NARRATIVES OF CONSCIOUSNESS, DIASPORA AND RESISTANCE: BLACK EUROPEAN WOMEN AND NON-EUROPEAN BLACK WOMEN IN BERLIN, GERMANY

By Jessica Nogueira Varela

Submitted to

Central European University

Department of Gender Studies

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Erasmus Mundus Master´s Degree in Women´s and Gender Studies (GEMMA)

Main Supervisor: Dr. Nadia Jones-Gailani (Central European University)

Second Supervisor: Dr hab. Dorota Golańska (University of Łódź)

Budapest, Hungary

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Declaration:

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

I further declare that the following word count for this thesis is accurate:

- Body of the thesis (all chapters excluding footnotes, references, etc): 39.924

- Entire manuscript: 44.290

Signed: Jessica Nogueira Varela

Abstract:

Through the analytical lenses of Black Feminist Epistemologies, Post-Colonial Theory and Decolonial Theory, my aim in this research is to unpack and reflect upon the different standpoints of black women (European and non-European) who live in Berlin. Since 2019, I have visited the city taking part in events organized *by* and *for* the Black European community, as well as for the general public. To do this research in Berlin, I am utilizing qualitative research methods, namely, field visits, autoethnography, participant observation, field journals and oral history. Through a reinterpretation of W.E.B Du Bois' "double-consciousness" I shall analyze the intersections between black European women and non-European black women understanding how both groups are positioned within Berlin's logic of "multiculturalism". I want to outline and analyze which mechanisms may offer advantages or disadvantages to these two groups of black women depending on which differences (class, citizenship rights, sexuality, gender, age, nationality, languages spoken, familial relations, migration history and religion) may or may not intersect under given circumstances. I understand the concept of consciousness serves as a metaphor for understanding the political and collective implications of being gendered and racialized as Black women in the West. I argue that the othering caused by racism and sexism affects Black women differently than it would affect other groups, especially non-European Black women migrants that may have more limited access to networks of support. I conclude that Black women's self-definition is the first step in reclaiming consciousness against different forms of discrimination, and that Black women (European and non-European) create a variety of strategies to respond to how they are positioned. Finally, through this research I wish to contribute to the ongoing dialogue between Black Feminism and Feminist approaches to Decolonial and Post-Colonial theories. I hope to add to the growing body of scholarship that engages with creative strategies of resistance designed by Black women, mapping their narratives of counter discourse.

Key words: Black women, double-consciousness, autoethnography, Berlin, Black Europeans, Oral history narratives, migration

Resumen:

A través de las lentes analíticas de las epistemologías feministas negras, la teoría poscolonial y la teoría descolonial, mi objetivo en esta investigación es desempaquetar y reflexionar sobre los diferentes puntos de vista de las mujeres negras (europeas y no europeas) que viven en Berlín. Desde 2019, he visitado la ciudad participando en eventos organizados por y para la comunidad negra europea, así como para el público en general. Para hacer esta investigación en Berlín, estoy utilizando métodos de investigación cualitativa, a saber, visitas de campo, autoetnografía, observación participante, diarios de campo e historia oral. Mediante una reinterpretación de la "doble conciencia" de W.E.B Du Bois, analizaré las intersecciones entre las mujeres negras europeas y las mujeres negras no europeas, entendiendo cómo ambos grupos se posicionan dentro de la lógica del "multiculturalismo" de Berlín. Quiero esbozar y analizar qué mecanismos pueden ofrecer ventajas o desventajas a estos dos grupos de mujeres negras dependiendo de qué diferencias (clase, derechos de ciudadanía, sexualidad, género, edad, nacionalidad, idiomas hablados, relaciones familiares, historia migratoria y religión) se conectan en determinadas circunstancias. Entiendo que el concepto de conciencia sirve como una metáfora para comprender las implicaciones políticas y colectivas de ser racializadas por el género como en el caso de las mujeres negras en Occidente. Sostengo que la diferencia causada por el racismo y el sexismo afecta a las mujeres negras de manera diferente de lo que afectaría a otros grupos, especialmente a las mujeres negras no europeas migrantes que pueden tener un acceso más limitado a redes de apoyo. Concluyo que la autodefinición de las mujeres negras (europeas y no europeas) es el primer paso para reclamar la consciencia contra diferentes opresiones y que las mujeres negras europeas y no europeas crean una variedad de estrategias

para responder a como son posicionadas delante diferentes estructuras. Finalmente, a través de esta investigación, deseo contribuir al diálogo continuo entre el feminismo negro y los enfoques feministas de las teorías descoloniales y poscoloniales. Espero agregar al creciente cuerpo de estudios que se involucra con estrategias creativas de resistencia diseñadas por mujeres negras, mapeando sus narrativas de contra discurso.

Palabras clave: mujeres negras, doble conciencia, autoetnografía, Berlín, europeos negros, narraciones de historia oral, migración

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I would like to start by thanking the Lord for being here, alive and breathing and able to do this work. I thank my mother, Maria Alvilmar Nogueira Varela, my grandmother Maria Vilma Nogueira Varela, and my younger (only) sister, Julia Barbosa Varela for the feminist lessons they constantly teach me and for the sacrifices that were made so that I could be. I am grateful for all of the Black women I have met throughout my path, especially those who are part of this work and who offered me their time and support. I am grateful beyond what I can express for the opportunity to earn this degree and for the growth writing this thesis is giving me. In a very strong sense this could not have been dreamt of had I not been contemplated by the GEMMA (Erasmus Mundus Master Degree in Women's and Gender Studies) consortium and the European Commission with a scholarship. From the GEMMA consortium, I would like to thank Professor Adelina Sánchez Espinosa and Omayra Herrero Soto from the University of Granada, and of course the wonderful Professor Jasmina Lukic, CEU Coordinator for GEMMA. On that note, I am also grateful for the institutional support I found at my home and partner university, Central European University and University of Lodz respectively. I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Nadia Jones-Gailani, my supervisor at the Central European University, for her constant support, insightful feedback and caring words in times of need and in times of joy. Prof. Dr. Nadia Jones-Gailani and her vision strengthen my belief in the fight for an anti-colonial and anti-racist feminist project that is encompassing of solidarity and change, inspiring me to do the best work I can; I am blessed to be able to work under her guidance and to have taken "Postcolonial Theory" and "Feminist Methods" with her where I was able to first develop the questions for this research and where critical thinking could meet the possibilities of praxis. I would also like to thank Prof. Dr. Hab. Dorota Golańska, my supervisor from the University of Lodz, for her kindness and support throughout this process. I am fond of the memories of the days I spent in Lodz, doing the readings for the "War and Imperialism", the class Prod. Dr. Hab.

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Time Matters

The completion of this work
is as a wave crashing then,
another one comes, and the Lord
knows
there is no time, the waves come
and go and they culminate
in a tide
crashing, roll, rolling and gently
sweeping: chase the infinite.

The completion of this work is
proof of meeting wonderful
people from other timelines
who, like the ocean, come and go
and might return
as the tides crash
the unknown.

Eternally sweeping time,
it comes no
sooner than waves go,
if this is true
this work is proof
I have got more souls

than one.

I dedicate this work to my mother, Maria Alvilmar Nogueira Varela.

Te dedico este trabalho mãe, Maria Alvilmar Nogueira Varela.

I. Chapter One: Introduction

On October 22, 2019, Aminata Touré, gave an interview to the German TV channel N-TV, where among other topics she advocated for more policies designed to fight racism and to protect migrants. "We have a big problem with racism" said Touré who is the first black woman elected deputy speaker for the state of Schleswig-Holstein, Germany[1]. In a different interview, this time for DW Germany, Touré's concerns are justified through her personal background. The DW article explains that Touré acquired German citizenship at the age of 12 and as the daughter of parents who fled from Mali "after the 1991 coup" Touré "said she would like to do more for black people in Germany, as well as for people whose parents were born abroad, as her parents were"[2] (DW Germany, 2019).

Echoing Touré's concerns over racism, citizenship and migration, a growing body of scholarship work has been developed to analyze, understand and challenge the idea of a "colorblind" and racially homogenous Europe "largely untouched by the [racial] ideology it exported all over the world" (El- Tayeb 2011, vx). This body of scholarship, emerging from the humanities and social sciences, diverges from the position that the analytical framework provided by the concept of Race does not exist and cannot work outside of the U.S.

In the European context, different authors and activists have argued over the need to unveil Europe as a continent that not only *created* "fictive ethnicity", but that on a material/structural basis, *reads* racial relations as well as *produces* and *re-produces* them within and outside its territories (Balibar, 1994). Considering the specific standpoint(s) of black European women, for instance, authors such as May Opitz et. al (1986), Philomena Essed (1991), Grada Kilomba (2019), Fatima El-Tayeb (2011), and Sarah Lennox (2016) have contested the idea of a linear

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[1] My Translation of the Interview heading. Original says "Wir haben ein großes Rassismus-Problem". Available at <https://www.n-tv.de/politik/Wir-haben-ein-grosses-Rassismus-Problem-article21343172.html>
[2] Full interview can be found at: < https://www.dw.com/en/new-role-for-aminata-toure-german-green-with-african-roots/a-50202515>

and fixed narrative of European history, economy, culture and identity. Through the standpoint of Black Women's experiences and activism(s) the authors aforementioned situate Europe in dialogue with transnational contexts that incorporate different theories and analytical tools, providing a distinct outlook on the history of Europe. In a similar vein, my aim in this research is to place Black women's experiences and knowledge at the center of my inquiries. To do that I have utilized Oral history methods focusing on how Black women narrate their lives navigating the city of Berlin.

By analyzing the intersections between black European women and non-European black women I want to understand the ways in which both groups are positioned within the idea(l) of German nationhood and Berlin's logic of "colorblindness" and "multiculturalism" (El-Tayeb 2011, xv; Bodirsky 2012, 455). The German ideal can be expressed for example through the role model type of citizen, namely the so-called "German-Germans" who would correspond the nation that Germany wants to be as one of the people I interviewed put it.

I want to outline and analyze which mechanisms may offer advantages or disadvantages to these two groups of black women depending on which differences (class, sexuality, gender, age, nationality and religion) may or may not intersect under given circumstances. I argue that those intersections *can* and *do* produce different realities that affect black women's lives differently. My focus is on reflecting, analyzing, comparing and contrasting the standpoints of black women who live in Berlin and to do that I am deploying a reframing of the concept of *"double-consciousness"* as conceived by African-American scholar William E. B. Du Bois (2007).

In that sense, I have designed a particular combination of scholarly literature and qualitative methodology that can afford to answer questions of diaspora, identity and narrative my research demands. To do that I have deployed Oral history research methods namely, oral history interviews, autoethography, field visits, participant observation, field notes and field journals.

Over the course of about one year I have been to Berlin and attended different events organized by the Black community. More importantly, I interviewed thirteen Black women (non-European and European) to analyze how similar or distinct their self-definition strategies might be responding against "The Coloniality of Power/Gender" (Quijano 2000; Lugones 2008). I am applying the critical and analytical lenses of Black Feminism in addition to Decolonial and Postcolonial Theory to understand and unpack the significant differences among Black women in terms of belonging and consciousness in the Diaspora. I have also delved into my own positionality in the field and how it has affected my work.

Overall, with this research I hope to contribute to the ongoing dialogue existent within Black Feminism, Qualitative Methods and Decolonial/Postcolonial theories. I hope to contribute to a growing body of scholarship that engages with creative strategies of resistance designed by Black women focusing on their narratives of Diaspora as counter-discourse.

Leading questions:

Some of the central issues to this research can be found below. In short, I would like to a-) center Black women's diasporic consciousness formed by European and non-European Black women's political self-definition as the standpoint through which to reflect on the different realities produced by distinct structures of power. From their standpoints I hope to uncover how certain differences of class, language and citizenship become more or less significant as they are construed and reproduced, how these differences may intersect and what distinct effects they have, and how black women (European and non-European) respond differently according to their positionality. Through this work I want to understand how Black women's diasporic consciousness both engages with and challenges the "Coloniality of Power/Gender" embedded in notions of national identity (Quijano, 2000; Lugones 2008). In other words, I want to reflect upon how they navigate their lives and their identity in the city of Berlin, analyzing how self-

identification/self-definition can become a political form of resistance against power structures organized around gender, race, nationality, sexuality and class. Therefore, breaking down how Black women's diasporic consciousness disrupt ideas of "integration" and "multiculturalism" that Berlin and Germany represent in comparison to other countries.

Finally, by asking these questions my interest is placing black women's standpoints as complex and dynamic subjectivities that *can* and *do* destabilize the idea(l) of German "welcome culture" as well as that of "open[ness] […] towards diversity" that can be observed in Berlin (El-Tayeb, 2011 xv; Jäckle, König 2017, 233; Bodirsky 2012, 455). I argue that Black women's diasporic consciousness not only reframes and actualizes Du Bois' (2007) concept, but also pushes for a more nuanced understanding of migration and belonging along differences.

I would like to incorporate that complex and, at times, contradictory body of intellectual work for two reasons. First, I want to combine their perspectives as a way to self-define as a black woman from the Global South doing research in/for Western academia; especially considering that my fieldwork is in Germany. Second, those authors have, at times, provided distinct and useful concepts and categories that add to the complexity of the experience of self identification and representation that are pivotal in unveiling the production of diasporic identities. In the specific case of Black Feminism, some of the questions that it poses are critical in understanding what being black means, as well as inquiring the validity of what makes black women's experiences unique, yet connectable across countries which is aligned with Du Bois' (2007) *"double-consciousness"* to be further explained soon. It is important, then, that I make my intentions within the research as visible as possible. Thus, I must explain what is meant by terms such as "race" and how it relates to being "black"; I will as well as explicate whom I am referring to as I write "European black women" and "non-European black women" within the context of this research.

Blackness and Gender within hierarchical relations

Much has been debated over the usefulness of the category of "race" within the humanities and social sciences. It has been argued by Charles Hirschman in the article "The Origins and Demise of the Concept of Race" (2004), that race is a "broken concept" with no "valid rationale" (Hirschman 2004, 410). Despite acknowledging that "racial identities, classifications, and prejudices remain part of the fabric of many modern societies", to which I would add *all* instead of *many*, Hirschman claims that due to its inherent arbitrariness and elusive nature, "race" should be abandoned in the social sciences/humanities, being replaced by the category of ethnicity (Hirschman 2004, 386). Contesting this approach, Fatima El-Tayeb understands "ethnicity" as a category that comes with its own "loaded and ambiguous" problems, especially in the European context (El-Tayeb 2011, xii). She justifies that "'ethnic', rather than replacing […] 'race' with a neutral, precise, and nonbinary terminology of largely objectifiable regional difference […] is the outcome of hierarchized labor structures that not merely use, but produce 'ethnic' difference" (El-Tayeb 2011, xii). In this sense, it is important to briefly historicize how distinct the conceptions categories of race, culture and Blackness can be.

In the book "Showing Our Colors […]" Optiz et. al demonstrate that "the concept of 'race' can be traced to the thirteenth century and the region of the Romance languages. Not until the sixteenth century, however, did it become customary to use it to describe privileged membership and descent" (Opitz et. al. 1992, 9). A similar conclusion and development also investigated by Walter Mignolo in "RACISM AND COLONIALITY" (2018) which argues that the establishment of racial and sexual hierarchies (creating lesser-than-human categories) is directly linked to the violent European processes of colonization initiated in the Americas. That hierarchical construction mutates in the eighteenth and nineteenth century which have settled the organization of human beings into a-) different races and b-) sexual difference not only ascribing certain characteristics to them on the grounds of biological differences, but

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implicating the superiority or inferiority of one race over the other. Currently, such approaches to the issue of race and gender have been reformulated and scientific knowledge does not overtly uphold those divisions any longer and yet, both continue to be invoked in numerous discourses as a way to refer to different groups of people and their theoretically immutable cultural/biological background (Wright 2004, 1).

As put forth by Optiz et. al "whenever 'race' is invoked it is understood as a relational concept that consists of distinctions drawn between one's own group (in group) and another group (out group)" which means that "characteristics such as skin color, behavior, religion, and so on are interpreted as 'racial characteristics'" (Opitz et. al. 1992, 9) Henceforth, the usefulness of the category of 'race' comes from the historical context(s) in which it flourished as a way to explain, naturalize, and reproduce material and symbolic inequalities among different peoples. Likewise, gender has been particularly constructed in the West around ideas of sexual difference, wherein the male identified body is taken not only to be the superior, one, as well as the universal, "normal" human body. In that sense, "woman" is constructed in difference and in relation to "man". As pointed by Maria Lugones in "The Coloniality of Gender" (2008) the female identified body is understood as inferior in relation to the human "male" body in Western patriarchal and heteronormative societies. Lugones writes that "understanding these features of the organization of gender in the modern/colonial gender system – the biological dimorphism, the patriarchal and heterosexual organizations of relations – is crucial to an understanding of the differential gender arrangements along 'racial' lines. Biological dimorphism, heterosexual patriarchy are all characteristic of […] the colonial/modern organization of gender" (Lugones 2008, 2).

Race and gender can be understood here as social constructs that structured and still structure societies through several institutions, such as the church, the police, and the nation-state. These

institutions have historically, symbolically and materially (re)produced power dynamics of discrimination privileging and granting rights on the basis of superiority to some, on the one hand, and oppressing, repressing and excluding others, on the other. However, both gender and race can also be an important place from which to speak to power, becoming useful as forms of political identification under which groups may find creative ways of self-organizing in order to address those structures.

I find it important to add with regards to Blackness that one could say simply that Black people are those who have Black African ancestry and whose skin and facial features are identifiable as such. However, "Blackness" emerges as a complex identity marker intrinsically oscillating back and forth with constellations of location, gender, language, religion, nation-state and overall, culture. In the next sub-section I will briefly describe whom I mean by defining the groups of non-European Black women and European Black women in Berlin whose narratives are central for this research.

Non-European Black Women and European Black women?

I will now argue why it is important to understand these two main groups namely European and non-European in the context of this research, since there is also a small third intersecting one residing in between them. I would like to also highlight that during the fieldwork Black women's self-identification was the chief denominator of the grouping process. In other words, the black women who identify themselves as pertaining to one group or the other were considered as such.

The first group is that of European Black women: those who born on European countries that were given European citizenship rights on the merit of birth and those who have acquired it at an early age. For example, Black European women such as Aminata Touré would belong to this group. Of course, being born on European soil does not exclusively mean Western Europe,

Black women born on Central Europe, in the cases of Austria or Slovakia for instance as well as on what can be considered as Eastern Europe, would also enter this group.

Fatima El-Tayeb in "European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe" (2011) defines "the resulting model of black European identity" as "one that reacted to the process of racialization itself rather than aiming at producing a legitimate racial or national identity, challenging the very idea of normative, exclusive identity formations" (El-Tayeb 2011, xliii). Agreeing with her proposition it is not of my interest throughout the descriptive part of this research to explicitly mark black women's "racial or national identit[ies]". With regards to racial identification one noteworthy aspect is that I do not mark my interviewees as biracial black women, dark skinned, light skinned or mixed race, unless, of course, the interviewee may have chosen to define herself as belonging to any of the categories aforementioned. In the case of national identification, returning to Touré's experiences for instance, she could choose to describe herself as Mali-German, Black German, Afro-German or simply as German. In her specific case, during the interview with DW Germany she identifies as Afro-German and that is how she would be referred to over the course of the research.

Then comes the group of non-European black women which would consist of black women who were born outside of European territory, in countries such as Haiti, Brazil, Kenya, Colombia, Ecuador, Canada, The United States, Morocco, etc, who have migrated to Europe for different reasons. The concept of "migrant" here is understood as put forward by Khalid Koser in the book "International Migration: A very Short Introduction" (2007). As Koser explains "[t]he United Nations (UN) defines as an international migrant a person who stays outside their usual country of residence for at least one year" (Koser 2007, 4).

It is also important to stress that in terms of rights of entry, residence and mobility within European states part of the Schengen Borders Code/Agreement, migrants fall under the

umbrella term of "third-country national". According to the "European Commission" website under the section of "Migration and Home Affairs" the classification for third country national is that of any given person "who is not a citizen of the European Union within the meaning of Art. 20(1) of TFEU and who is not a person enjoying the European Union right to free movement"[3]. Finally, the third group that lies in the intersection of the two previous ones is that of black women who either uphold dual-citizenship status or who have acquired European citizenship rights, but for different reasons may choose not to identify themselves as European. One of the interviewees I conversed with, Regiane, belongs to this third group since she has dual-citizenship, Brazilian and Italian, but she choose to identify as Brazilian.

In sum, there are two main groups of Black women I have interviewed and a smaller third one that intersects both European and non-European. In this sense, my concern has been with understanding why each interviewee has identified as they did and how they may have constructed that identity. In order to read the rich diversity of narratives my interviewees presented I have decided to frame them around the concept of consciousness. In the next chapter, I will lay out some of my theoretical concerns, including the ones related to consciousness, and justify why I have chosen to draw from the scholar literature I am engaging with, namely Black Feminism, Decolonial and Postcolonial Theory. To do that I will go over the current debates around Blackness, gender, nation and identity wherein I shall finish by contextualizing some of the history of Black Europeans and the problems around ideas of insider-ness and outsider-ness that constructs the Black European strategies of resistance, where Black women have been at the fore-front.

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[3] Found in: < https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/glossary_search/third-country-national_en>

II.   Chapter Two: Standpoint or a Problem of Consciousness

To initially support the theoretical foundation of this research I am going to be summarizing some important aspects of Feminist Standpoint theory which contribute to my approach to consciousness. Thereof, it becomes an important tool in the making of this research as it prioritizes knowledge from the perspective of non-hegemonic knowledge(s). My leading argument is that Feminist Standpoint theory is not an outdated debate and that it instead proves quite useful in this research as I build upon the foundation that feminists of color have created by critically assessing their own standpoint.

Feminist Standpoint Theory composes a rather productive and controversial epistemology and methodology that aims to identify how, why, where and by and for whom knowledge is produced. Some of its main currents question the objectivity of the scientific method as a neutral, natural and positivist way to produce knowledge. Furthermore, as Sandra Harding posits Feminist Standpoint theory and "its intellectual and political force strikes not just at some fusty, now archaic, epistemological dogmas, but rather at some of the still most deeply held assumptions of modem Western societies […] it refuses to settle for only a tolerable ontological, epistemological, methodological, and ethical relativism" (2009, 194). This is a broad definition of what Standpoint Theory is which calls for slightly more specific examples of what it does, and answering to that I shall focus on an angle of great interest for my research: a Marxist one.

To look at Marxist theory is to deploy a classic set of analytical tools, e.g. dialects, historical materialism, and class-consciousness. To do understand a Feminist Standpoint approach to that I will briefly refer to Nancy M. Hartsock (1997) as I find her work relevant in terms of all the tools mentioned. Hartsock (1997) explains that when she first started articulating this Marxist angle she wanted to "translate the notion of the proletariat (including its privileged historical mission) into feminist terms […] like the lives of proletarians in Marxist theory, women's lives

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in Western capitalist societies also contained possibilities for developing a critique of domination" (1997, 368). That initial translation had its share of problems as seen in "Comment on Hekman's 'Truth and Method'" (1997) where Hartsock proceeds to analyze and review her previous position on its possibilities and limitations.

In this work I do not rely on a framework that places Black women within "a privileged historical mission", but still I find that Black women have historically been active and vocal about their Standpoint, Black women's voices being heard is something that matters; in that sense my work purposefully prioritizes Black women's narratives as a point of departure for its reflections (Hartsock 1997, 368). I may move from one of the Marxist understandings of consciousness when considering that. However, I believe that one of the most fruitful discussions such Marxist translation can uphold is the leverage of consciousness, that is, the processes a person part of given group needs to go through in order to acquire collective consciousness.

