

# **“WE SHOULD ALL BE FEMINISTS”**

**AN EXPLORATION OF THE WORK OF BEYONCÉ GISELLE  
KNOWLES-CARTER SHAPED BY FEMINIST LITERATURE**

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**Axelle Hantson**

Studentennummer: 01301553

Promotor: Prof. dr. Marysa Demoor

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## **List of Abbreviations**

CFC: Crunk Feminist Collective

CR: Consciousness-raising

CRM: Civil Rights Movement

HBCU: Historical Black Colleges and Universities

R&B: Rhythm and blues

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## **Preface**

Feminism itself has changed tremendously over the years, and has realised many several distinctions. This research focuses on Black feminist thought, hip-hop feminism, and intersectionality because feminism, when used in a general sense, sometimes still means feminism shapayed by White, upper class, educated women.

This might seem contradictory since I myself am a white woman, however I feel that this topic is very interesting to investigate, regardless of the colour of my skin, and I feel that we should focus more on other distinctions of feminism that do not have the privilege that White feminism has had. Yet, it is highly important to note that a certain distance is needed and will be upheld. I will not try to envision or appropriate Black culture or Black feminism, yet will always strive to achieve an objective point of view in this thesis. I will therefore use the personal pronoun 'I' or other neutral personal pronouns quite often throughout this body of work, so my voice can be distinguished from that of others, being Black scholars, critics and authors. Moreover, most scholars capitalise the words "Black" and "White" when referring to ethnicities, and I have done the same throughout this thesis.



## Introduction

I have chosen to write about the topic of Beyoncé Giselle Knowles-Carter and feminism because it is important to note the importance of feminism in today's society through literature, popular culture and pop music. Feminism has seemingly moved away from being solely an academic pursuit, and has entered the daily lives of many women. Moreover, many influential people – celebrities, politicians, etc. – have discussed feminism in a public manner. One of the polarizing figures that promotes feminism publicly, is Beyoncé.

To establish my research, I have chosen to look at the importance of Beyoncé as a Black feminist role model in today's society by scrutinizing her last two albums *BEYONCÉ* (2013) and *Lemonade* (2016), and the writings of two authors: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Warsan Shire. The two albums by Beyoncé and works of Adichie and Shire will be analysed via a Black feminist thought, hip-hop feminist and intersectional theoretical framework. Both authors and their work are featured in Beyoncé's last two albums and have supported Beyoncé's self-declaration of being a feminist. Moreover, Beyoncé's work is laced with Black feminist thought and hip-hop feminist tropes and this is supported by her explicit embrace of Black feminism and feminist literature. This supports my claim that an iconic figure such as Beyoncé has used feminist literature and her position as a Black woman to strengthen the importance of Black feminism in society, and is one of the first Black women to have the opportunity to be this influential to such a large audience in music. Moreover, after conducting an analysis of her last two albums through a Black feminist thought, hip-hop feminist and intersectional lens, I aim to prove that these two albums of Beyoncé can be considered cultural texts belonging to a rich history of Black feminism.

Firstly, I will provide an overview of feminism by using the wave-model. After providing a definition for feminism, first-, second-, and third-wave feminism will be discussed. For this research, the second and third wave are the most important. This is because since the second wave, feminism became more inclusive and dynamic. Black feminist scholars were increasingly important voices within the second and third wave.

Secondly, building further upon second- and third-wave feminism, Black feminist thought, hip-hop feminism, and intersectionality will be thoroughly discussed. These three concepts are extremely important since they form the theoretical framework of this thesis, and will be the methodology for

analysing the last two Beyoncé albums. There are fundamental tropes present, such as the controlling images of Black womanhood (cf. 2.1.5) for instance, that are prevalent in Beyoncé's work.

After laying out the theoretical groundwork for this thesis, the person of Beyoncé will be scrutinized, apart from her music. Some of her performances for instance, will be analysed by demonstrating the presence of Black feminist thought, hip-hop feminist and intersectional tenets. This chapter thus will aim to portray how and why she is a self-defined Black feminist artist, and how this is then later on translated in her music.

Furthermore, a detailed analysis of the 2013 self-titled visual album *BEYONCÉ* is conducted. By applying the framework of Black feminist thought, hip-hop feminism and intersectionality, important tropes will be identified in the album in the form of recurrent themes, or specific song lyrics. There is an emphasis on the song “\*\*\*Flawless”, which features Nigerian author and feminist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and in regards to the research question of this thesis is thus the most important song off of the album, since it interpolates Adichie's writing.

Lastly, the visual album *Lemonade* (2016) will be scrutinized. The same methodology will be applied, which is demonstrating Black feminist thought, hip-hop feminist and intersectional tenets in the album, realised by analysing the song lyrics and themes. However, *Lemonade* is different from *BEYONCÉ*, because of the fact that there is a lot of spoken-word poetry by Warsan Shire in the film, and the visuals are more relevant as well. Thus, the spoken-word poetry and corresponding imagery will be looked at as well for Black feminist thought, hip-hop feminist and intersectional tenets.

To conclude, the aim of this thesis is to provide a thorough theoretical framework of Black feminist thought, hip-hop feminism, and intersectionality. Henceforth, this theoretical framework will be utilised to analyse Beyoncé as a self-defined Black feminist artist and more importantly, how her last two albums can be regarded as cultural texts within Black feminism because of her overt embrace of feminist literature.

## **Chapter 1: Basic introduction to feminism**

### **1.1 Definition and origin of feminism**

In *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, Nancy Cott (1987) states that the term ‘Feminism’ (initially capitalized) emerged in the first two decades of the twentieth century. (Cott as cited by Caughie, 6) Cott elaborates further on the definition of feminism, and states that feminism was part of a broader rebellious spirit of the early twentieth century that included, for example, the birth control movement and internationalism, as represented by the League of Nations and the International Workers of the World. (Cott, 1987 as cited by Caughie, 6) Moreover, feminism was both a continuation of the women’s movement of the nineteenth century and its fight for full citizenship for women, and an expansion of that movement to include the recognition of women’s sexual desires and freedom. (Cott, 1987: 15, as cited by Caughie, 6)

Feminism, especially on an academic level, was previously largely reserved for White, educated women, and was regarded as elitist. However, there has been a paradigm shift, with feminism now having a plural meaning, and with all sorts of women, regardless of sex, race, sexuality, etc. working actively towards this plurality of feminism. To describe the women’s movement in the United States, feminist activists and women’s movement historians use the “wave” model. (Springer, 1061) This model is mainly still a “Western periodization” (Caughie, 5), however. A brief explanation of the waves will follow, with the second and third wave especially important for this research.

### **1.2 First-wave feminism**

The first wave of feminism can roughly be situated from the late nineteenth century to the 1930s. (Caughie, 5) It emerged out of an environment of urban industrialism and liberal, socialist politics. Women were occupied with plans for electoral, educational, and employment rights. (Caughie, 5) Especially the right to vote was quintessential for first-wave feminists. Women’s suffrage was also central to the first wave. (Springer, 1061) Rampton (2015)<sup>1</sup> stated that “formally, the wave began at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848” and continues with “during the the early stages, feminism was intertwined with the temperance and abolitionist movements and gave voice to activists such as Sojourner Truth (d. 1883), who cried out in her very famous speech, “Ain’t I a woman?”” Moreover,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pacificu.edu/about/media/four-waves-feminism>

the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment – granting all women the right to vote – was especially quintessential to the first wave.

### **1.3 Second-wave feminism**

The second wave is described by Kimberly Springer (2002) as the “women’s liberation/women’s rights activism of the late 1960s” (Springer, 1061) and thus came a couple of decades after the first wave, more or less. What was quite new in this wave is that second-wave feminism included an entire strand devoted to such issues [increased attention to cultural critique]: cultural feminism. (Snyder, 178) Thus media, popular culture and so forth became important outlets of this wave of feminism.

R. Claire Snyder (2008) elaborates further on this and states that classic second-wave feminism argues that in “patriarchal society women share common experiences, and through a sharing of their experiences with one another in consciousness-raising (CR) groups, they can generate knowledge about their own oppression”. (Snyder, 184) Once they realize that what they thought were personal problems (e.g., uneven division of household labour, male-centred sexual practices, domestic violence, etc.) are widely shared, they can see the ways in which the patriarchal structure of society produces such problems, and the personal becomes political. (Snyder, 184) What Snyder has labelled “common experiences”, is something that the third wave critiques, opposing Black women with White women, for example, but this will be discussed later on (cf. 1.4).

Furthermore, Pamela L. Caughie (2010) discusses three distinctive phases within the second wave of feminism, based on Nancy Fraser’s *Justice Interruptus* (1997), stating that second-wave feminism traverses three phases, according to Fraser: “a first phase focused on *gender difference* which preoccupied feminists from the late 1960s to the mid-1980s, marked by debates between *equality feminism* and *difference feminism*; a second phase, which lasted until the early 1990s, focused on *differences among women*; and a third phase, which lasted through that last decade, focused on ‘*multiple intersecting differences*’” (1997: 175, emphasis added, as cited by Caughie, 6)

#### **1.3.1 The three phases of second-wave feminism**

Fraser provides the following as a brief summary of the three phases of second wave feminism: “in the 1960s and 1970s”, Fraser says, “differences between men and women were either seen as destructive because produced by male dominance (‘equality feminism’) or valued as women’s

unique cultural identity ('difference feminism')." (1997; 178 as cited by Caughie, 6) "In the second phase of the 1980s, which coincided with (and helped give rise to) identity politics, feminists argued that both of these positions privileged gender difference to the exclusion of other 'axes of difference', including race, sexuality, class, and ethnicity" (1997: 178, as cited by Caughie, 6). This is quite important, since then feminists were more and more aware that there were different kinds of women, and that there were more factors than solely gender that had an impact on women. A Black lesbian woman for instance, arguably still had it worse than a Black straight woman. This consciousness, a focus on a plurality of factors, was starting to become more and more relevant within feminism.

Caughie continues that, as Fraser puts it, only by abandoning an "exclusive focus on gender difference' could feminists respond to differences among women as other than 'threats to the unity of women'" (1997: 180, as cited by Caughie, 7). Such a reorientation enabled feminists to theorize feminism's relation to other political struggles (1997: 180, as cited by Caughie, 7) This is partly due to the rise of intersectionality, which will be thoroughly discussed in the second chapter of this thesis (infra 2.3).

Moreover, this awareness led to what Fraser defines as "the third phase of the second wave, though it might also be designated as the emergence of a third wave, divided by two competing positions: antiessentialism and multiculturalism". Antiessentialism, Fraser writes, "with its theory of performativity, rejects any notion of a shared, ontological identity as always necessarily exclusionary" (1992: 182, as cited by Caughie, 7). In contrast, multiculturalism, Fraser says "has become the rallying cry for a potential alliance of new social movements, promotes a cultural pluralism that recognizes all identities as equally valuable in their particularity". (1997: 184, as cited by Caughie, 7) Whereas 'difference' was seen as a threat in first-wave feminism, in the 'pluralist version' of multiculturalism, Fraser says, "'difference' is 'intrinsically positive and inherently cultural'" (1997: 185, as cited by Caughie, 7). The multiculturalist valorises the very group identity the antiessentialist delegitimizes." (Caughie, 7) Other feminists, such as Chandra Mohanty (1984), have voiced this concern as well, that there is a need for a more global feminism, focussing on other women outside of a Eurocentric point of view. She discusses this in her essay "Under Western Eyes", of which she has said that her goals were "feminist solidarity across borders". (Mohanty as cited by Caughie, 7) Thus, the second wave was already endeavouring for a

far more inclusive type of feminism, whilst highlighting its diversity as well. This is what becomes even more important in the third wave.

#### **1.4 Third-wave feminism**

The third wave built further upon the second wave, although some second wave feminists tend to be critical of the third wave. As R. Claire Snyder (2008) has noted, because third-wave feminists frequently overstate their distinctiveness while showing little knowledge of their own history, the movement has been widely criticized by second-wave feminists. For example, in *Not My Mother's Sister* (2004), Henry makes a convincing case that “third-wave feminism can be viewed as the rebellion of young women against their mothers and as their desire to have a feminism of their own, even though their political agenda – when they have one – remains quite similar to that of their mothers.” (Henry as cited by Snyder, 181-182) Although claiming that third-wave feminists show little knowledge of their own history, might be a stretch. Many third-wave feminists have a very good sense of what they are theorizing, as will be shown.

Thus, the third wave was a distinctive period of feminism, and signalled a new generation of feminists. (Springer, 1063) Rebecca Walker was quintessential for the third wave, Springer elaborates on this: “it came to public consciousness, or at least leftist consciousness, in the form of Rebecca Walker’s founding of the Third Wave foundation in 1992 (...) This generation of third-wave feminism credits previous generations for women-centred social and political advances.” (Springer, 1063)

As already mentioned, third-wave feminism can be interpreted as a reaction to the second wave, with many third-wave feminists endeavouring for a different approach. R. Claire Snyder (2008) has explained this in an essay titled “What Is Third-Wave Feminism? A New Directions Essay”, and has discussed three important tactical moves that respond to a series of theoretical problems within the second wave.

First, in response to the collapse of the category of “women”, the third wave “foregrounds personal narratives that illustrate an intersectional and multiperspectival version of feminism.” (Snyder, 175) Thus, the third-wave is focussing on the plurality of what it means to be a woman, and that not all women are the same, or as Snyder has described it, “intersectional and multiperspectival.” (Snyder, 175) Leslie Heywood (2006) has built further upon this, and has claimed that third-wave feminist

ideas about identities embrace notions of contradiction, ambiguity, and multiplicity, and thus builds on “postmodern theory’s critique of ideas about the unified self and moreover, engaging with the fluid nature of gender and sexual identity.” (2006a, 257-58 as cited by Snyder, 187) There is thus more than one way to be a woman.

Snyder continues with explaining the second reaction, and states that “as a consequence of the rise of postmodernism, third-wave feminists embrace multivocality over synthesis and action over theoretical justification.” (Snyder, 175) In this second reaction there is yet again an emphasis on “multi-“, in turn to accentuate the importance of diversity in the third wave. They also praise “action”, third-wave feminists opt to act instead of focussing solely on establishing themselves via academic ways, they prefer a more hands-on approach to act out their feminism. Sometimes even with a quite anarchist approach to politics, third-wave feminists call for immediate action or to understand individual acts as political in and of themselves. (Berger 2006, as cited by Snyder, 186)

Finally, Snyder concludes that “in response to the divisiveness of the sex wars, third-wave feminism emphasizes an inclusive and non-judgemental approach that refuses to police the boundaries of the feminist political.” (Snyder, 175-176) Put differently, third-wave feminism renounces grand narratives for a feminism that functions as “a hermeneutics of critique within a wide array of discursive locations, and alters at unity with a dynamic and welcoming politics of coalition”. (Snyder, 175-176) As the earlier waves might be regarded as more conservative, third-wave feminists most definitely promote a more progressive kind of feminism. So in conclusion, third-wave feminists have reacted to the second wave by proposing an intersectional and multiperspectival version of feminism, together with multivocality and action, and lastly, aiming for an inclusive and non-judgemental approach.

However, in spite of receiving criticism from some second-wave feminists, third-wave feminists really strive for their own kind of feminism, supported partly by the way they reacted to the second wave, as mentioned above, in order to address their different societal contexts and the particular set of challenges they face. (Snyder, 178)

#### **1.4.1 Most important characteristics of third-wave feminism**

During the third wave, mass media becomes more important, as Snyder has noted, with a lot of third-wave literature emphasizing the importance of cultural production and critique, focusing

particular attention on female pop icons, hip-hop music, and beauty culture, rather than on traditional politics per se. (Snyder, 178) The negative effects of the beauty industry on the self-image of women has also been central within the third wave. For this research, female pop icons and hip-hop music is especially important, since Beyoncé is a female pop icon, making hip-hop music that has touched upon the beauty industry. Moreover, her music, especially her later work, can be read as feminist, but that will be explained and analysed in detail later on in this thesis.

Adding to this, third-wave feminists claim to be “less rigid and judgemental than their mothers’ generation, which they often represent as antimale, anti-sex, anti-femininity, and anti-fun.” (Snyder, 179) This can be seen as a result of a more progressive era that was happening at the same time that the third wave was developing. Women were encouraged to take birth control, religion became less dominant in one’s life and women were starting to embrace their sexuality whilst second-wave feminists can still be seen as more conservative in this regard.

