nevertheless, stalwart Caribbean feminists have been researching Caribbean sexualities since the 1930s with particular attention to hypersexuality (Kempadoo 2003, 83).

African-derived *winin'*, because of its rotating hips and thrusting movement, was stereotyped as hypersexual and censored by formerly white colonial establishment and now by post-independence Trinidadian critics who see themselves as purveyors of decency and colonial culture. Postcolonial theory teases out white colonial censorship, stereotyping and bias against colonized peoples' forms of expression, in this case, African-derived *winin'* dances performed by Belfon and others. Dance scholar Julian Gerstin in "Tangled Roots: Kalinda and Other Neo-African Dances in the Circum-Caribbean" (2010) explains how colonial "chroniclers have reduced Caribbean dance to a single sensational image: frenzied black dancers revolving their loins and bumping together" referenced as early as 1751 (20). Gerstin argues that white colonials created a stereotype of *winin'* that inhabits European fears and desires. It stands today as an ongoing stereotype for those who are dismissive of blackness in Caribbean culture (20). The *winin'* stereotype, Gerstin explains, is one that fixes black identities in white colonial imagination (20). Bhabha explains how "the construction of the colonial subject in discourse, and the exercise of colonial power through discourse, demands an articulation of forms of difference – racial and sexual" (1994, 96). Even as Belfon is self-directed, proud and "fluid" in her *winin'* abilities, she is still perceived by some in colonial culture as fixed in the base level of so-called "unbridled sexuality."

Belfon and other Creoles are not the only people to *wine* in Trinidad carnival. East Indians *wine* too. "The Arabs do it. The African do it," according to Belfon (Belfon Interview, Appendix C). *Winin'* is also East Indian-derived in Chutney, originally an all-female performance involving crossdressing and simulation of sex to initiate Hindu

brides in heterosexual sex (Manuel 27; Pinto 151). Indian and Caribbean scholar Peter Manuel in “Chutney and Indo-Trinidadian Cultural Identity” (1998), states that traditionally, East Indian women *wine* together in wedding dances in an all women fete on Fridays before Hindu weddings on Sundays (27). East Indian *winin’* is considered in a private space compared to Creole *winin’* in public at Carnival (Pinto 151). Pinto explains that “blackness and black female sexuality open the national and diasporic space for Indo-Trinidadian women to articulate sexual grievance, but that grievance seems to be reinscribed intra-ethnically, as part of an appeal to Indo ‘families’ and gender relations. In its export as national product, the body of the Indo-Trinidadian woman performer seems to be either erased or written over with a sexuality marked by the presence of black women’s performance” (153). Because *winin’* has long been associated with Creoles, when it is performed by East Indian women, *winin’* is assumed to “erase” East Indianness (Pinto 153). In Latin America, and especially the Caribbean, there is a preponderance of race theories including “whitening” and “darkening” of ethnicities perceived as erasures of many cultures (Whitten and Torres 13-20).

In other words, the fact that East Indian women *wine* is tantamount to being marked as “darkened” or “creolized.” Blackness and Africanness are so stereotyped that any association with it can essentially “fix” others, even East Indians. But East Indian women have participated in *winin’* at private wedding dances called *lachari* or *chutney* (Myers 162). *Chutney* is a spicy Indian condiment, and the name given to folk music and practice called the *lachārī* in Bhojpurī villages in India (Meyers 162). East Indian indentured laborers brought their folk performances from rural northern India to Trinidad

and Tobago (Niranjana 91). Niranjana explains that Chutney is related to the Hindu ceremonies of the *maticore* or *matti korwah*, which refers to “digging dirt” and planting betel leaves and flowers for the gods on the Friday night before the wedding on Sunday. *Laawa*, the Sunday morning of the wedding, also refers to the unparched rice exchanged during the ceremony. Both Indian *lachārī* and East Indian chutney songs are sung in Bhojpuri Hindi or English creole with Bhojpuri Hindi words is known for its sexual explicit lyrics with humor and double entendre with links between food and sexuality (Niranjana 90). Intergenerational East Indian women perform chutney to initiate the new bride into sexual knowledge, traditionally heterosexual (Myers 162; Niranjana 91). The performances include sexually explicit Bhojpuri Hindi songs depicting sexual positions, with cross-dressed East Indian women simulating heterosexual sex-acts with each other as a sexual initiation for the bride. Older women often twist their skirts or saris in phallic forms, and use eggplants between their legs for races (Mehta 220). The ceremony is full of humor, singing, and dancing.

Since Belfon performs racialized carnival crossdressing from East Indian woman to African and vice versa, East Indian women’s performances are integral to Belfon’s staging. Chutney that was once women’s private space only in matikor ceremony emerged in the public space in Trinidad Carnival in the 1980s and 1990s with East Indian Hindu woman, Drupatee Ramgoonai. Before this time, East Indian women who danced and *wined* in public were considered taboo. East Indian women who danced in public were shunned and outcast by other East Indians, including Alice Jan in the 1930s who “undisputedly was the greatest female dancer of her day” in the general Creole public

(Ramaya 159). Alice Jan took the streets in Trinidad dancing and large crowds followed her everywhere she danced (Ramaya 159). Other public dancers include Dulari Jan, Rasulan Jan, and Rampiari (Ramaya 159). But sadly when Alice Jan died in 1978, Narsaloo Ramaya states that “she died a pauper in the Poor House in St. James [Trinidad]... where she was an inmate. She was buried without glory and fanfare every inch of which she deserved”(159). In the same way, prominent East Indians object to Ramgoonai’s display of chutney in a public space instead of confined to the privacy of home and the matikor, the women’s wedding tent (Niranjana 112). Chutney is traditionally sung by East Indian women in wedding tents, and East Indian men have been performing chutney soca in the public sphere since the 1960s to the present to include Kanchan, Sandar Popo, Sonny Mann, Rikki Jai, and Adesh Samaroo, and faced some criticism for their sexually explicit lyrics, but not as much as East Indian woman, Ramgoonai (Niranjana 121-122). Niranjana explains that “the public sphere here is considered to be an ‘African’ realm, so the making of chutney (and its rendering in English) necessarily involves making it available to the gaze of Afro-Trinidadians” (Niranjani 121). King concurs that for Creoles, “carnival existed then [in the nineteenth century] and still exists in a *public* space in which performance and display are privileged over restraint of modesty (2005, 30). The importance of playing *mas*, of taking over the public space and choosing the manner of displaying one’s body should not be underestimated, especially for recent slaves” (2005b, 26). Being able to reveal the near nakedness of black bodies in a carnival space in “lewd” *winin’* dances, is considered by

many to be liberating, especially in the context of a history of slavery when black bodies were shackled and bound.

As Belfon's contemporary, Ramgoonai is the first East Indian and Hindu woman to sing calypso, traditionally a Creole musical form; and chutney soca, with its fusion of Creole and Indian musical forms (Mehta 99). Manuel states that chutney soca is viewed as more modern popular music for recordings and concerts (27). Chutney is considered "classical" music with Indian instruments of the dholak, harmonium and dental. (Manuel 27). Literary theorist Brinda Mehta in Diasporic (Dis)locations: Indo-Caribbean Women writers Negotiate the Kala Pani (2004) argues that through chutney and chutney soca, East Indian women are reclaiming a public space for sexually suggestive dance (98). Like Belfon, Ramgoonai is easily the most controversial Caribbean woman performer challenging racial, gender barriers, and religious fundamentalism in Trinidad and Tobago. Ramgoonai rose to prominence with her 1988 hit *Roll Up the Tassa - Mr. Bissessar*, coming second place in Carnival Road March competition. Since then she continues with subsequent hits and much controversy. Some conservative Hindu East Indians criticize Ramgoonai stating that "for an Indian girl to throw her upbringing and culture to mix with vulgar music, sex and alcohol in Carnival tents tell me that something is radically wrong with her psyche. Drupatee Ramgoonai has chosen to worship the God of sex, wine and easy money" (quoted in Niranjana 113). An East Indian woman, "Mabel" remarks that "I do not like Drupatee. I don't know if it's the way she expresses herself or the way she sings... But her stage performance, I don't like what she performs as an artist. It's not appealing to me then. I believe it's more the way she carries on... the

way she wines” (“Mabel” quoted in Niranjana 116). Ramgoonai’s most controversial song is her 1988 hit *Lick Down Mih Nani*, or *Careless Driver* with double entendre in the words *nani*, meaning grandmother in Hindi, but also short for “punanny” for vagina in Trinidadian slang. The term “lick” means to hit something or someone, or to lick with the tongue as in oral sex (Niranjana 100). Ramgoonai’s “Lick Down Me Nani,” is typical of the double entendre in Chutney songs and was most controversial among conservative and religious East Indians because the private chutney songs are now made public by an Indian woman. East Indian *winin’* and public dancing (Niranjana 112). Chutney and Chutney soca singers are usually accompanied by chutney dancers.

Contemporary chutney (public) parties, according to Manuel indicate both men and women *winin’*. He observes that

partners of either sex may dance together, ‘wining’ front to front, back to back, or front to back. Both in weddings and public fetes, most of the dancers are women. Male partners should not be assumed to be gay lovers, especially considering that restrictions against mixed-sex dancing had long since established traditions of same-sex dancing. Heterosexual couples, as often as not, consist of two dancers who informally come to gyrate near each other on the dance floor, and who typically part without ceremony or conversation (27).

Manuel further argues that East Indian *winin’* to Creole *winin’* are similar with respect to dancing either same-sex or opposite. He notes that *winin’* has provoked controversies in both East Indian and Creole communities; however he notes that Creole women *winin’* outrage some homophobic critics who believe *winin’* Creole women are lesbians (27). But *winin’* at carnival is sometimes viewed as asexual or “autosexual” (Manuel 27), making it easier for gays and lesbians to *wine* without harassment during carnival.



Figure 6: Creole women *winin'* in Mud *Mas* on Carnival Monday in Caripichaima, Trinidad, 2000. Photograph by Pablo Delano in photo essay, "Carnival People" (175).

This example of Creole women *winin'* at Mud *Mas*, a masquerade when participants smear themselves with brown mud, but sometimes with food coloring to make colored mud – of red, yellow, blue, green, and others. Revelers dance through the streets until dawn.

- This event is described as the most “mystical or transcendental experience essential to carnival” (Martin 290). The widespread racial controversy between Africans and East Indians is not only about Belfon’s “vulgar” *winin'* representations of East Indianness, and her so-called “Creolizing” Indian culture in “Indian Man;” but also about East Indian women, like Ramgoonai, dancing and *winin'* in public. I find the disturbing element to be discussions around creolization as “impurity” of East Indianness.

Belfon self-serotypes and self-caricatures in black liminal displacement. She may seem to reify stereotypes and caricatures because she is viewed from a colonial gaze that creates stereotypes for Africanness and East Indianness in Trinidadian culture. No performance can truly denaturalize stereotypes and caricatures when they are constructed

where there are disparate inequalities by dominant culture on raced bodies – African and East Indian historically under colonial rule. However, even though both groups were colonial subjects, blackness and Africanness are still discriminated against more widely as shown in their lack of fluidity in social and economic spheres compared to other groups (Reddock 2001, 199-202; Whitten and Torres 23). Belfon’s fan base has always supported her African-derived *winin’* and do not see it as degrading to women, and especially East Indian women (Belfon Interview, Appendix C). African-derived *winin’* and the display of black female body is liberation from stereotypes of indecency and black body-shaming. Belfon’s critics are viewing through colonial eyes, historically seeing Africanness as “degrading,” “vulgar” “blackening” and “erasing,” all descriptors for “masculinity” on black women’s bodies (Kempadoo 2004, 33-38, Kingsley, Cooper 1995, 8).

Some Caribbean feminist scholars have been critical of Caribbean black women, like Belfon, displaying her body like an “object” and therefore reify sexist and racist tropes. While I agree that black female bodies may be viewed as reiterating these norms, I do not agree with covering the body in shame. Russo explains that “women and their bodies, certain bodies in certain public framings in certain public spaces are always already transgressive – dangerous and in danger” (Russo quoted in Harewood 44). Black female bodies are already viewed as hypersexual, whether they intend to be hypersexual or not (Kempadoo 2004, 7, 51). Therefore Belfon’s performance in *Indian Man* will be viewed in the stereotype of hypersexuality that is fixed in a colonial construct. What does Belfon do? She does not hide her body in performance. She undresses it, piece by piece,

to reveal near nakedness of her hypersexual body, and then *wines* on top of the African man on stage. Belfon self-stereotypes, that is, taking on all the stereotypical meanings and associations with the *winin'* black female body. She self-caricatures the images in the staging of East Indianness and Africanness showing, the societal binary opposition in East Indian/African.

Therefore, Belfon's performance nuanced because even when she performs fluidity of identities in the deliberate shifting and crossing from East Indianness to Africanness, she is still viewed in the colonial mode of stereotyping that fixes both East Indianness and Africanness, constructed by colonial culture. Nuances in Belfon's "Indian Man" (2004) are that she appears to reiterate stereotypes. Nuances, in themselves, are not fluidities. Stereotypes repeat and these are fixities (Bhabha 2004, 94-95; Hall 1997, 257-259). They are not definitively essentialized either. Both fluidity and fixity are operating in racialized gender performance. When Belfon uses black liminal displacements, that are self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing, she is using stereotypes, but only to throw them back to the source of stereotyping in colonial constructions of Africans and East Indians in Trinidad and Tobago.

Critics, who are not aware of *winin'*, assume that Belfon self-objectifies when she dances with male spectators on stage. Belfon states that "I might call a male audience member up on stage to dance with me... What I ensure though is that he wines *with* me ... not *on* me (Dikobe 2004)" (quoted in Harewood 41). In "Indian Man" (2004) however, Belfon is dominant in the *winin'* over the man on stage. According to cultural theorist Gordon Rohlehr in "I Lawa: The Construction of Masculinity in Trinidad and Tobago

Calypso” (2004), “whether she masks as protestor or rebel against male sexism or as confident celebrant of her own sexuality, the millennium woman is now open in the challenge she poses to the old patriarchal structures” (374). Contrary to conservative opinion, *winin’* is not performed exclusively for men. *Winin’* is performed for, and together with women and men alike; and sometimes associated with lesbianism among women and homosexuality among men (Manuel 27-29). *Winin’*, which is distinctly Caribbean, is homoerotic or lesbian-erotic in dance expression with complete strangers during carnival fetes or with people known to each other (Manuel 28, Martin 294)

Yet this image of the *winin’* black Caribbean woman is devalued in a stereotype of hypersexuality, racialized as “vulgar,” “deviant,” and “oversexed” (Cooper 1995, 8; Smith 2011, 8). In Belfon’s performance, it would be too easy to dismiss these performances because of stereotypes on black female bodies with “vulgar” speech and displays by “real women.” When Belfon *wines* on top of the African man in her performance of “Indian Man” or in any other performance, she claims to be more powerful and in control of her wining image (Harewood 41). Maude Dikobe states that “it is also extremely important to note that Denise [Belfon] differentiates between offering herself to her male audience as a sexual object, and celebrating her own sexual power. ‘I might call a male audience member up on stage to dance with me’, she says. ‘What I ensure though is that he wines *with* me... not on me’” (quoted in Harewood 41). Belfon claims to be in control of her image in *winin’*.

Pinto compares the views about Ramgoonai’s performance with black women’s bodies and performances (153). She explains that in Ramgoonai’s body and performance,

Ramgoonai is viewed as maintaining ethnic distinction while carving out a national and public space for East Indians in Trinidad's Creole culture. But black women's bodies, like Belfon's, are fixed and objectified. Pinto criticizes some Indian scholars and conservatives' fear of miscegenation, as if miscegenation is from association with black culture; instead of focusing on the "'fear' and regulation of black women's sexualities" (153).

East Indian Fears of Creolization and Douglarization

Belfon claims an intimate knowledge of East Indian culture through language, film, dances, gestures, movement foods and dress even though she is "French Creole mix," which is of African and French backgrounds (Belfon Interview, Appendix C). Because Belfon is Creole and dons an East Indian sari, East Indian critics view Belfon as "creolizing" the sari, a symbol of Indian "purity." From an East Indian perspective, Belfon raises the issue of *Dougl* in Bhojpuri Indian culture. Reddock states that the term, *Dougl* is derived from Bhojpuri Hindi pejorative word *dogla* (without the "u"), which means "bastard" (Reddock 1999, 573; Puri 1997, 127). The literal interpretation of *dogla* is an "illegitimate/ son of a prostitute," and does not even appear in the *Dictionary of Common Trinidadian Hindi*, revealing still the shame and exclusion in an East Indian and African mix (Reddock 1999, 573; Puri 128). For this reason, criticism of Belfon's performance of "Indian Man" is overwhelmingly from East Indian conservatives who view any mix, even in its cultural performance of Trinidad carnival, as so offensive. Reddock explains that over the last decades, the term "douglarization," coined by Hindu religious and East Indian leaders, refer to a perception that the African-led People's

National Movement (PNM) promotes “intimate relations between African men and [East] Indian women in order to ‘Africanize/Creolize’ the population, and in this way, deal with the problem of ‘race relations’” (1999, 573).

Furthermore, Hindu leaders fear the “obliteration of the ‘Indian’ race” (Reddock 1999, 573). In this way, Belfon’s performance from the East Indian perspective, is “douglarizing” or “creolizing” East Indian women. As a result of these racist sentiments, *Douglas* are outcasts in East Indian communities, and tend to live among Creoles in Trinidad and Tobago, but are still very much viewed as *Douglas* (Berkeley et.al 267). Belfon embodies Creoleness and East Indianness in her performances raises the ambiguity of *Douglas* as pariah, untouchable and outside of Hindu castes. Even though racialized gender identities are fluid in its multi-ethnicities, clearly the scorn of miscegenated shows how race, gender and sexuality are complicated with stereotypes and fixities. As a Creole woman wearing a sari, Belfon also evokes the lost *Douglas* in between both Africanness and East Indianness and East Indian fears of creolization. Mighty Douglas, a calypsonian of both African and East Indian descents illustrates the ambiguity and exclusion of *Douglas* in his 1961 calypso “Split Me in Two” sung in Creole.

*They sending Indians to India
And Negroes back to Africa
Can somebody just tell me
Where they sending poor me
I am neither one nor the other
Six of one, half a dozen of the other
If they serious about sending back people for true
They got to split me in two* (quoted in Puri 128).

Another calypsonian, Bother Marvin is *Dougla* of both African and East Indian background seeks unity in African and East Indian historical experience of voyages across the seas during slavery and indentureship in his song *Jihaji Bhai* (Brotherhood of the Boat) (Reddock 1999, 573-575).

Puri shows how the historical colonial stereotyping in a European/African power structure is now reduced in contemporary East Indian/African race relations as racist mudslinging in the media, and especially in carnival performances (132). Puri observes exchanges in the 1990 “douglarization debate” between Radica Smith, a Creole woman and wife of the PNM chairman and Satnarayan Maharaj, the secretary general of the Sanatan Dharma Sabha (130). Radica Smith states that in Trinidad and Tobago “we will be mixed. A brown-skinned curly-haired Trini and if we continue to push this race talk, we go 20 years backwards to the days of (Rudranath) Capildeo and (Bhadase) Maraj” (quoted in Puri 130). In many ways, Creole culture is about “mixing” as Radica Smith states, especially with Trinidad’s national motto, “*All ah we is one*” (We are all one) which promotes unity among ethnicities coded as “inter-raciality,” creolization, douglarization. In fact, Creole culture can seem like pressure to “conform” with mixing, and that if anyone does not want to “mix” with blacks, it may even be viewed as racist against blacks. Cultural commentators claim that Trinidad’s motto, however, is designed to reduce racial tensions among groups, and would even deny any racial tension. East Indian conservatives and critics, on the other hand, claim Creole mixing as “diluting,” “polluting,” and erasing any distinct Indian culture outside of India.

In response to East Indian conservatives, African purists in Trinidad are against mixed associations with East Indians, especially because of the backlash against blacks with colonial stereotypes (Khan 2004; Reddock 1999, 591). Many Africanists are outraged by Belfon's and other Creoles' performances with crossing or references to East Indian culture because of the onslaught of East Indian conservative insistence on "purity" viewed as a racist insult against blacks (Puri 130, Khan 2004, Reddock 1999, 591). Reddock observes some "conscious" Creoles, black or "mixed," resist racial mixing, calling for racial pride and to do-away with color-casting viewed as most damaging to blacks (1999, 591). Some Africanists criticize Belfon for being a disservice to her "race," for not upholding Africanness over all others. This sentiment can be seen in an earlier 1970s calypso "They Can't See Africa at All" by calypsonian, Chalkdust sung in Creole:

*He dimple come from me husband side
Who great grandfather was Irish
An' that is how he eye pretty and wide
Cause they mother mix with British
An look at me I am Carib and Portuguese
So meh chile hair curly
But the baby black down to the eyeball they ain't see Africa at all.
Ah say the baby black like a voodoo doll but they can't see Africa at all
(quoted in Reddock 1999, 590-591).*

Africanist critics are concerned about the gross devaluation of Africanness, and are especially vulnerable to racist critiques by conservative East Indians. Maharaj prints a one-page advertisement in the Trinidad Guardian in response to Radica Smith's "we will be mixed" (Puri 131). He writes that "[East] Indians find it insulting that a process of race mixing should take such priority when illiteracy crime, depravity and unemployment are destroying the people in the urban areas"(quoted in Puri 131). Puri explains that

Maharaj's "term 'urban areas', for instance, is coded 'African', and its reference to crime, dependency, illiteracy, madness, and unemployment reproduce colonial stereotypes of the lazy African. These stereotypes are, in turn, to be interpreted as an implied contrast to [East] Indian values of hard work and self-reliance"(132). Puri further observes that Creole culture is reduced even more in this advertisement with clear references to colonial stereotypes of blackness associated with "unbridled sexuality" and "irresponsibility" (Puri 132; Kempadoo 2004, 36-37). The "douglarization debate" certainly does not speak to Creoles having any economic and social mobility, and therefore "fixed" in the perception of being at the bottom of the social hierarchy and in color-casting among mixed group. Manuel attempts to explain the rift and divide between Africans and East Indians. He claims that East Indians feel, and had been made to feel, that East Indian culture is outside of Creole mainstream. On the other hand, Manuel notes that Africans resent East Indians' increasing economic and political mobility and dominance (36).

Conservative East Indian fear of "creolization" and "douglarization" has much to do with racial anxieties and shifting hierarchies from African at the bottom of the British colonial racial hierarchy than with a creole culture itself based on British/ West African social and sexual intercourse. It suggests a pejorative "blackening" of East Indianness. Creolization is a separate term and cannot be applied to East Indian because it is specifically West African and European, and not a process of "pollution" or "erasure" of East Indian culture. The African assertion throughout the Caribbean has much to do with restoring dignity to African descent peoples.

In “Sacred Subversions? Syncretic Creoles, the Indo-Caribbean and ‘Culture’s In-Between””(2004), anthropologist Aisha Khan explains the tension between African and East Indians began during the colonial period in Trinidad and Tobago when plantation labor changed from enslaved Africans to indentured Indians around 1838 (166). Political angst emerged from the perception of the new group of East Indians taking away scarce jobs from emancipated Africans during that time. Indian laborers migrated in an already “mixed” or Creole culture, based on miscegenation between Europeans and Africans. Indians were considered outsiders to this new world. Indians were concerned about Hindu caste purity and assimilation of Indian cultural identity in Euro- and Afro-Trinidadian creole culture perceived to be a threat to Indian cultural erasure. Africans on the other hand were concerned about Indian upward mobility, responded to what was perceived as Indian clannish behaviors as prejudice against black culture (Reddock 1999, 572). Pinto argues that Caribbean music and popular entertainments like soca and chutney are discourses for historical “grievances” between East Indian women’s bodies and black culture in Trinidad (138-139). Pinto claims that “with their focus on heterosexual sex-gender relations, soca lyrics are supposedly vapid, the opposite of what it means to be socially conscious of politically and publicly engaged with the state and the process of grievance. Grievance is usually defined as a claim to the state over an issue that is the state’s fault or that falls under its domain, or for which the state offers the possibility for redress” (141). Pinto further refers to Wendy Brown’s “performance of injury to the citizen” as an appeal that erases the state’s knowledge and culpability in the grievances at hand (141).

Therefore the “historical grievance” or tensions between Africans and East Indians are borne on women’s bodies in Trinidad carnival performance (Pinto 141). Grievance is reflected in the constructions of racialized gender identities denied by the state in everyday life, and especially cathected on African and East Indian women’s bodies in Trinidad carnival in music, costumes, dances, soca and chutney monarchs. The historical lineage and contemporary consequences in Belfon’s performance of “Indian Man” is in racialized carnival crossdressing which is the crossing of gender and race. In Belfon’s staged *transvestism* in “Indian Man,” she simultaneously crosses racialized and sexualized codes in “masculinity” and “femininity” for black women through gestures, movements, dance steps and costumes.

However, Puri sees the polarization of Creoles and East Indians as a negotiation for control over the East Indian woman in her simultaneous erasure and deployment (122). Puri is quick to suggest rape imagery for the “feminized” Indian culture without interrogating the colonial history that constructed ethnic hierarchies and the gendering of the two cultures (123, 133). She observes in Trinidad and Tobago that “a stereotypical African sexual irresponsibility and promiscuity threatening [East] Indian womanhood and Hindu religion alike. Through this translation, a feminized [East] Indian culture – the ‘Mother Culture’ – is portrayed as being besieged by the potential threat of violation by a masculinized and predatory African culture” (133). This is coded as heterosexual interracial sex as African masculine and East Indian feminine (Puri 133). Puri further explains that the fear of interracial sex is directed only at African people (masculinized), and not East Indian people (feminized) seeking interracial sex with African women. Puri

reclaims the term, *Dougla*, by providing Dougla poetics to interrogate racism and erasures (133). She states that dougla poetics is against purist racial discourse, acknowledging interracial contact and unity, and provides a space for *Douglas* and in unmasking power relations among East Indians and Africans in Caribbean culture (157).

Belfon, in “Indian Man” disrupts these very ideas about East Indianness as “proper femininity,” submissive and beautiful to give way to the dominant African masculine who *wines* on top of the man on stage. Disruption though, does not completely denaturalize racialized gender in the colonial gaze that sees the stereotype of the dominant African “masculine” in Belfon’s Creoleness when she *wines* on top of the African man on stage. Africans and East Indians have now taken up colonial stereotypes in response to each other in contemporary Trinidad and Tobago. Belfon performs black liminal displacement which is self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing the black and mixed stereotypes. Belfon deliberately “dominants” the African man, and therefore troubles the disturbing rape imagery in douglarization. Belfon’s performance shows fluidity in her self-conscious, self-directed actions to perform Africanness and East Indianness in a racialized “drag;” but colonial stereotyping constructed outside of the performer also fixes these identities with the preponderance of racialized gender meanings. Performance involves the performer’s and multiple audience’s perspectives that may include a dominant colonial gaze as well as Belfon’s many fans.

(Interracial) Race Calypsos

Knowing full well that East Indian conservatives are against interracial sex with Creoles resulting in *Douglas*, Creole calypsonians react to sing about their desires for East Indian women even more. Prominent Creole calypsonians Sparrow, Lord Melody, and The Mighty Killer among others sing about their desires for East Indian women in race calypsos that upset East Indian conservatives (Myers; Niranjana 145). Using “picong,” which is caricaturing in lyrics, Gordon Rohlehr defines “race calypsos” as

calypsos trading on racial stereotyping, and employing a caricature and humour based on the mockery of accent, gestures or music of the other race. They measure, or betray, the uncertainty with which the races have regarded one another; a latent atavistic mistrust, and the competition which has always been taking place against a background of chronic unemployment, poverty and dispossession on the part of broad masses of people, and authoritarianism, patronage and manipulation on the part of those small elitist groups who control their destiny (quoted in Puri 121).

In race calypsos sung by mostly Creole men about East Indians, themes may involve interracial desire, racial resentment, and what may seem as mocking East Indian culture. This reveals fixity as a process of stereotyping and therefore fixed in the colonial gaze, integral to Belfon’s spectacle in “Indian Man.” Niranjana teases out the binary stereotypes of African masculinity/East Indian femininity, observe in (inter) race calypsos. She points out that

In a certain type of calypso, where the [East] Indian woman is being courted by the African man, these notions are foregrounded in such a manner as to obscure or deflect questions of race: Proper femininity is racialized as East Indian and imaged as beautiful and submissive; proper masculinity is then normed as African, embodied in the wordsmith calypsonian or the badjohn. African masculinity is then delegitimized or becomes bad or violent masculinity. Further, I would suggest that when Indian femininity is sung into being with the desiring African male voice,

... a kind of hypermasculinity is produced in contrast to the object of desire (Niranjana 131-132).

In this way Belfon embodies the stereotype of African “masculine” creolizing East Indian “feminine” in “Indian Man” (2004) (Niranjana 212). I use the term (interracial) race calypsos for calypsos with interracial desires that do not necessarily mock East Indian culture or the idea of race “mixing.” Rohlehr states that interracial themes in song began in 1930 with Creole singer Duke of Normandy (Myers 373). Calypsos, dominated by Creole men in pre- and post-independence era, uses double entendre to express desires for cultural and sexual intercourse with the East Indian group, and for African cultural assertion (Puri 130-133). Kingsley’s nineteenth century discourse of African culture as masculine; and East Indian culture as feminine is seen here in calypso representations of always a “feminine” East Indian culture (woman) being overtaken by the “masculine” African culture (man).

Thus Belfon follows a long line of calypsonians in this tradition, and is the first woman to sing this form of (interracial) race calypso, and still representing an African woman (masculine) desiring an East Indian man (feminine). Niranjana posits that East Indian disapproval has much to do with the conservative East Indian fear of interracial sexuality, especially between Indian women and African men (136-145). I focus on blackness because of the discrimination, erasure of blackness, the fears of “creolization” and “douglarization” all against blackness and miscegenation that are at the core of both Belfon’s and Ramgoonai’s performances.

One example of (interracial) race calypso is Lord Melody's 1957/58 calypso, *Come Go Calcutta* sung in Creole. Lord Melody (Fitzroy Alexander, 1926 - 1988) was a Trinidadian calypsonian that rose to prominence in the 1950s and 1960s. The calypso, sung in Creole with Hindi words, represents a flirtatious and humorous sexual encounter with an East Indian woman:

Chorus: *Ow, nayga, sweet nayga/Ow, nayga, come go Calcutta.
Ramlal ain't making fun/When he know he go use the gun
Doolahin cry/When I told her this was goodbye
She run on me and she start to bite/Kilwalni [Creole man], sleep with me
Tonight
I told her plain I can't make the grade/She ask me why, I said I 'fraid
Melody, you can't leave at all/And as I kiss she start to bawl (Lord
Melody, 1957/1958).*

In *Come Go Calcutta*, Lord Melody's deliberate use of the pejorative English creole term, *nayga* for Negro, with its connotations of the presupposed British colonial hierarchical in polarization with the Indian, simultaneously indicates (East) Indian disassociation from, and disallowed sexual desire for *nayga*. The escape to Calcutta is a place or state of Indianness away from Creoleness. Despite the sexual invitation, Lord Melody fears the attack from, Ramlal, her Indian husband suggesting the disallowed sexual union. Niranjana suggests that there was, and is, a fascination and eroticization of East Indian woman (146), as if to suggest that sexual desire for East Indian women is pejorative and debasing in itself.

Another example of an (interracial) race calypso is the Mighty Sparrow's *Marajhin* (1982) sung in Creole and Hindi. It belongs to a trilogy of calypsos including *Marajhin Sister* (1983), and *Marajhin Cousin* (1984). *Marajhin* (1982) express his sexual

desire for Marajhin, an East Indian woman, but again, is represented as a forbidden by her Indian family.

*You are the genesis of my happiness
You are the one that I have always dreamed of
You got everything I need, everything I want
How can I exist without your sweet love
When I see you in your sari or your orhni [veil]
I am captivated by your innovative beauty
If it wasn't for you nanee [grandmother] and your bhowji [sister-in-law]
I would marry you and take you in the country ... (Sparrow 1982).*

Mighty Sparrow sings in English Creole with Bhojpuri Hindi phrases indicating the exchange of language. The humor in the song again is about the sexual politics of British colonial polarization between the East Indian and African revisited in the formation of an independent nation from British rule. Mighty Sparrow challenges ethnic absolutism that seeks ethnic purity to avoid Creoleness and Blackness. He sings, “I want to hold you, I want to rock you, I want to jam you, jam you, jam tonight” (1982). *Jam*, similar to wining, refers to forward thrusting pelvic movement on the dancing partner with close touching of the genitals (Martin 294). By singing about his desires for the East Indian woman in a Creole dance of *jam*, he overturns the presumed racial hierarchy to seek sexual and cultural intercourse, while provoking racial purists who consider Indian femininity as the vehicle of mother culture, fearing her “creolization” and cultural erasure by association with a Creole man.

Belfon is not the only woman to sing about interracial desires. East Indian woman Ramgonai again enraged critics when she sang *Hotter than a Chulha* [oven] in 1989. She sings in Creole that “mixing” is “*hotter than a chulha/ rhythm from Africa/ and from*

India/ blend together is a perfect mixture oh oh!/ All we doin' is addin' new flavour oh oh!" Of course, prominent East Indians and conservatives assumed that Ramgoonai was promoting interracial unions between blacks and East Indians (Niranjani 112).

Despite criticism, and maybe because of it, Ramgoonai continued with a string of hits with the interracial themes. In 2000, she collaborated with Creole soca performer Machel Montano with the censored song "Real Unity" (Niranjana 167). Montano's performance is characterized by its high energy fast-paced wining dances. The song incorporates the Hindi film song, "*Aap Jaise Ko*" from the popular Hindi movie, *Qurbani* sung by Ramgoonai. Montano chants the opening line in Hindi and sings in English Creole urging the "nation" to *wine* together (Niranjana 185). Ramgoonai's and Montano's collaboration in "Real Unity" became an instant hit, but East Indian radio stations refused to play it on the radio (Niranjana 187-188).

East Indian and African Criticism Against Belfon

Anthropologist Aisha Mohammed in "Love and Anxiety: Gender Negotiations in Chutney-Soca Lyrics in Trinidad" (2007) studies the reactions to Belfon's "Indian Man" in an editorial in the Trinidadian Guardian where East Indian columnist Anand Ramlogan praises Belfon's "Indian man" addressing the stereotypes of Indian men as rural and corrupt and making him a sex symbol. Ramlogan states that,

This calypso will at least give the Indian man some prominence and exposure on the national Carnival stage. The stereotype that has confined Indian men to being portrayed merely as rural farmers, double vendors, shopkeepers, doctors and lawyers, but never as sex objects will hopefully change. The lyrics of calypsos over the years have never focused on the

Indian man (except when Panday⁶ was in power and he was gleefully portrayed as corrupt (Trinidad Guardian 18 January 2004).

Mohammed discusses another editorial entitled, “African men hurting over Indian man calypso” where an African Trinidadian man writes,

Denise Belfon has done her race a great disservice by attempting to project the Indian man as an object of sexual desire to African⁷ women. To boast that African women should get “ah Indian man to jam meh inside de session” because they “yearning,” “hungry” and “thirsty” for an Indian man is disrespectful to the African male and damaging to his pride...Ms. Belfon must realize that while every Trini⁸ enjoys calypso, it is an art form that is indigenous to African people. Wearing a sari and hurting “the black man who just feeling to party” by spurning him in favour of Indian men is unfortunate (Trinidadian Guardian 25 January 2004).

Mohammed states that an African Trinidadian woman responds to this statement as a double standard,

It seems as though it’s ok for them [African men] to fantasize and sing about Indian and other women, and this is no problem. But we African women must never look beyond black men. If Indian men complained about the constant focus on Indian women, these same brethren would have damned them as racists. From Sparrow’s “Sexy Marajin” and Crazy’s “Nanny Wine” to Machel’s “Nothing wrong with wining on ah Indian gyul [girl]” and the ever present desire to marry a “Dulahin,” Indian women have always been targeted. African women never complained about the adverse impact of all of this on their self-esteem and pride (Trinidadian Guardian 25 January 2004).

Despite the criticism from East Indian and African Trinidadians in the media, Belfon is pleased with the East Indian audience reception at the Chutney Monarch, 2004. In our

⁶ This is in reference to Basdeo Panday, the first East Indian man to become Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago in the 1990s.

⁷ The term “African” is used locally and interchangeably with “black” and “Creole” in Trinidad and throughout the Caribbean.

⁸ “Trini” is the colloquial short term for Trinidadian used locally and across the Caribbean.

interview, she says how surprised is in receiving such warmth from an East Indian audience. We speak informally in Caribbean English Creole below:

DFE: What was the reception like with the [East] Indian audience?

Belfon: As you ask the question, I'm ... I'm getting goose bumps – because they love me. I was just a soca artist and then when I came into their arena, they accepted me with open arms. When I was.. As a matter of fact, the artist that was on before me on the night of the competition – when he was on stage they was chanting my name for me to come on. And that... that was real amazing... I ...I... I went back stage and I'm saying "Wow!" I have to deliver to these people, bwoy, I feel I might take the crown tonight! (Excerpt from 2011 Telephone Interview with Denise "Saucy Wow" Belfon, Appendix C).

This shows Belfon's intention to unite both groups, but clearly her performance was seen as trumping colonial stereotypes by some audience members. To be clear, Belfon's performance is fluid from the performer's perspective of creativity and self-directed acts, but runs the risk of still being viewed as fixed in ongoing colonial racial stereotypes. Both fluidity and fixity constitute the performance of disparate racialized identities.

Racialized "Drag" or Racialized Crossdressing in Trinidad Carnival – "Masculinity" and "Femininity" as Racial Characteristics

Today's racializing effects in gender have its roots in masquerade traditions under racial rules and inequality, and fully ingrained in Belfon's performance in "Indian Man" (2003). Racialized "drag" or racialized crossdressing is nothing new in Trinidad carnivals. Racialized crossdressing involves crossing "race" and/or gender simultaneously to critique, derisively mock, desire, or fantasize about the other. These performances are read as stereotypical codes for "masculinity" and "femininity" as racial characteristics for Africanness and Europeanness; and even though these performances

are fluid from the performers' perspectives, they are potentially fixed in lack of access and stereotyping. During slavery, carnival was an elegant social affair for the white Creole upper class (Harris 109; Brereton 53). White upper class carnivals involved masked balls, "promenading" and parading in carriages going house-to-house with musical bands (Harris 109). Racialized crossdressing emerged during the early colonial carnivals in Trinidad.

Colonial whites dressed in blackface during carnival to mock the slaves in the masquerade characters *negue jardin* ("garden slave") and mulatresse (Harris 109; Franco 74). Theatre scholar Max Harris in "The Impotence of Dragons: Playing Devil in the Trinidad Carnival" (1998) argues that the *Negue Jardin* and mulatresse masques were European men's fantasies about the Negue Jardin, based on the belief that black bodies were "sensuous" and "hedonistic" (110). For *negue jardin*, whites blackened their faces and wore inside out working trousers, bright-colored shirts, handkerchief and derisively mocked slaves during carnivals (Hill 1997, 28, Martin 290). *Negue jardin* costumes later became more elaborate with velvet or satin breeches, embroidered shirts or shortsleeved jackets with a heart-shaped cloth piece on the chest called a "fol," decorated with mirrors and rhinestones (Hill 1997, 28).



Figure 7: *Negue Jardin* costume in Hill, Errol. Trinidad Carnival (1997).

The “mulatresse” was the most popular disguise among white women in the nineteenth century (Franco 74). Performance scholar Pamela Franco in “The Martinican: Dress and Politics of Nineteenth Century Trinidad Carnival” (2004) states that the mulatresse costume was a simplified version of the “Martinican” dress worn by black Creole women. The mulatresse was a black Creole women’s fancy dress called *á la jupe* and *la grande robe* that included bodices and skirt ensembles. Skirts were tucked in the waist to reveal a little of the decorated underskirt with a drape over the shoulder, called *foulard*. The Martinican dress incorporated “European-manufactured cloth with West African dress aesthetic” (65-66). Black Creole women wore head-ties with sparkling broaches, and adorned themselves with gold rings, chains and bracelets. Harris explains that white women fantasized about being a mulatress, desired by white men, by wearing a simplified version of the Martinican dress (110).



Figure 8: Photograph of a “Mulatto” woman, Camille Dedierre, wearing a Creole woman’s fancy dress in 1900.

White women wore a simplified version, called the “Mulatresse” costume in late nineteenth-century Trinidad carnivals. Photograph from Franco, Pamela. “The Martinican: Dress and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Trinidad Carnival (2004) 71.

Enslaved Africans were not allowed to mask in carnival and watched at a distance (King 2011, 215). But shortly after the 1834 Emancipation of slavery, freed Africans and Creoles took to the streets in both black face and white face to mock Europeans who

mocked enslaved Africans in colonial carnivals (Harris 111; King 2011, 215). Harris points out that “now blacks dressed as whites, rendering the white men morally darker and the white women more vulgar than they had in jest pretended to be” (111). Blacks wore white masks over their faces and black varnish over the body in various masquerades that so upset white elites (Harris 111). Hill concurs that blacks blackened their bodies to mock white elites who blackened their faces to make fun of enslaved Africans (1997, 28-29, 40). Several devil masks emerged as a result with similar blackening of the skin all over already dark-skinned bodies with black paint or varnish from head to toe. Harris suggests that the blackening of the devil mask comments on the hellish nature of slavery, but also the stereotype of blackness as bad, evil, and equated with the devil. Other devil costumes include Jab Molassi that covered the body originally with molasses, and later with mud, tar or grease in blue, red and white that wreck-havoc on colonial society’s ideas about race and color (Martin 288). Changing the black/white to blue, red and yellow mocks the very idea of race and skin colors.



Figure 9: Engraving depicting a 1888 Trinidad carnival from *Illustrated London News* showing white-faced devils with blackened bodies and cross-dressed men as Dame Lorraines.

European elites stand on balconies and sidewalks distanced away from the rabbleroising. Picture from Bellour, H el ene, and Samuel Kinser. "Amerindian Masking in Trinidad's Carnival: The House of Black Elk in San Fernando."(2004), 134.

Black presence in carnival was dominated by kalinda, a sticking fighting dance ritual performed in *cannes brulees* or canboulay, which is a masquerade originally celebrated on August 1, commemorating back-breaking slave labor and revolts on sugar plantations (Martin). Canboulay masqueraders carried fire torches and sing kalinda call-and-response songs led by a chantwell, the lead singer in canboulay. Carnival eventually erupted in the Canboulay riots of 1881 and 1884 (Brereton 53). Colonial elite moved to

ban carnival on several occasions, but blacks persisted even more in masquerades. Finally the upper class joined together to sponsor and create their own carnivals with lavish costumes and finery called pretty mas' or fancy mas' that survive in today's masquerades on the streets (Harris 114). Upper and middle class joined groups of people called "bands" in bikini costumes depicting "exotic" or historical themes, but never about slavery (Harris 114). Ole mas'(old mas) or traditional mas', on the other hand was for lower class blacks who carried on with traditional mas from Canboulay in "dirtied up" costumes, painted bodies, daubed with white or yellow mud. Some traditional characters included devils, jab molassi mentioned earlier, along with wild Indians, burokeets, baby dolls among others.