In Marxist formulations simply belonging to the proletariat does not necessarily equate into acknowledging such belonging. It is how this possible connection (which could generate consciousness) is kept both in *front of* and *outside* the immediate view of the proletariat that makes it contradictory and interesting, hence the necessity of transcending such short-sightedness through collective consciousness. If on the one hand, Marxist analyses alone are not sufficient for explaining the contradictions of world and neither was Hartsock's (1997) initial translation of it into Feminist Theory (one problem being that it disregarded the possible differences amongst different groups of women or intra-group differences), then is it enough to craft a framework that considers intra-group differences, culture and colonialism? And if, the answer is affirmative, then, how does it affect the concept of consciousness? These two questions I am posing right now will productively accompany me throughout the body of this

work which is but an attempt of tackling that problem of difference and consciousness through the narratives of Black women in Berlin.

To address those questions I will lay out a re-reading and reinterpreting of Du Bois' "*double-consciousness"* (2007) placing it not as *universal*, but as a situated form of knowledge that can be actualized if understood as such. In that sense I argue that *consciousness* works as a construct that is individual *and* social, dynamic although apparently static, informed by time, space, race, gender, sexuality, class and language. I am reframing a perception of consciousness that embraces some of the main tenants from Standpoint Theory (embodied experiences, narrative and memory) as intimately connected. Through a close look at Black women's self-identification/self-definition from a Black Feminist and Decolonial standpoint I also hope to contribute to a better "understanding [of] how practices of remembrance help with the working through of historical injustice" (Rigney 2018, 369).

Du Bois and "double-consciousness"

To understand the problem of *consciousness*, I will now briefly detail Du Bois' "The Souls of the Black Folk" (2007) considering that it was conceived in a certain space (U.S) at a particular time (early 20th century). My main argument is that to actualize his concept it is crucial to dislocate it from its specificities, therefore, as a metaphor *double-consciousness* can be re-worked and reclaimed.

As pointed out by Brent Hayes Edwards in the introduction of "The Souls of the Black Folk" "by the time [it] was published, Du Bois had already achieved recognition as one of the leading lights of the African American intellectual elite at the turn of the century" (2007, ix). This implies that Du Bois' intellectual position was already placed within a series of concerns he had addressed and others he wanted to address as he carefully put together what would eventually become the book. After collecting and reworking a series of previously published

essays, adding new material as well, in 1903 Du Bois first published "The Souls of the Black Folk" (2007) which became one of the most important texts in critical race studies and sociology partly thanks to its convincing rhetoric and crafted arguments.

In the fourth chapter of "The Souls of the Black Folk" (2007), African-American activist and scholar W.E.B. Du Bois, describes the people he met while teaching in Tennessee – which he identifies as a tiny community. He wrote "I have called my tiny community a world, and so its isolation made it; and yet there was among us but a half- awakened common consciousness, sprung from common joy and grief, at burial, birth, or wedding; from a common hardship in poverty, poor land, and low wages; and, above all, from the sight of the Veil that hung between us and Opportunity" (2007, 50). His description is concerned with explicating where their shared experiences came from. The adversities they had in common, Du Bois (2007, 50) argues, allowed him and the Black community he had encountered to build a (half) consciousness that could be experienced in different occasions through emotions such as joy and grief. Most importantly, however, is Du Bois assessment in the first chapter of the "*Veil*": a symbolic and powerful metaphor for the process of dehumanization that racism entails (2007).

Du Bois' "*double-consciousness*" is about developing "a peculiar sensation" a "sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (Du Bois 2007, 8). He goes on to argue that "*double-consciousness*" is a perception of the self as *selves* being stuck in a paradox "of two-ness" (2007, 8). At the same time "an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (Du Bois 2007, 8). In this sense, Du Bois' "*double-consciousness*" is an exceptionally valuable framework to analyze social reality which is inherently contradictory as it is split and divided by the "*color-line*" – to quote him on the second chapter "Of the Dawn

of Freedom" (2007, 15). But, while relevant Du Bois' concepts and his intellectual trajectory are still situated in the specific setting of late 19th and early 20th century United States, he has been brought to an iconic status of leadership which has also been critically investigated by African-American women in particular.

Black women and Du Bois

One important thing in contextualizing Du Bois is his association as one of the key figures in Pan-Africanism. This is akin to a situation that left a strong impression on me when I was doing fieldwork, and it made me rethink how to approach Du Bois' legacies. On my way to one of the events organized by the Black community I noticed a plaque that paid homage to Du Bois and indicated that he had lived there while studying in Berlin. I did not plan to pass through that area, as I had not planned to go on foot in the first place, but I thought that it was a very symbolic thing to see by accident on my way to an event that could be seen as the continuity of Du Bois' work, so I shared that with some Afro-Brazilian women I encountered at the place.

As I finished saying what had happened one of the Black women present, a young person from the Northeast of Brazil like me, began challenging Du Bois. She firmly stated that as one of the key figures in Pan-Africanism he represented the kind of approach to Blackness that was not only heteronormative, but actively sought to undermine the possibility of Black love to be non-straight. She said that from her standpoint as a Black woman who was *sapatão* (same-sex loving women, a Brazilian term that will be further explained in another chapter) she had seen that there were serious limitations to Pan-Africanism. Therefore she was particularly cautious around this type of consciousness which would claim that Black women were sisters on the one hand, but metamorphose on the other whenever she self-defined as a *sapatão*: "then things would change" she said. In my reading that young Afro-Brazilian woman summarized her position through the following sentence: "not every Black is my brother".

The critique she brought up was crucial for my understanding of the nuanced legacies that we are dealing with once Black consciousness is discussed. To revisit Du Bois' legacies in 2020 it is necessary to thoroughly recognize its multiple facets, meanings and applications not only during the 19th century. It is necessary to reflect upon how that relates to what happens now. I was pointed to an enormous issue grounded on the lived experiences that that Afro-Brazilian young woman had while dealing with the Black community in Brazil and in Germany. Her narrative drew attention to a significant problem within the Black community, namely its sexual politics. To identify as a same-sex-loving person inside the Black community and to push for that as an integral part of one's subjectivity is to be discriminated against through different intersections. However, this is not an issue located only in Germany or Brazil, alternatively Black sexual politics are part of the global heteronormative structures Maria Lugones (2000) addresses through the "Coloniality of Gender". From a Black Feminist and Decolonial perspective it would be naïve to overlook how Du Bois's work and positionality are embedded in that. For the last part of this sub-topic I will briefly examine Du Bois' portrayal and treatment of African-American women.

Du Bois was a champion for the rights of women in the quest for suffrage in 19th century United States, as was Frederick Douglass whose activism along suffragettes is well documented by Angela Davis in "Women, Race and Class" (1983). By affirming that Du Bois and Douglass were championing for the rights of women is to situate their activism from the 19th century standpoint of what advocacy for women's rights is. That is what some would deem "first wave" feminism, and this is no small feature. Betsy Lucal posits that "had Du Bois ignored women in his work, he would not have been exceptional. The fact that women figure prominently in so much of his work sets him apart from his contemporaries, and, indeed, from not a small number of sociologists today" (2010, 263). As Reiland Rabaka (2010) and Betsy Lucal (2010) note, Du Bois' legacies also extend to his attention to the role of Black women within the African-

American community. Despite acknowledging his contributions Black women in the United States have also been critical of Du Bois.

Farah Jasmine Griffin, for example, points that he had "troublesome relationships with independent black women activists" that were at the forefront of the African-American community's work in the 19ᵗʰ century" (2000, 30). According to both Farah Jasmine Griffin (2000) and Joy James (2007) he seemingly did not credit African-American activists and writers Anna Julia Cooper and Ida B. Wells for much of their work done side by side with Du Bois himself.

Du Bois' positionality with regards to Black women can be further complicated when looking at his theoretical legacies. If on the one hand, as analyzed by Griffin "Du Bois applauds the emergence of economically independent black women", on the other he is also known for using what has been called a "masculinist language" to describe the need to protect Black women (2000, 29). Whilst tackling Du Bois' masculinist language, Hazel V Carby articulated that the "Souls of the Black Folk" is not only "gender-specific […] but it encompasses only those men who enact narrowly and rigidly determined codes of masculinity" (2007, 235). Carby (2007) criticizes Du Bois' masculinist framing as responsible for establishing that only the Black man would be capable of becoming intellectuals. Conversely, Black women would be important supporters for the Black community, albeit not in the same role as the Black man. Unfortunately, such approaches to Blackness through stereotypical gender roles did not cease and currently affect the lives and livelihood of self-identified Black women as some of my interviewees have elaborated.

Overall, in spite of championing for women's rights and recognizing the importance of Black women as workers and mothers, Du Bois' positionality and legacies are controversial. That must be contested if his work is to be reinterpreted, and different Black Feminists in the U.S

have done so. Du Bois' legacies, as pointed by the young Afro-Brazilian woman in the case I mentioned before, can also be linked and understood under the prism of Pan-Africanism which has been problematized over its heteronormative and masculinist views as well. In this work, I wish to move away from that masculinist language and I understand that my interviewees' self-definition challenge the angle suggested in Du Bois' original conceiving of "*double-consciousness*" going beyond the supposed neutrality of the male Black subject and the premise of being born in the United States.

Decolonizing Consciousness

My preoccupation with dislocating my work from the U.S to Black women living in Berlin is informed not only because this research takes place in Europe, but because my research is based on Black Feminist and Decolonial principles. It is noteworthy to mention that not only Du Bois' conceptualizing of "*double-consciousness*" was produced in and by the socioeconomic and historical context of the United States, but additionally many of the scholars whose work have responded to his concept (including the ones I will analyze here) were/are located in the West. In spite of being a former settler-colonial space, the United States is part and parcel of the West and consequently its intellectual productions, history and politics are valued and studied globally. In that sense, I partially agree with Bourdieu and Wacquant (1999) when they criticize the United States' "power to universalize particularisms linked to a singular historical tradition by causing them to be misrecognized as such" (Bourdieu; Wacquant 1999, 48).

On another sense, as an Afro-Brazilian woman I firmly reject Bourdieu and Wacquant's (1999) overall (mis)understanding of racial relations in Brazil. Their suggestion that African-American researchers who traveled to Brazil were the ones backing the Black movements in Brazil to adopt tactics from the civil rights movement is unfortunate, and denote Bourdieu and Wacquant's (1999) own limited views with regards to Brazilian and South American colonial

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history, especially in relation to the anti-colonial strategies of resistance forged by Afro-Brazilian and South American women and men. "On the cunning of Imperialist Reason" (1999) has its many problems and perhaps the most significant is that their arguments could easily be extended to Europe/Eurocentrism as well, but Bourdieu and Wacquant's critique of the "symbiosis" and acceptance of geographical and historical particularities in academia only goes so far (1999, 50).

Bourdieu and Wacquant's (1999) argument could be stretched into a much more interesting and complex problem if it were to extend through a Decolonial and or Postcolonial line of critique. Their article exemplify what Manuela Boatca (2013) articulates in relation to Western knowledge production and how it is embedded in the problem of colonial/imperial histories. Boatca writes: "modernization theory, mandating a specific type of economic and social development after the US model, was only the twentieth century embodiment of a long series of 'global designs' conceived and enacted from the particular local history of the Euro-American core […] Critical theories attacking modernity from within fail to pinpoint this additional dimension pertaining to coloniality, and thereby become complicitous with the criticized global design, whose premises they unwillingly reproduce" (2013, 224).

In this sense, it is necessary that I briefly overview what I mean by Coloniality which constitutes a poignant part of my work in decolonizing consciousness. The "Coloniality of Power" is Quijano's (2000) theoretical description of a specific kind of rationality that encompasses globalization/modernity and its structures of power. Quijano (2000) articulates that there is an important correlation between a-) modernity and colonialism in its capitalist/exploitative mode of production and b-) the conceptualization of race as a categorical form of difference. Thereof, he argues that colonialism in the Americas from the 16th century onwards was central not only to creating hierarchies of race, but dividing "conquerors and conquered" in labor/racial relations

based on phenotype (2000, 534). Most importantly, Quijano's framing reveal significant differences between racial relations that took place in South America and those that happened in the U.S. It is not only that the endurance of structures of race, labor and mobility are fundamental in Eurocentrism – eventually becoming Euro-Americanism – but that these structures offered considerable advantages to those who had proximity to whiteness and could be at least partially acknowledged as such.

Quijano writes that "beginning in the eighteenth century, […] the more "whitened" among the mestizos of black women and Spanish or Portuguese had an opportunity to work. But they were late in legitimizing their new roles, since their mothers were slaves. This racist distribution of labor in the interior of colonial/modern capitalism was maintained throughout the colonial period" (2000, 536).

His argument is built upon the durability of coloniality through the significant power granted to what is later known as the West. Conversely, Quijano's (2000) analyses in this particular text do not look deeper into the conceptualization of gender in the West as a form of violence in itself woven through the matrix of power he unpacks. In order to critically respond to that lack of gender analysis María Lugones coins the term "The coloniality of Gender" (2008). "The Coloniality of Gender" theorizes the need to understand how "intersection[s] of race, class, gender and sexuality" are embedded in "the systematic violences inflicted upon women of color" (2008, 1). Lugones (2008) investigates colonial, racial and gender relations by joining two different frameworks of analysis of power: a-) that developed by Third-World Feminists and Critical Race Scholars and b-) that proposed by Quijano (2000).

Lugone's "Coloniality of Gender" (2008) proposes an expansion that locates "the place of gender in pre-colonial societies [as] pivotal to understanding the nature and scope of changes in the social structure that the processes constituting colonial/modern Eurocentered capitalism

imposed" (2008, 12). She argues that those impositions were "introduced through slow, discontinuous, and heterogeneous processes that violently inferiorized colonized women" (2008, 12). Lugones further claims that the heteropartiarchal structured placed reduced "gender to the private, to control over sex and its resources and products [as] a matter of ideology, of the cognitive production of modernity that understood race as gendered and gender as raced in particularly differential ways for Europeans/'whites' and colonized/'non-white' peoples" (2008, 12).

Agreeing with Lugone's (2008) and Quijano's (2000) propositions, I am applying the lenses of "coloniality" as a way to look at my interviewees' narratives and my own experiences in the fieldwork. Through their framework which I am combining in "The Coloniality of Power/Gender" it is possible to unveil how heteronormative and patriarchal formulations have structurally defined and racialized what is natural, what is normal, and what is moral, separating those categories from what is unnatural, abnormal, and immoral. Additionally, I critically assess and tentatively decolonize consciousness and the scholars who have interpreted it by deploying the "Coloniality of Power/Gender" framing. I am particularly drawn to this issue because from a Black Feminist Decolonial perspective I believe it is important to make visible the connections between theory and location that occur as concepts travel.

Returning to "The Cunning of Imperialist Reason" (1999) and the influential power located in the United States, I believe Decolonial and Postcolonial Theory are central in grasping how the West informs those who are outside of its territories, and yet, caught on its webs. I find that a significant part of challenging imperialism and colonialism is to re-signify theories and concepts understanding the multiple relations of power (local and global) that exist, and consequently how they taint one another.

Limits of a Black Feminist approach outside of the U.S

In this section I will briefly justify the need for this research to simultaneously draw from a Black Feminist framework while distancing itself from the premises of U.S theorizing. To do that I am reinterpreting critiques from Decolonial and Postcolonial Theory in my overall assessment of what Black Feminism is in ways that can attend to the specificities of my field. Considering that my main goal is to grasp the differences and similarities between European and non-European Black women, I will look into a series of epistemological problems and analyze how I can best address them considering a series of contextual and dimensional divergences from U.S Black Feminist contributions and this research.

Continuing the discussion on knowledge production initiated before, I will shortly review two of the main arguments present in Feminist Studies/Women's studies and in Critical Race Studies as to why their contributions are poignant still. If the canon of objective epistemology/philosophy places women as objects to be known and not as producers of knowledge as argued by Nicole Westmarland (2001, 2), and according to what is posited by Michelle M. Wright (2004), Black subjects (framed as men) can know the white subject (again, men) without ever being truly seen or known as just *a man*, then, where does that leave Black women? What does that mean for Black women to be wholly *unknown*, and what space do they occupy? Moreover, those questions are not sealed off from time and space, or at least this is not what I am proposing. Once Black womanhood is approached the follow up questions should be where and at what given time. For example, different approaches to Black women's knowledge production are studied and elaborated by African-American scholars, such as Rose M. Brewer (1989), Patricia Hill Collins (1986), bell hooks (1989), and Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989).

In the article "Black women and Feminist Sociology […]" Rose M. Brewer (1989), for instance, defends the need for a fourth critique of Sociology from the perspective of Black feminist

scholars that embody and benefit from its predecessors, namely 1 -) debates around value-free or value-oriented sociology, 2-) purpose of sociology from the perspective of third-world male/Black male researchers and 3-) feminist critique of the patriarchal construction of the discipline's canon (e.g the trinity of Durkheim, Marx, Weber). In that sense, Black feminists' fourth critique would be one that can potentially combine all three categories of race, gender, and class which would contradict the very foundation of positivist Sociology as a European, male-centric and objective science (Brewer, 1989).

Brewer's observations strengthen that of Black feminist scholar and sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (1986) in the conceptualization of "Outsider within". Collins (1986) valorizes Black women's unique standpoint as advantageous for sociological investigation due to its simultaneous status of insider/outsider in different social groups in the United States, and this formulation is a source directly mentioned in Brewer's article as potentially challenging mainstream sociology. Likewise, Brewer's arguments resemble that of Legal studies scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) in "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex" which tackles antidiscrimination laws and their flaws considering intergroup differences among Black women in the United States. In that sense, African-American women's contribution is decisive not only for the construction of a specific field of knowledge (Black Feminist Theory) but for the dispute of knowledge production in different fields. I must note, though, the existence of some conflicts within U.S Black Feminist theory, praxis and methodologies as they travel to other areas.

"Intersectionality" is a good example of a concept that originated within African-American Feminist thought and metamorphosed into what "would be figured as […] an ideology that has colonized the hearts and minds of (vulnerable) college students" as pointed out by Jennifer C. Nash; and what Patricia Hill Collins herself later described as a "definitional dilemma" (Nash

2019, 2; Collins 2015, 2). Intersectionality's roots can be seen in the Combahee River collective "Black Feminist statement" (1982) originally published in 1977. In the statement the self-identified Black Feminist lesbian collective vowed to be "actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression", and articulated as their "particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking" ([1977] 1982, 13). This idea of interlocking of sites of oppression is expanded and elaborated on a couple of years later in Legal studies through Crenshaw's "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex" (1989).

Crenshaw (1989) coined the term "Intersectionality" in its classic use by exemplifying the meeting point of oppression as a crossroads. From that use specifically conceived in and for critical race studies and antidiscrimination Law, it is possible to observe now a dramatic modification almost beyond recognition. "Intersectionality" has proven complicated to pin-down and this difficulty has caused confusion as the term travelled being adopted and reinterpreted by other scholars. Two main problems stream from there in my reading, the first is what Oleksy would perceive as the impossibility of creating "a common understanding as to whether it is a critical concept/theory, methodology, or social practice" (2011, 263). The second problem is that of misinterpretation/misappropriation which has led to José Esteban Muñoz's careful advice against "critical hermeneutics and political projects that are not sufficiently intersectional" that would instead fall into "the race class and gender mantra" preventing "the work of theorizing relations of power" (1999, 166-167).

I believe that such debates around "Intersectionality" are productive insofar as they incite researchers, readers and practioners to rethink and revaluate the extent to which different concepts can or cannot be useful under a variety of circumstances. In this research I do not engage with "Intersectionality" directly, but it is possible to see how my analytical frame takes

into consideration the interlocking of oppressions as a critical site of struggle. By doing that I am dialoguing with Intersectionality as conceived within U.S Black Feminist Thought, but I do so while looking purposely at my overarching research questions, the field, my postionality, and my interviewees. This requires that I separate what is useful in Intersectional thinking within the scope of this research from what is U.S specific in Black Feminist Intersectional Thought.

The field, my research questions and most importantly my interviewees' standpoint are unswervingly informing the design of what I believe is a suitable way to address the issue of Black women's diasporic consciousness. This means that although I value "Intersectionality" as a U.S Black Feminist contribution, and I revisit the work of the Black Feminist scholars who theorized it, I do not believe that it should be reduced to the "the race class and gender mantra" Muñoz warns us about (1999, 167). Neither should it be reproduced as a mathematical equation for *all* other contexts as each poses their own challenges that are institutionally distinct than those located in the geopolitical and historical space of the U.S.

What I am suggesting here, alternatively, is the attempt to locate U.S Black Feminist Intersectional work in comparison to other bodies of knowledge. In this sense, I am approaching Decolonial/Postcolonial Theory and U.S Third-World Feminism as productive sources for the development of this research as they reflect on contradictory forms of consciousness within coloniality, through the nation–state, globally and *in movement*. Similarly, the Combahee River, Brewer, hooks, Collins and Crenshaw represent a group of Black women situating themselves within the epistemological tradition of the West, and the specific historicity of race relations and institutional structures of the U.S. Their positionality, political strategies, methodological responses and written work denounces a variety of societal issues from their own standpoint. Thus, I am tentatively examining the limits in the range of Black Feminism as a framework that

can answer some questions, but not *all* questions. In this research I am invested in drafting answers that can possibly offer a better understanding of the nuances and particularities of the lives of Black European women and non-European Black women in Europe; in my perspective that effort demands differential lenses of time and space.

In my reading of Postcolonial and Decolonial theory, it is crucial to ask about the colonized and the colonizers in order to identify power in time and space against the backdrop of continuous processes of domination and the consequences they still entail. As a Black woman from the global south in the pursuit of this question, I do not wish to gloss over the contradictions of coming from South America: both a former colony and a whole continent. To be more specific I do not wish to overlook being Afro-Brazilian and a Portuguese speaker and that gains another dimension of importance if as Edward Said proposes "to have been colonized was a fate with lasting, indeed grotesquely unfair results, especially after national independence had been achieved" (1989, 207).

Taking Said's analysis regarding the destiny of the colonized it is possible for me to read how in the making of this work I come bearing the sings of colonization. For instance, it is possible to observe my first language (Portuguese) as a colonial sign and the legacy of colonization processes initiated by Europe the 15th century. That my first language is a colonial mark is noteworthy, especially considering that four of my interviews were done in Portuguese and that this research is written in English which is the lingua franca for communication in much of the academic/business/technology world.

In Said's (1989) "Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors", *colonized* surfaces as a word that carries both past and present insofar as the colonized were and *still are* linked not only to its metropolis' past, but to whatever the costs of independence were – also keeping in mind countries and territories that are still under foreign rule. Grasping that

discussion about the meaning of colonization and its subjects is important for this research given that I am conversing with Black women in the Diaspora whose lives and narratives are set in a multitude of places with a multitude of colonial legacies, and whose citizenship status, for example, play a significant part in terms of mobility and identity.

Overall, I have argued that as I engage with U.S. Black Feminist legacies I must also ask what it means within the scope of this research. I cannot simply transport an entire body of U.S. Black Feminist Thought and incorporate it uncritically, and I have explained why I believe that another framing around the idea of Black women's diasporic consciousness is necessary. This research is based on historical, geographical, political, economical and subjective implications of Black womanhood in Berlin. Therefore, I find it important to make visible this existing connection between my overarching questions, my fieldwork and the strategies I have deployed.