The relationship between women and men was also important within the third wave, with third-wave feminists interacting with men as their equal. Third-wave feminists, by “occupying female subject positions in innovative or contradictory ways, unsettle essentialist narratives about dominant men and passive women.” (Snyder, 185) Being a married woman did not necessarily mean that the woman was submissive and docile, and married women could be regarded as feminists too. Moreover, third-wave feminists shape new identities within the interstices of competing narratives. In essence, there is no one way to be a woman. (Snyder, 185)

Sexuality was also crucial, third-wave feminists “claim sexual pleasure as they desire it (heterosexual or otherwise), and actively play with femininity, without obtaining an anti-male stance.” (Snyder, 178) Snyder adds that “the third wave desire for girl power seems simultaneously authentic, playful, and part of the younger generation’s project of reclamation, which also redeploys terms like “bitch,” cunt,” and “slut.”” (Snyder, 178) By reclaiming derogatory words such as “bitch”, third-wave feminists empower themselves linguistically as well.

Another characteristic that third-wave feminists believe separates them from second-wave feminists, is the fact that they claim “to have a broader vision of politics than second-wave feminism, that they do not have a “party line”, and that they focus on more than solely women’s issues”



(Heywood 2006a, 366-67 as cited by Snyder, 181), and overall are more inclusive than their predecessors.

Moreover, whilst the third wave endeavours to highlight the distinctiveness of all women, they do reject the universalist claim that all women share a set of common experiences, which was something that second-wave feminists definitely strongly believed in. A White, educated woman does not share many common experiences with a Black, uneducated woman, for instance. However, they do not abandon the concept of experience altogether, they value the personal story very highly, and it functions as one of the central hallmarks of third-wave feminism. (Snyder, 184) The phrase “the personal is political” still forms the core of feminism, and the sharing of personal experiences functions as a form of CR [consciousness-raising] within the third wave. (Snyder, 184) As the third wave puts great emphasis on personal experiences, many third-wave stories strive to “demonstrate the gaps between dominant discourses (usually dictated by White women) and the reality of women’s lives” (Snyder, 184), which was very different, most of the time. Not surprisingly, the rejection of the common experience of all women was an endeavour started by feminists of colour.

Henceforth, the theoretical tools of academic feminism support third-wave scholars to push popular articulations of women’s experiences in a postmodern, critical direction, rendering them more radical and theoretically sophisticated. (Snyder, 191) Many third-wave feminists rely on personal experience to discuss their feminism, which is thus very central to the third-wave movement, summarised in “the personal is political”.

To sum up, Snyder states that “third-wave feminism prevents a tactical response to three major theoretical challenges to second-wave feminism. First, the “category of women” debates (initiated by feminists of colour) that shattered the idea of a shared women’s experience or identity.” (Snyder, 183) There is no such thing as one, fixed way to be a woman, and the third wave emphasizes this multiplicity. Secondly, “the end of grand narratives through the decline of Marxism, resulting in the rise of poststructuralism, deconstruction, and postmodernism within the academia”. Lastly, the “sex wars that fractured the unified political stand of feminism on many important issues. The third wave responds to the debates of the 1980s that hobbled feminist theory and practice.” (Snyder, 183)

In conclusion, even though the third wave was subject to criticism by the second wave, third-wave feminism does in fact continue the endeavours of second-wave feminism to establish conditions of

freedom, justice, equality, and self-actualization for all people, doing so by focusing on gender-related issues in particular, even as it offers a different set of tactics for achieving those goals. (Snyder, 192) Because third-wave feminists see themselves as a new generation, they do emphasize the distinctiveness of their feminism.

Because of the great endeavours made by second- and third-wave feminists, this gave way to multiple evolutions within feminism. This resulted in the rise of many different distinctions of feminism, most notably Black feminist thought and hip-hop feminism. Moreover, the notion of intersectionality gained a lot of importance as well.

### **1.5 Conclusion**

In conclusion, there are three distinctive waves within feminism to date. Thanks to endeavours by feminists of colour, the second and third wave saw great changes, and the Eurocentric vision of White women was being challenged. For this research, the second and third wave are the most important. Although second-wave feminists and third-wave feminists have voiced critique about one another, it is thanks to their efforts that Black feminism rose to prominence, and that some of its subdivisions – Black feminist thought and hip-hop feminism – became important as well. Voices outside of the academia were being heard, and the audience shifted from exclusively within the academia to the outside as well. Logically, since many women of colour were still excluded from top institutions. They challenged the White feminists and helped to create a more dynamic brand of feminism. They highlighted for instance that there is no notion of a common or shared experience, since Black women and White women share completely different experiences. This gave way to the notion of intersectionality, which focussed on multiple axes, such as gender, race, and sexuality. Black feminist thought, hip-hop feminism and intersectionality will now be discussed in the second chapter.

## **Chapter 2: Black feminist thought, hip-hop feminism, and intersectionality**

As discussed in the first chapter, ever since the second wave, feminism started to become more inclusive and diverse. Since this was especially an endeavour by Black feminists, it should come as no surprise that Black feminism consequently became very prominent within the discussions of feminism. Furthermore, Black feminism can also be subdivided into Black feminist thought and hip-hop feminism, and since these two brands of feminism are extremely relevant for this research, this chapter will thoroughly explain the two. Furthermore, the concept of intersectionality is also very crucial and will be discussed in this chapter as well.

### **2.1 Black feminist thought**

In spite of the double burden of gender and racial discrimination, African-American women have established a rich intellectual tradition that is not widely known. In the quintessential book *Black Feminist Thought*, Patricia Hill Collins (2009) set out to explore the words and ideas of Black feminist intellectuals and writers, both within the academia and outside. Collins provides an interpretive framework, drawing from fiction, music, poetry, and oral history. The book, as a result, provided the first synthetic overview of Black feminist thought and its canon, which will be discussed down below.

Collins addresses the painstaking process of collecting actions and ideas of what she calls “thrown away” Black women like Maria Stewart, who was one of the first U.S. Black feminists to promote the utility of Black women’s relationships with one another in providing a community for the activism of Black women and their self-determination. (Collins, 5) Black women intellectuals have laid a fundamental foundation for a distinctive point of view on community, self, and society. In doing so, Black women have created a multifaceted, African-American women’s intellectual tradition. (Collins, 5)

The politics of U.S. Black feminist thought constitutes the dialectic of oppression and activism, the tension between the suppression of African-American women’s ideas and their<sup>2</sup> [our] intellectual

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<sup>2</sup> Many Black scholars use the personal pronouns ‘our, us, we’ and so forth when they discuss matters attending to Black people. For obvious reasons I have changed it – and will continue to do so – to more neutral personal pronouns.

activism in the face of that suppression. (Collins, 6) Moreover, the oppression of African-American women has encompassed three interdependent dimensions, as described by Collins.

### **2.1.1 First interdependent dimension of oppression**

The first interdependent dimension of oppression of Black women, constitutes the “exploitation of Black women’s labour essential to U.S. capitalism – the “iron pots and kettles” symbolizing Black women’s long-standing ghettoization in service occupations – represents the economic dimensions of oppression.” (Davis 1981; Marable 1983; Jones 1985; Amott and Matthaei 1991 as cited by Collins, 6) Survival for most African-American women has been such an all-consuming activity that most have had few opportunities to do intellectual work as it has been traditionally defined. (Collins, 6)

### **2.1.2 Second interdependent dimension of oppression**

The second interdependent dimension of Black women’s oppression, is the fact that the “political dimension of oppression has denied African-American women the rights and privileges routinely extended to White male citizens.” (Burnham 1987; Scales-Trent 1989; Berry 1994, as cited by Collins, 6) Forbidding Black women to vote, excluding African-Americans and women from public office, and withholding equitable treatment in the criminal justice system all substantiate the political subordination of Black women. (Collins, 6)

### **2.1.3 Third interdependent dimension of oppression**

The third and final interdependent dimension of Black women’s oppression, deals with the “controlling images applied to Black women that originated during the slave era attest to the ideological dimension of U.S. Black women’s oppression.” (King 1973; D. White 1985; Carby 1987; Morton 1991, as cited by Collins, 7) Within U.S. culture, sexist and racist ideologies infuse the social structure to such an extent that they become hegemonic, namely, seen as normal, natural, and inevitable. (Collins, 7) In this context, certain assumed qualities that are attached to Black women are used to justify oppression. From the mummies, jezebels, and breeder women of slavery to the smiling Aunt Jemimas on pancake mix boxes, ubiquitous Black prostitutes, and ever-present welfare mothers of contemporary popular culture, negative stereotypes applied to African-American women have been fundamental to Black women’s oppression. (Collins, 7) These controlling images, however, will be thoroughly explained further on in this chapter (infra 2.1.5).

Equally important, many U.S. White feminist scholars have opposed having Black women as full colleagues. Furthermore, this historical suppression of Black women's ideas has had a pronounced influence on feminist theory, being that of omission. (Collins, 8) As mentioned earlier, theories that were advanced as being universally applicable to women as a fixed group, upon closer examination, appear greatly limited by the White, middle-class, and Western origins of their proponents. Thus, as U.S. Black women have been an historically oppressed group, they have produced social thought designed to oppose oppression. (Collins, 11) Not only does the form assumed by this thought deviate from standard academic theory – it can take the form of music, essays, poetry, and so forth – but the purpose of Black women's collective thought is distinctly different. (Collins, 11)

Another dimension of developing Black feminist thought is reinterpreting existing works through new theoretical frameworks. Moreover, it also involves searching for its expression in alternative institutional locations and among women who are not commonly perceived as intellectuals. (Collins, 17) For instance, Sojourner Truth and her powerful speech titled, "Ain't I A Woman?". This speech has proven to be very influential and important to Black women overall, yet Sojourner Truth was not an intellectual per se, since she was born into slavery in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Lastly, the music of working-class Black women blues singers of the 1920 and 1930s is often seen as one very important site outside academia. (Davis 1998 as cited by Collins, 19) Music, thus, has been quintessential to Black women and Black feminist thought. The blues women of the previous century, can be regarded as the predecessors for many Black female musicians today, such as Beyoncé. For instance, Imani Perry (1995) suggests that the music of Black women hip-hop artists serve as a contemporary site of Black women's intellectual production. (Collins, 19)

#### **2.1.4 Six distinguishing features of Black feminist thought**

The first distinguishing feature of Black feminist thought is the fact that Black feminism remains important because U.S. Black women still constitute an oppressed group. U.S. Black women participate in a dialectical relationship linking African-American women's oppression and activism. (Collins, 25) For as long as Black women's subordination within intersecting oppressions of race, gender, class, sexuality, and nation remains, Black feminism as an activist response to that oppressions will continue to be needed. (Collins, 25)

Continuing, a second distinguishing feature of U.S. Black feminist thought surfaces from a tension linking ideas and experiences. On the one hand, all African-American women face similar challenges that are a result from living in a society that historically and routinely derogates women of African descent. (Collins, 28) Despite the fact that U.S. Black women face shared challenges, this neither means that individual African-American women have all had the same experiences nor that they [we] agree on the significance of their [our] varying experiences. (Collins, 28-29) This is a critique that is echoed by third-wave feminists, as mentioned in 1.4.1. So, there is no essential or archetypal Black woman whose experiences stand as normative, normal, and thereby fully authentic.

Correspondingly, a third distinguishing feature of Black feminist thought concerns the “connections between U.S. Black women’s experiences as a heterogenous collectivity and any ensuing group knowledge or standpoint.” (Collins, 33) One key consideration that standpoints of oppressed groups is that self-defined standpoints can spark resistance. (Collins, 33) Black feminist thought has the possibility to create a collective identity among African-American women about the dimensions of a Black women’s standpoint. Moreover, through the process of re-articulation, Black feminist thought can offer African-American women a different view of themselves [ourselves] and the world. (Omi and Winant, 1994, 99 as cited by Collins, 36)

A fourth distinguishing feature of Black feminist thought is the concern with the essential contributions of African-American women intellectuals. The presence of a Black woman’s standpoint does not imply that African-American women, whether or not academic, appreciate its content, recognize its significance, or see its potential as a catalyst for social change. (Collins, 37) One key endeavour for Black women intellectuals of varying ages, educational backgrounds, social classes, and occupations subsists of asking the right questions and scrutinizing all dimensions of a Black women’s standpoint with and for African-American women. (Collins, 37)

Furthermore, a fifth distinguishing feature of U.S. Black feminist thought deals with the significance of change. In order for Black feminist thought to function effectively within Black feminism as a social justice project, both must remain dynamic. (Collins, 43) This feature is especially important to hip-hop feminism, which will be discussed further on in this chapter (infra 2.2). Dynamism in Black feminist thought, is crucial and has expanded into other brands of feminism.

Lastly, the sixth and final distinguishing feature of Black feminist thought embodies its relationship to other projects for social justice. A wide array of African-American women intellectuals have advanced the view that Black women's struggles are a part of a wider struggle for human empowerment, dignity, and social justice. (Collins, 46) The struggles Black women endure, impact their lives, and that of others, greatly. This is, again, because of the intersecting oppressions of race, gender, and so forth.

Besides the important six distinguishing features of Black feminist thought, Collins also thoroughly discusses another quintessential part of Black womanhood and Black feminist thought, that of the controlling images. This is already touched upon briefly earlier in this chapter, but will now be further explained.

### **2.1.5 The controlling images about Black womanhood**

The realisation and employment of these controlling images, portraying African-American women as stereotypical mummies, matriarchs, welfare recipients, and hot mommas helps justify U.S. Black women's oppression. The dominant ideology of the slave era fostered the creation of these controlling images of Black womanhood. (Collins, 79) Challenging these controlling images has been a core theme in Black feminist thought. (Collins, 76) Moreover, analysing these particular controlling images also reveals the ways in which oppressions of gender, race, sexuality, and class intersect. Furthermore, since these images are changing and dynamic, each one provides a starting point for scrutinizing new forms of control that emerge in a transnational context, one where selling images has increased in importance in the global marketplace. (Collins, 79)

#### **2.1.5.1 *The mammy***

The first controlling image that has been applied to U.S. Black women is that of the mammy. The mammy is the obedient, faithful domestic servant, created to condone the economic exploitation of house slaves and sustained to explain Black women's long-standing restriction to domestic service. (Collins, 80) The image of the mammy represents the normative yardstick used to evaluate all Black women's demeanour. By nurturing, loving, and caring for her White children and family better than her own, the mammy portrays the dominant group's perceptions of the perfect Black female relationship to elite White male power. (Collins, 80) The image of the mammy is the public face that Whites expect Black women to assume for them. (Collins, 81) Moreover, juxtaposed against the images of White women, the mammy images as the Other exemplifies the oppositional

difference of mind/body and culture/nature thought to separate Black women from everyone else. (Collins, 81) The controlling image of the mammy is thus one that is somewhat positive, since it focusses on the nurturing aspects of Black women. Although that is contrasted with their inferior position within the White family.

#### ***2.1.5.2 The Black matriarch***

The creation of the second controlling image of Black womanhood, is tied to the fact that the mammy image by itself cannot control Black women's behaviour. The image of the Black matriarch, although it is a more recent phenomenon, fulfils similar functions in explaining Black women's placement in intersecting oppressions. (Collins, 82) The matriarch is a symbol for the mother figure in Black homes, instead of in White homes. The image of the matriarch, a bad Black mother, to explain Black economic disadvantage ties gender ideology to explanations for extreme distributions of wealth that characterize American capitalism. (Collins, 84) The stereotype of lousy Black mothers was used in order to criticize Black women's failure to thrive in life.

By constructing this image of the matriarch or overly strong Black woman, it has also been used to influence Black men's understandings of Black masculinity. Many Black men reject Black women as marital partners, claiming that Black women are less desirable than White ones because of Black women being too assertive. (Collins, 85) Essentially, African-American women who must work, encounter pressures to be submissive mummies in one setting, but are then stigmatized as matriarchs for being strong figures in their own homes. (Collins, 86) So either way, Black women end up with the short end of the stick.

#### ***2.1.5.3 The welfare mother***

A third, externally defined, controlling image of Black womanhood, is that of the welfare mother. This controlling image seems to be linked to working-class Black women's increasing access to the U.S. welfare state entitlements. (Collins, 86) The image of the welfare mother constitutes a class-specific image established for poor, working-class Black women who make use of the social welfare benefits to which they are entitled by law. (Collins, 86) There was no need for this stereotype as long as Black women were denied these social welfare benefits, but when U.S. Black women gained more political power and demanded equity in access to state services, the need for this controlling image arose. (Collins, 86)



The image of the welfare mother shares some important traits with the two previous images, those of the mammy and the matriarch. Like the matriarch, the welfare mother is labelled a bad mother. But unlike the matriarch, the welfare mother is not perceived as too aggressive – on the contrary, she is not aggressive enough. (Collins, 87) The image of the welfare mother provides ideological justifications for intersecting oppressions of race, class, and gender. African-Americans can be racially stereotyped as being lazy, by blaming Black welfare mothers for failing to pass on the work ethic. (Collins, 87) Even though many Black women were thus entitled to welfare from the state, they were still being critiqued and seen as lazy.