Today, Trinidad carnival is still divided between pretty mas and ole mas (Harris 114). Pretty mas is now commercialized with sponsors and performed by the upper classes in the skimpy costumes bikini costumes with feathers, plumes, glitter and *winin'* dances (Harris 114-115). Ole mas is still marginalized, though with some governmental funding, and self-generated by individuals and groups including Blue Devils bands in the hills of Paramin, Trinidad (Forbes-Erickson 237-260). Other racialized carnival crossdressing include traditional carnival characters Dame Lorraine, which means "fashionable lady," mocked French plantation wives with detailed scripts, music and "eighteenth century costumes of the French aristocracy" (Hill 1997, 40; King 2004, 27). Dame Lorraine costumes consisted of floral-print dresses with padded bottoms and breasts and sometimes pregnant bellies (Martin 286). Dame Lorraine was traditionally

performed by black men who crossdressed to white plantation women; and in recent years, by black women.

Therefore, it should be no surprise that racialized carnival crossdressing is extended to commentary in crossing to East Indian women in saris including Belfon and other black Creole calypsonians. In 1972, Lord Shorty in cross-dressed as an East Indian woman on stage wearing an odhanī, a veil signifying female privacy (Myers 375). At the time, it was an outrage. And because of the racial tensions between East Indians and Africans, many conservative East Indians were offended and considered Lord shorty's act as sacrilege and disrespectful to East Indian women. Bear in mind, Lord Shorty was the originator of Soca music, a combination of chutney and calypso sounds, and even claimed to be part of East Indian culture although he was a black Creole (Martin). In the same way that black Creoles trouble the European/African and male/female binaries in colonial culture, they also perform across any other perceived structures, including East Indian/African structures (Reddock 1999, 571).

Belfon as “De Jamettes”

Belfon's performances have been compared to the nineteenth century Jamettes. In fact, one of Belfon's many chart-toppers is called the “De Jamettes” is a celebration and homage to the nineteenth-century Jamettes. *Jamette* is derived from the French word *diametre*, which refers to the nineteenth century free blacks who lived below the “diameter” of “respectable” society – “madams, prostitutes, gamblers, stick-fighters, and others” after the emancipation of slavery (King 2005, 192). King notes that European colonials policed black bodies and black sexualities during this period. She suggests that

jamettes was considered to have “unacceptable sexualities” and suggests that jamette women were probably lesbians because heterosexual sex signified “order while homosexuality, its antithesis, promotes chaos” (Alexander quoted in King 2005, 193). European colonials have always considered all Caribbean black women sexualities, lesbians or heterosexuals, as deviant, depraved and outside of colonial heteronormativity, and do not necessarily make distinctions between black women’s sexualities (Kempadoo 2004, 9).

In fact, the original meaning of *jamette* is “slut,” in attempts to deride black women’s sexualities (King 2005, 192). King states that jamette women were known for carnival crossdressing, sexually explicit songs, horseplay and *winin’* dances that upset colonial elites (2011, 219). King states that

jamette women’s double cross-dressing threatened the colonial social hierarchy because it was an attempt not only to change the outward symbolism of their bodies but also to briefly superimpose the representation and meaning of the white male body and its socially granted subjectivity and power over their own lack of power – while also shocking the elite with the titillating and/or horrifying revelation of their own black women’s bodies (2011, 219).

One of the most controversial masquerades of the nineteenth century is the jamette’s *pis-en-lit* which literally means piss-in-bed has been periodically outlawed since the nineteenth century, and was finally banned in the 1950s (291). King states that *pis-en-lit* was traditionally played by black men dressed as white women in transparent night gowns with fake “blood” and menstrual cloths. Between their legs, the Black men carried a poui sticks between their legs as phallic symbol all mocking all European establishments (2004, 30).

Although Belfon's performance pales in comparison with the grotesque imagery in historical jammets, she disrupts white colonial mores in her characteristic racialized crossdressing, sexual horseplay and *winin'* dances, especially in "Indian Man." Belfon self-stereotypes by exaggerating stereotypes that shows fixed identities because stereotypes perpetuate fixities. Belfon performs black liminal displacements by exaggerating the stereotypes and caricatures of African "masculinity"/East Indian "femininity" back to the colonial culture that creates such fixities in the first place.

In my interview with Belfon, she tries to explain the historical and contemporary "grievance" as Pinto puts it. We speak here very informally with Caribbean accent to get the most of Belfon's ideas about the "controversy" and about her efforts to perform with pop star Remo Fernandez from Goa, India, and to her embodiment of East Indianness with languages, Hindi and Bhojpuri. Belfon tries to show that her intention to "crossdress" as an East Indian woman is not to mock or be disrespectful to the sari and East Indian womanhood, but to embrace them. She does this by crossing the stereotypical codes in racialized carnival crossdressing. The most fascinating feature is what Belfon claims to be a parallel with Remo as being outsiders or "unwants" on the threshold of Caribbean and Indian cultures. Below is an excerpt from my interview with Belfon, in informal Caribbean English Creole:

DFE: So when you came about to do that song "Indian Man,"... and um... I remember reading about the controversy. What do you think about the East Indian and Creole tension in Trinidad?

Belfon: Um, at first, maybe the first two days of when the controversy started, I was a bit disturbed by the fact that all these activists,... and this and that and whoever, had these negative things to say about me trying to do a song where I was just - y'know - in the studio looking for some lyrics

for a melody that I had written in Anguilla and one of the guys that was at the studio jump up and sang the line in the beginning [Singing] “Tonight I lookin’ for ah Indian Man” and I was, “this was it.” It wasn’t something that was planned. It wasn’t something where, y’know, I just say I gonna target the Indians in society and this is my plot. It wasn’t like that, but when the song was finished and finalized, it came to a point where everything that I wrote and I sang on the track made sense. It meshed.

DFE: Yes

Belfon: Creole man was always singin’ about how is Indian gyal they want... how is East Indian gyal they like ... and no female has ever taken it upon themselves to sing about ah Indian man. So when it started, I was like, okay, they want bacchanal – I gonna give them bacchanal.

DFE: Yes

Belfon: I like Indian man. I want ah Indian man. Indian man I like.

DFE: Hmm mmm

Belfon: It make the Indian man popular!

DFE: Hmm mmm. Yes! And then later, I heard that you performed with Remo Fernandez from Goa?

Belfon: From India

DFE: Yes, a “real” Indian man

Belfon: Yes!

DFE: So how did that come about?

Belfon: He heard the song. He heard the track. He looked at me on YouTube. He was very fascinated and interested in... with my ethnicity... someone like me. He’s Indian, also and in that part of India, Goa, you have that type of... that type of... people and culture there. It’s an island. It’s where all the “unwants” are sent. And I... am somewhat like the “unwanted” [laughs].

DFE: Is that what Remo said, or do you just think that?

Belfon: I...I think that, and when I put it over to him, he kind of agreed with what I was saying. ...(Excerpt from 2011 Telephone Interview with Denise “Saucy Wow” Belfon, Appendix C).

Conclusion

The complexity in Belfon’s performance is not that it is more than “reductive” stereotypes of Africanness and East Indianness. Of course Belfon’s performance is more than essentialized categories, and certainly Africans and East Indians are more than the colonial racialized gender binary discussed here. But one cannot deny the alarming

postcolonial debates and racialized mudslinging between these two groups about racialized gender and sexualities. No one really is a stereotype because a stereotype is a colonial construct outside of the performer, created by colonials for the colonized. Therefore, despite Belfon's fluidity of identities in transforming herself as an East Indian woman and as a Creole woman, her performance can still be viewed as fixed in colonial stereotypes using gendered language of "masculinity" and "femininity" as racial characteristics because these inequalities do exist for racialized identities. But what is most fascinating about Belfon's performance of "Indian Man" is a critical space she creates for the "unwanted."

Chapter Three: *La Mulata* and “The Pleasure of Disguising”⁹:
Jamaican Dancehall *Transvestism* in the Persona of “Carlene, The
Dancehall Queen”

“The dancehall queen Carlene is phenotypically almost white and has a full body with large hips and a big bottom – a figure that is more often associated with the woman as opposed to the physical characteristics of the lady” (Ulysse 163).

“Exhibitionism conceals ordinary imperfections. In dancehall world of make-believe, old roles can be contested and new identities assumed. Indeed, the elaborate styling of both hair and clothes is a permissive expression of the pleasures of disguise” (Cooper 2004, 127).



Figure 10: Media photo of Carlene, The Dancehall Queen in Josephs, Kenrick “Artist Profiles 411: Carlene Smith,” 2003.

Since the 1990s, Carlene Smith has emerged as one of the most popular dancers and enduring personalities in the world of Jamaican dancehall. Dancehall music is an off-

⁹ Cultural studies scholar Carolyn Cooper refers to Jamaican Dancehall as “the pleasure of disguising” (2004, 127).

shoot of reggae music that developed by black working class communities in Kingston's inner city from the 1970s (Niaah 2010b, 132-133). It is a secular upbeat dance music using rhythmic percussions with deejays and singers (Niaah 2010b, 138). Cultural studies scholar Sonjah Stanley Niaah in "Dance, Divas, Queens, and Kings: Dance and Culture in Jamaican Dancehall" (2010b), states dancehall music is more than a musical genre, but a lifestyle referred to as just "dancehall" (2010b, 132). Niaah states that dancehall is "a way of life for a group of people, largely disenfranchised youth – who are sustained by it in real, symbolic, imaginary, and material terms," including distinctive fashion, hairstyles, film, theatre, modeling, dance moves and choreography sustained by and for black working class Jamaicans (2010b, 132; Stolzoff 2). Dancehall dances consists of African-derived *winin'* which is which is the rotation of the pelvis, similar to carnival *winin'* mentioned in Belfon's performance in Chapter Two, but with the inventiveness of party dance steps with names like the "boogle," "butterfly," "tattie" and others. Dancehall music and fashion have influenced many North American artistes including Beyoncé's "Single Ladies (Put a Ring On It)" (2008) with a distinctive dancehall beat, dance moves, and in many of her recent costumes of one-piece swimsuit-type style in the dancehall aesthetic.

Dancehall artiste Smith was born in Kingston, Jamaica on May 1, 1971 to a white German father and an African Jamaican mother. The Jamaican/German connection, often referred to as "Germaican," is not unusual in Jamaican culture because Germans had settled in Jamaica from 1838 at the Emancipation of slavery (Tortello; Ryman 101). A

significant number of Jamaicans claim to be of German descent (Tortello).¹⁰ In Jamaican Creole culture, Smith is a “browning,” a woman of African and European descent (Stolzoff 242; Mohammed 2000, 25).¹¹ Mohammed in “‘But most of all mi love mi browning’: The Emergence in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Jamaica of the Mulatto Woman as Desired” (2000) states that the term “browning” in Jamaican society was coined in the 1980s, “comprises a recognizable combination of black and white (and/or other ethnic groups such as Chinese or Jews” (34-35). Since “brownness” is considered on a continuum of black and white, many self-identify as “black” (Terborg-Penn 8),¹² including Smith who says she is “a black girl or with a shade of black” (Smith Interview, Appendix D).

But before the 1980s term “browning” for Smith, it was the “mulatress” or mulatto woman (*La Mulata*) (Kempadoo 1999, 6) *La Mulata* as mentioned in chapter one is a colonial stereotype, created by colonials for the “miscegenated” of African and European backgrounds. A colonial stereotype is a reductionist and essentialist images

¹⁰ In Smith’s case, her parents met in Germany when her mother lived and worked as a nurse in Germany. Smith spent some time with her father in Germany, and later with her mother who moved to New York, USA. Smith reflects what Barbadian poet and playwright Edward Kamau Brathwaite calls creolization in Jamaican society, which is the complex interaction between European and West African cultures (xiii, 308).

¹¹ In Jamaica, as in many parts of the Caribbean, people of European and African ancestries are referred to as “brown,” and specifically, “browning” for women (Mohammed 2000, 25; Stolzoff 242; Kempadoo 1999, 6). Caribbean feminist historian Patricia Mohammed states that the term, “browning” in Jamaican society comes from the historical reference, “mulatto woman” or “mulatress” (*la mulata*) in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (2000, 25).

¹² Feminist scholar Rosalyn Terborg-Penn in “Through an African Feminist Theoretical Lens” (1995), argues that historically in the Caribbean, “since slavery, women of African descent, regardless of skin colour, have been identified and often have identified themselves as black. In this sense, black symbolizes a cultural milieu more than colour”(9)

about subjects under colonial rule (Bhabha 94). Colonialism and colonial rule refer to being subordinate to imperial powers from Europe to neo-colonial domination from Europe and America from the point of contact in slavery, indentureship, migrations to today (Ashcroft et. al. 2-4). Colonialism has had an impact on issues of race, gender, sexuality, class, nationalism, and immigration (Ashcroft et.al. 2). As a result, postcolonial theory interrogates the scourge of colonialism on colonial subjects. Postcolonial performance reflects the ongoing debates about race, gender, sexuality and class in dancehall since historical slavery to the contemporary period (Ashcroft et.al. 2).

La Mulata is an enduring figure in postcolonial performance since slavery to the present in Smith's dancehall performance as "The Dancehall Queen." The historical *La Mulata* is viewed as sexually seductive, a "prostitute" and "socially despised" (Kempadoo 2004, 80). Yet at the same time, *La Mulata* or the "browning" today is expected to "act" closer to whiteness or Europeanness, signifying the highest degree of "femininity," "class," respectability; and not like the black or African counterpart of "masculinity," which represents closer to nature, uncivilized, deviant, hypersexuality (Kempadoo 1999, 6; 2004, 7; Ulysse 148-149). Smith's dancehall performance as "The Dancehall Queen" is therefore a remnant of continuing regulations over racialized and sexualized bodies in the trope of *La Mulata* since slavery and in current race and gender discussions. Kempadoo in Sun, Sex, and Gold: Tourism and Sex Work in the Caribbean (1999), state that

studies indicate that despite the generalized image of the promiscuous and sensuous black woman, the category of women "of mixed race" – the "mulatto," "mustee," or "colored" woman – was considered particularly

exotic and sexually desirable by white men (Henriques 1965, Beckles 1989, Bush 1990). The social category, which itself arose from the exercise of power over black slave women, was, however, legally and ideologically placed outside of white society, representing European racial impurity and moral, racial, and social degradation, constituting an “unnatural transgression of the rules of social propriety” (Kutsinski 1993:75). The mulatto woman (*la mulata*) thus came to be represented as erotic and sexually desirable yet was outcast and pathologized and defined as economically attractive for slave master. The mulatto woman emerged thus during slavery as the symbol of the prostitute – the sexually available socially despised, yet economically profitable body (1999, 6).

Kempadoo states that the colonial stereotype of “the mulatto, mestizo, or metis who embodies racialized sexual transgressions, however, it commonly defined as a tragic figure, a ‘hybrid’ – who inhabits the outer margins of respectable and civilized society, who is possibly infertile or sterile, and who is positioned as the ideal domestic, sexual servant or prostitute, and who is denied legitimacy as a social equal to whites” (2004, 33). As a result, postcolonial feminisms “put into sharp relief how gender, race, class, nationalist, and imperialist hierarchies are interwoven in ways that particularly undermine the lives of Third World women – physically, politically, economically, and culturally” (Peterson and Runyan 28). In the absence of equality is colonial stereotyping fixes *La Mulata* with set characteristics that “need no proof” of her promiscuity and lasciviousness (Bhabha 94-95).

Today, “browning” or *La Mulata* is integral to contemporary dancehall performance along racial, color, geographical, class, and color casting that privileges light skinned over dark skinned blacks (Ulysse 148; Stolzoff 2, 163). As a “browning,” Smith’s public performance as “The Dancehall Queen” has raised the issue of

miscegenation and color casting in Jamaican society. Color casting is derived in miscegenation between slave holders and enslaved Africans during slavery and colonialism in Jamaica (Brathwaite). It determines the quality of life, employment, and social and economic mobility. Color casting in dancehall is distinguished between “uptown” and “downtown” Kingston and St. Andrew people (Ulysse 151, Stolzoff 2). In dancehall’s parlance, “uptown” is associated with brownness, the middle-class and being “light-skinned,” which includes 25% of the population of white, Chinese and brown people, and usually lives in St. Andrew, north of Kingston. The term “downtown” signifies lower class at 75% of the population of dark-skin blacks and representative of dancehall culture and lives in the inner cities of Kingston (Stolzoff 242; Ulysse 151-163; Niaah 2010b, 132-133). In this color/class divide, “uptown” factions are critical of “downtown” culture. Stolzoff calls them “the ‘uptown’ critics and ‘downtown’ defenders” (230-231). Smith is considered to be “uptown” and middle class because she is a “light-skinned,” and is expected to remain “uptown” (Stolzoff 242; Ulysse 163). Stolzoff states that “while Carlene [Smith] is a browning (a light-skinned person of mixed African and European ancestry), a racial category usually associated with uptown, middle-class social standing, she is seen as a representative of downtown culture because of her social background and her involvement in dancehall” (242). Smith is supported by the black working class fans, but decried by middle- and upper-class society for her unabashed involvement in dancehall “vulgarity” (Stolzoff 162-163).

As a brown woman, Smith was dubbed “Carlene, The Dancehall Queen” at a fashion competition or “fashion clash,” but only in the media (Niaah 2010a, 138). In

1991, Smith contacted Andrew Williams, the manager of Cactus Club in Portmore, Jamaica with the proposal for an “uptown”/ “downtown” fashion clash “uptown” fashion models from Pulse modeling agency and “downtown” dancehall dancers (Josephs). Williams agreed to host this historic event that launched Smith as “The Dancehall Queen” in popular culture and the media (Joseph). “Downtown” dancehall models and “uptown” professional models would dance and model down a runway in a competition similar to voguing in the US, but also in dancehall masquerade tradition with revealing costumes. L’Antoinette Stines, artistic director of Jamaican dance theatre company L’CADCO, was Smith’s choreographer for this fashion clash; and Leroy Reid, Smith’s brother-in-law, was her manager at the time (Josephs). Smith, who is aware of her middle class status based solely on her “light-skin,” rejects Jamaica’s rigid class, color, class, and geographical lines (Smith Interview, Appendix D).

However, the titles of “Dancehall Queen” and “Dancehall King” are traditionally given to dark-skinned blacks in community dance competitions in the inner city of Kingston, and have never attracted the media fanfare like Smith’s light skin (Niaah 2010a, 138). What is most remarkable about Smith as “The Dancehall Queen” is this renewed phenomenon of *La Mulata* or “browning” in the public sphere, and what this resurgence is saying about color-casting in racialized gender identities at this time. Smith states that she performs as “The Dancehall Queen” to erase the race/class lines, and to present dancehall as a genre for everyone, not just for “downtown” Kingston people (Smith Interview, Appendix D). But despite Smith’s efforts to cross race/color lines in Jamaica’s rigid color caste hierarchies, middle- and upper-class representatives in the

media have criticized Smith for “consorting” with the “vulgarity” of black culture, and for not “behaving” as a brown woman of the middle class. If Smith acts anything but “respectable,” then she is attacked as in the stereotype of *La Mulata*, “socially despised” and in the figure of a “prostitute” (Kempadoo 1999, 6). Smith goes further to cross from “browning” to whiteness, which signifies the “pinnacle of femininity,” but does not perform there as expected as white “lady” (Kempadoo 2004, 36; Ulysse 162-165). Instead, I see Smith as “denigrating” Europeanness with dancehall blackness, and is further complicated by her miscegenated body as a browning or *La Mulata*. The complication, though fluid in performance, is still viewed as colonial stereotypes that are constructed by dominant colonial culture. Therefore, even as Smith’s performance shows some signs of fluidity of identities in its self-directed performance, it is simultaneously fixed in by colonial stereotyping of Africanness or blackness, *La Mulata*, and Europeanness. Below is an excerpt from my interview with Smith. We speak candidly below in *Patois* (English Creole) and informal Jamaican Standard English about anti-brown prejudice and color-casting:

DFE: Yeah... Are you aware that there might be any ... um... anti-brown sentiments, like...

CS: Oh yeah! I’ve had people... women... I have women anti- *everything*. I have women come up to me to tell me, I am where I am *because I’m brown*. ... and where I’m at *because I’m from uptown*. I am where I’m at *because of this* and I am where I’m at *because of that*. I’ve heard that ...back in the day they said I did surgery on all parts of my body. I’ve never had a plastic surgery in my life. I’ve had caesarian that that’s it. So I’ve had people, y’know ... they can’t accept people for who they are, so there is a problem for something

DFE: So what you say to those people who had a “problem” with, y’know... your complexion.

CS: I would normally say to them, love you first, then you can love me. If

you love yourself, who cares about the rest of the world.... So... no, those things not going to bother me. ... (Excerpt from 2011 Telephone Interview with Carlene “The Dancehall Queen” Smith, Appendix D).

This chapter explores Smith’s performances of *La Mulata* or “browning” as “The Dancehall Queen” in dancehall culture to investigate whether Smith’s racialized gender identities can ever be viewed only as fluid when *La Mulata* is fixed in colonial stereotyping. Racialized gender is the distinct intersection of gender and race issues. Gender is socially prescribed behaviors done to distinguish between “masculinity” and “femininity” (Peterson and Runyan). In Racial Formation in the United States from the 1960s to the 1990s (1994), race theorists Michael Omi and Howard Winant posit that “*race is a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts by referring to different types of human bodies*” (55). In other words, race in dancehall’s “uptown” and “downtown” divisions, refers to the sorting of “looks,” as in phenotypes with skin color, body type, hair textures and lengths in very minute hierarchies (Brah 3-4; Omi and Winant 55).

Racialized gender issues being addressed here are colonial stereotyping and color casting among Caribbean blacks and other ethnicities, and how they are performed by Smith, “The Dancehall Queen.” Stolzoff states that according to Jamaica’s rigid class hierarchy, a “brown” person is considered middle- and upper-class (2). Drawing on a 1986 study by Evelyn Huber Stephens and John D. Stephens, Stolzoff reports that from the 1960s, Jamaican society has been highly stratified by class, race, ethnicity, and culture. Stolzoff observes that more than 75 percent of the population was made up of black urban working class, small farmers, employed and unemployed (152). He notes that

even though blacks had progressed beyond working class to professional ranks, the “capitalist class” as he states, was predominantly white, Chinese, and brown, which is a category for people of African and European ancestry. Smith is considered a “browning,” or as Ulysse describes her as “almost white” which means she is middle-class or of the “capitalist class” (163). The category “white” consists of several ethnicities including Lebanese, Syrians, Jews and Europeans. Stolzoff notes that among the “white” class, only twenty-one families are known to control Jamaica’s economy (152). Ulysse adds that “Jamaica has been polarized between black and white since colonialism despite the presence of the colored, Chinese, East Indians, and Syrians who populate the island” (152). So Smith reflects the polarity of black and white in the structure, as well as being brown. A majority black population of over 75 percent is controlled by a minority ruling class of whites (Stolzoff 152). In contrast, the black population in the US is in the minority, while the dominant majority group is white. In the Caribbean, the black and indigenous peoples are in the majority but still ruled by a minority colonial white and “mixed” population along rigid color caste hierarchies with blacks at the bottom or off the ladder all together. The dynamics of racism is the same on blacks whether in a majority or a minority group, but specificities can vary with social and upward mobility.

In Jamaica’s color caste hierarchy, critics theorize that Smith’s fame as “The Dancehall Queen” is entirely because of her skin color as a brown woman or a “light-skinned black woman,” and that she really cannot dance as well as dark-skinned black women in dancehall (Niaah 2010a 136-138). As a result of Smith’s light-skin and risqué dancehall fashions, Smith regularly faces the onslaught of the media and in scholarship

both accusing her of capitalizing on “brownness” in the black working class genre of dancehall, and in being “disrespectful” and “degrading” to women (Ulysse 148-149, Niaah 2010a, 138). My reading of Smith is all these concerns, and the reemergence of the stereotype of *La Mulata* in the public space of dancehall, and the backlash against the stereotype of *La Mulata* as desired (Mohammed 2000, 25). I consider the denied knowledge of the racial minutiae in color casting that holds racialized gender identities in place. As a result, Smith has been described in one instance as “a combination of large thighs and bottom, a pretty face and she is also light-skinned” (The Sunday Gleaner, January 13, 2002, 1E). In another case mentioned earlier, Ulysse claims that she observed Smith simulating an orgasm on stage (162).

Although Smith vehemently denies any simulated sex acts on stage, sexual horseplay, and *transvestism*, Smith’s dancehall acts that resemble simulated sex and perhaps a simulated orgasm are all characteristic of dancehall dance moves that will be discussed later (Ryman 110-112). I think this suggests that Smith already knows the difference between dancehall “play” and actual sex acts, but that some viewers unfamiliar with the dancehall world may view these “acts” as “orgasms.” Because *La Mulata* is already stereotyped as hypersexualized, it is possible too, that other spectators may see Smith’s performance as salacious.

I apply Butler’s fluidity of identities to Smith’s dancehall performance as “The Dancehall Queen” to examine fluidity and fixity in the figure of *La Mulata* or browning as desired because even though *La Mulata* may appear fluid because she is neither one nor the other, *La Mulata* is a figment of colonial stereotyping and fixity that repeats to

hold this image in place. Butler's fluidity of identities is the ability to infinitely reconfigure gender identities in drag performance with shifting distinctions in between "anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance" (175). Butler's observations in drag performance are metaphors for gender fluidity in everyday life. But her claim that gender identities are fluid is a universal one which does not consider racial stereotyping on racialized gender identities and the colonial structures that fix them. In my project, fluidity of identities is social and upward mobility in everyday life, and the ability to reinvent oneself. Fixity, according to Bhabha, is a "paradoxical mode of representation: it connote rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition" (94-95). Fixity shows how power and domination hold people in place. Fixity's strategy is the stereotype, which Bhabha defines as "a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always 'in place', already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated" (94-95).

Even though some Caribbean scholars argue for instance that Caribbean identities are fluid because of the multi-ethnicity of the region and culture, fluidity denies the cultural and economic challenges, especially for blacks and indigenous peoples at the bottom of color casting hierarchies. Other Caribbean scholars do not tell us about the rigid color casting, and the race theories of "whitening" and "blackening" of races well documented yet ignored throughout the region. "Whitening" or *blanquemento* in Latin America and the Caribbean refers to seeking ways to become culturally "white," which is becoming more "civilized" than blacks and indigenous peoples (Whitten and Torres 13). "Blackening" or *Negreado* on the other hand, is viewed as uncivilized or lacking

civilization and culture (Whitten and Torres 13). Because white colonial culture is still dominant, even with black and indigenous majorities in former European colonies, racialized identities are not as fluid because of inequality and the lack of social and economic mobility.

Butler assumes that everyone can and should perform fluid identities without considering racial implications and stereotyping when inequality exists. Even though *La Mulata* may appear to slide along the color caste scale from white to black because she is neither one nor the other, *La Mulata* is still a racialized and sexualized stereotype, created and fixed in colonial imaginations and stereotyping. Smith self-identifies as “black,” not white (Smith Interview, Appendix D). Many “mixed” people like Smith self-identify as black even with other backgrounds (Terborg-Penn 8; Ulysse 162, Stolzoff 242). Despite Smith’s self-identification as “black,” she is still viewed as “browning” or *La Mulata*, a racialized gender category. If one denies knowledge of the sexualized, racialized gender of *La Mulata*, then she does not exist, and is therefore solely fluid without racial intervention against colonial culture’s construct.

The problem with fluidity of identities is that it does not critique the source of power and does not acknowledge the fixities against black and “miscegenated” gender identities. Butler uses drag performance as a model to show how gender is performed as fluid in everyday life but denies any racial considerations in gender identities as there are in Caribbean racialized gender identities. I use Butler’s drag model to analyze how Smith’s “The Dancehall Queen” crosses stereotypical codes for African “masculinity” and European “femininity” in a racialized “drag” in dancehall *transvestism*. Racialized

“drag” is the crossing of race along color caste lines (hooks 127-128). Dancehall *transvestism* refers to crossdressing typical in many dancehall events. I investigate whether racialized identities can be fluid when viewed as colonial stereotypes. Although Butler insists that sex and gender are denaturalized in a “fluidity of identities,” she ignores how race could be “denaturalized” in staged *transvestism* if at all. Identities, then, cannot be completely fluid if racial stereotyping “fixes” identities in staged *transvestism* (Hall 1997, 258; Bhabha 2004, 94-95).

Ultimately, if identities are fluid as Butler argues, then racialized identities can just simply change or denaturalize constructed historical racial stereotyping and caricaturing. I argue that racialized identities are not solely and completely fluid because of racial stereotyping that fixes identities in the racialized “drag” of Smith’s dancehall *transvestism*. Fluidity is upward and social mobility that can be curtailed by colonial power structures. Racialized identities that are black, “miscegenated,” and “brown” have been stereotyped in essentialized images. Therefore, even as Smith may perform a fluidity of identities in her performance with the freedom in and on the body, she nevertheless raises the stereotypical figure of *La Mulata*. Smith performs dancehall blackness through dance form and then performs her whiteness with her signature platinum blond wigs. Instead of shying away from these well documented colonial stereotypes, Smith performs what I call black liminal displacements that are performances of self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing. Self-stereotyping involves being aware of, and endorsing stereotypes of a marginalized and or stereotyped group (Schneider 242) for the purpose of revealing the source of stereotyping in colonial

culture. Schneider explains that self-stereotyping is seeing oneself as being part of a marginalized group and defending the marginalized group by taking on ingroup stereotypes (242). Self-caricaturing exaggerates self-stereotyping to create grotesque imagery. Black liminal displacements “exaggerate” racialized gender meanings in racialized “drag.” The purpose of staged *transvestism* is stereotyping and displaying stereotyping back to colonial culture that created stereotypes and caricatures of Africanness, Europeanness and *La Mulata* in the first place.

Race and color casting of black and brown are essential to the dancehall event. Race is bound up with a sexualized image based on “desireability,” which is a process of colonial stereotyping of sexuality projected on Caribbean bodies (Kempadoo 2004, 29-30, 81). Fincher defines sexuality as “desire, fantasy, pleasure, and self-image,” and not solely sexual relations (Fincher 323). The idea of sexuality as a “self-image,” or as stereotyped image as being sexualized in Caribbean race constructions. Faith Smith states that “to speak of the *taboo* of miscegenation might seem odd, because if the region has answered to the charge of the sin of improper mixture of blood, it has also scoffed at or celebrated this perceived sin. Over and over, the impurity of blood or the mixture of races has been the reason for the region’s being understood to be inferior to Europe, and later also the United States, and thus incapable of morality or not ready for political autonomy” (2011, 2). Miscegenation is an ongoing colonial stereotype which is reinforced as proof of inferiority (Kempadoo 2004, 33).

Smith performs black liminal displacement which self-stereotypes and self-caricatures blackness or Africanness, Brownness as *La Mulata*, and Europeanness. In

black liminal displacement Smith self-identifies as black, and her performance is liminal as a “browning” in the character of “The Dancehall Queen” in dancehall in between European and African. Yet at the same time, Smith displaces these stereotypical codes through dancehall *transvestism*. I have used an African “masculine”/European “feminine” binary based on colonial stereotyping and on Butler’s analysis of drag performance to explore fluidity and fixity in Smith’s performance. Black liminal displacements are performed to address the source of colonial stereotyping and caricaturing in colonial culture. Because dancehall is more than a musical genre, but also includes film, fashion, modeling, dance, plays, and a wide array of sub-genres, I will analyze three of Smith’s most memorable performances as *La Mulata*, “The Dancehall Queen” in 1) the print media highlighting Smith’s dancehall style and fashions in “A Peak Inside Carlene’s Closet,” and 2), a poster for Slam condoms, and 3), a 1990s video of a “stage show” featuring Smith’s dancehall dancing performed as part of a reggae/dancehall showcase.

Performance I – Dancehall “Dress Up” Masquerade

In the first performance Smith performs black liminal displacement by self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing colonial stereotypes of African “masculine”/European “feminine,” and the miscegenated *La Mulata* or “browning” through “dressing up.” “A Peak Inside Carlene’s Closet” provides an insight in the world of dancehall with adorning the brown and black body.



Figure 11: “A Peak Inside Carlene’s Closet.” Youth Link Magazine, April 13, 2004, 12.

Smith boasts:

I have 350 wigs, not including the ones given away ... trust me any shade of black, brown, whatever colour just check me. I’m the wig specialist.

The most expensive outfit I’ve ever bought is ... (keep in mind that you only get Voyage in England and that’s where she bought these items), a Voyage mesh skirt suit. The skirt cost \$94,525 (995 pounds) the blouse \$201,495 (2,121 pounds) and the Gianni Versace silver slippers for \$475,000 (5000 pounds).

The single most expensive item ... that I’ve ever bought is a Victoria’s Secret top for \$10,200 (US \$1,700).

I would describe my sense of style as something that varies... I like to look sexy because that reflects my personality. I have suits that are tasteful, like for funerals or christenings because these are some of the places where it’s wrong to show a lot of skin.

I have no favourite designer ... but there are people whose sense of style admire like Marilyn Monroe, Audrey Hepburn (now deceased) (she has a thin waist-line) Cindy Breakspeare [Miss Jamaica and Miss World 1976], Aloun N’Dombet Assamba [politician] (she is full-figured but carries herself well), Lisa Hanna-Panton [Miss World 1993] (she looks good in whatever she wears) and my mother, Ivy

Smith, who has a good taste in choosing clothes. When she was young, she was very sassy(Interview by Nordia Henry in Youth Link Magazine, 2004, 12).

Smith emphasizes that her sense of style and that “the outfits are as crucial as the dance moves ... A dancehall queen’s outfit should not come from a store. That can never be right, that absence of individual creativity subtracts from the royalty of the crown.” Ironically, in this media piece, Smith states that she buys her clothes from expensive fashion outlets outside of Jamaica. I think to distinguish herself from the local crowd. However, in our conversation, Smith states that she “designs” her outfits. I think she refers to “design” as putting her outfits or a look together rather than creating them like a fashion designer. In our conversation, Smith states that she likes “one of a kind” items. Smith’s icons are Marilyn Monroe, Audrey Hepburn, and two beauty queens Miss World 1993, Lisa Hanna and Miss World 1976, Cindy Breakspeare (Youth Link 12).

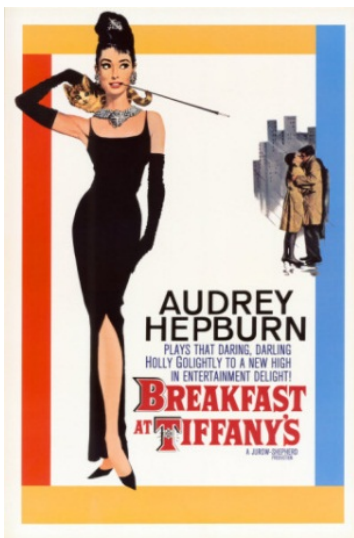


Figure 12: Iconic Audrey Hepburn on the poster for the film *Breakfast at Tiffany's*

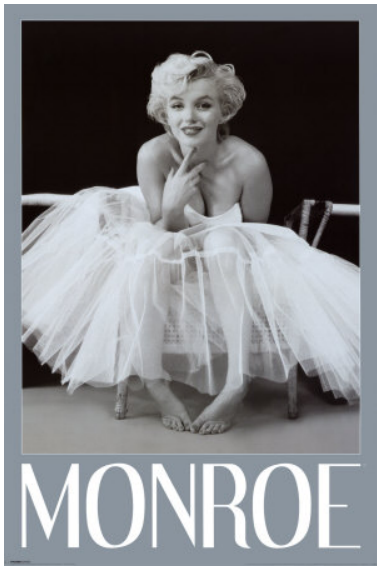


Figure 13: Marilyn Monroe poster by photographer Milton Greene.

Below is an excerpt from our interview in *Patois* (English Creole) and informal Jamaican

Standard English:

DFE: ... So what about the idea of wearing the wigs and the dancehall fashion? How did you come up with some of the styles?

CS: I ... I.. Well I designed all the clothes I wore, and I was always a very sexy individual. From a kid, I was always... they say y'know, I used to be just always in my own little world. I don't bother people, and y'know, I not looking attention from anybody, I just like to feel sexy, and when I dress certain way, I felt sexy..., and so I like to create whatever it is I'm doing, however it is. I like to package things. If I .. If I.. bring you a glass of water, I don't want to just throw it out in the glass and bring it to you. I've always been that kind of person, where everything must... I mean you'd have to see where I live to understand my home. I like to take things from top to bottom making it unique in my own vision. This is how I see it, and this is how I wanna see it. So it comes with the hair, I thought being... being different from my head to my toe, and so that's how I created these looks. I wanted just to be different from head to toe. I wore wigs that some people never even consider putting on dem head. It wasn't to be beautiful or ugly or... it's just different. It's just feeling and being different.

DFE: Did you think of it like ah ... like a role or a character that you were playing, or anything like that?

CS: I wasn't playing... It was me, and ah... and I told people in several interviews that I do have multiple personalities. Thank god none of them is a serial killer or anything like that. (Laugh)

DFE: (Laugh) No.

CS: Right, but I do have multiple personalities... And ... something happens to me when I ...getinto ...a mode. When I get sexy... as I said, it has nothing to do with anybody.... I love dancing, so I used to always create a dance move. From I'm a kid, I used to perform at my school, fetes and functions and...I was dressed differently and it wasn't in a way like, "what the!" It was in a way like "wow!" And it came across, and it grew into me and unto me... and I saw that it worked... and there was this one thing that I wanted to be a household name ... in a... in a ... in my own creation. I wanted to do something that nobody else ever done, and I did.

DFE: Yes

CS: So it was never about... and again, I did not care what people think. (Excerpt from 2011 Telephone Interview with Carlene "The Dancehall Queen" Smith, Appendix D).

Modeling and "profiling" are essential elements in dancehall culture, referred to as "the pleasure of disguising" (Cooper 2004, 127). In Sound Clash: Dancehall Culture At Large (2004), literary and cultural studies scholar Carolyn Cooper argues that in dancehall, "exhibitionism conceals ordinary imperfections. In dancehall world of make-believe, old roles can be contested and new identities assumed. Indeed, the elaborate styling of both hair and clothes is a permissive expression of the pleasures of disguise. In the words of Diva Sandra Lee [a dancehall diva]: 'The [hair] extension[s] add a movie look to us. ... Is like a disguise. I want to look different tomorrow' "(2004, 127). In other words, dancehall patrons and dancers often change their "characters" and roles, and create personae for each dancehall event and in everyday life. Some dancehall patrons go to dancehall just to be seen in dancehall fashion. Ulysse explains that the dancehall fashion is frowned upon by the mainstream culture, and considered "vulgar" and indecent

because it exposes the black female body (156-157). Smith, who designs her outfits, is known for her “bare-as-you-dare” dancehall fashions that include lingerie pieces, lace, fishnet, thigh high boots, leather pieces, and her signature long blond wigs (Stolzoff 110). Stolzoff states that dancehall women, including Smith, are known as dancehall “divas” or “donnettes” because they are known for designing and wearing “x-rated” bare-as-you-dare costumes to dances and dancehall events (110). Dancehall fashion pieces include wigs of all colors, large gold jewelry, mesh tops, and “batty riders,” that are pairs of shorts that show more of the buttocks than it covers (Stolzoff 110). Another signature piece is the “puny printer” which is a pair of tight pants showing the outlines of women’s genitalia (Stolzoff 110).

In Figures 15 and 16 below, Smith is wearing two of her dancehall fashions in a dancehall concert photographed by Lee Abel. As a child, Smith says that she enjoyed “dressing up”, even to the point of having “multiple personalities.” Smith jokes that her “multiple personalities” are “not like being an axe murderer or anything weird like that” (Smith). She explains that something happens when she wears a wig and dancehall fashions, likes “dressing up” in wigs and costumes (Smith).



Figure 14: Carlene The Dancehall Queen dancing on stage at the Reggae Sunsplash Music 1994 by photographer Lee Abel



Figure 15: Carlene “The Dancehall Queen” dancing on stage at the Reggae Sunsplash 1994 by photographer Lee Abel.

In the background is Pinkie who is part of The Dancehall Queen’s “crew,” which is a group of female dancers. Smith’s costumes typically consist of bikini-type costumes and thigh-high or knee-high boots, gloves, lots of glitter and

sequins, shiny fabrics, and any color wig. However, Smith's signature wig is a long blonde wig taking on the character of *La Mulata* in "Dancehall Queen" performance.

Dancehall fashion is not confined to the fashion clashes or parties. Dancehall fashion is worn everywhere in everyday life and events outside of the dancehall event, including funerals, baptisms, graduations, visiting the sick in hospitals, going to PTA meetings at schools, and any and every occasion (Ulysse 165). Ulysse cites fashion commentator Norma Soas about dancehall fashions she observed at a funeral in 1992:

The women seemed to wear every piece of fashionable item they owned – all at once. Baubles, bangles, beads abounded. This was a "let it all hang out affair." No mini was too short, no tights too tight, no chiffon too sheer, no lace too see through. Hot pants were cheek-by-jowl with lace leggings. Feet were shod in everything from Roman sandals to studded boots. Breasts were encased in bustiers and worn with chiffon big-sleeved blouses. Ankles were wrapped in gold chains with longer thicker versions adorning the neck. Over-sized earrings brushed the wearer's shoulders. Uptown people who might think the dress shown here is inappropriate for the occasion do not really understand the ghetto culture which is vibrant in its own right (164).

Ulysse states that it is not usual, for instance, to have Churches, hospitals, police stations, schools issuing notices of appropriate dress codes including no dancehall fashion (165). Smith, however, considers her dancehall as "her job," and does not wear dancehall fashions in her everyday life. Therefore for her "job," Smith crosses to whiteness or white femininity, and in everyday life she resumes as a brown woman.

In my interview excerpt below, Smith explains that dancehall is a "character" that she plays. She states how she "crosses" class, which of course is already raced in Jamaican society. The difference between Smith and other dancehall women is that Smith is really a middle-class brown who can move more freely between classes (including

dancehall), and dancehall women are restricted to lower class without any hope of moving through the classes. Smith performs black liminal displacement by self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing African “masculinity”/European “femininity.” She self-stereotypes black dancehall culture by crossing over to African “masculinity,” stereotyped as “vulgar” in gestures, movement, near-nakedness, and hypersexuality. Below is an excerpt from my 2011 interview with Smith. We speak informally in Patois (English Creole) and Jamaican Standard English about dancehall fashion, race, class and color lines:

DFE: But you know that dancehall people wear their clothes... I mean... anywhere.

CS: Right, and this is the difference between me... my own was a job, and I chose dancehall because, at the time, that’s where I thought the weakness of my country was. ... I, I chose dancehall because I knew,... back then, nobody would expect a “character”.... quoting myself now.... A character to be of... where they state me to be from... the way I look, to represent dancehall, and I knew I would get the attention, because I wasn’t the typical... quote, unquote “Jamaican” who would like dancehall. And as the way I stated, dancehall was a Jamaican thing, not a class or race thing.

DFE: Okay

CS: So I wanted to cross it over to make sure it [dancehall] was a Jamaican thing and all Jamaicans were entitled to enjoy our rich culture of dancehall.

DFE: Okay I understand...because dancehall was typically seen as ... like a class thing.

CS: Ah... inner city or ... a class, definitely, class. If you’re from the countryside, it was the poorer people from the country who would like this [dancehall]

DFE: and also black....dark-skin...

CS: It’s not even the color of your skin, it’s more your class. ... And so it was just, y’know (Excerpt from 2011 Telephone Interview with Carlene “The Dancehall Queen” Smith, Appendix D).