In the next sub-section I shall consider some of the strategies Black Europeans have developed in comparison to other parts of the community in the Diaspora. I will shortly review some of the main exponents who have developed different approaches and methodologies to inscribe Black consciousness at the heart of Europe.

Black Europeans at the heart of Europe

In "BLACK IN TIME" (2010, capitalized in the original) Michelle M. Wright makes a compelling case for the need to reconsider how time has been understood and appropriated in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Through some examples of scholarly work on the Black Diaspora, Wright (2010) proposes that chronological narratives used in those fields have been informed by a Newtonian perception of time which is linear and progressive. This in turn impacts how scholars produce and reproduce similar origin stories based on literature which does the same. Wright argues that

> If there is any area of conflation between African Diaspora Studies and Enlightenment philosophers, it is in the construction of epistemologies as linear ''progress narratives,'' in which in a metaorigin is determined, and all ensuing historical events are understood as a series of causes and effects that eventually relate back to this origin. Simply speaking, conservative Europeans and North Americans embrace Ancient Greece and Rome as the origin of their civilizations, and place non-Whites in an unenviable position of being mere, passive footnotes in these timelines. (Wright 2010, 71).

Wright goes on to identify that African-American intellectuals deemed necessary to develop a different epistemological strategy, one different "metaorigin" that would take another starting point, but similarly allow for an evolving, rational and causal narrative (Wright 2010, 71). Understandably this "metaorigin" strategy is located in the Atlantic "slave trade and slavery" (Wright 2010, 71). Wright calls this chronological narrative the "Middle Passage Epistemology", and while she considers that as a strategy it has been a "successful response", she also concedes that it has led to a somewhat monolithic body of work. Wright problematizes the "Middle Passage Epistemology" to be a representative model *of* and *for* all Black communities in Africa and within the Black Diaspora (Wright 2010, 70).

I believe Wright's (2010) insights are relevant for this work as an interesting outlook on time, first, and as a critical framework for epistemological strategies developed by Black scholars, second. According to "Showing Our Colors" (1992), one of the first official intellectual publications by Afro-Germans which helped diffuse the term, Black people (addressed as Moors and later Negros) have been present in Europe since the "Middle Ages". This reminder is interesting because it highlights how Europe and Africa were historically related in ways that our current outlook does not fully comprehend. More importantly, it suggests already there the existence of what Homi Bhabha has called the "interstice", a dialogical space result of the relationship between two parts (2004, 2). One good example of that relational tie is offered by Opitz et. al who add that "several paintings have survived from the twelfth century that depict Africans living in Germany" (Opitz et. al 1992, 4). Opitz et al, the authors of "Showing Our Colors" (1992), further argue that Black Europeans and Black Germans have been neglected in

German historiography as has German colonial history, its visuals, its missionaries, the institutions that it supported and that supported it, a major gap that only now beings to be addressed as Sara Lennox indicates in "Remapping Black Germany" (2016).

In order for Black Diaspora literature to explain time, space and causality in relation to cultures and nations where Black communities exist it has resorted to two main lines of strategy as summarized by Wright in "Others-from-within from without" (2003). According to Wright these strategies will vary depending on what kind of national narratives may be othering Black communities. Wright explains that in the case of the U.S and the UK "racist discourses posits Blacks as Others from Within – physically part of the nation, but in all other ways utterly foreign and thus utterly incapable of being integrated into that nation" (2003, 297). Therefore, Wright suggests that the strategy in those countries is one that does not need to argue for Blackness to be acknowledged as part of a nation's history, even if "racist discouses" ardently wish to expunge Blackness out of its body (2003, 297). I would further complement that Black communities in the U.K and the U.S strategically argue against structural racism which transforms Black populations and other racialized minorities in second-class citizens.

In the case of Afro-German communities, or Black Germans, Wright (2003) indicates that they are considered to be outside of the nation's history/narrative/identity. In parallel to that, Wright (2003) indicates that the Afro-German communities are not only considered by white Germans to be outside the nation's history/narrative/identity but are "*simply non-existent*" (2003, 298). That is, the encounters with Blackness are associated exclusively with Black Africa and foreignness. Thus, for Black Germans the strategy adopted is one that strives to re-inscribe Blackness into the country (and into the continent I would add) where the Black communities "have only recently claimed a presence in the German imagination", for instance through the

publication of autobiographies and activism that specializes in creating archives (Wright 2003, 298).

Taking into account those historical and strategic differences is especially significant whilst considering that they were developed as responses to structures of power, which is an argument I also employ in this research looking specifically at Black women's diasporic consciousness. One of the main distinctions between my work and that of other scholars mentioned thus far is that I am concerned with how those bigger claims may translate into the experiences of non-European Black women and European Black women. By focusing on the divergences and convergences between those two groups, I am trying to better grasp how those strategies of adaptability and resistance are employed on the day-to-day life as Black women navigate the city of Berlin along a myriad of realities. These realities are in turn shaped by such national discourses of othering and belonging which can complicate the situation for Black women depending not only on their citizenship/languages they can speak, but on their class, sexuality and security network. In this sense, this research has been crafted especially to be able to grasp on those different accounts and understand how they may form.

In the next section, I shall explicate some of the methodological challenges I encountered in the planning and execution of this work. I will shortly reflect upon the role of translation in this work, analyze some of the reasons why I am engaging with the qualitative methods I have chosen. In doing so, I will also elaborate on why I believe they were appropriate for the field and for the overall goal of this research. Additionally, I investigate some of the ethical concerns I had before, during and after I left the field, critically investigating my own positionality and how it has informed my steps.

III.   **Chapter Three: Autoethnographic insights, Oral history and fieldwork**

Fieldwork described

Over the course of slightly more than 12 months, from the 14th of February 2019 until the 4th of March 2020, I did qualitative research in Berlin. My main objective was to understand the differences and similarities between the experiences of European Black women and non-European Black women who were living in the city for at least one year. My criterion for deciding upon the one year period was based on the United Nation's definition of "international migrants". As seen in the book "International Migration […]" (2007) by Khalid Koser, "[t]he United Nations (UN) defines as an international migrant a person who stays outside their usual country of residence for at least one year" (Koser 2007, 4). In adopting that definition, I wanted to make myself as open as possible to the possibility of conversing with the biggest number of people willing to be interviewed; considering that both groups of women (European and non-European) could fit that definition of international migrant. This decision was also carefully made accounting for my fieldwork where, for instance, I had met Italian, British and German Black women (Germans from other cities) who had moved to Berlin.

During those months, I conducted fieldwork trips that lasted between a day, a week, and three consecutive weeks. While in Berlin attended a number of events organized by different institutions and groups that had as its main focus engaging with Black people (either from Africa or of Black African descent) and people of color in general. These events would be advertised and shared on Facebook, and if I confirmed my interest in one of them, Facebook would immediately suggest similar events to me. For example, if I confirmed my interest in attending a workshop on writing for Black people, I would receive a recommendation to join a fundraising concert by young queer people of color that would take place on that same week.

Thanks to that I had no trouble finding places where to meet people in an apparently casual manner.

As stated before, I actually had *very* hard time building up the courage to talk to people and say what I was doing there. My second difficulty was the fact that by not living in Berlin, but in Budapest, my time doing fieldwork was always too short and it hindered my snowballing from going other places. My third problem is simply a consequence of the second, where there were always too many events to attend, sometimes four or more in the same week. In between Audre Lorde movie-screenings, self-organized student groups to discuss racism, women of color networking events, and black-led workshops it was quite hard for one person to dive into everything. I only had so much money, time and energy while doing fieldwork, and no matter how hard I tried, I always felt as if I were missing out on something.

That feeling of missing out on something was, I believe, caused by the uncomfortable sensation that I was not fulfilling my purpose in doing fieldwork. In other words, I felt as though I was not advancing as much as I would have liked. Nonetheless, it is not as if that feeling is uncommon in the attempt of doing fieldwork research. On the contrary, as Lila Abu-Lughod describes in "Veiled Sentiments" (2016), there are days in which doing fieldwork seems to be *particularly* distant from the theory that is taught on how to do research. In her words

> on a day when people are busy and you are alone in a desolate landscape, suffering from fever and being eaten alive by fleas or annoyed by a child poking fun at you, the question of whether this is the experience that carries such dignified labels as "research" or the more scientific 'data collection' nags. (Abu-Lughod 2016, 9-10)

Similarly, William Foot Whyte claims in the Appendix A of "Street Corner Society" (1943/1993) that his process of doing research at Cornerville had plenty of drawbacks: his planning of the project was difficult because he had no background training in Sociology nor Anthropology having to learn about both as he did the research, his entering the field with the

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mindset of an economist not knowing exactly how to contact people, among other ethical issues mentioned. Whyte wrote that he "sometimes […] wondered whether just hanging on the street corner was an active enough process to be dignified by the term 'research'" (Whyte 1993, 303).

It must be noted that concerns such as those described above may not be uncommon due to the possibility of mixing different research methods. It is advised to do so by different authors because mixing methods may challenge researchers to look for other explanations than the ones they might initially have, further warranting their arguments (Angrostino 2007). Additionally, the researcher may not be able to spend as much time in the field, thus needing interviews as a way to intermediate and complicate their own set of observations juxtaposing it with people's narratives; which would seem to be my case (Beaud and Weber, 2007). Another advantage is possibly developing a better frame through which watch and observe things, therefore acknowledging, as Brazilian Anthropologist Roberto da Matta (1978) posits, that as researchers we exist in between two different worlds of meanings (significados). By different worlds of meaning, a term translated from Portuguese by me, I am considering Da Matta's claim regarding the importance of "learning to perform a double task: a) that of making the exotic familiar and/or (b) that of making the familiar exotic" (Da Matta 1978, 4, my translation).

Though I had hoped that my fieldwork experience would offer pointers about *how to* read the social script of life in Berlin, I also knew that my embodied experience could only account for so much. My limited time in the city in addition to the literature I had researched on it revealed that I probably had a lot of ground to cover and not as many resources available. Besides, there was an array of different realities and life-narratives that could be, perhaps, lying outside of the circle/bubble of events organized within/for the Black community. I needed to talk to people, I had to; only then I could hope to hear and to learn from the Black women whose lives crossed my path and also about those that hadn't thus far. To have a more nuanced understanding I

needed to have at least half-a-dozen interviews as a means to better comprehend the life journeys of Black women throughout Berlin; the kind of knowledge that I could not produce myself. In that sense, my "world of meanings", to quote Da Matta (Da Matta 1978, 4), was distant from that of my interviewees not only because I did not live in Berlin, but because of possible distinctions of class, spirituality, sexuality, language and nationality. With the intent of meeting more Black women whose path had not crossed with mine I wrote in search for interviewees on a couple different Facebook groups. I wrote in English in one of them, in Spanish in another and in Portuguese in the Brazilian community. My message in English was quite detailed as I felt people were kind of resistant not only to conversing with researchers, but especially to being recorded, so I tried to craft my message so it would address and ease possible concerns. This is what I wrote:

> Hello, everyone! My name is Jessica Nogueira Varela and I am a scholarship student from Brazil. […] This is the second year of the MA which means I need to write […] my thesis. My research interest is understanding the Black Community and the city of Berlin through the Oral Histories of Black women, European and non-European. […] I want to do face-to-face interviews to better understand the nuances in relation to citizenship rights, language, sexuality, gender, class, etc. I hope to converse with women who have been living in Berlin for at least one year. All ages are welcome. I can do the interview in Portuguese (my mother tongue), Spanish and English. I hope that through the interviews we can reflect together on what it means to be a Black woman in different spaces during different times through distinct ways of re-organizing our identities and our lives. […] I would like the interview to be recorded as well, but, please do let me know if you would have a problem with it and I can resort to taking notes only. […] At the time, all I can offer is a coffee or beer over the conversation. But, since I am here exclusively for the research I will be happy to go to any part of the city, at any given time to meet you up! If you think that maybe this is not your profile, but you know someone else who might be interested in participating, please, let me know whom and I will gladly contact them! Thank you so very much for reading it this far! Hope we can chat soon! (My Facebook post on an English speaking group on the 21st of Ferbruary 2020)

Though I was initially hesitant to write on Facebook groups I had seen other researchers using the platform to meet their interviewees, some were quite successful in that approach, so I decided to try it as well, and see about my luck; I can say now that I am happy I did so. Being able to converse with and to learn from my interviewees' subjectivity by listening to their worlds of meanings is why each interview exchange was vital to the making of this work. From my snowballing fieldwork from 2019 I met about 15 Black women that I considered approaching for interviewing, but as my research topic changed, and all of the three interviews I did in that year were not recorded, I decided to start over in 2020 and contact the 15 people from before in addition to those I could try to meet from the on-line Facebook posts. Of course, some people declined the offer saying it was not for them after seeing the list of questions I had prepared; others who had initially agreed to meet me were actually not that keen on really doing it by avoiding my messages all together or just stalling our meeting.

I got in touch with more than 20 people, and managed to schedule and converse face-to-face with 13 of them. The shortest interview lasted for about 30 minutes at longest lasted for one hour and a half that were cut in two parts. Most of the interviews were done in public spaces, such as cafés or restaurants, and just two were in the person's house. Out of those 13 interviews, one person was Afro-Ecuadorian, one was from Kenya, four were from Brazil where one had double citizenship (Brazil/Italy), one was from Canada, one was British-Jamaican, and five were born in Germany. As seen from the nationalities mentioned, I have had the opportunity of interviewing not only Black women from Europe, but also of conversing with Black women from my own country, in addition to migrant Black women from different parts of the world. This was truly rewarding as it allowed me to have several interesting perspectives on class difference, mobility, gender, race, and overall life in the city of Berlin as a Black woman.

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A Note on Translation

The implications of entering academia as a non-English speaker are yet to be more closely investigated as a form structural difference in terms of reproduction and production of knowledge. I am writing reproduction first and production later based on Walter Mignolo's argument in "DELINKING" (2007, 455, capitalized in the original) where key concepts in power struggles such as "emancipation" are re-interpreted by different groups throughout distinct moments in time. Because concepts conceived in one place must painstakingly change as they are appropriated *elsewhere*, I believe that this appropriation encompasses a complex process of translation. Therefore, the process of translation is also embedded in distances of time and problems of space, especially considering the languages spoken in countries outside the West. This is but one dimension of translation, namely the epistemological aspect, but in it there is also a bigger question of ontology.

In relation to this work I am looking at the predicaments of translation in both the transcripts of the interviews which capture the oral speech and transform it into written text, the language translation from Portuguese to English needed in some of the interviews, and the ways in which some concepts prove ontologically hard to translate. Agreeing with Foster (2009, 148) that "the practice of translation in whatever medium is never innocent" I would like to disclaim that translation in the context of this research is a matter of creativity and difference that struggle in between what it shall modify and adapt and what it will lose – both intentionally and accidentally.

While in the field I knew that even as I tried my best to understand each world of meaning presented to me I would probably not be able to pick up on everything. Some cultural clues, regional or local references brought up on conversation could easily get lost, though I tried to prevent that. These negotiations had to be done right at the spot, while I was listening, taking

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notes and thinking about what I was being told, which means that later I had to pay even more attention to crossing my notes with the interview transcripts in attempt to lose as little as possible. Transcribing, then, becomes a crucial element in the making of this work where I tried to retain some aspects of the oral speech whilst carefully removing others. Following Johnson's (2018) structure to explain his process of transcription in "Black, Queer, Southern Women" I would like to offer a brief overview of it. For instance, I inserted pauses in the interviewees' speech and my own signaled in the text by the use of reticence, I also included changes in the tone of voice if they happened, and I added some background noises, such as laughter in between the conversation and my own agreement in the background. In order to keep a more direct narrative I edited some of the content out too which I indicated by ellipses inside brackets, and like Johnson I also "deleted words and phrases such as 'um,' 'you know,' and 'like' when they were not a part of the narrator's typical speech pattern and used as vocal fillers" (Johnson 2018, 15). After explaining this technical aspect I shall shortly engage with the issue of translation from one language to another.

Considering that five out of my thirteen interviews were done in Portuguese, translation also appears in a literal sense where I have the ontological responsibility of making sure that the content of what my interviewees' said is being understood. Consequently, a couple words were harder to translate to this work than others, and my strategy was to signpost them since the interview as words they would require a more detailed account of their meaning in Brazil. For example, and this is an interesting case of ontological difference, one of the interviewees' corrected me when I tried to paraphrase her and use the Portuguese word for lesbian. She said she did not identify as a lesbian and proceeded to clarify her reasons for not doing that, in addition to justifying why she preferred the Portuguese term *Sapatão*; a longer section in the interview analysis will be dedicated to explicating and situating her positionality. On the other hand, the biggest risk is that may have ended up assuming that something that is known to me

and to the interviewee may not have received as much attention and gotten accidentally lost in the transcription I present here. I tried to avoid that by reviewing each transcript myself, but it is still possible that something may have passed me by.

Qualitative means asking why

As I began along this journey of collecting and recording Black women's commitments to diasporic consciousness, I asked myself how can I address the questions I am posing in this research as an Afro-Brazilian cisgender woman concerned with listening to other Black women, European and non-European? I wanted to understand in what ways the context of their being in Europe/Germany/Berlin shape their relationships within the Black African Diaspora and to their local communities. The focus of my oral histories were on expressions and commitments to Black womanhood in Berlin in accordance with insights provided by Decolonial and Postcolonial Theory in addition to U.S. Black Feminist methodologies. I have framed my research around the central problem of consciousness building upon a critical approach to unravel the historical, geographical, political, economical and subjective implications of Black women and their diasporic consciousness.

Studies that examine the intersections of race, gender, and class have informed the basis for the kind of qualitative study that can significantly contribute to a more nuanced grasp of social realities that inform the lives of Black women in Berlin. My main concern in the research lies in establishing the subjective experiences of Black women's daily lives in Europe. In order to recognize the differences and similarities between non-European Black women and European Black women in Berlin, I have developed a methodological framework that is expansive enough to examine, in detail, how race, gender, nation, migration and class function to produce the realities of Black women, both now and in the past.

While I draw from concepts conceived primarily within the United States, where African-American scholars offer different perspectives to historically investigate slavery and racism, I do not wish to limit my sources to their contributions alone. As argued by Michelle M. Wright "when we deploy an epistemology, we do so in order to observe, analyze and/or interpellate" and by "doing so, we unwittingly (or, perhaps, wittingly) change what we are interpellating and occlude other possibilities" (2010, 71). Considering that my research is not oriented towards the United States, but towards Black Women's experiences in Europe, I dialogue with a variety of texts produced outside and inside the West. One of the authors whose intellectual legacies I incorporate to answer for Black consciousness in Europe, for example, is Paul Gilroy. In the "Black Atlantic" (1993) Gilroy outlines the Atlantic Ocean as a geopolitical space from which he critically addresses the consequences of the Black Diaspora in the U.K and in Europe. His foundational work is set against the backdrop of the cultural turn in British academia and it has inspired other scholars to dislocate their gaze from Blackness *within the nation* to a more nuanced understanding of Black consciousness. Likewise, my work seeks to point to Black consciousness as in *movement* throughout different contexts.

The conceptualization of race and its gendered implications are at the heart of this research in its effort to understand how and why racism manifests differently (or not) in the lives of my interviewees and in my own experience. Using gender as the primary lens through which to reexamine colonial legacies and their aftermath in the German context, my research explores the relationality of history, identity and memory in the experiences of race and racialization for Black women in Berlin. My work builds upon the urgency of Black feminist calls for decolonizing epistemologies, methodologies and practices that can tackle different forms of discrimination rooted in colonialism.

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Oral History and Ethnography

Penny Summerfield (2013, 48) tells us that "the oral telling of public and personal histories" is a common event that happens daily. In other words, telling and/or retelling one's personal/public account over something is the first step of Oral History. Broadly speaking, oral histories bear some similarities to anthropological observation methods and ethnographic research principles. What oral history offers that is unique is a dialogue between an informant and the researcher that is unbounded by the chronology of time and the notion that interviewees must answer specific questions or are limited in how they can tell their story.

Oral History offers the researcher the opportunity of listening to first-hand accounts of lived experiences that are sensitive to the everyday realities that have shaped both individual and collective narratives. What began as the possibility of reconstructing and revising historical events from the perspective of those who may have been neglected in the official histories has become a recognized medium through which the voices of silenced and marginalized populations are uncovered (Summerfield 2013). Although, it must also be mentioned that social science methodologies designed to collect information within marginalized populations imply an onus on the part of the researcher to analyze and represent the gathered material. In the specific case of Oral History, as Alessandro Portelli (2003) has long argued, oral sources are mediated through the process of transcription, where the author transforms and modifies the original source to fit the confines of a written text.

In "What makes Oral History Different" (2003) Portelli proposes that "expecting the transcript to replace the tape for scientific purposes" would be the "equivalent to doing art criticism on reproductions, or literary criticism on translations" (2003, 64). He contends that "the most literal translation is hardly ever the best, and a truly faithful translation always implies a certain amount of invention," concluding that "the same may be true for transcription of oral sources"

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(2003, 64). From a Decolonial perspective, Portelli's proposition demonstrates how Western knowledge has separated one form of communication (written) from another (spoken) which I believe is pivotal in unpacking how reflexivity can be explored. In the research design, I realized that much of my work of conversing with my interviewees, and subsequently transcribing and translating our dialogues would require attention to that separation and its implied hierarchy of written texts over oral texts.

Early conversations within academia about oral history methods were intended "to give a voice to the voiceless" and "recover history" (Summerfield 2013, 49). It was not until later that debates engaged critically with interpretation and authorship in shaping the ethics of how we record subjective narratives, and I believe it is possible to see a rather similar line of critique with regards to ethnography and the ethnographer's positionality. Ethnography can be described as "a qualitative research strategy that relies primarily on participant observation and concerns itself in its most general sense with the study and interpretation of cultural behaviour" (Aslop 2013, 113). From this definition it is important to highlight how the interpersonal relations in the field pass through the embodied presence of the *participant* in participant observation. Similarly, the authority of the researcher in interpreting and writing about the data collected cannot be emphasized enough. I am building upon Nikki Lane's "Bringing Flesh to Theory: Ethnography, Black Queer Theory, and Studying Black Sexualities" and her description that ethnographic work "often involves spending months, and more often years, in a particular field site, where one develops relationships with members of the group, community, or institution being studied" (2016, 632). Furthermore, Lane explains that "ethnographers are positioned in a place to observe, but also place their bodies on the line—participating, when possible, in the quotidian practices of the group" (2016, 632).

As Edward Said points out "the problematic of the observer" was "remarkably underanalyzed in the revisionist anthropological currents" where the reader would "perhaps suddenly [notice] how someone, an authoritative, explorative, elegant, learned voice, speaks and analyzes, amasses evidence, theorizes, speculates about everything – except itself" (1989, 212). Said continues with very provocative "not pronounced" questions for social sciences, humanities, and academic knowledge production in general, *after all*: "Who speaks? For what and to whom?" (1989, 212). In the specific case of this research, it is not my ambition to suppose that I can possibly represent the wide variety of experiences Black people face while living in Europe. Black women in this research speak specifically from their Standpoint, that is, located in the time and space in which I was able to conduct the interviews. While that may offer an interesting angle through which to reflect upon the different realities for Black women, men and non-binary people in Europe, as well as on the lived experiences of other people of color in general, it certainly does not presuppose that it characterizes all that exists. In that sense, my interviewees' voices are filtered and added to my own with the purpose of making a political argument as to Black women's subjective experiences while in Europe. I am concerned specifically with the various forms of discrimination fueled by colonial hierarchies and its legacies such as Anti-Black racism and misogyny which is why I speak and against what I argue.