#### ***2.1.5.4 The welfare queen***

With the election of the Reagan administration in 1980, the stigmatized welfare mother transitioned into the more pernicious image of the welfare queen. (Lubiano 1992 as cited by Collins, 88) Media images increasingly identified and blamed Black women for the deterioration of U.S. interests in order to mask the effects of cuts in government spending on social welfare programs that housed working families, fed children, supported basic public services, and assisted cities in maintaining roads, bridges, and basic infrastructure. (Collins, 88) Thus, the welfare queen image signals efforts to use the situation of working-class Black women as a sign of the deterioration of the nation. Henceforth, Black women were used as the scapegoat. Conflicting with the welfare mother, who draws upon the moral capital attached to American motherhood, the welfare queen embodies a highly domineering, materialistic, man-less working-class Black women. (Collins, 88)

#### ***2.1.5.5 The Black lady***

During the same period, the welfare queen was accompanied by another similar, yet class-specific image, that of the “Black lady” (Lubiano 1992 as cited by Collins, 88). Since the Black lady refers to middle-class, professional Black women who serve as a modern version of the “politics of respectability advanced by the club women” (Shaw 1996 as cited by Collins, 88), this image is merely a benign one, and does not appear as a controlling one. This image portrays the women who stayed in school, worked hard, and achieved much. However, the image of the Black lady builds upon prior, negative images of Black womanhood in many ways. (Collins, 88) So even though this image is perhaps the only one with moreover positive qualities, it is based upon prejudice and negative stereotypes of Black women.

Hence, when looked at together, the welfare queen and the Black lady constitute class-specific versions of a matriarchy thesis whose fundamental goal is to discredit Black women's full exercise of citizenship rights. (Collins, 89) Black women are left between a rock and a hard place, because of these interconnected images.

#### ***2.1.5.6 The jezebel, hoochie, or whore***

Lastly, the final controlling image, the one of the jezebel, "hoochie", or whore, is central in this nexus of controlling images of Black womanhood. Since efforts to control the sexuality of Black women is positioned at the heart of Black women's oppression, historical jezebels and contemporary "hoochies" portray a deviant Black female sexuality. (Collins, 89) This is also supported by the fact that Black women have to endure an extremely sexualized racism. The image of the jezebel originated under slavery when Black women were depicted as being, to use Jewelle Gomez's phrasing, "sexually aggressive wet nurses" (Clarke et al. 1983, 99 as cited by Collins, 89). Jezebel's objective was to relegate all Black women to the category of sexually aggressive women and thus providing an impactful narrative for the widespread sexual assaults by White men typically reported by Black slave women. (Davis 1981; D. White 1985 as cited by Collins, 89)

The contemporary "hoochie", rooted in the historical legacy of the jezebel, seems to be entirely different. For one, whereas images of Black women as sexually aggressive overall pervade popular culture, the image of the hoochie seems to have permeated everyday Black culture in entirely new ways. (Collins, 90) The hoochie, is referred to as such by Black men as well. In the context of a gender-specific, heterosexual, and White normality, the jezebel or hoochie is transformed into a racialized, gendered symbol of deviant female sexuality. (Collins, 91) Deviant female heterosexuality is typified by the "hot mommas" of Black womanhood, as opposed to normal female heterosexuality, which is expressed via the cult of true White womanhood. (Collins, 91) Black women and their alleged deviant sexuality then become constructed around jezebel's sexual desires. Since the jezebel or the hoochie is constructed as a woman whose sexual appetites are at best inappropriate, and, at worst, insatiable, it quickly becomes an easy step to imagine her as a "freak". And if she is a freak, her sexual partners as well become stigmatized. (Collins, 91)

Henceforth, these prevalent images of Black womanhood embody elite White male interests in defining Black women's sexuality and fertility. Furthermore, by coinciding smoothly with

intersecting oppressions of gender, race, class, and sexuality, they help justify the social practices that characterize the matrix of domination in the United States. (Collins, 93)

Consequently, due to the growing influence of radio, television, the Internet, and so forth, this gave way for new means of circulating the controlling images. Especially popular culture, has become increasingly crucial in promoting these images, since new global technologies allow U.S. popular culture to be spread throughout the world with a rapid pace. Music is also an important distributor. Black rap music can be seen as a creative response to racism by Black urban youth who have been written off by U.S. society. (Rose 1994; Kelley 1997, 43-77 as cited by Collins, 93) This is something that is echoed by hip-hop feminists and will be discussed in 2.2.

Comparatively, these controlling images remain powerful influences on the relationships of Black women with Black men, Whites, other racial/ethnic groups, and also, one another. (Collins, 97) The importance of representation in the media, has led to prevailing standards of beauty – especially skin colour, hair texture, and facial features – which in its turn has been an example of how controlling images derogate African-American women. The beauty industry highly values fair skin, silky hair, and more features which Black women naturally do not have. Harmed by colourism, it is important to note how these beauty standards have affected the treatment of Black women in everyday life. (Collins, 99) Many musicians, writers, and artists have addressed this and thus voiced their conflicted feelings concerning skin colour, hair texture, and standards of beauty. Beyoncé has done so as well, with songs such as “Pretty Hurts”, but this will be explained further in the fourth chapter (4.2.1).

To conclude, the controlling images applied to Black women are so uniformly negative that they almost necessitate resistance. For U.S. Black women, constructed knowledge of self emerges from the struggle to replace controlling images with the self-defined knowledge deemed personally important for Black women’s survival. (Collins, 110-111)

#### **2.1.6 The importance of music in Black feminist thought**

Crucial to this thesis, is the emphasis Black feminist thought places on the relevance of music for Black women. Social institutions controlled by White males, led African-American women to resort to literature, music, and daily conversations as important locations for constructing a Black feminist consciousness. (Collins, 270) Music is regarded as an important location where Black women have

come to voice their concerns and moreover to create a unique voice, and is regarded as art as well. Angela Davis (1989, 20) suggests that “art is special because of its ability to influence feelings as well as knowledge”. Davis continues, and contends that the dominant group failed to fathom the social function of music and particularly the central role music played in all aspects of life in West African society.(Collins, 115) As a result, “Black people were able to create with their music an aesthetic community of resistance, which in turn encouraged and nurtured a political community of active struggle for freedom” (1989, 201 as cited by Collins, 115) Spirituals, jazz, blues, R&B, and progressive hip-hop all form part of a “continuum of struggle which is at once aesthetic and political (p. 201 as cited by Collins, 115)

Blues was quintessential to the legitimization of music, since it was not solely a form of entertainment, it was a way of solidifying community and commenting on the social fabric of working-class Black life in America. (Collins, 116) Since many Black women were shunned from academia, music – and blues – was one crucial manifestation for their Black feminist concerns. Moreover, blues has occupied a significant place in Black women’s music as a site of the expression of Black women’s self-definitions. Likewise, the blues singer strives to create an atmosphere in which analysis can take place, and yet the same atmosphere is intensely individualistic and personal. (Collins, 116) When Black women sing the blues, they [we] sing their [our] personalized, individualistic blues while simultaneously expressing the collective blues of all African-American women. (Collins, 116)

Comparatively, the songs can be regarded as poetry, as expressions of regular Black women restated through Black oral traditions. The lyrics sung by many of the Black women blues singers defy the externally defined controlling images used to justify Black women’s objectification. (Collins, 117) These blues singers thus sang their songs – which were often laced with sexually explicit themes – in a complicated context of class, race, and gender politics. (Collins, 118)

Furthermore, the works of renowned Black women blues singers also advocate the importance of self-reliance and independence for African-American women. (Collins, 128) Also, the linking of economic self-sufficiency is regarded as one critical dimension of self-reliance, combined with the demand for respect, is a feature that pervades Black feminist thought. So blues women were already concerned with financial independence and self-empowerment, which later Black artists, such as Beyoncé, are as well.

Moreover, another way of empowering themselves, is claiming the erotic as a mechanism for empowerment. (Collins, 142) Also, classic Black blues women, such as Ma Rainey or Bessie Smith, were also concerned with the relationships between Black women and Black men. In their songs, they offer rich advice to Black women on how to deal with unfaithful and unreliable men. (Harrison 1978, 1988; Russell 1982; Davis 1998 as cited by Collins, 165) In turn, the blues tradition provided the most consistent and long-standing text of Black women who urge that Black men change their ways. Both then and now, songs also often encourage men to define new types of relationships. (Collins, 167) This is also something that has been echoed in the works of contemporary women hip-hop artists, such as Beyoncé.

### **2.1.7 Black feminist thought in a transnational context**

Black feminist thought is thus mainly concerned with U.S. Black women, however it does deal with transnational issues as well. Within this broad transnational context, women of African descent have a distinctive and shared legacy that in turn is part of a global women's movement. (Collins, 250) At the same time though, due to the peculiar combination of the legacy of African cultures, a history of racial oppressions organized via imperialism, colonialism, slavery, and an emerging global racism that, assisted by modern technology, moves swiftly across national borders, women of African lineage encounter particular issues. (Collins, 250) Thus, by positioning African-American women's experiences in a transnational context, it simultaneously provides a new point of view on U.S. Black feminism as a social justice project, and also decentres the White/Black binary that has long plagued U.S. feminism. (Collins, 251) Black feminists from all over the world, helped combat the Eurocentric standpoints in feminism.

So to conclude, Black feminist thought has been quintessential to developing a consciousness for Black women. Alongside its six distinguishing features, the emphasis it places on the controlling images of Black womanhood, and the importance of music as a valid art form, many of its features are either linked to Beyoncé as an artist, or are present in her music. This will be further discussed in detail in the later chapters.

### **2.2 Hip-hop feminism**

Another important brand of Black feminism, is hip-hop feminism, with the term being coined by writers such as Joan Morgan (1999), shani jamila (2002), and Gwendolyn Pough (2003). Moreover, this incorporation of hip-hop into Black feminism is started by second- and third-wave feminists.

As previously mentioned, these feminists were highlighting the difference of exploring their kind of feminism outside of the academic realm, since they were excluded from the academic discourse.

### **2.2.1 The origins of hip-hop**

Initially, hip-hop culture was created as a social and recreational space for the working-class and the poor who had been pushed to the fringe of society and forgotten. (Peoples, 22) Ever since the inception of hip-hop, it has represented resistance to social marginalization, and later on, resistance to and commentary on the economic and political oppression that makes social marginalization possible. (Peoples, 23) Therefore, hip-hop has grown to be an undeniable force today because of the wide influence it wields.

Moreover, because of hip-hop's widespread popularity, heterogeneity, and sociocultural and economic currency, it establishes the possibility for using it as a tool of resistance. (Peoples, 25) In this way, hip-hop emerges as what Whitney A. Peoples (2008) terms "the generational and culturally relevant vehicle" through which hip-hop feminists can spread their message of critical analysis and empowerment. (Peoples, 25) Continuing the trend started by the blues women, hip-hop artists use their music as an outlet for their feminist opinions.

### **2.2.2 Characteristics of hip-hop feminism**

Young Black female writers such as Joan Morgan (1999) and Kristal Brent Zooks (1995) have argued that Black American women are in dire need of a new feminist movement. (Peoples, 20) As mentioned above, this was an endeavour started by feminists of colour from the second and third wave. Zooks and Morgan are considered to be third-wave feminists that argue that second-wave Black feminism has failed to address the present realities and needs of young, Black women. shani jamila (2002) has voiced this concern as well, stating that "as women of the hip-hop generation, they [we] need a feminist consciousness that allows them [us] to examine how representations and images can be simultaneously empowering and problematic". (jamila 2002, 392 as cited by Peoples, 20) Thus ensuing in a dialogic relationship between on the one hand hip-hop and on the other hand, feminism. This dialogue then resulted in the birth of hip-hop feminism, which might be best understood as a means of reconciliation on the part of young Black women in the U.S. trying to create a space for themselves between the whiteness and/or academically sanitized versions of university-based feminism, since this is where most first came across a conscious naming and exploration of feminism, and also the maleness of the hip-hop culture that most of these women

grew up on. (Peoples, 26) Thus, hip-hop feminists are products of the hip-hop generation, but as Joan Morgan writes, are also “the daughters of feminist privilege.” (Morgan 1999, 59 as cited by Peoples, 26)

Additionally, Morgan (1999) and others plead that hip-hop culture and rap music hold radical and liberating potential, as a result of hip-hop’s culture relevant depiction of Black life in America. Furthermore, this potential, as they argue (Davis 1995; Morgan 1999; Pough 2004b) should be explored by the contemporary feminist movement to appeal to younger feminists, especially those of colour, with hip-hop feminists seeking to pick up where they feel feminists of the second wave left off. (Peoples, 20) They believe that hip-hop offers a space for young Black women to express their race and to critique racism as well. Moreover, hip-hop feminists argue that hip-hop is a site where young Black women start to build or further establish their own gender critique and feminist identity. (Keyes 2000; Pough 2002; Byrd 2004, as cited by Peoples, 21)

Henceforth, this shift of the feminist approach to hip-hop has taken the current form of a “socio-political agenda of uplift, aimed at self-empowerment for girls and women through political education based on feminist modes of analysis.” (Peoples, 28) Hip-hop, then, surfaces as the common cultural ground, and as the generationally relevant instrument through which to disperse and within which to employ the feminist tools of critical analysis. (Peoples, 30) Consequently, the present political agenda of hip-hop feminism appears to encompass a contemporary manifestation of the consciousness-raising method of organizing used in the liberation struggles of the 1960s and ‘70s. (supra 1.3) (Peoples, 30)

Hip-hop feminists are mostly feminists that were influenced by the second wave in one way or another. Therefore, it is not surprising that in the process of branding hip-hop feminism, they have voiced critique of second-wave Black feminism. They have expressed at least three points of criticism of second-wave Black feminism, fundamental to the development of their own feminist politics. (Peoples, 39) The three concerns are “(1) second-wave Black feminists’ preoccupation with hip-hop’s misogyny at the expense of exploring its potential; (2) the seemingly narrow and static conception of feminist identities emerging out of second-wave theorizing and activism; and (3) the outmoded and subsequently ineffectual strategies for outreach to and empowerment of young Black women and girls employed by second-wave Black feminists.” (Peoples, 39) Hip-hop feminists believe that the strategies used by second-wave Black feminists to achieve their theories of political,

social, and economic oppression are in dire need to be updated in order to capture the attention of contemporary Black girls and women.

However, even though they offer critique, hip-hop feminists have not abandoned historical manifestations of Black American feminism, quite the contrary, they build rather extensively on the work of second- and first-wave Black feminists in their own theorizing. (Peoples, 43) For instance, themes such as empowerment, the importance of images and representation, and Black women's involvement in coalitional politics are major themes in hip-hop feminism that were also prominently present in the theorizing of older generations of Black feminists.

In this sense, just as other Black feminists have chosen to engage other modes of cultural production that are harmful to the development of Black women's subjectivity, so have hip-hop feminists refused to turn away from challenging and volatile engagements with hip-hop. (Peoples, 47) Hip-hop feminists thus use the opportunity of voicing critique to construct an individual, political, and social agenda of scrutiny and action for the current moment. Hip-hop feminists are able to make large intrinsic concerns such as classism, heterosexism, sexism, racism, and so forth, intelligible to Black women and girls, by using culturally and generationally relevant frames of reference, along with intersectional approaches developed earlier. (Peoples, 47)

Aisha Durham, Brittney C. Cooper, and Susana M. Morris (2013) have also theorised hip-hop feminism. They have described hip-hop feminism as a "generationally specific articulation of feminist consciousness, politics, and epistemology rooted in the pioneering work of multiple generations of Black feminists based in the United States and elsewhere in the diaspora but focused on questions that grow out of the aesthetic and political prerogatives of hip-hop culture." (Durham, Cooper, and Morris, 722) These scholars have also debated the critique voiced by hip-hop feminism, and state that even though third-wave feminism and hip-hop feminism do share some intellectual terrain surrounding the posture of critique, hip-hop feminism profoundly opposes the staunch politics of generational disavowal so prevalent in most third wave work and is also much more measured in its critique of the second-wave Black feminists. (Durham, Cooper, and Morris, 723) Furthermore, hip-hop feminists are insistent on living with contradictions, because failure to do so relegates feminism to an academic project that is not politically sustainable beyond the ivory tower. (Durham, Cooper, and Morris, 723)



Moreover, newer studies within hip-hop feminism focus increasingly on performative, ethnographic accounts that construe hip-hop as lived, embodied culture. (Durham, Cooper, Morris, 727) For instance, language, in its broadest sense, is one way researchers suggest that hip-hop operates as an everyday, ordinary practice. Thus, the analysis of song lyrics has been an manifestation of this claim, which this thesis shall pursue as well by analysing Beyoncé's song lyrics.