Although Smith is not “dark-skinned,” she claims a “black” identity, possibly to gain access to the black dancehall world. Yet at the same time, Smith consciously or

unconsciously distances herself from the working black masses in dancehall while performing dancehall blackness. Smith performs black liminal displacement by self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing whiteness in the mode European “femininity,” costumed in long blonde wigs, but disrupts, or even “sullies” the presumed “purity” of whiteness by performing black dancehall, and by her very embodiment of *La Mulata*. Smith’s performance of *La Mulata* as “The Dancehall Queen,” the colonial “miscegenated” brown body, is most striking and unabashed in the face of backlash from black scholars and the middle- and upper-classes. Smith’s black liminal displacement, though fluid in Smith’s deliberate racialized “drag” performances of race/class, is still fixed in colonial stereotyping. Racialized gender identities constitute both fluidity and fixities. For even with attempts at fluidity, some audiences (namely colonial ones) will view Smith’s performances as stereotypes. Where-ever inequalities exist among racialized gender identities, stereotypes will still thrive because they are externally constructed.

The Near Nakedness of Dancehall Fashion

Some scholars argue that Smith and other dancehall women are empowered by the near nakedness of black women’s bodies in dancehall fashion. Others are disgusted by the display of black women’s bodies; and yet others argue that black dancehall women denigrate themselves in dancehall. To be clear, dancehall women do not think of themselves as “degraded” and “vulgar.” The black female body is central to dancehall adornment or masquerade. Blackness and the black female body are valued in dancehall culture with maximum exposure. It is in and on the body where dancehall people perform

“freedoms” not necessarily experienced in everyday life of poverty and marginalization. Smith is attracted to this freedom which resists confinement and the acceptance of anyone wanting to participate and perform dancehall. Niaah explains that

Dancehall is used as a space to resist the “other” by revalorizing aspects of the body that are censored in the wider social sphere, including shape, size, age, definition of structure, social classes, races, age groups and genders, all of which have corresponding histories. For example, one remarkable aspect of dancehall culture is the valorization of the steatopygous female, the “buffer zone” (visibly plump pudenda also known as the “buffalous” or “buff bay”), the “mampy” (fat woman) and marky marky belly (a stomach with stretch marks on it), especially as these are exposed through revealing figure-hugging or transparent garments (2010a 136).

Dancehall culture and aesthetics are stereotyped by colonial culture as not “civilized.” Colonial critics cannot stand the sight of black bodies in dancehall; and to think that Smith would join the black bodies and become hypersexualized *La Mulata* as The Dancehall Queen remains quite an issue in Jamaican colonial society. Edmondson even argues how common place it is to see (or not see, as in, not noticed) and the display of marginal black bodies in dancehall and that it is perhaps expected of dark-skinned blacks (2003, 7). But Smith’s “brown” body in the black culture of dancehall is more reviled, even shocking, because of the stereotype of *La Mulata* as desired, yet “socially despised”(Kempadoo 1999, 6).

Poor black women masquerade and disguise out of limited circumstances, poverty, and the lack of opportunities for social mobility. Dancehall fashion yearns to be out of poverty, and looks to self-expression for whatever is considered glamorous, decadent, and gaudy instead of the everyday dearth. Somehow, Smith injects herself in

black dancehall culture as “The Dancehall Queen” because it allows her self-expression to masquerade not allowed in middle and upper class society; in fact, she wants to make it a “Jamaica thing,” not a “class thing” (Smith Interview, Appendix D). Smith’s performance in the media details her expensive fashions, and more than 350 wigs, typical of dancehall’s flair that attracts many dancehall supporters who see her as a status symbol, and possible a way out of poverty.

Some may view Smith as self-degrading. However, Smith adopts dancehall systems of valorizing the body as Niaah explains, and not colonial middle- and upper-class white European values (2010a, 138). Cooper argues that dancehall is misunderstood as “the devaluation of female sexuality” (2004, 125-126). Cooper further posits “women as sexual being claims the right to sexual pleasure as essential signs of her identity. Both fleshy women and their more sinewy sisters are equally entitled to display themselves in the public sphere as queens of revelry” (2004, 126-127). Caribbean feminist scholar Judith Bethelheim in “Women in Masquerade and Performance” (1998) concurs in Caribbean women’s sexuality and “being sexual” in society are repressed by Caribbean patriarchy. Bethelheim asserts that “the female performer uses her sexuality as an active agent,” therefore going against patriarchal structures (69). My reading is that the embodiment of sexuality in dancehall performance is bound in ideas of bodily freedom from repressions. Black women have the right to move and *wine*, and dance and adorn themselves in whatever way they wish in order to experience full freedom of expression in their bodies. In colonial culture, the black and “miscegenated” female body was

enslaved, repressed, and controlled with stereotypes of hypersexuality. Dancehall women parade in near nakedness in reaction to racial and class restrictions on their bodies.

Several scholars criticize the Smith's and other dancehall women's near-nakedness of black and brown bodies as just childlike to expose the body, especially genitalia. Anthropologist Kevin Frank argues in "Female Agency and Oppression in Caribbean Bacchanalian Culture: Soca, Carnival, and Dancehall" (2007) that the "nakedness" in dancehall pageantry "revels in the shamelessly low" (184). Frank somehow equates the display of naked black bodies in dancehall with Freud's notion of infantilism. He further notes that Freud argues that young children expose their bodies especially their genitalia. Frank is convinced that "dancehall girls do seem shameless and indeed appear to take great satisfaction in exposing their bodies, calling special attention to their genitalia" (184). He actually refers to dancehall women as "girls" because they expose their bodies, and especially their genitalia (Frank 184). But Frank clearly infantilizes black women regardless of whether the women call attention to their genitalia or not (184). Genitalia are power. In the limited and fixed circumstances, dancehall's focus on nakedness and genitalia is a site for political agency, no matter how limited it is in the racial and class divisions.

Some are concerned that Smith's and other dancehall women's near-nakedness and simulated sex acts and *winin'*, that they may be the cause rapes and sexual assaults on black women. Ruth Herschberger (1948) was one of the first scholars to argue that "rape is a form of violence involving the personal humiliation of the victim" and that men encouraged other men to participate in violence against women (quoted in Bevacqua 26).

However it was Susan Brownmiller who first made the distinction between rape as violence and not sex (Bevacqua 26). Therefore, rape and sexual assaults are acts of violence against victims, and not the fault of victims. Rapes and sexual assaults do not occur because of what people wear or how they dance. However, Maria Bevacqua in Rapes on the Public Agenda: Feminism and The Politics of Sexual Assault (2000), argues that the colonial stereotype about black women's bodies and sexuality as promiscuous derived in slave society was used to justify rapes and sexual assaults on black women since slavery to the present (Bevacqua 23). Bevacqua illustrates how the

presumption of lasciviousness, historians find, probably had its origin in European men's first travels to Africa where they mistook women's semi-nudity in tropical climates for promiscuity...Furthermore, under slavery, black women were never afforded the same privacy as were white women, so, again, the slaves' more frequently glimpsed semi-nudity was assumed to proclaim, their sexual laxity...In the late nineteenth century, the myth of black women's promiscuity was firmly established in popular imagination and in scholarship. Given this construction of black female's bodies and sexuality, the pattern of assaults on female slaves was at once explained and excused (23).

The near nakedness of Smith's and dancehall women's bodies in dancehall performance is then fixed in the stereotype to control and blame black and brown women for their own, or any other's rapes and sexual assaults for showing their bodies. As a result of a history of rapes during slavery when white slave masters had ownership over black women's bodies, Bevacqua states that "black women possessed an understanding of rape as connected to racism, sexism, and economic oppression, albeit one couched in the protectionist terms of the day" (18). Dominant culture has access to black bodies as a result, and it goes without question even today.

But despite the control and violence against black bodies, I still see black, brown women and men as having the right and agency in dancehall and carnival to “dress-up” and adorn their bodies in dancehall, and to move and dance as they please without blame or shame. In this way, black dancing bodies are empowered in just “being” as they are in dancehall. Smith too responds to the comments and questions in the media about the near nakedness in dancehall fashions being blamed for rapes and sexual assaults. In our 2011 interview, Smith explains her view of the performing near naked body, and disagrees with critics who blame dancehall fashions for rapes and sexual assaults. We speak here below in Patois (English Creole) and informal Jamaican Standard English:

Smith: It doesn't matter if you're clothed or half-clothed, or naked or dress sexy, or dress exposing... because when I did several research on all the rape cases that took place in Jamaica, from way before I was born... None of the rape cases were prostitute...and I'm giving you... none of the rape cases were go-go dancers or exotic dancers... none of the rape cases were people who were dressed a certain way...no exposing any parts of them. These were all... all the cases were... the majority of them were children, and the others were very much clothed women. Because I did a report and I went to the police station, and I worked from there. That was one of my defense to say ...how a man views a woman has nothing to do with how she actually looks.....For the full ten years that I've dressed like that nobody has ever assaulted me .. because it's not how I look; it's how I carried myself... and part of it, they knew it was a job... and it was like my job...that I enjoyed, but it was never that in the middle of the afternoon, I am going to the mall, just a scenario, that I was dressed in any way. I was always in a jeans. People were amazed that they could never see me... out of... “work” dressed the way I was. It was merely for entertainment at the time when it was for that purpose. (Excerpt from 2011 Telephone Interview with Carlene “The Dancehall Queen” Smith, Appendix D).

Smith defends her right and the right of other dancehall women to freely express themselves through valorizing racialized bodies regardless of sanctions and censorship.

Even though dominant culture has stereotyped black and brown bodies as hypersexual and oversexed, I see black and brown bodies in dancehall, adorned to near-nakedness, as inherently and absolutely liberating within the body regardless of how a colonial gaze may construct the fixities in racialized stereotypes. Smith's performance is fluid in the valorizing black and brown bodies within dancehall, but her performance is simultaneously viewed as fixed by the historical stereotype of the black and brown women's bodies as lascivious. Feminist and queer performance scholar Sue-Ellen Case posits that "the notion of the body as a site where contesting discourses converge, rather than as a site for shared identification as 'women', operates as a nodal point for a variety of 'post-disciplinary' works central to critical theory" (107). Case argues that "the nude body – became a site for political and representational change. In the hippie subculture, the grass-roots women's culture, performance practices, and women studies, the naked body offered up, in the costume of a 'moment of truth', both a demand for change and a portrait of a given condition of social oppression" (106). Case refers to the Living Theatre's performance, *Paradise Now* (1968) when the ensemble stripped in public, and the Performance Group staged naked improvisations in the production *Dionysus* in '69. Case also cites Carolee Schneemann's performance art with staging of the nude female body "as exhibiting a specifically female agency, freed from the fetters of patriarchal signification" (106). Case explains that the nude body in the 1960s and 1970s was a utopian site which "stripped away" oppression, and participated in "pleasurable social relations" (106). She notes that the immediacy of the nude body changed from the 1980s to emphasize difference with earlier experiments. Case maintains that "these

performances problematize rather than heroicize the body as a sign of social agency. They aim at producing the effect of social difference, juridical inscriptions, or binary oppositions rather than signaling some sense of an alternative, unified potential for the body to ‘mean’ and do” (107).

Smith’s brown body is no different from Case’s analysis. But while the near nakedness of Smith’s body may be empowering for her and others, some audiences will see the stereotype of the racialized “miscegenated” body as hypersexual and particularly “queer” and threshold. Smith then self-stereotypes blackness as hypersexual in dancehall culture. This deliberate self-stereotyping is of course somewhat fluid because it is self-directed. Smith self-caricatures through the heightened spectacle with wigs and costumes. However, Smith’s performance is not solely fluid because it is also viewed as a colonial construct that fixes color hierarchies where inequalities exist.

Dancehall Queen Competitions

With Smith’s influence and the phenomenon of the dancehall queen, the first ever International Dancehall Queen Competition was held in Montego Bay, Jamaica in 1998. The first international winner of the International Dancehall Competition was Junko, a Japanese woman, who came to Jamaica to compete and won the title of Dancehall Queen in 2002 (Sterling 101; Edmondson 2009, 191). Since then, the International Dancehall Queen competition has attracted dancers from the United States, Canada, England, Germany, Guadeloupe, Belize, Trinidad and Tobago, Sweden, Hungary, Japan, and of course, Jamaica all vying for the crown of Dancehall Queen. The competition features fashion and dance segments (DVD International Dancehall Queen Vol.5 Part 1, 2007).

International Dancehall Queen Competitions attract women from Italy, France, the United States, Guadeloupe, and Germany to compete with Jamaican dancers. Several eliminations are held across the United States and Europe for the selected dancers to compete in the International Dancehall Queen Competition in Jamaica (Sterling 101; Edmondson 2009, 191).

DFE: So what you think about the Queens... “The Dancehall Queen”... the competitions?

CS: That always exist from I was... before I was in the system....It was dancehall dancing, right? -competition, and I’m sorry that when I stopped as “Dancehall Queen” that I’m not “Dancehall Queen” because I consider that a title, always have....Um... because I created it, y’know... and when I see they took it because of a monetary state back to this level, it upset me because people... a lot of people are disgusted by what it is [dancehall queen competition].

DFE: Really?

CS: Yeah! They see how the girls perform... and ...and ...the way they look... and carry themselves, it’s like back to where it was ... to dancehall dancing. ... because they just... they just ride on the “Dancehall Queen” because that was the high note... and they were trying to ... they were trying to sell it.... And so they did by using... but it’s a dancehall dancing... the way the girls carry themselves, it’s no different from an exotic club. ...it’s nothing to it. It’s just girls dancing... any way they... I mean...any way they can... Secondly, I never rivalry with dancehall... my aim was to... I used to have a fashion clash... right, right...that’s how I started it. I used to clash with “uptowners”... the Pulse models, the Spartan models... that’s who I took on... I never clash dancehall because I was showing dancehall had class. I was trying to tell people dancehall is important... dancehall is part of our culture... we don’t have to do certain things to be dancehall. So when they took it back to this... this... I think it’s disgusting.... I think they just take the “Queen” off of it, and just call it “Dancehall Competition.”

DFE: A dance competition

CS: because we used to have it before... I remember when I lived in New York, and as a kid, I saw this team once, and it was some Jamaicans and Americans dancehall dance competition and they were on... y’know, hitting them privates [genitalia] on the ground... I’ve never danced like that... the things that people want to do... like you know I invented the “butterfly”

DFE: Yes, the “butterfly.”... So I want to ask you...

CS: ... and several others [dances] (Excerpt from 2011 Telephone Interview with Carlene “The Dancehall Queen” Smith, Appendix D).

Although Smith performs in dancehall culture, she still distinguishes her act from other performers. She ironically attempts to blur Jamaica’s rigid class and color lines, and believes that she brings a touch of “class” dancehall.

“Dancehall Queen” and “Dancehall King” titles were originally given to dark-skinned black women and men in black working class community dance competitions (Niaah 2010a, 138). These competitions never made the news in Jamaican society. Dancehall dance competitions took place in the confines of the inner city “ghettos” of Kingston away from “uptown” Kingston’s and St. Andrew’s middle and upper-class society. Niaah points out that dark-skinned black women and the title of “Dancehall Queen” did not gain national attention until Smith was declared “The Dancehall Queen” in the media (2010a 138). Niaah claims that of the bona fide community dancehall dancers she interviewed in her study, modeling or “profiling,” like that done by Smith, is only secondary to dance skills (2010a 137). Unlike Smith who never competed for the title of “Dancehall Queen,” Niaah states that Denise Cumberland won the title of “Dancehall Queen Stacey,” by dancing for it in the first ever International Dancehall Queen Competition in 1999, and reigned to 2002 (Niaah 2010a 138). Dancehall Queen Stacey is slim, tall and dark-skinned with phenomenal dance skills and she is from the dancehall community (Niaah 2010a 138). Dancehall Queen Stacey states that dancehall “is not modeling, not hype again, just enjoyment and everybody together uniting (Niaah 2010b 135). But Smith’s purpose is to reinvent the image of *La Mulata* to cult status as

“The Dancehall Queen” unearthing the unspoken and unremarked fixities in “shadism” color casting and race in Jamaican society.

In her performance in The Jamaica Star, a popular newspaper, Smith states that “accept it or not, I am the undisputed original Dancehall Queen and that cannot be disputed” (The Jamaica Star). Smith says that “what we currently have are dancehall dancers.” She says that what is missing is the keen fashion sense (The Jamaica Star). Smith is the undisputed reigning Dancehall Queen with no need to compete for the title. However, other Dancehall Queen hopefuls competed in the competition, and Jamaica, Denise Cumberland won the title of Dancehall Queen, as “Dancehall Queen Stacey,” and she reigned to 2002. Dancehall Queen Stacey is slim, tall and dark-skinned with phenomenal dance skills (Niaah 2010a, 138). She does not endure the criticism and descriptions of her body like Smith. However like Smith, Stacey gained fame from dancing at dance events and in music videos in the Caribbean and internationally.

However, in my interview with Smith, and in the media, she declares herself to be *the* original Dancehall Queen who created it; and that before and after her, dancehall dancers are not really “queens” and “kings,” they are dancers in dance competitions (Smith Interview, Appendix D). What Smith really means is that she thinks she created the flair of being “The Dancehall Queen,” and that before her, no other “browning” had taken on the title. Besides, Smith’s journey to dancehall culture was through fashion clashes, not through inner city community dance competitions usually reserved for dark-skinned blacks. However, Smith created a number of dancehall dances including the butterfly dance, and popularized the head top dance. Ironically, Smith criticizes other

“queens” for being “disgusting” in their erotic dancing, and for not “carrying” themselves well, that I think shows her middle class scorn of dancehall women, while at the same time participating in some of the more glamorous parts of dance hall “dress up” (Smith Interview, Appendix D). She even suggests that community “dancehall queens” lack the flair for fashion; and that they should just take the “Queen” out of the title and call it a “dancehall dance competition.”

Colonial Mimicry, Skin Bleaching – *Blanquemento* (“Whitening”) by Some Dark-skinned Beauties

Smith’s image, *La Mulata* as “The Dancehall Queen,” is a performance of colonial mimicry, “the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*” (Bhabha 127). Contrary to the meaning of “mimicry,” which is imitating another person, colonial mimicry is a power relationship that repeatedly mocks racial ambivalence, for example in Smith’s racialized identities (Bhabha 127). Colonial mimicry is not about “natives” imitating and desiring to be white, which is a colonial derisive statement about colonial subjects’ “miscegenation.” Colonial mimicry applies to Smith’s performance as *La Mulata* as “The Dancehall Queen” because of her multi-ethnic African Jamaican and white German backgrounds that carries stereotypical codes for her image as “browning” (*La Mulata*). Mimicry is a performance of colonial domination on “miscegenated” bodies like that of Smith. It is a repetition of power over hybrid, “miscegenated” bodies that are ridiculed or puzzled by miscegenated bodies as being “*almost the same but not white*” and not whole or “pure” (Bhabha 127).

An example of how colonial mimicry works is in Bhabha's discussion of Sigmund Freud's curious remarks about the "mixed," *La Mulata*, Creole: "Their mixed and split origin is what decides their fate. We may compare them with individuals of mixed race who taken all round resemble white men but who betray their coloured descent by some striking feature or other and on that account are excluded from society and enjoy none of the privileges" (Sigmund Freud quoted in Bhabha 127). Bhabha refers to this moment as the mimicry as ambivalence, the ambiguity that must be pinned down in one or the other (128). It should be noted that ambivalence and ambiguity are not automatically fluid because they are open to being stereotyped through colonial mimicry.



Figure 16: Carlene "The Dancehall Queen" and daughter Crystal, photographer Winston Mills. published in Mills, Claude. "Lisa and Carlene – Candid on Motherhood." The Flair Magazine, May 5, 2003, 17.

During the 1990s, there was a growing and alarming trend for dark-skinned black women to try look just like Smith with "light-skin" and a full, "plump" figures. Several

dark-skinned beauties bleached their skin to look as “brown” as Smith; and some even took hormone pills, otherwise called “chicken or fowl pills,” to gain full figures like Smith’s (Barnes 102). Some scholars argue that skin-bleaching is self-hatred and self-negation for having dark skins, and in trying to mimic whiteness. However, as colonial mimicry, dancehall’s skin-bleaching trend reveals the effects of race and color casting on blacks who attempt to lighten dark skins to move up the social and economic ladder of race and color-castes. Colonial mimicry perpetuates the power structure by ridiculing the “miscegenated,” and in this case, the dark-skinned women who attempt to look “browner” or “whiter.” As a result, Thomson states that

the island’s class and racial divides remained stubbornly in place. The problem of the colour-line continues to haunt Jamaica. The lighter your complexion, the more privileged you are likely to be. An insidious “shadism” has ensured that a minority of white (or near white: what Jamaicans call “local white”) inhabitants still control the plantations and other industries, while the black population remains separated from the by the powerlessness or poverty of their lives (5).

hooks states that racialized “drag” in color casting is about black women stereotypically coded as “masculine” in attempts to cross over to be “feminine” which is “to look like a white female in a space only a brown-skinned black woman can occupy.” (128). She considers this phenomenon as internalized racism which points to self-hatred of black “looks” in favor of whiteness. However, hooks’s analysis limits the ability of blacks to comment on racialized constructions in and on their bodies; and suggests that any deviation from what is considered “black” could lead to accusations of internalized racism.

In another context, racialized “drag” in Caribbean carnival crossdressing, for example, is more than symbolic and not always about attempting to look like a white female (King 2005, 30). Racialized “drag” in a Caribbean context can be a statement about stereotypical constructions of racialized gender on black female bodies. Niaah explains that skin bleaching is “far from being a signal of self-negation, it is an opportunity grasped by those who feel disenfranchised by dark skins” (2010a 49). What Niaah really means is that the skin-bleaching trend finally reveals an unspoken and denied effect of Jamaica’s color casting, and a clear sign of the lack of social mobility that led to some dark-skinned blacks’ racial crisis. This proves the impact of inequalities and colonial stereotypes that hold racialized gender identities in place, and therefore, this aspect of racialized gender remains fixed because of inequalities.

A fluidity of identities, long associated with multi-ethnicity, denies inequalities among intra- and inter-raced groups. Studying race in the Caribbean in an essentialized white/black model is passé because it is along color casting of skin colors called “shadism.” By closely examining “shadism” in the Caribbean, I reveal how performing race is more complex in inter- and intra-race relations. “Shadism” and color casting illustrate a highly sophisticated knowledge of how colonial race structures have left an indelible scar on racialized gender identities fixated on whitening dark skins in dancehall culture. Like Trinidad’s “All Ah We is One,” Jamaica’s motto, “Out of Many One People,” privileges multi-ethnicity as an ideal over dark-skinned blacks who are made invisible on the color-caste scale (Cooper 2010b). Complexity in this case is not fluidity

in any stretch of the imagination. Complexity in shadism is about fixing dark-skinned blacks at the bottom of skin color hierarchies.

Many dark-skinned dancehall women aspire to move up the color caste scale to “brownness” as a way to get even a measure of social mobility, and to be *smaddy* (the Creole term for “somebody”) (Niaah 2010a, 49; Barnes 103). Niaah explains that the Creole term *smadditizin’* means “becoming somebody,” and used frequently among dancehall people (2010a, 49). *Smadditizin’* is a belief and process of acquiring an identity by being “seen” or visible in the public sphere (Niaah 2010a, 49). If being “brown” is the only way to be visible in a color caste society, then there is a distinct problem. Skin bleaching debunks the myth of “fluidity” because fluidity suggests the freedom to change, shift, and mobility for dark-skinned and blackness. This suggests that dark-skinned blacks perceive themselves, and are perceived as invisible in the color-caste Jamaican society, and therefore fixed in the lack of opportunities (Niaah 2010a, 49). Anthropologist Natasha Barnes in Cultural Conundrum: Gender, Race, Nation, and the Making of Caribbean Cultural Politics (2006) interviews a dark-skinned dancehall woman, Sheri Roth, who explains: “I know that they [skin bleaching crèmes] can do bad to your skin but I have nothing to lose in wanting to become a *brownin’*. I am poor and bored and being whiter would make me happier... I want people to thin that I am more than a ghetto girl... I want to walk into dancehalls and feel like a movie star, a white one” (quoted in Barnes 103). In the same way that Smith looks to American film stars like Audrey Hepburn and Marilyn Monroe for their movie star glamor, Sheri Roth wants to emulate “white” movie star glamor as a way out of the everyday marginalizing poverty

below the racial and social ladder and be *smaddy* (somebody). Smith as “The Dancehall Queen,” regaled in blonde wigs, “light-skin,” to “movie star” status, has been blamed for the skin-bleaching trend among dark-skinned blacks, at least at the local level in Jamaica.

In my interview with Smith, she quickly denies that skin-bleaching has anything to do with her; and I am not saying that Smith is responsible for skin-bleaching because of her image as *La Mulata*, “The Dancehall Queen.” But when some dark-skinned black women take “chicken pills” (hormone pills) to gain full figures like Smith’s, then skin bleaching is more than just a coincidence. Below, Smith remarks that skin-bleaching is about dark-skinned women not “loving themselves,” and about their “upbringing” in homes that do not value blackness. We speak here informally in Patois (English) and Jamaican Standard English:

DFE: So I want to ask you... What you think about the girls bleaching their skin?

Smith: Oh, I’ve been... I’ve been blamed for that... and I’ve been on campaigns to say, “you can’t blame me for being the complexion I am because God gave me this... I did not use something to get it”.... So for somebody else to... for somebody else to, to, to have to do something to change their color... that, that has nothing to do with me. Y’know, if I look one way, and I’m how God made me... you can’t blame me for it.

DFE: Hmm mmm...and the girls want to use the hormone pills, the “chicken pills” and stuff, to gain weight, and...

Smith: No, I don’t even know what they not doing and what they doing

DFE: Yeah, yeah

Smith: And as I said, it is stemming from your household. This is stemming from how you were brought up... “*Yu see ‘ow you damn ‘ead dry!*” [See how nappy your hair is]. I’ve heard people say this to children, and I’m like... why are you telling her that? “*See ‘ow you favor yu popa!*” [See how you look like your father!] ...That’s usually not in a good way... I often intercept that and, and, and get mad... You’re building a complex to the child at this age. So what you think... as she gets to certain age, her hair has to change... and if she ever could afford it, the nose would have to change... and her breasts will have to change and her bottom and her

everything else ...that she has been... grown to understand... is a fault.
(Excerpt from 2011 Telephone Interview with Carlene “The Dancehall Queen” Smith, Appendix D).

As disturbing as it is for some dark-skinned black women to resort to skin bleaching for any chance of fluidity along the color caste line for social mobility, it nevertheless reveals racializing structures inherited from slavery and colonialism. Color casting in dancehall holds racialized gender identities (dark-skinned black people) fixed in place at the bottom of the race/class hierarchy. It would seem, however, that Niaah (2010a), Cooper (2004) and Barnes (2006) have denied the psychic damage on some black dancehall women who try to become “brown” or “whiter.” But Niaah, Cooper and Barnes defend dark-skinned dancehall women, always in staunch support of their deep-seated reasons for changing their skin color to “brown” in order to reveal processes of racism in colonial culture even after fifty years of Independence from white British rule. Niaah and Barnes, for example, consider skin-bleaching by dark-skinned women in dancehall to be equivalent to putting on a “costume” of browning or whiteness as a way out of everyday realities (Barnes 13), similar to white women donning the popular “mulatresse” costumes including bronzing their skins to look “brown” in nineteenth century Trinidad carnival (Franco 74; Hill 1997, 40). Nineteenth century white women wore a simplified version of the Martinican or mulatresse dress, which was a black Creole fancy dress with lots of sparkling gold jewels, head wraps with broaches, bodice and tucked skirt at the waist with exposed laced underskirt (Franco 65-66). White women fantasized about being *La Mulata*, “desired by white men,” because *La Mulata* was considered a symbol of erotic sexuality and white women wanted to play *La Mulata*,

if only during carnival times (Harris 110). However, unlike the nineteenth century white women who put on mulatresse costume to look brown, today's dark-skinned black dancehall women put on the "costume" of skin-bleaching in the hopes of becoming permanently "brown" as a way out of their fixed positions in the rigid race/color hierarchy.

As a dance and fashion movement, dancehall influences popular film, including the movie Dancehall Queen (1997), which is the story of a black working class woman who competes and wins the Dancehall Queen title in an inner city dance competition. The movie is directed by Don Letts and Rick Elgood, and the lead character is played by actress Audrey Reid. In figure 9, Reid is featured on the movie poster wearing a blond wig, a signature costume piece for the Dancehall Queen.

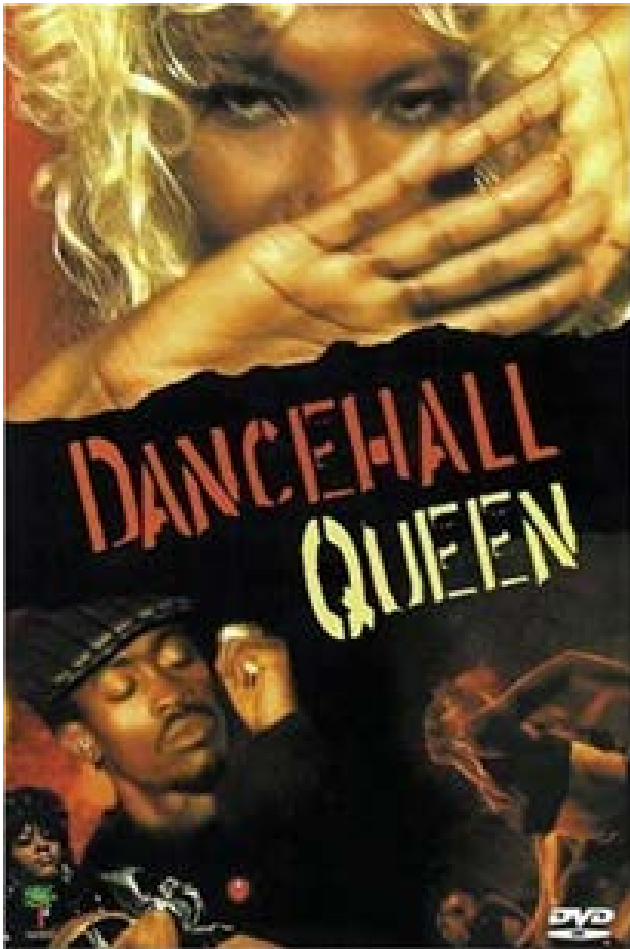


Figure 17: Poster and VHS cover for “Dancehall Queen” original 1997 movie and later in digital Videodisc format, 2009 - Elgood, Rick, and Don Letts, dir. Dancehall Queen. Perf. Audrey Reid, Carl Davis, Paul Campbell, Mark Danvers, and Cherine Anderson. Digital Video Disk. Lions Gate, 2009.

All things and anything “black,” “African,” and “miscegenated” (impure) were, and still devalued by colonial culture across the Caribbean in stereotypical codes (Reddock 1999, 574). As long as stereotypes and inequalities persist, racialized gender identities cannot really be fluid alone. Of course, fluidity is self-directed and conscious; but colonial stereotyping holds racialized gender identities in place. Identities therefore are both fluidity and fixity simultaneously because fluidity is in the realm of the

performer, and fixity is a construct in stereotyping outside of racialized performers. The problem of an inherited racial color casting since the sorting of enslaved Africans during slavery by the “purity of blood” was, and still being played out in various Caribbean masquerades.

By using postcolonial theory, feminist scholars observe historical racialized, sexualized and gendered codes for “masculinity” and “femininity” in current debates about black and brown Caribbean female body. I am employing postcolonial theory in the racialized, sexualized gendered codes for “masculinity” and “femininity” on the black Caribbean female body. In Table 2, I show stereotypical codes for blackness, brownness and whiteness based on postcolonial feminists.

Racialized	Gendered	Sexualized	Classed
Blackness or Africanness	“Masculinity” – Vulgar, Uncouth, Unrefined	Hypersexual, erotic, exotic	Lower class
“Mixed Race,” Brown, La Mulata	“Masculinity”	Hypersexual, Erotic, Exotic, “oversexed”	Middle class
Whiteness or Europeanness	“Femininity,” “The Pinnacle of Femininity” Lady like, refined “Lady” as opposed to “Woman”	Purity	Upper class

Table 2: Stereotypical Codes for “Masculinity” and “Femininity” in Smith’s Dancehall *Transvestism*

Performance II - The Dancehall “Stage Show”



Figure 18: Cover of the VHS Reggae Dancehall Showcase with “Catch the Back Front & Side of Dancehall Queen Carlene,” 1995.

I watched a video of Smith’s performance at a dancehall event in 1995 called Reggae Dancehall Showcase in Miami, Florida, featuring deejays Galaxy P and Gringo, and dancers Smith and Pinky, a dancer who regularly performed with Smith. As mentioned earlier, dancehall women performed in “crews.” The selector or toaster was “Weepow” from Stone Love sound system, and the event was billed with “Catch the Back, Front & Side View of Dancehall Queen Carlene and the Crew,” signifying the

spectator event of Smith's body, and exhibitionism of *La Mulata* or browning as the main attraction.

The video started showing black patrons of all ages at the event standing around and dancing to a mix of the latest and past dancehall and reggae music hits including Beenie Man, Buju Banton, Shabba Ranks, Super Cat, and Bob Marley. The setting looked like a big indoor hall with a high stage for WeePow's turntables and microphones. People were standing by the wings and behind WeePow on stage. The rest of the audience was in front of the stage dancing and milling about in a thick crowd. People cheered, danced and sang when the WeePow changed the records at the turntable, toasting the crowd.

People were dressed up for the occasion, but some wore dancehall fashions including the women who wore platinum blond wigs, plastic see-through short skirts with thongs, and matching tops and boots. Others wore billowing sleeves, wigs of different colors and styles, super short shorts and miniskirts, sequins, glitter and dark glasses. I observed some young men with bleached blond hair with black see-through outfits. Others wore big shirts and pants. Everyone's postures reflected that they were at the place to be seen. I noticed groups of women or "crews." When the cameras came around, the women started dancing even more to the camera, while some men were standing by watching the women. Other men danced in their groups separate from the women.

Then deejays Galaxy P came on stage for his performance, and everyone turned their attention to the stage for his performance. The crowd showed disapproval and boos for Galaxy P's lyrics and performance because he failed to entertain the crowd. WeePow

then introduced Carlene “The Dancehall Queen” and Pinky for their first appearance on the video, stating that the dancers “will let the men in the crowd leave their women for Smith and Pinky.” The camera showed a section of the crowd glued to the stage when Smith and Pinky appeared. Pinky was first onstage wearing a silver, shiny, frilly cropped short sleeve blouse, a short full skirt with frills, below-the-knee boots, and black hair extensions in one braid from the nape of the neck to mid-back. Pinky appeared to be Smith’s sidekick because Smith was the main attraction for the show. Smith entered the stage wearing a black strapless bustier top and a full silver frilly short skirt with silver underwear attached; thigh high black boots, and her signature long mid-back platinum blond wig with a long fringe.

Smith and Pinky moved around the stage in dancehall pageantry in costume and dance. However, the spotlight was on Smith as the main attraction in the event. Their staged performance lasted no longer than a minute, and was more of a teaser for the audience. Pinky stayed mostly to the side while Smith dominated the stage area. Both dancers started together and then broke away to do separate dances in their spaces on stage. Smith’s dance consisted of dancehall steps. Then both Smith and Pinky exited the stage showing the audience dancing.

Gringo then took the stage and was cheered for his mostly homophobic lyrics towards gay men and told the men in the crowd to “put up both hands if you don’t fuck man,” which reflected the genre and mood of the crowd to be “schooled” in men’s heterosexual desire. Gringo ended his performance with the crowd cheering. In Smith’s and Pinky’s second appearance, the dancers changed their costumes to what Weepow

called “x-rated” style. Smith and Pinky appeared in an even more exposed costume that revealed more of their bodies. Smith entered the stage wearing a black cape that she removed to reveal a transparent sequined one-piece black swim suit costume. The one-piece suit was high cut showing Smith’s full thighs and much of her genitals, while the thong at the back showed all of her buttocks with thigh-high black boots. Smith’s platinum blond wig was pinned up, and she wore long sparkly earrings. Pinky wore a black transparent top and skirt with a thong and black tennis shoes. Her hair was black extensions in one braid from the nape of the neck to mid-back.

Smith moves her hips forward, while *winin’* and exposing her genital area, while her back was backward until she touched the ground. On the ground, Smith did the head-top dance that she created and popularized. Smith put the top of head on the ground, while *winin’* her pelvis in the air, and lifting one leg up and apart while the other leg was on the ground. Smith turned her back to the crowd again showing all of her buttocks while wining. Pinky was doing similar dances, but off to the side giving Smith the stage. Then both Smith and Pinky left the stage.

When the camera showed sections of the audience, the crowd was looking on and watching in stunned silence, even shock. Weepow called for an encore for Smith to reappear on stage. Within a few seconds, Smith appeared on stage crawling on her hands and feet towards the crowd to continue the dance on the ground. The camera showed a section of the crowd with black, dark-skinned women as dancehall queen-hopefuls wearing the similar platinum wigs and dancehall fashions of transparent plastic blouses, short skirts with thongs, and boots, performing to the camera. Other women wore

dancehall fashions with different color wigs and accessories. The video ended with patrons leaving the hall singing, dancing and talking as they went outside.

Dancehall Dance and African-Derived Forms

In this performance, I focus on dancehall dance and movement on stage.

Dance scholar L'Antoinette Stines in "Does The Caribbean Body Daaance or Daunce? An Exploration of Modern Contemporary Dance From a Caribbean Perspective" (2005), makes distinctions between *daaance* as African-derived dance in dancehall; and *daunce* (pronounced with an exaggerated British accent) for European dance forms (45-46). The distinctions between daaance and daunce relate to Jamaica's colonial color/class and the prejudices against African-derived dance forms in colonial cultures (45). Stines states that dancehall is a "revolution" against Jamaica's color-casting class structure which leaves dark-skinned blacks grossly marginalized and light-skinned blacks, other ethnicities and whites as middle- and upper-classes. Stines points out that

the Dancehall revolution implemented through music, lyrics, fashion and movement is a construct that emerged and created a 21st century Jamaican identity superceding ancient African dominance of the 20th century indigenous Jamaican daaance. The dancehall revolution is a synthesis of ancestral presence, media influences, foreign infiltrations, and traditional memories as the evolutionary and revolutionary (evo-revo) tools of resistance against Jamaica's unwieldy class structure" (45).

Dancehall dance is derived from Junkunnu dances that include African-derived dancing, and the fanciful Junkunnu Set Girls, Queen Party, Brag and Buru traditions performed after the Emancipation of slavery to the present (Ryman 115). Junkunnu was known for *winin'* dances, *transvestism*, hetero- , homo-erotic sexual horseplay and simulated sex

acts in dances that British colonial elites called Junkunnu dances “vulgar,” and “degrading ”(Senior 85).

During the “stage show,” Smith performs her signature move, the butterfly with bent knees and a forward and backwards thrust of the pelvis to open and close her knees like a butterfly. Smith has been credited for creating the dancehall butterfly dance in the 1990s (Walker 55-56). In “Dance Inna Dancehall: Roots of Jamaica’s Popular Dance Expressions,” dance scholar Christopher Walker explains the Smith’s butterfly dance similar to the step performed by the Junkunnu character Pitchy Patchy (55-56). Walker illustrates the butterfly in Junkunnu and Smith’s performance:

The torso is bent slightly forward. The pitchy patchy inward and outward knee movement are fast and determined to give shards of fabric hanging from the costume a life of their own. The action in the butterfly carves inward and outward, creating what seems like an abstraction of the graceful butterfly wings. The pelvis is an important part of this movement. The heels quickly lift from the ground as the buttocks are tossed backward and up at the start of the movement and then proceed fluidly in contraction with the inward movement of the knees. A hyperextended release on the outward movement begins the backward toss again (55-56).

Ryman observes that other dancehall dances consist of the Junkunnu aesthetics of dancehall *transvestism* (100). Many dancehall men crossdress to women and perform simulated sex acts even on the floor (Ryman 110). Women dress up in what I call racialized “drag” in crossing race to brownness or whiteness with blonde wigs and extensions like Smith’s. (Ryman 110) So too does Niaah who argues that African continuities in dancehall dances consists of the “emphasis on the beat and on natural bends – elbow, head pelvis, torso, and knees ... in the movement pattern, as documented in various African dances” (2010b 134). Dance scholar Welsh Asante observes the seven

foundations in African dances found in dancehall dances that include polyrhythm, polycentrism, memory, holism, multidimensionality and curvilinearity (in Niaah 2010b, 134-135).



Figure 19: Jamaican dancer Annet Richard Binns in Junkunnu character dance costume for Pitchy Patchy. Binns is doing a typical butterfly dance, popularized by Smith in dancehall dance. Photo: Jim Rowbotham.

African-derived *winin'*, as discussed in Chapter Two in Belfon's carnival crossdressing, is derived from African dances (Martin 294). African-derived *winin'* is the fluid rotation of the pelvis performed in alone or in physical contact front or back with others in homo-erotic or hetero-erotic dances (Martin 294). Among dancehall enthusiasts, the Junkunnu aesthetic and African-derived *winin'* are fully acceptable. However, among the colonial elites (including middle and upper classes), criticize dancehall performers as just plain "vulgar." Africanness and black dance forms were, and still are, stereotypically coded as "masculine," which means "vulgarity," and "oversexed" in colonial imagination because of the freedom in the black body (Kempadoo 2004, 36) . Therefore, despite the black "fluidity" in African-derived dance forms and Junkunnu aesthetic, blackness is

viewed and constructed in the stereotype of hypersexuality used to fix black and brown identities.

The Queen Party is a women's party with a mysterious Queen dressed in the most elaborate and fancy clothes and veil covering her face. The Queen is accompanied by her daughters and grand-daughters with "auctions" for the Queen's entrance and then for a peek under her veil and for the Queen's exit (Ryman 114). Brag is the processional dance performed by the company Queen and entourage. Two attendants hit sticks over the Queen's head as she dances to the place of festivities (Ryman 115). Buru is another closely related form coming out of the Set Girls tradition. Buru is the musical ancestor of Jamaica's mento, ska, reggae, including dancehall. The Buru masquerade has a female fertility effigy, called Mada Lundy followed young female dancers. They would start in the morning and process to the homes of important community leaders dancing and singing until they end in the town center. Ryman observes that the women in Mada Lundy's (effigy) entourage

unashamedly display provocative pelvic movements. The rolling, seductive Buru rhythm, resonating from the fundeh and repeater drums, demands no less of the dancers. The front foot flat on the ground with the back foot on the ball of the foot and rotating pelvises punctuated by small hops in sync with the slap of the fundeh drum are broken up by purposeful and continuous pelvic rotations as the young dancers slowly descend to the ground, and only to ascend to their original position in one emphatic movement, a hop (115).

African-derived *winin'* is seen as a sign of fertility, preparation for child-birth, and "uphill walks especially with heavy contents on the head" for rural women (Ryman 115;

Niaah 135). Yet at the same time, colonial elites have stereotyped all things black, and all things African.

Dancehall “Crews” and Set Girls in Color-Caste Junkunnu

Dancehall and Smith’s character as “The Dancehall Queen” are strangely reminiscent of Junkunnu “sets” of skin gradations and dancehall “crews,” that are groups of dancehall women in fashion class competitions and dancehall patrons (Ryman 130). Skin gradations, color casting, and “shadism” are nothing new in contemporary dancehall culture. In the early 1990s, dancehall DJ Buju Banton sang the song “*Mi Love Mi Browning*,” which is about the “browning” as an object of desire – like his car, money, bike, but his browning is his most prized possession. “*Mi love mi car, mi love mi bike, mi love mi money and ting/ But most of all, mi love mi browning/ Love mi car, love mi bike, love mi money and ting/ But most of all mi love mi browning*”(Banton quoted in Mohammed 2000, 34). Banton’s song stirred some debates and controversy among blacks who felt that Banton had devalued black women with his public desire for brown women. Banton responded with the song, *Mi Nu Stop Cry Fi All Black Woman* (I can’t stop crying for all black women), which is an acknowledgement of racial abuse and yet giving due respect to dark-skinned black women (Mohammed 2000, 35). “*Black is beauty, oonu colour is one inna million/ Have it from birth, a natural suntan, smooth like a lotion/ Take care of your complexion/ Don’t get me wrong, mi respect black woman*” (quoted in Mohammed 2000, 33). These dancehall songs explain the impact of color casting of browns and blacks reminiscent of the Set Girls in Junkunnu masquerades and songs.