My difficulty in entering Black groups of the African Diaspora in Berlin was not something that my previous anthropological training in Brazil could have prepared me for. With the tools to read and interpret texts, my background in the study of anthropology prepared me to be rigorous in deploying my research tools and to critically write. I was able to research and defend a thesis about Black Feminism in my hometown (Fortaleza) where my self-identification as a Black woman was not put into question by the Black women I met and interviewed in the field. We shared a rather similar understanding of Black womanhood in Brazil and what it means.

Comparatively, by doing fieldwork in Europe I realized that explaining my identity would require a conscious effort in order to contextualize the complexity and difference interwoven in the histories of Black people in Latin America and in Brazil. It was not just a disparity of space, but of time, narrative, memory and consciousness. After some time in Berlin I began noticing that I did not exactly belong to any group in particular, but I thought it was just an initial difficulty which many researchers in Social Sciences identify as part of the process.

In the very first week of the 2018 Gender Studies MA program at the Central European University, the incoming students were invited for a roundtable discussion about Research and Ethics. I thought that it was a statement in itself: experienced researchers were about to share their troubles, reflections and possible blueprints for doing ethical research with us, new students. From that roundtable, one of the lessons I took is that the issue of ethics and of accountability in regards to what one does and writes, and what one does after one writes is a rather complex one. This complexity is epistemological, historical and material, and, I want to argue that both aspects of it necessarily go through the *self*, that is, the narrator, the story-teller, the embodied and emotional, and of course real, the researcher.

It is in Gender Studies that I discovered a uniquely feminist approach to questions of positionality and ethics in qualitative research. Lila-Abu Lughod (1999) and Ruth Behar (1996) have long dominated in feminist research subfields since they shoulder the responsibility of holding accountable those who seem indifferent or unknowing of the power relations inherent in this research method and likewise I cannot and *do not wish* to deny Anthropology/Ethnography's faults. They do so while writing about themselves in the process, they acknowledged their socio-economical status, their familial background and their difficulties as well as privileges, in other words by tackling ethics and acknowledging power relations they were also discussing their positionality. I was asked to read and reflect critically

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about their work, and I was also encouraged to write about myself, to take texts personally and put down on paper a critical evaluation of my own experience. Perhaps the most transformative of the process has been the transition towards putting myself in the text, and writing using *I*.

Behar's beautiful concept of observing vulnerably shaped my questions regarding how to answer the unspeakable question of emotionality posed by an embodied researcher. Behar's (1996) "The Vulnerable Observer" also puts into question many of Anthropology's claims to objectivity especially regarding the historical development of is methodology (Ethnography) which, as stated before, relies on the definition of participant observation. As Behar writes while answering a question from her aunt about what Anthropology is and does:

> […] Anthropology, to give my Aunt Rebeca a grandiose reply, is the most fascinating, bizarre, disturbing, and necessary form of witnessing left to us at the end of the twentieth century. As a mode of knowing that depends on the particular relationship formed by a particular anthropologist with a particular set of people in a particular time and place, anthropology has always been vexed about the question of vulnerability. […] Our intellectual mission is deeply paradoxical: get the "native point of view," *pero por favor* without actually "going native." Our methodology, defined by the oxymoron "participant observation," is split at the root: act as a participant, but don't forget to keep your eyes open (Behar 1996, 4 – 5, italics in the original).

In situating myself at the center of questions regarding vulnerability and ethics, when I was working through the collected material, I asked myself how ethnical it had been to attend an event fully aware that my being there was intentional and that my purpose was to observe? In other words, was my research design ethical, and did it, as Patrick Johnson argues, simply reinforce how "power dynamics [though] inescapable within the context of oral history and ethnographic research" can be mediated through the researcher's awareness "of such dynamics" by "approaching and working through them with a sense of ethics and moral responsibility" (2018, 10)? Or was that inescapability rooted in the researcher's awareness and doomed to turn into self-fulfilling prophecy? As Grada Kilomba reminds us that "being looked at and questioned are forms of control that of course embody power" (2019, 66). What was I to make of my positionality as it was juxtaposed against the image of the neutral and objective

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researcher? Since Behar herself counters, researchers tend to develop defense mechanisms wherein invoking the methodology can divert attention and "drain anxiety from situations in which we feel complicitous with structures of power, or helpless to release another from suffering, or at a loss as to whether to act or observe" (1996, 6).

Behar's provocative call to listening vulnerably "with a particular set of people in a particular time" remains (1996, 4). To me, listening vulnerably meant embodying both power and powerlessness within the context of collecting material experiences and memories for this research, after all what did I owe to the people I met while doing the research? The *a priori* knowledge of why I was in Berlin meant a special type of self-awareness to me that meant being in the field is not accidental but *intentional*, even though some researchers may feel okay with not telling right away their reasons for being in the field (for security reasons or to build trust, for example). In my thinking about ethics and responsibility in relation to those I met – during the process of actively interpreting and writing – the problem of coloniality came to the front. In terms of power structures, could I possibly differentiate and maybe separate what was hereditary (therefore challenging if not inescapable) in scholar research from what its legacies were? In trying to answer that question the powerful words of anti-colonialist poet and writer Aimé Cesaire ([1955, 1972] 2000) came closer to my reflections. While I certainly did not wish to take upon the role of scholars who had performed "evil work […] as watchdogs of colonialism" I was not sure my sensibility and Black Feminist commitment would be enough to keep me from reproducing the problematic structures colonialism had created (Cesaire 2000, 55-56).

Behar writes in the "Vulnerable Observer" that "somehow, out of that [Anthropological] legacy, born of the European colonial impulse to know others in order to lambast them, better manage them, or exalt them, anthropologists have made a vast intellectual cornucopia" (1996, 4).

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Anthropology's cornucopia was built on the backs and at the expense of the peoples of color of the world, and yet, as Cesarie argues it was also through it and its inquiry gaze that "the overall superiority of Western civilizations" was put to question (2000, 68). In a sense, Behar's (1996) acknowledgement became my own as I began to recognize that as problematic as it may be to look at Anthropology's history as a Black woman from the global south in 2020, it was still one of the first disciplines to ever be interested in (other) people and in listening to them. From my Standpoint as a Third-World research and as a Black woman I must reckon with the contradictory roles scholars played out of the fear that the so-called native other would disappear where a series of damaging misconceptions would be created such as in the case of same-sex relationships in Africa (Epprecht 2006) and cannibalism in South America (Conklin 2001). The conflicting task of performing the type of work that had validated knowledge about the Third-World and defined it as such put me in a complicated spot and I returned to the question of power. While in the field I frequently felt sad without knowing how to do this work as Black woman and a Third-world researcher. How could I?

Again the question of positionality/reflexivity returns as what is, to me, one of the most critical aspects of academic research – not only in the West but globally – that exemplifies its uneasy relationship *with* power. To be critical of my own positionality is to be attentive to the methodologies and methods I use – even before I get to set foot on the field, collect or analyze any data. As argued before, by approaching a variety of Black Feminist scholarship from the U.S and engaging with Decolonial theorists I am faced with the fact that I am not African-American and that I am doing research in another continent (Europe) and country (Germany). To start addressing that I would like to shortly analyze some of the possibilities and problems of reflexivity as described in "Autoethnography as feminist method" by Elizabeth Ettore (2017).

One advantage Ettore (2017, 2) proposes would be that "the transformative power of 'writing the self'" becomes visible, thus "transforming personal stories into political realities by revealing power inequalities inherent in human relationships and the complex cultures of emotions embedded in these unequal relationships". That same advantage also has its own flip side in that by crafting a methodology focused on the *self* (or the person who is writing) the accusation/critique of solipsism begins to lurk (Ettore 2017; Chang 2008). Additionally, even if the self-reflective feminist framework may reveal that "knowledge comes from political understandings of one's social positioning as well as experiences of the cultural freedoms and constraints one encounters.", as Ettore (2017, 2) claims, that does not mean that the analysis will be necessarily focused on the dynamics of power relations one experiences throughout life where not only the intersection of oppression occurs, but also the intersection of privileges, as I shall also argue in my analytical chapter as well as in relation to myself.

Ettore (2017) offers a solution to the possible pitfalls of solipsism and insufficient engagement with cultural analysis outside of the self by suggesting that researchers reclaim reflexivity not only in their task of interpreting other people, but also in their views of feminism and ethnography; Ettore (2017, 15) then proposes that learning to constantly review oneself and one's positionality "should not lead to a blurring of the personal and the political", but to a recognition of how subjectivity "affects every aspect of [the] research process". Despite agreeing with the Ettore's solution, I still see it as somewhat abstract and even elusive in its application. As Ettore (2017) herself claims in the Introduction of "Autoethnography as a Feminist Method" there are many ways of doing feminist research, but this is not equivalent to having a shared set of *feminist* parameters on how to think about feminist ethics, citation or positionality, for instance. Even if her solution makes sense to me and in my understanding of "Autoethnography as a Feminist Method" (2017) she demonstrates such feminist critical inquiry is possible by doing it, I do not believe *all* feminist research is committed to being

critical of its role/power in knowledge production or that *every* feminist research is willing/wanting to be held accountable for engaging directly with people.

In the complicated position of negotiating my entry in different Black spaces as a third world country Black woman I began noticing that explaining what my intentions were was much harder than I had anticipated. I believe that autoethnography is one way of creatively unpacking that problem as a fracture in the rigidity of Western academic knowledge production that has the potential of answering hook's plea for those located at the margins "to remember, as part of a self-critical process where one pauses to reconsider choices, location" and what tools facilitated their journey or made it difficult (1989, 17). By making autoethnography a central part of the methodology, I am aligning the critical aspect of ethnographic inquiry, with a mind to focus on how histories of oppression work to shape how knowledge is produced.

Autoethnography's shore

As illustrated by Heewong Chang (2008) in "Autoethnography as Method", the use of autobiographical material and life-narratives is not exactly novelty in the social sciences, but in my perspective that is the most original feature of autoethnography. To me the novelty of Autoethonography is precisely the recognition of the writer's narrative as a concomitant construction of the self in relation to the social world. In other words, reflexivity becomes central in the process of writing autoethnography which tentatively acknowledges and works with the role/presence of the researcher/writer. In that sense, I find it relevant to elaborate on what my Black Feminist and Decolonial take on Autoethnography is in order to justify the version of it that I tailored so it may suit this research and the questions it addresses.

In "Autoethnography as Method" (2008) Heewong Chang defends that Autoethnography needs to pay attention to certain requirements. In order to be bridge the gap between autobiography (where the self narrates the individual) and ethnography (where the self narrates culture),

autoehtnography must acknowledge reflexivity as its main source of critical insight, so it is not just autobiography or thick cultural description of the field. Chang describes how autoethnography "follows the anthropological and social scientific inquiry approach rather than descriptive or performative storytelling" where "the stories of autoethnographers [should] be reflected upon, analyzed, and interpreted within their broader sociocultural context" (2008, 46). Chang suggests "that autoethnography should be ethnographic in its methodological orientation, cultural in its interpretive orientation, and autobiographical in its content orientation" (2008, 49). I find particularly relevant Chang's concern with objectivity, since he considers that in order for the autoethnographic knowledge to be legitimized it must support its "arguments with broad-based data" balancing the "'internal' data generated from researchers' memory with 'external' data from outside sources, such as interviews, documents, and artifacts" (2008, 55). My problem is not with Chang's suggestion for triangulation *per se,* but with the ways in which striving for objectivity seemingly glosses over the overlapping issues of what knowledge is considered valid and why. In that sense, Black Feminist scholars from the Global South and North have long investigated and demonstrated how and why Black women's knowledge and poetics have not been acknowledged as such.

In Brazil Sueli Carneiro (2003) explores the historical exclusion of Black women's contributions from within both the women's movement and the Black Brazilian movement, in the United States Rachel Alicia Griffin (2012) discusses, among other issues, how the devaluation of Black women's work and the devaluation of their knowledge is translated in the educational system where although Black history has a month – that usually means Black male history. In Europe and Germany more specifically Grada Kilomba (2019) argues that the epistemic violence Black people are put through means not only their invisibility in educational institutions, but also the de-legitimization of her work as a Black woman and a person capable of producing knowledge. Kilomba (2019) autobiographically speaks of being deemed by other

scholars as emotional, over-analytical, and *too personal* in what she wrote. I do not mean to advocate that a Black Feminist approach to Autoethnography should firmly reject what Chang (2008) posits in relation to objectivity and triangulation of data/sources. What I am stating is that I believe it is important to be critical of the concept of objectivity not just while using the blueprints of autoethnography, but also in dealing with hierarchical epistemologies. For instance, I approach my interviewees' talking about themselves, their views of the world, and day-to-day lives as valid knowledge, therefore, interviewing them is a means to reach out to one of the many systems of understanding reality as a Black woman – including my own. My Black feminist and Decolonial interpretation of autoethnography is one deeply concerned with the embodied experiences of Black women and their diasporic and temporal consciousness which, to me, demands a closer look into the validity of concepts such as objectivity in the humanities and social sciences. Especially taking into account how objectivity not only in the exact sciences, but also in the humanities and social sciences have historically meant epistemological (when not ontological) erasure for different groups.

It is through the desire of understanding what happened to me in the process of making this work, how the field has surprised me in a number of ways and how people *may have read* me as I *read* them (simultaneously constructing an image of one another) that I arrive at Autoethnography's shore. As the person and face behind these written words I feel the urgency to confess I am not the all knowing author and to briefly borrow Donna Haraway's words, I do not have any "god tricks" of an all encompassing vision to perform, quite the contrary (1988, 582). I have made plenty of mistakes in tentatively crafting this research, and I can only hope to acknowledge my own faults while in the field – with the hopes of learning from them. In this section, I shall describe some of the joys and difficulties of making this work while also elaborating a little more on what the field was like, and how I got to the places where I could

meet my future interviewees. Finally, I can write despite the fear of vulnerability by using the first person singular: *I*.

IV.   Chapter Four: The (dis)contents of being a Third-World researcher in Europe

History has it that when the Portuguese came to Brazil they tried to build an amicable relation with the natives at first. Not only the Portuguese but other European travelers, as the French, exchanged small goods in return for the native's work: for the extraction of Pau-Brazil (a type of wood) Europeans would offer to native Brazilians "linen and wool garments, hats, knives, mirrors, combs, and scissor[s]" (Dodge 2018, 7). I am particularly invested in this historical narrative since I learned about it at school, as a child, because I have changed and so did my initial thoughts about it. I stopped seeing that as just the past, and started realizing that it can be analyzed from radically diverging angles. For instance, one could look at the material relationship developed there foreshadowing the change into slavery that would come sooner than later, an unfair exchange doomed to end in exploitation. Another could interpret the apparent friendliness of the natives as an act of symbolic economy as well – where the small goods received were treated as important gifts and valuable rewards for their work and knowledge. In my case I am more inclined to paying attention to the metaphorical sphere of that that colonial encounter where two different value systems collided and a mirror, an item that can symbolize confirmation of existence and knowledge of oneself (in terms of Western knowledge of what being is), was handed down. The metaphorical implication is remarkable because the Brazilian natives could only see themselves through an object offered by Europeans. Likewise, as a child I learned about Brazilian history from the perspective of the colonizers.

I was told that before the Portuguese came and discovered Brazil there was nothing, apparently, no history, no written word and no existence: a new world. At school I was also taught about

Black Africans that were brought to Brazil from their lands and subsequently enslaved. I was not told from where exactly in Africa they were from or what languages they would speak, what beliefs they held or had happened to them once slavery had been declared illegal. Only much later I would understand that this was "probably the predominant migration event in the 18th and 19th centuries" where "an estimated 12 million people were forced from mainly western Africa to the New World" and that such violent and horrifying act would have significant and long-lasting consequences (Koser 2007, 2).

Fast-forward to my undergrad where I was taught the cannon of Sociology, Anthropology and Political Science through the classics, those that make up the foundation of Social Sciences, all Western white male authors; if sometimes white women's work, such as Margaret Mead's "Sex and Temperament" (1953), would be included it would usually be in Anthropology. Around the third semester, I learned about Brazilian scholars and critical thinkers that had taken upon themselves the task of unveiling Brazil from the perspective of Brazilians, finally. Albeit, for reasons foreign to me at the time, even the Brazilian canon still did not include either Black Brazilians or native Brazilians (or most minorities for that matter) and instead they were objects of study. In retrospective I acknowledge that I was seeing but not from my own perspective.

In the first chapter of "Black Skin White Masks" ([1952] 2008) Frantz Fanon writes that "every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards" (2008, 9). The overall content of what Fanon proposes affects me profoundly and I can understand how the educational system I grew up in had adopted a Euro-American standpoint. That is to say I learned about colonization, Brazil, race, gender, and class as if I am

not directly caught up by those words combined and as if these categories were natural and have always existed. In that sense, I consider Mohanty's suggestion that "there can, of course, be no apolitical scholarship" as an important call which indicates I must critically assess not only the educational system in Brazil, but my own work as well (1984, 334).

I direct my inquiring gaze to my work as a political space where I can see myself standing, a Black Brazilian woman doing research in Europe. When I hold the mirror of Western knowledge – as the first inhabitants of Brazil held in their hands – what do I see? When I look at other Black women and men from the Global North and they sometimes ask me if I am Black – what do I see? When from time to time white people from the Global South and North do not even bother asking me, but instead *tell me* I am *not* that Black – I am mixed, I am this or I am that, anything *but* Black – what do I see?

I am given Western tools to think, elaborate and write about what I love and believe in from a historical perspective in the current world. I am privileged enough to also be rewarded in exchange for my work, even though I come from a underprivileged family with no savings who could never afford such investment. I am from the northern part of Brazil, comprised of the North and Northeast which are historically the poorest regions of the country. According to the 2018 socio-economical report published by IBGE the "most vulnerable […] specific groups" in Brazil are "women, Black or mixed-race people, young people and the population with lower levels of instructions", the report also revealed that "about half (47%) of Brazilians below the poverty line were from the Northeast […] where people earn less than US\$ 1.90 […] per day" (IBGE 2019, 24; 58). In that context of financial limitations and a series of unfavorable variables, I was privileged enough to have a white mother who believed education was a priority and with a lot of help from my grandmother, she raised my sister and I to walk the path of learning as a means to improve our lives.

My mother, Maria Alvilmar Nogueira Varela, was aware that education can be a very powerful tool to gain leverage for those at the bottom of the socio-economical pyramid. My mother is not an exception, take for instance "This Bridge Called My Back" (1983) and specifically Cherie Moraga's "La guera", where her mom strictly instructs her to have an education as a way to not live the same life she did, as a way to avoid having a "difficult" life, a life of financial constraints (Moraga 1983, 27 - 34). Or consider Audre Lorde's mother in "Zami: A New Spelling of My Name" (1993, 21 - 31) who insisted that all of her three daughters be educated, learn how to read and learn how to write to be able to get a decent job as the children of migrant parents. For poor families of color, access to education has in it a promise: the possibility of going up a *very material* ladder. Similarly, a statistic study published by OECD in 2019 reveals that in Brazil "a tertiary education is associated with better employment outcomes for both men and women" and in "2018, about 82% of tertiary-educated young women (25-34 year-olds) were employed, compared to 63% of those with upper secondary education and only 45% of those without upper secondary education" (OECD 2019, 3). The possibility of socially ascending, I believe, is the main reason for my mother's investment in our education, as she comparatively had a more stable income once she was able to join the formal labor market than my grandmother who had to work informally as a seamstress to provide for her children after my grandfather left her to start a new family.

I understand my almost-never-present black father and my lack of knowledge about the black part of my family, his family, as one of the elements that move me to do this research. That part of my growing up a black girl in an underprivileged white family turned into the will to know more about Black women, therefore, more about me (this work is intrinsically connected to the parts of who I am and what I hope to become). This context is especially important as a form of acknowledgement of how seriously I take what I do personally and professionally, symbolically as well as materially. So, if this is my work then this is what gives me meaning

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and hope, and I give it purpose – the *mirror* becomes mine. In this section my concern with positionality finds its strongest expression and I am able to reflect upon the happiness and discontent of being chosen and choosing, knowing quite well that I am not an innocent bystander in my own narrative.

I shall critically engage with the problem of positionality through the use of anecdotes about the fieldwork trying to recollect, as accurately as possible, my impression of those events and how they made me think and feel. My inspiration for using anecdotes as a form of story-telling comes from three different sources: the first is "O ofício do etnólogo" (1978) by Brazilian Anthropologist Roberto Da Matta, the second is "Black women, writing and identity" by Caribbean-American scholar and writer Carole Boyce-Davies (1994), and the third is Grada Kilomba's, Afro-Portuguese author and artist, episodic form of narrative in "Plantation Memories" (2019). All of the authors aforementioned use anecdotes differently, Da Matta (1987) speaks specifically of the researcher that ought to play roles in the field and the anecdotes that come afterwards in the attempt to disguise the "human and phenomenological side" of how subjective doing research really is. Boyce-Davies (1994) and Kilomba (2019), comparatively use their anecdotes/episodes of racism/sexism with the intent to explain Black women's diasporic experiences where race, gender and class are met with other variables such as nation, aesthetic and sexuality. Boyce-Davies (1994), for instance discusses being surprised while doing research in Brazil and not finding a single book written by Afro-Brazilian women writers in book shops. By retelling her memories she starts to assess and reconstruct the reasons for the marginality of Black women's writings as a systematic and structural issue. Similarly, I am assessing the notes, diary entries, and memories I have of some of the experiences I had while in the field from 2019 to 2020 in order to investigate how this work has affected me while paying close attention to what roles I may have played in return.

Being Black

While in Berlin to do fieldwork on May 31st 2019, I was invited to a birthday party. The person who invited me, a white Berliner, introduced everyone before we sat down on two empty seats and started talking. About an hour later, one of the guests I had met before (a white man with long blond hair) came in our direction and started talking to my friend. At one point the man turned to me asking "Oh, right, I forgot your name, sorry, you had one of those African names, didn't you?" the friend who had invited me immediately turned red and said to the man he should not have asked that. We looked to one another and I just had the energy to reply that my name was Jéssica. The man, perhaps noticing what he had done or not, said he was sorry and explained he was a bit drunk. After he left my friend apologized for putting me in that situation, and although I said it was *ok*ay, the whole incident left a strong impression on me. Following Sara Ahmed's steps in "Cultural Politics of Emotion" (2014) I would like to propose briefly thinking about the word impression and its possible applications in the experience above.

As Ahmed (2014) describes the word impression can have an interesting variety of meanings in different contexts. According to Ahmed forming an impression "might involve acts of perception and cognition as well as an emotion" where "not only do I have an impression of others, but they also leave me with an impression; they impress me, and impress upon me" (2014, 6). I find Ahmed's framing of the word impression valuable because as she argues it averts the "analytical distinctions between bodily sensation, emotion and thought as if they could be 'experienced' as distinct realms of human 'experience'" (2014, 6). To me, it seems like the white man who said I "had one of those African names" was under the impression that I represented a whole continent. I suppose that my Black African heritage and I merged into one in his view which is a rather complicated thought process.