Furthermore, consciousness-raising in popular culture serves as a mode of "public pedagogy" (Pough 2003, 238 as cited by Durham, Cooper, Morris, 729). Namely, new research taking up hip-hop as pedagogy is less interested with "identifying culturally relevant teaching tools for out-of-touch educators, but is more interested in broadening the hip-hop feminist tradition of producing democratizing forms of knowledge that enable all [us] to better understand the ways racialized sexuality is performed, represented, and policed in the United States and abroad. (Love 2012 as cited by Durham, Cooper, and Morris, 729)

Henceforth, hip-hop feminism's persistent investment in being in but not of the academia has made social media attractive, since it provides an opportunity to practice public pedagogy among non-academic audiences. (Durham, Cooper, and Morris, 731) As a type of radical inquiry, hip-hop feminism is particularly flourishing within online communities and the blogosphere. The Crunk Feminist Collective blog that they [we] publish has been heralded as one of the most successful feminist blogs. (Nussbaum 2011 as cited by Durham, Cooper, and Morris, 732) Social media is thus one important space where Black women who are not considered as typical intellectuals, can share their feminist views with others.

Hip-hop feminists attempt to tackle Black sexual politics, and is achieved mainly by debating and challenging the pervasiveness and persistence of "misogynoir" (the hatred of Black women and girls, the term is coined by CFC member Moya Bailey (2010)), respectability politics, and compulsory heterosexuality within the music and overall the culture of hip-hop at large. (Durham, Cooper, and Morris, 730) Also, formulations of the hip-hop aesthetic would benefit from a more overt engagement with the ways women in hip-hop culture invoke their own blues women predecessors. The blues women of the previous century have been quintessential to the cause of hip-hop feminism, and Black feminism alike.

In conclusion, it is precisely hip-hop feminism that is particularly able to move women from the “side-lines to the stages they [we] built, and from the cheering section of audiences that their [our] public pedagogies have made space for, to rightfully claim an unapologetic place at the centre as culture creators and knowledge makers.” (Durham, Cooper, and Morris, 734) Thus, the dialogic relationship that has been established between hip-hop and feminism can be seen as an extremely important framework to analyse Black womanhood and to appeal more to contemporary girls and women whose lives are intertwined with hip-hop and its culture as a way to discuss their feminism.

### **2.3 Intersectionality**

The notion of intersectionality was first introduced by Black scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, stating that “intersectionality was introduced in the late 1980s as a heuristic term to focus attention on the vexed dynamics of difference and the solidarities of sameness in the context of antidiscrimination and social movement politics.” (Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall, 787) As mentioned before, feminism has faced repeated criticism over a universalising construction of woman that in truth centres White privileged women. One of Black feminism’s endeavours has been to destabilise and disrupt such a narrow premise and in doing so, it has formulated the concept of intersectionality. Intersectionality is concerned with the ways in which the “social categories of ability, age, gender, race, sexuality, nationality, and class symbiotically reinforce on another to produce marginalised subject and consequently”, intersectionality has proved to be ground-breaking for the feminist movement. (Okolosie, 90) Intersectionality thus, highlights the importance of not only focussing on gender being the most important aspect of discrimination, but emphasizes other factors that are equally important.

So, for contemporary Black feminists, the concept of intersectionality has become the primary tool through which they articulate their [our] understanding of how social inequalities are created and sustained, with also highlighting that such an analysis should become normative practice for the movement. (Okolosie, 90) Moving away from a fixed understanding of womanhood and feminism, Black feminists opt for diversity and plurality. Crucial for this endeavour has been social media, its merit being that it “has enabled their [our] attempt to position Black feminism not as existing on the fringes and in opposition to ‘mainstream’ feminism, but as centred in their [our] own right.” (Okolosie, 90-91)

The true radical potential of intersectionality is described by Lola Okolosie (2014) as the following: “through attending to the absent, those beyond marginality as it were, we are able to gain a better understanding of who within our movement experiences the full weight of an oppressive ‘imperialist White- supremacist capitalist patriarchy’ (hooks, 2000).” (Okolosie, 94) Many minorities are discriminated against for a wide array of factors. Moreover, the fact that intersectionality is so insistent on examining the dynamics of difference and sameness, it has played a major role in facilitating consideration of race, gender, and other axes of power in a wide range of political discussions and academic disciplines. (Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall, 787) Many academics and scholars saw the many links between oppression and aspects such as sexuality, race, and so forth, and started establishing this discussion on the foreground.

Law, for instance, is one of the many fields that has been influenced by intersectionality in the previous century, with many Black feminists endeavouring for the same type of discussions within feminism, drawing from the importance of intersectionality has proven to have in law. As the multiple disjunctures between race and gender discourses played out in these contexts, feminists of colour saw connections between on the one hand, the rigid structuring of law that rationalized narrow and mutually exclusive approaches to intersecting patterns of subordination, and the single-axis frameworks within progressive, antiracist, and feminist discourses that were being contested, on the other. (Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall, 790) Moreover, intersectionality, in this sense, travels from its groundings in Black feminism to critical legal and race studies, even to other disciplines within the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences; and across countries and continents as well.” (Cho, Crenshaw, McCall, 792) Thus, there is a great hope that bridges will continue to be built into the centrifugal forces of intersectionality.

In the important essay “Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis”, Sumi Cho, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw and Leslie McCall (2013) further explain the concept of intersectionality, and make a distinction between “structural intersectionality”, “political intersectionality”, and “colorblind intersectionality”. These will now briefly be discussed.

### **2.3.1 Structural intersectionality**

This concept of intersectionality and its analysis emphasizes political and structural inequalities. Within academic and political discourse as well, Black feminism emphasized the role of structures in establishing the conditions of life in which racially and economically marginalized women were

situated. Moreover, intersectionality helps reveal exactly how power works in diffuse and differentiated ways through the creation and deployment of overlapping identity categories. (Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall, 797). As stated earlier, multiple axes are responsible for the creation and discrimination of individuals, thus focussing on more than solely gender.

### **2.3.2 Political intersectionality**

This particular notion of intersectionality and its reconstructive understanding, is the key concept that “all politics are identity politics” (Chun, Lipsitz, and Shin 2013, 937 as cited by Cho, Crenshaw, McCall, 800). Political intersectionality then, reflects a “dual concern for resisting the systemic forces that undoubtedly construct the differential life chances of intersectionality’s subjects and furthermore, for reshaping modes of resistance beyond allegedly universal, single-axis approaches.” (Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall, 800) Moreover, political intersectionality provides an applied dimension to the insights of structural intersectionality (cf. 2.3.1) by presenting a framework for contesting powers and thereby linking theory to existent and emergent social political struggles. (Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall, 800)

### **2.3.3 Colorblind intersectionality**

Devon W. Carbado (2013) is credited for coining the term “colorblind intersectionality”. Colorblind intersectionality invites attention to the “privileged intersectionalities among politicized constituencies, whilst providing a conceptual account that attends to the unrecognized intersections that underwrite many of the divisions and competing agendas within political movements for greater equality.” (Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall, 802) Meaning that, for instance, a White woman is believed to stand in for all White people and all women, which is, as discussed multiple times throughout this thesis, absolutely not valid.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

To conclude, not only do intersectional prisms excavate and expose multi-layered structures of power and domination by adopting a grounded praxis approach, they also engage the conditions that shape and influence the interpretive lenses through which knowledge is produced and disseminated. (Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall, 804) Moreover, intersectionality must be interpreted not only through its rhetorical presence in numerous discursive and institutional settings, but through its substantive articulation in pursuit of understanding and intervening against the social reproduction of power. (Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall, 806) To fully grasp how power and knowledge is dispersed, one must

most certainly take into the account the inextricable links between various axes that intersectionality highlights.

## Chapter 3: Beyoncé as a self-defined Black feminist

This chapter will now discuss in which ways the previous chapters can be applied to Beyoncé. Proving how Beyoncé embodies notions of Black feminist thought, hip-hop feminism, and intersectionality, will further support the claim that Beyoncé can be regarded as a feminist artist. Moreover, Beyoncé has branded herself as a feminist and has made deliberate attempts to align herself with feminism. (Duan, 60) For instance, Beyoncé was on the cover of *Ms. Magazine* in 2013, the influential feminist scholar Gloria Steinem co-founded magazine, next to the phrase “Beyoncé’s Fierce Feminism<sup>3</sup>”. Needless to say, Beyoncé is a much talked about figure within the feminist debate. And appearing on the cover, meant that an influential feminist such as Gloria Steinem voiced her full support of Beyoncé as a feminist. Furthermore, Beyoncé has used her public performances to put her feminism on display as well. All this will now be discussed in detail down below.

### 3.1 Biography of Beyoncé Knowles

Beyoncé Giselle Knowles-Carter was born on September 4, 1981, in Houston, Texas. (Trier-Bieniek, 2) When Beyoncé attended high school, she formed a girl group with her cousin Kelly Rowland and friends LaTavia Robertson and LeToya Tuckett<sup>4</sup>. The foursome, managed by Beyoncé’s father Matthew Knowles, performed on a show called *Star Search* as Girls Tyme, but later became known as Destiny’s Child when they were signed to Columbia Records in 1997. The female group is arguably one of the most famous girl groups of the late 1990’s and early 2000’s. However, it became more and more clear that there was only one real star in the group, that being Beyoncé. LaTavia Robertson and LeTova Tuckett left the group after complaining that their manager, Matthew Knowles, was biased and favoured Beyoncé and her cousin, Kelly. They were replaced with Michelle Williams and Farrah Franklin, with Franklin already leaving the group within a year. The group released four studio albums; their debut album *Destiny’s Child* in 1998, *The Writing’s On The Wall* in 1999, *Survivor* in 2001, and their final album called *Destiny’s Fulfilled* in 2005<sup>5</sup>.

Despite their young age when they were in the group, Destiny’s Child’s smash hits such as “Independent Women Part 1” (2001), “Survivor” (2001), “Bootylicious” (2001) (the word

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<sup>3</sup> <http://msmagazine.com/blog/2015/03/07/beyonces-fierce-feminism/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/artists/beyonce/biography>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/artists/beyonce/biography>

bootylicious has actually been incorporated into the Oxford Dictionary, meaning attractive<sup>6</sup>) and “Girl” (2004) carry strong feminist messages such as female empowerment, solidarity, independence, body confidence and more. After disbanding in 2006, Beyoncé focussed solely on her solo career, although she had already released her debut solo album in 2003, titled *Dangerously In Love*.

After going solo, Beyoncé quickly became known for lyrics promoting women’s empowerment in their personal lives and romantic relationships. (Trier-Bieniek, 3) Songs such as “If I Were Boy” (2008), which challenges and criticises gender roles, “Run The World (Girls)” (2011), which emphasizes women’s strength and empowerment, for instance, already highlighted Beyoncé’s feminist messages throughout her discography. In chapters four and five, a more thorough and detailed analysis of Beyoncé’s songs will be provided on the basis of her last two albums, *BEYONCÉ* (2013) and *Lemonade* (2016). This chapter however, will focus on how Beyoncé’s persona and performances can be read as manifestation of feminism as well.

### 3.1.1 Beyoncé’s activism

In regard to the subject matter of this thesis, it is relevant to briefly touch upon the ways Beyoncé has positioned herself as a Black feminist activist. First, Beyoncé has written a piece for *The Shriver Report* on women’s pay equality. In the piece, titled “Gender Equality Is a Myth!”, Beyoncé writes:

“Men have to demand that their wives, daughters, mothers, and sisters earn more—commensurate with their qualifications and not their gender. Equality will be achieved when men and women are granted equal pay and equal respect. Humanity requires both men and women, and we are equally important and need one another. So why are we viewed as less than equal?” (Knowles-Carter, 2014)

So, besides voicing these opinions in her music, Beyoncé also speaks publicly about feminist issues such as the wage gap and gender inequality. Moreover, Beyoncé has her founded her own foundation, titled BeyGood<sup>7</sup>, through which she has realised many charitable causes. For one, after her Coachella performance (cf. 3.1.2), Beyoncé has announced four school to receive the newly established Homecoming Scholars Award Program<sup>8</sup> for the 2018-2019 academic year. The four

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<sup>6</sup> <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/bootylicious>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.beyonce.com/beygood/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.beyonce.com/article/homecoming-scholars-awards-program/>

universities awarded with this program, are all Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Moreover, to celebrate the one-year anniversary of her critically acclaimed album *Lemonade* (2016), Beyoncé announced the establishment of the Formation Scholars awards<sup>9</sup> for the 2017-2018 academic year, to encourage and support young women. Four were rewarded to female students studying creative arts, literature, or African-American studies. She is also one of the ambassadors of Chime for Change<sup>10</sup>, an organisation looking to build a global campaign that will create change for girls and women around the world, and to take action by taking on the critical issues facing women. These are just some examples to illustrate how Beyoncé has advocated for women all over the world, especially Black women.

### 3.1.2 Super Bowl (2013) and Coachella (2018) Performances

Beyoncé's Super Bowl performance and her headlining act at Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival, will be briefly discussed. The Super Bowl performance was seen as a definite moment of clear feminism, female empowerment, and patriarchal resistance. (Lieb, 86) She performed with her all-female band and dancers, during one of the most objectifying and panoptic four hours in modern pop culture. (Duan, 60) Moreover, not only was she claiming ownership of her body, Beyoncé was also demonstrating that Black women, who are haunted by a long history of controlling images (cf. 2.1), can be admired for the exact same characteristics that have been regarded as derogatory. (Duan, 60) The performance was a celebration of her sexuality, femininity, and feminism.

Her headlining act at Coachella was historic as well. It served as a clear ode to Blackness and female empowerment, for multiple reasons. First, Beyoncé was the first Black woman in history to headline the festival, and it was her first performance after giving birth to twins. Coachella is regarded as a “notoriously white festival<sup>11</sup>”, and Beyoncé turned it into a two hour spectacle celebrating Blackness in all its aspects. Beyoncé appeared on the stage, dressed similar to Egyptian queen Nefertiti, surrounded by dozens of female dancers in catsuits with Pharaoh death masks, overtly honouring and referring to Afrocentrism<sup>12</sup>. Moreover, the central theme of the performance were the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and allusions were made to the Civil Rights Movement as well. She sang “Lift Every Voice and Sing”, which is known as the Black national

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.beyonce.com/formation-scholars/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.beyonce.com/chime-for-change-as-global-citizens/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://pitchfork.com/features/festival-report/why-beyonces-coachella-performance-was-one-for-the-ages/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.mo.be/opinie/beychella-als-momentum-voor-de-zwarte-vrouw>



anthem. She played fragments from iconic Black people, from a Malcolm X speech mentioning the position of Black women in society (the speech also appears in her album *Lemonade*, cf. 5.2.3) to Fela Kuti. Beyoncé's wardrobe also echoed her political message. Her top contained a coat of arms, which in its turn showcased a bust of Nefertiti, the Black Panther logo, a clenched fist (symbol of the CRM), and a bee (referring to her nickname, Queen B)<sup>13</sup>.

These two exceptional performances can thus be seen as clear examples of Beyoncé as a feminist artist who does not shy away from using her performances to make political and feminist statements. Moreover, it is also interesting to look at it via an intersectional lens, since she focusses on gender and race. She celebrates women, yet also focusses greatly on Blackness. These two performances serve as an introduction to a more in depth analysis of Beyoncé as a feminist performer.

### **3.2 Beyoncé, Black feminism and Black feminist thought**

Many of the topics and important features that were discussed in 2.1, can be applied to Beyoncé. For instance, the importance of her predecessors, – the women blues singers – the pervasiveness of the controlling images of Black womanhood, and so forth.

Important to realize to fully understand Beyoncé as a feminist performer, is the increasing influence of popular media in all of its myriad forms of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Bearing that in mind, the ubiquity of Beyoncé's influence is much greater in comparison to those who have preceded her by several decades in the cultural art forms and popular imagination, such as the blues women of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. (Kohlman, 28) Moreover, as a Black woman existing in a music industry infamous for exploiting and marginalizing Black women's musical talents (whether they be light-skinned or dark-skinned, conventionally attractive or not), it is already an exceptional feat for an artist such as Beyoncé, who now has the ability to own a feminist identity on a world stage – something that few pop artists do. (Hobson, 22) Beyoncé, thus, occupies a space earlier generations may have never imagined – a singing, dancing, acting, Black woman who is an entertainment mogul. (Griffin, 2011 as cited by Tyree and Williams, 124) The way that was paved by the Black women blues singers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, allowed Beyoncé to be the influential feminist music artist she is today.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.mo.be/opinie/beychella-als-momentum-voor-de-zwarte-vrouw>

### **3.2.1 Policing of the Black woman's body in Black feminist thought**

Something that is also very relevant within Black feminist thought, is the policing of the body, coupled with the controlling images of Black womanhood. How Beyoncé portrays her body, has been both praised and critiqued by many scholars. This will now be explained.