Smith's dancehall *transvestism* is coded crossing from brown woman or a "light-skinned" black woman to white "femininity" in the persona of "The Dancehall Queen," and who performs in the black working class dancehall culture. In Smith's staged *transvestism* as "The Dancehall Queen," she crosses racialized, sexualized and gendered codes "masculinity" and "femininity." I have devised a racialized, sexualized gender binary of African masculine/European feminine, based on scholars' observations of "masculinity" and "femininity" codes on the Caribbean black female body, to analyze Smith's staged *transvestism*. Using black or African masculine/white or European feminine codes in dancehall *transvestism*, Smith crosses racialized genders from a black or brown woman to the persona of a white woman as "The Dancehall Queen." With this crossing, Smith carries the racialized, sexualized and gendered codes for "masculinity" and "femininity" on the black (brown) female body which is expected to be "feminine." In crossing to "The Dancehall Queen," Smith's racialized gender identity is still seen as brown (in the range of blackness) with all the gestures, movement, dance, signs and codes that signify stereotypical meanings for brownness or *La Mulata* which signifies hypersexuality, eroticism and exoticism (Kempadoo 2004, 7).

When shifts occur on Smith's body between anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance, each shift contains stereotypes of African "masculine," *La Mulata*, and European "feminine." Smith performs black liminal displacement, which is the self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing of colonial stereotypes and caricatures of Africanness, *La Mulata*, and Europeanness. Smith's performance in itself is fluid because she deliberately self-stereotypes and self-caricatures these colonial stereotypes; but her

performance is simultaneously fixed in colonial stereotyping based on the backlash against Smith's brownness from colonial culture of the middle and upper class society. Self-stereotyping is a practice of endorsing stereotypes from a group. Smith endorses the stereotypes about dancehall people including the masquerade of "skin color" and dressing up. Smith performs self-caricaturing, which is taking on caricatures of *La Mulata* as desired and in the spotlight as "The Dancehall Queen."

Table 3 below illustrates how I apply Butler's schema for drag performance to Smith's dancehall *transvestism* using stereotypical codes for "masculinity" and "femininity" on the black female body in dancehall *transvestism*.

Butler's Schema for Drag Performance	Carlene "The Dancehall Queen" Smith's Dancehall <i>Transvestism</i>
Anatomical Sex	Brown (Black) Female
Gender Identity	Brown (Black) woman
Gender Performance	Brown (Black) woman crosses to white woman in the white feminine persona of "The Dancehall Queen"
Performance Genre	Jamaican Dancehall <i>Transvestism</i>
Stereotypes/Caricatures	<i>La mulata</i> - Black, brown or "mixed" woman as hypersexual, "exotic," "erotic," figure of "prostitute" White femininity as "ideal femininity"
Black Liminal Displacement as Self-Stereotypes and Self-Caricatures	African Masculinity/European Femininity
Costumes, Gestures, Repetition, Audience's perception	Blond wigs and for whiteness; and "hypersexual" costumes for blackness

Table 3: Performance Analysis Chart showing Butler's Schema for Staged *Transvestism* applied to Smith's Dancehall *Transvestism*

Therefore, Smith's anatomical sex is female. Smith's gender identity is a brown woman, which is a mix of African and European decent. Smith self-identifies as "a black girl" or "a shade of black" (Interview). In the Caribbean context, it is understood that

brownness is in the continuum of blackness (Terborg-Penn 8). As a black woman who is light-skinned, Smith simultaneously crosses races and genders to white femininity in the persona of “The Dancehall Queen.” Smith wears blond wigs and provocative, risqué costumes showing a lot of skin, and appears to be sadomasochistic with lace, leather pieces, and leather boots. In this case, blackness and brownness signifies the colonial stereotype of “masculinity” as a racial characteristic which means “uncouth,” “vulgar.” Brownness is further sexualized as hypersexual, “erotic” and “exotic” (Kempadoo 2004, 1-4, 36-38).

Performance III - Slam Condoms for the “Wickedest Ride”

In this performance, Smith is featured on the cover image of Slam Condom from the mid-1990s. Slam Condom is the brainchild of Chinese Jamaican entrepreneur Victor Wong. Wong’s cousin, Chinese Jamaican Walter Chin had taken the photograph of Smith. Chin is an international fashion photographer for Vogue and Elle. Chin is the photographer for advertising campaigns including Revlon, Chanel, and Clairol (Sunday Gleaner 7E). Chin states that Smith knew how she wanted to wear, which was red leather bikini with red leather thigh-high boots and long gloves. Smith chose the pose with open thighs. The leather costume is reminiscent of sadomasochistic costumes usually with leather and similar in design.



Figure 20: Mid- 1990s Slam Condom poster and condom box featuring Smith “The Dancehall Queen” Photographer Walter Chin

The photo design is inspired by the image of Smith as dancehall queen and sex symbol, and by the popular dancehall song “Slam,” written by Dave Kelly and performed by dancehall artiste, Beenie Man, who was then Smith’s boyfriend and later the father of her daughter, Crystal. The song advises men to have best sex, otherwise called “slam,” with “real ghetto” women, known as black working class women or “downtown” women. Below is an excerpt from Slam Lyrics written by Dave Kelly (1995), performed by Beenie Man and sung in *Patois* (English Creole):

Gimmie de gal dem wid de wickedest slam [Give me the gal with the best sex]
Di kinda gal whey know fi love up she man [The kind of gal who knows how to love her man]
Man if yuh waa fi get di medal, [Man, if you want to get the medal]
Yuh have fi get a slam [You have to get sex]
From a real ghetto gal [From a real ghetto gal]

Me not gon run to get, no uptown girl [I'm not going to run to get an uptown girl]
True, she brown and she pretty like pearl [Just because she may be brown and pretty like a pearl]
True, me know a mamma man round de world [True, I know that male transvestites exist around the world]
You could-a find out your girl-a name "Earl!" [You could find out that your girl's name is "Earl!"] (1995).

The colonial stereotype of *La Mulata* as “prostitute” and “socially despised” is present on this Slam condom poster. Smith is aware of this colonial stereotype, but chooses to self-stereotype and self-caricature images of *La Mulata* more forcefully, ironically on a condom wrapper and poster. Caribbean hypersexuality has been used as a tourism product to lure sex tourists and the fascination of blackness and “mixed-raced-ness,” historically and now today, associated with an “unbridled sexuality” and “sexual paradise” (Kempadoo 2004, 1-4, 36).

The dancehall song, “Slam,” reveals some suspicion of the brown woman, being so “pretty like pearl” to be deceptive and to be mistaken for a male to female cross dresser. In heterosexist culture, ironically, Smith a brown woman is featured on the Slam condom packet. In this case, Smith could be seen as a man because of her blackness as “masculine physique” (Kempadoo 2004, 36), while performing white femininity. Black liminal displacement in this case is about Smith as a brown woman in a white feminine persona. It follows that whiteness is always figured as feminine in the Caribbean, while Africanness is associated with masculinity both with stereotypical images.

When I show pictures of Smith dressed in a blond wig and dancehall fashion to some of my colleagues in the US who are unfamiliar with Smith, they assume that Smith

is a man in drag or, at the very least, a woman as a faux queen, which is a woman dressed as a man in drag. Could some spectators be seeing blackness as a “masculine physique” that Kempadoo discusses? Yet from my perspective, I would immediately see Smith as a woman. In these cases, Smith’s sex is uncertain; however, what she embodies is an exaggerated white femininity, in other words to mock white femininity in Smith’s pleasure of “dressing up” (Smith). I believe there is something about Smith’s “dressing up” which is always “drag” as sociologist Judith Lorber defines as “to set up ‘femininity’ or ‘masculinity’ as pure performance, as *exaggerated* gender display and then to cut them down as pretense after all”(xv-xvi). In Smith’s case, the “*exaggerated* gender display,” as Lorber puts it, comes from Smith’s intentional wearing of blond wigs, which represents whiteness, and in wearing skimpy clothes to show a lot of skin and body. In this way, I view Smith with a transvestite persona.

On the surface, Smith maintains stereotypical representations; she reiterates hegemonic and misogynist culture. However, she is aware of the stereotypes and caricatures of black Caribbean culture and her place in it as a brown woman. She performs black liminal displacement which is self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing of the collective in dancehall culture. Smith’s reiteration of norms is “subversive performativity,” which is, according to Madison and Hamera, deliberate and subversive reiteration of norms, in this case, of self-stereotyping blackness (xix). Smith’s portrayal on the condom box is carnivalesque performance which celebrates “vulgarity,” the “grotesque,” and with complete irreverence of what is expected of a brown woman, and by extension, black woman in the rigid color-coded society. Smith’s staged *transvestism*

exaggerates gender meanings. It does not change gender meanings. It is not meant to change or denaturalize gender meanings. It is meant to draw attention to the unchanged gender meanings, and the powerlessness in attempting to change gender meanings in stereotypes created by others about individuals and groups. Therefore displacements in-between anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance remains as a series of stereotypes and are not “fluid.”

Smith’s performance as “The Dancehall Queen” has been used in tourism campaigns in billboards, posters, commercials as a commodity selling Jamaica as “paradise” for sex tourism -“Come to Jamaica, and feel alright,” Jamaica tourism slogan (Edmondson 7). But as Kempadoo argues, the Caribbean has been known for its hundreds of years of prostitution, concubinage and rapes during slavery, and sex havens for colonial elites (Kempadoo 2004, 31, 55). As a result of this sexualized image and because of economic poverty, Caribbean governments have used hypersexuality, exoticism and eroticism as a tourist product, including Jamaica. Smith is one of the many “brown” or “mixed-raced” images used for tourist campaigns, associated with “overactive libidos” (Kempadoo 2004, 26, 34-36). Therefore, Smith’s seems to go against Euro-American feminisms in reiterating white patriarchy and as an object for male gaze in the spectacle of her “eroticized” body all splayed out on tourist campaigns, dancehall posters and Slam condom wrappers.

However, Smith is aware of not only the male gaze but also the female gaze. Smith acknowledges that “men look at me as a sex symbol... And women look at me. So I thought it would be good for them to have me” (Vibes Magazine 52). So that Smith’s

performance and patrons' dancehall *transvestism*, like Trinidad carnival *winin'*, have always included homoerotic and hetero-erotic sexual horseplay in performance, whether in dance, posters, films, plays or other dancehall genres (Ryman 110-113). Feminist scholar Laura Mulvey in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (2001), argues that Freud's scopophilia, which is the pleasure of looking, derives from the pleasure of using another person as an object of sexual stimulation. In Smith's dancehall performance, she has both a lesbian and heterosexual gaze. Mulvey insists that scopophilia is hierarchical in a binary opposition between active/male and passive/female where the male gaze that projects fantasies on the female body (188). She argues that "in their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. Woman displayed as sexual object is the *leitmotif* of erotic spectacle" (188).

Using Mulvey's theory, Smith would then appear to reify Mulvey's "*to-be-looked-at-ness*" and "erotic spectacle;" however, by dancehall aesthetics that valorizes black and brown bodies, Smith's performance in liberating from the colonial gaze, which is the dominant gaze over colonial subjects' bodies. This is not to say that black or brown men do not have a dominant gaze. According to Alexander white heteropatriarchy in the Caribbean was replaced by black (light-skinned) heteropatriarchy when many Caribbean nations became independent from Europe. Caribbean black heteropatriarchy, then, became the purveyors of white heteropatriarchy and still exists too with the white minority population which controls these societies. In many ways, black heteropatriarchy

is now classed as middle- and upper-class, and control lower classes, including dancehall women. Mulvey's theory does not consider the racialized and sexualized dimensions of gender of the figure of black women and *La Mulata* like Smith, with a history of stereotyping that already assumes Smith's hypersexuality whether or not she is naked or clothed. Smith performs self-stereotypes hypersexuality and eroticism in dancehall.

Performers of racialized gender identities do not have the agency to escape or transcend stereotypical images and appear to reiterate them even as they are fluid within their genre. Smith self-stereotypes Caribbean hypersexuality as a way of life in the image of *La Mulata* in HIV/AIDS campaigns, knowing full well that she is considered a "sex symbol" in dancehall culture. Besides, dancehall is entirely a different culture that celebrates black and brown bodies no matter the size, shape, color. While Smith's performance may be fluid in this regard, her performance and all of dancehall are perceived in colonial stereotyping of the body. Colonial culture would prefer not to see the black and brown body, and to censor and erase the spectacle of these bodies in public enactments.

Racialized gender identities will always be viewed as stereotypes and "fixed" in colonial representations because stereotypes have been constructed by dominant culture as a necessary function where inequalities exist. Michael Pickering in "Racial Stereotyping" (2004), argues that "the stereotypical Other is a one-sided construction which helps to maintain symbolic boundaries between 'us' and the other social or ethnic categories in the interests of 'our' own sense of identity, security, legitimacy....In acting against this premise, stereotypes attempt to fix our own identities, our own sense of

ourselves in and over time” (97). Therefore, in societies based on racial inequalities, color casting, and “shadism,” stereotypes are constructed by the dominant culture to perform power to keep control of other groups.

When Smith enters the dancehall “stage” on Slam condom wrapper and poster, she appears in the white feminine persona of “The Dancehall Queen.” Some critics consider Smith’s performance to be offensive and disrespectful to women, especially performed by a woman. However, black working class women are not offended by Smith’s fashion sense, costumes, and performance because these are celebrated black dancehall women’s fashion and culture. I contend that Smith is self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing. She is aware of the racialized, gendered, classed stereotypes and caricatures, and uses them in the carnivalesque space and time in dancehall. Dancehall is considered a black working class space. Blackness is associated with being lower class, even though many blacks have risen to middle class status. Smith, being light-skinned would be considered middle-class because light-skin is associated with social mobility. As a light-skinned black woman, Smith is expected to conform to codes of behavior akin to the ideal of white femininity. By performing staged *transvestism* in dancehall, Smith disrupts or displaces audiences’ perception of racialized, sexualized and gendered stereotypes. One would expect to find black, as in dark-skinned blacks in dancehall. Smith as a brown woman, with a particularly light skin, is not the typical image in dancehall black lower class. Her performance as a brown woman is decidedly “black” stereotyped as hypersexual, “erotic” and “exotic” and displayed through costume, gestures, repetition, and *winin’* dances. Therefore, while Smith gender identity as a brown woman is disrupted

in her gender performance as a white woman, the gender meanings in Smith black body is unchanged because it is still read as a stereotype or caricature, and fluidity is not complete.

Although some may argue that self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing in black liminal displacement perpetuate stereotypes and reiterate the norms in hegemonic and misogynist culture, I maintain that self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing by a marginal group is what Madison and Hamera call “subversive performativity” and necessary to its survival (xix). They argue that subversive performativity is “an internalized repetition of subversive ‘stylized acts’ inherited by contested identities” (Madison and Hamera xix). As “inherited stylized acts,” black Caribbean women take control of stereotypes and caricatures by self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing in a carnivalesque space and time, which is a time for complete irreverence, vulgarity and the grotesque. Black liminal displacements reflect colonial stereotypes back to the source of stereotyping in dominant culture. Bakhtin states that “carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order” (10). The carnivalesque, which derives from carnival, is the subversive qualities in carnival involving the “vulgar” in voice, gestures, movement, and certainly the “repetition of stylized acts” in gender itself (Butler 175; Bakhtin 10). In all performance, it is necessary to have a space for the carnivalesque, the grotesque and the “vulgar.”

Smith's "Dumb Blonde" Comment

As "The Dancehall Queen," Smith collaborated with former beauty queen and Miss World, Lisa Hanna to co-host the short-lived television talk show "Our Voices" in 2003 (Mills, The Flair Magazine 2003, 4). The format of the program was to spark debates about controversial issues, sexuality, and to get women, in particular, to begin talking about issues affecting them every day. The media thought of Smith and Hanna as unlikely co-hosts because rigid color and class distinctions, for example Claude Mills reported in The Flair Magazine (2003) "Lisa Hanna-Panton is a dark skinned, svelte and drop-dead gorgeous professional while Carlene Smith is a light-skinned, voluptuous, buxom beauty who represents the *outré* fashions and hard-core sensibilities of the dancehall world" (The Flair Magazine 2003, 4). Smith states "Our Voices" was a significant point in her life. She states that, "being a co-host of Our Voices ...has impacted my life in a positive way. It shows another side of me other than the 'dumb blond' or 'sex symbol' picture that people paint of me" (The Flair Magazine 2003, 4). This reveals Smith's performance as presenting herself in a heightened "whiteness," or *La Mulata* as desired "sex symbol" in the dancehall world, and now showing "another side" in the media, run by middle and upper class mores. In Figure 22 below, Smith is hobnobbing with socialites of the day – moving from the "downtown" dark-skinned dancehall world to the "uptown" light-skinned middle-class and upper-class arenas.



Figure 21: Carlene “The Dancehall Queen” Smith in blonde wig and dancehall fashion with see-through lace, flanked by Lisa Hanna-Panton (Miss Jamaica and Miss World 1993) right at the launch of television talk show “Our Voices” held at the Caribbean Sculpture Park at the University of Technology, Jamaica in 2003.

Others in the photograph are Margaret Miller (far left) and another former Miss Jamaica Johanna Ulett, General Manger of Spartan Health Club. Flair Magazine, Monday March 23, 2003 p. 4.

In addition to “uptown” critiques on dancehall at large, “downtown’s” speech and language are often attacked as not the British Queen’s English. It is assumed that dark-skinned blacks cannot pronounce “h’s” as a sure sign of a person’s class. Radio talk-show host Andrea Samuels from Hot 102FM criticizes Smith’s speech and somehow implied that because Smith is a dancehall performer, she should have no place on the radio. In a sample of colonial and middle-class media, Samuels remarks that “Carlene [Smith] needs to drop the h’s where they don’t belong, and putting them where they don’t. I don’t think they should have somebody on TV who is not enunciating properly” (Flair Magazine 2003, 4).

Despite their efforts to address important issues, “Our Voices” had a short run due to legal obligations. Even though Smith’s and Hanna’s most significant program in “Our Voices” was an interview with Jamaican LGBT activist and co-founder of Jamaica Forum of Lesbians, All-Sexuals¹³ and Gays (J-FLAG), Brian Williamson in 2004. In the past, other radio and television interview would pixelate the faces and distort voices of LGBT people so they would not be recognized for fear of violence toward them. However in the interview with Williamson, his face and voice were clearly seen and heard. He talked about activism and was organizing a march through Half-Way-Tree in St. Andrew. The march did not take place because of violent threats towards anyone intending to participate. Within days of the interview, Williamson was tragically murdered at his home. During the police investigation, a crowd gathered outside of his apartment and sang the popular homophobic lyrics from Buju Banton’s dancehall song, “Boom Bye Bye.” Since then, LGBT people have faced a backlash of increased violence that many sought asylum from the United States, Canada and England. In the next chapter I discuss Staceyann Chin, who was persecuted in the wave of LGBT backlash during this period. This chain of events is significant in dancehall because prior to the homophobic songs in 1990s, LGBT and transvestite performances of African-derived *winin’* with homoeroticism and hetero-eroticism performed freely in all dancehall events. In fact, even the masquerade traditions of Junkunnu had accounts of same-sex sexual

¹³ “The term all-sexual was adopted at a Caribbean regional meeting in Curaçao in 1997 which brought together people doing in community- organizing and building around sexual orientation and gender identity. It was intended to reflect a continuum in sexual identity, which captures the consensual bisexual and transgender experiences of sexual minorities” (jflag.org)

horseplay all part of the revelry and in everyday life. However, in recent years, and as recent as this year, male dancehall *transvestism* has been heavily persecuted with beatings and deaths at dancehall events.

After the short run of “Our Voices,” Smith went on to start a radio show called “Open Minds” on radio station, Hot 102 FM while maintaining her roots in dancehall fashion and culture. Again this talk show was a lifestyle program that addressed taboo subjects, sexuality, relationships, and difficult issues including incest, abuse, and depression. Smith included a host of panels from comedians, poets, sports personalities, and other public figures. Smith’s most significant guest to my project in her radio show “Open Minds” was Jamaican spoken-word poet Staceyann Chin who will be discussed in Chapter Four. Unfortunately, “Open Minds” was cancelled recently because Smith had a family emergency to help her mother who was ill in New York (Smith Interview, Appendix D).

Smith’s performance as “The Dancehall Queen” is not only fluid because “browning” is still a colonial stereotype that fixes the image of the miscegenated bodies. Despite the ambiguous liminal nature of *La Mulata* of being neither white nor black, she is fixed as hypersexual and “erotic.” Therefore, Smith’s performance of black liminal displacement seems to reiterates stereotypes or binaries in self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing, but only to expose stereotypes to dominant culture. She not only self-stereotypes as *La Mulata*, but as African “masculine” in the “vulgarity” of African-derived *winin’* and dance moves; and as European or white “femininity” in blonde wigs and “light-skin” in dancehall. But if Smith avoids these colonial stereotypes and

caricatures all together, she would then be denying that these stereotypes exist and not address the power structure that created them.

Therefore, Smith's performance shows that racialized gender identities as neither solely fluid nor fixed on extreme polar opposites. Fluidity is self-directed and conscious and fixity is the power and control that keeps racialized gender identities fixed without social and economic mobility. Therefore, racialized gender identities constitute both fluidity and fixity because inequalities exist along the representations of race, gender, sexuality, color casting with blackness at the bottom of the ladder, *La Mulata* in-between, and whiteness at the top of the hierarchy reflecting the lack of fluidity in social mobility for some racialized identities.

Smith's self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing in black liminal displacement critiques dominant culture. Smith does not avoid stereotypes and the stereotypical codes for African "masculinity" as black woman, nor European "femininity" as brown lady. She revels in-between in the figure of *La Mulata*. She reflects stereotypical codes back to mainstream culture that deny its role in constructing them (Bhabha 2004, 94-95; hooks 120). Black liminal displacement critiques the source of power, and not the marginalized blacks or browns who appear to reify stereotypical codes, they did not create. This reveals how racialized identities are fluid in their own life, yet simultaneously fixed by colonial stereotyping. Even as identities appear as fluid in Smith's dancehall *transvestism* between anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance; racial stereotyping fixes meanings in stereotypical codes of "masculinity" and "femininity" on Smith's brown body.

Conclusion

Black liminal displacement is derived from the fact that Smith is a light skinned, “almost white” woman, according to Ulysse, and that her “blackness” is questionable in her gender parody of white femininity (163). As a brown woman, Smith’s black phenotype troubles or displaces her performance of white femininity. Yet at the same time, Smith’s image of whiteness is displaced by blackness in dancehall. In both cases Smith’s persona is “in-between” with implicit performance of blackness. Smith performs a rather tense interaction between race and gender constructions which she highlights as “The Dancehall Queen,” a brown woman parading white femininity. In black liminal displacement, Smith’s racialized gender parody in her transvestite persona of white femininity is restricted. Smith cannot escape Caribbean hypersexuality, eroticism, and exoticism that Kempadoo discusses. Butler’s fluidity of identities is about the numerous, even countless ways to parody gender, but in the Caribbean where gender is racialized and sexualized with layers of stereotypes, racialized gender parodies are limited in ways to transcend stereotypical images. For example, despite Smith’s efforts to parody racialized gender, her performance does not transcend racialized gender meanings in historical stereotypical images of hypersexuality, eroticism and eroticism of brown women.

Chapter Four: The “Markers of Identity”¹⁴: Staceyann Chin’s

Racialized Androgyny of African “Masculinity” and Chinese

“Femininity” in Performance Poetry

“The visual in America is that I’m black and that often translates into the stereotype Black American. I open my mouth and I’m Caribbean, one; I have this big Afro, and my hair is obviously black, and then I follow it up with the idea that I’m bi-racial. I’m part Chinese, part black. People are stunned by it” (Chin 2002, 5E).

“I am afraid to draw your black lines around me/ I am not always pale in the middle/ I come in too many flavors for one fucking spoon” (Chin, “Cross-Fire” 2007, 361-368).



Figure 22: Staceyann Chin at Michfest Womyn in New York City, 2011, Photograph by Nívea Castro.

Chin is a performance poet, playwright, lesbian political activist and resident of New York City (Chin). She was born on December 25, 1972 to Jamaican-born parents: an African-descent mother and a Chinese father in Montego Bay, Jamaica, and was raised

¹⁴ Literary theorist Susan Somers-Willett in The Cultural Politics of Slam Poetry: Race Identity, and The Performance of Popular Verse in America (2009), refers to the “markers of identity” as performance poets’ embodiment of intersecting identities seen on the body before they even open their mouths to speak (18).

by her maternal grandmother (Aptowicz 181). Chin is “black Chinese or “half-Chiney” or “half-Chinese” which carries pejorative connotations among Jamaican Chinese (Shibata 2013, 369-371), and really informs Chin’s articulations of intersectionality in performance like *Dougl*a and *La Mulata*. Yet at the same time, “half-Chiney” carries light-skinned and brown privilege in Jamaican Creole color-caste society (Mohammed 2004, 60; Cooper 2010a, 282). In her biography in The Huffington Post, Jamaican performance poet Staceyann Chin maintains that she “unapologetically identifies as Caribbean and black, Asian and lesbian, woman and resident of New York City” (2012). In The Jamaica Gleaner, Chin insists that she is “Jamaican, Asian, migrant, New Yorker, lesbian, poet and black” (2002, 5E). As is typical of many Caribbean Creoles, Chin self-identifies as black and “mixed-raced,” and multi-ethnic and personifies intersectionality of race, gender, sexuality, nationality and class (Chin Interview, Appendix E; Terborg-Penn 9).

Since 1998, Chin has been writing and performing slam, also called performance poetry. As an American cultural phenomenon, slam emerged in 1984 at the “Get Me High” Jazz Club in white working class neighborhoods in the north-west side of Chicago by a group of white poets who called themselves “Ill-Bred Poets of the Get Me High” (Smith and Kraynak 9; Somers-Willet 2-5). Some “Ill-Bred Poets” later became the founding members of the Chicago Poetry Ensemble and worked to formalize slams for future generations (9). Slam or performance poetry is performing by reading or reciting poetry competitively in slam competitions, or non-competitively to entertain an audience (Smith and Kraynak 4, 8; Halberstam 40). In “What’s That Smell?: Queer Temporalities

and Subcultural Lives” (2008), queer theorist Judith Halberstam posits that “slam poetry is a form of competitive poetry in which poets perform three-minute poems on a scale of 1 to 10, and the slammers move through preliminary rounds until they face-off in the finals” (40). Halberstam states that slam poetry attracts people of color and queers of color, even though it is open to all people. White construction worker Marc Kelly Smith is considered the founder and creator of the genre of slam or performance poetry in Chicago bars, and the International Slam poetry movement that spanned over two decades (Somers-Willet 3). In the 1980s, Smith organized several poetry slams in Chicago bars like the Déjà vu and Green Mill bars (Somers- Willet 4-5).

Later, slams gained fans from other major cities like San Francisco and New York leading to the first National Poetry Slam (NPS) in 1990 (Somers-Willet 4-5).¹⁵ Slam poets Smith and Joe Kraynak in Take The Mic: The Art of Performance Poetry, Slam and The Spoken Word (2009), state that “slam poetry is *performance* poetry, the marriage of a text to the artful presentation of poetic, words onstage to an audience that has permission to talk back and let the performer know whether he or she is communicating effectively” (5). Smith and Kraynak explain that slam is not text on a page, nor is it formalized poetry readings. They clarify that slam is not “rap without the music” or simply “competitive poetry;” however, they list five characteristics of slam as “poetry, performance, competition, interaction and a sense of community” (14). Slam is in

¹⁵ Other founding members of the Ill-Bred Poets and the Chicago Poetry Ensemble include white poets John Sheenan, an ex-Roman Catholic priest; Rob Van Tuyle, a high school teacher; Anna Brown, a performance artist; Jean Howard, a model; Ron Gillette, an editor; Dave Cooper, a paralegal; Karen Nystrom, a student; and Mike Barrett, a copywriter (Smith and Kraynak 9).

reaction to academic poetry in the mid-1980s. Smith and the “Ill-Bred Poets” thought that academic poetry alienated non-academic audiences (Smith and Kraynak 9; Somers-Willet 2). Smith and Kraynak explain that when they started slams in the mid-1980s, they wanted to “dissolve the snobbish barriers between ‘artist’ and audience by knocking pomposity off its perch and making poets recognize their humble yet noble role – as servants to their culture and community” (12). Slam poetry later grew in popularity in the late 1990s to early 2000s to include international poets from Europe and Canada (Somers-Willet 2; Halberstam 40; Olson 401).

From the late 1990s, slam poetry have attracted people of color, queer people, and queers of color like Jamaican Staceyann Chin, Sri Lankan D’Lo and American “white lesbian” Alix Olson who have all gained mainstream attention in slam competitions performing poetry about specific intersections between race, gender, sexuality, nationality, and desire (Halberstam 40). Chin first performed poetry in 1998 at the Nuyorican Poets’ Café in New York City to rousing applause and critical acclaim (Olsen 401). She was the winner of the LAMBDA literary Foundation’s National Poetry Slam in 1998, and the Women of Color Conference Poetry in 1999 (Olson 401). She performed poetry at Livity Poetry Club and the annual Calabash Literary Festival in Jamaica (The Jamaica Gleaner). As a performance poet, Chin was the co-writer and performer in the Tony award winning Russell Simmons’s “Def Poetry Jam on Broadway” (2003), and later on the HBO series, “Def Poetry” hosted by Mos Def (2006). As a playwright, Chin held three one-woman off-Broadway plays including “Hands Afire” (2000) at the Bleecker Theater; “Unspeakable Things” (2001), which toured Copenhagen, London,

Helsinki, Sweden, and Norway (Chin). Chin's third one-woman play, "Border/Clash: Litany of Desires" (2008), opened at the Culture Project in New York City to rave reviews (Theatre World 94). Chin's performance poetry was featured on television programs on NBC, CNN, CBS, BET, and in the news media in The New York Times and The Jamaica Gleaner. Chin is currently a regular blog writer on the internet newspaper, The Huffington Post, which chronicles her personal stories about her intersecting identities. Chin is the recipient of the 2007 Power of the Voice Award from the Human Rights Campaign, the 2008 Safe Haven Award for Immigration Equality, the 2008 Honors from the Lesbians AIDS Project, and the 2009 New York Senate Award.

Since those early days of Chicago white working class Ill Bred Poets and The Chicago Poetry Ensemble, slams have increasingly become a space to perform racialized identities by people around the world considered as marginalized and voiceless (Somers-Willet 18; Smith and Kraynak). Identities are contentious debates and struggles about binaries and power relationships in gender, race/ethnicity, sexuality, class, nationality and other axes of power (Wetherell 2010). Slams have allowed poets to vent frustrations about intersecting power dynamics in identities to "talk out loud" off the page and on the stage. Literary theorist Susan Somers-Willet in The Cultural Politics of Slam Poetry: Race Identity, and The Performance of Popular Verse in America (2009), states that performance poetry is about

the author's performance of identity on some level because of the author's mandated presence onstage. His or her speech, dress, gestures, voice, body, and so on all reflect in some way on the poem a hand, and these various aspects of embodiment convey nuances of cultural difference that the page cannot. With the author's embodiment, members of the audience

instantly privy to the physical and performative markers of identity that consciously or unconsciously inform their understanding of the poem through certain cultural lenses (18).

Somers-Willet argues that performance poetry is about embodying performers' "markers of identity"(18). "Markers of identity" are not only differences, but they are stereotypes that are composite "images" about whole groups that reduce, essentialize and "fix" groups with certain characteristics to create essentialized identities and representations of people (Hall 1997; Peterson and Runyan 1999). As Somers-Willet points out, "slam poetry engages a whole host of cultural and political complexities before an author even opens his or her mouth" (18). These "markers of identity" are truly seen on the body through race, ethnicity, gender, costumes, gestures, movements, and postures by just walking out center stage.

Since "text" is performed in slams through voice, orality, emphasis, accent, melody, modulation, intonation and rhythm; text gives "voice" to the "markers of identity" that Chin embodies in performance poetry. Performance text, according to performance theorist Norman Denzin in Interpretive Ethnography: Ethnographic Practices for the 21st Century (1997), is "situated in a complex system of discourse in which traditional and avant-garde meanings of theater, film, video ethnography, performance, text, and audience all circulate and inform one another" (93). Denzin explains that the performed text is "lived experience" and "embodied experience" (94). Like the lyrics of Trinidadian calypsos and Jamaican dancehall songs, slams' texts give voice and are forms of oral communication that are fundamental to performance and embodiment (Stucky 273).

This chapter analyzes Chin's racialized gender identities of "half-Chiney," "miscegenated" as (Caribbean) hypersexualized in performance poetry, and steeped in color casting. Many assume that because Latin America and the Caribbean are diverse and multi-ethnic, Caribbean identities are fluid. However the concept of fluidity denies the fixities in the lack of mobility for blacks and indigenous peoples across the region, coupled with Caribbean race theories of "whitening" (*blanquemento*), the process of "civilizing;" and "blackening" (*negreado*), the idea of being "uncivilized" and "backward" (Whitten and Torres 13). Coupled with the dreaded color casting, which is the privileging of "light-skin" over "dark-skin," fluidity of identities is clearly not for everyone, especially not for those at the bottom of social hierarchies. Chin's performance poetry talks about, and embodies marginalized experiences of race, gender, sexuality and nationality and class personally and collectively, and addresses the fixities in inequalities.

Therefore, I argue that Chin's performance of racialized gender identities in performance poetry is not solely and definitively fluid because of stereotypes that fix identities. Even though racialized gender may appear to be fluid, at least from the subjects' positions, racialized gender is simultaneously fixed by dominant culture that creates stereotypes about racialized gender identities. Bhabha argues that the stereotype is a strategy of fixity used to justify the lowered positions of racialized gender identities in everyday life. Hall explains that "stereotypes get hold of the few 'simple, vivid, memorable, easily grasped and widely recognized' characteristics about a person, reduce everything about the person to those traits, *exaggerate* and *simplify* them, and fix them without change or development to eternity. ... *stereotyping reduces, essentializes,*

naturalizes and fixes, 'difference'" (258). Hall argues that another feature of stereotyping is that it excludes and symbolically fixes boundaries and excludes everything from boundaries. He states that stereotyping is part of maintaining social and symbolic order, and occurs where there are "gross inequalities of power" (259). Stereotyping, as Hall argues, is a "representational practice," which means it is produced and reproduced usually with visual imagery (258). Stereotypes are seen as tangible elements of essentialized identities and labels. Colonial stereotypes are images created by dominant culture to classify and essentialize colonized subjects that fix racialized gender identities (Peterson and Runyan; Hall; Bhabha).

But stereotypes are more than mere images. They affect and impact racialized gender identities in daily realities. For example, the stereotype of Caribbean hypersexuality, according to Kempadoo, is the assumption that Caribbean people have "hyperactive libidos and overly rely on sexuality as a marker of identity" irrespective of sexual preference of black and brown people (2004, 7-9). Faith Smith argues that the Caribbean is perceived as "the very epitome of excessive sexuality" because of a history of miscegenation (6). She concurs with Kempadoo that by being non-white, "mixed-raced," Creole, indigenous, African and Asian in the region, is to be marked as "deviant, queer, or perverse" (Smith 6). Postcolonial theory examines the "silenced expression and subordinated practices" by marginalized peoples (Madison 2005, 47). Postcolonialism constitutes imperial processes from the point of contact with colonization to the present in the Americas Asia and Africa (Madison 2005, 47). Madison states that "postcolonial theory argues that in countries constituted by a colonial past – whether it is the Americas,

Asia, or Africa – postcolonialism entails ‘all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present’ (Ashcroft et al., 1998, p.2)” (2005, 47). Racialized gender is the distinct intersectionality of race and gender, and especially how racial and gender stereotypes construct racialized gender. Fedorak states that that “the concept of race is culturally constructed according to economic, political, and social agendas, rather than a biological reality” (53). She further defines ethnicity as “a sense of identity on cultural traits that have been passed down through the generations” (Fedorak 51). Physical appearance, distinctive clothing and foods are “markers” or symbols that make ethnic groups (Fedorak 51). However, Peterson and Runyan argue how race “marks” gender through racial stereotypes as in being “racialized” or “gendered” in models of masculinity and femininity (29). Kitch advocates for a “*genderized race or racialized gender*,” and points out how race and gender are too inextricably linked to be studied separately. (2). Therefore, postcolonial feminism focusses on “the *interaction* of oppressive dynamics and on race/ethnicity as a primary axis of oppression” and “put into sharp relief how gender, race, class, nationalist, and imperialist hierarchies are interwoven in ways that particularly undermine the lives of Third World women – physically, politically, economically, and culturally” (28) (Peterson and Runyan 28). If Chin’s performance poetry is viewed through a postcolonial lens, her performance, while being fluid, acknowledges fixities in stereotypes. This is important because everyone’s identities are not only fluid, which is from the self; identities are also constructed through stereotyping for racialized gender identities.

Chin's performance poetry is absolutely exhilarating. Her entire face and body moves with every breath and word. As fellow performance poet and novelist Cristin O'Keefe Aptowicz observes in Word in Your Face: A Guided Tour Through Twenty Years of the New York Poetry Slam (2008),

To watch Chin perform is to watch the very essence of poetry manifested: her performances are imperfect, volatile and beautiful. Chin's poetry is passionate and well-written, sure; but it's her ability to communicate that passion in performance that is unparalleled. She becomes the poetry. Balled-up into her slim body until she is practically hunched over, she explodes onstage until all you can see are her precise limbs and her bouncing afro (181).

Poetry is literally bursting out of Chin's body as Aptowicz observes. Chin's performance poetry is embodied experience about ambiguity in identities. Through performance poetry, Chin appears to subversively blur identities through juxtaposing one stereotype after another.

I explore Butler's concept of fluidity of identities in Chin's performance, and the legacies of colonial stereotyping that fixes racialized gender identities. Performance is an inclusive term for theatrical and everyday practices. I use performance to analyze identities as performances, particularly how Caribbean gender is raced and sexualized with colonial stereotypes and caricatures. Goffman uses theatrical language of the "stage" to explain everyday life as "acts" and "scenes" as a theatrical production of a play (Hawk and Gardner 105). Schechner states that "performance means: never for the first time. It means: for the second to the *n*th time. Performance is twice behaved"(36). I use performance as embodiment, which is performance knowledge in the body through gestures, movements, stereotypical codes, voice to study how racialized identities are

performed in genres that reflect everyday life (Stucky 273). I employ interdisciplinary practices in performance studies that borrow from performing arts, popular entertainment, anthropology, sociology, psychology, cultural studies, literary studies, ethnographic interview, women's and gender studies to analyze Chin's performance.

In this case, I examine Chin's African and Chinese Jamaican heritages and how these have impacted Chin's ideas about intersectionality of race, gender, sexuality, class, nationality, and immigration status. My task is to defamiliarize fluidity of identities to show the fixities in inequalities and discrimination that impede racialized gender identities. Chin raises the issues of color casting in Jamaican society and the inter- and intra- race relations left as a legacy of colonialism in Jamaica. Chin's performance is embodied intersectionality.¹⁶ As a "half-Chiney," black, lesbian, Jamaican poet, she embodies the signs, stereotypes, and fluidity in identifying with all. While this indicates fluidity of identities in Chin's performance as deliberate, self-directed, and conscious articulations and orality; it is important to underscore that performance of racialized identities is simultaneously viewed as stereotypes because of existing inequalities.

Butler uses drag performance, which is the crossing of genders or in creating same-gender personae, to determine how sex and gender are denaturalized and therefore fluid. I use racialized "drag" by racialized gender identities to explore fluidity and fixity in Chin's performance. hooks refers to black women, for example, in racialized "drag" as symbolically crossing stereotypical codes from blackness coded as "masculine," "to look

¹⁶ In 1989, legal scholar and critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality which refers to race and gender as one dimension for women of color (Kitch 2).

like a white female in a space only a brown-skinned black woman can occupy” to be “feminine” (128). I use hooks’ idea of racialized “drag” in Caribbean masquerades that typically play with color casting and simultaneously crossing genders and races/ethnicities.

According to several postcolonial feminist scholars, blackness or Africanness is stereotypically coded as “masculine,” and whiteness or other ethnicities are stereotypically coded as “feminine” (hooks 129; Kempadoo 2004, 36). I have explored the stereotypically coded gendered language for Caribbean races/ethnicities in Belfon’s and Smith’s fluidity in staged performance and the surrogation and the fixities in colonial stereotypes of *Dougla* and *La Mulata*, and have argued that Belfon and Smith performed black liminal displacements that are self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing colonial stereotypes to expose dominant culture. Belfon in carnival performance of “Indian Man,” and Smith’s performance of “The Dancehall Queen” in Jamaican Dancehall entail costumes and masquerade in racialized “drag” in the crossing from African “masculinity” to East Indian femininity and European femininity carrying codes of racial characteristics in gendered language.

The problem with Butler using drag performance to show how gender is “fluid” in everyday life is that staged *transvestism* is inherently a performance of gender stereotypes; and stereotypes, according to Hall, “fixes” meanings (Hall 1997, 258). Hall argues that stereotyping “fixes” difference, and is about essentializing, reducing and naturalizing by using certain characteristics about a person (1997, 258). In the introduction of *The Kaleidoscope of Gender: Prisms, Patterns, and Possibilities* (2011),

women's and gender scholars Joan Z. Spade and Catherine G. Valentine explain that stereotypes are "controlling images that maintain complex systems of domination and subordination in which some individuals and groups are dehumanized and disadvantaged in relationship to others" (xv). In stereotypes, dominant culture control and construct meanings for individuals and groups, carried in codes and signifiers in staged *transvestism* (Hall 1997, 5). Individuals cannot change gender meanings constructed for them in stereotypes. Caricaturing exaggerates stereotypes. Butler agrees that the gender meanings in staged *transvestism* are the same as in hegemonic and misogynist culture. Yet she insists that gender meanings are denaturalized because of the multiple shifts between anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance. If drag performance is a performance of stereotypes and caricatures that fix meanings, then identities cannot really be completely fluid.

In the previous chapters on Belfon and Smith, I have employed a racialized "drag" model of African masculinity/East Indian femininity and African masculinity/European femininity to analyze the masquerade traditions in racialized Trinidad carnival crossdressing and Jamaican dancehall *transvestism* to explore Butler's fluidity of identities in racialized identities. A racialized "drag" model works best in the Caribbean masquerade traditions involving costumes, crossing races/ethnicities and color-casting, dance and revelry – all integral to performances of racialized gender identities. Chin is not within the masquerade traditions of Trinidad carnival and Jamaican dancehall with costumes, dance and African-derived *winin'*, and therefore the racialized "drag" model does not apply to Chin in the same way. However, racialized "drag" of an

African masculine/ Chinese femininity is only applied to illustrate Chin's racialized "androgyny," which is the blurring of intersectional identities in performance poetry in the United States. Racialized "androgyny" parses out multiple racial stereotypes, and then blurs them. It questions the colonial stereotype of "miscegenation" as a hypersexualized category. One would expect "mixed-raced-ness" to be fluid because it is neither one nor the other, neither black nor white, neither black nor Chinese; but in reality it still a colonial stereotype which essentializes any "miscegenation" as "exotic" and "erotic," "queer" and "deviant." By devising a schema of "anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance" in drag performance, Butler's fluidity of identities is a metaphor for how normalized gender can be disrupted and performed in everyday life (175). However, Butler assumes that everyone can disrupt gender without considering the racial dimensions. For Chin, I only use racialized "drag" model as a metaphor for racialized gender performance in everyday realities, and as a method to chart fluidities and to expose stereotypes that fix racialized gender identities. Chin blurs the stereotypical codes of "masculinity" and "femininity" on the Caribbean black female body in racial androgyny in performance poetry.