I believe it is productive to picture the impossibility of the reverse happening because Whiteness is not marked, consequently imagined to be *universal* as well as diverse. Whiteness unlike Blackness is not seen as culturally or ethnically bound to one geographical, national or historical origin, therefore Whiteness can be anything it may desire. Although one could argue that Europe can sustain a similar role to that of Africa in the man's assumption about my name, a scene where a Black woman says to a white man "Oh, you had one of those European names, didn't you?" sounds implausible because Europe is not imagined in the same racialized, reductionist and stigmatizing way that Africa has been historically and discursively constructed. As Grada Kilomba proposes "racism is not biological, but discursive. It functions through a discursive regime, a chain of words and images that by association become equivalents: African – Africa – jungle wild – primitive – inferior – animal – monkey" (2019, 75). Hypothetically, to that man and in that moment my name, my appearance and the African continent were one indistinguishable part of a whole. His assumption about my name, and thereof, about me, confirms what the African-American educator Anna Julia Cooper had already elaborated in the originally published 1892 essay "A Voice from the South" ([1892] 2007). Cooper wrote "only the BLACK WOMAN can say 'when and where I enter, in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and without suing or special patronage, then and there the whole *Negro race enters with me*" (2007, 117, italics in the original).

Being uncomfortable

Another incident that left a strong impression on me happened on the 21st of June 2019 while I was trying to do an interview in an open air café called Zuckerbaby in Richardplatz, Neukölln. The person I was supposed to interview arrived a little later than the time agreed and after greeting each other and sitting down, we conversed shortly about our respective day. Slowly, the café that was empty before started becoming fuller. The person who had agreed to converse with me looked around as I kept talking about the terms of the interview. I remember saying

she did not have to answer any questions she did not feel comfortable with, for example. Shortly after that she *asked me* if I did not feel discomfort being there and talking about race amid white people who could be listening. I was caught off guard: I had spent so much time preparing for our meeting before, and thinking about the best way to explain that I did not want to make her feel uncomfortable, that I apparently had not considered that the location itself could make people uneasy. I confessed to her that that had not crossed my mind up until that point. I had not thought about how comfortable she would feel to discuss her life in the space where we were supposed to talk, and I had not visited it prior to our meeting either. I was under the impression that the place would not be a problem, but I was wrong.

It is not as if I had not read before about instances where the researcher is taken by surprise, quite the opposite, in the fieldwork/interview anything can seemingly happen – as in life – and many things are outside of the researcher's sight; justifying "the need to be aware of the social life of stories that extend beyond the interview" (Narayan and George 2012). Feminist research in particular problematizes how interpreting can lead to a series of narrative misunderstandings between interviewer and interviewee, how a feminist critique of Oral history can actually offer insights on Feminism itself, and how off the record conversations can potentially be an opportunity to clear possible misunderstandings between the parts involved (Borland 1998; Gluck 2013; Jones-Gailani 2017). In spite of what I considered to be my best effort to listen vulnerably during the interviews, I still had my fair share of faults in a couple occasions, this being one of the most remarkable. With the benefit of hindsight now, I can imagine that I could have somehow predicted the possibility that someone could feel as uncomfortable as the person I was supposed to interview had felt. I had the impression that because I did not feel discomfort discussing race amid whiteness no one else would feel or think differently, but this experience showed me otherwise. Of course, since I was the person interviewing and not the one supposed to be answering questions I felt more at ease than if the roles were reversed. In addition, one

could argue that two Black women conversing openly about race, gender, class and other structural issues might, unfortunately, attract not only unwanted eavesdropping in what clearly is a private conversation, but also some other form of unsolicited intervention from others.

In the end, I explained to the person that though I did not feel the same way, we could go elsewhere if she preferred, which we did. I was grateful that the person had the courage to speak up about what she was thinking and feeling, because through this experience I became aware of the politics of space/place during interviews in a phenomenological sense. While I may not have been able to offer up more than changing places in this particular occasion, I started reflecting on where Black women may feel more comfortable at in order to converse with me. I learned to ask at the beginning of all interviews (in public spaces) if the interviewee felt okay in the place we were at, and I believe that too became a vital part of my vulnerable listening.

Being inside... out

Considering Ahmed's (2014) phenomenological frame of the word "impression" I would like to analyze the following anecdotes which represent two different moments of my fieldwork in Berlin. In both situations I am directly questioned as to my self-identification as a Black woman, especially considering my nationality. My main argument is that I was read by both Black women as somewhat outside the spectrum of Blackness as a light-skinned Black person specifically from Brazil, which I assume is one of the reasons for them to ask me *if* I do identify as Black. I imagine both of them had different expectations for questioning me in this regard and I adapted my position accordingly, hoping that my answer would be sufficient in addressing their concerns.

On the 1ˢᵗ of June 2019, I participated in one of the first summer events of the year organized by a Black feminist group in Berlin. On that day I had the opportunity to meet many of the people I would interview later including this person that initially questioned me, who is a dark-

skinned African-American woman with whom I became friends later. She shared with me that she had heard a couple of things about Brazil's problem with racial identification as we were walking. She told me that her partner was half Brazilian and that though in Europe he was read as Latino the same did not happen in Brazil where he was seen as white. She knew that many Brazilians were Black, but she was surprised that her partner would pass as white. I tried to offer some insight on it from a historical perspective as an *insider*, and I recall at some point saying something along the lines of "as a Black woman" to which she replied "So, you identify as a Black woman?" I remember feeling hurt by the question. I was not quite sure I understood why I was being asked that, so I just confirmed and continued the point I was making. Only afterwards, as I wrote about it my field journal, I stopped to think about the conversation and its content, realizing I occupied a very liminal position. This liminal position was again problematized while I was on the field, but the second time it happened it was through a question posed by an Afro-Brazilian woman whom I had contacted on-line in order to interview.

On the 21st of February 2020, I was arranging the details for interviewing Victoria, an Afro-Brazilian young woman I had virtually met through a Brazilian community on Facebook. Victoria, whose growing up in Brazil and views of life I would later realize were rather similar to my own, was very friendly and welcoming to my proposal of meeting face to face. Her questioning me as to my Blackness did not hurt me as the experience before did, and it indeed motivated me to engage in conversation with her. I will transcribe and translate the message I received from Victoria which said: "Just a question! Lately I have been hearing from many Brazilians that Blacks who are not dark-skinned aren't really Black and so on! I consider myself Black, but I have the same skin tone as yours. So, I am still ok for your research, right?" I replied a couple of minutes later by affirming that it was absolutely okay, and that this was actually one of the topics I would like to approach on the research.

Why the comment from before had hurt me and this one, from Victoria, did not? Both Black women in the anecdotes above had the impression that I could see myself differently than I do. I would argue that even though both of them problematize my identity from distinct starting points there is one underlying assumption that runs its course through their questions consequently leading towards similar conclusions. That underlying assumption consists of me being a light-skinned person having passability as a mixed-race woman and as a Brazilian/Latina; thereof, I could "choose" to move away from Blackness and embrace a mixed-race Latina/Brazilian identity instead. In that sense, I got sad not because one of them was an insider to Brazilian culture, like me, and the other was not, not because one of them was dark-skinned, from the U.S, and "more authentic" than me, and the other one was light-skinned, from Brazil, therefore, just as "inauthentic" as me (though both things also crossed my mind). I also did not feel hurt by the question itself which is not novelty, be in Brazil or in Europe.

I heard from different white people in Brazil and in Europe that *I am not* Black or that I am not *that* Black, I also got thrown the term "*cappuccino girl"* by both white women and black men in Europe a couple of times, among other practices of othering/racialization that have happened throughout my life. What I mean is that occupying a threshold where I need to fend for my-*self* and the whole of the identities I try to hold together is part of my *day to day* experience. The difference between the anecdote that hurt me and the one that did not is simply that one happened first and the other later making me aware that even though I was doing research within the Black community, I would probably have to keep on arguing f*or* and *from* this liminal position I occupy for as long as necessary.

It is also worthy to connect my standpoint with that of other Black women who wrote about being put through alienating experiences such as Ika Hügel-Marshall (2008), Afro-German artist and writer, whose autobiography "Invisible Woman: Growing Up Black in Germany"

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discusses details of her encounters with white women and men who told her she was more tanned than really Black comparatively saying that she could be Italian. Audre Lorde (1993) herself in "Sister Outsider" strategically using her positionality to *write as* a "Black lesbian feminist socialist mother of two" who would "usually find [her]self a part of some group defined as other, deviant, inferior, or just plain wrong" (1993, 114); and Griffin (2012) in the Autoethnopgraphy "I AM an Angry Black Woman" where she writes about recalling "the stark moments of being […] an insider outside as well" being "always" deemed "as the 'too Black to be White' and 'too White to be Black' girl in school. The Oreo. The Zebra. The Mutt" (2012, 141). Contrasting my experience with that of the Black women whose authenticity was also put into question I understand that my discontent comes from the impression or assumption that I would not have to go through that while doing fieldwork within the Black community.

That illustrates, to me, how race and identification can seemingly confuse people in regards to one's status an outsider or as an insider. By examining that I would also like to point to the bigger problem of framing positionality in two apparently opposed concepts a-) either or (as either inside or outside) and b-) "halfie" researcher as conceptualized by Lila Abu Lughod (2008). I believe that my being a Third-World country researcher and a Black woman from an underprivileged background complicates these opposing forms of conceptualization, especially that of the "halfie" researcher that would technically escape the problem of belonging by admitting the performances involved in the *situated-ness* and fluidity of posionality. Agreeing with Maggi W.G Leung as she writes that "it is not intrinsically better or worse to be an insider or outsider in ethnographic research", I do not see my *in-between-ness* as something that hinders my research, but it is something that I acknowledge as demanding, nonetheless (2015, 9). The demands of my positionality are trespassed by class, gender, race, coloniality and migration which in turn become the core of my reluctance to self-define as a "halfie" researcher.

Developed by Lila Abu-Lughod in "Writing Against Culture" (2008) a "halfie" researcher is a term coined to designate the complexities of positionality within Anthropology. Through it Abu-Lughod answers the question of "what happens when the 'other' that the anthropologist is studying is simultaneously constructed as, at least partially, a self?" (2008, 53). Abu-Lughod proposes looking at "positionality, audience, and the power inherent in distinctions of self and other" by juxtaposing Feminist theory and the Anthropology as partial forms of knowledge that stand on "shifting ground" (2008, 53). The "halfie" researcher would, then, be someone who willingly faces the problem of bridging the gap between "a being who must stand apart from the Other" and "the outside [as] a position within a larger political-historical complex" in visible terms (2008, 53). I understand that Abu-Lughod strategically uses the term to represent herself as well, as seen in the "Afterword" of the 30th anniversary edition of "Veiled Sentiments" (2016) where analyzes her own position in the field as a researcher "of Arab and Muslim origin" whose "father was Palestinian Arab" and who "had spent important childhood years in Egypt and summers with relatives in Jordan", though coming of age "mostly in the United States" with a U.S born mother (2016, 264). A close application of the term can also be seen in Binaya Subedi's (2006) article "Theorizing a 'halfie' researcher's identity in transnational fieldwork" where Subedi himself claims the "halfie status" as "derived from living in two different countries (Nepal and the United States) for an equal amount of time" (2006, 574).

Interestingly, Abu-Lughod (2016) ultimately reviews her own concept by indicating that it "is inadequate to describe our complex identities and how we move in and out of different life-worlds" and by concurring with her I would like to justify why I believe that it would be inadequate to claim the "halfie" status for myself in relation to this research. Apart from being someone who spent most of my formative years in the same city/state/country due to lack of resources, I also do not fit the mobility route of researchers who a-) return to the global south (home) to do research then go back to the global north (also home) to write or b-) perform

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indigenous research in their own communities nor c-) are born in the global north and go to the global south to do their research ultimately returning home/north to write. As a researcher with lack of resources from the Third-world and as a Black woman I identify as someone who leaves home/south to do research in the not-home/global north. Accordingly, I refuse to apply the "halfie" lenses on my own research, though valuing its contributions, because it would seemingly indicate that I am not taking into account how class privilege, coloniality and transnational mobility are interlocked in my own life-narrative making my journey as a researcher both more content and discontent. To sum, I propose that my status in the Black Diaspora is one that figuratively turns me inside out by forcing me out of my liminal space from within Black womanhood and not only from outside. My liminal *being* consists of a process of constantly re-evaluating my positionality from within each identity or each soul, if you will.

Being outside

I am linked to the problem of Black women's diasporic consciousness as an Afro-Brazilian migrant woman. I came to Europe as a scholarship recipient in 2018, and since, then, I have constantly been thinking about the manifold narratives that my being here engenders. On the one hand, I am incredibly privileged considering that a-) I am receiving top education and doing something I love b-) I would never be able to afford the necessary costs of studying in Europe if not for the scholarship I am granted and c-) I get to learn (professionally and personally) by living in and getting to know different countries and cultures. On the other hand, I am *othered* by a-) situations of racism, sexism and harassment that occur since I arrived (which does not mean similar things did not happen before when I was in Brazil, I would say that the constellation of power itself differs) and b-) bureaucratic practices such as showing my passport/residence permit to authorities which leads me to c-) having to pay attention to how I present myself in the authorities' eyes.

My self-awareness has been construed over the course of years through a series of uneasy exchanges with the immigration police where I am asked a series of questions that I must answer thoroughly, truthfully and carefully. For instance, on the 7th of August 2019, while returning from a trip in Lisbon, I noticed that some people of color were asked to step out of the line where passports and flight tickets were being checked. One of them apparently had the hand-luggage bigger than the size allowed by the company. The other two were a man and a woman with their young child that seemingly had some problem boarding with their stroller. When my turn came I showed my passport and my ticket but the flight attendant asked me to step aside as well. He took my passport in his hands and in clear Portuguese accent said "So, you are from Brazil and you entered Europe a year ago? Why? Do you have any permission to be here?" to which I replied "Yes, I am studying here" while nervously looking for my Hungarian residence permit in my bag. I remember feeling vexed as if I had done something wrong. After handling my permit, the white male Portuguese flight attendant slowly inspected the document "July 2019?" he asked himself still looking at it. With a last glance to the document he said "Oh, expiring in July 2020, okay" giving me back the permit and passport and finally letting me board the plane.

There are already several things can be assumed from that. Some could point to border/passport checking as a common practice that is randomly assigned to different people by different people. Implicit in that assumption is the belief that randomly assigned checks are colorblind which recent research in Europe indicates is not (Thalhammer et. al 2001; Open Society 2009). In "Global Lockdown" (2013) scholar and activist Julia Sudbury presents a concept I find useful briefly introducing in this discussion related to power structures, rights to mobility and international capital. She defines "global lockdown" as a notion that does not "suggest the existence of a universal and undifferentiated global carceral regime" but as a "term to evoke the antiglobalization movement's critique of global capital and U.S. corporate dominance"

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(Sudbury 2013, xii). Sudbury proposes that "globalization and free trade have generated borders that are (selectively) porous" wherein race, class, gender, marital status, sexuality and citizenship status can potentially hinder or leverage one's mobility (2013, xx). She considers that "anxieties about nonsanctioned border crossings have led wealthy nations to expand the reach of their policing and surveillance operations" (Sudbury 2013, xx). The toughening of such operations have severe consequences both inside and outside the nation-state as it is the case with "the war on drugs" which according to Sudbury "has been mobilized by the United States as the basis for a globalized buildup of surveillance, policing, and border control mechanisms" (2013, xxii). These two elements (the war on drugs and the toughening of borders) must also be taken as part of an infrastructure connected with the so-called war on terror which simultaneously reflects and sustains structural forms of racial violence. As Fatima El-Tayeb (2011) describes in "European Others":

> Structural violence against minorities takes various forms; some of them, such as racial profiling by the police, are at times subjects of public debates, while others remain completely invisible (and therefore are arguably even more effective). Often these forms of violence take place in the context of the regulation of mobility in the "national interest" as the criminalization of unregulated migration makes incarceration appear more and more as simply a type of legitimate population management. From the discourse around the threat posed by illegal immigrants follows a practice that unselfconsciously ties the access to full human rights to being Western and white. (El-Tayeb 2011, 24)

The risk of crossing borders as a Third-World country researcher and as a Black woman is that if I make a mistake – depending on the case even if I do not make any mistakes – my entry and existence in that space is threatened. So, I must learn to be *extra* prepared and have all my documents at hands, I must learn to speak in my best imitation of the General American English accent, and to, at the same time, *act naturally*. Through the bureaucratic *othering*, in particular, I am reminded (as if I could suddenly forget) that I am the other and that I *do not belong*. Many

of the Afro-Brazilian women I interviewed also expressed feeling anxious over their border crossing experiences as well as with having to go to the immigration office in Berlin in person. They problematized the treatment they received from some of the immigration officers and one of them recalled being shouted at in one of her trips there.

It is important to mention that European people of color are also constantly subjected to such bureaucratic *othering*. The expectation that Europe is synonym with whiteness systematically targets people of color, European and non-European alike, as demonstrated by the report "Ethnic Profiling in the European Union" (2009). The report looks at different Eastern and Western European countries noting that "police are especially likely to stop people who 'look foreign'—even as the number of persons of minority appearance who are in fact naturalized or native-born citizens has significantly increased" (2009, 46) This tactic of othering people of color visibly affects Black European people and also constitutes a pervasive re-enacting of colonial scenes pointed out by Grada Kilomba in "Plantation Memories" (2019).

In the fifth chapter of "Plantation Memories" Kilomba (2019) cleverly articulates that the problematic of othering Black people face in Europe cannot be reduced to an equation where the white subject is an insider, therefore entitled to belonging in *all* spaces, and the black subject is an outsider, at *all* times and *everywhere*. As Kilomba (2019) analyzes the episodic case of Alicia an Afro-German woman frequently othered by white Germans who repeatedly ask where she is from as to mark their disbelief that she is German. Many of my interviewees who were born in Germany reported going through similar experiences where white Germans would assume they were foreigners and sometimes praise their German level or ask them where they were from and after they said they were Germans, my interviewees would be asked where were *their* parents from. Kilomba (2019) identifies the practices of othering perpetuated by white Germans as an act of violence that places Alicia as an outsider because in the social imaginary

she could not exist as both Black and German. Her being questioned over and over means in Kilomba's words a re-staging of colonial relations of power where Alicia was "looked ad and questioned because she is expected to justify her presence in *white* territory" (Kilomba 2019, 66, italics in the original).

While considering the complexity of bureaucratic practices of othering, I find it relevant to add that my status as a Third world Black woman doing fieldwork in Europe illustrates only a small fraction of structures and hierarchies of movement. In a world where international mobility constitutes a form of privilege, I hope my arguing over it does not overlook the harsher realities that oppressions of gender, race, class, and sexuality engender as different peoples fight for survival daily. I can consider myself one of the fortunate ones to have been able to come this far and to speak about the kind of violence that I am exposed to by being who I am, as in the airport anecdote. But that does not mean that I want to contribute to the belief that there is not much work left to be done in shattering the illusion of meritocracy in capitalism. In other words, I must acknowledge the position I hold and attempt to point to other parts of the power structures that more aggressively menace the existence and survival of different people. Either by omission or through direct violent acts, institutional forms of Anti-Black racism quite literally endanger the lives of Black folks in different fronts. Aligned with other mechanisms of exclusion such as transphobia, lack of accessibility and misogyny, systematic anti-Black racism is an urgent issue that needs to be reckoned with on all possible levels.

One could easily look at my airport anecdote and claim that if I made it this far, then things must not be as problematic as argued, and to that I would contest it is quite the contrary. As Silvio Almeida (2018) points out racism is structural and structuring, meaning that it is interwoven in the very fabric of institutions as much as in day-to-day individual relations, and although the later tends to be more visible the former naturalizes power imbalances. As a Black

Feminist from the Third-World I recognize Law enforcement as one of the main apparatuses of structural violence that disproportionately threatens the right to life and mobility of Black folks. The problem with Law enforcement and anti-Blackness racism is not necessarily new, and yet research done by scholars, such as law philosopher Silvio Almeida (2018) and sociologist Vilma Reis (2005) in Brazil, and critical race scholars in the U.S as Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) and Michelle Alexander (2010), demonstrate that its pervasiveness is not only historically visible throughout, but pressing to dismantle. Therefore, Law enforcement is part and parcel of structural racism and one of its strongest institutional manifestations from racial profiling in the streets and in borders, to the unfair and unequal assessment of cases by the Justice system, and the critical number of deaths of Black folks in the hands of Law enforcement authorities. Even though it is demanding, both emotionally and physically, to argue over the problematic of violence I wish to state here in this space, where I can talk about my positionality, that Black lives matter.

I want to remember the names of my Black sisters and brothers whose lives were violently taken in Brazil. From the more recent case of the murder of João Pedro, a 14-year-old Black boy, who was shot by the federal police in his home on the 18th of May 2020[4], to the killing of eight-year-old Black girl Agatha Felix on the 20th of October in 2019[5] shot by the police as she was going back home with her mother, to the assassination of Marielle Franco[6], Afro-Brazilian left-wing politician, and Anderson Gomes her white driver on the 14th of January 2018 both shot to death, the case still remain unsolved to this date (the 30th of May, 2020), there is barely any time to mourn in the face of such systematic pain. I find that it is urgent to channel my anger and sadness in this space to also remember the lives and names of my sisters and brothers

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[4] For more information: https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/internacional/en/brazil/2020/05/14-year-old-boy-killed-at-home-during-federal-police-operation-in-rio.shtml
[5] See: https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/Police-Bullet-Kills-8-Year-Old-Girl-in-Rio-de-Janeiro-20190921-0006.html
[6] About Marielle's case: https://theintercept.com/2019/01/17/marielle-franco-brazil-assassination-suspect/

from the United States who were targeted by Anti-Black racism to death: George Floyd murdered by a white police officer on the 25th of May 2020,[7] Breonna Taylor murdered at her home on the 13th of May 2020[8], and the killing of Ahmaud Arbery as he went jogging on the 23rd of February 2020[9]. Though hard to look at all of those cases and to suffer again with each one – opening up the wound of realizing this discussion never stopped being necessary – I understand the importance of highlighting not only how frequent and how many they are in Brazil and in the U.S, but also to demand justice for *all* cases. If I am because we are, then I must not only remember the names of my sisters and brothers, I must use my anger as Audre Lorde (1993) taught in "The Uses of Anger", to say once again and for as long I can breathe: Black lives do matter.

Being responsible

Finally, I have presented four anecdotes that I hope demonstrate the relational dynamics of being read and reading people in the field under different prisms, blurring the lines that separate insider and outsider statuses. My overall argument was that I am neither a native researcher nor a complete outsider/insider in relation to the people I met. The anecdotes described, I believe, make a good case for a phenomenological and Decolonial analysis of positonality, one that is critical of its incomplete knowledge. To make the mirror of positionality mine I have to be willing to admit the risks of exposing what happened to me, my actions and reactions.

In performing the exercise of opening up these colonial wounds, I tentatively brought to the fore a variety of impressions I carried within me in the making of this research. That does not mean that the anecdotes presented here summarize everything that happened, and I do not wish to give the misleading idea that there was not a lot of joy and happiness parallel to that. In the

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[7] See: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52854025

[8] For more information: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52646460

[9] See: https://www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-52644384

making of this work I have been incredibly fortunate and content too. I have been assisted by a number of people from family to institutional support, to the generosity and kindness of my friends and complete strangers too. I felt particularly embraced by the Afro-Brazilian women I met in Berlin who made me feel close to home even though we were all in Diaspora. Izabel and Victoria welcomed me in ways I cannot be thankful enough for, and as they showed me a part of their lives and beliefs I could understand more of what resistance means in practice. I am also extremely grateful to all of the Black women I met whose generosity and honesty challenged me to reconsider my initial assumptions about Diaspora and Black womanhood. To each Black woman who agreed to talk to me and who expressed solidarity with me, a complete stranger to them, I owe the best job I can possibly do. As I am given power to interpret, I am also given the responsibility to write something that not only mirrors, but honors what I have seen, done, and studied: this is where my loyalty is. In other words, as I build this research and its narrative (interpreting the field, the interviews and myself under the guidance of different theories and methods) I am also holding myself accountable as to whether or not what I want to say and what I am actually saying is aligned.