Beyoncé is proud and confident in her body, but her body is also outside of the norm of traditionally celebrated bodies, which are White, tall, and thin – Beyoncé has transformed the enslaved body of the Black woman, either desexualized or hypersexualized and always in ownership, and shaped it as a figure of class aspiration, female empowerment, and liberation. (Bordo, 2003, 11 as cited by Duan, 66) Moreover, Beyoncé reclaims her body by not allowing it to rest, while labour – especially considering the history of enslavement of the Black female body – Beyoncé's body labour is marketed as freedom and worthy of celebration. (Duan, 64) Rather than lamenting the fate of the Black female body as a commodified entity, Beyoncé has found a way to become a crucial part of this process of commodification and reproduction. (Kohlman, 37) Moreover, Beyoncé resists against oppressive and fetishistic narratives about her body by exaggerating it – the hair, the curves, the legs – all while enforcing the dialogue around her body, telling her audience why the bodies of Black women matter. (Duan, 56) Beyoncé simultaneously undermines the same White beauty “model-thin-zero” standards by embracing a “bootylicious” aesthetic of her (and by extension other black women's) natural curves and in this way projects a Black femininity that subverts the meanings of “racially pure” bloneness and White womanhood. (Hobson, 21) Beyoncé putting her body on display, is a way of empowering Black women's bodies.

Yet, some scholars still tend to criticize the portrayal of Beyoncé's body. However, when these critics police Beyoncé for how she portrays her body, it is as if these same critics are becoming the patriarchal dominating force created to tell Beyoncé what to do with her body. (Whittington Cooper, 205) For instance, Beyoncé's decision to wear a weave at times cannot simply be read as a desire to be more White. Again, when self-described feminists rail against Beyoncé, they are policing her body for daring to transgress proper social relations. (Duan, 60) So if Beyoncé's body is still colonized by the White patriarchy, which some would argue, she has at least reversed the control of the panoptic gaze (Duan, 66) and regulates her own body.

### **3.2.2 Sexuality in Black feminist thought**

Perhaps unsurprisingly tied to the aforementioned relevance of the Black woman's body, is the concept of sexuality. Beyoncé's embrace of sexuality and feminism establishes a space to imagine Black womanhood in new ways. (Mitchell, 46) As mentioned before, Black feminist thought saw eroticism and sexuality as a means of empowerment. Consequently, Beyoncé sincerely challenges other feminists to reconsider their relationship to sex and sexuality. (Hobson, 20) Beyoncé is addressing topics, like sex and sexuality, that Black feminism still struggles to reach. (Whittington Cooper, 210) Moreover, Beyoncé's discourse on femininity, sexuality, sex and sexiness has liberating potential for Black women. (Hobson, 22) As pleasure is linked to sexuality, and is also an integral part of Black feminist thought, it is also a central theme within Beyoncé's work. One vital aspect of the reimagining of the Black female superstar as Black feminist is a keen focus on sex that is consensual and fulfilling. (Hobson 2003; Lindsey 2013 as cited by Brown, 181) Beyoncé's use of sexuality then, plays at the margins of the "politics of respectability", emphasizing the ways in which historical archetypes of promiscuity and exploitation are still prevalent and should be actively challenged. (Kohlman, 34) Although popular media rarely displays a Black face when talking about feminism, Beyoncé has most definitely changed the game in which Black women can unhesitatingly embrace the label of feminist, and bring to the table all of their sexiness and contradictory selves. (Hobson, 24) Beyoncé's embrace of sexuality which she then links to her self-defined feminism is one way of embodying Black feminist thought.

Henceforth, Beyoncé found ways to survive and thrive to a point where she could champion the feminist cause, which should not be summarily dismissed by other feminists. (Hobson, 21) Furthermore, the critique of Beyoncé, her identity as a feminist, and her feminism, in the context of a continuous discussion of alienation from feminism, is thus a reminder that exclusion and invisibility continue to be problematic in self-defining feminism. (Cupid and Files-Thompson, 104) Yet it is extremely clear that Beyoncé has generated a popular narrative of feminism writ large. However, Black feminism and Black feminist thought creates space for accountability, which is the reason Beyoncé deserves criticism. (Brown, 180) Either way, as has been shown in this part of the thesis, tropes of Black feminist thought are definitely present in the image of Beyoncé, without looking at the lyrics of her songs.

### 3.3 Beyoncé and hip-hop feminism

Besides Black feminist thought, hip-hop feminism is also a brand of Black feminism that is extremely relevant when it comes to Beyoncé. As explained in the previous chapter, it focusses on the merit of hip-hop, reaching young girls and women via music, female empowerment, validation outside of the academia and so forth. Furthermore, the importance of Black female performers, such as Beyoncé, as certified feminists. This will now be explained in further detail.

Indeed, hip-hop feminism offers a bridge between complex Black sexual politics and feminism that can be used to analyse Beyoncé. (Brown, 184) Hip-hop feminists are credited for the endeavour to think of music, in this case Beyoncé's, as a part of one's feminism. This is a direct result of Black women engaging feminism on the web and more women in popular culture identifying themselves as feminists. (Mitchell, 50) Hip-hop Black feminist scholars, such as Durham (2012) and Hobson (2015), see Beyoncé as a “disruptor tasked with wrecking essentialist Black feminist concepts in order to forge her own interpretation of liberation.” (Brown, 180) For instance, the ways in which Beyoncé deals with her sexuality and appearance, supports this claim. Overall, a hip-hop Black feminist reading of Beyoncé pushes Black feminist scholars in a multitude of disciplines to incorporate notions such as pleasure in their analyses. (Brown, 190) Beyoncé's self-identification as a feminist has been heralded by hip-hop feminists, and has thus lead to other Black feminist to rethink certain fixed opinions.

To conclude, the Crunk Feminist Movement Collective (2013) (cf. 2.2.2), a blog that facilitates discussions among hip-hop generation feminists of colour, outlines five reasons to support Beyoncé as a feminist. The first reason they present, is the following: Beyoncé is a work in progress, which recognizes her feminist declarations have modified, changed, and progressed. Secondly, “sometimes bitches do need to bow down<sup>14</sup>”, which supports moments or instances when women should not accept less from anyone. Thirdly, the Crunk Feminist Movement Collective argues, is the reason that “academic feminism ain't the only kid on the block,” which, as mentioned earlier, as a typical notion of hip-hop feminism and Black feminism over all, with Black women looking outside of the academia for expressions of their feminism. This also acknowledges that feminist voices can come from various people of all occupations and levels of education. The penultimate reason they offer, is the: “We are here for anybody that is checking for the f-word, since so many folk aren't,” which

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<sup>14</sup> Refers to a lyric by Beyoncé in the song “\*\*\*Flawless”

notes the limited support of feminism which in turn requires a requisite support of those willing to embrace it. This a response to a sometimes negative connotation that comes with the word feminism. Lastly, they argue that “King Bey always brings her A-game and manages to have fun while doing it,” which identifies the contradictory voices and hatred for those within and outside the movement that Beyoncé seems to rise above and succeed despite of their existence. (Tyree and Williams, 125) Beyoncé is embraced by hip-hop feminists as one of, if not, the most prominent Black artists promoting feminism and is thus regarded as a powerful Black feminist artist.

In conclusion, by positioning Black feminist thought and subsequently, hip-hop feminism as a theoretical lens to explore Beyoncé’s role as a Black feminist figure, this further expands upon the complexity surrounding Black feminist pop stars. As mentioned above, Beyoncé is the recipient of both praise and criticism, which thus showcases this complexity that surrounds Black feminist pop stars, and especially one as influential as Beyoncé. However, Beyoncé nonetheless incorporates Black feminist thought and hip-hop feminist tropes.

### **3.4 Beyoncé and intersectionality**

Besides analysing Beyoncé as a feminist through a Black feminist thought and hip-hop feminist lens, it is also very useful to look at Beyoncé as an intersectional Black artist, or as Marla H. Kohlman (2016) has claimed, an “intersectional icon”. The persona of Beyoncé presents for many an example of intersectional agency. She is simultaneously a “commoditized item to be consumed by the public gaze, a wife, an independent woman, a devoted daughter and a mother.” (Kohlman, 27) In the ways Beyoncé constructs her image, it can be argued that Beyoncé is fully aware of herself as an intersectional artist. She purposefully presents herself as a performer, a lover, a mother, a wife, an actress, and so forth. (Kohlman, 35) Beyoncé has not transcended race, sexuality, or gender; she has consciously made them an intrinsic element of her audience’s engagement with her. (Kohlman, 36) Beyoncé is displaying an image of a Black female artist who is free within herself. In the end, Beyoncé has a different kind of artistic agency than the female artists who have come before her, because she can make the choice to bring aspects of herself into her art that were not available to the Black female performers who came before her. (Kohlman, 36) In this regard, the Black women blues singers that have preceded Beyoncé did not possess the choice or liberty that Beyoncé now does have. As already mentioned, the women blues singers were quintessential to embracing

feminism as a Black artist and have definitely paved the way for many contemporary Black female artists, with Beyoncé exceeding.

Moreover, critics have proposed an intersectional mode of feminism that sees “multi-vocality and agency in seemingly confining positions and images that are controlled by patriarchal power grids.” (Chatzipapatheodoridis, 411) Beyoncé performs from various ambiguous positions, such as the aggressive Black woman, the erotic vixen, or the devoted wife, which, when looked at through the lens of intersectionality, appear to instill agency in the artist’s conscious choice to inhabit them. (Chatzipapatheodoridis, 411) By embodying these positions, Beyoncé is simultaneously addressing the controlling images of Black womanhood and reclaiming them by making them her own. Again, Beyoncé is very much aware of the images she creates of herself, whether that be her performances, or pictures she shares.

Forthwith, while cultural theory around the icon of Beyoncé has focused on her feminist and racial politics as well as her politicization of the Black female body, “a queer reading also concentrates on the artist’s queer appeal and, most importantly, on her exposition of Black camp, an intersection of racial, feminist, and queer poetics.” (Chatzipapatheodoridis, 406) Beyoncé has incorporated many queer manifestations in her music as well as her performances. Her feminist advocacy is inextricably linked with the politics of race, since the artist deploys her audiovisual agenda from the “organic position of Black female subjectivity, inhabiting an intersectional locus of identity crossed with racial and gendered markers.” (Chatzipapatheodoridis, 407) Embracing certain aspects of queer culture into her performances, highlights her intersectionality since it adds to the factors of race, gender, and sexuality.

### **3.5 Beyoncé feminism**

Lastly, Beyoncé has been insistently read as a modern feminist superwoman, (Ward, 158) resulting into an exploration of her own brand of feminism. Whittington and Jordan (2014) began to explore “Bey feminism” (coined for Beyoncé’s brand of feminism) within Black feminism. They argue that Bey feminism is a type of feminism that Beyoncé promotes which combines traditional feminism with the everyday woman. Since the everyday woman and ordinary life is central to Black feminism and hip-hop feminism, this is a logical consequence. It also allows a more “grassroots platform for women to start discussing feminism and even embrace it in a world where feminism has remained rather elitist, especially for Black women.” (Whittington Cooper, 204) Examining how race, gender,

and class operate within the context of Beyoncé, Black feminism should be able to fully understand Bey feminism. (Whittington Cooper, 209) In fact, these two brands of feminism support one another, and share perhaps a dialogical relationship instead of an opposing one.

Beyoncé, a self-proclaimed feminist performer, is a contemporary example of an entertainer who offers new creative possibilities for performance, backed by Beyoncé feminism. (Kumari, 403) Beyoncé went from performing and “representing complexity to condensing femininity and feminism into a single brand.” (Kumari, 409) Bey feminism allows the everyday, common woman to be proud of her role as a wife, to still embrace her sexuality, and to strive for career achievements without having to be ashamed. (Whittington Cooper, 209) It is a brand of feminism that is also characterized by empowerment, and Beyoncé’s feminism focuses on sexual empowerment as well, which allows her to convey the contradictions in female roles, yet adds up to a unified identity as Beyoncé. (Kumari, 408) Mako Fitts Ward (2017) has said that “Beyoncé snatching wigs<sup>15</sup>, getting her paper, and slaying<sup>16</sup> the competition reflects an articulation of individualism that is embodied in another mode of political change, and that is of power feminism.” (Ward, 155) This is predicated on the idea that power feminism is “paramount to other modes of feminist consciousness, which lauds women’s successful adoption of the principles of individualism and economic self-preservation.” (Ward, 155) This notion that is described by power feminism is definitely aligned with Beyoncé feminism.

Furthermore, this sense of empowerment derives from women’s authority individualism and to dominate the spaces that they occupy. (Ward, 158) This is most definitely the case with Beyoncé. She wants to motivate audiences towards female empowerment, but she also empowers herself in the process. (Kumari, 405) Moreover, the continued dominance of Beyoncé’s feminism across social media platforms, supported greatly by contemporary hip-hop feminist for instance, will continue to invite fans and detractors to important feminist conversations. (Cupid and Files-Thompson, 106) Thus, Beyoncé has sparked many debates or conversations within feminism, and can be regarded as a crucial Black feminist performer that puts feminism on full display.

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<sup>15</sup> Queer slang, meaning something absolutely amazing  
(<https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Snatching%20wigs>)

<sup>16</sup> Queer slang, meaning to greatly impress (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/slay>)

### 3.6 Conclusion

Beyoncé is undeniably a feminist. She is championing for justice for women in overt and covert ways. When Beyoncé posts pictures of her child, Blue Ivy Carter, on Instagram or other forms of social media, she is resisting controlling images of Blue. When Beyoncé sings that “pretty hurts<sup>17</sup>”, she is resisting controlling images of Black women and beauty alike. When Beyoncé fired her father as a manager and started to command her own career in every way, Beyoncé is innovating and transgressing the sexism, capitalism, and racism that subdues Black female artists. (Moss, 171) Logically, many Black cultural critics and intellectuals view Beyoncé as the “apex of Black female achievement”. (Ward, 151)

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<sup>17</sup> Title of a song that appears on *Beyoncé* (2013)



## **Chapter 4: The self-titled Album *Beyoncé* (2013) as an overt Black feminist opus**

Even though all of Beyoncé's albums definitely contain Black feminist tropes, her self-titled album, *Beyoncé* (2013) was perhaps her first clear and overt statement of her self-defined feminism. Besides the subject matter of the album, she also used a sample from Nigerian author and feminist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's TED Talk<sup>18</sup> and same-titled essay, "We Should All Be Feminists" in her track "\*\*\*\*Flawless", and thus openly aligns herself with feminism and shows a clear knowledge of feminist literature. This chapter will aim to prove this claim, by analysing the album's content and song lyrics through a Black feminist thought, hip-hop feminist and lens, with especially linking it to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's text.

### **4.1 Beyoncé's performance at the 2014 MTV Video Music Awards**

A good way to initiate this chapter, is a discussion of Beyoncé's performance at the 2014 MTV Video Music Awards (VMAs), which can be seen in its entirety on the website vimeo (2018). In addition to bringing discussions of gender equality into her music and public service, Beyoncé also presented her feminism to young people via major media appearances. At the 2014 MTV Video Music Awards, Beyoncé performed a medley of some songs from her then latest album, *Beyoncé*. Around the 10 minute mark of the performance, the instrumentals of the song "Superpower" are playing, and Adichie's quotes appear on the huge screen on the stage, accompanied by her voice. The words from Adichie are the following:

"We teach girls that they cannot be sexual beings in the ways that boys are. We teach girls to shrink themselves, to make themselves smaller. We say to girls, 'you can have ambition, but not too much. You should aim to be successful, but not too successful, otherwise you will threaten the man.' Feminist: a person who believes in the social, political and economic equality of the sexes." (Adichie 2012)

After these words, the culmination was Beyoncé standing, by herself, in front of the huge screen with the word "feminist" behind her, with the song "\*\*\*\*Flawless" starting to play. Noteworthy as well, is that Beyoncé is accompanied by her female dancers for the first part of the quote, yet is standing all by herself when the part starts that provides Adichie's definition of feminism. This

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<sup>18</sup> [https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_ngozi\\_adichie\\_we\\_should\\_all\\_be\\_feminists](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_we_should_all_be_feminists)

statement that Beyoncé made, is a definite example of Beyoncé defining herself as a feminist. Moreover, she is overtly aligning herself with feminism. The magnitude and scale of the VMAs is tremendous, thus this statement was extremely powerful, especially coming from a Black female artist.