Chin performs black liminal displacement by blurring colonial stereotypes as embodied in her performance poetry. Black liminal displacement is a performance of self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing. Self-stereotyping involves embracing constructed stereotypes (Schneider 242), but only to reflect them back to dominant colonial culture that created them. Self-caricaturing exaggerates racialized caricatures about colonized people. Madison explains that "for many marginalized identities and people of color, they

are known in a particular world through caricature and stereotypes. A major problem is that the stereotypical projection of one's identity by other worldly constructions of who one is diminishes the complexity and humanity of one's individuality, as well as one's ethnicity of affiliated group. When in one world, I may animate that world's caricature or stereotype of the person they construct me to be." Madison states that "we become a double self: the self of our 'home place world' and the self that succumbs to stereotypical behavior that the particular Other world expects, sometimes demands, of us" (100). Chin is aware of colonial stereotypes, but if she avoids stereotypes, then she would be erasing, instead of critiquing dominant culture that creates them.

Some may assume that blurring of identities is "fluidity of identities" because of how these appear on the "surface" of the body. But this is only a façade and complacency that hide inequalities. Butler looks at what she calls "perpetual displacements" in the multiple shifts that occur on the surface of the body between anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance (175). Butler argues that gender meanings in staged *transvestism* are the same as in hegemonic and misogynist culture. Yet, she insists that the same gender meanings are denaturalized in staged *transvestism* and does not explain how gender meanings are changed. Nevertheless, Butler determines that fluidity occurs through multiple shifts between anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance. This move undermines and ignores that gender meanings would be the same regardless of shifts in between anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance.

Dub Poetry

I place Chin's work in performance poetry in a Jamaican dub tradition, even though dub poetry emerged a generation earlier in the 1970s, and even though Chin performs in an American performance poetry tradition in New York City. Dub poetry is inclusive of orality in any form of spoken-word performance of poetry (Habekost 4). Dub poetry began in the slums of Kingston, Jamaica in the 1970s (Morris 93; Habekost 2-3). It is not the same as deejaying on dancehall music, but is performed poetry on its own or to reggae rhythm based on African Caribbean heritage, Rastafarian philosophies and black urban experiences of poverty, exploitation and violence (Morris 93; Habekost 2-3). Dub poetry is spoken word in *Patois* (English Creole language) along with original reggae music. Dub poet Oku Onuora states that dub poetry is not "*merely putting a piece of poem 'pon a reggae rhythm; it is a poem that has a built-in reggae rhythm – hence when the poem is read without any reggae rhythm (so to speak)..., one can distinctly hear the reggae rhythm coming out of the poem*" (3). Chin's performance poetry, though not performed to reggae, has a rhythm in its orality, accents and pauses that are reminiscent of a reggae sound.

Original dub poets include Oku Onuora, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Noel Walcott, M'Bala, Jean Binta Breeze, Mutabaruka, and the late Michael Smith (Johnson 155). Although dub poet Linton Kwesi Johnson coined the term "Dub Poetry" in the 1970s, later Johnson and other dub poets like Mutabaruka found the term dub poetry limiting, instead preferring to be called "poets." However dub poet Oku Onuora viewed dub poetry as "a form of poetry that can absorb and incorporate any kind of black musical rhythm,"

and was representative of what Onuora saw as “Jamaican adaptability” (Habekost 3). Onuora theorizes dub poetry as “*unlimited. You can dub een a South African riddim, you can dub een a kumina riddim, you can dub een a nyaginghi riddim, you can dub een a jazz riddim, you can dub een a funk riddim, you can dub een, you can dub!*” (Onuora quoted in Habekost 4). Although Onuora’s “Jamaican adaptability” reflects fluidity in the ability to transform, dub poetry talks about the fixities among the poorest of the black poor in the slums of Kingston. It is this “Jamaican adaptability” that I see in Chin’s performance poetry as following dub poetry in speaking about poverty and exploitation; but Chin and other contemporaries call attention to intersectionality and fixities in racialized and sexualized identities that discriminate and prevent mobility of marginalized racialized and sexualized groups.

Cross-Fire, 2007

Chin performed “Cross-Fire” (2007) at Vassar College in New York city in spring 2008 as part of the LGBTQ programs in the Vassar First Year’s “Art as Activism: 3 Poets 1 Mic.”¹⁷ I watched a film of Chin’s performance of “Cross-Fire.”¹⁸ Chin enters the stage wearing green cargo pants and an orange camisole, bear feet and a large Afro hair style, knob earrings, bead choke necklace, rings and bracelets. She is thin and gaunt, with long arms and legs. As she speaks her poems in front of the mic stand, her both long arms move wildly around like flapping wings, and her fingers, all ten, are stretched out with every gesture. She never just stands still. Her legs and body move from side to side as she

¹⁷ http://vassarlgbtq.blogspot.com/2009/02/celebrating-queer-people-of-color_19.html posted February 19, 2009. Accessed 08/15/2013

¹⁸ http://wn.com/staceyann_chin Accessed 08/15/2013

performs. In between lines, she pauses and stops moving; and when she starts talking again, her arms and legs move wildly with gesticulations. Chin's facial expression is intense, with serious frowns and lines; and then at times with wide open eyes. Her voice is loud, clear with guttural shouts and angry screams calling out the stereotypes and caricatures in marginalized identities. Caribbean "Africanness" and "Chineseness" are characterized by being "oversexed" or sexualized and "queer" in being "half-Chiney" (6). Chin addresses some of the ignorance in diversity that assumes knowledge of Chin's identities. In performance poem, "Crossfire" (2007), Chin states "and while we're on the subject of diversity/ Asia is not one big race/ and there is no such country called the Islands/ and no-I am not from there" (361-368). As Denzin points out, the performance text is the performer's "lived experience" and "embodiment" (94). I discuss Chin's performance text as her embodiment and orality in her intersectionality of race, gender, sexuality, nationality and class. Somers-Willet talks about the performance poet's "markers of identity" in her very presence on stage, even before she utters a word (18).

"Markers of identity" include skin color, hair, movement, gestures, and dress/costume all carrying signifiers of identity to audiences whether they see stereotypes or not. I apply Butler's schema for drag performance: "anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance" to Chin's embodiment in performance poetry to investigate whether identities are fluid alone. Butler's schema involves the shifts in the performer's anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance. I use Butler's schema because she uses this to illustrate fluidity of identities. Although Chin is not performing drag, or in a Caribbean masquerade tradition of crossdressing in the crossing of genders, I still

look closer to find particular references stereotypes of racialized “drag” with the stereotypical codes for “masculinity” and “femininity” in her performance poetry. Chin does not to “cross” racialized gender, but performs racialized “androgyny” in juxtaposing references of racialized gender stereotypes. Therefore Chin’s staged performance is fluid, in that it is self-directed and conscious in her embodiment of intersectionality. However, Chin’s performance could well be viewed as stereotypes because dominant culture may see it as such. Chin in turn performs black liminal displacement, the self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing of stereotypes in the orality in her performance poem. Below is an excerpt from Chin’s performance text, “Cross-Fire” (2007):

Most people are surprised my father is Chinese - like
there's some preconditioned
look for the half-Chinese lesbian poet
who used to be Catholic but now believes in dreams

Let's keep it real/ says the boy in the double-X hooded sweatshirt
that blond haired blue eyed Jesus in the Vatican ain't right
that motherfucker was Jewish, not white

Christ was a Middle Eastern Rastaman
who ate grapes in the company of prostitutes
and drank wine more than he drank water
born of the spirit the disciples also loved him in the flesh
but the discourse is on people who clearly identify as gay
or lesbian or straight
the State needs us to be left or right
those in the middle get caught
in the cross-fire away at the other side

If you are not for us you must be against us
People get scared enough they pick a team

Be it for Buddha or for Krishna or for Christ
God is that place between belief and what you name it
I believe holy is what you do

when there is nothing between your actions and the truth

I am afraid to draw your black lines around me
I am not always pale in the middle
I come in too many flavors for one fucking spoon

I am never one thing or the other - ... (2007, 361-368).

African Masculinity/Chinese Femininity

Chin gestures wildly with her long arms over her full Afro hairstyle. Her body sways from side to side, and her voice is loud and angry. Her facial expression is serious with frown lines. Chin's performance calls attention to intersectionality in race, "mixed-raced-ness," gender, sexuality, immigration, nationality, religion, sexual assaults. She shows the fluidity of identities in intersectionality, but warns about the fixities in each stereotype that prevents racialized and sexualized identities personally and for the collective. She performs black liminal displacement by self-identifying as black, and by self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing by juxtaposing the stereotypes to unsettle the audience who is confronted by a list of assumptions and stereotypes. She attacks essentialism, which uses stereotypes in representation to fix categories as "essentialist identities" (Newman). Chin states that "I am afraid to draw your black lines around me/ I am not always pale in the middle/ I come in too many flavors for one fucking spoon/ I am never one thing or the other" (361-368). Chin's liminality of "neither here nor there" or "never one thing or the other" captures the notion of fluidity of identities in the existence of more than one "identity." Yet at the same time Chin's liminality reflects the struggle to access even the right to have more than one identity, and the inequalities that still fix identities (Turner; Chin 361-368).

Performance poetry is the embodiment of “markers of identity” on the body (Somers-Willett 18). In the performance of “Cross-Fire” (2007), Chin’s blackness and “mixed” Asian appearance in her embodiment on stage carry stereotypical codes that she attempts to debunk. Chin states in her performance poem, “Crossfire” (2007). As a black and “mixed,” “half-Chinese,” “black Chinese,” “Chinese Creole” woman, Chin is stereotyped as “hypersexual,” “exotic” and “erotic” in her displays of anatomical sex and gender identity. In the Caribbean context, blackness (and “mixed”) are stereotyped as “masculine,” which symbolically represents hypersexuality, exoticism and eroticism (Kempadoo 2004, 34-36). On the other hand, Caribbean Chineseness is simultaneously racialized like East Indianness as “femininity” (Reddock 1999, 574). Reddock suggests that Chinese, Syrians, and East Indians are typically associated with “whiteness” (1999, 574). Chinese, like brown people, signify middle class because of their social mobility.

Furthermore, the evidence of racialized, sexualized and gendered codes is derived from colonial Caribbean societies. Scholars show how race and sexuality are so intertwined in the Caribbean to produce sexualized stereotypes for blackness, brownness or “mixed race” (Smith 2011; Kempadoo 2004). By racializing, sexualizing, and gendering, I refer to stereotypical codes or meanings for “masculinity” and “femininity.” As mentioned previously, but now only for the purpose of tabling, scholars point to blackness or “Africanness” on the black female body is considered “masculine,” which refers to being unrefined, “uncouth,” and “vulgar” (Cooper 2004, 8; Kempadoo 2004, 36; Ulysse 162). I focus here on blackness or “Africanness” because throughout the Caribbean. “Africanness” has been at the bottom of racial color-caste hierarchies and

discriminated against resulting in fixities and a lack of social and economic mobility (Whitten and Torres 13). This does not mean that I am not concerned for other non-white stereotypes of Chinese “femininity” and “half-Chiney.” These and many other colonial stereotypes are egregious; but I focus on black liminal displacement because Chin self-identifies as black and how her performance of blackness incorporates other colonial stereotypes. Blackness is further sexualized as “hypersexual,” “erotic” and “exotic” for all black Caribbeans including heterosexuals, lesbians, and transgender people or anyone considered “sexual deviants” (King 2005, 163; Kempadoo 2004, 34-36; Smith). Gender and sexuality scholar Ruth Fincher states that sexuality is “a society constructed set of processes which includes patterns of desire, fantasy, pleasure, and self-image. Hence, it is not restricted solely, nor indeed mainly, to sexual relations” (323). In this research, I look at sexuality broadly as the expression of self-image, perceptions and stereotypes about sexuality in staged performance.

However, regardless of sexual preference, blackness and mixed-raced-ness or miscegenation are considered hypersexual, “hyperactive libidos,” “exotic,” “erotic,” “oversexed,” “deviant” and “queer” (Kempadoo 8, 9; Smith 2011, 6). When I discuss blackness, I consider how race and sexuality are interlocked to produce the stereotype of hypersexuality (Kempadoo 2004, 8-9; Smith 6). In the Caribbean racialized gender codes however, whiteness or Europeanness is considered the “pinnacle of femininity” on the black female body (Kempadoo 2004, 36). White femininity, as discussed earlier in previous chapters, is considered an ideal femininity, and the black female body is disciplined toward “white femininity.” The code of white femininity is sometimes applied

to other non-white groups including people of Chinese, East Indian and Middle Eastern backgrounds (Reddock 1999, 574). Reddock states that African descent people perceive that the social mobility of Syrians, Indian and Chinese groups is “assisted by the degree of phenotypical similarity with the white group” (1999, 574). In this case, Chineseness could be associated with “whiteness” simply because of skin color. Skin color is further classed and linked to upper, middle and lower classes in Jamaica’s rigid color class divide. On the other hand, nineteenth century colonial writer Kingsley assumes that the Chinese are gender ambiguous, which is carried through to some contemporary readings on racial stereotypes (111). These stereotypes are consistent with contemporary ones. For example, Tavis S.K. Kong in Chinese Male Homosexualities: Memba, Tongzhi and Golden Boy (2011), shows how racialized and sexualized stereotypical codes are carried through today in colonial culture in British society. Kong states that “Caribbean men and Chinese men seem to serve as two ends of the pole of sexual stereotyping in racial hierarchy: the former are perceived as ‘hyper-masculine’ and ‘hypersexed’ (e.g., active, domineering, strong, large), the latter as ‘hyper-feminine’ and ‘undersexed’ (e.g., passive, friendly, smooth, small)...[and] almost always represented as sexually neutered or asexual” (127-128).

Using postcolonial theory’s “symbolic and material remnants” from colonial culture, I employ theatre semiotics, as a racialized, sexualized and gendered code system for “masculinity” and “femininity” in Chin’s slam. Elam explains that semiotics is “the study of the production of meaning in society” (2002, 1). I use theatre semiotics because they identify racialized, sexualized, gendered codes for “masculinity” and “femininity” in

the embodied acts seen and felt on the surface of the body in gestures, movements, voice, and costumes. Every gesture has meaning in performance. Blackness and “mixed” blackness have meaning on the body that translates in gender play in staged *transvestism* whether in carnival crossdressing, dancehall or performance poetry. In the Caribbean gender codification, scholars show how gender and racial stereotypes converge on the Caribbean black and “mixed” female body.

“Half-Chiney” or “Black Chinese” Connotations

In “Cross-Fire,” Chin makes reference to being “half-Chinese” and “black” and how these had shaped her intersectionality personified in performance poetry. Although being “half-Chinese” may have been glossed over as the obvious in Chin’s performance, and perhaps a fascination for many, “half-Chinese” carries pejorative overtones and stereotypes of miscegenation throughout the Caribbean, like categories of *Dougla* and *La Mulata* covered in chapters two and three (Shibata; Mohammed 2004, 60; Lee-Loy 23). When Chin uses “half-Chinese” in performance poetry, she highlights the stigma of miscegenation and the assumption of hypersexuality in interraciality. Furthermore, terms like “half-Chiney,” “half-Chinese” and “part-Chinese” have been used in Caribbean Chinese communities especially in Jamaica as derisive labels for mixed Chinese like Chin (Shibata 2013, 370). Many descendants of Jamaican Chinese are from Hakka, Guangdong, China (Shibata 2005, 53; Thomson 299). The Chinese Hakka expression *ship-yit (t)diam* means “half-Chinese,” literally meaning “half-brain” or “half literate/educated,” not “pure” and not “whole,” even “death” (Shibata 2013, 370). “Half-Chinese” consisting of African and Chinese heritages is especially abandoned or

disowned by their Chinese families (Shibata 2005, 64). In Chin's memoir, The Other Side of Paradise (2009), she talks at length about the abandonment by her Chinese father and family, and was raised by her African Jamaican grandmother. As a result, Chin has scarce little to do with her Chinese family and father, and embraces Africanness (Chin's Memoir and Interview).

A significant "mixed Chinese" group exists in Jamaica because many Chinese have intermarried African Jamaicans (Shibata 2013; Lee-Loy 23). Part of Chin's early ambivalence about being "black" is that in Caribbean culture Chineseness is emphasized over blackness (Mohammed 2004, 60-61). Lee-Loy explains that Chineseness and "mixed" Chinese are marginalized and invisible in the Afro-Euro Creole culture in the Caribbean (116). She argues that "to 'be seen' as West Indian means to 'be not seen' as Chinese (116). She observes that Chineseness, including "mixed," is characterized in the reductive stereotypes of shopkeepers, broken Hakka and English, "Mr. Chin" or "Miss Chin," since "Chin" is a very common Chinese surname (Lee-Loy 23).

However, being "half-Chinese" can also carry light-skinned privilege in color caste Creole societies. As in "Cross-Fire," Chin is caught in between abandonment for being "half-Chinese," and skin-color privilege in Jamaica's color casting. Stolzoff explains that the Chinese, whites, and brown people in Jamaica are part of, what he calls the "capitalist" class (163). Cooper explains that "mixed-race (African) Jamaicans often define themselves as "half-Indian, half-Chinese, half-Syrian, half-white. But never half-African" (Cooper 2010a, 297). Cooper argues that the "half" is privileged over the other "half" of Africanness. She references Peter Tosh's song "African" as an example of the

celebration and privileging of Africa and “Africanness” over the other “halves,” and in a legitimate “marker of racial identity” (Cooper 2010a, 297). In Tosh’s song, he states “Don’t care where you come from/ As long as you’re a black man/ You’re an African/ No mind your nationality/ you have got the identity of an African” (quoted in Cooper 2010, 297). The song goes on further:

Cause if you come from Trinidad
And if you come from Nassau
And if you come from Cuba
You’re an African
...
‘Cause if your *plexion* high, high high
If your plexion low, low low
And if your plexion in between
You’re an African

Tosh criticizes and parodies “complexion” in the deeply divided color caste Jamaican (and Caribbean) society with “shades” of “browns” and “blacks” with a shortened, “plexion.” Tosh shifts privilege to “Africanness” and African identity regardless of skin color and nationality. So that even as the “half” in Chinese is offensive in Jamaican Chinese culture, Afrocentrists claim an African identity irrespective of “mix” and skin color, and especially in response to prejudices against blackness, even among some blacks.

To be clear, Chin self-identifies as “black” and gains even more of a realization of blackness in relation to Chineseness, and in the United States when she arrives in the early 1990s. In the United States, Chin explains that she is faced with being a “black” foreigner (Simmons 172). She states “can’t you see how light I am?” as if having light-skin would provide immediate skin color privilege (Chin 2003, 172). Yet at the same

time, she states that she experiences being an “outsider” for being a lesbian in Jamaica, where she felt the terror of backlash homophobia that gripped the country in the 1990s and 2000s. Simmons observes the sense of light-skinned privilege in color casting complicated with sexuality in Chin’s experience of light-skinned privilege and sexuality.

Although ostracized and attacked for her sexual orientation in Jamaica, Stacey[ann] had enjoyed ‘light-skinned privilege’ (the intraracial form of racism) afforded her on the island. She quickly discovered that in the U.S. of A., racism against people of color occurs across the board, transcending the shade issue thought to be so important in many Black communities. Although she wanted to shout, ‘Can’t you see how light I am?’ the realization resulting from these experiences challenged not only her sense of self, but the way she saw many things, like power relationships and oppression (172).

Because of Chin’s light-skin complexion as a “mixed” person of Chinese and African descent, Michael Glitz in The Advocate observes Chin in her performance poem, “Passing:”

Chin strides on stage with authority, woos them with sexy words about loving another woman, and then demands respect with her passionate poem “Passing.” “I do not wish to pass,” cried Chin, her arms defiantly held high. “I do not wish to pass/As semiwhite/Or nearly normal/Holding down corporate jobs/Stroking narrow-minded dicks/So I can be invited to family dinners/So I can disown my brothers and sisters/Who cannot pass” (60).

Chin’s references to being “semi-white” or “nearly normal” equate whiteness with normalcy. As mentioned earlier, Chineseness in the Caribbean culture is often locally thought to be as close to whiteness, and therefore viewed as the “pinnacle of whiteness” in stereotypical codes (Reddock 1999, 574; Kempadoo 2004, 36). When Chin declares that she does not want to “pass,” she refers to passing for “white” with light-skinned privilege, but also about “passing” as straight.

Place, Displacement, and Code Switching or “World Traveling”

Chin uses postcolonial concepts of place, displacement and code switching in “Cross-Fire.” Place and displacement address the relationship of migration from one’s “homeland to the metropolitan center of the European world” and to North America (Madison 2005, 49; Ashcroft et.al. 2-4). It involves moving from a colonized country to a dominant colonial and imperial country. In “Cross-Fire,” Chin pauses and stops moving only for a while, and dryly states in response to questions about her background, “Asia is not one big race/ and there is no such country called the Islands/ and no-I am not from there” (2007, 361-368). As an “outsider,” Chin responds to assumptions about her intersectionality from a (former) colonized state to the metropolis dominant colonial state. Lugones argues an “outsider” and/or “minority” in a dominant culture use of code switching also referred to as “world traveling,” which is “where one must travel through worlds of difference, unfamiliarity, or alienation as well as the contrasting worlds of comfort, familiarity, and support by shifting codes from one world to the next” (Lugones quoted in Madison 2005, 99).

Chin’s code switching occurs in her more “formalized” language, though accented, in performing in the United States. In her performance poetry in the Caribbean, she uses more Creole (*Patois*) in her cadence and tone, according to her audience. Madison discusses Lugones’s concept as “when outcasts travel to different worlds and perform differently in those worlds, they do so *not* out of deception, but out of appropriateness, civility, respect, out of health and safety for their own survival” (99). Therefore out of the survival of displacement, Chin engages in code switching in

performance poetry, but she is not polite, as Lugones suggests in code switching. Chin calls attention to the issues of immigration, sexuality, race and poverty by weaving how each one affects the other. In our interview, Chin illuminates her experiences of race, blackness, and Chineseness in Jamaica and the United States. I show how these have impacted on her performance in performance poetry. Below, we speak informally in Jamaican Standard English:

DFE: What's your experience of race and blackness in Jamaica... and in the US?

Chin: Race and blackness... I mean... in a nutshell... I know that in Jamaica... I need qualifiers when I say that I am... black... um and, in America I don't need any qualifiers – I am inextricably black in the US... and though the black people here might understand that I am “mixed” with something, the larger white populous doesn't necessarily “read” me as “mixed;” they read me as “black.” – Ah... in Jamaica, of course, “shade” becomes more important... than... ah – than race itself.

DFE: Right

Chin: I don't think there's much of a difference that is seen between, um...let's see... people who are white, or people who are mixed with like white and Indian, or people who are mixed with white and Chinese - I don't think... those “mixtures” that are not mixed with black are seen as anything, but white.

DFE: Right

Chin: ...Um and in... whereas if you are mixed with black and with one of those races, particularly Chinese or white that you are seen as... you're immediately classified as... middle-class or at least um... the lower upper-class or upper middle-class.

DFE: Right

Chin: Um... so I think, y'know, the term “blackness” in Jamaica...refers directly to the *shade* of brown that you might be...um...and it has to be – the darkest shade of that brown ... y'know, and the black masses usually have it. It um... it almost literally is the interpretation, in terms of color... in Jamaica. So I have to... I have to make qualifiers – I have to say, okay – I'm “black” because I have a black mother or my politics is “black” or I am not white or I have to be read as such... um, whereas in America, when I say I'm black, it encapsulates all of that immediately, y'know the politics of it...um, particularly because I wear my hair in an afro all the time – or used to before my daughter came along (Excerpt from 2012

Telephone Interview with Staceyann Chin, Appendix E).

Chin explains that her choice to wear an Afro in performance poetry is her “mark” of blackness, and is still today a powerful symbol of black power. She simultaneously highlights the intersection of race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, desire, color, privilege and prejudice all of which are her lived experience embodied in her performance in “Cross-Fire.” I continue with asking Chin about her Chinese heritage in performance, and her ambivalence about Chineseness. She finally comes to terms with Chineseness as what “[informing] my blackness” (Chin’s Interview).

Chin: Y’know.... I was very decidedly...umm... a black person who was – in... who was -w-w-whose, whose um phenotype was informed by my Chineseness - all my life growing up in Jamaica. I knew I didn’t look like the other black kids I – I - um grew up with – um...So I knew something else was in me and everyone else knew it and it wasn’t a secret, and people referenced it all the time – with regards to my hair or my skin color or how skinny I was or...all those number of things or when speaking particularly about my father, they’ll say “Chinese”... Um about the food, I mean y’know – some of it was...y’know being teased on the school grounds about, y’know... Chinese people eat dogs or the other part of, y’know, it was “I’m pretty because I’m half-Chinese.”

DFE: Hm-mm. Hm-mm

Chin: Come to America, y’know... um. Grew up [in Jamaica] and and I’m here at 24... and there’s a way that – the Chinese identity was not isolated in Jamaica – it was only how it informed my blackness.

DFE: Right

Chin: The focus was only on how it [Chineseness] informed my blackness. So I was a black girl with long hair or I was a black girl with curly hair or I was a black girl who was light-skinned or I was a black girl whose frame looked like um, I had Chinese in me, or I was a black girl whose father was Chinese.

DFE: Hm-mm. Hm-mm

Chin: So...my Chineseness y’know... there wasn’t any kind of isolated, legitimized Chineseness in Jamaica. However, when I came to the States... I think the Asian American community sought me out; the Chinese American community sought me out, particularly when I became a voice for nativity(?) issues or um... y’know, intersectionality issues or

um... y'know, minority issues – that the Chinese community and the Asian community began to seek me out and ask me about that Chinese – And I had to work really hard to isolate the Chinese experience – and to articulate that Chinese experience – because it's not as if I was raised with my father or raised in a Chinese community or among Chinese people – so there was a way that my Chineseness only has to do with ah... a phenotypical inheritance or a...a- a-a kind of um... how I - how I – how I interpreted myself, how I - I saw myself - how I... how I um, I felt in my own body when you heard people talking about Chinese people. It was never really necessarily directly - directed at me. Outside of my blackness, it was never... I was never - seen as Chinese or spoken about as Chinese – but I had to kind of piece that identity [Chineseness] together because people were really asking questions – that forced me to ask myself to the question, “Am I Chinese?” or “What makes me Chinese?” or “What of me is Chinese?” and therefore, what of it is important in terms of... the articulation of an identity (Excerpt from 2012 Telephone Interview with Staceyann Chin, Appendix E).

Caribbean Masquerade Model for Race, Gender, Sexuality

In the masquerade traditions of Jamaican dancehall *transvestism* and Trinidad carnival crossdressing involving the simultaneous crossing of genders and races/ethnicities, I have used models of African masculine/European feminine and African masculine/East Indian feminine to explore Butler's fluidity of identities. Although Chin is not performing in the masquerade traditions with costume revelry, I use an African masculine/Chinese feminine model only to show colonial stereotyping around the figure of “half-Chiney” in performance poetry. Because I have used a racialized drag model of “masculinity” and “femininity” in the masquerade traditions of Jamaican dancehall *transvestism* and Trinidad carnival crossdressing, I approach Chin's performance poetry with the same model, but as racialized “androgyny” which juxtaposes and blurs the stereotypical codes in performance. Although Chin's staged performance is fluid, it is still viewed as fixed in a colonial gaze of stereotypes. Chin's performance

poetry addresses these fixities in racialized gender identities through orality and the “lived experience.”

Based on scholars’ observations of Caribbean racialized, sexualized and gendered codes for “masculinity” and “femininity,” I have devised a binary of African masculine/Chinese feminine for Chin’s racialized androgyny or blurring of “masculinity” and “femininity” in performance poetry. Chin performs ambivalence and blurring of identities in staged *transvestism*. I analyze Chin’s performance poetry as a play on the codes of racialized “masculinity” and “femininity” on the black Caribbean female body. In this case, I consider African masculine/Chinese feminine in Chin’s racial androgyny while playing with staged *transvestism*. Even though, I consider African masculine/Chinese feminine at play in Chin’s racial androgyny in staged *transvestism*, I believe that the idea of white “femininity” is always simultaneously at play on the black female body. In this study, black Caribbean women performers of staged *transvestism* resist this ideal femininity on the Caribbean black body to express blackness in its “vulgarity” and “hypersexuality.” Racial androgyny is the blurring of the codes of racialized, sexualized gender stereotypical codes of “masculinity” and “femininity.”

Butler's Schema for Drag Performance	Staceyann Chin's Racial Androgyny in Performance Poetry
Anatomical Sex	"Black" Female
Gender Identity	"Black" woman, "mixed race" black and Chinese
Gender Performance	Racialized "androgyny"
Performance Genre	Performance Poetry and Slam
Stereotypes/Caricatures	Black woman as "masculine," hypersexual, "exotic," "erotic" Chinese femininity "White femininity" Nativism
Black Liminal Displacement as Self-Stereotypes and Self-Caricatures	African masculine/Chinese feminine
Costumes, Gestures, Repetition, Audience's perception	Afro symbol for blackness, Bare feet, Androgynous style with army green cargo pants and powder blue camisole top

Table 4: Performance Analysis Chart showing Butler's Schema for drag performance applied to Chin's Performance Poetry as Racialized "Androgyny"

Black liminal displacement challenges the universality in fluidity of identities because it simultaneously seems to reify racial stereotypes. Some scholars would theorize Caribbean identities as fluid because of the multi-ethnic or "mixed" populations, and the interactions among various races and ethnicities. However, using fluidity in this way denies the historical lineage of stereotypical codes on racialized groups. Literary theorists Carole Boyce Davies and Monica Jardine in "Migration, Diaspora, Nations: The Re-Making of Caribbean Identities" (2010) argue that "Caribbean identities are multiple tectonic layers which bear the various linguistic and cultural marks of prior indigenous ethnicities as well as multiple colonizers" (437-438). I agree that identities are multiple, and even "tectonic layers" as Davies and Jardine explain; however, these involve stereotyping and caricatures over time. If I consider staged *transvestism* as multiple or blurring identities as in racial androgyny, each image is part of the historical lineage of

stereotyping and caricaturing in contemporary stagings like Chin's performance poetry that speaks powerfully about racialized embodiments.

In investigating whether Butler's fluidity of identities occurs in staged *transvestism*, I use Butler's schema to analyze Chin's performance poetry. I have devised a performance analysis chart showing the elements in Chin's racial androgyny. This table includes racialized gender codes in staged *transvestism* of blackness, "mixed race" or brown is considered "aggressive," "hypersexual," erotic and "exotic." Chineseness here is considered "feminine" which signifies an "ideal" away from blackness; however, I consider the effects of white femininity on the black female body. Chin's performance is mocking the idea of white femininity, and for that matter, the idea of a racialized gender construct through self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing. In our interview, Chin talks about how she performs stereotypes and caricatures back to the audience as a strategy to get the audience to "seriously think about people who are actual stereotypes" (Chin). In this way, Chin reflects stereotypical codes and meanings back to the audience to have a conversation about them.

DFE: ... So how do you address the stereotypes and caricatures in performance? Do you have a special thing that you do?

Chin: um, I don't know if I have a special thing that I do, but I know that um, depending on the audience I'm talking to - I try to at least raise, at least in the introduction of my performance - I raise the issue of stereotypes by calling out stereotypes about them.

DFE: Yes.

Chin: So if I'm in New England, y'know, um - I would probably say "Oh, all of you guys are like rotten wealthy and you, y'know, y'know, y'know - you have this money up here and all of you have property on the beach and y'know." And-and-and many of them would say, "Oh, of course, sure." Or if I'm in, y'know, and different places, y'know - or if I'm in an African American, um, community, I will start talking about

like, “So every boy here play basketball, right?... so - When you call out people – when you call out the stereotypes and begin the conversation about what people think of-of those people, then I think that they are probably more receptive about hearing that they need to seriously think about people who are actual stereotypes as well– So I mean I try always to um to not just speak my own stories but speak the stories of the people to whom I’m speaking to so it becomes a conversation even if it is a monologue (Excerpt from 2012 Telephone Interview with Staceyann Chin, Appendix E).

Chin discusses identities as out of the body experience “two-spirit” referring to same-gender-loving. Chin hints at the fear of the State in enforcing people to have an identity, and that the State demands that people must choose. The concept of the “cross-fire” is for those who get “caught in the middle,” as Chin notes. This place of in-between-ness in avoiding essentialism is a “dangerous” place of “cross-fire.” If identities are fluid, why would there be a “cross-fire,” a dangerous in-between place? Here, Chin points to the fixities that hold marginalized groups in fear of attacks.

When Chin enters the stage, her costume entails large afro, camisole top, cargo pants, and bare feet. Her performance poetry is a very physical, energetic, with foot stomping and wide hand arm gestures; and her voice consists of loud guttural shouts and Jamaican-accented. Chin states that she is stereotyped as “exotic,” particularly because she is black and Chinese “mixed” (Chin Interview, Appendix E). Blackness and “mixed race” or brown are sexualized as hypersexual, “erotic,” and “exotic” (Kempadoo 2004, 80). Hypersexuality include the black Caribbean sexual “outlaws” as prostitutes, lesbians, gay, transgender as somehow “oversexed” and “deviant” (Kempadoo 2004, 34-36; King 2005 193). Therefore, as a lesbian, Chin is already perceived as hypersexual. In her performance text, like song lyrics, talks about the stereotypes and caricatures in

identities. Chin performs self-stereotypes and self-caricatures by highlighting the stereotypes and caricatures about Caribbean blackness. In our interview, she talks about how her blackness is perceived as “native,” “loud,” and that some audiences assume that she only speaks English “so good” because of living in the United States. She states that she thinks that she is perceived as “native” she performs with bare feet with a large afro. Chin shows that she is aware of the stereotypes and goes further by self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing to control the representations. Chin’s costume, stage presence and performance text and gender performance are self-stereotypes and self-caricatures to displace audience’s perceptions about stereotypes and caricatures.

Poem For The Gay Games, 2007

I saw Chin perform at the event, “Slamming Oppression with Staceyann Chin, A Queer Activist Poet” hosted by the University of Texas at Austin Queer People of Color and Allies (QPOCA) on November 10, 2010 at the San Jacinto Multipurpose Room at the University of Texas at Austin. QPOCA was established in 2009 as an agency of the Multicultural Engagement Center at University of Texas at Austin. QPOCA responds to the needs of queer people, queers of color, and people of color at the university. The agency’s mandate is to assist with tools for self-empowerment, education, outreach, visibility for people of color, address stereotypes, and provide a safe haven.¹⁹ As a relatively new and enthusiastic group, QPOCA invited Chin to perform in the San Jacinto Multipurpose Room in the student dorm at University of Texas at Austin.

¹⁹ See QPOCA’s official website <http://qpocatexas.com>

When I arrived at the dorm, I was led downstairs to the basement to the San Jacinto Multipurpose Room. The lines to get inside were long. The crowd was thick, with some people milling around talking, laughing, meeting and greeting friends. Some moved from line to line to find a shorter line to join. Excitement filled the air. I found a line and stayed there. I was actually worried that I would not find a seat, and thought I would have to stand as close as possible to the stage to see Chin's performance. While in line, I looked across the hall to see posters of Chin plastered everywhere on the walls. I finally got to the front of the line to get a program and rushed inside to get a seat from the few remaining back seats. It was a fairly large room with a big, open stage with microphones and podiums center and stage left downstage. The stage was around a foot and a half from the ground. The seats were arranged with an aisle in the center, and an aisle on both sides off center. The room was jam packed with members of QPOCA and students. All seats were taken, and some audience members stood at the back of the room by the entrance doors and sides.

The mood was festive as the audience eagerly awaited Chin's entrance on stage. She was just flying into Austin from New York City on a delayed flight. QPOCA student representative Ambalika announced that Chin was on her way. Chin entered the room with Ambalika walking down the center aisle with her trademark style of a full flowing afro, army green cargo pants and a powder blue camisole top. A collective calm came over the audience as Chin walked through the audience toward the stage. I did not see Chin's shoes; but when she stepped on stage, she was there with bare feet. She first started with greeting everyone: QPOCA is affiliated and endorsed by the Multicultural

Endorsement Center and the Center for African and African American Center. Chin cynically remarked about why so many groups seemed to heavily endorse this event as she read the list of associations with QPOCA. Then in her opening, she reeled off stereotypes she heard about Texans and about her being in Texas including saying that everybody told her to be careful about Texans because they would “lynch” person like her. In our interview, Chin stated that in her performances, she usually employed strategies of talking about stereotypes about her audiences as a way to unsettle any stereotypes her audience might have about her (Chin Interview, Appendix E). That way, she said, everyone would be on a level playing field, and revealed how she juxtaposes stereotypes about herself and the audience (Chin Interview, Appendix E). Chin then read excerpts from her memoir, The Other Side of Paradise (2009), and talked about her personal experiences and intersecting identities, especially about being black, Chinese, “half-Chinese,” Jamaican, Caribbean, and lesbian. As Chin read sections from her memoir, she embodied the personal stories of pain, heartbreak, abuse, assault, and family abandonment. The audience responded with shocks and murmurs, to which Chin said, “It’s okay. Remember, I survived!” The audience erupted with applause.

One of the most striking performance poems Chin performed that night was “Poem for the Gay Games.” Chin first performed this poem she called a “speech/poem” as part of the opening of the Gay Games VII held in Chicago on July 15-22, 2006 (Rand 235). The performance poetry text was published later in Word Warriors: Thirty-five Women Leaders in Spoken Word Revolution, (2007). The Gay Games is the largest sports and cultural event in the world. It was conceived by Dr. Tom Waddell and started

in 1982 at the Kezer Stadium in San Francisco.²⁰ The games are hosted every four years like the Olympics in major cities worldwide. The next Gay Games will be held in 2014 in Cleveland and Akron, Ohio on August 9-16, 2014. The games are open to all people regardless of age, athletic/artistic ability, sexual orientation, gender, race, nationality, physical or health status, and religion. The event was usually sponsored by numerous corporations and businesses that gave the LGBT visibility at least for the few days.

By all accounts, Chin was critical of the fanfare for the Gay Games 2006, and criticized the gay movement for its political exclusion of queers of color, and for “selling out” to big corporations who sponsored the Gay Games (Rand 236). Chin said, “the companies that sponsor our events/ do not honor the way we live or love/ or dance or pray/ progressive politicians still dance around/ the issue of gay parenting/ and the term marriage is reserved/ for those unions sanctioned by a church-controlled state” (Rand 236; Chin 369-373). Women’s and gender studies scholar Erica Rand in Red Nails, Black Skates: Gender, Cash, and Pleasure On and Off the Ice (2012) noted that “white, affluent middle-aged men” criticized Chin for “impoliteness, inappropriateness, and lack of civility” in her performance poetry at the Gay Games (235). Rand said that they cringed at Chin’s vulgarity at the liberal use of the F-word, especially at a televised event (235). Some patrons were puzzled and asked, “Who was that angry woman?”(Rand 235). To this, Rand was reminded about the question and stereotype: “Who is that angry black woman?” Chin screamed, “*fuck you-you-fucking-racist-sexist-turd/ fuck you for crying about homophobia/ while you exploit the desperation of undocumented immigrants/ to*

²⁰ See information and resources for The Gay Games at <http://gaygames.org/wp/>

clean your hallways/ bathe your children and cook your dinner/ or less than you and I spend on our tax deductible lunch!" (Rand 235; Chin 369-373). It was not only the F-word that offended some; but it was Chin's critique of whiteness in the LGBT movement for not considering the plight of queers of color, and for not looking at global and local issues of poverty and immigration (Rand 235).



Figure 23: Staceyann Chin in performance at the Southpaw Club in Brooklyn, NY. With Permission from Staceyann Chin

As Chin performed "Poem for the Gay Games" in the San Jacinto Multipurpose Room at University of Texas at Austin, it was as if all the air was being expelled from her body. Her back was hunched over, rounded when the air squeezed out of her lungs. Chin was using all her energy to lift her knees and feet to stomp down, and almost through the floor. Figure 2 shows Chin's typical movement of leg lifts and stomping in a performance at the Southpaw Club in Brooklyn, New York. In her performance of "Poem for the Gay Games," Chin's message was urgent. "I want to scream out loud/ *All oppression is*

connected you dick,” Chin yelled out (369-373). She was critical of what she saw as apathy in queer activism. Chin thought that the LGBT movement had not considering how multiple identities like race and nationality interact with sexuality. Chin questioned identity labels of “black” “lesbian” “woman” and the façade of unity at the expense of the most vulnerable and exploited queers of color in the movement.

Chin used all the space in the San Jacinto Multipurpose Room. During her performance of “Poem for the Gay Games,” she came down from the stage and through the center aisle. She spoke with passion directly at the audience with angry facial expression, and piercing eye contact with the lines: “Tongue and courage tied with fear/ I am at once livid, ashamed and paralyzed/ By neoconservatism breeding malicious amongst us/ Gay/ Lesbian/ Bisexual/ Transgender/ Ally/ Questioning/ Two spirit/ Non-gender-conforming – every year we add a new letter/ our community is happily expanding beyond the scope/of the dream Stonewall sparked within us.” The audience seemed stunned by her close proximity, and one could not help watching her move through the audience. All heads turned to see her. Chin climbed up on a table just center downstage on the ground level. She stood there, yelling to the ceiling with arms outstretched in the most dramatic gesture, and said, “yet everyday/ I become more and more afraid to say/ black/ or lesbian/ or woman – every day/ under the pretense of unity” (). By the end of Chin’s rant, it seemed that she was all spent. In a final appeal, while back on the stage, she shouted the charge: “Now! while there are still ways that we can fight/ Now! because those rights we still have are so very few/ Now! because it is the right thing to do/ Now! before you open the door to find” (373) At the next and final line,

Chin lowers her head, and with a choked up voice, to a near whisper, she said, “they have finally come for you” (373).

Below is an excerpt of the performance text for “Poem For the Gay Games” (2007) performed by Chin:

Being queer has no bearing on race
or class or creed
my white publicist said
true love is never affected by color
or country or the carnal need for cash
...
I can't explain why
but the term lesbian just come across
as confrontational to me
why can't you people just say you date people?

Tongue and courage tied with fear
I am at once livid, ashamed and paralyzed
By neoconservatism breeding malicious amongst us
Gay
Lesbian
Bisexual
Transgender
Ally
Questioning
Two spirit
Non-gender-conforming – every year we add a new letter
our community is happily expanding beyond the scope
of the dream Stonewall sparked within us

yet everyday
I become more and more afraid to say
Black
or lesbian
or woman – every day
under the pretense of unity
I swallow something I should have said
about the epidemic of AIDS in Africa
or the violence against teenage girls in East New York

or the mortality rate of young boys on the south side of Chicago

even in the friendly conversation
I have to rein in the bell hooks-ian urge
to kill motherfuckers who say stupid shit to me
all day, bitter branches of things I cannot say out loud
sprout deviant from my neck ... (2007, 361-368).