In the next sub-section, I shall turn my analysis to the interviews I conducted while in the field. I believe that my interviewees' experiences and mine are not mimetically the same, and yet as I kept listening and learning from non-European Black women who also had suffered discrimination and violence, as well as Black European women who had faced similar situations of othering and exclusion, I realized we had indeed a shared standpoint. Listening to my interviewees' perspectives I recalled different theoretical concepts and paradigms for instance, Kimberle Crenshaw's formulation of "Intersectionality" (1989) and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's analysis in "Can the subaltern speak?" ([1988] 1993), but nothing struck me quite like the idea of consciousness did. In a thorough review of the material collected, the notes I had taken, my fieldwork journals, my own experience, and my interviewees' life-narratives I

noticed a pattern or rather a problem would often times emerge, a problem of self-definition in time and space.

It is important to note here that I am using the term "self-definition" concurring with Patricia Hill Collins's description of it in "Learning from the Outsider Within" (1986). Collins describes "self-definition" as "defining and valuing […] one's own […] standpoint in the face of images that foster a self-definition as the objectified 'other'" (1986, S18). Self-definition becomes then "an important way of resisting the dehumanization essential to systems of domination" and a form of resistance that works as a counter-discursive practice (1986, S18). In my reading, this is perhaps the first step in countering structures of power for marginalized peoples. This is where I found that my interviewees' life experiences challenged not only notions of what national/gender/racial identity is, but also of belonging and otherness in terms of Diaspora. Accordingly, I crafted my analysis in terms of what would seem to defy some elements in the intersection of critical race studies and gender studies. By saying that, I do not mean to discredit or delegitimize such traditions of critical thinking. On the contrary, it is exactly because I recognize their insights as powerful that I choose to be engaging in a creative dialogue with both (Gender and Critical Race Studies).

In the following chapter I shall engage with Du Bois' definition of *double-consciousness* from where I will analyze Black women's diasporic consciousness in time and space. I hope to reframe and expand the theory and practice of Black Feminist counter-discourse still acknowledging that such knowledge is still embedded in structures of power.

V.   Chapter Five: Reframing double-consciousness through Black women's narratives

While many of the assumptions I had when I started this research changed once I got to the field, others were brought to the fore of my hypotheses only after I revisited what I collected.

For example, I had initially assumed that Berlin's multiculturalism would come up during some of the interviews, but only after carefully examining all of them I noticed that it was starkly present throughout. As I tentatively continued to observe what would surface and why, I stumbled upon several apparent contradictions while trying to define what Black womanhood is in terms of identity and Diaspora. A couple of the events I had the opportunity to attend also indicated that the city of Berlin itself serves as a landmark for the Black Diaspora through a series of historical events that have complex ramifications, particularly the partition of Africa in what became known as "The Berlin Conference" of 1884-5 (Kilomba 2019; Opitz 1992).

I had and afford to simultaneously answer to questions of coloniality, class, migration, language, gender, and race. After all, I wanted to understand and investigate the differences (and similarities) between the narratives of non-European and European Black women in Berlin, and this demands I describe Black womanhood and Diaspora in a historical, material and discursive way. My interviewees' different experiences navigating the city of Berlin were nuanced and layered with multiple forms of knowledge and manifold beginnings in space and time, so, I had to ask myself: how I could possibly explain the myriad of ways Black women, non-European and European, were self-defining?

I was facing a dilemma that had been elaborated in academia by scholars such as Collins (2000), and Gilroy (1993), that is, specifically the dilemma of Black people's positionality in the in-between space of Diaspora *and* the space of the nation-state. Different liberation movements had struggled with it too, as Audre Lorde summarizes in "Learning from the 1960's" (1993). While addressing her liminal position Lorde writes that "as a Black lesbian mother in an interracial marriage, there was usually some part of me guaranteed to offend everybody's comfortable prejudices of who I should be" (1993, 140). Likewise, I was provoked and called to answer questions of identity in the age of globalization best summarized by Homi Bhabha's

poignant suggestion that "globalization […] must always begin at home" (2004, xv). His claim is provocative exactly because it points to the fiction of identity as a local and/or *authentic* construct. I could see how I had found myself asking similar questions. If there is "no one universal and inevitable form of the nation" as Mrinalini Sinha argues, then the definitional challenge of trying to describe a group that is *still* in diaspora is even bigger (2017).

The transitional and unfinished aspects of the Black Diaspora came to life through the interviews, and as I reviewed the collected material I could not help but to recall Bhabha's words that "our nation-centered view of sovereign citizenship can only comprehend the predicament of minoritarian 'belonging' as a problem of ontology − a question of belonging to a race, a gender, a class, a generation becomes a kind of 'second nature,' a primordial identification, an inheritance of tradition, a naturalization of the problems of citizenship" (2004, xvii). To answer the ontological challenge that identity and (non)belonging create I propose rethinking William E. B. Du Bois' (2007) "*double-consciousness*" through the standpoint of the Black women I interviewed living in the city of Berlin.

In my reading Du Bois' "*double-consciousness*" metaphorically speaks of being Black in the West, split between different heritages and sources of knowledge. "The Souls of Black Folk" (2007) is where *double-consciousness* is introduced as a paradigm that reveals the dissonance of existing between two worlds as a "Negro" and as an "American" (2007, 7). Du Bois' conceptualization is central to my analysis because it offers critical insight on the problem of existing through contradiction, painstakingly translating different cultures and value systems *to* and *through* day-to-day life.

In the idea of consciousness it is possible to embrace the complexities of self-definition enabling me to comparatively address the diversity of the interviews I collected. What I am tentatively reframing as consciousness is my understanding of what I found at the contradictory space

Black women occupy, collectively struggling to self-define in a world order that structurally tries to undermine their political subjectivity. In that sense, I argue that a definition of Black women's standpoint in the Diaspora does not need to be homogenous to be coherent: as long as the critical exercise of self-reflexivity is constant and continuous that can be taken as a form of consciousness.

My concern with European and non-European Black women's process of self-definition has developed from my own struggles with identity which started long before I migrated. I learned about my race by being discriminated against in my own country as racism was felt through my skin, nose and hair. Racism as a form of oppression "is not simply understood in the mind" as Patricia Hill Collins has argued "it is [instead] felt in the body in myriad ways" (Collins 2000, 274). Likewise, I learned about racism by feeling it in my body, for example, when I got told that my skin would be prettier if it was fairer, and I had my nose and hair made fun of for being too big, too much. I was called by derogatory terms specifically used for Black women in Brazil and I have had to deal with the suffering those experiences brought me; in other words, racism has manifested in my life many times, and I do not know a reality where it does not exist.

People from my city and state have made me feel odd and alienated many times because of their reading of my race. I would be constantly asked if I were from the state of Bahia which statistically has the biggest concentration of Black people in Brazil, with 76,5% of the population self-declaring Black on the 2010 national census (IBGE 2010). Brazil was one of the last countries to abolish the enslavement of Black Africans, and because of the system of institutional slavery it forcibly brought more Black Africans to the country than most of the colonized regions in the New World (Conrad 1984). Historically Bahia was a big international port and market of enslaved Black African people; on the other hand Ceará was significant in the internal trade after the transatlantic commerce of people was prohibited (for a more detailed

review of the topic, please see Santos 2018, 958). Nowadays, Ceará has one of the biggest non-white (Black, Indigenous, Mixed and Asian descent) populations of Brazil, accounting for 68,3% of the total population in the state (IBGE, 2010). In 2017, I had the chance to study Black Feminism in my city, where I interviewed the members of INEGRA, a Black Feminist NGO. When I did those BA interviews, the Black women from INEGRA highlighted that they too got asked the same question: "Where are you from? Are you from Bahia?" and when as they answered they were from the state of Ceará people would react as if they were surprised.

Once I migrated to study in Europe in 2018 that aspect of *otherness* and feeling of not belonging became more salient. Which is not to say that by simply being here, in Hungary, I feel as though *I must be always* thinking about my gender, class, race and sexuality *at all times*, but that as Kilomba (2019) explains, episodes of "everyday racism" put in place "not only a restaging of the colonial past, but also […] a traumatic reality which has been neglected" (Kilomba 2019, 11). "Everyday racism" is a concept developed by Grada Kilomba, Portuguese writer and artist, in "Plantation Memories" (2019) where she analyzes the entanglements of racism, sexism and colonialism in the lives of Black women in Europe from a psychoanalytical perspective. Kilomba describes "everyday racism" as a combination of "vocabulary, discourses, images, gestures, actions and gazes" that position the Black subject as Other, as the unwelcomed body, "denied the right to exist as equal" (Kilomba 2019, 43-44).

My main argument in this last chapter is that by utilizing Du Bois' consciousness as a metaphor it is possible to further grasp how Black women may be othered whilst from the inside of the nation-state, whether the one they were born and raised into and/or the one they may have migrated to. By being repeatedly placed elsewhere it is as if Black women should always be in another place, at another time*, preferably* as colonial subjects. Thus, from Du Bois' concept I argue that Black women's diasporic consciousness is first a form of reflexivity that disputes

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space in the present, where Black women are discursively self-defining in the current times, as subjects.

My second main argument is that discursively speaking Black women are not only collectively displaced by structural racism, but by the interlocking of oppressions which affects them differently. In suggesting that I am asking what happens once Black women are othered from multiple sites simultaneously as was Audre Lorde (1993) in the example mentioned previously. To explain how race and gender co-exist with other axes of structural difference I have resorted to the theory and feminist practice of Gloria Anzaldua (1987). Self-defined U.S Third World feminist writer and poet, Gloria Anzaldua articulated an alternative form of consciousness from "the U.S.-Mexican border" [an open wound] where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds" (1987, 3).

Anzaldua argues for a "*mestiza*'s consciousness" in "Borderlands/La Frontera" (1987) by taking her own standpoint as a lesbian Chicana feminist, poet and writer; she construes a poetic and complex framework that is useful for its awareness of how identities are relational, in addition to its critical understanding of self-reflection as a contradictory (though necessary) process in the struggle for liberation (1987, 77). In building bridges between Du Bois' and Anzaldua's consciousnesses and my interviewees' standpoint I want to make the case for a distinct type of consciousness. I am arguing for Black women's diasporic consciousness as an answer against the interlocking of oppressions which try to move Black women as if they are not supposed *to be*. To counter that Black women have crafted a series of different strategies that will shift and adapt depending on the situation they may find themselves in. Therefore, Black women's diasporic consciousness is but the process of becoming political subjects whose minds, spirits and bodies are located in different times and spaces, but who come together through the similarities that underlies their experiences.

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I have divided the rest of this chapter around two sub-topics these are interwoven and do not work separately, but instead interlock into one another having different effects and creating distinct realities for the Black women involved. The first theme is that of being *wholly unknown,* a complex politico-historical process of alienation that comes over Black women, subjects whose identities are neither male nor white. Overall, I will also analyze what strategies of resistance were developed and used by some of the Black women I met at the time we conversed. I shall look at what those strategies were, how and why they may vary according to each situation and each reality experienced. To further argue for all these points I will draw from other authors who have critically dialogued with Du Bois' (2007) consciousness as well.

Finally, before turning to the interviews and my analysis of them, I would like to highlight that this work is my interpretation of what has been said to me. Consequently, as Katherine Borland's "That's not what I said" (1998) carefully advises interviewees can, of course, dispute the interviewer's reading of the material collected. The very least I can do in response to this possibility, besides acknowledging it, is to hold myself accountable for the analytical framework I am putting in place and the insights I offer through the interviews made.

Black women's Diasporic consciousness

Nataly was the first person I met during the fieldwork in 2019 and we kept in touch since. She is a young Afro-Ecuadorian student doing her BA in political studies in Berlin and I have felt a close connection with her since our first meeting due to our shared Latin American background. She was the first person I interviewed and our conversation was candid, although she told me with fierce determination that people like her were not supposed to be in Berlin.

> Jessica: […] Like, do you meet other Ecuadorian people? And how do you feel in regards to them?
> Nataly: My sister and I are the only Afro-Ecuadorian women that I know here…
> [Jessica agrees in the background]

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Nataly: My age, my generation that are also studying in the university, you know? And one of the things I know actually is that I am not supposed to be here, 'cause, yeah, in a sense you know, when you think about, like, class, intersectional class and race, I am not... You won't see actually people like me here. I come from a lower class background, I am also Black, and the reason I am here is because a German couple paid our studies, my studies. My and my sisters studies. Otherwise I wouldn't be here because I am not wealthy and I am not white *mestiza* and stuff like that, so, everybody that comes from Ecuador and are studying here are that: white *mestizos* and wealthy. So, in this sense, I am like, the exception, somehow.

It is possible to observe in Nataly's answer that being Afro-Ecuadorian was not enough for her to feel as if she had a "deep, horizontal comradeship" with other white mestizos Ecuadorians she met in Berlin (Anderson 2006, 7). As in Nataly's response many of my 13 interviewees have described feeling as if they did not fully identify with people who had the same national background as them in Berlin. The echo of Du Bois' (2007) "*double-consciousness*" can be perceived when Nataly identifies that there is a significant divergence between her and other young Ecuadorians who study abroad. She describes those differences through intersections of class, gender and race.

Whenever Nataly meets with other compatriots with whom she could possibly relate with, that identification does not build as it could since the visibility or consciousness of being different keeps this link from being made. Although Nataly acknowledges other Ecuadorians and speaks Spanish as they do, she does not necessarily identify with them because they are "wealthy white mestizos". In Nataly's perception her being in Berlin is in and of itself a remarkable exception; after all she is an Afro-Ecuadorian woman who comes "from a lower class". To me, the two-ness of what Nataly describes carries an uncanny resemblance with the two-ness captured by Du Bois' "*double-consciousness*".

Like in Nataly's case many of my interviewees' responses were permeated by reflections about difference: what it means and how it translates into daily encounters. My interviewees all came from different backgrounds and had had a myriad of experiences that otherwise would not

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necessarily connect them, and, still there were narratives and feelings that would cut across their age, sexuality, class, nationality, religion and citizenship. To name what those shared experiences consisted of is to name *the world* and *the self*. In making this argument I am keeping in mind what Audre Lorde articulated in "Poetry is not a Luxury" (1993). Lorde (1993) elaborates on the need to name the parts of ourselves we not yet have words for, and she places it as a foundational part of resisting structures of oppression. Inspired by Lorde's words I would like to reframe consciousness and describe what Black women's diasporic consciousness is: the possibility of naming a non-homogenous group that has a common standpoint. For example, some of my interviewees preferred to self-define by questioning the need to label themselves as pertaining to identity categories in general. Izabel was one of them.

An Afro-Brazilian art-activist from the Northeast of Brazil (Pernanbuco), Izabel welcomed me into her home and our conversation was thoughtful and long, as she explained her previous background training with different social movements in Brazil and her current position in Berlin. Izabel described herself in terms that were carefully thought and I could see that every word she used was intentional.

> Jessica: I would like to ask you actually how do you identify, […] how would you describe yourself?
>
> Izabel: Me? I always describe myself as a Black woman […] It is so complex because all the time we are, somehow, at least me, I go dissolving myself into other things because I don't believe these static things that people create and I have little faith too in identities though I use them too and I know that they are part of a political process of breaking paradigms but I don't, I don't really use identities anymore this is why I tell you now, I am Izabel and I am *sapatão* this is one of the identities I use most often in my life, it is like it is my real DNA in truth, I am a *sapatão* and then I am a Black woman, and I am this thing. This thing that, it is not accepted, not liked and unacceptable in this society, this is me.

Izabel's lack of faith in identities does not conflate over her consciousness of the productive potential that identities have as part of a collective political process. In parallel to the complexity of describing oneself Izabel's answer suggests she sees that there are two aspects of herself that

still remain even if she is not using identities anymore. When Izabel states "this is why I tell you now, I am Izabel and I am a *sapatão* and then I am a Black woman" she is powerfully self-defining, carving out a self that, according to her, is her "real DNA".

In Brazil, *sapatão* is a term that has been historically used to offend and shame same-sex loving women, but that has recently been reclaimed by same-sex loving women as a means to re-signify the word and its application. As argued by Ariana Mara da Silva (2018) in "Soterópolis sapatônica: arte negra decolonial", the word *sapatão* could be somewhat equivalent to dyke or butch. Although, *Sapatão* is a term is used exclusively in Brazil both in its previous purpose (to shame) and its current reinterpretation (to designate same-sex loving women). Agreeing with Mara da Silva (2018), I would like to place *sapatão* as a potential Decolonial practice of self-definition by offering another example.

During a different moment of my conversation with Izabel she corrected me when I accidently described her as a lesbian. She said: "I am not a lesbian, I am a *sapatão"*. Izabel then further problematized the ways in which in Berlin all non-heterosexual identities would fall into the umbrella term "queer" when there are significant differences between and among non-heterosexual Black people, people of color and white people. Izabel's defines her positionality while reflecting on two very important spheres of knowledge: a-) her identity as a *sapatão* Black woman which leads to b-) seeking Decolonial practices of resistance through Afro-Brazilian history. One of the sources of resistance Izabel mentioned is Candomblé, an Afro-Brazilian religion that shares several elements with West-African Yoruba traditions. These practical instances reveal the Decolonial potential not only of the term *sapatão* (in its differential meaning compared to other words that were negatively used to define same-sex loving women), but of the singularity of growing up as a Black Latin American woman that comes from a radically distinct Black tradition. Thus, in deploying the metaphor of consciousness as a

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framework to reflect upon black women's self-definition I am stretching the very concept of consciousness from its origins, so it can embrace different experiences of Black womanhood.

Stretching the metaphor of consciousness makes it possible to better understand how and why Black women subjectively interpret their own environment and their identity. For instance, Afro-Germans unlike African-Americans do not share the "metaorigin" of the transatlantic slave trade (and the subsequent chattel enslavement of Black Africans) as a temporal reference from which to think about themselves (Wright 2010, 71; Opitz et. al 1992; Wright 2003; Lennox 2016). By claiming this I am not implying that there is no relation between Afro-Germans and African-Americans, there certainly is. Perhaps the most visible tie between both Black heritages aforementioned is that black soldiers from the United States based in Germany at the time of the Second World War fathered children with German women. Black children born after the end of the war became known as "war babies" and some of them were later able to claim their dual citizenship (Kraft 2020 ; Fehrenbach 2005; Hügel-Marshall 2008; Muniz de Faria, Yara-Colette 2003).

In this sense, Black Germans may identify in relation to the notion of war babies, for instance, or to other notions of Blackness from other parts of the world (as some of my interviewees did when self-defining). Therefore, a black German woman may interpret Black womanhood differently than an African-American woman, although they will likely also have convergent views on what it means to be a black woman. Similarly, a black woman from Cameroon who migrates to Berlin will most likely be informed by a particular notion of Black womanhood that differs from that of the black German and the African-American in some aspects, but converges significantly in others. This is not to suggest, as well, that black women who have the unfortunate event of the transatlantic slave trade as a common point will construct identical notions of Black womanhood, what I am proposing is the existence of a constant dialogue

between local and global notions. Each black woman has her own temporal orientation and comes from a differently rich Black heritage that may have other references than the transatlantic slave trade. As in the case of Lena, a young model and content creator from Kenya who has been living in Germany for nine years.

Lena is one of the people I met while in one of the events organized by the Black community in 2019. Having the chance to converse with her was quite insightful as I learned about her life in Berlin, her work at the fashion industry, the love she has for Kenya (Lena's home-country) and her African identity. Lena told me that at first she had a difficult time while in Germany, and she explained that in addition to the looks she received, she was being constantly reminded she did not belong which had a negative impact on her.

> Jessica: So, could you, please, hum, tell me a little more about the beginning like when you first moved here? How was it for you…
> Lena: Yeah, hum, I lived in Dusseldorf with my father in conservative Germany and it was very hard for me as a Black person there… It was very hard, people would ask every day every time "where do you come from? what are you doing here?" and it's like a constant daily reminder you don't belong here. Just even the way they look at you, it's just like [pause] what's wrong? And for me it was so crazy because I came from Africa where everybody looks the same and nobody is asking there where they come from, and, then coming here was like the first time in life I kind of got to identify as African, because this was part of me I never thought about it, until I came here. [...] I even never even for a moment was sitting down and thinking like "I look different" or "my skin is dark" or "my hair is nappy". No. And then I come here and people look at you, and you're like whoa. I remember I used to cry, because I felt sad, from the first point, because I felt that people were looking down upon me, like, "oh, you're from Africa, can you read?" or "oh, are you born and raised in Africa, like, oh can you operate some machine?" or maybe, just the most dumbest stuff they make you feel like "oh, you are born and raised in Africa and you come here!" it's like…hum… you are like *time traveling* from before civilization.

In Lena's quote above it is possible to identify several problems that being othered imposes on both non-European black women and European black women. In Lena's case being repeatedly asked where she was from created a sense of not belonging that was experienced through sadness and alienation. When Lena says she used to cry because she was placed as an outsider this does not refer *only* to her status as a migrant Black woman, but to people's ideas about the

place she comes from. Lena was confronted with images Germans have of Black Africans, images that did not mirror the reality and the knowledge she has of her home. This act of careful reflection on why she was being othered led Lena to notice for the first time the weight of being recognized as an African. This recognition did not come through Lena's own eyes which have a positive image of Kenya; her self-definition originates from an embracing and empowering gaze upon the beauty and difficulties of coming from there.

In "Black Feminist Thought" (2000) Collins explores some of the stereotypes or "controlling images" which reveal the "ideological dimension of oppression" that exists in the U.S and consequently mark African-American women negatively; I believe an alternative version of that can be observed here (Collins 2000, 22). By being othered through harmful stereotypes Lena felt as though in the eyes of Germans her being in Dusseldorf represented not only a change of place, but a change of time. The intersection of different power structures voiced through the Germans Lena had encountered at that point placed her in a distinct time and space altogether. From the twenty-first century Lena was dislocated to the colonial site Black Africans occupy in the everyday imagination of coloniality. Lena was not the only one of my interviewees who said they felt as if they were *outsiders* while in Berlin.

Black Germans who were born and raised in the city also shared similar experiences to that Lena described during the interviews. In my reading that begins to map the problem with assuming that one will feel at home in their own country, in addition to putting into question the belief that being born and growing up in the same nation/place/city will guarantee that people will belong: they may still be placed as *outsiders*. I am using this term as a way to refer to Patricia Hill Collins's sociological concept of "outsiders within" (1986). Albeit, Collins coins the concept to discuss specifically African-American women's positionality, her text reveals

the possibilities of Standpoint Theory in its assessment of the knowledge created by different communities as valid ways of knowing.

In "Learning from the Outsider Within" (1986) Collins describes how African-American women were both insiders and outsiders in different spaces in the United States. On the one hand, by working as domestic workers for wealthier white families where they were treated almost *as if* they were a part of the family, but reality demonstrated that "in spite of their involvement, they remained 'outsiders' (1986, S14). On the other hand, African-American women were also being marginalized within the African-American community "unlike Black men" who could "use a questionable appeal to manhood to neutralize the stigma of being Black" (1986, S19). Consequently, Collins suggests that African-American women were both in and out those two groups as they were also in and out Feminist theory and African-American studies.

Collins (1986) work on the concept of "outsiders within" strongly resembles Du Bois' (2007) "*double-consciousness"* through her assessment of African-American women as existing in the intersection of different communities. In contrast to Collins (1986) concepts and the context of the United States, the women I conversed with all identify as Black women, but none of them come from the United States. Their experiences may be somehow connected to the U.S construction of Black womanhood, but they (my interviewees) are outside the African-American historical spectrum which can be considered a risky and challenging aspect of dislocating the concept of consciousness outside the U.S. In that sense my work is tentatively following the steps of one of the most memorable scholars to reframe Black consciousness in Europe, namely, Paul Gilroy through "The Black Atlantic" (1993).