As others have argued as well, for many popular culture scholars, this moment was an achievement. As *Slate* writer Amanda Marcotte (2014) said, “the VMAs statement was next level – an unusually mainstream flaunting of feminist pride in our image-driven culture. And man did it feel good.” (Trier-Bieniek, 4) Moreover, according to Bennett (2014), the VMA performance was the “holy grail” of “feminist endorsement” by the “most powerful celebrity in the world.” Suddenly, the word feminism was “Beyoncé-fied”, rendering empowering, beautiful, trendy, and hyper-relevant.” (Zimmerman 2014, as cited by Tyree and Williams, 124-125) Notably, not only was this moment remarkable for the popular rebranding of feminism, but it also signals something else: a Black woman’s reclaiming of the word without adjective. (Hobson, 24) Many media outlets such, such as *Time*<sup>19</sup>, called the performance “empowering;” and it was without a question at this point that Beyoncé was officially a self-described feminist – even without uttering the words in public herself. (Bennett 2014, Dockterman 2014 as cited by Duan, 60) That is the great spectacle of Beyoncé’s performativity: her declaration of feminism at the 2014 VMAs was flashy, flawlessly produced and widely publicized. (Duan, 60-61) Beyoncé took the stage and let the entire world know that she, a Black female performer, is definitely a feminist too.

#### **4.2 An in-depth analysis of the self-titled visual album *BEYONCÉ* (2013)**

Beyoncé released her self-titled album *BEYONCÉ* on the 13<sup>th</sup> of December in 2013. It was a quite unconventional release since it was exclusively available only on iTunes at midnight, with just a brief announcement on her Instagram as the only promotion for the album. (Hobson, 18) Thus, sans prior promotion or official forewarning, the caption of the Instagram announcement solely read “Surprise.” (Cupid and Files-Thompson, 95). The album was an overnight sensation that sold more than 80,000 copies in the first three hours of its release and quickly headed toward the number one spot on the Billboard charts (Rothman as cited by Kumari, 409) The album was met with raving reviews and was critically acclaimed. It was described on MSNBC’s *Melissa Harris-Perry* show as

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<sup>19</sup> <http://time.com/3181644/beyonce-reclaim-feminism-pop-star/>

a “feminist manifesto” (Harris-Perry 2013) and has an average score of 85 on Metacritic<sup>20</sup>. One of the charges of feminism is for women to be viewed in a holistic manner, as full human beings, that encompass a dynamic identity, and is not viewed through an objectified lens that denies wholeness, and undermines an entire picture. (Cupid and Files-Thompson, 103) With that, in making it a requirement to consume *BEYONCÉ*, as a package only becomes more significant. The consumer had to purchase all of the aspects, performances, offerings of Beyoncé and thus had to consume a complete package and a holistic view of the creative project.” (Cupid and Files-Thompson, 103)

Merging the personal and political is standard within the discographies of Black feminist pop stars. (Brown, 183) Moreover, the album is laced with Black feminist thought and hip-hop feminist tropes such as empowerment, embrace of sexuality, independence, sisterhood, importance of the family, and so forth. Tia C.M. Tyree and Melvin L. Williams (2016) have created a chart which showcases all the Black feminist and hip-hop feminist tenets in Beyoncé’s albums, which can be seen in appendix number two. This chart is thus very useful to portray the Black feminist in hip-hop feminist tenets in her oeuvre, for this research with a clear focus on the 2013 self-titled and visual album. The release of this album also situated Beyoncé in the musical tradition of Black feminist pop stars. (Brown, 177) By taking a closer look at certain songs and their lyrics, this chapter will aim to demonstrate that the album as a whole is “Beyoncé’s Black feminist opus” (Brown, 177), but also, that the corresponding songs can be read as cultural texts, part of Black feminism’s rich history. Beyoncé’s lyrical catalogue consistently incorporated elements of Black feminist thought and hip-hop feminism. The most common concepts in her albums were of the “collaborative nature and power of sisterhood; resistance to the oppressive gender roles in love relationships; contestation of the power dynamics present between women and men; concerns of images and representations; need for financial independence and individual freedom; demand for the respect of the intellectual capacity of Black women; and creation of agency for Black women’s experiences”. (Tyree and Williams, 134)

Beyoncé’s songs can be read as mini-lectures in feminist theory – and methodology – and Beyoncé has introduced feminism to new generations of young women and given feminists an opportunity to rally behind a woman who is perhaps the world’s biggest pop star. (Trier-Bieniek, 1) The methodological approach here will be an analysis of Black feminist and hip-hop feminist tropes in

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<sup>20</sup> A webpage that generates an average score based on a wide variety of reviews

the corresponding songs, with the only track that will be analysed as a standalone track is “\*\*\*Flawless”, since that is the song that features Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

#### **4.2.1 Black feminist thought and hip-hop feminist tenets in *BEYONCÉ***

By this album, Beyoncé asserted her sexual agency in relation to a sex-positive feminist lexicon and on the album, Beyoncé celebrated her sexual exploits and presented a narrative that related to Carol Queen’s (2001) views on sex-positive feminism, that pushed women to embrace their sexuality and furthermore to not “denigrate, medicalize, or demonize any form of sexual expression except that which is not consensual” (94). (Tyree and Williams, 131) Because of the highly sexual nature of the album illustrated by songs like “Rocket”, “Drunk In Love”, and “Partition”, the question then is if she is a self-proclaimed “modern day feminist” at the time of this album, what exactly becomes of her sexualized content. (Haglund and Wickman 2013 as cited by Tyree and Williams, 137) Sexuality, even though it is a definite black feminist and hip-hop feminist trope, is still a topic of debate within feminism. However, Beyoncé answers this question herself in the outro of the song “Partition” (the lyrics are available in appendix three). A woman is speaking in French, and it is sampled from the French version of *The Big Lebowski* movie (Haglund and Wickman 2013 as cited by Tyree and Williams, 137). She is asking the man whether or not he likes sex and more specifically, if he likes coitus. She then corrects a misconception about feminists by stating that men think feminists hate sex. However, she asserts women love this natural and stimulating activity. (Haglund and Wickman 2013 as cited by Tyree and Williams, 137) The answer Beyoncé provides is thus claiming that feminists and women in general adore the activity of sex and are, to put it in Adichie’s words, “sexual beings in the way that boys are”. Beyoncé, thus, echoes what Black feminist thought and hip-hop feminism have been declaring, that the embrace of sexuality is a very feminist trope and that eroticism is empowering.

Moreover, since the album is also a visual album, the iconography is also relevant. Through the visuals for multiple songs, including “Blow”, “Partition”, and “Yoncé”, Beyoncé articulates a Black feminist commitment to liberation via the politics of pleasure. The politics of pleasure is an emerging framework within the Black feminist thought tradition, which centres pleasure as an ingress to a Black feminist identity. (Brown, 177-178) The topics of these songs are about sexual pleasure, and the corresponding music videos corroborate this. The album serves as an example of

her tenuous relationship with the term “feminist” and her continuous process to strengthen her Black feminist commitments. (Brown, 177-178)

While in the first four albums Beyoncé’s views on her family were initially sporadic references, in this album, the singer openly discusses being a mother, daughter, and wife. This finding was particularly important given Beyoncé’s standpoint as a Black woman and its impact on the themes of her music. (Tyree and Williams, 132) Thus through the themes of her music, and the accompanying visuals, Beyoncé situates herself, her marriage, and her desires as a critical aspect of her Black feminist politic. (Brown, 186) As noted by Bart Landry (2000), the preservation of the collective family has been pivotal in the pursuit of racial uplift for the Black community. This is perhaps the most clear on the song “Blue”, which is an ode to her firstborn daughter, Blue Ivy Carter. The song deals with the strong bond between a mother and child, with lyrics such as “Each day I feel so blessed to be looking at you / Cause when you open your eyes, I feel alive<sup>21</sup>”. This song is thus a clear example of a cultural text containing Black feminist tenets, such as the importance of family.

Henceforth, an important lyrical connection to Black feminist thought was Beyoncé’s connection to sisterhood. Evoking her proverbial sisterhood was often signalled by a call-and-response tradition, which has deep ties in the Black community. (Tyree and Williams, 134) In songs such as “Partition”, with the intro of the song being a sample from a concert where Beyoncé shouts “Let me hear you say “hey Ms. Carter!”” with the crowd then responding back to her by shouting “hey Ms. Carter!” is an example of this call-and-response tradition. Some would perhaps argue that the choice for Ms. Carter instead of “Beyoncé” is not feminist, I beg to differ however, since within Black feminist thought and hip-hop feminism, marriage and equality is very important and thus meaning that taking your husband’s name is not a sign of dominion, but of mutual love and support. This call-and-response tradition in support of a strong sisterhood is also the case in the song “\*\*\*Flawless” (infra. 5.2.2).

Equally important, is the use of the call-and-response tradition in the song “Mine”, which features famous hip-hop artist Drake. In the song, she sings openly about postpartum depression, stating in one lyric that she is “not feeling like myself since the baby<sup>22</sup>”. Moreover, the call-and-response

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<sup>21</sup> <https://genius.com/Beyonce-blue-lyrics>

<sup>22</sup> <https://genius.com/Beyonce-mine-lyrics>

tradition is then quite obvious in the lyrics “Are we even gonna make it? / Oh cause if we are, we’re taking this a little too far<sup>23</sup>”. Not only is the subject matter something important to feminism, since the “personal is political” and the importance of personal experiences, she is making a sensitive subject such as postpartum depression visible on a large scale, empowering other women to discuss it as well.

Lastly, because of the pejorative history of the controlling images of Black womanhood, the beauty industry is also something this is talked about within Black feminist thought and hip-hop feminism (cf. 2.1). This trope is discussed in the song “Pretty Hurts”. In this song, Beyoncé voices critique about the beauty industry and how it constantly regulates women’s bodies to look a certain way. This is especially relevant considering Beyoncé is a Black woman, and as mentioned earlier, the norms in the beauty industry mainly apply to White women only. Lyrics such as “Blonder hair, flat chest / Vogue says thinner is better<sup>24</sup>” echo this. By explicitly calling out Vogue Magazine, Beyoncé delivers a powerful statement. The ending of the song, is a typical trope of empowerment, culminating in the final lines: “The illusion has been shed / Are you happy with yourself? / Are you happy with yourself? / Yes<sup>25</sup>”. With the affirmative “yes”, Beyoncé encourages all women to feel good about themselves and their bodies, despite with society urges women to look like. This song is also an example of Beyoncé voicing Black feminist thought and hip-hop feminist tropes in her music.

#### **4.2.2 \*\*\*Flawless – Beyoncé featuring Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie**

In regard to this thesis, perhaps the most relevant song off of *BEYONCÉ* is “\*\*\*Flawless”, which features Nigerian author and feminist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The lyrics can be found in appendix four. As mentioned in 4.1, Beyoncé has sampled Adichie’s TED Talk and same-titled essay titled “We Should All Be Feminists” on this track. Besides the aforementioned quotes by Adichie during Beyoncé’s MTV Video Music Awards performance, the song actually features additional quotes. These are all the words spoken by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie that are on the track:

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<sup>23</sup> <https://genius.com/Beyonce-mine-lyrics>

<sup>24</sup> <https://genius.com/Beyonce-pretty-hurts-lyrics>

<sup>25</sup> <https://genius.com/Beyonce-pretty-hurts-lyrics>

“We teach girls to shrink themselves, to make themselves smaller. We say to girls, ‘You can have ambition, but not too much. You should aim to be successful but not too successful, otherwise you will threaten the man.’ Because I am female, I’m expected to aspire to marriage. I am expected to make my life choices always keeping in mind that marriage is the most important. Marriage can be a good thing, a source of joy, love and mutual support. But why do we teach girls to aspire to marriage, yet we don’t teach boys to do the same? We raise girls to see each other as competitors – not for jobs or accomplishments, which in my opinion can be a good thing, but for the attention of men. We teach girls that they cannot be sexual beings in the way boys are. Feminist: a person who believes in the social, political and economic equality of the sexes.” (Adichie, 2012)

It is no coincidence that Beyoncé chose these exact words to feature on this particular track, since Adichie’s words support the subject matter of the song. Moreover, Adichie’s words echo Black feminist tropes such as the embrace of women’s sexuality, which is a recurrent theme on the album. She does so when she states that “We teach girls they cannot be sexual beings in the way boys are.” This is a critique that is twofold. First, it implies that women are not sexual beings or at least not in the way men are, which is an inaccurate statement, backed by Black feminist feminists who value sexuality highly. As mentioned in 4.2.1, the song “Partition” debates this as well. Second, it is also a critique on the inequality between men and women and how this is embedded in society. Boys and girls are taught different values, which Adichie criticises here. Adichie mentions marriage as well, which Black feminists believed was important, since they endeavoured for an equal relationship between men and women. Yet marriage should not solely be a woman’s duty or automatically imply passiveness and submissiveness. Beyoncé agrees with this, as corroborated by the lyrics “But don’t think I’m just his little wife / Don’t get it twisted, get it twisted”. This means that although she is a married woman, she is more than that. Adichie questions gender roles as well when she wonders “why we do not teach boys the same”. Thus highlighting the inequality between men and women, which is also a characteristic of Black feminist thought, and moreover of feminism itself.

“\*\*\*Flawless” is a song that is representative of Beyoncé’s intersection of racial, feminist, and queer politics. It is an “outspoken feminist manifesto”. (Chatzipapatheodoridis, 411) The iconography of “\*\*\*Flawless” highlights Beyoncé’s “femme identity and flirtations with kink culture and homoeroticism, which places her image outside of “vanilla” heteronormativity.”” (Mitchell, 41)

“\*\*\*Flawless” foregrounds Beyoncé’s image of Queen Bey, a pun originating from the stereotype of Queen Bee, the quintessential figure of female aggressiveness and independence in the post-slavery imagery of African-American culture. (Chatzipapathodoridis, 412) Yet, Queen B is also the nickname her fans have given her and the name she is now most associated with. Moreover, the song is a feminist anthem writ large. The lyrics speak to women about claiming a flawlessness, despite their actual flaws and encourages women to embrace their power boldly. (Mitchell, 50) Beyoncé’s voicing of the empowerment of one’s body, especially considering the regulating of Black women’s bodies and controlling images in the past, is thus a strong feminist message she delivers which is highlighted by the repetition of lyrics such as “You wake up, flawless” and “I woke up like this, I woke up like this / We flawless, ladies tell ‘em”. As mentioned in 4.2.1, the call-and-response tradition is also important within the music of Black feminist artists. Moreover, the song evokes sisterhood, body empowerment, and opposes the regulation of Black women’s bodies with lyrics such as “we flawless, ladies tell ‘em / I woke up like this, I woke up like this / we flawless, ladies tell ‘em / say “I look so good tonight” / god damn, god damn”, these are again tropes of Black feminist thought and hip-hop feminism.

Moreover, to make the voice of reason come from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a Nigerian woman with a Nigerian accent was a very bold choice. For a Black woman to choose another Black woman as an intellectual mentor is to disrupt White supremacy. (Mitchell, 52) Furthermore, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, ideas of Black inferiority are still quite present, so for Beyoncé to choose for Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie was important. (Mitchell, 52) This deliberate choice to sample a Nigerian, feminist author, was not only a bold choice, but again an affirmation of Beyoncé aligning herself with feminism.