In “Poem for the Gay Games,” Chin is critical of any queer movement, which excludes the violence felt by queers of color. She is concerned about the global concerns of queers of color, and the effects of immigration. “To embrace ‘queer,’” states black queer performance theorist E. Patrick Johnson in “Queer Theory” (2008), “is to resist or elide categorization, to disavow binaries (that is, gay versus straight, black versus white) and proffer potentially productive modes of resistance against hegemonic structures of power” (166). Chin is already queer and embodies “queer” because of her intersectionality. She calls attention to the (white) LGBTQ movement’s exclusion of some of the most vulnerable queers of color. In another poem, “On Rooms to Fight and Fuck and Crow,” Chin maintains that “I do not want to be part of any binary that kills desire and instinct. No part of me nurses the fragile, indecipherable desire to fit in. Skin, pussy, and original sin render me the madwoman in the proverbial attic. All day, I navigate a war of terror perpetuated on the bodies of women, on bodies of color, on poor people whose crime is that they do not earn enough” (256).

Yet at the same time, she warns about fixities facing racialized and sexualized identities because fluidity alone would erase any knowledge of the realities of poverty and racial inequalities. Johnson notes that in academic circles “queer” is used in theorize

gender and sexuality away from rigid categories, and used in de-essentialize race and class (166). Johnson and Mae G. Henderson state in the Introduction to Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology (2005), that they seek to “*quare* queer – to throw shade on its meaning in the spirit of extending its services to ‘blackness’” (7) Johnson and Henderson argue that both terms, “black” and “queer” reflect difference. For example, “black” resists assimilation and absorption, while “queer” resists heteronormativity. However, they claim that the term “black queer” “names the specificity of the historical and cultural differences that shape experiences and expressions of ‘queerness’” (7). Similarly, women’s and gender studies scholar Rinaldo Walcott in “Against the Rules of Blackness” (2011), argue that “queer discourses in black diaspora studies remain against the rules, out-of-order utterances that trouble the borders of the ‘normal’ and ‘proper’ black body. That ‘normal’ and ‘proper’ black body is an imagined heterosexual black body. But the absent/present dyad that exists in black diaspora studies does not and cannot entirely eliminate what we might tentatively call a black queer diaspora”(75).

Although the term “queer” is not used in the Caribbean, it is used extensively in scholarship about Caribbean queers (Tinsley 2010, 166; Glave 189). Literary scholar Thomas Glave in “Whose Caribbean? An Allegory, in Part” (2005), states that “while I believe in and support the inclusive, imaginative, and political possibilities of the word *queer*, I chose not to use it [*queer*] ... because it is not yet in the Caribbean at large a word that has either been used or considered for its potential in application to non-heterosexual sexualities, practices, and identities. By way of amplification with regard to *queer*, a similar, but somewhat differently employed term has recently emerged in some

African American and gay circles: ‘same-gender-loving’” (189). While in solidarity with being black queer and same-gender-loving in the United States, other Caribbean studies scholars refer to some indigenous terms and sexual practices, some pejorative like “queer,” but fully re-appropriated across the Caribbean as *jamette*, *zami*, *Man Royal*, *Aunty/Anti-Man*, *maricon* and *macocotte* (King 2011; Tinsley 2010; Hill MacDonald-Smythe 2011).

Chin is concerned about categories and labels like “queer,” “black,” or “lesbian” because of what she calls, the “pretense of unity” that can potentially exclude specificities in economic, nationality, and immigration issues. In “Poem for the Gay Games,” Chin states that “yet everyday/I become more and more afraid to say/black/or lesbian/or woman – every day/under the pretense of unity” (2007 361-368). Chin’s ambivalence is probably part of an indigenous Caribbean black Creole culture which uses different names from race, gender and sexualities. Caribbean literary theorist Omise’eke Natasha Tinsley in Thieving Sugar: Eroticism Between Women in Caribbean Literature (2010), states that the terms “queer” and “quare” are not used in Caribbean texts for same-sex loving. Queer theory avoids binaries in sexual identities and in de-essentializing race as Johnson states (2010, 166). However, in “What is Uma?: Women Performing Gender and Sexuality in Paramaribo, Surname” (2011), Tinsley notes that embedded in Caribbean Creole culture and language is the subordinated knowledge and theory around gender and sexuality well before Butler’s gender performativity (2011, 242). She argues that Anglophone and Francophone Caribbean scholars like Carolyn Cooper and Bernabé et.al all point to indigenous Creole theories of race and ethnicity, but systematically overlook

the language around gender and sexuality that suggests gender and sexuality fluidity (Tinsley 2011, 242).

However, the point of fluidity in racialized gender identities is that it is self-directed in its indigenous Creole cultural form. But fluidity should not ignore the fixities in impeding, criminalizing racialized and sexualized identities. As a result there are numerous names for “lesbians” in Caribbean Creole culture. Tinsley notes the terms for women loving women, “like Trinidad’s *jamettes*, Jamaica’s *man royals*, Haiti’s *madivines*, and Barbados’s *wicca*, many involved in same-sex relationships here have done so openly in the context of working-class Afro-Caribbean traditions called *mati* in Suriname, *zami* in Grenada, and *kambrada* in Curaçao. These terms can refer without distinction to female friends or lovers” (2010, 7). In terms of gender, “masculine” and “feminine,” it is common to hear in Jamaican Creole that black women are referred in the masculine pronoun, “him,” in conversation, suggesting a connection between black women and “masculinity.” Tinsley states that “Creole languages speak gender in the region as more complex than any naturalized masculine-feminine duality. The absence of grammatical gender for Creole nouns (*Sranan wan* instead of Spanish *uno/una*) and pronouns (Haitian *li* instead of French *il/elle*) suggests a culturally specific grammar of gender that differs from Europe’s compulsory binary. This absence is accompanied by rich vocabulary to express female masculinity and male femininity” (2010, 9). Tinsley notes that even though there are complexities in Creole culture, she observes that not all of the authors she studies identify themselves *lesbian* or *mati*, even though some might identify as *mannengre meid* or *man royal*. However, all of them identify themselves as

women (9). This indicates why Chin, in her performance poem “Poem for the Gay Games” (2007), is ambivalent about the term “lesbian,” especially coming from Caribbean Creole culture that valorizes the existence of “lesbian” identities. But despite the fluidity of Creole sexualities, it is important to recognize the criminalization of Caribbean lesbians throughout the region that denies agency and access to countless resources afforded to heterosexuals.

Smith states that Jamaican lesbian writer Makeda Silvera who lives in Canada, remembers the term “sodomite.” Silvera states that “in Jamaica, the words used to describe many of these women [lesbians] would be ‘Man Royal’ and/or ‘Sodomite.’ Dread words. I heard sodomite whispered a lot ... tales of women secretly having sex, joining at the genitals, and being taken to the hospital to be ‘cut’ apart were told in the school yard. Invariably, one of the women would die” (quoted in Smith 9). Smith reminds scholars to look at the various local terms “lesbians” that are as epithets, and but now re-appropriated by women loving women. Smith states that “we should not allow Silvera’s racial identity as an Afro-Caribbean-Canadian woman to obliterate or undermine her identity as a lesbian. Specifying other ‘local’ and ‘authentic’ conjugations is also important” (9).

“Prostitutes” and “Lesbians”

Heteropatriarchy and hypersexuality are essential to Caribbeanness (Kempadoo 2004, 7). According to Kempadoo, heteropatriarchy privileges heterosexuality, promiscuous masculinity, and normalize intolerance against sexual desires and practices considered outside of heteronormativity, for example homoeroticism and same-gender

sexual relations (2004, 9). Hypersexuality is the polar opposite from heteropatriarchy's "order." Hypersexuality is the belief that Caribbeans have an overactive libido, based on the history of slavery and miscegenation and are outlawed, promulgates disorder, and are far outside of heteronormativity and heteropatriarchy (Kempadoo 2004, 7-9). "Hypersexuals" include lesbians, transgender, prostitutes, gays and other so-called "sexual deviants" (Kempadoo 2004, 9). Hypersexuality is constructed under colonial domination, and therefore a colonial stereotype for sexual outsiders including blacks and the "miscegenated" - all assumed to be "queer" (Smith).

Therefore, stereotypical codes for hypersexuality extend to Caribbean black women's "sexual agency and erotic autonomy" in figures of "prostitute" or "lesbian" (Alexander 22-23). It should be noted that anyone can be called "hypersexual" whether or not they are prostitutes, lesbians, transgender or gay, simply because they do not conform to heteropatriarchy. Alexander explains that erotic autonomy is defined as black women's sexual agency outside of the structure of the heterosexual family (22-23). Alexander states that,

Given the putative impulse of this eroticism to corrupt, it signals danger to respectability – not only to respectable black middle-class families, but most significantly to black middle-class womanhood. In this matrix, then, particular figures have come to embody this eroticism, functioning historically as the major symbols of threat. At this moment in the neocolonial state's diffusion of sexualized definitions of morality, sexuality and erotic autonomy have been most frequently cathected on the body of the prostitute and lesbian. Formerly conflated in the imaginary of the (white) imperial heteropatriarchy, the categories of "lesbian" and "prostitute" are now positioned together in black heteropatriarchy as outlaw, operating outside the boundaries of law, and therefore, poised to be disciplined and punished within it (23).

Alexander explains black women's sexual agency, which she calls "erotic autonomy," is black women choice in choosing sexual partners whether heterosexual or lesbian, and that erotic autonomy is figured outside of heterosexual family structure. The fact that black women's erotic autonomy is criminalized shows fixity in action. Fixity is the repetition of domination over anyone outside of normalized heteronormativity (Bhabha). Prostitutes and the "figure" of "prostitute," that represents promiscuous heterosexual women, are criminalized as outside of heterosexual family structure (Alexander 23). Chin talks about this fixity as bound in poverty, immigration, stereotypes, and sexuality in Third World women, gays, lesbians, transgender immigrants. So while it may good to theorize gender identities as fluid, it is devastating to ignore how fixities and stereotypes hurt racialized gender identities.

Chin embodies the notion of the "queer fetishized native," specifically from the Caribbean (Alexander 70). Alexander is critical of queerness as a universal or common experience when the "native" is fetishized. Alexander argues that "what is disturbing about this development is that if we invoke a common experience of (sexual) queerness as the ground on which to establish *global* solidarity communities, where is this queer 'native' to fit? Who is this 'native' within the discourses of anthropology, fetishized as sexual other at the inauguration of imperialism, now recolonized by white gay capital through tourism?" (68-69). She further argues that

I foreground the imperial, not only because the unequal dichotomies between consumer/producer and producer/audience adhere to a First World/Third World hierarchy, but also because implied within this nexus of sexual transaction is the production of a 'queer fetishized native' who is made to remain silent within his local economy in order to be

appropriately consumed. By nativization, I am referring to an ongoing process through which an essential character is attributed to the indigenous – the ‘native’ – which derives largely from relationships to geography or to a particular territory, which in turn structures the context within which this ‘native’ is to be imagined and understood (70).

Like Alexander, Chin was critical of any queer movement that excluded the violence felt by queers of color. Chin too, was concerned about the global concerns of queers of color, and the effects of immigration and responded more forcefully in “Poem for the Gay Games” (2007). When I ask Chin about her awareness of, and use of stereotypes or caricatures in performance, she states:

Chin: Oh absolutely!

DFE: Yes

Chin: I can’t tell you how many times I’ve been asked, how is it that I speak English so good – and I make a point of saying that I speak English as *well* as I do because I learned it in school, so – um... but but um, y’know, people ask me all the time, y’know um... I donnu... people...I – I’ve been asked um, what did I feel like when I first saw electricity, which is y’know- very, very, y’know - one of the worst ones. I had a woman come up to me on stage and said, “My God!” y’know ... “your-your- your um, your face, your whole being, your accent - you’re extraterrestrial!” (Excerpt from 2012 Telephone Interview with Staceyann Chin, Appendix E).

Chin’s black and “miscegenated” body is marked as different, alien, even “extraterrestrial!” Her anatomical sex and gender identity are therefore seen in racialized and sexualized stereotypes. Chin’s costume entails large free-flowing afro, powder blue camisole top, army green cargo pants, and bare feet. Her performance poetry is physical, energetic with foot stomping and wide hand arm gestures; and her voice consists of loud guttural shouts and Jamaican-accented.

In our interview, Chin states that she is aware of how she is stereotyped as “exotic,” particularly because she is black and Chinese “mixed” (Chin Interview, Appendix E). Chin further explains that with her hair and bare feet, audiences see the stereotype of nativism, which is to assume her backwardness. She observes that because she performs in a loud, Jamaican accent and shouts, audiences assume that she is just “loud” because she is Caribbean. Chin’s army green cargo pants and powder blue camisole top with air-punching fists portray Chin as a militant warrior, and “angry black woman” throwing back these stereotypes and caricatures back to the audience. Chin performs black liminal displacement by self-stereotyping the colonial stereotype of black and “miscegenated” hypersexuality and queers of color or “queer fetishized native” by her presence on stage.

In black liminal displacement, race and blackness are particularly marked in each shift on the black or “miscegenated” female body between anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance in any staged *transvestism* whether in drag performance or carnival crossdressing. Noland argues that

For Fanon, race is not merely one element of contingency among others; instead, race is the historically specific form of contingency that governs the rest, making it virtually impossible for the raced subject to experience existence in other ways – as ‘the revelation of a community’ Racialization works insidiously to undermine not only accidents of birth and nuances of class but even the subject’s experience of other, less socially determined aspects of his facticity, such as orientation in space, a kinesthetic background, a sensitivity to touch (198).

Colonized peoples, particularly the raced, are denied access to their own bodies. Noland discusses that according to Fanon, the colonized subject or people of color are deprived

of their “body schema,” which is “an interwoven fabric of sensations ... replaced with a label, an affect-laden sign (“A Negro!”) (199). Therefore the colonizer gaze sees raced identity as a reduction, that no matter how Chin may see herself, the colonizer’s gaze views in stereotypes. Noland’s analysis concurs with Chin’s reference to “the visual” and Hammonds “global sign” race/ethnicity on the body. Noland asks, “Do the marks of race, like those of gender, short-circuit any agency that might inhere in a heightened sensitivity to the gesturing self?” (196). I would answer yes, because the mark of race is still mired in stereotypes that are externally constructed, and still affects agency, poverty and mobility.

Visibility and the “Visual” of Black Skin

Chin, who is acutely aware of the “markers of identity” in her experience and in performance poetry, calls them the “visual” in audience’s perceptions as stereotypes and caricatures. Performance is “the subject of knowledge and the core method of discovery” (Stucky 273). Chin uses performance as “knowing” which involves her particular experiences of being “marked.” As Chin observes, “The visual in America is that I’m black and that often translates into the stereotype Black American. I open my mouth and I’m Caribbean, one; I have this big Afro, and my hair is obviously black, and then I follow it up with the idea that I’m bi-racial. I’m part Chinese, part black. People are stunned by it”(The Jamaica Gleaner 2002 5E). In the same press release, Chin refers to “the visual” with stereotypical butch/femme identities. She plays with what she calls “contradictions” in the “visual” on her body. Chin states that “I don’t look butch...but I open my mouth and I’m a lesbian, so there goes another crumbling stereotype. I feel that

I am a bunch of, at least visual, contradictions. And I guess that is kind of parallel symbolic for all the other contradictions that I am” (5E). Chin refers to herself as “contradictions” in stereotypes that are how others see her. Chin’s performance poetry is about negotiating identities in race, gender, sexuality, class, location and stereotypes. She talks about the intersections of personal stories and identities as Caribbean, black, lesbian, and in her own ambivalence of these categories and what they really mean in various locations where she traveled and lived. At times, Chin wants to blur identities; and other times she is ambivalent about identities. Either way, Chin is aware of, and reuses stereotypes of Africanness, “half-Chiney” and Chineseness to show how racialized, sexualized gender is staged and performed in everyday life by marginalized identities.

Because of Chin’s ambivalence, her staged presence, race/ethnicity, and costumes and identity “markers” are deliberately cryptic and androgynous. Phelan argues that “the ‘visibility’ of black skin is not, and cannot be, an accurate barometer for identifying a community of diverse political, economic, sexual, and artistic interests” (10). Although I agree that black culture is diverse, I do not agree with Phelan about “the ‘visibility’ of black skin.” Historically and contemporarily the “visibility” of black skin, and its gradations in color-casting, signal the physical and psychic violence toward black skins.

According to Phelan

Visibility is a trap (‘In this matter of the visible, everything is a trap’: *Lacan, Four Fundamental Concepts*: 93); it summons surveillance and the law; it provokes voyeurism, fetishism, the colonialist/imperial appetite for possession. Yet it retains a certain political appeal. Visibility politics have practical consequences; a line can be drawn between a practice

(getting someone seen or read) and a theory (if you are seen it is harder for 'them' to ignore you, to construct a punitive canon) (6-7).

Phelan overlooks the violence against "visibility," which includes stereotyping and caricaturing of under-represented groups in mass media. She assumes that a black focus on identity politics and representation is to "equals power" by just wanting to be seen (10). However, identity politics is not only to represent under-represented groups, but it is about intervening in racist/sexist representations of stereotypes and caricatures in mass media including theatrical practices.

hooks, for example, suggest that in order "to intervene and transform those politics of representation informed by colonialism, imperialism, and white supremacy we have to be willing to challenge the effort of mainstream culture to erase racism by suggesting it does not really exist" (131). The danger in Phelan's concept against "visibility" is the erasure of "black skin," and does not focus on racist/sexist mainstream culture that perpetrates violence, physical or emotional, against black skin. hooks points out that white dominant culture claims to be ignorant of constructing elaborate color-casting of black skins, that it denies, "via erasure, a history of race relations that documents their accountability. This denial allows no space for accountability, no space for whites in contemporary culture to know and acknowledge the primary role whites played in the formation of color castes" (120). Therefore, as a strategy against race denial, it is necessary for black performers to reflect stereotypes and caricatures like a mirror back to dominant culture that denies its constructions of skin gradations. Even though Phelan does not mention the violence in surveillance of black skin, the visibility

“trap,” or as Somers-Willet calls “markers of identity,” is precisely what fixes racialized identities even “before an author even opens his or her mouth” in performance poetry (Somers-Willet 18). In my interview with Chin, I ask about her experience of blackness and color-casting in the Caribbean and in the United States and how these experiences have shaped her performance of racialized gender identities. Below, we speak informally in Jamaican Standard English.

Chin: Um... so I think, y’know, the term “blackness” in Jamaica...refers directly to the *shade* of brown that you might be...um...and it has to be – the darkest shade of that brown ... y’know, and the black masses usually have it. It um... it almost literally is the interpretation, in terms of color... in Jamaica. So I have to... I have to make qualifiers – I have to say, okay – I’m “black” because I have a black mother or my politics is “black” or I am not white or I have to be read as such... um, whereas in America, when I say I’m black, it encapsulates all of that immediately, y’know the politics of it...um, particularly because I wear my hair in an afro all the time – or used to before my daughter came along.

DFE: Right

Chin: Um...y’know, I - I’m marked as “black” and - perceived as “black” and - in a weird kind of way, I am ... I act - perceived as “black,” even in my own consciousness I...I feel more legitimately “black” in America than I do in Jamaica. (Excerpt from 2012 Telephone Interview with Staceyann Chin, Appendix E).

Like Chin’s “the visual,” which is about the stereotypes on her body for blackness and sexuality, black feminist Evelyn Hammonds contends that race is a “global sign” on the body (302). In “Black (W) Holes and The Geometry of Black Female Sexuality” (2004), Hammonds observes that “while it has been acknowledged that race is not simply additive or derivative of sexual difference, few white feminists have attempted to move beyond simply stating this point to describe the powerful effect that race has on the construction and representation of gender” (302). Hammonds notes that “even when race

is mentioned it is a limited notion devoid of complexities. Sometimes it is reduced to biology and other times referred to as a social construction. Rarely is it used as a ‘global sign’, a ‘metalanguage’, as the ‘ultimate trope of difference, arbitrarily contrived to produce and maintain relations of power and subordination’ (Higginbotham)” (302). Hammonds suggests the “global sign” is recognizable and visual, as perhaps the first noticeable thing on the body.

Phelan, who is against focusing on the “‘visibility’ of skin color,” really sees the only difference in bodies is genitalia. She explains that

In employing the body metonymically, performance is capable of resisting the reproduction of metaphor, and the metaphor I’m most keenly interested in resisting is the metaphor of gender, a metaphor which upholds the vertical hierarchy of value through systematic marking of the positive and the negative. In order to enact this marking, the metaphor of the gender presupposes unified bodies are different in “one” aspect of the body, that is to say, difference is located in the genitals” (151).

I agree with Phelan that the difference between genitals on white bodies, not considered “raced;” however, I disagree with Phelan’s analysis because skin color and phenotype are certainly marked. Even though genitals can be differentiated on non-race white bodies, skin color and phenotype are certainly marked on “raced” bodies. Phelan’s concept denies how race and gender are interrelated, but more as “*genderized race or racialized gender*” (Kitch 2). Kitch explains how race and gender are so inextricably linked that it is nearly impossible to treat them separately (2). Therefore, skin color is marked and visible, at least for “raced” peoples.

By not focusing on the “visibility” of race, Phelan’s concept erases race, blackness, and the institutional politics of representation in and on the black bodies in

color castes. hooks points out she “counter[ed] white female insistence that when a child is newly born and coming out of the womb the first concern is to identify gender, whether male or female, by calling attention to the reality that the initial concern for most black parents is skin color – this concern being a direct reflection of the correlation between skin color and success” (121). For blacks, the first concern is skin color because of how it is used as a “meter” as well as the threat of violence in surveillance and discrimination.

Therefore in Butler’s “fluidity of identities,” sex and gender are denaturalized, blackness is fixed in each shift on the body, for example “black” anatomical sex, “black” gender identity, and “black” gender performance. “Black” is not changed in each shift on the body. Phelan’s argument against “‘visibility’ of black skin” in representational politics is based on her assumption that race is a choice. Phelan argues that “race-identity involves recognizing something other than skin color. The tendency to do so leads to corollary proposition that all people with the same skin color believe the same thing, and that there is , for example, such a thing as a coherent African-American community” (8). While on the “surface” race may seem more than skin; for blacks in the range of color caste, skin color is a reality in the threat of violence. Again, Phelan does not mention violence, but moves to what she assumes to be skin color signifying black homogeneity. Chin not only crosses racialized sexualized codes for “masculinity” and “femininity” in performance; but she blurs these codes in gender performance as racial androgyny.

But blurring of identities is not fluidity because the racialized and sexualized gender meanings are “fixed” in the stereotypes; and disrupts fluidity seen on the body. Chin embraces stereotypes and caricatures in racial androgyny by self-stereotyping and

self-caricaturing. Black liminal displacement is self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing and subversively exaggerates the gender meanings in stereotypes to reflect back to the mainstream culture that create stereotypes about the group. Black liminal displacement, as self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing by Caribbean black women, does not denaturalize gender meanings. Black liminal displacement is, however, a necessary space for racialized, sexualized gender identities to expose stereotypes in carnivalesque performance that embraces the supposedly “vulgarity,” grotesque, “impoliteness” and stereotyped as blackness according to Caribbean scholars about the black female body. By carnivalesque, I refer to Bakhtin’s carnival theory. Bakhtin states that “carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order” (10). He argues that the carnivalesque describes carnival’s subversion including irreverence, vulgarity, grotesque acts in marketplace movements, gestures, and voice (Bakhtin 10). By exaggerating marketplace gestures in black liminal displacement, Chin exposes and upsets the mainstream culture. When Chin screamed in performance poetry, “*fuck you-you-fucking-racist-sexist-turd,*” the audience felt Chin’s anger and powerlessness in being heard.

Therefore, Butler’s fluidity of identities undermines race and the effects of racial stereotypical codes in drag and any other staged *transvestism* like racialized “drag,” used as models for everyday life. Fluidity of identities shows how sex and gender are denaturalized, but does not address how race could ever be “denaturalized.” According to Lakshmi Arya in “Imagining Alternative Universalisms: Intersectionality and the Limits of Liberal Discourse” (2009), Arya suggests that Butler’s fluidity of identities is a

universal claim, and that racialized gender subjects are unable to contest power relations in what she calls, Butler “matrix of gender relations” (242). This suggests that racialized gender subjects lack the access to effectively counter power relations.

The fact that Butler never elaborates on race, shows how race is still fixed, even as sex and gender can be fluid. When one “sees” the shifts on the “surface of the body,” then they absolutely appear as fluid on the body and this is where the universalizing occurs. However, I suggest that each shift of the body is a stereotype or caricature, and the meanings in stereotypes are fixed, at least for a period of time in any racialized staged *transvestism* with codes of “masculinity” and “femininity” on black female bodies. Awareness of stereotypical codes for race as “masculinity” and “femininity” is used in racialized staged *transvestism* as either crossing or blurring.

Just as Butler uses a model of drag performance to illustrate how gender is performed as fluid in everyday life, Chin’s performance poetry as racialized androgyny is not completely fluid in staged performance or illustrated in everyday life. Of course shifts occur on Chin’s body in between anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance; however, the gender meanings in each shift are derived from stereotypes and caricatures of blackness and “mixed” identities. When Chin enters the stage, she carries the “markers of identity” on her body before she even speaks as Aptowicz observes (181). Chin’s anatomical sex and gender identity are racialized and sexualized as seen on the body. Chin does not try to hide or change the markers she calls, “the visual” on her body (The Jamaica Gleaner 5E). Chin embraces the stereotypes and

caricatures and reuses them in gender performance as self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing.

Butler suggests that the effect of gender is produced through stylization of the body as mundane “bodily gestures, movements and styles of various kinds that is an illusion” (179). The “illusion,” which is the visual effect on the body appears natural (175). Butler argues that the naturalizing effect of gender is imitative and that the original or primary gender that is being imitated is nothing more than a fabrication that does not exist (175). However, what happens when “the visual” on the body is so marked by race? Butler overlooks the stereotyping and caricaturing inherent in drag and any other staged *transvestism* that plays with “masculinity” and “femininity” on the black female body, particularly with racialized, sexualized and gender codes. Stereotyping fixes gender meanings in the codes for “masculinity” and “femininity” on raced and sexed bodies and especially in racialized staged *transvestism*.

If each shift is racialized and sexualized with stereotypes, performers are then powerless or lack the agency to change gender meanings in each shift. Butler claims that identities are fluid simply by observing shifts on the body in staged *transvestism*; yet she assumes that gender meanings are changed with these shifts when they are stereotypes. Butler’s fluidity of identities depends on both shifts seen on the body between anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance; and on the changes in gender meanings. I suggest that fluidity is only partial if observed on the body and gender meanings are fixed in stereotypes. Therefore, performance is a series of stereotypes and caricatures in each shift. However this performance is subversive in appearing to reiterate stereotypes and

caricatures. In “Performance Studies at the Intersections” (2006), performance scholars Judith Hamera and D. Soyini Madison argue that subversive performativity is “an internalized repetition of subversive ‘stylized acts’ inherited by contested identities” (xix). Subversive performativity appears to reiterate stereotypes, even from hegemonic and misogynist culture. However, the subversive reiteration of stereotypes appear to be reflected back to dominant or mainstream culture that very often expect the marginalized to behave in this way.

Conclusion

In conclusion, black liminal displacement in Chin’s embodiment of the “markers of identity” in performance poetry engages in boundary crossing and blurring of identities in racial androgyny. However, by blurring the racialized and sexualized gender codes of African “masculinity,” Chinese “femininity,” “half-Chiney,” Chin reveals a sense of powerlessness in changing gender meanings in stereotypes. Her recourse is to exaggerate such stereotypical gender meanings in self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing in performance poetry. In so doing, Chin reflects stereotypes back to audiences and mainstream culture that created stereotypes. Subversive speech like Chin’s F-word and supposed “loudness;” the grotesque body gestures, the bare feet stomping in the ground, and facial expressions with deep lines and contortion are all reflected back to the dominant culture in a series of stereotypes and caricatures that offend many. Chin even admits to black liminal displacement which is self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing back to the source of colonial power to unsettle audience’s presumptions about identities (Chin Interview, Appendix E).

Black liminal displacement is a reaction to universalism in fluidity of identities, which suggests that all identities are fluid in having the agency to change gender meanings as shifts occur on the body. Black liminal displacement is performing in-between-ness, being ambiguous, and even androgynous in the avoidance and rejection of essentialized categories and labels, but at the same time self-stereotypes and self-caricatures colonial stereotypes about “miscegenation.” By extension, black liminal displacement is the playing with “the visual” to use Chin’s term and steeped in the knowledge of stereotypes, which is self-stereotyping “the visual.” Black liminal displacement functions as a radical repositioning about identities by living in the interstices. Black liminal displacement in Chin’s performance poetry reveals how racialized, sexualized gender is performed in everyday life as self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing. Chin’s performance illustrates how black liminal displacement appears to reiterate the mundane “stylized acts” of the status quo; but is really subversive performativity, a necessary survival on Caribbean black female bodies.

Remarkably, Chin’s juxtaposing of stereotypes or the blurring of identities involves both fluidity and the fixity in stereotyping, not in polarized opposites, but as complementing each other. Fluidity of identities is always self-directed as Chin has done in performance poetry. Chin’s performance simultaneously acknowledges the fixities in racialized and sexualized gender through stereotypes and caricatures. Fixity is a dominant colonial repetition of power that holds racialized and sexualized identities “in place” using stereotype as a strategy of control (Bhabha 94). Therefore racialized gender identities are simultaneously fluid and fixed; but what is most important to note is that

even with fluidity, I still cannot ignore the effects of stereotyping on racialized gender identities in the access of any identity.

Chapter Five: Conclusion: Characteristics and Applications of Black Liminal Displacements

After analyzing Belfon's Trinidad's racialized carnival crossdressing in "Indian Man," Smith's Jamaican dancehall *transvestism* as "The Dancehall Queen," and Chin work in American performance poetry as racialized "androgyny," I determine that racialized gender identities are not completely fluid because of inequalities that fix racialized identities through stereotypes. Pickering maintains that "the stereotypical Other is one-sided construction which helps to maintain symbolic boundaries between 'us' and other social or ethnic categories in the interests of 'our' own sense of identity, security and legitimacy" (97). The stereotype, as a construct, is from dominant cultural perspectives like white colonial culture; and even though racialized identities can be fluid through self-directed means, they can be limited because of cultural domination. Therefore the racialized subject in any unequal relationship is always fixed by "symbolic boundaries," that point to how racialized people perform in everyday life (Pickering 97). Butler's fluidity of identities, on the other hand, belies the underside of racial stereotypes in gender identity.

Racialized gender identities underscore the racial characteristics in gendered language of "femininity" and "masculinity" used on raced Caribbean black and "miscegenated" female bodies in Creole, *Dougla*, *La Mulata*, "half-Chiney" in existing color castes, and ironically integral to cultural performances with a history of skin coloration in performances, such as Trinidad carnival, Jamaican Junkunnu Set Girls,

Queen party, Brag, and dancehall performance (Ryan, Stines, Puri). These traditional and contemporary figures of Creole, *Douglas*, *La Mulata*, and “half-Chiney,” although seemingly fluid in race/ethnicity, are simultaneously stereotyped of hypersexual, “erotic,” and “exotic” in colonial culture (Kempadoo 2004 34,). In spite of diversity and multi-ethnicity throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, the appearance of fluidity in racialized identities is only a façade. White colonial culture continues to control black and indigenous peoples, even in places with a black majority. Therefore, racialized identities, whether intersecting in race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, are struggles for racialized identities marred by historical and contemporary stereotypical codes.

Even though Butler illustrates how sex and gender are denaturalized in a “fluidity of identities” using a model of drag performance, she does not consider race and stereotypes in gender performance and performativity. Besides, “fluidity of identities” is universalizing and assumes that everyone can equally access fluidity without examining inequalities in racial stereotyping inherent in any drag performance and the racial dimensions of gender. In everyday life, fluidity is the ability for social mobility and access. Fixity, derived in colonial culture, relies on stereotyping which holds racialized identities within “symbolic borders,” and impedes mobility. Fixity is “a sign of cultural/historically/ racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition” (Bhabha 94). Fixity, like gender performance and performativity, is repetition, performed over and over again to maintain power. In the case of Caribbean racialized gender, race is constructed through stereotypes of sexuality

creating a complex set of stereotypes, so that blacks and mixed bodies are always hypersexual and “queer” (Smith; Kempadoo 2004, 7-9). Therefore, fluidity of identities not only ignores race which is sexualized, but erases any effect of race and ethnicity on gender performance.

I have argued throughout that racialized identities are not solely fluid, because they are mired by historical process of fixities and stereotyping that still fix, essentialize, and reduce racialized identities. In the same way that Butler uses drag performance as a model to analyze gender as fluid, I have used Caribbean masquerade traditions of racialized carnival *transvestism*, applied to Belfon and Smith to look for fluidities, but to expose hidden fixities in stereotypes. For Chin, I have applied this model of the masquerade tradition in her orality and embodiment in performance poetry to chart Chin’s fluidity of identities, but to expressly point out Chin’s attention to fixities in hers and the collective’s intersectionality and lack of access.

If I were to analyze fluidity of identities alone, then I would be denying that fixities exist for the most vulnerable and marginalized of Caribbean blacks, indigenous peoples, and other colonized subjects who lack the access to the very “identities” assumed to be fluid. I contend throughout my study that my fabulous Caribbean performers Belfon, Smith and Chin perform black liminal displacements as the self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing of colonial stereotypes in the racialized and gendered language of African “masculinity,” European/East Indian/and Chinese “femininities,” along with *Dougla*, *La Mulata* and “half-Chiney” - all drawing attention to fixities in colonial stereotypes and mirrored back to the colonial culture that shirk away from the

acknowledging stereotypes created in colonial culture that view Caribbean black women performers are “disrespectful,” “degrading” and, the catch-all term, “vulgar” (Cooper 2004; Niranjana). Therefore, black liminal displacement mirrors colonial stereotypes and caricatures.

In this concluding chapter, I apply black liminal displacement beyond these three Anglophone Caribbean women’s performances to the racialized gender performances in contemporary American theatre and performance artists Anna Deavere Smith, Adrian Piper, Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña. Black liminal displacement is the self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing of colonial stereotypes. Its complexity is in the appearance of reiterating stereotypes, when it is reflecting them back to colonial culture that create racial stereotypes about raced and colonized peoples. I show how these theatre and performance artists play with racialized, sexualized and gendered codes in their work to review stereotypes and their role in performance.

In previous chapters, black liminal displacement requires that performers self-identify as black, even if they are “mixed.” Belfon, Smith and Chin self-identify as black and multi-ethnic with French, German and Chinese heritages as are typical of Caribbean Creole culture. While other groups, including whiteness, are stereotyped, I have focused on blackness or Africanness because it has been historically discriminated against at the bottom of all racial color-casting hierarchies throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Yet at the same time, I have considered constructions of Caribbean Europeanness or whiteness, East Indianness and Chineseness, but only as they are constructed in relation to, and their “mix” with Africanness. African American theatre

and performance artists Anna Deavere Smith and Adrian Piper are “light-skinned” black women that call into questions race, color casting, and fears of miscegenation in American society. Theatre scholar and actor Anna Deavere Smith plays with racialized “drag” or crossdressing in “Fires in the Mirror: Crown Heights Brooklyn and Other Identities” (1992), and “Twilight – Los Angeles, 1992” (1993). Performance artist Adrian Piper, on the other hand, plays with her in-between-ness of “passing” for white and unsettling audiences with her declaration of being black to then study what she expects to be unsettled reactions in performance art, “Cornered” (1988) and “Calling Card”(1986). Latino and Caribbean immigrants to the United States, performance artists Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez Peña play with the stereotype of nativism to unsettle colonial audiences’ perception of nativism in their performance art, “Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit” (1992-1994).

Through theatre semiotics, I can parse out stereotypical codes for analyses. Elam states that semiotics is “the study of the production of meaning in society” (1). He defines theatre semiotics as a series of “sign systems and codes at work in society and the actual messages and texts produced thereby” (1). I have used theatre semiotics to explain the stereotypical codes in Trinidad carnival *transvestism*, Jamaican dancehall *transvestism* and American performance poetry with racialized androgyny. Reinelt discusses Latin American theatre’s “theatricality,” which “shares with ‘performance’ an emphasis on the body and on verbal, visual, auditive, and gestural signs performed in front of an audience, which is a co-creator of meaning. Since this concept of theatricality stresses the relationship between theatrical codes and cultural systems and its sociopolitical context in

specific historical periods, it includes a militantly political set of entailments” (163). Caribbean’s “theatricality” is culturally coded with historical effects of colonialism and resistance. Postcolonial theory unearths how historical issues impact contemporary performances (Ashcroft et.al. 2).

I observe the evidence, based on postcolonial feminist theories, of racialized, sexualized and gendered codes for “masculinity” and “femininity” on the Caribbean black female body in the performances by Caribbean black women. In each chapter, I have applied these racialized sexualized gendered signifiers for “masculinity” and “femininity” on the Caribbean black female body, derived from postcolonial scholars’ thoughts on gender signs and meanings in order to view and analyze performances by Caribbean black women.

Here I show how I have applied Butler’s schema for drag performance on to the works by African American theatre and performance artists. In Butler’s schema for staged *transvestism* anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance, the anatomical sex would be racialized as *black* female, and not just female. Gender identity may depart from being female, but not likely to change blackness. Gender performance can depart from both anatomical sex and gender identity, but blackness will most likely be seen and marked on the body in all three elements in Butler’s schema. hooks states that a color-caste hierarchy by nineteenth century white racists is well documented in history, law and literature. She notes that contemporary whites are ignorant of this history and this “reflects the way the dominant culture seeks to deny, via erasure, a history of race relations that documents their accountability” (120).

With denial, as hooks claims, there is no need for “dominant culture” to be accountable for stereotypical codes (120). Denial, not only erases historical lineage of stereotypical codes, but maintains them in contemporary society. In the same way, fluidity of identities is a façade which denies fixities in racialized gender identities, for example the lack of access and social mobility for Caribbean blacks. Other postcolonial feminists share similar codes for “masculinity” and “femininity” projected on Caribbean black female bodies as I have discussed in my study. The purpose of these codes is the repeated punishment on the black female body already assumed to be “masculine” coded as “vulgar,” “unrefined,” lower classed, and hypersexual and “oversexed” regardless of sexual preferences (Kempadoo 2004, 36; Cooper 1995, 8; hooks 129; Smith; Ulysse 148-147).

The problem, as I have defined it, is a conceptual one because I am examining drag performance as a model for how gender is fluid, but fixed in racialized identities. Consequently, I have come to define “identity,” racialized, sexualized, gendered codes and all, as self-stereotyping a series of stereotypes and caricatures. Brantlinger suggests that “the privileged individuals have the power to construct and advertise their own positions and character as superior. ...Construction of self as superior is socially relational because it depends on finding Others to be socially inferior” (337). Therefore, it is possible for some individuals to change gender meanings in stereotypes and codes through constructing the self, but others may not have the agency to change these stereotypical meanings. I offer a conceptual solution for readers to understand how racialized, sexualized gender is performed as self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing as

black liminal displacements. Black liminal displacement displaces and confuses audiences' perceptions about racialized, sexualized and gender stereotypes on the black and miscegenated female body. However, re-using stereotypes and caricatures in staged *transvestism* does not necessarily change gender meanings in stereotypes and caricatures; but the performance by Caribbean black women is still empowering because it recognizes stereotypes and caricatures at its source, and subversively reflects them back to the mainstream culture.

Characteristics of Black Liminal Displacements

Characteristics of black liminal displacement are as follows:

1. Black liminal displacement is a reaction to universalism in fluidity of identities, which suggests that all identities are fluid in having the agency to change gender meanings as shifts occur on the body. When shifts occur on the Caribbean black female body between anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance, each shift contains inherent stereotypes. However, of the shifts between anatomical sex and gender identity in staged *transvestism*, racialized and sexualized gender performance is self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing in Caribbean life that I have called black liminal displacement.

2. Black liminal displacement is staged *transvestism* by Caribbean black women who use stereotypical codes for “masculinity” and “femininity” on the black female body through self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing in various genres, including Trinidad carnival crossdressing, Jamaican dancehall *transvestism*, and in the orality and embodiment in American slam or performance poetry.

3. Black liminal displacement performs what Bhabha calls the “metonomies of presence,” which is the repetition of inappropriate stereotypical codes through self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing (1994, 128). However, through self-stereotyping reflects stereotypes back to dominant culture to show that they are aware of stereotypical codes that mainstream culture deny (hooks 120). Black liminal displacement reveals powerlessness or lack of agency to fully change stereotypical codes in gender meanings therefore identities are not completely fluid.

4. Black liminal displacements are multiple shifts in self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing on the Caribbean black female body. They are repetitions or a series of stereotypes and caricatures on the body; exaggerations of fixity in gender meanings to take control of their images and to turn them back to mainstream culture.

5. Black liminal displacement is the performance of self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing in staged *transvestism* by black Caribbean women in order to displace, confuse perceptions about racialized, sexualized and gender stereotypes on the black female body; and to displace audience’s perceptions about stereotypical codes for blackness and whiteness on the black female body.

6. Black liminal displacement is derived from colonial society and is postcolonial performance with the subversive repetition in colonial mimicry in what Bhabha calls the “metonomies of presence,” that are racialized and sexualized gender codes and signifiers of “masculinity” and “femininity” in staged *transvestism* (1994, 128). I have devised African “masculinity”/ East Indian “femininity”; African “masculinity”/ European

“masculinity”; and African “masculinity”/ Chinese “femininity,” based on scholars’ observation stereotypical codes on black female bodies in postcolonial feminism. I then applied Butler’s schema of anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance in drag performance unto Belfon’s carnival crossdressing, Smith’s dancehall *transvestism* and Chin’s racialized androgyny in slam or performance poetry.

7. Black liminal displacement is subversive performativity. As a result of self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing, performers may appear to reiterate stereotypes, norms or to maintain power and subordination. Hamera argues that Judith Butler’s use of performativity illustrates how gender and sexuality are constructed (46). Hamera and D. Soyini Madison concur that performativity is a signifier which is

inscribed on the body – performed through the body – to mark identities. In this view of performativity, gestures, posture clothes, habits, and specific embodied acts are performed differently depending on gender, as well as race, class, sexuality, and so forth, of the individual. How the body moves about the world and its various mannerisms, styles, and gestures are inherited from one generation through space and time to another and demarcated with specific identity categories (xviii).

Madison and Hamera suggest that performativity is the “mark” of identities through gestures and clothes (xviii). As they observe, performativity can assist in theorizing racialized identities (Madison and Hamera xviii). Performativity is useful in showing how performers play with essentialist labels, even though they do not transcend essentialist categories. If identity could be defined through performativity, it would involve looking at the body in scopophilia, or in a colonial gaze. Individuals are then defined by

observing bodily gestures, movement and postures, and what appears as performativity, may well be “subversive performativity.”

8. Black liminal displacement is carnivalesque. As “inherited stylized acts,” black Caribbean women take control of stereotypes and caricatures by self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing in a carnivalesque space and time, which is a time for complete irreverence, vulgarity and the grotesque. Bakhtin states that “carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order” (10). The carnivalesque, which derives from carnival, is the subversive qualities in carnival involving the “vulgar” in voice, gestures, movement, and certainly the “repetition of stylized acts” in gender itself (Bakhtin 10). In all performance, it is necessary to have a space for the carnivalesque, the grotesque and the “vulgar.” Black liminal displacement subversively exaggerates the gender meanings in stereotypes and caricatures to reflect back to the mainstream culture that create stereotypes about the group. Black liminal displacement, as self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing by Caribbean black women, does not denaturalize gender meanings. Black liminal displacement is, however, a necessary space for racialized, sexualized gender identities to expose stereotypes in carnivalesque performance that embraces the supposedly “vulgarity,” grotesque, “impoliteness” and stereotyped as blackness according to Caribbean scholars about the black female body.