Considering the U.S and the UK through the space of the Atlantic as the meeting point of dispersion and encounter of Black African culture, Gilroy (1993) traces the intellectual history

of consciousness and how it is differently translated once it is adapted by a variety of thinkers (1993). Gilroy's understanding of double consciousness is a pan-Africanist one that can be applied to the whole of the Black African Diaspora, and certainly to Black Europeans who require "some specific forms of" it while "striving to be both European and black" (1993, 1). In Gilroy's perspective double consciousness is not a given that automatically conflates into one's existence as a Black person from the moment said person is born. The double consciousness proposed in Gilroy's "Black Atlantic" is one that in order to be acquired must be not only aware but critical of the myth of equality and humanity that Modernity represents as it simultaneously enacts horrific pain onto Black people through slavery and colonization: based on that Gilroy establishes double consciousness as a form of counter-discourse to modernity.

While I concur with much of what Gilroy (1993) proposes his focus on Blackness is indeed more attentive to male Blackness, which as pointed by Michelle M. Wright "limits his survey to mostly African American, heterosexual, and masculine norms, a subject formation that offers little difference from the white subject in the Western nation, with the exception of race. Yet the category of race can never be fully divorced from the related categories of gender and sexuality" (2004, 6). Alternatively, my work is (and as I see it has to be) concerned with the categories Wright (2004) indicates as many of my interviewees' were not from the global north and some of those who were would not fully identify with their nationality (born in) either. This is why Gilroy's conceptualizing of "double consciousness" is important, though not sufficient to explain such diversity.

One of the women who questioned the problematic of racial reading and identity as elusive in the German context was Naima, a 22 year-old student who challenged the umbrella term Afro-German, and instead preferred to identify as Mozambique-German. Naima welcomed me in her home and we did the interview in Portuguese which she explained was a language she learned

because of her father who is from Mozambique. Born in Germany and having German as her first language, Naima was one of the interviewees who problematized the German "lack of politically correct terms to discuss race".

> Naima: I identify as a mixed Black person... I know that politically I cannot identity as Black but I also recognize that I am not white which is my mom's part which is white […] There is no correct terminology to define people, you are either Black or white, and if I identify as 'Afro-German' or 'Black' that can also be questioned because I am fair-skinned, raised in Germany, and we all have a different experience. […]

Naima's critical approach to her national and racial identity illustrates another core aspect of my tentative expanding Du Bois' *double-consciousness*. Her experience speaks to the instability of identity categories as fixed and essential, instead, contributing to an intersectional argument of time and space where both inform the ways one may be read. In Germany, Naima grew up facing Anti-Black discrimination, for instance, being asked where she is from and hearing back that she "cannot be German" in addition being taunted through her Blackness in gendered ways. For instance, Naima shared that she had been laughed at because of her hair, that people would try to touch it without her consent, and that she heard derogatory terms meant to sexualize Black women. But while those experiences are an important aspect of being racialized/gendered in Germany, it does not mean Blackness is static in time and space. Naima also told me that once she traveled to Mozambique, she was not perceived as Black but instead as white. As she cleverly articulates below, "identity is constructed outside of oneself" and that has implications that go beyond simplistic assumptions of *either/or*.

> Jessica: How is your relationship with you father and your family in Mozambique?
>
> Naima: […] The relation with my family there [Mozambique] is very good, which cannot be said about my family here, my family from Mozambique is much more inclusive of my mom not being from there, instead of my [German] family here that had to learn [emphasis] to be inclusive of my father but there is a still some ressentimento/*hurt* that my mother dated, and had a relationship with and had children with a Black man, hum, but I remember that it was very hard also in Mozambique because there, I also am also not included, because I am also white, there for all the people, as I am here Black, and I think that this is also a reason why I define my identity and self-define as a *mestiza*, because I know also that from that

side I am also not just Black, it is not that simple to say here that here I am Black, and to be Black there too… I think that identity is always something that is constructed outside oneself, I did not construct my identity alone, it was also my environment.

This part of Naima's narrative indicates how the racial comparison here is not really about her self-definition, instead the comparison centers around how other people's readings of Naima could rapidly change from one place to another and how she could grasp and grapple with that. What moved was not really Naima's Blackness or her heritage, but the referential point wherein ideas of Blackness and Whiteness were construed, which does not mean she does not answer to that construction. She certainly does that by articulating an image of herself that reflects the dynamics of Black consciousness, where she acknowledges that this may be disputed elsewhere, but not within the realm of her self-definition.

Naima's views somewhat reflect the positionality of Susan, one of my Black German interviewees. Susan self-identified as a working class young Black woman, and we met while in one of the study groups for Black academics in Berlin. She kindly agreed to meet and converse with me for the interview in Kreuzberg where she lives. Susan's perception of life as a working class Black woman in Berlin was valuable in ways my previous assumptions before could not have predicted. Her experience narrated below reveals some of the issues Black Germans face while self-defining.

> Jessica: So, yes, how would you describe who Susan is?
>
> Susan: I am a Black German young woman heterosexual orientation, I grew up with my mom and she was a single parent, so it was my mother and my sister and then later my brother, from another father, but my mother was not with either of them, as a single parent financial situation was always tight, we always had to worry about saving water, saving energy, it was always tough, I even think that it was a strength to grow up in this way, but it has always been a kind of struggle, I still support my mom financially today.
>
> Jessica: And how did you come to identify as a Black German? Was it always a given?
>
> Susan: Yeah, actually this is very interesting, because I think I wouldn't have answered this way a couple of years ago even, hum, my identity was basically drawn from growing up in Kreuzberg, I had a lot of Turkish speaking friends or friends with Turkish background, so even, like today I can understand Turkish partly just because of that, but, then you see my

identity was really shaped by my environment, and I would identify as a, hum, as a young woman from Kreuzberg, primarily, and, […] I remember because we had hum, a theater play I remember that it was a play at school, and we had like an exam, you had to play something, mostly about an identity, so I took my, I took myself as a point of departure, and the point that I made was that "oh, you are nowhere to be at home because here you are seen as foreign", even among my Turkish friends, yeah, they are my friends of course, but I was different than them, in Germany as well, people pronounce my name Susan in English, which is totally fine, but in German, erm, my name is Suzanne [difference I understood in the pronunciation], it's not Susan, so these are the points where you're saying like "no that's not my name", but you don't feel at home, and at the same time, if I imagine myself going to Sierra Leone [where her father is from], I knew that like, just because of the color of my skin, like, because I am so light, definitely I feel, also since I don't speak the language, and etc, they would see me as foreign, so my point at this play was to see the difference in between that. […]

Susan's experiences mirror Naima's in a rather interesting way, where both critically embraced their own Blackness through their heritages and their physical features while in Berlin. Susan was particularly drawn to Black consciousness by performing a play about herself where she could address the meaning of differences she observed among her friends and her. As Susan explained, though both her and her Turkish friends belonged to "Migration-Germans", and not "German-Germans" (from what I gathered this meant white Germans), there were significant intra-group distinctions among those with a migrant background. Susan's narrative also highlights how one's othering happens through an intersection of different characteristics that can shift the perception of local and migrant not only in Berlin. When Susan critically analyzes her positionality she imagines that she also would not feel at home if she were to travel to Sierra Leone (her father's home country), and that she has to deal with the consciousness of being divided between both spaces (Berlin and Sierra Leone) knowing she is placed outside of the boundaries of the national.

Another equally compelling, complex and nuanced consciousness of Black womanhood was present in Tebbi's self-definition. Tebbi is a Black entrepreneur and psychologist who was born in Botswana and moved to Germany around three or four years old. We met during one of a networking events organized for and by Black, Indigenous and Women of Color (BIWOC).

Tebbi and I had the chance of conversing in her office in Berlin, and she welcomed me into her

self-reflections which were quite insightful to listen to.

> Jessica: So, how did you become aware of yourself in racial terms? Was it something you
> were always aware of, a given, or was it something that you had to reflect and to think
> through?
> Tebbi: I think that, hum, [long pause] I kind of was aware always because the difference
> maybe is that my mom is Black, and then I have two brothers that are dark skinned, and I
> think there was always more of a question especially my younger brother he is only fourteen
> months younger than me, so we grew up very close, and he asked me this question once "so,
> do you feel more Black or do you feel more white?" So, it was more like a tension of... of
> hum... Am I more with my, my brother and my mom or am I more with my dad? So, but I
> always knew that I wasn't either of these. And, hum, when I was growing up, there wasn't
> any language, like in the German language there are no words for a lot of things, and also
> this idea of even when you're mixed you can clearly identify as Black, also this idea was
> never there, no, especially in the German, eh, after these Nazi terms, this idea of race and
> pure race and pure white, pure Black and, it is very difficult, so I was very happy when I was
> kind of introduced to this idea that… I mean I wasn't white, but I can definitely identify as
> Black, like it's not about the shade of my skin, it's about a shared experience, [lowers voice]
> I'd say like in my late twenty's maybe that I got kind of like [normal voice tone] the clear
> going out like, I am a Black woman in Germany.

Tebbi's narrative offers different critical insights on Blackness in Germany; first through the

familial relationships she had while growing up, then, by being asked whether she identified

more with her black mother or white father. Tebbi knew of her heritage and ancestry so, she

was not invested in identifying as either *more this* or *more that*, but instead she creatively

understood she was neither of these (black or white only). The second relevant point Tebbi's

narrative raises is that of Black women's diasporic consciousness being constructed through

embodied experiences and daily encounters with systematic racism one example being the lack

of terms in German to speak about race. Tebbi's consciousness of her positionality is a turning

point where she could perceive that Blackness was felt not exclusively through the shade of

one's skins, but by a distinct kind of knowledge of the collectiveness of Black experiences.

Once Tebbi was able to self-define, I believe, this meant not simply embracing the contradictory

space she occupies, but finding strength in a shared standpoint black women have in diaspora.

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Unlike in Tebbi's case, who could question German language as a starting point of reflection, some of my interviewees told me about their difficulties relocating to Berlin wherein language was crucial, but in a radically distinct way. As Izabel said at a certain point during our interview living in Germany feels as if one had become a child again. Black women from the Global South who had spent most of their lives in their home-countries said that arriving in Berlin meant in many ways they had to learn things from scratch: how to navigate the city, how to communicate and how to understand the world around them. They had to learn the written and unwritten rules of that specific society, where "people would openly refuse to shake hands with you" and still "not have a pattern […] [not] judge you" as Marisa, a domestic worker from Brazil shared.

Marisa told me over our phone interview, that once she learned how to speak German she felt that the social script of Berlin was easier to be seen, experienced, read and understood. I learned that her journey as a domestic worker from Brazil was not the easiest, but she said she was proud of being someone smart and hard-working since she was a child. To learn to speak German, Marisa confided she went through a lot of difficulty as she had to work extra-long shifts to afford paying the school, leaving her home for long journeys to the houses she worked at, many times under heavy snow and without appropriate shoes. That did not make Marisa quit, but she admitted that it took her longer to learn German than other people in her class.

She spoke energetically and with confidence about how despite suffering discrimination at school as a kid, her curiosity and interest in Brazilian art and Black Brazilian culture particularly through "*teatro do oprimido*" was decisive for her to feel "beautiful and wonderful". This comes as a strategy of resistance, a second-sight of resistance if you will, where Marisa could reaffirm her self-definition under a positive light and find the strength to face against racist and sexist stereotypes against Black women in Brazil.

Marisa's conversation had a huge impact on me as I realized I probably would not have been able to meet her on the events organized by the Black community in Berlin. Marisa said that due to working extra-shifts as a domestic worker she unfortunately did not have as much time to enjoy the city's many cultural events nor join the activities promoted by the Black community. Although, Marisa highlighted she would be keen on attending them with her four year old daughter, Savannah. When asked about what life at Berlin felt like, Marisa expressed that what she liked the most was how there is "no pattern in Berlin, people won't judge you". Her perception was also echoed by some of my non-European interviewees, but certainly not all of them, some were quite critical of its apparent progressive stance, as Izabel. But, in a strong sense, what Marisa commented reminded me o Dr. Gloria I Joseph's words about Audre Lorde's life in Berlin.

In the "Wind is Spirit" (2016) Dr. Joseph describes Audre Lorde as "carefree in a joyous way that was a pleasure to observe" as she "often strode purposefully" with beautifully colored outfits (2016, 146). Dr. Joseph's continues writing that "in Germany, Audre experienced a kind of freedom unlike any that she had in the States. […] She could dress as she pleased, behave as she wanted without the recognition and fear of disapproval from her Black female peers, family, professional colleagues or Black male establishment" which is "not to say [Lorde] did not experience racism, but she could express herself openly and not have apprehensions and fears about the consequences of her actions" (2016, 146). Dr. Joseph's (2016) description of Lorde is fitting because it demonstrates one of the radical possibilities of resistance hidden in the process of migration. By journey to a country and city where she could physically distance herself from the glance of loved ones and judgmental sizing from people inside and outside the Black community, Lorde's happiness to be who she is mirrors Marisa's favorite aspect of Berlin, and potentially illustrate how freedom can be exercised through migration. This does

not invalidate the experiences of racism that took place, but as Dr. Joseph argues the absence of anxiety is a powerful way to practice freedom.

As in Lorde's case with her compatriots from the United States, Marisa's relation to other Brazilians was also a source of anxiety. She said that she did not mingle much with other Brazilians because oftentimes "they were not very open-minded". When I asked Marisa if she had suffered any discrimination during her time in Berlin she immediately remembered one instance on the subway.

> Marisa: There I was with my wonderful Black [one of the terms in Brazilian Portuguese to refer to Afro hair] in the metro. Then, I hear in Portuguese, 'So-and-so, look at this! *Misericórdia*/Holy Christ!' I could not believe that [someone] would come all the way from Brazil to make fun of my Black! The other friend corrected him saying 'in here it's like this'

Marisa's not wanting to mingle with Brazilians can be compared with Nataly's previous response, where she perceived herself different than other Ecuadorians living in Berlin, and she knew no one apart from her sister with whom she could share the hyphenated part of her self-definition (Afro). The difference Nataly felt in relation to other Ecuadorians was also based on class distinctions, where she recognized "white *mestizos*" were there due to their wealth whereas she wasn't. In this case, one could argue that her outsider status was only in relation to other nationals, but that given Berlin's "multiculturalism", Nataly could have felt more "integrated". Another bit of my conversation with Nataly reveals that such assumption does not correspond to her experience; in spite of her acknowledgment that Berlin was diverse she also saw that there were many misunderstandings among different communities as well.

> Nataly: Once you get the first step done, which is like, creating the space and then maintain the space and working with different people and diverse people is also hard. And, especially, the reason that we have to be [not audible] like packed in one cause, like, POC, but we are different people from different communities and backgrounds and ethnicities and stuff … and also people who have been socialized in the West or with Western knowledge which also reproduce stereotypes about each other. You know, me as a Black person, have… grew up with stereotypes, *wrong* stereotypes about Arabs and Muslims or about East Asians, South Asians.

This observation is quite interesting because it reveals misconceptions among People of Color – a political term used to describe non-white people living under racist structures – about other communities of color. The possibility that one can or may recognize their status as a marginal subject in Western society does not necessarily mean or guarantee that one may be able to see through *the Veil* of discrimination that is placed upon others. As Nataly points, being raised and socialized *in* the West or *with* Western knowledge is living in a world of meanings that will produce knowledge about racialized others without offering much of a counter-point to balance it out. Another interesting example of that came up in an interview with Wanda, a classically trained dancer from the U.K whose parents were from Jamaica.

In our conversation Wanda marked her parent's heritage and her professional career as central parts of her growing up in the U.K. I understood that she held her parents' identity and their legacy as an important and formative part of her cultural heritage, and in so doing Wanda comparatively assessed the racist stereotypes she had encountered during her professional life. By working as a classically trained dancer on predominantly white environments Wanda had to deal with racist assumptions about her (e.g people expected her to be taking the class or to be a hip-hop dancer) and she positioned herself against them by excelling at everything what she does.

Wanda shared that the need to excel all the time added pressure on her, being something that according to her both benefits and hinders her at times, but knew she *knew* would have to respond to those assumptions in the career she had chosen. In this sense it is possible to trace a parallel between her response and Du Bois' "second-sight" which is the a priori knowledge that "*the Veil*" creates racist stereotypes, and that Black people will need to react against them ([1903] 2007, 7). More importantly, Du Bois explains that to compensate for the invisibility "*the Veil*" caused he tried to excel in competing with his classmates and felt happier when he

could perform better than them at school which can be considered as a defense mechanism against his exclusion ([1903] 2007, 8). Likewise, Wanda developed distinct responses against the prejudices she faced where she positioned herself to be very professional and excel in the career she had decided to follow. Although, Wanda's assessment goes beyond what Du Bois originally proposed in that she could witness and identify the existence of prejudice also *inside* the Black community, and she recalled a particular moment that left a strong impression on her.

> Wanda: So, yeah, [long pause] everything has to do with comparison and so I also think it depends on what field you come from, [...] I come from a classically trained background [...] whether it's people in the UK or whether it's people in Germany that I am expected to be a Hip Hop dancer, that's expected of me the [not audible] over and so that is not a different prejudice the first time adults come to a class and they assume that I am taking the class instead of teaching the class [...] And yeah and moving to London was a bit, yeah, London was the opposite, and so London suddenly had like a huge huge African community [compared to Birmingham which had a large Jamaican community] and it was kind of assumed that you were African, and so as I was studying, I remember that one time I was being like "Oh, they don't like us". I remember that one time I was studying and then I was working in a shop and I was working part time in this shop and there were like these hum... these thieves came into the shop and it was like an expensive clothes shop there, and they were these, hum, Caribbean thieves. They do this thing where they make like a big show, and then like somebody is in the back stealing, and so they come with a white friend and the they make a scene to distract you and the white friend is the one that is stealing, so everyone is watching them and they come and they are like [clap] "oh, look at this" and the white friend is stealing in the background, this is like a known trick in London, that they do this, so they came and they were doing this, so, when they left I was with... so I am saying African, but I mean British with African parents, I was like with two of my colleagues two of my Black colleagues, and they were like "but they make us all look bad when they are like that", and I was like "huh?" and they were just like "oh, you know, these Jamaicans, they make us all look bad" and I was like [pause, surprised look] and then they were like "oh, you're not Jamaican, are you?" and I was like [emphasis] "yes", and they were like "oh, I never would have guessed", and I was just like [looking puzzled] "huh?", and that was the first time that I was like, oh, okay, like okay this, weird, like, not like a tension, but like this thing where, "okay, we are not them" or "we are them".

Wanda understood that in the eyes of her co-workers Black Jamaicans were not seen positively in this specific situation. It illustrated how there were negative images about Black Jamaicans not only from the outside but also present *from inside* the Black community in London. That realization shocked her and as Wanda analyzes those negative images fomented a sense of "us" versus "them" putting in effect a distinction that separated Black Africans from Black

Jamaicans who were blamed for making the whole group look bad. I would like to propose thinking about what both Wanda and Nataly brought up to argue for the need of a better understanding not only of how anti-Black racism and racial hierarchies work from the perspective of *the white gaze*, but of how it operates among and inside Blackness as well as other communities of color.

I would like to propose critically thinking about consciousness as the attempt to build bridges that can better dismantle racist stereotypes from the outside and from within. To discuss the need to build bridges within communities of color and, especially, women of color I will now closely work with Gloria Anzaldúa's "Borderlands/La Frontera" (1987). In it Anzaldua argues for the need to define and to live a *mestiza consciousness* that belongs not to one culture or the other: neither fully American nor fully Mexican, neither heterosexual nor heteronormative, neither Anlgo-speaking nor Spanish-speaking and neither Catholic nor Pre-colonial. What Anzaldua (1987) proposes is a consciousness fully enmeshed in its contradiction and fully embracing of its dissonance; a consciousness not based in or (this *or* that) but in and (this *and* that). This is a rather complicated and at times painful process which makes consciousness an unfinished means to grapple with identity, politics and purpose.

In Anzaldua's words "every increment of consciousness, every step forward is *a travesia*, a crossing. I am again an alien in new territory. And again, and again. But if I escape conscious awareness, escape 'knowing' I won't be moving. Knowledge makes me more aware, it makes me more conscious. 'Knowing' is painful because after 'it' happens I can't stay in the same place and be comfortable. I am no longer the same person I was before" [italics in the original] (1987, 48). By proposing this form of consciousness, a conflicting and challenging one, Anzaldua puts forward a framework for critically disputing identity and what it means in terms of the self and the other, the local and global, material and ontological, personal and political spaces of difference. To acquire a *mestiza* consciousness it is necessary to go time and again

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into unknown territory, it is realizing one's own gaze against the gaze others have and coping with being uncomfortable.

I strongly agree and relate with much of what Anzaldua's (1987) *mestiza* consciousness provides, though from an Afro-Brazilian Decolonial perspective I believe that the term *mestiza* can be problematic. In Nataly's quote from before where she reflected upon her own positionality in comparison to that of "white wealthy *mestizos"* some of the issues with the term are already made visible, namely its possible conflation of racial and class difference. Furthermore, the term *mestizo* implies hybridism as the addition of distinct cultures and knowledges in one body, but it does not mean that the person who has mixed heritages will be conscious or critical of their positionality. This is even more relevant in Latin American countries such as Ecuador, Brazil, and Colombia where the term *mestizo (Spanish) or mestiço (Portuguese)* has served the purpose of emptying racism and race as political categories.

Decolonial theorists from South America, such as María Lugones (2008), Walter Mignolo (2018), and Afro-Brazilian Sueli Carineiro (2008), have consistently demonstrated that racial hierarchies not only persist, but actively work through the fantasy of racial-mixing as a solution. One compelling example to further contest the term *mestizo* can be found in Brazil considering the historical policy-related attempts of whitening the population in what became known in as *ideologia de branqueamento* or whitening ideology. As the article "Negroes Having White Souls?" by Petronio José Domingues (2002) indicates after the abolishment of slavery in Brazil there were several governmental policies put in place that either overtly or covertly advocated for the whitening of the population. For instance, besides the financial incentives for Italian and German people to migrate to Brazil, the Brazilian government in its official census predicted that Black people would disappear from the country (being literally whitened) in the next 200 years (Domingues 2002). One of the main tenets for that was the idea of assimilation which

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considered that if Black and indigenous peoples were to become a part of the nation they would have to be mixed into the national (whitened) body (Domingues 2002).

In that sense, I argue that the *mestiço* identity would correspond to the need of creating a national identity that could bring together distinct racialized groups by de-racilizating or in other words whitening them. This presents a particularly complicated problem where proximity to whiteness, for instance being light-skinned, can bring significant benefits for mixed people. The danger of the *mestiço* identity is the inconsequential celebration of being mixed as being de-racialized when there are significant differences between being a "white *mestizo*" and being a black one. In addition, in Latin American countries the idea of being mixed potentially alienates Black people by promising that if they can distance themselves from Blackness, they will be rewarded with social ascension. This is why instead of utilizing Anzaldua's (1987) *mestizo* consciousness I am tentatively combining her proposition with Du Bois' framing which I find to be more suitable for grasping the differences between European and non-European Black women, forging a metaphor that is more encompassing of colonialism as a critical point of inflection.