Additionally, Beyoncé, in the song, gives her critics a valid response when they question her legitimacy as a feminist. Mikki Kendall (2013) of *The Guardian* praised her: “it is clear that a lot of Black American women, the mainstream middle class White feminist narratives with which we are so familiar aren’t necessarily compatible with Beyoncé’s view of herself. This album makes it clear that her feminism isn’t academic; isn’t about waves, or labels. It simply is a part of her as much as anything else in her life.” (Duan, 61) This is typical of Black feminist thought and hip-hop feminism, since they value – as mentioned earlier – everyday places and ordinary women as valid for their kind of feminism. There is a growing body of feminist work that is aimed at popular audiences, but



“\*\*\*Flawless” made discussions of feminism much easier and moved the discourse away from the derailing “Femin-Nazi” discourse of conservative pundits. (Mitchell, 52)

Lastly, it is interesting to note the clear juxtaposition between the first part and second part of the song. The song starts with a sample from when Beyoncé’s first all-female group, Girls Tyme, performed on the show *Star Search*. After this intro, the lyrics that follow are braggadocious, which is a clear inheritance of hip-hop culture and is here reversed, instead of a male hip-hop artist, there is now a female artist singing these lyrics, which is a hip-hop feminist trope. Yet what follows in the second part are then Adichie’s powerful words, combined with Beyoncé’s lyrics telling the listeners to embrace their bodies and themselves, to ultimately culminating into the outro of the song, in which we learn that Girls Tyme lost on the show. Therefore Beyoncé is actually putting her own flaws and vulnerability on display – she did lose on the show – yet she still became to be the iconic, Black, feminist performer she is today. Beyoncé is telling all women that they are in a sense all flawed, yet in the same way, they are all flawless too. The feminist message that can be read here as well, is the uplifting reassurance that all women have to fight, which eventually will only make us stronger. This can thus be read as a clear embodiment of female empowerment.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

On the self-titled album, Beyoncé has chosen to centre Black womanhood as a site of beauty and knowledge, for a world audience. And throughout this project she takes on a complex Black femininity that is “sexual, intelligent, seductive, manipulative, and feminist”. (Mitchell, 52) The songs are a feminist call to arms, infused with traits of “Black urban slang and a brass sensibility.” (Chatzipapathodoridis, 410) Moreover, Beyoncé’s 2013 self-titled and visual album creates a space to experience non-normative Black femininity and allows its audiences to begin to imagine a new politics of being for Black womanhood.” (Mitchell, 40)

Furthermore, the case of the visual album’s release is an endeavour in a continuum of Beyoncé as a feminist woman that enjoys her work, and acknowledges her artistry as commodity. New media, then, presented the moment where her small triumphs of personal agency as a feminist worker, reached a new level of autonomy. (Cupid and Files-Thompson, 101) This is achieved by the unconventional release of the album. That Beyoncé is a black woman at the top of her musical enterprise propels this rebranding to another level. As Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie noted in an

interview with Vogue magazine: “my thirteen-year-old niece calls herself a feminist – not because I made a speech but because of Beyoncé” (cited in Frank 2014). (Hobson, 24)

In the year that followed the album release, Beyoncé maintained to identify herself as a feminist, and making feminism hyper-visible. For instance, she posted a picture on her Instagram profile dressed as Rosie the Riveter. In doing so, she introduced feminist iconography into the lexicon of a generation that ponders post-feminism as a reality. (Cupid and Files-Thompson, 103) Mitchell (2016) then rightfully ponders, “would feminism be part of a national discussion that includes young women, non-academics, and non-activists without this album? (Mitchell, 52)

Lastly, girl power is a concept that teaches girls can do, be, and have anything they want (Pomerantz, Raby & Stefanick 2013 as cited by Tyree and Williams, 127). It is a term that goes well with the concept of Black Girls Rock, which is the mantra that is coupled with a movement of a non-profit designed to help promote female youth empowerment and mentoring among women of colour as well as spawn dialog about representation in the media. (Tyree and Williams, 127) Within today’s current empowerment discourse, there are some who are called role models and further push the conversations of female empowerment. Beyoncé is one of them, especially after the release of this album. (Tyree and Williams, 127) The overall messages found in *BEYONCÉ* are feminist for many reasons. They are empowering, blunt, honest, and there are overt engagements with feminist literature, Adichie’s “We Should All Be Feminists”, and addresses polarizing debates within feminism regarding sexuality, for instance. The album also contains many Black feminist thought and hip-hop feminist tropes as well. Arguably, this album did in fact put feminism on the forefront for many young women, and Beyoncé has seemingly reached out to a generation that needed a Black feminist to match their brand of feminism more and make it more accessible as well. *BEYONCÉ* tells the world that women are most definitely flawless and in fact, woke up like this.

## **Chapter 5: *Lemonade* (2016) as the culmination of Beyoncé’s Black feminist endeavours**

The final chapter of this thesis will conduct an in-depth analysis of Beyoncé’s 2016 visual album, *Lemonade*. Hip-hop over the past 30 years has become an indispensable cultural artefact in American society generally and Black culture specifically, and as mentioned earlier, struck up a bond with feminism too. Miles describes a visual albums as a “musical album constructed in a thematic manner accompanied by a visual storytelling of each song”. (Miles, 136) Beyoncé’s visual musical album *Lemonade* is particularly important because of the ways in which the visual and vocal narrative speaks to the historical marginalized experience of Black women by both society and hip-hop. However, Black women have persisted, resisted, and used their literary inventiveness to reshape notions of Black womanhood in both society and hip-hop (Pough 2004). (Miles, 136)

### **5.1 About *Lemonade* (2016)**

This album can be regarded as even more ambitious than her previous albums when it comes to the themes of Black feminism, womanhood and racial issues. like *BEYONCÉ* before it, *Lemonade* was a surprise release that caused much discussion of its aesthetics, themes, politics and subject matter. (Macrossan, 138-139) But what makes *Lemonade* stand out even more than *BEYONCÉ*, are the visuals that accompany the album. Even though *BEYONCÉ* was a visual album as well, it contained only videoclips for the corresponding songs. *Lemonade* is different and more determined to use the visuals as a portrayal for and about Black women, which I will strive to demonstrate in this chapter. Instead of separate music videos, *Lemonade* is a one hour long film. Moreover, *BEYONCÉ* was the first time Beyoncé openly relied on feminist literature, as mentioned earlier, and *Lemonade* builds further upon this by incorporating spoken-word poetry in the film.

The visuals from *Lemonade* are outstanding, with *Lemonade* being nominated for four Emmy Awards<sup>26</sup>. *Lemonade* is laced with glorious feminist sentiments, references to the Black Lives Matter movement, and calls to Black women with empowering spoken-word poetry and poetic lyrics. The film consists of 11 chapters that detail the crumble and rise of Beyoncé’s marriage to Jay Z, as well

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.billboard.com/articles/news/7438880/beyonce-lemonade-four-emmy-nominations-how>

as the pressures Black people, and Black women in particular, face daily.<sup>27</sup> These respective 11 chapters – and the spoken-word poetry connecting them – will be discussed further down below.

Thus aside from its digital visual album format, a large part of the popular discourse on *Lemonade* focuses on how it engages with the Black Lives Matter movement and its celebration of Black women and Black female sexuality. *Lemonade* continues Beyoncé's negotiation of race, sexuality, and gender, as it features many references to African-American women and Southern history, particularly Black female identity, sexuality, spirituality, as well as witchcraft, menstruation, slavery and African Yoruba culture and religion. (Macrossan, 141) Many of the Black feminist thought and hip-hop feminist tenets discussed in the previous chapters, can distinctively be found in this visual album as well.

### **5.1.1 Warsan Shire and *Lemonade***

Warsan Shire is a Somali-British poet, born in 1988<sup>28</sup>. The poetry that I could find of Warsan Shire, which was featured on *Lemonade*, will be analysed in this chapter (poems are in appendix five). However, throughout *Lemonade*, there is spoken-word poetry for which I failed to find a source or origin. Nonetheless, in the official *Lemonade* credits, Warsan Shire is credited for the poetry and film adaptation – and other sources confirm this as well – so it is plausible that Warsan Shire used existing material of hers but wrote additional pieces of poetry exclusively for *Lemonade*. More importantly, Shire's importance is highlighted by the fact that she is the second person to be mentioned in the credits, just after Beyoncé herself. The first credits read “a visual album by Beyoncé,” followed by “film adaptation and poetry, Warsan Shire”, which can be found in appendix six. Shire's words are just as important as the music. When the two are paired together, they appear to be unstoppable,<sup>29</sup> and consequently, it is the spoken-word poetry that directs us to listen carefully. (Vernallis, 1)

### **5.2 An in-depth analysis of *Lemonade***

As mentioned earlier, the film consists of 11 chapters, with spoken-word poetry by Warsan Shire between these chapters and songs. These 11 chapters will now be scrutinized, with an emphasis on the poetry, the lyrics, and cinematography. The methodology is the same as in the previous chapter,

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.theodysseyonline.com/breakdown-of-beyonces-lemonade>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2016/apr/27/warsan-shire-young-poet-laureate-beyonce-lemonade-london>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.elitedaily.com/music/warsan-shire-lemonade-poetry/1473670>

being the aim to lay bare the Black feminist thought, hip-hop feminist, and intersectional tenets in the album and film to prove that it can be regarded as cultural texts of Black feminism and hip hop feminism and consequently, further solidify Beyoncé as a Black feminist icon. A script of the film is in the appendices, as appendix seven. Since I will mainly focus on the music and poetry, I will only explicitly refer to the imagery if it specifically adds to the words, the script is added in the appendices in order to make the discussion of the film more orderly and complete. The track list of the album, as appendix one. I have transcribed the spoken-word poetry and lyrics based on *Lemonade* and its subtitles.

### 5.2.1 Intuition

The film opens up with varying scenes, with and without Beyoncé in it. The song “Pray You Catch Me” starts playing. The song gets interrupted to introduce the first chapter, “Intuition” alongside with a shot of a Bayou shack. Beyoncé starts delivering the first piece of spoken-word poetry:

“I tried to make a home out of you, but doors lead to trap doors, a stairway leads to nothing. Unknown women wander the hallways at night. Where do you go when you go quiet? You remind me of my father, a magician... able to exist in two places at once. In the tradition of men in my blood, you come home at 3:00 AM and lie to me. What are you hiding? The past and the future merge to meet us here. What luck. What a fucking curse<sup>30</sup>.”

Right after the last sentence, the song “Pray You Catch Me” is continued. In the first part, the theme of infidelity is already introduced, and from here on, Beyoncé lays out an emotional progression for how Black women negotiate their relationship with Black men, especially their husbands and fathers. (Miles, 136) The spoken-word poetry passage is then supported by the lyrics of the song, such as “You can taste the dishonesty / It's all over your breath as you pass it off so cavalier<sup>31</sup>”. The visuals when Beyoncé is speaking, are all shots of Black women, no men in sight, thus emphasizing the shared struggle that women have had to endure when it comes to their relationships with Black men. When Beyoncé says “What are you hiding?”, the shot is of a Black woman sitting in a rocking chair, with a leaf covering her face. This is a nice convergence of the poetry with the imagery to

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<sup>30</sup> As mentioned before, for some spoken-word poetry I was unable to find the source or author, this part is one example of that. However, because of the official credits, I assume it is Shire's as well.

<sup>31</sup> <https://genius.com/Beyonce-pray-you-catch-me-lyrics>

support the theme of Black women's suffering. This generalisation of Black women's suffering is a part of the importance of sisterhood within Black feminist thought and hip-hop feminism.

Beyoncé then jumps off of a building – coinciding with the title of the song “Pray You Catch Me” – and eventually plunges into water, leading to the second chapter, “Denial”.

### **5.2.2 Denial**

As Beyoncé is submerged in the water, she starts reciting another piece of spoken-word poetry, the lines are from Shire's poem “Women Who Are Difficult To Love”:

“I tried to change. Closed my mouth more. Tried to be softer, prettier, less awake. Fasted for 60 days, wore white, abstained from mirrors, abstained from sex, slowly did not speak another word. In that time my hair I grew past my ankles, I slept on a mat on the floor. I swallowed a sword. I levitated. Went to the basement, confessed my sins and was baptized in a river. Got on my knees and said amen and I said Amin. I whipped my own back and asked for dominion at your feet. I threw myself into a volcano. I drank the blood and I drank the wine. I sat alone and begged and bent at the waist for God. I crossed myself and I thought I saw the devil. I grew thickened skin on my feet. I bathed in bleach and plugged my menses with pages from the holy book, but still inside me, coiled deep, was the need to know ... are you cheating on me? Cheating. Are you cheating on me?”

Beyoncé encourages her audience to think through the ways Black women have historically devalued their humanity for the purpose of keeping together Black unions (Mitchell, 1), especially with the line “I whipped my own back and asked for dominion at your feet.” This line builds further upon the previous chapters, meaning the position of Black women with it comes to Black and White men. Furthermore, while this part focuses on themes of betrayal and infidelity committed by fathers and husbands, it highlights a larger historical pattern of Black men failing to see the ways in which they marginalize this other half of the Black population. Black solidarity has historically suppressed the voices of anyone outside of the dominant Black male heterosexual paradigm. (Miles, 137) This as well is echoed by the line “I whipped my own back and asked for dominion at your feet.” Black women have had to relinquish aspects of their identity to exist in harmony with Black men. It is partly autobiographical too – since it deals with infidelity in her own marriage – emphasized by the line “are you cheating on me?” yet functions as a comment on Black women's relationships as a

whole. Highlighting the gender inequality and submissive role of Black women is a Black feminist thought and hip-hop feminist trope, which can be found here.

The policing of Black women's bodies is something that is prevalent within Black feminist thought and hip-hop feminism, and is here being addressed as well, with lines from the poem such as "tried to be softer, prettier, less awake. Fasted for 60 days, (...)". This emphasizes Black women's bodies and how they are regulated, which is being critiqued here. Especially the phrase "I bathed in bleach", meaning an effort to lighten the skin tone, is an extremely powerful statement, echoing White beauty standards that Black women are too dark and not light enough to be considered beautiful. This spoken-word passage thus contains multiple feminist tenets, especially Black feminist ones. Then after the spoken-word poetry passage, Beyoncé bursts out of a building and the song "Hold Up" starts playing, a song about dealing with the supposed infidelity and her rage, which then leads to the third chapter, "Anger".

### **5.2.3 Anger**

This chapter, just as the previous chapters, is immediately introduced to the audience by another passage of spoken-word poetry:

"If it's what you truly want... I can wear her skin over mine. Her hair over mine. Her hands as gloves. Her teeth as confetti. Her scalp, a cap. Her sternum, my bedazzled cane. We can pose for a photograph, all three of us. Immortalized... you and your perfect girl."

Miles (2017) has looked at this passage through a Black feminist theoretical framework, highlighting the work of bell hooks. hooks, in "Ain't I a Woman" (1981), gives an account of how Black women did not immediately join in the fight for feminism because the feminist struggle was largely shaped around White women's middle-class ideals. For Black women, sexism was insignificant when compared to the harsh reality of racism. However, the historical movement to free all Black people did not take up the issues that specifically impacted Black women, with hooks arguing that the fight against racial oppression was an attempt to establish Black male patriarchy. This dialectic forced Black women to choose between being Black and being a woman. In the process of narrating how Black men have failed Black women, Beyoncé juxtaposes the Black woman body with that of a White woman's when she narrates "I can wear her skin over mine." Here Beyoncé gets to the heart of hooks' question, "Ain't I a Woman?" The Black woman's body

has been devalued to a status void of womanhood and they are required to perform their femininity to be viewed as a woman. (Miles, 137) The first part of this passage thus serves as an intersectional critique on race and gender. The concerns voiced in the passage can be read as feminist statements. The next part of the spoken-word poetry are lines from Warsan Shire's poem "The Unbearable Weight Of Staying":

"I don't know when love became elusive. What I know is no one I know has it. My father's arms around my mother's neck, fruit too ripe to eat. I think of lovers as trees... growing to and from one another. Searching for the same light. Why can't you see me? Why can't you see me? Everyone else can."

After this, the song "Don't Hurt Yourself" starts playing, in which Beyoncé positions herself as a strong and extraordinary woman, especially voiced by the first line of the song: "Who the fuck do you think I am<sup>32</sup>". Moreover, Beyoncé addresses the Black feminist tenets in her song of financial independence and female empowerment with the lyrics "And keep your money, I've got my own / Keep a bigger smile on my face being alone<sup>33</sup>" and then interpolates Malcolm X when she continues with "Motivate your ass, call me Malcolm X<sup>34</sup>". Immediately after that lyric, a speech from Malcolm X is heard, titled "Who Taught You To Hate Yourself<sup>35</sup>" in which Malcolm X states that:

"The most disrespect person in America is the Black woman. The most unprotected person in America is the Black woman. The most neglected person in America is the Black woman."

During this part, the visuals are different shots of Black women, smiling, and constructing themselves as strong, thus juxtaposing with the words spoken by Malcolm X, the stills can be seen in appendix eight. The fact that Beyoncé immediately cuts her song to deliver this powerful statement, is again a testimony of the 'personal is political' within Black feminism, and shows that *Lemonade* serves as more than just an album about infidelity, amongst many themes. It is an testimony of, and for, Black women. Whilst discussing difficult relationships with men for instance, Beyoncé simultaneously addresses the struggles of all Black women. Focusing on everyday

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<sup>32</sup> <https://genius.com/Beyonce-dont-hurt-yourself-lyrics>

<sup>33</sup> <https://genius.com/Beyonce-dont-hurt-yourself-lyrics>

<sup>34</sup> <https://genius.com/Beyonce-dont-hurt-yourself-lyrics>

<sup>35</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCSOiN\\_38nE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCSOiN_38nE) 2:25-2:39



experiences from ordinary Black women, is a crucial aspect within Black feminist thought and hip-hop feminism.

#### **5.2.4 Apathy**

This part is also introduced by another passage of spoken-word poetry:

“So what are you gonna say at my funeral now that you’ve killed me? Here lies the body of the love of my life whose heart I broke without a gun to my head. Here lies the mother of my children both living and dead. Rest in peace, my true love, who I took for granted. Most bomb lover who, because of me, sleep evaded. Her shroud is loneliness. Her god was listening. Her heaven will be a love without betrayal. Ashes to ashes, dust to side chicks.”