9. While stereotyping and caricaturing fall outside of what individuals may think of themselves, black liminal displacements are self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing as subversive “acts” with full knowledge of how stereotypes and caricatures shape and “fix”

identities. Therefore racialized identities are fluid in their self-directed and conscious stagings, and yet fixed in stereotypes constructed in mainstream culture.

10. Black liminal displacement is surrogation and collective memory between Africanness and Chineseness, East Indianness and Europeanness. In this study, I am aware of other groups not represented here, but I have selected Belfon, Smith, and Chin because of their views on blackness in relation to others and because of their mass appeal in their performance genres. Surrogation, according to performance theorist Joseph Roach, is “the theatrical principle of substitution of one persona for another” (53). Roach explains that surrogation reenacts the “historical sense of the shared experience of peoples from two continents” (54). Roach argues that collective memory “requires public enactments of forgetting, either to blur the obvious discontinuities, misalliances, and ruptures or more desperately, to exaggerate them in order to mystify a previous Golden age, now lapsed” (3). Like surrogation and collective memory, postcolonial theory relies on the historical debates about colonialism, slavery, genocide as a way to understand contemporary issues to extrapolate stereotypical codes among peoples in carnival crossdressing, dancehall *transvestism* and performance poetry.

11. In black liminal displacements, “black” refers to the specificities in each performer’s blackness, which includes their understanding of what it means to be black in the Caribbean and in immigrant communities in America. “Liminal” refers to the in-between moments of multiple displacements in anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance in staged *transvestism*. Liminality, according to anthropologist

Victor Turner, is a “state” referring to “any type of stable or recurrent condition that is culturally recognized” (359). Turner argues that

the attributes of liminality or of liminal *personae* or “threshold people” are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, conventions and ceremonial (359).

I apply Turner’s liminality to Butler’s schema for staged *transvestism* including displacements in-between anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance in the in-between stereotypes and caricatures. Diamond refers to a temporal separation or the liminal space in performance, which she defines as “always a doing and a thing done”(2). Diamond suggests that “common sense insists on a temporal separation between a doing and a thing done, but in usage and in theory, performance, even its dazzling physical immediacy, drifts between present and past, presence and absence, consciousness and memory. ...It is impossible to write the pleasurable embodiments we call performance without tangling with the cultural stories, traditions, and political contestations that comprise our sense of history”(2). In other words, temporal separations or liminal space between “a doing and a thing done” are ongoing actions in between that hold special meanings and a myriad of cultural specificities in gender constructions. “Displacements” refer to the multiple shifts or displacements in what Butler calls “fluidity of identities” in-between anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance in on the “surface” of the body in staged *transvestism*. Audience receptions are displaced when marked black female bodies perform self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing.

Application of Black Liminal Displacement: Anna Deavere Smith, Adrian Piper, Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña.

In this section, I apply black liminal displacement to theatre and performance artists Anna Deavere Smith, Adrian Piper, Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña. Playwright and actor Anna Deavere Smith performs black liminal displacement in her characters based on interviews. Smith came to national prominence in the early 1990s for her one-woman plays and performances in “Fires in the Mirror: Crown Heights Brooklyn and Other Identities” (1992), and “Twilight – Los Angeles, 1992” (1993). “Fires” was created after the race riots took place between the Lubavitcher Jewish community, which is an Orthodox Jewish sect, and the Caribbean- immigrant community in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, New York in August 1991(Weatherston 191). A three-day riot ensued after a young black Guyanese boy, Gavin Cato, and his cousin Angela were hit and killed by a car carrying the spiritual leader of the Lubavitcher community (191). “Twilight” was inspired by the four-day L.A. riots after four white police officers were acquitted of beating of a black man, Rodney King (Stanley 193).

Smith’s one-woman staged *transvestism* involve interviewing and taping individuals in each community to gage their reactions and impressions about race relations in Gavin Cato’s death and Rodney King’s beating (Stanley 195). Smith then performed selected interviews verbatim with body gestures and facial expressions, costumes in a series of monologues in what is called “documentary theatre” (Weatherston 192). In her body of work, Anna Deavere Smith crosses both genders and race/ethnicities to capture her characters including white, Asian, Caribbean, Jewish, men, and women in

staged *transvestism*. Smith takes on and embodies individuals from various communities through gestures, movement, repetition, and accents that some argue, are reifying stereotypes and caricatures. Smith changes costumes and setting quickly with putting on hats, wigs, scarves or taking off coats for costumes; and by using a chair, box, and small table for setting. Smith masterfully changes characters with facial expression, posture, emphasis, cadence and accents.

In the play “Fires in the Mirror” (1992), Smith captures distinctive Caribbean American and Jewish communities and attitudes towards strained race relations in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, New York, as well as the national debate. Smith shows that the incident in Crown Heights reflects the wider cultural problem of race relations. Some interviews are rummaging about race. Others directly address Gavin Cato’s death. Smith interviews national figures, race critics including Reverend Al Sharpton, Angela Davis and individuals from both the Caribbean and Jewish communities and then performed these monologues verbatim with voice, accent, specific gesture and emphasis all showing a kaleidoscope racial concerns and debates. In an excerpt, Smith plays a white man, Aaron M. Bernstein from Cambridge Massachusetts. He is described as “a man in his fifties, wearing a sweater and a shirt with a pen guard” (1247). Smith crosses both genders and races from a black woman to a white man in racialized staged *transvestism*.

Okay, so a mirror is something that reflects light.
It’s the simplest instrument to understand,
Okay?
So a simple mirror is just flat
Reflecting
Substance, like
For example,

It's a piece of glass which is silvered on the back,
Okay?
Now the notion of distortion also goes back into
Literature,
Okay?
I'm trying to remember art –
You probably know better than I.
You know you have a pretty young woman and she
looks in a mirror
and she's a witch
(He laughs.)
Because she's evil on the inside,
As everyone knows –
you see the inner thing (1247).

Though it is never mentioned, this excerpt refers to Pablo Picasso's cubist painting called "Girl Before a Mirror," 1932. In this painting, a girl looks in the mirror to see a grimacing image of herself. Smith, who plays Bernstein as a white man, "intellectualizes" about race in America by using art metaphors. Race is so complicated that it takes a white man to explain it. By performing in racialized "drag" of a white man, Smith represents white America as not having any real understanding about race on the streets of Crown Heights. "Girl Before a Mirror" is one of the many metaphors for the play which reflects the rage of race in America like a mirror to dominant culture. Further, it reflects race relations back to white dominant culture in denial of race and racism (hooks 120).



Figure 24: Pablo Picasso's "Girl Before a Mirror" (1932) in the Collection Modern Museum of Art (MoMA), New York.

Black liminal displacement says that racialized gender identities are not completely or definitively fluid as long as inequalities exist that fix racialized identities. Bhabha calls racialized and sexualized codes the “metonomies of presence” that refer to “those inappropriate signifiers of colonial discourse – the difference being English and being Anglicized; the identity between stereotypes which, through repetition, also become different; the discriminatory identities constructed across traditional cultural norms and classifications, the Simian Black, the Lying Asiatic” (128). Bhabha shows how certain characteristics or the “metonomies of presence” are applied to, but not limited to racial groups such as blacks and Asians. Like Bhabha’s “metonomies of presence,” and according to postcolonial feminists, blackness by Caribbean black women is not only racialized, but simultaneously gendered, classed, and sexualized (Smith, Kempadoo 2004, 34).

Black liminal displacement is the playing with “the visual” to use Chin’s term, or the “metonomies of presence” or stereotypical labels, to use Bhabha’s term. Black liminal displacement functions as a radical repositioning about racialized identities by living in the interstices of “[vacillating] between what is always ‘in place’, already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated” (Bhabha 1995, 95). Black liminal displacement is therefore the manipulation and displacement of stereotypical imagery on black female bodies.

If I use Butler’s schema of anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance for staged *transvestism*, Smith would be seen as a black (light skinned) female for anatomical sex. Her gender identity is a black woman. Although, Smith could successfully cross gender from “feminine” to “masculine” in gender performance of a white man as Aaron M. Burnstein on stage, Smith’s blackness, though light-skinned, is noted and marked in crossing races/ethnicities. Blackness, as several scholars suggest, carries stereotypical codes that are inescapable. Despite the shifts on the body between anatomical sex, gender identity, to gender performance, stereotypical codes for blackness are marked. For example, in Smith’s embodiment, I view her “black” anatomical sex, “black” gender identity, “black” gender performance as partially fixed with race. Stanley states that theatre critic Tania Modleski points out that Smith’s blackness involves multiple historical representations. Smith is a black woman considered a “vessel” for multiple voices. However as Stanley argues, “Modeleski warns that when a black woman is perceived as a vessel for many, she is often viewed as the cultural representation of the maternal archetype conjuring images of the mammy. Thus, Smith’s own ‘body politic’

becomes a complicated text open to discussion” (201-201). Smith’s “blackness,” as Modeleski observes, is stereotypically coded as “mammy” as all-suffering, as well as various other signifiers.

However, Smith is not attempting to shun or avoid a stereotypical image of blackness she did not create. Smith now “owns” the historical and contemporary stereotype by self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing her blackness that refuses to shift with anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance. Black liminal displacement in this way displaces, unsettles audiences and confronts mainstream culture with the immovable blackness on the body. The fact that Modeleski is “uncomfortable” seeing a black woman cross to another race/ethnicity reveals the fixity in the unchanging image of blackness as a stereotypical code. Black liminal displacement is unsettling because it is a series of stereotypes and caricatures performed as self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing on and by the black female body.

However, in several scholars’ analyses Smith’s performance, it starts and stops with reifying and reiterating stereotypes and caricatures as if this in itself is the worst thing to do; and it leaves the onus and culpability on black performers to undo historical stereotypes, constructed in dominant culture. Instead, Smith’s performance is self-stereotyping of her own blackness in American culture, and in embodying other stereotypes and caricatures. In this way, Smith calls attention to the fixities, and “symbolic boundaries” on racialized gendered bodies. Therefore, claiming fluidity of identities alone denies the realities of a continuing repetition of performativity in fixity and “narcissistic mimicry” by dominant culture in stereotyping and caricaturing about the

other (Bhabha 1994, 122). Bhabha shows how fixity is the “repetition” of stereotypes in a “narcissistic mimicry” by a dominant culture in order to maintain power over raced, gendered and sexed bodies (94). Bhabha explains that “fixity” is a colonial construct based on difference and otherness. Fixity, according to Bhabha “connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition” (1994, 94). Fixity therefore is repeated, and performative in its reinforcement of reiteration of the status quo and power. In other words, fixity is not static with one unchanging state, fixity repeats power on subordinates (Bhabha 94).

In another excerpt from “Fires in the Mirror” Smith plays a “Caribbean American man with dreadlocks, in his late teens or early twenties, wearing a bright, loose-fitting shirt” (1261).

“Ambulance coming’, ambulance comin’,
Calm down, calm down
God will help them,
God will help them if you believe.”
And he was actin’ like he was dyin’.
“Wa Aww,
me too,
I’m hurt, I’m hurt, I’m hurt too.”
Wan nothin wrong with him,
wan nothin wrong with him.
They say that we beat up on that man
that he had to have stiches because of us.
You don’t come out of an accident like that
unmarked,
Without a scratch (1261-1262).

Smith performs staged *transvestism* in crossing gender to play a young Caribbean American man with dreadlocks. She embodies the character in posture, gestures, emphasis and he does appear like a stereotype and caricature of what is assumed to be

Caribbean down to the dreadlocks and “bright, loose-fitting shirt.” However, through black liminal displacement of self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing, Smith reveals abject powerlessness and feelings of injustice that locks this character’s identity, preventing fluidity. Although identities may appear fluid on the surface of the body in Butler’s observations in drag performance, racialized gender identities in Smith’s racialized “drag” are not only fluid, but they reveal how racialized gender identities are fixed in racial stereotyping. The racializing of gender identities impedes gender fluidity because, even as gender and anatomical sex are fluid, race is particularly “marked” on the body. What appears as fluidity on the body is actually a repetition of fixity through stereotyping and caricaturing in staged *transvestism*.

In other words, Smith is not making fun of this marginalized character by the caricature. Smith is emphasizing and exaggerating the stereotypes and caricatures amidst pain and loss that it is not making fun, but elevating the stereotypical codes for mainstream culture to see and acknowledge. Through self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing, performers reflect the codes for “masculinity” and “femininity” on the black female body; and like a “mirror,” they reflect them back to mainstream culture that denies its role in constructing stereotypical codes for black women (hooks 120). Black liminal displacement, therefore, confronts mainstream culture by mandating that it affirms given stereotypes. In this way, the sometimes “vulgar” display of self-stereotypes and self-caricatures is, as Bhabha claims, “the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination. It unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power, but re-implicates its identifications in strategies of subversion that turn the

gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power” (Bhabha quoted in Gilbert and Tompkins 250). Therefore, black liminal displacement does not attempt to denaturalize stereotypes in the colonial gaze. Black liminal displacement wants to reiterate stereotypes and caricatures through self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing in order to reflect stereotypes back to dominant culture.

In another excerpt from “Fires in the Mirror” (1992), Smith crosses to from an African American woman to a Caribbean man. She performs Gavin Cato’s father with a Caribbean accent (Guyanese). Smith describes Gavin’s father as speaking in “a pronounced West Indian accent” (1271).

and all the time I just deny deny deny,
and I never thought it was Gavin,
but I didn’t have a clue.
I thought it was one of the other children –
the bigger boys
or the girl,
because she worry me,
she won’t et – [eat]
but Gavin ‘ee was ‘ealtee, [healthy]
and he don’t cause no trouble.
That’s what’s devastating me now.
Sometimes it make me feel like it’s no justice,
like, uh,
the Jewish people.
they are very high up,
it’s a very big thing,
they runnin’ the whole show
from judge right down (1272).

Smith deliberately and subversively ends the play with Gavin Cato’s father, a Caribbean immigrant with a Guyanese accent. In doing so, Smith shows how the Caribbean American community in Crown Heights, New York City is so far outside of

the American mainstream; and Smith reveals the community's feeling of abject powerlessness to access any justice. Smith choice of the term, "West Indian" accent is no accident. A West Indian is not represented in mainstream media; and when it is referenced, it is a caricature. That Smith ends the play with the accented character of Gavin's father, shows a deliberate ploy to expose his marginal status with an accent outside of the mainstream. Through self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing in black liminal displacement, Smith takes on, embodies, and reiterates the stereotypes for mainstream culture and humanizes Gavin's father. Like a mirror, she reflects stereotypes and caricature back to dominant culture.

Theatre scholar Rosemary Weatherston states in "'The True Words of Real People': Documenting the Myth of the Real in Anna Deavere Smith's *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*" (2008), that critics have referred to Smith's work as "enacted oral history," "performed interviews," "a linguist near-image," "postmodern theatre for development," "hypernaturalistic mimesis," "Brechtian epic Gestus," and "docudrama" (192). I claim that Smith performs black liminal displacement which is self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing on and by the black female body. By self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing, Smith embraces and embodies the stereotype and caricatures of the individual or group portrayed, but only to turn these images toward mainstream culture that often deny that race and stereotypical codes exist. Smith performs staged *transvestism* with coded binary of African masculine/ European (or other) feminine in crossing racialized, sexualized gender in a "stylized *repetition of acts*" through gestures, facial expression, movement, voice, cadence and accents not a fluid identities but

identities somewhere in the middle of fixity, which is “a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always ‘in place’, already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated... as if the essential duplicity of the Asiatic or the bestial sexual license of the African that needs no proof, can never really, in discourse, be proved” (Bhabha 1994, 95). Even as sex and gender can be denaturalized, race and ethnicity are not shape-shifting in staged *transvestism*.

In another play, “Twilight”(1993), Anna Deavere Smith performs as a Korean immigrant, Mrs. Young-Soon Han who shot a fifteen year old African American girl in her shop for suspecting her of shoplifting . Smith interviewed Han and performed and embodied the words verbatim with accents, body gestures, facial expression, and postures. Smith embodies the kaleidoscope of differences in American races/ethnicities. Below is an excerpt from Mrs. Young-Soon Han’s performance text performed by Smith:

then a couple months ago
I really realized that Korean immigrant were left out
from this
society and we were nothing.
What is our right?
Is it because we are Korean?
Is it because we have no politicians? Is it because we don’t
speak good English?
Why?
Why do we have to be left out?
(She is hitting her hand on the coffee table).
We are not qualified to have medical treatment!
We are not qualified to get uh
food stamps!
(She hits the table once.)
No welfare!
(Hits the table once.)
Anything!
Many Afro-Americans

(Two quick hits.)
who never worked
(One hit.)
they get
at least minimum amount
(One hit.)
of money
(One hit.)
to survive! (166-167).

Such is the power of stereotyping that a fifteen year old black teenage girl could be shot in the face because of a suspicion of shoplifting. Critics warn that Smith's performance of Asian character Mrs. Young-Soon Han risks reifying caricatures and stereotypes of others including racial binaries (Stanly 202). In "Teaching the Politics of Identity in a Post-Identity Age: Anna Deavere Smith's *Twilight*" (2005), literary theorist Sandra Kumamoto Stanley points out that in this monologue the character, Mrs. Han discusses the tensions between the African American and Korean American communities. Stanley questions whether Smith's black body be discursively appropriating Mrs. Han's Asian American body (202). This suggests a layering of stereotypical or essentialist categories of blackness and as a Korean immigrant. However, black performers, like Smith, cannot, and really should not, avoid caricaturing and stereotyping when playing another race/ethnicity or gender in staged *transvestism*. The point of self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing in black liminal displacement is not to change racialized sexualized gender meanings, but to display them back to the source of power or to dominant culture. This is an example of how difficult it is to transcend stereotyping and essentialist categories in any staged *transvestism*.

But Smith is not attempting to transcend or denaturalize racial stereotypes; Smith is exaggerating them to draw attention to stereotypes and caricatures constructed by dominant culture. In effect, Smith holds up stereotypes and caricatures like a “mirror” to unsettle and confront audiences and mainstream about racializing, sexualizing, and gendering stereotypes and caricatures that fixes certain identities. Anyone who cringes with embarrassment, discomfort, or offence at seeing a series of self-stereotypes and self-caricatures on stage; or recoil at the sight of black female bodies on stage, experiences the effects of black liminal displacement, that is, the reflection of stereotypes and caricatures back to mainstream culture. Discomfort is the audience’s displacement in being “forced” sit through seeing the stereotypes and caricatures performed on and by the black female bodies. It is a jarring recognition and memory of race and stereotypical codes. I agree that Smith perpetuates stereotypes, but Smith and the discriminated should not be blamed. Stereotypes are constructed by dominant and hegemonic culture for marginalized groups, and it is near impossible to denaturalize them. Smith subversively reiterates the stereotypes and caricatures, in order to “mirror” them back to the source of mainstream culture that denies its constructed stereotypical codes (hooks 120).

In black liminal displacement, Smith’s blackness is uncomfortably marked above her sex and gender identity, and simultaneously displaced with the dis/embodyed image of a Korean immigrant in body gestures and accent. The discomfort in viewing multiple stereotypical images describes black liminal displacement which unsettles and displaces audience’s perceptions about blackness on stage. Jackson points out that Smith interviewed people “at liminal moments when they had just begun to place words around

the crisis” (207). Smith identifies the liminal moments as being critical to how she would approach “acting” like her interviewees. Stanley posits that “unlike Stanislavski method actor, Smith wants her audience to see the difference – the gap – between her character’s subjectivity and her own, between her character’s body and her body” (195). In this way, Smith’s self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing as a black woman in interchanging roles displace audiences’ perceptions. Smith states that “character lives in the obvious gap between the real person and my *attempt* to seem like them. I try to close the gap between us, but I applaud the gap between us. I am willing to display my own *unlikeness*.” (Smith quoted in Stanley 195). Smith’s *unlikeness* as a black woman crossing race and gender in staged *transvestism* is as obvious as the characters she embodies.

This shows that even though sex and gender can be fluid on the body, race and blackness are marked and fixed in each shift on the body in staged *transvestism*. Smith’s performance is therefore a series of stereotypes and caricaturing on the black female body. Performance theorist Richard Schechner in “Anna Deavere Smith: Acting as Incorporation” (1993), suggests that Smith is “possessed” by the people she interviews, and that she does not “act” like people on stage (63). Anna Deavere Smith is not trying to steer away from, hide or denaturalize stereotypes and caricatures in performance. She faces them and represents them to audiences. Through self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing in black liminal displacement, Smith attacks mainstream culture’s amnesia about the racializing, sexualizing and gendering of stereotypes and caricatures in the United States. However, the stereotypical codes or gender meanings are subversively

exaggerated with each change in gestures, repetition, costumes, accents, and voice in her blackness and in crossing to other races/ethnicities.

Based on Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* or the alienation technique, Diamond theorizes what she calls a gestic feminist criticism which she proposes

would 'alienate' or foreground those moments in a play-text in which social attitudes about gender could be made visible. It would highlight sex/gender configurations as they conceal or disrupt a coercive or patriarchal ideology. It would refuse to appropriate and naturalize male or female dramatists, but rather focus on historical material constraints in the production of images (83).

However, blackness is so marked in gender that denaturalizing gender in gestic feminist criticism is not realistic in racialized gender. Blackness remains intact in Butler's schema for staged *transvestism* from anatomical sex to gender identity and gender performance.

Unlike Diamond's Brechtian gestic feminist theory which seeks to denaturalize gender, Bhabha's "metonomies of presence" confronts the source of power in mainstream culture with constructed stereotypes and caricatures through self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing, often in whatever is inappropriate, "vulgar," and carnivalesque spectacles (Gilbert and Tompkins 250). Stereotypes and caricatures in race, gender, sexuality, and class are rebelliously displayed and re-presented through self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing in Smith's racialized staged *transvestism*.

In another application of black liminal displacement, I consider the performance art by philosopher and performance artist Adrian Piper, described as a "light-skinned, African-American woman" (Jackson 185). Piper's work is about her racial identification, and her ambivalence about blackness. In her performance art, "Cornered" (1988) in the

collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, Piper performs on video where she questions viewers who are presumably white to consider if they were black. In black liminal displacement, Piper reflects stereotypical codes about blackness and whiteness back to the dominant culture in a museum setting.

For some, Piper might appear or “pass” for white. Maybe for others, like myself, I recognize Piper’s black ancestry immediately through cultural knowledge of color-casting. Being “cornered” in a room with a video monitor with questions about black ancestry displaces white audiences into thinking they could be “black” or both “black” and “white” like Piper on the video. Piper incites the “fear” of blackness in white audiences.



Figure 25: Performance artist Adrian Piper in “Cornered” (1988), as seen on the video monitor below – Collection Museum of Contemporary Art (Chicago).



Figure 26: Adrian Piper's "Cornered" (1988) Collection Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago.

I apply black liminal displacement, which is self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing in performance, to Piper's performance art. Piper, who is aware of the stereotypical codes for blackness and whiteness exaggerates her "passing" for white, and then exposes her "hidden" blackness. In this way, Piper displaces the audiences' perceptions about race, and confronts audiences with ideas about blackness and color-casting. hooks argues that "white folks" or dominant culture deny knowledge of constructed color-casting hierarchies that she says were constructed by dominant culture and internalized in black culture (120). hooks claims that "this denial allows no space for accountability, no space for whites in contemporary culture to know and acknowledge the primary role whites played in the formation of color castes" (120). By "cornering" dominant white culture in the small space of a room in the museum, Piper is able to mandate the viewing of her "passing," and to confront dominant culture with the stereotypical codes for blackness as feared in America.

In postcolonial performance, Bhabha refers to reflecting stereotypical and caricatured codes back to dominant culture as a necessary strategy by discriminated people (Bhabha in Gilbert and Tompkins 250). Piper uses black liminal displacement as self-stereotyping the fear of miscegenation, blackness and whiteness. Therefore the performance is subversive performativity, which is as Madison and Hamera argue, “an internalized repetition of subversive ‘stylized acts’ inherited by contested identities” (xix). “Subversive performativity” is what appears as reiteration of stereotypes and caricatures, norms, or status quo when it is to annoy and upset dominant culture its spectacle.

Mistakenly, Phelan assumes Piper's race could be a "choice," and does not acknowledge the coded meanings and spectacle of "black skin" (10). Phelan insists that "the 'visibility' of black skin is not, and cannot be, an accurate barometer for identifying a community of diverse political, economic, sexual, and artistic interests" (10). Even though black culture is diverse, Phelan does not address the violence, physical and psychic, against black skins in white culture's propensity to categorizing even the "shades" of black skins. Phelan thinks that any focus on identity politics and representation of under-represented groups "equals power" instead of the historical and contemporary racial stereotyping in mass media that fixes "black skins" in place (10). Phelan argues that "the metaphor of the gender presupposes unified bodies are different in "one" aspect of the body, that is to say, difference is located in the genitals" (151). In this case, it is easy to assume that gender identities can be fluid because of shifts on non-raced white bodies. However, in racialized gender identities, race is marked even when sex and gender can be fluid and denaturalized.

In another performance piece, "Calling Card," Piper passes out business cards with the passage:

Dear Friend:

I am black.

I am sure that you did not realize this when you made laughed at/agreed with that racist remark. In the past, I have attempted to alert white people to my racial identity in advance. Unfortunately, this in variably causes them to react to me as

pushy, manipulative, or socially in appropriate. Therefore, my policy is to assume that white people do not make these remarks, even when they believe there are no black people present, and to distribute the cad when they do. I regret any discomfort my presence is causing you, just as I am sure you regret the discomfort your racism is causing me (quoted in

Jackson 185).

Piper states that “many white viewers of my work are shocked by it because it confronts them with circumstances, images, and ideas with which they are unfamiliar and uncomfortable” (quoted in Jackson 186). “Calling Card” is reminiscent of “race card.” Piper brings up race as awkward “subjects” in awkward “settings,” and many would prefer not to talk about race as if it is an excuse even when obvious. This denial is precisely what gives race its power to fix marginalized identities.

For Piper, location and space are important in themes of black liminal displacement. As a light-skinned black woman, who “passes” for white, Piper unsettles and displaces images of black and white in formal and business events usually assumed to be a place of power dominated by whites. In black liminal displacement, Piper displaces audiences with the fear of “miscegenation.” She engages with audiences, who are uneasy when confronted by racial issues and identities, and in the possibility that they, too, could be “marked” by blackness. Her performance really questions the ambiguity of racialized identities. Are identities really fluid if they neither one nor the other? The in-between, too has been stereotyped as *La Mulata*, “tragically” not white, and having to live with the mark of blackness no matter how light-skinned she may be to “pass” as white. Fluidity underscores the ability for social and economic mobility – and from performers’ perspectives. Fixity, here, is a construct from mainstream culture about minorities and marginalized. Therefore no matter how fluid Piper’s performance may be, it is nevertheless fixed racial stereotyping by dominant culture.

Ultimately, black liminal displacement is a debate about whether identities are fluid or fixed. Brantlinger argues that

Identity, therefore is not only composed by subjective understandings, it is imposed externally by role prescriptions combined with societal messages about what it means to be from certain groups. Typically, privileged individuals have the power to construct and advertise their own positions and character as superior (Howard 2008) Construction of self as superior is socially relational because it depends on finding Others to be socially inferior (337).

To the extent that Piper can access privilege and “identity” through her “passing” for white while other darker ones cannot, mean that fluidity obscures race. Fluidity hides inequality and is a façade in color casting hierarchies and the racial dimensions in gender. Dark-skinned blacks would then remain fixed at the bottom of the racial/color ladder as those “passing” for white can fluidly choose to be not raced. Muñoz argues that identity is a fiction accessed with “relative ease” by dominant culture or “majoritarian subjects” (5). However, “minoritarian subjects,” as Muñoz suggests, do not fare so well in “accessing” identity (5). He rejects the “essentialism versus anti-essentialism” as in debates about “fixity” and “fluidity” of identities. Muñoz though admits that “the political theorist’s formulation understands identity as produced at the point of contact between essential understandings of self (fixed dispositions) and socially constructed narratives of self” (6). Therefore, scholars should not ignore fixities at the expense of the most marginalized poor and people of color.

Nativization as “an ongoing process through which an essential character is attributed to the indigenous – the ‘native’ – which derives largely from relationships to geography or to a particular territory, which in turn structures the context within which

this ‘native’ is to be imagined and understood” (Alexander 70). As a process of fixity, which continues to essentialize racialized identities is already sexualized, queered, wild and caged.



Figure 27: “Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit” by Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña, in Raena Lynn Quinlivan’s Corporeality and The Rhetoric of Feminist Body Art, 2008, page 12).

Performance artists Cuban American Coco Fusco and Mexican-born Guillermo Gómez-Peña explore the stereotype of nativism on display in a cage in the performance art, “Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit.” The performance piece was later filmed and titled, “The Couple in the Cage” in the early 1990s (Worthen 1979). Costumed in feathered headdresses and skimpy clothing, Fusco and Gómez-Peña portrayed themselves as “natives” or indigenous inhabitants from, ironically, a fictitious Caribbean island of Guatinaui, reinforcing the idea of the Caribbean as still “undiscovered” (Worthen 1979). Fusco and Gómez-Peña displayed themselves in a cage as a recent anthropological discovery from the Caribbean, and were seen in art museums in the United States, including the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago and on a plaza in Madrid, Spain. In addition to wearing feathered head dresses and skimpy clothing, Fusco and Gómez-Peña interchanged with wearing Western-style sunglasses, basketball sneakers, and even watched television and posed with viewers to photographs (Worthen 1979). The performance revealed certain attitudes of some audiences who actually believed that Fusco and Gómez-Peña were discovered “natives.” Some audiences never questioned Fusco’s and Gómez-Peña’s imprisonment or display in a cage. Ultimately, Fusco and Gómez-Peña’s performance indicates that the idea of imperialism and colonialism along with the stereotypes still exists well into the 1990s and beyond.

Black liminal displacement reveals the powerlessness to fully access agency and change stereotypical codes in gender meanings. My focus is stereotypical gender meanings in codes, and the myriad ways marginalized communities deal with stereotypes through staged transvestism as a metaphor for everyday life. The research problem is a

pragmatic one of agency, choice, and will to change or denaturalize racialized and sexualized gender. However, I have chosen to view the problem as conceptual because Butler analyzes staged *transvestism* to develop a concept of “fluidity of identities.” As a conceptual problem, I have discussed “agency” and “will” in racialized gender identities that appear to reiterate stereotypes in performances as displacements between anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance. I suggest that performativity describes the real powerlessness to change gender meanings but that subversive performativity deliberately uses stereotypes in self-stereotyping.

Like fluidity, Bhabha argues that fixity is “anxiously repeated” over and over again to maintain power through stereotyping (1994, 94). By critiquing Butler’s fluidity of identities, I have raised a conceptual problem to address the real issue of will, choice, and agency in performance and performativity in racialized sexualized gender by Caribbean black women. Fluidity implies that racialized and sexualized gender identities can simply change the meanings in inherited stereotypes and caricatures. I concede that Butler’s fluidity of identities is about the agency to, not only change and shift in-between anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance, but to change gender meanings in stereotypical codes too.

My conceptual solution is black liminal displacement, which is staged performance by Caribbean black women using stereotypical codes for “masculinity” and “femininity” on the black female body. Even though shifts appear obvious in-between anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance, I have argued that stereotypical codes for blackness remain in each shift, and that Caribbean black women do not have

the agency to change gender meanings in stereotypical codes. Caribbean black women in this type of staged *transvestism* use self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing to own stereotypical codes and mirror them back to hegemonic culture that constructed stereotypical codes on the black female body. As a conceptual solution, black liminal displacement mirrors everyday performances of self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing in speech, rituals.

Further research for a pragmatic solution could look at everyday performances, for example the N-word as self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing. In speech, I have considered the use of the N-word by blacks as an example of black liminal displacement which is self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing to reflect the N-word back to dominant culture that would deny and erase the word. In popular entertainment, I note Trinidadian born Nicki Minaj with distinctive wigs, style in a racialized “drag;” and black fashion model Naomi Campbell with Jamaican parentage crossed over in the runway fashion world by adopting a straight hair weave in what hooks observes as “drag” along color caste hierarchies (128-129).

Other possible research may address color-caste hierarchies and various other racialized and sexualized codes in gender construction and performance by black women and Caribbean performance artists. I have identified at least two Caribbean performance artists who are using Caribbean masquerade model in performance art including themes with Dame Lorraine, color-casting and body image that deals with stereotypes of racialized and sexualized gender. Trinidadian installation and performance artist Richard Bolai creates and cross dresses in grotesque Dame Lorraine costumes in photographs

(Kiendl 221). Another performance artist and sculptor is Trinidadian Susan Dayal, who is now creating self-portraits in the nude with prosthetics or wire costumes with themes of being sexualized, gendered, and raced (Dayal 136-138). Dayal's performance art reflects the issues of fluidity and fixity in racialized gender identities that can be theorized just from her vast body of work. After all, if gender is socially learned, it is possible to consider how Caribbean race and sexuality converge with gender in stereotypical categories imposed on peoples of color.



Figure 28: Self-Portrait of Trinidadian performance artist Susan Dayal in “She Web” (1999), a corset made of 18-gauge galvanized wire. Photo by Susan Dayal, 2010 in Dayal, Susan. “Reflections on She Web.” 2011, 138.

Conclusion

In the final analysis, racialized gender identities are neither extremely fixed nor fluid in absolutes, and cannot be placed on poles for racialized gender identities. Identities are not completely fluid because of stereotyping; and yet identities are not completely fixed because of some people's access and agency. Identities are, however, repeated and repeated over and over again in stereotypes, caricatures, and in the negotiations of borders in racialized, sexualized "masculinity" and "femininity" on Caribbean black and miscegenated female bodies. Caribbean black women's response to stereotypes and caricatures are black liminal displacement which is self-stereotyping and self-caricaturing that exaggerates stereotypical codes to excess toward the source of power and domination.

Appendix A

IRB Protocol 2010-05-0016 Approval Letter



OFFICE OF RESEARCH SUPPORT

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

P.O. Box 7426, Austin, Texas 78713 (512) 471-8871 -FAX (512) 471-8873
North Office Building A, Suite 5.200 (Mail code A3200)

FWA # 00002030

Date: 03/18/11

PI(s): Denise Amy-Rose Forbes-Er Department & Mail Code: THEATER & DANCE, DEPT

Title: Performance of Fluid Identities and Black Liminal
Displacement by Threshold Women

IRB EXPEDITED APPROVAL: IRB Protocol # 2010-05-0016

Dear: Denise Amy-Rose Forbes-Er

In accordance with the Federal Regulations the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed the above referenced research study and found it met the requirements for approval under the Expedited category noted below for the following period of time: 03/11/2011 - 03/10/2012, Expires 11 a.m. [midnight] of this date.

Expedited category of approval:

- (1) Clinical studies of drugs and medical devices only when condition (a) or (b) is met. (a) Research on drugs for which an investigational new drug application (21 CFR Part 312) is not required. (Note: Research on marketed drugs that significantly increases the risks or decreases the acceptability of the risks associated with the use of the product is not eligible for expedited review). (b) Research on medical devices for which (i) an investigational device exemption application (21 CFR Part 812) is not required; or (ii) the medical device is cleared/approved for marketing and the medical device is being used in accordance with its cleared/approved labeling.
- (2) Collection of blood samples by finger stick, heel stick, ear stick, or venipuncture as follows: (a) from healthy, non-pregnant adults who weigh at least 110 pounds. For these subjects, the amounts drawn may not exceed 550 ml in an 8 week period and collection may not occur more frequently than 2 times per week; or (b) from other adults and children², considering the age, weight, and health of the subjects, the collection procedure, the amount of blood to be collected, and the frequency with which it will be collected. For these subjects, the amount drawn may not exceed the lesser of 50 ml or 3 ml per kg in an 8 week period and collection may not occur more frequently than 2 times per week.
- (3) Prospective collection of biological specimens for research purposes by Non-invasive means.
Examples:
 - (a) hair and nail clippings in a non-disfiguring manner;
 - (b) deciduous teeth at time of exfoliation or if routine patient care indicates a need for extraction;
 - (c) permanent teeth if routine patient care indicates a need for extraction;
 - (d) excreta and external secretions (including sweat);

- (e) unannulated saliva collected either in an un-stimulated fashion or stimulated by chewing gumbase or wax or by applying a dilute citric solution to the tongue;
 - (f) placenta removed at delivery;
 - (g) amniotic fluid obtained at the time of rupture of the membrane prior to or during labor;
 - (h) supra- and subgingival dental plaque and calculus, provided the collection procedure is not more invasive than routine prophylactic scaling of the teeth and the Process is accomplished in accordance with accepted prophylactic techniques;
 - (i) mucosal and skin cells collected by buccal scraping or swab, skin swab, or mouth washings;
 - (j) sputum collected after saline mist nebulization.
- (4) Collection of data through noninvasive procedures (not involving general anesthesia or sedation) routinely employed in clinical practice, excluding procedures involving x-rays or microwaves. Where medical devices are employed, they must be cleared/approved for marketing. (Studies intended to evaluate the safety and effectiveness of the medical device are not generally eligible for expedited review, including studies of cleared medical devices for new indications).
Examples:
- (a) physical sensors that are applied either to the surface of the body or at a distance and do not involve input of significant amounts of energy into the subject or an invasion of the subject's privacy;
 - (b) weighing or testing sensory acuity;
 - (c) magnetic resonance imaging;
 - (d) electrocardiography, electroencephalography, thermography, detection of naturally occurring radioactivity, electroretinography, ultrasound, diagnostic infrared imaging, doppler blood flow, and echocardiography;
 - (e) moderate exercise, muscular strength testing, body composition assessment, and flexibility testing where appropriate given the age, weight, and health of the individual.
- (5) Research involving materials (data, documents, records, or specimens) that have been collected, or will be collected solely for non-research purposes (such as medical treatment or diagnosis). (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(4). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt).
- (6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.
- (7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt).
- Use the attached approved informed consent.
- You have been granted a Waiver of Documentation of Consent according to 45 CFR 46.117 and/or 21 CFR 56.109(c)(1).
- You have been granted a Waiver of Informed Consent according to 45 CFR 46.116(d).

Responsibilities of the Principal Investigator:

1. Report immediately to the IRB any unanticipated problems.

2. Ensure the proposed changes in the approved research during the IRB approval period will not be applied without IRB review and approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subject. Changes in approved research implemented without IRB review and approval initiated to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subject must be promptly reported to the IRB, and will be reviewed under the unanticipated problems policy to determine whether the change was consistent with ensuring the subjects continued welfare.
3. Report any significant findings that become known in the course of the research that might affect the willingness of subjects to continue to participate.
4. Ensure that only persons formally approved by the IRB enroll subjects.
5. Use only a currently approved consent form (remember that approval periods are for 12 months or less).
6. Protect the confidentiality of all persons and personally identifiable data, and train your staff and collaborators on policies and procedures for ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of subjects and their information.
7. Submit for review and approval by the IRB all modifications to the protocol or consent form(s) prior to the implementation of the change.
8. Submit a Continuing Review Application for continuing review by the IRB. Federal regulations require IRB review of on-going projects no less than once a year (a Continuing Review Application and a reminder letter will be sent to you two months before your expiration date). If a reminder is not received from Office of Research Support (ORS) about your upcoming continuing review, it is still the primary responsibility of the Principal Investigator not to conduct research activities on or after the expiration date. The Continuing Review Application must be submitted, reviewed and approved, before the expiration date.
9. Upon completion of the research study, a Closure Report must be submitted to the ORS.
10. Include the IRB study number on all future correspondence relating to this protocol.

If you have any questions call or contact the ORS (Mail Code A3200) or via e-mail at orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Sincerely,



Jody L. Jensen, Ph.D.
Professor
Chair, Institutional Review Board

Appendix B

IRB Protocol 2010-05-0016 Approval Consent

IRB APPROVED ON: 03/11/2011 EXPIRES ON: 03/10/2012
IRB PROTOCOL #: 2010-05-0016

Title of Dissertation: Performance of Fluid Identities and Black Liminal Displacements by Threshold Women

Conducted By: Denise Amy-Rose Forbes-Erickson
Of The University of Texas at Austin
Department of Theatre and Dance
1 University Station D3900, Austin TX 78712-0362,
USA
Telephone: (512) 471-5793 Fax: (512)471-0824

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The person in charge of this research will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can stop your participation at any time and your refusal will not impact current or future relationships with UT Austin. To do so simply tell the researcher you wish to stop participation. The researcher will provide you with a copy of this consent for your records.

Purpose of this Study:

The purpose of this study is to analyze gender performances by three famous West Indian women performers, and to add to performance scholarship. The study looks at how gender and race plays a role in theatrical and public performance.

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following things:

Participate in a recorded interview to answer the following:

- How would you describe your performance of identities in your work and activism?
- Can you explain your self-identification as “Caribbean and Black, Asian and lesbian, woman and resident of New York City?” (QPOCA performance, Nov. 10, 2010).
- Can you describe your Chinese and African identities in Jamaica, and now as a US resident?
- How do your identities shape your performance style?
- What are the divisions you perceive between African Americans and the Caribbean; and Africa and the African Diaspora, and how do you “bridge the divide” in your performance?
- Do you highlight one identity over the other or some other process?

Time:

Total estimated time to participate in study is 30-minutes.

Risks:

Risks are no greater than everyday life.

Benefits:

There are no direct benefits for participating in this study; however, researchers will benefit from understanding how gender and race plays a role in theatrical and public performance.

Compensation:

There is no compensation for participation in this study.

Confidentiality and Privacy Protections:

- a) Interviews or sessions will be audio taped.
- b) Tapes will be coded so that no personally identifying information is visible on them.
- c) Tapes will be kept in a secure place (e.g., a locked file cabinet in the investigator's office).
- d) Tapes will be heard only for research purposes by the investigator and his or her associates.
- e) To make possible future analysis the investigator will retain the recording.

The data resulting from your participation may be made available to other researchers in the future for research purposes not detailed within this consent form. In these cases, the data will contain no identifying information that could associate you with it, or with your participation in any study.

The records of this study will be stored securely and kept confidential. Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin, members of the Institutional Review Board, and (study sponsors, if any) have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. All publications will exclude any information that will make it possible to identify you as a subject. Throughout the study, the researchers will notify you of new information that may become available and that might affect your decision to remain in the study.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have any questions about the study please ask now. If you have questions later, want additional information, or wish to withdraw your participation call the researchers conducting the study. Their names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses are at the top of this page.

If you would like to obtain information about the research study, have questions, concerns, complaints or wish to discuss problems about a research study with someone unaffiliated with the study, please contact the IRB Office at (512) 471-8871 or Jody Jensen, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (512) 232-2685. Anonymity, if desired, will be protected to the extent possible. As an alternative method of contact, an email may be sent to orisc@uts.cc.utexas.edu or a letter sent to IRB Administrator, P.O. Box 7426, Mail Code A 3200, Austin, TX 78713.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and have sufficient information to make a decision about participating in this study. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator Date: _____

I agree for the interview session to be audio recorded.

Confidentiality and Privacy Protections:

- a) Interviews or sessions will be audio taped.
- b) Tapes will be coded so that no personally identifying information is visible on them.
- c) Tapes will be kept in a secure place (e.g., a locked file cabinet in the investigator's office).
- d) Tapes will be heard only for research purposes by the investigator and his or her associates.
- e) To make possible future analysis the investigator will retain the recording.