In this sub-topic I have advocated for an expansion of the concept of double consciousness and discussed it while approaching distinct authors who have dialogued with this concept. Through my interviewee' narratives I have presented what I find to be relevant counter-points to the arguments made by authors who have dialogued with Du Bois' "double-consciousness", while pushing for the shared standpoint Black women have in the Diaspora which I have tentatively called Black women's diasporic consciousness. To further argue for the idea of Black women's diasporic consciousness I have also drawn from Gloria Anzaldua's (1987) theoretical interpretation of consciousness while analyzing that some of the biggest divergences I have in relation to her *mestiza* consciousness can be summarized in two points a-) the focus, since my

work is exclusively centered on Black womanhood, which leads me to b-) the location and meaning of *mestiza* from an Afro-Latin/Brazilian perspective which can be problematic. In that sense, I proposed pushing the idea of consciousness even further by challenging the previously presented frameworks not only from a South of the U.S perspective, but from a Decolonial and Black Feminist angle from Brazil.

VI.   Chapter Six: The Veil of Gender

In this last chapter I would like to shortly and very broadly sketch the axes of gender and race that have been more assertively brought up during the course of some of the interviews. This is a very important topic for me to approach even if I cannot possibly address all of its implications in the remaining space of this work. Still, I found interesting to bring to the fore of my reflections the problem that the Veil of Gender poses to women who are racialized under different structures of power.

The connecting thread here is the issue of violence and silence. My question is not whether or not racialized and gendered women can speak, because as we will see, the possibility of talking back or talking to is one among the other survival strategies that surge during what Homi Bhabha has called the "third-space" (2004, 53). Bhabha's "third-space" places significant importance on race, colonialism and consciousness, wherein the process of translating and negotiating culture offer critical insight for the possibilities of resistance that travel from symbolic to material, and vice-versa. Albeit, I am taking his idea of third-space which still somehow overlooks how gender is constructed in the West, I am doing so because I am interested in understanding the Veil of Gender as a type of third-space. What I can ask here is what gets lost and what does not when Black women find themselves in the translational day-to-day third-space the Veil of Gender places upon them. My final argument is that to

acknowledge the existence of the Veil of Gender as a structural axis of racialized difference it is necessary to look at how violence can be enacted symbolically, psychologically and physically through it.

Through the standpoint of the women who marked their gendered experiences as a key aspect of their narratives I shall dispute how gender radically affects what a Black Diasporic consciousness is. My main argument is not only that Blackness is interlocked with how womanhood is experienced, but that one's location in time and space is of great relevance. By analyzing violence as a thread I wish to scratch the surface of colonialism's legacies and its rationality. I am considering that "global Eurocentered capitalism is heterosexualist", as proposed by Maria Lugones, which means that one's vulnerability is strongly related to gender, race and sexuality in capitalism, possibly limiting access to resources including a support network they may or may not be able to count on (2008, 12).

It is relevant to explain that the Veil of Gender is a title inspired by Du Bois' concept of "*the Veil*" ([1903] 2007). It is possible to say within Du Bois framework as presented thus far that in order to acquire some type of *"double-consciousness"* it is necessary to first acknowledge the existence of *"the Veil"* as structural discrimination. To further unpack this metaphor of the Veil and reframe it through Gender I will consider some racialized and gendered markers specific to Black Women in the West. I have divided this chapter in function of those markers, namely the hair, the stereotypical images the white imagination attaches to Black women in Berlin, the violence the white gaze imposes, and the silencing of institutional violence.

Fantastic Hair

Ayanna, a young Black German woman, said in a given moment of our conversation, that she has to deal with some sort of sexist and racist violence on a daily basis. She mentioned that every day for as long as she can recall there have been attempts of harassment in Berlin and

that it was such a ubiquitous event that she usually did not think too much about it. This does not mean she was not quite critical of it or that she normalized it, but on the contrary she saw that it was a structural problem which she particularly addressed through her feminist activism since she was fifteen. In this sub-section I shall shortly explain how racism and sexism can be experienced through the hair where it becomes (in and of itself) a third-space of resistance.

She was not the only one who referred to the ubiquity of racist violence, and in this topic I would like to discuss how Black women are particularly marked through their hair in daily basis. Three of the women I conversed with said very closely related things, for example Lena ('I never thought [before Germany] that my hair is nappy'), Victoria ('there was this girl in my classroom and she always wanted to touch my hair') and Susan ('when I had braids this lady in the metro was touching my hair'). These are European and non-European Black women for whom the hair was a point of tension considering a-) the making racist remarks they had to hear about it and b-) the not consensual touching of their hair. It is possible to suggest that their testimony illustrates how Black women have their physical traits marked and reduced to racialized identities, a type of racism similar to what Oracy Nogueira has called "marked racial discrimination" (2007 292, my translation of the term). Though Nogueira (2007) was referring to Brazilian racial relations while developing this concept, I find his overall assessment of marked racialization quite useful in understanding how Black women are singled out through their physical traits, such as the hair, which is then marked (or identified) as inherent to Black womanhood.

In this sense, the hair becomes a site that can be racialized by others whilst simultaneously transforming into a powerful site of resistance for Black women: a living symbol and the embodiment of pride, as described by Audre Lorde in "Is your hair still political?" (2009). In the essay Lorde recounts that was wearing natural locks she had done herself when she is denied

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entry in the Island of Virgin Gorda over the insinuation that she might a "Rasta" (2009, 226). In Lorde's words "it finally dawned […] what this was all about. […] Some see locks and they see revolution. Because Rastafarians smoke marijuana as a religious rite, some see locks and automatically see drug peddlers" (2009, 226). Likewise, Wanda, in a distinct moment of our conversation, said that her parents were Rastafarians and that the practice they had was radically distinct than the idea people typically had about it. By comparing Wanda's testimony with Lorde's (2009) essay it is possible to infer that racist assumptions, de-politicizing appropriation and misinformation play a big part in how black women's hair can become a form of embodied practice of resistance.

Kilomba (2019) further elaborates with regards to Black women in Europe that there is a fine line where Black women "can be transformed from a fascinating Black woman into a humiliated 'N.' […] from good into bad, from sweet into bitter" (2019, 102). Kilomba's assessment can be juxtaposed to Naima's experience growing up in Berlin surrounded by racist images about Black people. Naima indicated that she thought she had internalized some of those assumptions while at a predominantly white school, where teachers questioned her ability to speak German and made her believe she was a kid who misbehaved. Naima problematized how these violent images were unwillingly imprinted upon her and how that made her feel sad as she did not want to be a bad kid. In the next sub-topic I will shortly analyze some of the racist images or stereotypes that as I could identify are placed on Black women in Berlin.

Symbolic Violence in Three Images

In the fieldwork and through the interviews I noticed that there were a few stereotypes attached to Black women in Berlin which performed the double work of gendering and racializing them in visibly colonial ways. One of them is that of the sexualized (under heteronormativity) Black woman who can be expected to be a bit more sexual, sensual person as Susan, described.

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Victoria, the Afro-Brazilian woman whom I presented previously, also had to hear unwanted comments that she must be good in bed, and likewise, Lena, a model and content creator, shared that she constantly felt very objectified being a Black woman from Africa in Europe. The second stereotype or image I perceived is that of the loud or misbehaved black woman who is seen as a potential trouble maker or as someone who is angry, as some of my interviewees also pointed out. The third image is that of the hip-hop dancer, that Wanda and Tebbi brought up, which I would say is perhaps a more modern version of the expected sensuality black women are supposed to have according to hetero-partriarchy.

The symbolic violence exercised through those three stereotypes is perhaps one of the most significant similarities between non-European and European black women that I could observe in Berlin. Whether local or migrants black women were placed under those signs and I suspect that has several connections with colonial fantasies specifically created through the "coloniality of gender" (Lugones 2008). These images are rather problematic because they are more difficult to counter seeing that they exist as part of a complicated dialogue between the realm of the sign and the realm of the consciousness as explained by Kilomba (2019). On the other hand, such images reaffirm the continuous need for Black women's self-definition in both individual and collective levels a means to defy them and create new positive images. In my reading, the third-space of dialogue between self-definition and colonial images certainly can be further discussed in a historical, material and dialectical sense and I am personally committed to the idea of pursuing such line of critical investigation in the future.

Violent Reactions

In another conversation, this time with Tayo I learned about her experience as a German born Afro-Sinti artist, singer and political organizer. Tayo's refusal to belong to either the Afro community or the Sinti community was due to her growing up with an activist mother. During

our coffee, Tayo compared what it felt like when she first moved to Berlin for better opportunities with the situation as of 2020. Although Tayo said that Berlin had a better scene for artists due to its being an international hub for creative people to meet and work, she also evaluated the raise of everyday racism as being a downside of currently living in the city. It must be noted that many more of my interviewees shared a similar sentiment and in my interpretation that reveals the actuality of this research in the wider context of neo-liberal and extreme-right violence. In Tayo's words below:

> Tayo: I think it [Berlin] still is attractive to musicians all over the world, like, I have been working, and am still working with so many great and talented people […] But besides that, I have to say, and I think this counts also for the rest of Germany, but here, in the big city, you can feel it more, because there are more people and there are more connections, I think than perhaps living in a small, smaller city somewhere in Germany and you're just in your circle, being here you're just, you know, just more outside and everything so I think that, you know, you're more outside and everything, so I think there, there [lowers voice] there is more, like… Well, outspoken racism that I can say that I am experiencing compared to fifteen, ten years ago, or something, yeah. [Jessica agrees in the background] Tayo: Yeah, I can really say that. I don't know if it's really… If it really was less before, but it wasn't visible as it is now, because now… those people that have racist ideas or something they are… more… they feel more secure or something to say it, yeah, so I can say that, yeah. Especially since I also have children, when I am going outside with my children, just something random like shopping or, whatever, this, oftentimes, some kind of non-verbal reaction or something.

In my reading, Tayo's quote also reveals what it means to be an African descendant person within the African Diaspora in Berlin, that is, to identify and relate with the socio-historical anguish of the Diaspora is to be a part of a community that may be small, in a sense, but that holds within itself other worlds. Black women's self-definition is powerful because it can oppose the verbal and non-verbal reactions that our mere presence within different spaces can disrupt. Among the non-verbal reactions I could identify, some of my interviewees (Lena, Naima, Ayanna and Victoria) expressed that receiving weird or judgmental looks was something that affected them and that made them feel different. Some tried to resist the looks by isolating themselves and others said they were prone to challenging them. Comparatively,

the verbal reactions tended a lot more violent as recounted by my interviewees, as in Victoria's example below:

> Victoria: But even like, for example, one time a guy spat on my face on the tram, he told me to go back to Africa, I am not even from Africa. So, yeah, he tried to spit on my face, but I moved and he missed, and then it was like, it was 3 am, I thought okay, maybe I can call the police, but my German, I am learning German, I will try to explain myself *and what?* Maybe the police will not handle everything, and I am sure that even if there is a lot of racism in Brazil no one would spit on me because I am Black, I see that racism here is different than in Brazil, I see many great things here, but there are also these things that like, are not good about living here, *sometimes I go through some situations I would like to address, but I end up having to let it go* because there is this whole thing with language and I have to ignore it and just let it go.

Victoria's narrative above resembles my own in the sub-topic where about reflexivity (Being Black) but taken to another extreme. In the eyes and through the gaze of coloniality our subjectivity is made invisible, and we are placed as others through the same discursive device that made Lena be seen as a time traveler from before civilization in the chapter before. What is more aggravating in Victoria's case above is that the verbal act of violence is followed by a physical one, and though she wishes to talk back ('maybe I can call the police') Victoria does not feel that she should. As she is struggling to learn German she is not sure about how to put into words, German words, what had taken place and the situation she had been through. Victoria asks perhaps the most pertinent question there is to be asked to the very institutions that silence women of color, migrants, poor and marginalized communities that are supposed to be protected by those same institutions. Victoria says, *yes,* I have something to say, and *yes*, I want to speak, but I cannot (yet) explain myself, *and what?*

Institutional Violence and Silence

Through Victoria's narrative I propose a closer look at the invisibility Black women face as gendered and racialized subjects in capitalism. I want to include her testimony here so it can be registered as I find it powerful evidence of the ubiquity of the Veil of Gender and of the need to keep on arguing on every possible space against systemic violence.

Victoria started our conversation by saying that she was originally from a peripheral area in the state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. She confided that her father had been with fourteen different women, and that he had been officially married three times, although according to her he still thought that women were the problem and not him. When I asked her how the relationship with her family was she confided that her father was physically violent towards her mother and her brother.

There is a direct connection between that part of Victoria's experience, as I see it, and what Maria Lugones has argued in relation to the apathy men show in relation to the liberation struggles women lead. She critically asserts that "the indifference that men, but, more importantly to our struggles, men who have been racialized as inferior, exhibit to the systematic violences inflicted upon women of color […] is found both at the level of everyday living and at the level of theorizing of both oppression and liberation" (2008, 1). Lugones stand is one that not only challenges men's apathy towards women whether they are racialized or not, but that actively demands that lack of solidarity be examined both on an epistemological and everyday sense. In a similar vein, Victoria's narrative will critically evoke that, not only in the context of Latin America, but in relation to Europe.

Victoria articulated that once her mother and her father got married he convinced her to stop working and therefore, Victoria's mother became financially depended on him. On the other hand, that also made Victoria's mother motivate her to become an independent young woman so the same fate would not befall her. Victoria managed to improve her social condition through education, and by working and studying she got her first scholarship as a geography student, and then eventually met a white German partner who convinced her to move to Germany. However, once in Germany Victoria realized things unfortunately were not exactly as she had

expected them to be. In what follows she reconstructs some of the incidents that were decisive

for her to realize that.

> Jessica: so, would you say that you have changed since you got here? And like how do you think you changed or maybe not
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> Victoria: Yeah, I would say I became very independent not that in Brazil I was very dependent, but here I had to deal a lot with being alone, with solitude […] I started looking at things differently, for example, the whole being a migrant somewhere else, because I never had that experience, like, […] I was in Brazil, I knew how everything worked, and in here I saw people looking at me differently since I am different, so it is like learning how to deal with all that, but here I also became a bit insecure, with the language, with sometimes having to do things because you are not from the city, *sometimes people think you are the problem.* […] For example, […] in Brazil I never had a private health insurance, it was always SUS [the public health system], but I see that the way the doctors treat you here, they treat you quite ... I don't know, in Brazil they are more careful, for example, I had a situation here in Berlin, that was a very bad situation. I went to the doctor […] then the doctor wanted to make a smear test, and I told him did not want to do it because at the time, when I came here, I was a virgin, and I did not want to do it, so the doctor said "no, no okay, I will not do it you just sit there and open your legs and I will just take a look", so I sat and he held me down and introduced the thing on me, and it hurt me, and that kind of messed with my head, and I was extremely upset, so, with my experience with the doctors in Brazil, maybe it is the language, or I don't know, if I told to the doctor that I do not want to get that exam, they would not have forced me to do it, they would have said, "okay, you do not want to do it, your bad" […] So, I see differently, all of these things with the treatment.

Victoria's experienced changes to the way she saw herself according to the quote above. She

noticed that she became more independent as she also had to deal with more difficult situations

on her own; she had to face solitude and silence. I would say that both are lived in the flesh,

solitude and silence, which makes for a process migrants who cannot speak the local language

can potentially go through. The silence of not being able to fully grasp words or to fully engage

with others and the solitude that can cause, the sadness it can attach to one's consciousness, in

my reading that is the first part of what Victoria described. The second is how not being heard

even when she spoke made her feel more insecure. Victoria expressed she did not want to make

the exam and that she had particular reasons not want to go through that. She expected her will

to be respected as it should have. Understanding that what had happened to her at the doctor's

office was an act of violence Victoria tried to articulate to others that she had been violated, but

even as she spoke to those around her she was not heard and she could not find either justice or comfort.

> Victoria: [...] This doctor experience that I just told you, it is possible that they [the police] might also *say that it is your fault and maybe you did something to provoke it.* Like, for example, this doctor experience that I just told you when I tried to say it to my, like, thank God I am not with that boyfriend anymore, this German guy, because he was super abusive, super aggressive, and at the time he told me like "oh, it's your fault, *why did you go to this doctor?"* I [emphasis] went to this appointment because I wanted to do the fucking breast exam, I did not want the [smear] exam, I have to always check my health, so you hear these kind of things like this and, then, when I heard this from him, he [the boyfriend] said, "oh, no one forced you to go there, you attended that appointment because you wanted to", so I said, like yeah, *what if I speak to the police?* They would say the same thing to me: "it is your fault", you know? [voice breaks a little] and I even did I speak with some women, some people from my church, they said "oh, but in the US and in Australia they do that too, and you're already 25 the doctor is supposed to perform this exam, what if you have something?" I said, but in Brazil, this is not happening, *this is not supposed to happen*, and they said like "oh, we have been through that, a woman's life is like this" you know? "women suffer" like, [short pause, Jessica says she is sorry] no, and the worst is that, I saw some women, that like do not want to fight, okay, I also did not fight, I just wrote a review saying that he was a terrible doctor, but they [the women] saying like, "oh this is natural, like women are supposed to suffer, a woman's life is this", [...] now I only go to female doctors, and like, the fact that I went there does not allow him to treat me like that, and when I like commented with my friend from Nigeria, I have a friend from Nigeria, and a friend from Angola, and he said like "well, with my Black female friends this has happened too, you are not the first one of the doctor doing that, but I doubt that if you were German that would have been done to you" and my friend from Angola said, these kind of things unfortunately happen all the time.

Victoria's testimony seen above can be read through a complex layering of Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Bhabha's "third-space" and Lugones' "coloniality of gender" (Spivak 2013; Bhabha 2004; Lugones 2008) As Victoria conveys what happened to her and speaks against the gender based violence committed against her, she is silenced and blamed. Once by her boyfriend, whom she found out was abusive, and the second time by the network of support she thought she could trust, namely the women at her church. Victoria's narrative illustrates the difficulties of accessing a network of support when one may be vulnerable, and more importantly Victoria's embodied experiences illustrate how intersections of violence can be symbolical, physical and psychological. Additionally it exposes how the third-space is not exactly a two way venue where the oppressed can translate their experiences effectively talking

back against the institutional violence they may encounter. Even, perhaps, the empathy of those that could have been comforting failed to listen to her. In other words, Victoria's ex-boyfriend and the members of her church not only did not assist her, but actively blamed her and naturalized the violence she suffered as part of being a woman.

In sum, I have tentatively pointed to how black women encounter specific forms of gendered and racialized violence. I understand that people are othered differently inside capitalism and likewise their responses are developed through a limited space where their positionality may complicate their ability to talk back. I have very broadly tried to sketch the problem of the Veil of Gender as an invisible artifact that has longevity of its own. Insofar as the Veil of gender does not need to invade, but instead is *part* of every aspect of the social structure possible: either individually (individual x society) or collectively (social group x society) as well as within every institution. The main distinction may not be what stereotypes are attached to black women (European and non-European) in Berlin, but what kind of access to networks of support they have in countering those. This is where migration, sexuality, class, language, and citizenship are starkly visible according to what my interviewees presented and what I could personally observe.

VII.   Final thoughts

As for gendering, we must ourselves gender "the people."
Spivak in the Introduction to Fanon's Documentary on "Concerning Violence"

In this work I have unpacked some of the central aspects of Black women's self-definition I considered to be more visible throughout my research. In the introduction I explained some of

my main goals where the core idea was to understand the similarities and differences between non-European black women and European black women in Berlin. I have tried to think of the intersections between both groups in terms of class, language, citizenship rights and coloniality. To critically address the possible connections between those categories and black women's self-definition I have worked through the framework of consciousness as theorized within Feminist Standpoint Theory and beyond.

I believe that exercise has ripped some of the constraints placed on Du Bois' *double-consciousness* as a concept fixed in time and place it was authored. Although, some of the theoretical reflections I proposed also had authors who speak from the context of the U.S, I have also engaged with intellectual work that originates from different places outside the Western canon. This was certainly a political choice that made my work challenging and rewarding, as I have tentatively crafted a piece that draws from sources of more than one language or one linear history. With regards to the methodology I have mostly utilized insights from Oral History and other qualitative research methods such as participant observation, field journals, interviews, and autoethnography. I find the methodological aspect of this research to be an interesting review or reflexive section of this work where I could critically address my own unfinished knowledge and the ways this research becomes meaningful to me as praxis of Black Feminist and Decolonial theories. In this context, I strongly align myself with Spivak's quote at the start of this conclusion that the work must be done in the sense that those who are engaged with anti-colonial practice must continue to gender the people.

In the following chapter I have looked at the interviews made and at my interviewees' narratives as the departure source of reflections. I have tentatively analyzed them through Du Bois and Anzaldua's concept of consciousness wherein a great importance was placed on the idea of who can self-define, why, how, where and why. I have pushed for an argument that could encompass

the diversity and richness I observed through the narratives I heard and at the same time I have struggled to understand how sexuality, class and coloniality may intersect with other categories. Subsequently I sketched some ideas I found to be related to the problem of consciousness but not always acknowledged nor examined which I tentatively called the Veil of Gender, inspired by Du Bois' concept of "*the Veil*" (2007). In this final chapter my argument was that the Veil of Gender creates definable and specific obstacles for Black women through systematic violence.

Overall, I would say that through this research I learned that systematic violence against Black women and racialized people needs to be understood and thought about both separately and together as the issues of sexuality, class and citizenship will heavily influence how much one's able to respond to violence. Similarly, it is important to conceive of Black womanhood as inherently diverse, but I do not yet think that there is enough scholarship for thinking critically through that outside what is offered in the U.S. In this sense, I have found through my interviewee' narratives and my own lived experience that becoming a Black woman is not simply being a black woman, but acquiring consciousness over what it means in time and space, as a group that may experience consciousness differently but that goes through considerably similar experiences, nonetheless.

It is in this sense that I have argued for Black women's diasporic consciousness as a political form of subjectivity that can be summarized in three points. First, the self-definitional power of Black women's standpoint which opposes gendered notions of race and racial notions of womanhood, and that includes *all* self-identified Black women regardless of their assigned sex at birth and their sexuality. Second, the recognition of the historicity of a given nation-state in informing how Black women's consciousness is going to be crafted, in addition to the local historicity of Black womanhood there is also the symbolic and material construction of the

Black diaspora as a group that is not nation-bound. Or as Michelle M. Wright puts it "a truly diasporic approach to Black subjectivity must not be ethnically specific yet must provide some sort of specificity. It must translate across languages and cultures yet not effect so much transformation as to be unrecognizable to other Black communities" (2004, 3). Third, the sense that Black women's Diasporic consciousness is a political position means that it is neither homogenous nor disconnected from other colonial legacies of oppression. As a form of subjectivity that is aware of the many continuities of colonialism, Black women's diasporic consciousness can be acquired by different self-identified Black women in distinct parts of the diaspora.

Finally, one could try to counter that by claiming that Du Bois argument is fixed and has served its purpose pointing to inequality in the 19th century, but that nowadays it has become obsolete, but I would beg to differ. As Patricia Hill Collins (2000) posits in "Black Feminist Thought" there is a myriad of experiences within Black womanhood, and although she was referring to the United States, I would say that it is the systematic interlocking of oppression and privilege that makes Black women's lives so visible and at the same time invisible. Being aware of that, I argue, consists in a double consciousness of gender and races because at the intersection of both there is a specific need to self-define and resist. By not looking at how Black people are differently gendered in the West the chance of politically addressing an enormous problematic is kept invisible and silenced. In other words, as Black women are put under different constellations of power that reflects the dialectics of how both oppression and resistance can be witnessed and performed in all sorts of places: it may be our home country, in the country-side, our parent's lands, a city in Europe or a metro in Berlin.

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