The data resulting from your participation may be made available to other researchers in the future for research purposes not detailed within this consent form. In these cases, the data will contain no identifying information that could associate you with it, or with your participation in any study.

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You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and have sufficient information to make a decision about participating in this study. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator Date: _____

I agree for the interview session to be audio recorded.

IRB APPROVED ON: 03/11/2011 EXPIRES ON: 03/10/2012
IRB PROTOCOL #: 2010-05-0016

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator Date: _____

Appendix C

Telephone Interview with Denise “Saucy Wow” Belfon in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, Friday, August 26, 2011.

[In English Creole and Informal Caribbean Standard English]

DFE: I see where you were born on Nov. 23rd, right?

Belfon: Correct.

DFE: And what year? You don't mind?

Belfon: No... I don't want to say the year.

DFE: You don't want to say the year –Alright, no problem - hmm... so what is your background? In terms of ...- you know across the Caribbean everybody has a “mix.” I know in Trinidad, they would say “Creole.”

Belfon: Yes, I'm... I'm actually A Trini-Lucian. I always tell people that my father and grandmother – they are from St. Lucia - and I am Trinidadian. My father's bloodline is actually the bloodline they say of royalty – the certain years that they settled- the masters and everybody settled – and Soufriere is the certain part of the island where you go for health reasons you go to the sulfur springs and different areas to get treated medically and whatnot by natural resources of St. Lucia. Well actually the people that settled there were named “Soufriere,” known to the world then, come from the... I come from the names “Deveau,” “Iboulay,” and “Ouveigh.” Those are prominent people, or were prominent people in times gone by, where history is concerned where St. Lucia is concerned as an island. My father's last name is Franztupa. My grandmother's last name is Marciel M-A-R-C-I-E-L. So that's the thing in a nut shell. Awm, I'm French Creole Mix.

DFE: French Creole Mix. Okay. And is that like ah...?

Belfon: Yes, I think this would help also. My Great Grandmother is descended from African slaves out of Jamaica. So I have... I real mix up. (laughs).

DFE: So French Creole Mix and African through Jamaica. That's good. So how would you describe your identity when you're in Trinidad? Just like what you said, French Creole Mix?

Belfon: I would describe myself as French Creole Mix, but... so, when people are trying to, like define my ethnicity, you can never say what my background really is. My husband just yesterday, or the other day, was telling me that I could pass sometimes for mix with Chinese. When I started my career, people thought that I was Syrian mix. Awm, then they're some people, when I do my Indian aspect of my culture, they say that you know, I could pass for an Indian woman. So, it's really confusing when you look at someone of my ethnicity.

DFE: So you don't really talk about it. Is that what you mean?

Belfon: Awm... If I'm asked about it, I will speak about it. That's the only thing that comes out of my mouth. And So, I could be a Trini-Lucian.

DFE: Well, of course. Yes - Yes, that's interesting because like for me I have a similar thing where my mother is half Indian, and like my father's background have white Scottish and African

Belfon: Correct, well if I really get into where I really come from, girl - it's White, English, because of the French – that the “Belfon” name comes from. Three brothers from France settle in Grenada, and certain parts of Grenada and that's where the Belfon name come from where the Caribbean is concerned. My father's father is white and blond.

DFE: He's blond?

Belfon: Yes, he's blond with blue eyes

DFE: That's your Grandfather?

Belfon: My Grandfather on my father's side

DFE: Hmm mm

Belfon: Blond with blue eyes...

DFE: Hmm mmm

Belfon: And... my Grandmother' mother came from Grenada... born in Aruba. My mother is very dark-skinned. She got her complexion from her father. My Grandfather being white and my Grandmother being Negro.... That's there in a nutshell

DFE: Yay! Wouldn't you say that that is the typical West Indian culture?

Belfon: Correct... Correct... If I was to go to any of the - awm - the parades in America Labor Day or Caribana or wherever, I'll have to wear all like twelve flags!

DFE: Exactly. Yes. Yes.

Belfon: [laughs]

DFE: So when you came about to do that song “Indian Man,”... and um... I remember reading about the controversy. What do you think about the East Indian and Creole tension in Trinidad?

Belfon: Um, at first, maybe the first two days of when the controversy started, I was a bit disturbed by the fact that all these activists,... and this and that and whoever, had these negative things to say about me trying to do a song where I was just - y'know - in the studio looking for some lyrics for a melody that I had written in Anguilla and one of the guys that was at the studio jump up and sang the line in the beginning [Singing] “Tonight I lookin' for ah Indian Man” and I was, “this was it.” It wasn't something that was planned. It wasn't something where, y'know, I just say I gonna target the Indians in society and this is my plot. It wasn't like that, but when the song was finished and finalized, it came to a point where everything that I wrote and I sang on the track made sense. It meshed.

DFE: Yes

Belfon: Creole man was always singin' about how is Indian gyal they want... how is East Indian gyal they like ... and no female has ever taken it upon themselves to sing about ah Indian man. So when it started, I was like, okay, they want bacchanal – I gonna give them bacchanal.

DFE: Yes

Belfon: I like Indian man. I want ah Indian man. Indian man I like.

DFE: Hmm mmm

Belfon: It make the Indian man popular!

DFE: Hmm mmm. Yes! And then later, I heard that you performed with Remo Fernandez from Goa?

Belfon: From India

DFE: Yes, a “real” Indian man

Belfon: Yes!

DFE: So how did that come about?

Belfon: He heard the song. He heard the track. He looked at me on YouTube. He was very fascinated and interested in... with my ethnicity... someone like me. He’s Indian, also and in that part of India, Goa, you have that type of... that type of... people and culture there. It’s an island. It’s where all the “unwanted” are sent. And I... am somewhat like the “unwanted” [laughs].

DFE: Is that what Remo said, or do you just think that?

Belfon: I...I think that, and when I put it over to him, he kind of agreed with what I was saying.

DFE: Hmm mmm. So do you... I also read that you sing in Hindi and Bhojpuri?

Belfon: I have sung in Hindi and Bhojpuri.

DFE: Hmm mmm

Belfon: I had a Hindi... ‘cause when I go into any realm of music, or anything I’ve assisted in... in another culture, I do a lot of background checks and history on what and why, and what will make thing even more spectacular in what it is I am doing. That is the reason I do it.

DFE: So, did you pick the Hindi, or did you learn it? Did you learn to speak it?

Belfon: From a child, I’ve always looked at Indian movies. It is very, very, easy to learn from. I catch... I learn things very quickly. It is very easy to me.

DFE: So, Did you ever perform in Chutney Monarchs?

Belfon: Yes, I’ve been to the Chutney Monarch, twice. ... The same year that I enter Chutney Monarch was the year that I had “Indian Man.” So I placed sixth in the competition - for a first time, but I was very good. Made history being the first Negro artist, or - or should I say, awm “mixed” artist to be in the Chutney Finals – being in a Soca Finals Monarch with a Chutney song.

DFE: I mean that is like... Amazing!

Belfon: Correct

DFE: What was the reception like with the Indian audience?

Belfon: As you ask the question, I’m ... I’m getting goose bumps - because they love me. I was just a soca artist and then when I came into their arena, they accepted me with open arms. When I was.. As a matter of fact, the artist that was on before me on the night of the competition – when he was on stage they was chanting my name for me to come on. And that... that was real amazing... I ...I... I went back stage and I’m saying “Wow!” I have to deliver to these people, bwoy, I feel I might take the crown tonight!

DFE: That’s good, yes, yes ... So

Belfon: But I didn’t.

DFE: So you came fifth?

Belfon: Sixth

DFE: Sixth in the competition, but that was the first year?

Belfon: Yeah first year in the Chutney Monarch. In the second year I entered and I sang... awm... It means “kiss” in Hindi, or “to give me a kiss.”

DFE: Yes, and that went well too?

Belfon: It was very, very well received also. I came eighth and then I just bowed out of the competition. I started to focus on other things, other things that deal with the youth of our nation and through the Caribbean. I went to St. Lucia and I try to do something very positive.

DFE: So let me ask you, when you perform the “Indian Man” song, you wore a sari, right?

Belfon: Yes, I did

DFE: And I read somewhere that some people thought, and this is a quote, that it was “disrespectful” to wear a sari. Why is that?”

Belfon: Yes, that is very true. I don’t know why it’s disrespectful to them, but um... Sax Maharaj, which is the big wig here in Trinidad and Tobago and in Hindu society - he made a statement saying that saris are being worn all over the world and he doesn’t see anything wrong with me wearing a sari. I look very good in an Indian sari, and he said that I should continue doing what I’m doing – and this was a quote from him. I don’t know, but you see when people have negatives to say about me, I take it on, but I take it in stride... I feel so sad when people don’t know me and don’t want to take the time to get to know me, and they judge me and just put me down like that.

DFE: I read something as well about winin’. Winin’ is a typical dance all across the Caribbean. I mean – everybody - everybody wines, but this comment was more like some people thought it was “disrespectful” to wine? Do you know anything about that?

Belfon: My whole career – I’ve been hearing that. I’ll be celebrating twenty years in the business this November and in Carnival coming next year. And from the time I start performing till now, I’ve always heard how wining is this - this bad thing, and so disrespectful and so degrading to women and blah blah blah blue blue blue – and honestly speaking that’s just a handful of people who’s saying that. The majority – the majority of people from over the years has now joined me – and has now started to respect and understand me – and understand that what I do onstage is one thing, and when you offstage, it is something else. You have to differentiate and accept that it [winin’] is an art that I do.

DFE: So what do you feel about winin’?

Belfon: Winin’ is an art! It is an expression of you being artistic and creative. The Arabs do it. The Africans do it. One time I performed in London, and the base of the crowd that was there – there was – a lot of people from Nigeria – Two Nigerian people came up to me and asked me, “what part of Nigeria am I from?” I said, “I’m from Trinidad and Tobago.” It was because of the bicycle wine that I created, what they expressed to me - the move that I do – a certain part of the peddling of the dance – they say that is part of their mourning – whether it is mourning for a son or whoever died in the family. They do

that dance! I was shocked! I was shocked! In certain parts of African tradition, they do that dance too.

DFE: Yes, because winin' is actually a West African tradition. Did you do any dance lessons over the years?

Belfon: From the age of seven, I've done every type of dance you can think about – modern, tap, jazz, ballet – I've been in the dance arena from as early as seven years old. That is why when I do what I do onstage – it's winin', yes, but, but a lot of people compliment me and tell me "It's winin', but winin' with a difference, bwoy."

DFE: How do you see yourself outside of Trinidad – in the world – in the wider world?

Belfon: I'm recognized by the regional people who live abroad. I'm recognized by them. And there are few people internationally who know me. Where the wide world is concerned – I would really like to be recognized – and at some time to get the opportunity to perform at something really big and international.

DFE: I'm sure you go to carnival in London and Toronto –

Belfon: Yes everywhere – everywhere. But I'm speaking about something like an award show or on one of those stages – and to see what my culture and what I can bring with our music to the world.

Appendix D

Telephone Interview with Carlene “The Dancehall Queen” Smith in Kingston, Jamaica, Wednesday, September 28, 2011.

[In *Patois* (English Creole) and informal Jamaican Standard English]

DFE: So it was kind of hard to find certain information on you like when you were born, and where.

Smith: Kingston, Jamaica. May 1st 1971

DFE: Okay, thanks. And then, the Caribbean media usually refer to you as “brown” or “browning.” Do you identify yourself as “brown”?

Smith: I don’t identify myself as anything, but a Jamaican. Um... my...my, my parents - my mother is from Jamaica, and my father is a white man from Germany.

DFE: okay. So how do you feel about people calling you “brown” though?

Smith: Oh I don’t care. I am... if a shade is in umm... But my skin... I am a Black girl with different “shade” of... of...of however they want to call me. I’m fine with it.

DFE: And they’d normally refer to you as “middle class.” Would you say you’re middle class?

Smith: And again... I am Jamaican. And being a Jamaica, you can be any class. And the place I put myself is “first class citizen.”

DFE: That’s good. Yes. I found in an article.... And all of these questions I’m asking you are from what I read. And you know, people talk and ask different things. So I found this person who wrote something about you said that you look like you were “almost white” with a “full body,” and “large hips” and “big bottom.” What you think about that kind of comment?

Smith: As I said before... I... I ... you can describe me however you want. ‘Cause you might look at me and see something else; and somebody look at me and they see something else. What I am is a very happy human being who loves the way she looks. So, I mean... you can describe me anyway you want. Umm ... I’ve been dubbed over and over for being voluptuous because at the time at the peak of my career I had a 36 bust, a 24 waist, and a 38 hip. So I mean... they can dub me how ever. I’m just a happy person who loves the way she looks.

DFE: Good. And, do you travel a lot Carlene, like abroad?

Smith: Yes. Yes, I do.

DFE: So... ‘cause you have family abroad?

Smith: I have all my family abroad. But for work purposes, back then I used to tour. I used to do tours and do all kind of stuff.

DFE: When you traveled abroad, did anybody ever ask you about your background?

Smith: Well y’know, when you get to the airport and especially when you leave Jamaica, and let’s say you land in the UK or the United States, and they see my passport ‘cause I have a Jamaican passport, I’ve often been spoken to in Spanish or everything else, but

“Jamaican.” Nobody... Nobody thought of me as being Jamaican because y’know because our culture is advertised as one image, and our motto is “Out of many one people” so you can get anything out of Jamaica. I was never “classified” in appearance by the Americans or the Europeans as being Jamaican. One- my presentation, probably, is not just a package. It’s not just one look, it’s a package. Umm ...they sometimes tend to think Jamaicans speak one way, and I did not sound like the “typical” Jamaican to them. And this was back in the 90s when we weren’t y’know, exposed. And so if you weren’t a Rastafarian person or somebody who they considered, y’know...probably...ah don’t know, but I was never thought of as being Jamaican.

DFE: So is your Dad in Germany or in Jamaica?

Smith: My dad died in Germany. He’s dead.

DFE: Oh I’m sorry.

Smith: That’s okay

DFE: Okay ... because I read somewhere that he raised you.

Smith: That’s my stepfather

DFE: Oh step father... yes, okay.

Smith: My stepfather raised me. He’s also ... umm... mixed with white.

DFE: Yes...Okay. That’s very interesting. I didn’t know that. You see – Sometimes... there’s all kinds of things written about you online, and even in some of the books that you’d think they’d get some information right. They don’t have any of this kind of thing. Did anybody ever interview you seriously?

Smith: Yeah, but I guess... I guess when people... umm... put it out, it translates in how ever way they want to – because they are articles in Jamaica that I’ve read where they keep quoting... I mean they stress on me being half-white. I would state it and it stops there, but they usually just break it down to me being half-white; and my status is “Jamaican.” I don’t care how you want to classify me. Yes, I’ve lived abroad and I’ve live all over too, all over the world, but I’m still Jamaican.

DFE: And you mom is in New York?

Smith: U.S. ... My mother is a beautiful black woman.

DFE: So I read that in the 1990s, you were in the AIDS campaign, HIV/AIDS campaign

Smith: Yes. That’s one of my strong... umm... something that I strongly believe that I should have an input in, and anyway that I can, I still make it my point of duty to give my time and effort.

DFE: And I remember the Slam condoms with your image.

Smith: Yes, that’s how it came about. At the time, with me being a public image that the owner of Slam condoms, Victor Wong, thought that well, it would be a great idea to let me be associated with an image that they think is a sex symbol. In Jamaica, I was dubbed as a sex symbol, and so men might, y’know ... might just use a condom because they love it and its me on it; and a woman might not be ashamed to buy it, because she can say, y’know well, her favorite personality is on the condom, she’ll just have it. And just having it, is a step. When we did surveys, it was like, “*Condom! No Sah!*” [No Sir!]

DFE: Hm mmm. A lot of the men don’t want to wear it.

Smith: Jamaican men can't catch AIDS. "No man, it's a gay thing." We had to ... We had to really work hard on it because our AIDS rate at the time was rising.

DFE: Yes, I remember. Okay. ... So what about the idea of wearing the wigs and the dancehall fashion? How did you come up with some of the styles?

Smith: I ... I. Well I designed all the clothes I wore, and I was always a very sexy individual. From a kid, I was always... they say y'know, I used to be just always in my own little world. I don't bother people, and y'know, I not looking attention from anybody, I just like to feel sexy, and when I dress certain way, I felt sexy..., and so I like to create whatever it is I'm doing, however it is. I like to package things. If I .. If I. bring you a glass of water, I don't want to just throw it out in the glass and bring it to you. I've always been that kind of person, where everything must... I mean you'd have to see where I live to understand my home. I like to take things from top to bottom making it unique in my own vision. This is how I see it, and this is how I wanna see it. So it comes with the hair, I thought being... being different from my head to my toe, and so that's how I created these looks. I wanted just to be different from head to toe. I wore wigs that some people never even consider putting on dem head. It wasn't to be beautiful or ugly or... it's just different. It's just feeling and being different.

DFE: Did you think of it like ah ... like a role or a character that you were playing, or anything like that?

Smith: I wasn't playing... It was me, and ah... and I told people in several interviews that I do have multiple personalities. Thank god none of them is a serial killer or anything like that. (Laugh)

DFE: (Laugh) No.

Smith: Right, but I do have multiple personalities... And ... something happens to me when I ...get ...into ...a mode. When I get sexy... as I said, it has nothing to do with anybody.... I love dancing, so I used to always create a dance move. From I'm a kid, I used to perform at my school, fetes and functions and...I was dressed differently and it wasn't in a way like, "what the!" It was in a way like "wow!" And it came across, and it grew into me and unto me... and I saw that it worked... and there was this one thing that I wanted to be a household name ... in a... in a ... in my own creation. I wanted to do something that nobody else ever done, and I did.

DFE: Yes

Smith: So it was never about... and again, I did not care what people think. My family matter, and they knew I was always unique and different. So they accepted me how I was...and then when I turned it around and made it into something that... y'know...was...was entertaining.

DFE: Y'know I have to tell you that... umm... that I was a huge fan, when I was there in Jamaica... and what impressed me was how well you were able to respond to critics... because I would watch you on TV and so on...and one time I saw you at ah... Gladys Knight concert...it was backstage at a Gladys Knight concert... back in the 90s.

Smith: At the stadium

DFE: Yes, at the stadium... and what I remember is how you would answer the critics because they were coming at you really hard... and I always said that I wanted to meet

you... and I wanted to... I didn't know I was going to be doing this work that I'm doing now... I didn't know... and when the chance came for me to write, I told my advisor that I would want to write about you. Y'know.

Smith: Okay

DFE: So let me ask you about the "x-rated" fashion... Did you get like... I remember that was a big... big ...ah... discussion back then, and the critics were asking questions about ...whether they thought it was degrading to women and I remember a thing about if it would encourage sexual assault and all this sort of thing. What is your take on that?

Smith: It doesn't matter if you're clothed or half-clothed, or naked or dress sexy, or dress exposing... because when I did several research on all the rape cases that took place in Jamaica, from way before I was born... None of the rape cases were prostitute...and I'm giving you... none of the rape cases were go-go dancers or exotic dancers... none of the rape cases were people who were dressed a certain way...no exposing any parts of them. These were all... all the cases were... the majority of them were children, and the others were very much clothed women. Because I did a report and I went to the police station, and I worked from there. That was one of my defense to say ...how a man views a woman has nothing to do with how she actually looks.....For the full ten years that I've dressed like that nobody has ever assaulted me .. because it's not how I look; it's how I carried myself... and part of it, they knew it was a job... and it was like my job...that I enjoyed, but it was never that in the middle of the afternoon, I am going to the mall, just a scenario, that I was dressed in any way. I was always in a jeans. People were amazed that they could never see me... out of... "work" dressed the way I was. It was merely for entertainment at the time when it was for that purpose.

DFE: But you know that dancehall people wear their clothes... I mean... anywhere.

Smith: Right, and this is the difference between me... my own was a job, and I chose dancehall because, at the time, that's where I thought the weakness of my country was. ... I, I chose dancehall because I knew,... back then, nobody would expect a "character".... quoting myself now.... A character to be of... where they state me to be from... the way I look, to represent dancehall, and I knew I would get the attention, because I wasn't the typical... quote, unquote "Jamaican" who would like dancehall. And as the way I stated, dancehall was a Jamaican thing, not a class or race thing.

DFE: Okay

Smith: So I wanted to cross it over to make sure it [dancehall] was a Jamaican thing and all Jamaicans were entitled to enjoy our rich culture of dancehall.

DFE: Okay I understand...because dancehall was typically seen as ... like a class thing.

Smith: Ah... inner city or ... a class, definitely, class. If you're from the countryside, it was the poorer people from the country who would like this [dancehall]

DFE: and also black....dark-skin...

Smith: It's not even the color of your skin, it's more your class. ... And so it was just, y'know For all these years our artistes have been wanting persons or people [for music videos] that it doesn't matter how they look... where they're from was very vital... and it's usually that they're poor and hungry and wanted to get out of poverty probably if it was something else it would have been okay... So when they saw that this

girl [Carlene] did not need anything of the sort, she wasn't looking anything. She wasn't a music kid. It was like "wow!" "Why is she doing this?" Must be nice... and so I was tagging the quote, unquote, called the "uptowners," I was tagging them into it... And was opening them up to a different genre... But I was really doing it to help the inner city people...the, the less fortunate Jamaicans, women especially. And again, I would go into the inner city and I see these beautiful girls... and you know when I speak to them... and their only focus in life is for a man. Yeah... They can't do anything for themselves because some of them don't have the education and they feel like it stops there. I say but no, but you can dance and they look good. So let me open this door for everybody...And I remember they used to do ... um.. videos... and they would go overseas and pick the overseas girls. So I decide, this has to stop. The raw talent is right here... and so I started to promote myself. This is even before I got so huge. I said, no no no, I have a set of girls for the video, and they say, "where they from," and I say, "they're right here"... and I did the logics to them and said you don't have to fly them. You don't have to pay for food, you don't ha ... Just pay them for them video shoot. You saving money.... And at the same time, these girls are gonna benefit because they would get that money without doing that...And this is where I opened up the.. the.. the niche of the market not going overseas. And so everything now was putting also on a business mode, but never for me. It was to help others.

DFE: So what you think about the Queens... "The Dancehall Queen"... the competitions?

Smith: That always exist from I was... before I was in the system...It was dancehall dancing, right? -competition, and I'm sorry that when I stopped as "Dancehall Queen" that I'm not "Dancehall Queen" because I consider that a title, always have....Um... because I created it, y'know... and when I see they took it because of a monetary state back to this level, it upset me because people... a lot of people are disgusted by what it is [dancehall queen competition].

DFE: Really?

Smith: Yeah! They see how the girls perform... and ...and ...the way they look... and carry themselves, it's like back to where it was ... to dancehall dancing. ... because they just.. they just ride on the "Dancehall Queen" because that was the high note... and they were trying to ... they were trying to sell it.... And so they did by using... but it's a dancehall dancing... the way the girls carry themselves, it's no different from an exotic club. ...it's nothing to it. It's just girls dancing... any way they... I mean...any way they can.. Secondly, I never rivalry with dancehall... my aim was to... I used to have a fashion clash... right, right...that's how I started it. I used to clash with "uptowners"... the Pulse models, the Spartan models... that's who I took on... I never clash dancehall because I was showing dancehall had class. I was trying to tell people dancehall is important... dancehall is part of our culture... we don't have to do certain things to be dancehall. So when they took it back to this... this... I think it's disgusting.... I think they just take the "Queen" off of it, and just call it "Dancehall Competition."

DFE: A dance competition

Smith: because we used to have it before... I remember when I lived in New York, and as a kid, I saw this team once, and it was some Jamaicans and Americans dancehall dance competition and they were on... y'know, hitting them privates on the ground... I've never danced like that... the things that people want to do... like you know I invented the "butterfly"

DFE: Yes, the "butterfly."... So I want to ask you...

Smith: ... and several others [dances]

DFE: Like what?

Smith: They have the mini "tatty" that I recreated for the girl version... and they have a dance that you shake your bottom, but I put a little more class to it, and had the girls doing it... Umm... the "go-go wine," ... and several other dance moves, and some of them just came... they didn't have any names or anything... they just... they just saw me doing it and people would do it.

DFE: Right... So I want to ask you something that you said about the Dancehall competition with the girls not carrying themselves right. Is it because?... What is it? Is it the fashion aspect of it you're thinking?

Smith: It's not only the fashion ... it's how they present themselves

DFE: Okay

Smith: As I said... I mean... you don't need to see.... my anatomy from... from the outside in... and the things they would do and in how they dance... not becoming. ...They see it as okay, but as I say... people compare... because there have been very pretty girls that enter and win... but their presentation... ah tell them run and bump on them vagina... that's just...

DFE: Yeah... yeah... y'know...

Smith: There's nothing more to it than just dressing naked and dancing explicitly.

DFE: Y'know Carlene, there was something I read, and you can clarify this... because I don't really believe that this was true... but the person wrote that she was at Cactus Nightclub and that it was one of the fashion clashes... and that she claimed that you simulated an orgasm on stage.

Smith: What?!

DFE: She claimed that you simulate an orgasm on stage... Was that true?

Smith: That is!... I've never even heard anything of that sort! First of all it's a fashion clash. There's girls coming in and going out. When would I have time for that!

DFE: Yeah... y'see... this is part of what is out there...

Smith: Yeah... and that is okay ...as I said... if, if, if I wasn't that important they wouldn't be talking about me

DFE: What disturbs me is that they didn't ask you the questions

Smith: No, no, no, no ...They don't want the truth. They want to fabricate a story.... and sometimes people do things to sell what they're doing. And... and if you really know me away from that presentation [of dancehall queen], I'm boring... and then you have to spice it up (sighs).

DFE: Yeah... Are you aware that there might be any ... um... anti-brown sentiments, like...

Smith: Oh yeah! I've had people... women... I have women anti-“everything.” I have women come up to me to tell me, I am where I am “because I'm brown.”... and where I'm at “because I'm from uptown.”... I am where I'm at “because of this” and I am where I'm at “because of that.” I've heard that ...back in the day they said I did surgery on all parts of my body. I've never had a plastic surgery in my life. I've had caesarian that that's it. So I've had people, y'know ... they can't accept people for who they are, so there is a problem for something

DFE: So what you say to those people who had a “problem” with, y'know... your complexion.

Smith: I would normally say to them, love you first, then you can love me. If you love yourself, who cares about the rest of the world.... So... no, those things not going to bother me.

DFE: So I want to ask you... What you think about the girls bleaching their skin?

Smith: Oh, I've been... I've been blamed for that... and I've been on campaigns to say, “you can't blame me for being the complexion I am because God gave me this... I did not use something to get it”.... So for somebody else to... for somebody else to, to, to have to do something to change their color... that, that has nothing to do with me. Y'know, if I look one way, and I'm how God made me... you can't blame me for it.

DFE: Hmm mmm...and the girls want to use the hormone pills, the “chicken pills” and stuff, to gain weight, and...

Smith: No, I don't even know what they not doing and what they doing

DFE: Yeah, yeah

Smith: And as I said, it is stemming from your household. This is stemming from how you were brought up...“Yu see ‘ow you damn ‘ead dry!” [See how nappy your hair is]. I've heard people say this to children, and I'm like... why are you telling her that? “See ‘ow you favor yu popa!” [See how you look like your father!] ...That's usually not in a good way... I often intercept that and, and, and get mad... You're building a complex to the child at this age. So what you think... as she gets to certain age, her hair has to change... and if she ever could afford it, the nose would have to change... and her breasts will have to change and her bottom and her everything else ...that she has been... grown to understand... is a fault.

Appendix E

Telephone Interview with Staceyann Chin in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, New York City, USA, Friday, September 28, 2012.

[Informal Jamaican Standard English]

DFE: What's your experience of race and blackness in Jamaica... and in the US?

Chin: Race and blackness... I mean... in a nutshell... I know that in Jamaica... I need qualifiers when I say that I am... black... um and, in America I don't need any qualifiers – I am inextricably black in the US... and though the black people here might understand that I am “mixed” with something, the larger white populous doesn't necessarily “read” me as “mixed;” they read me as “black.” – Ah... in Jamaica, of course, “shade” becomes more important... than... ah – than race itself.

DFE: Right

Chin: I don't think there's much of a difference that is seen between, um...let's see... people who are white, or people who are mixed with like white and Indian, or people who are mixed with white and Chinese - I don't think... those “mixtures” that are not mixed with black are seen as anything, but white.

DFE: Right

Chin: ...Um and in... whereas if you are mixed with black and with one of those races, particularly Chinese or white that you are seen as... you're immediately classified as... middle-class or at least um... the lower upper-class or upper middle-class.

DFE: Right

Chin: Um... so I think, y'know, the term “blackness” in Jamaica...refers directly to the *shade* of brown that you might be...um...and it has to be - the darkest shade of that brown ... y'know, and the black masses usually have it. It um... it almost literally is the interpretation, in terms of color... in Jamaica. So I have to... I have to make qualifiers – I have to say, okay - I'm “black” because I have a black mother or my politics is “black” or I am not white or I have to be read as such... um, whereas in America, when I say I'm black, it encapsulates all of that immediately, y'know the politics of it...um, particularly because I wear my hair in an afro all the time – or used to before my daughter came along.

DFE: Right

Chin: Um...y'know, I - I'm marked as “black” and - perceived as “black” and - in a weird kind of way, I am ... I act - perceived as “black,” even in my own consciousness I...I feel more legitimately “black” in America than I do in Jamaica.

DFE: Hm-mm, hm-mm, so what does it mean to be “black” in America?

Chin: ... Um... I think it's a very loaded... and more so than ever now - it's more loaded because - this kind of um... mixed-raced-ness that has become “chic” – the almost ambiguous nature of mixed-raced-ness... and how um – there's some value to it now because...y-y'know, um ... y'see in the 90s, the word “exotic” could be thrown around with reference to darker-skinned people, now the word “exotic” has to do with almost

any “mix,” and I’ve experienced it, particularly in Brooklyn. Um... e-er, but, I think what it means to be “black” is a – is a whole number of things and it depends on what you look like, where you live, ‘cause what it means to be “black” in say... Athens, Georgia is very different from what it means to be “black” in Brooklyn, New York... Um, in Brooklyn, New York, I think it’s a badge, it’s an honor, it’s a... “I’m a black girl,” y’know... I mean - “Black is Beautiful” Black is - “natural” and “shea butter” and stylish and... um ...y’know, the kind of artistic intellectualism that pervades – the city now... which is very different from say, y’know “I’m a black girl” in ...um...y’know, say... y’know – Canada, San Bernadino or ...even those places... that blackness has to do with um...y-y’know being criminal or um... for being um ...not of value or ... being not as beautiful or being – um... y’know, I think it means something very different, I think ... um...

DFE: Depending on where you are?

Chin: Depending on where you are and depending on whose mouths it comes out of, I think... ‘cause when I’m in Jamaica when particularly people say “black people,” it sounds derogatory, but when another group of people saying it, it sounds ... “oh you know we’re strong, and we’re better than white people” or “we’re smarter than white people” or “we’re cleaner than white people”...um, whereas in- in - in A- America, y’know, it has to do with... - I- I feel like there’s more positive – there’s more of a positive spin – on being “black” or being identified as “black” when you are not in the US... um... a-and y-y’know, with the [American] media - the types of stereotypes that exist - y’know for and um ...around, y’know the ethnicities of black folk, yeah - so it’s as if... it’s al...it’s almost as if, you – you... there are very few places where I want people to... focus on – take note of, and to dwell on my blackness – because that might mean I’m not as safe or I’m perceived in a way that is not positive or it will make my experience more difficult. But as I said the “planet” of Brooklyn is a very different “animal.”

DFE: Hm-mm, hm-mm. Where does being Chinese - fall in - for you?

Chin: Y’know.... I was very decidedly...umm... a black person who was – in... who was -w-w-whose, whose um phenotype was informed by my Chineseness - all my life growing up in Jamaica. I knew I didn’t look like the other black kids I – I - um grew up with – um...So I knew something else was in me and everyone else knew it and it wasn’t a secret, and people referenced it all the time – with regards to my hair or my skin color or how skinny I was or...all those number of things or when speaking particularly about my father, they’ll say “Chinese”... Um about the food, I mean y’know – some of it was...y’know being teased on the school grounds about, y’know... Chinese people eat dogs or the other part of, y’know, it was “I’m pretty because I’m half-Chinese.”

DFE: Hm-mm. Hm-mm

Chin: Come to America, y’know... um. Grew up [in Jamaica] and and I’m here at 24... and there’s a way that – the Chinese identity was not isolated in Jamaica – it was only how it informed my blackness

DFE: Right

Chin: The focus was only on how it [Chineseness] informed my blackness. So I was a black girl with long hair or I was a black girl with curly hair or I was a black girl who

was light-skinned or I was a black girl whose frame looked like um, I had Chinese in me, or I was a black girl whose father was Chinese.

DFE: Hm-mm. Hm-mm

Chin: So...my Chineseness y'know... there wasn't any kind of isolated, legitimized Chineseness in Jamaica. However, when I came to the States... I think the Asian American community sought me out; the Chinese American community sought me out, particularly when I became a voice for nativity(?) issues or um... y'know, intersectionality issues or um... y'know, minority issues – that the Chinese community and the Asian community began to seek me out and ask me about that Chinese – And I had to work really hard to isolate the Chinese experience – and to articulate that Chinese experience – because it's not as if I was raised with my father or raised in a Chinese community or among Chinese people – so there was a way that my Chineseness only has to do with ah... a phenotypical inheritance or a...a- a-a kind of um... how I - how I – how I interpreted myself, how I - I saw myself - how I... how I um, I felt in my own body when you heard people talking about Chinese people. It was never really necessarily directly - directed at me. Outside of my blackness, it was never... I was never - seen as Chinese or spoken about as Chinese – but I had to kind of piece that identity [Chineseness] together because people were really asking questions – that forced me to ask myself to the question, “Am I Chinese?” or “What makes me Chinese?” or “What of me is Chinese?” and therefore, what of it is important in terms of... the articulation of an identity.

DFE: Hm-mm, hm-mm...So how do you treat, ah, identities in slam poetry?

Chin: Well, I mean - I haven't been in slam poetry in...I think more than ten years – I haven't been in any kind of competition, but I think people conflate slam poetry with *performed* poetry... um, because a slam specifically is about – competition... whereas performance poetry is just poetry spoken out – out loud...um...but identity is very important in- in work that is performed and, um... and certainly as a young poet, as a young performance poet coming out of the Nuyorican Poets Café or Basards in New York City, um, my identity politics, y'know... is important – one, because it is – it began at least, or it – it continues to be a – a – a – a... a bull horn for issues of the young... because it is... it's easy to go to the anger in performance poetry because it has to do with shouting, or screaming or stomping, um... a-a-and there's also a kind of immediate gratification - which - is also um, important to the young... where y'know... we get to...y'know, we voice – we need an avenue, an outlet, ah, a kind of... a-a-a place to vent. So, so aside from the art of it, aside from the... poetry of it, aside from the... community of it, aside from the... the kind of political response of performance poetry, ah... it also ...is an um... it also is an um...it also is ah, an accessible um, mode of venting. It's an-it's an accessible avenue to young people – so once you have a pen and you have access to an open mic in your neighborhood, in your city, in your town, you can participate in slam poetry or performance poetry. If you're not used to performance, then you can... – if you're not used to competition, then you can go straight into performing your work. There's an avenue for that. Ah, so ...and because the body that is speaking is “pregnant” and it becomes so much more important – and it isn't just words on a page. Y'know... i-it

becomes very political if I'm on stage screaming "I am Chinese!" with an afro, or "I am Black!" with an afro, y'know - or if a white person gets up on stage and says "nigger,"... then of course, the tension of what they look like, y'know, versus, ah - what they're saying ... I donnu... the added component of ...what the speaker looks like...um- how effective their technique might be - all of that adds to the tension in the room or to the explosion in the room, y'know... So identity plays an important part because um...inherent in the process of performance poetry is the believability - and - your body, your face, your gestures, your presence on stage, your um, the components, y'know - the things that make you off... y'know, whether you're fat or skinny, or tall or short, or Latino or black, or whether you have an immigrant voice, y'know, whether you are a-a-a Palestinian woman - all of that is inserted in what people understand or what people believe of the performance.

DFE: Do you feel free to express those identities in performance poetry?

Chin: I think I do... I mean, um... I certainly... when I was 24 and I started, I needed somewhere to put all of these things pressing against my throat, my arms, my body... um... y'know, I was a recent immigrant who had fled Jamaica for some kind of freedom in America and got here and discovered "race" in a way that I hadn't experienced it before in Jamaica, um and um... I think I needed somewhere - y'know, I-I, my- my cup was running over and I needed somewhere to splash it - and to pour it out and y'know, and I found the walls of the Nuyorican Poets Café, I found the floors of Bar 13, I found y'know, stages all over the United States and Europe y'know, where I could, y'know dash those things against walls, and crack open gourds of y'know, feelings and issues and throw them out. So I think- I think maybe when I started, I didn't have a choice, but to - to-to-to - to kind of raise those things to vent - and as I grew - but as I'd grown older, particularly because this career that I have created or that has been created for me and that I'd-I'd been lucky enough to experience...um...it's given me a voice, an avenue, so even on my Facebook page there's tons of people who read and respond to my-my-my comments because um...y'know, when I go to speak, y'know, people show up to come and hear me, um... y'know and um... and I've been lucky enough to - to have been given a space to say what it is I choose. So there's a way that - um... my own life has provided fodder for whatever it is that's going on - because on what I'm writing now - I just had a baby...um - she -she-she's eight months old and a very difficult pregnancy and a wrote for the Huff Post for that - and there's a way that my own life - whatever is happening in my own life, whether I am, y'know, kind of going through a break-up or...um... I'm falling in love or ...I'm having a baby or...I'm traveling to South Africa and meeting women who are talking about their own experiences of sexual assault and - survival. Like there's a way that...I - I - I - I - it's a combination of my taking the space and people making the space for whatever it is that I...ah... whatever it is that I interpret - whatever sense I make of my life, I pour that into whatever work I'm doing. ... Ah, y'know, memoir writing ...it seems i-i-is not only my passion, but um, it's what is expected of me, and um... and I - I - I enjoy it tremendously and so I just kind of write whatever it is that I feel like writing - like I think I have a poem called um, "Tweet This Mother Fucker" in um... I - I was on twitter and a guy just tweeted something stupid at

me, man – and he was like, “you belong in my kitchen, washing my,” whatever, and he goes “write a poem about that!” – and so I write – I wrote a poem about that – and that has become one of the most well-known, one of the most referenced poem in my recent years – So there’s a way that my own life, by responding with poetry, there’s a way that the work.... th-th-that the work come out, the issues come out, your identities come out, because - you can’t help but be a body in America... um, you can’t help but be a... you can’t help but be a - be a political creature if you are moving through the world in many spaces if you playing your identities – if you say out loud, “I am black” “I am a lesbian” or “I am a writer” or “I am a thinker” or “I am an activist” or “I am a feminist.” If you respond...if you just write about the responses then the work becomes rich, and y’know full of identity issues and full of um, comments about identity and a kind of rumination around identities.

DFE: Hm-mm, hm-mm. So I think you had said this once earlier, like ah... have you come across particular stereotypes or caricatures about the Caribbean, and -?

Chin: Oh absolutely!

DFE: Yes

Chin: I can’t tell you how many times I’ve been asked, how is it that I speak English so good – and I make a point of saying that I speak English as *well* as I do because I learned it in school, so – um... but but um, y’know, people ask me all the time, y’know um... I donnu... people...I -I’ve been asked um, what did I feel like when I first saw electricity, which is y’know- very, very, y’know - one of the worst ones. I had a woman come up to me on stage and said, “My God!” y’know ... “your-your- your um, your face, your whole being, your accent - you’re extraterrestrial!”

DFE: Hm-mm (laughs)

Chin: Y’know, um.. so there’s that – and then there’s the idea that um... that I’m a political creature because I’m Jamaican because we’re all loud ... and, y’know...and we speak y’know ... and we’re always ready for a fight – that makes me... that makes me the political creature I am as opposed to like, Oh, y’know that’s just who I am because that’s my personality. Um, the-the one that comes up the most is um, that I don’t look like a Jamaican because I think we identify that whole – that whole um... that whole um - color-based identity where most Jamaicans should be dark-skinned and so they don’t imagine that there are Jamaicans who look like me.... and by extension, most Jamaicans are uneducated or um, we speak only the um, the Jamaican language that exists there, and so English sound strange coming from a Jamaican mouth...ah, our standard English sounds strange...um... what else? Ah – oh yes, this one I get all the time particularly because I like to perform bare-footed because my hair is y’know, kind of like - wildly long – people expect me to be smoking weed – In performance, I’ve even had friends who are lawyers be asking me like, “So, where do I get weed?” and I’m like “No, not really. I don’t even know where I can find that” - So those are some of the basic stereotypes – I’ve been asked um, people call me a dreadlock, like a Rastafarian because I am – I have natural hair – I think they conflate the two – they mix the two all the time, um – I donnu, I mean, there’s a whole bunch.

DFE: Yes, I know.

Chin: and they imagine that there's nowhere in Jamaica that you are able to say that you are gay because there's outcry against homophobia in Jamaica, y'know because our village pockets are so tiny, um... they don't make it on the maps and they don't make it in the competitions, so people don't know that there are actual places in Jamaica, inside y'know, the um, the places where money can buffer... ah...they don't- they don't imagine that there are places there that you can be gay, um... I donnu, there's a whole bunch of, I mean, stereotypes, y'know...

DFE: So one last question, so how do you address the stereotypes and caricatures in performance? Do you have a special thing that you do?

Chin: um, I don't know if I have a special thing that I do, but I know that um, depending on the audience I'm talking to - I try to at least raise, at least in the introduction of my performance - I raise the issue of stereotypes by calling out stereotypes about them.

DFE: Yes.

Chin: So if I'm in New England, y'know, um - I would probably say "Oh, all of you guys are like rotten wealthy and you, y'know, y'know, y'know - you have this money up here and all of you have property on the beach and y'know." And-and-and many of them would say, "Oh, of course, sure." Or if I'm in, y'know, and different places, y'know - or if I'm in an African American, um, community, I will start talking about like, "So every boy here play basketball, right?... so - When you call out people - when you call out the stereotypes and begin the conversation about what people think of-of those people, then I think that they are probably more receptive about hearing that they need to seriously think about people who are actual stereotypes as well- So I mean I try always to um to not just speak my own stories but speak the stories of the people to whom I'm speaking to so it becomes a conversation even if it is a monologue.

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Vita

Denise Amy-Rose Forbes-Erickson was born in Cross Roads, St. Andrew, Jamaica in 1969. After graduating from the Immaculate Conception High School in Kingston, Jamaica in 1986, she attended the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts in Kingston, Jamaica, where she graduated with a Diploma in Sculpture, specializing in welded steel in 1990. Upon completion, she worked as an artist and theatre designer, participating in several exhibitions and theatre productions with the Little Theatre Movement National Pantomime Company of Jamaica. In 1996, she attended Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London, England, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts (Hons.) in Theatre Design in 1999. Throughout and after college, she continued to design theatre productions and participate in exhibitions in England, the Czech Republic, Caribbean, Canada and the USA. In 2004, she attended the University of Kentucky, where she received a Master of Arts in Theatre with a design concentration in spring 2006. She began doctoral studies in Performance as Public Practice in the Department of Theatre and Dance, University of Texas at Austin in fall 2006.

Email: forbes.erickson.d.a@utexas.edu

This dissertation was typed by the author.