After this, the song “Sorry” starts playing, with the final lyrics the most important in regards to the spoken word passage. Beyoncé is addressing her husband and his mistress, saying “He better call Becky with the good hair / He better call Becky with the good hair<sup>36</sup>”. As early as the 1950s and 1960s, across class lines, having straight or sleekly wavy hair was considered “good” hair and having kinky or very curly hair was considered “bad” in black American communities (Walker 2000, 538 as cited by Duan, 67) So White women naturally possessed “good” hair, whereas Black women did not. Moreover, the name “Becky” is slang for a White girl or woman. Calling her “Becky with the good hair”, thus emphasizes the fact that Black women are, yet again, considered to be less beautiful or worthy than White women. Supported by the visuals, during the song there are many Black women dressed in traditional African clothing, emphasizing their Blackness. The dichotomy between White and Black women in this album has already been introduced in 5.2.3, so Beyoncé builds further upon that, and consequently continues the Black feminist thought trope of critiquing the regulation of Black women’s bodies and the long history of the controlling images of Black womanhood.

#### **5.2.5 Emptiness**

It opens with another passage right away, however I will omit these few lines and start with the part that is Shire’s poem “Dear Moon”:

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<sup>36</sup> <https://genius.com/Beyonce-sorry-lyrics>

“(…) Loss. Dear moon, we blame you for floods… for the flush of blood… for men who are also wolves. We blame you for the night, for the dark, for the ghosts.”

After these few lines, the song “6 Inch” starts playing, however after the first few bars the music is cut abruptly, and Beyoncé continues with a reading of Shire’s poem:

“Every fear… every nightmare… anyone has ever had.”

It then continues with the song, which is a song about female empowerment in regards to financial gain, with lyrics such as “Too smart to crave material things / She’s stacking her paper<sup>37</sup>” and “She grinds from Monday to Friday / Works from Friday to Sunday<sup>38</sup>”. The visuals are quite ominous, tying in with the haunting words of Shire’s poem “Dear Moon”. The fact that the song is about a strong woman and the poem creates a haunting imagery, with words such as “nightmare” it can be read as a critique on the submissive roles of Black women throughout history and how White men would be petrified to see them rise. Especially since the last line that Beyoncé reads, is supported by daunting visuals of Black women looking ferocious. There is a void created within Black women – a void largely due to society’s marginalization of Black bodies but also due to Black men’s inability to see that Black women’s issues must be incorporated into the Black community’s struggle (Crenshaw 1989 as cited by Miles, 136-137) Moreover, the Black feminist thought and hip-hop feminist trope of financial independence is present in this chapter as well.

### 5.2.6 Accountability

Here Beyoncé’s reads Warsan Shire’s “How To Wear Your Mother’s Lipstick”:

“You find the black tube inside her beauty case where she keeps your father’s old prison letters. You desperately want to look like her. You look nothing like your mother. You look everything like your mother. Film star beauty. How to wear your mother’s lipstick. You go to the bathroom to apply the lipstick. Somewhere no one can find you. You must wear it like she wears disappointment on her face. Your mother is a woman and women like her cannot be contained. (…) Mother dearest, let me inherit the earth. Teach me how to make him beg. Let me make up for the years he made you wait. Did he bend your reflection? Did he make you forget your own name? Did he convince you he was a god? Did you get on your

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<sup>37</sup> <https://genius.com/Beyonce-6-inch-lyrics>

<sup>38</sup> <https://genius.com/Beyonce-6-inch-lyrics>

knees daily? Do his eyes close like doors? Are you a slave to the back of his head? Am I talking about your husband or your father?"

After this the song "Daddy Lessons" starts playing, not a surprising choice considering the final line of poetry. Again the theme of Black women negotiating their relationships with Black men, especially fathers and husbands is crucial here. It is also honouring one's heritage, in Beyoncé's case Texas (which she mentions multiple times throughout the song), and Blackness. Whereas the first chapters of *Lemonade* were more aggressive, from this chapter onwards we see a tenderness brewing within Black women and the relationships with other Black men. President Obama is discussed during one part of the visuals, and Beyoncé shares old footage of a home video when she was a little girl with her father. Thus discussing her own problematic relationship, since she fired him as her manager in 2010 for an array of reasons. Then we see footage of her father with her daughter, Blue, showcasing that she probably is restoring the relationship with her father. As mentioned before (cf. 4.2.1), the family is extremely important within Black culture and Black feminism, therefore this shift to a more sentimental part in the film is no surprise. The line of poetry "Are you a slave to the back of his head?" is referring to either the history of slavery that Black people had to endure as well as the submissive role of Black women in society and often relationships. Beyoncé, however, tries to restore the relationships, which is again an important Black feminist trope.

### **5.2.7 Reformation**

We hear Beyoncé reciting some poetry again:

"He bathes me until I forget their names and faces. I ask him to look me in the eye when I come home. Why do deny yourself heaven? Why do you consider yourself undeserving? Why are you afraid of love? You think it's not possible for someone like you. But you are the love of my life. The love of my life. The love of my life."

The song "Love Drought" starts playing. As can be seen from the spoken-word poetry, Beyoncé seems receptive to forgiveness and love, despite the hardships. This can be seen as a Black feminist trope, since love, sexuality, marriage and so forth are very important. This is echoed by lyrics such as "Cause you, you, you, you and me could move a mountain / You, you, you, you and me could calm a war down / You, you, you, you and me could make it rain now / You, you, you, you and me

could stop this love drought<sup>39</sup>”. In the visuals we see Beyoncé leading other Black women walking into the ocean (also linked to the title of the song), as if to cleanse themselves from the difficulties expressed earlier on in the film. It can function as a sort of baptism, to feel reborn and to move forward.

### **5.2.8 Forgiveness**

The argument made in 5.2.7 about baptism is confirmed here because of the spoken-word poetry Beyoncé starts to recite:

“Baptize me... now that reconciliation is possible. If we’re going to heal, let it be glorious. 1,000 girls raise their arms. Do you remember being born? Are you thankful... for the hips that cracked? The deep velvet of your mother and her mother and her mother. There is a curse that will be broken.”

The theme of female empowerment is again voiced here, celebrating birth, women, and mothers. More importantly, the last line refers back to the line in the very first chapter “Intuition”, when Beyoncé said “what a fucking curse”. By this time in the album, the curse is about to be broken. The visuals concur this, since her husband, Jay-Z is present whilst the song “Sandcastles” is playing. Forgiveness is rooted in an historical tradition of Black women offering compassion and understanding as a strategic tool of liberation (Vanzant 1996). This tradition dates back to slavery where we see slaves such as Sojourner Truth offering love and forgiveness to the Whites (Fitch and Mandziuk, 1997), very similar to the notion of grace rooted in the Christian tradition. (Miles, 137) Forgiveness for Black women, is thus not a sign of being meek, quite the contrary, it is a part of personal liberation. This is a form of feminist empowerment. It is as well linked to Christian tradition, evoked by Beyoncé due to the baptism line and imagery. This chapter is thus laced with tropes of Black feminist thought.

### **5.2.9 Resurrection**

This chapter is quite political. We hear a woman speaking – it is unclear who – about love, their children and so forth. Whilst this woman is speaking, we see many Black women dressed in old-fashioned clothing, posing for a photograph. We also see Black women on the streets. It ends with

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<sup>39</sup> <https://genius.com/Beyonce-love-drought-lyrics>

old photographs scattered on the grass, then the song “Forward” starts playing simultaneously with Beyoncé who starts reciting a line from Shire’s “Women Who Are Difficult To Love”:

“you are terrifying... and strange... and beautiful.”

This line of poetry, combined with the song “Forward” and the imagery is perhaps the most bravest statement throughout the film. We see Black women, visibly emotional, holding pictures of slain Black men. These women include Sybrina Fulton, mother of Trayvon Martin, Lezley McSpadden, mother of Michael Brown, and Gwen Carr, mother of Eric Garner (the stills are in appendix nine). This political engagement connects with her statements in support of Black Lives Matter. (Macrossan, 143) Featuring these Black women in such an empowering way – with “Forward” and the imagery – is both a political and a feminist statement that Beyoncé makes. These women have lost their relatives due to racist policies, such as police brutality, but moreover, these women are all mothers, sisters, etc. The scale of *Lemonade* and the audience it reaches is tremendous, so putting these women on the forefront is definitely a sign of sisterhood and empowerment, both very important tropes of Black feminist thought.

The lyrics “It's time to listen, it's time to fight / Forward<sup>40</sup>” combined with the visuals of the Black women holding the photographs, signals either the need to oppose to racism and injustice for Black people, yet also the urge to move forward to a better society, in which such injustices cannot happen. These themes of empowerment, resistance, and leading to liberation and freedom is a Black feminist thought trope as well.

### **5.2.10 Hope**

The penultimate chapter opens up with Beyoncé reciting Warsan Shire’s poem “Nail Technician As Psalm Reader”:

“The nail technician pushes my cuticles back... turns my hand over, stretches the skin on my palm and says, “I see your daughters and their daughters.” That night in a dream, the first girl emerges from a slit in my stomach. The scar heals into a smile. The man I love pulls the stitches out with his fingernails. We leave black sutures curling on the side of the bath. I

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<sup>40</sup> <https://genius.com/Beyonce-forward-lyrics>

wake as the second girl crawls headfirst up my throat, a flower blossoming out of the hole in my face.”

Beyoncé then performs an acapella version of the song “Freedom” in front of a small crowd of Black women composed of her friends, family, and the women mentioned earlier holding the photographs of their slain relatives. Then, the song starts playing and there is a clear focus on the visuals of all the Black women being together. The poem by Shire, describing painful experiences having beautiful outcomes (“The scar heals into a smile” / “a flower blossoming out of the hole in my face”) combined with a song such as “Freedom” and the imagery of these strong Black women, strongly supports and embodies the Black feminist thought tropes of liberation, empowerment, and sisterhood. Lyrics such as “Freedom! Freedom! Where are you? / Cause I need freedom too! / I break chains all by myself / Won't let my freedom rot in hell / Hey! I'ma keep running / Cause a winner don't quit on themselves<sup>41</sup>” echo this as well. First, “breaking chains” can be read as a remark on slavery – when Black slaves were literally shackled and chained – with now Beyoncé and other Black women breaking these shackles and being free. Second, read in the autobiographical fashion of *Lemonade*, it can be seen as Beyoncé breaking free from the hurt and pain and now being free because of the forgiveness (cf. 5.2.8) she granted her husband and father. And third, logically it is also relatable to all Black women, taking a stand for liberation and freedom through the sisterhood Black feminist thought and hip-hop feminism value so highly. The aforementioned lyrics embody this as well because of the call-and-response tradition (cf. 4.2.1)

### **5.2.11 Redemption**

The final part starts with Beyoncé reciting the following words:

“Take one pint of water, add a half pound of sugar, the juice of eight lemons, the zest of half a lemon. Pour the water from one jug, into the other several times. Strain through a clean napkin. Grandmother, the alchemist, you spun gold out of this hard life conjured beauty from the things left behind. Found healing where it did not live. Discovered the antidote in your own kitchen. Broke the curse with your own two hands. You passed these instructions down to your daughter who then passed it down to her daughter.”

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<sup>41</sup> <https://genius.com/Beyonce-freedom-lyrics>

Besides the recipe for lemonade – inevitable giving the title of the visual album – this passage is a testimony to women, voiced through the grandmother she mentioned. When Beyoncé speaks these words, we see a visual of her with her daughter caressing each other's natural, curly hair. Tied into the previous chapters, this a powerful image commenting on the regulation and visibility of Black women's bodies. Earlier, Beyoncé talked about “bathing in bleach” whereas now she is seen with her natural hair, as well as that of her daughter. She is celebrating Blackness and putting it on display. Furthermore, an elderly woman – presumably her grandmother – and other Black women who were already present before can be seen. This supports the themes of redemption and freedom.

More importantly, the line “broke the curse with your own two hands” again refers back to the curse mentioned twice throughout the film (cf. 5.2.1 and 5.2.8). First it was “a fucking curse”, later on “the curse will be broken” and now as a matter of fact, the curse has finally been broken, and everything comes full circle. The pain and struggles that dominated the first chapters of the film have now been replaced by liberation and empowerment. Looked at via a Black feminist thought and hip-hop feminist lens, this chapter highlights the sisterhood that unites Black women in the multiple struggles they have had and still have to endure. Beyoncé has used her voice to ignite activism – another important Black feminist and hip-hop trope – echoed by the lyrics “I'ma walk, I'ma march on the regular / Painting white flags blue<sup>42</sup>”. By painting white flags – a symbol of surrender – in another colour, she is urging to take action.

Lastly, we see a woman named Hattie – Jay-Z's grandmother – at her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday party speaking the following words:

“I had my ups and downs, but I always find the inner strength to pull myself up. I was served lemons, but I made lemonade.”

These words perfectly summarise *Lemonade* as Beyoncé's story but moreover, the story of all Black women. Black women have had a lot to endure, yet through their strength, empowerment, sisterhood and more, they always survived. These words spoken by Jay-Z's grandmother perhaps perfectly embody Black feminist thought and why it still matters and is needed in today's society.

To finalise this chapter, Beyoncé is speaking for the last time:

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<sup>42</sup> <https://genius.com/Beyonce-freedom-lyrics>

“My grandma said, “nothing real can be threatened.” True love brought salvation back into me. With every tear came redemption and my torturer became my remedy. So we’re gonna heal. We’re gonna start again. You’ve brought the orchestra, synchronized swimmers. You’re the magician. Pull me back together again the way you cut me in half. Make the woman in doubt disappear. Pull the sorrow from between my legs like silk. Knot after knot after knot. The audience applauds... but we can’t hear them.”

After these words, the song “All Night” starts playing, which is a song that captures the redemption leading to salvation and thus love, the best. This is echoed by lyrics such as “Found the truth beneath your lies / And true love never has to hide<sup>43</sup>”. The visuals include many couples – heterosexual and homosexual – who seem to be happily in love, herself and her husband included. This ending is less powerful than the one mentioned above, but since *Lemonade* does function as Beyoncé’s story about infidelity as well, it is only logical she would end the chapters with a love song instead of another feminist or political statement. However, each chapter has Black feminist thought and hip-hop feminist tropes, besides the alleged autobiographical story Beyoncé is sharing.

### 5.2.12 Formation

After the song “All Night”, *Lemonade* is finished but there is one more song left, “Formation”. This was the only song, released together with its music video, that was put out before *Lemonade*. “Formation” address Beyoncé’s fierceness in consonance with her cultural background, the notion of Black womanhood, and queer discourses. (Chatzipapatheodoridis, 412) “By tracing her origins in the Deep South and highlighting her Creole roots and Black heritage (“My daddy Alabama, mama Louisiana / You mix that negro with that Creole, make a Texas-bama<sup>44</sup>”), Beyoncé produces “Formation” both as an intergenerational homage to Black female power and as an indictment against police brutality over African-American individuals, by using post-Katrina images of the city of New Orleans as her visual backdrop.” (Chatzipapatheodoridis, 413) Beyoncé, again, creates this intersection of race, gender, and sexuality supported by the music and its corresponding imagery.

Furthermore, the music video also lays emphasis on the city’s queer culture by incorporating footage from *That B.E.A.T.* (Beghari 2012), a documentary about the dancing culture of bounce and its affiliation with the city’s queer community; the featured act of bounce queen Big Freedia in the

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<sup>43</sup> <https://genius.com/Beyonce-all-night-lyrics>

<sup>44</sup> <https://genius.com/Beyonce-formation-lyrics>



song's lyrics further consolidates the visibility of the city's queer culture. (Chatzipapatheodoridis, 413) Highlighting queer culture is also a characteristic of Black feminist thought, hip-hop feminism, and intersectionality. By focusing on queerness, this can be regarded as dynamic (which was an important trope within Black feminist thought and hip-hop feminism) but also as intersectional since it focuses simultaneously on race, gender, and sexuality. As Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley and Caitlin O'Neill (2016) put it, "femme and fabulous, Beyoncé's "Formation" celebrates the art of Black femininity in every kind of body brave enough to own it" (Chatzipapatheodoridis, 413) As part of the dynamism Black feminist thought and hip-hop feminism promote, "Formation" manages as an audiovisual project to render "multiple minoritarian subjects visible in a rather celebratory and inviting way and provides spaces of identification with and through Black female and queer culture." (Chatzipapatheodoridis, 413)

The vision of empowerment illustrates Beyoncé's feminist politics, which is evident in the final line of the song: "always stay gracious best revenge is your paper". By suggesting this as the ultimate form of justice, she is deploying a vision of power feminism invested in self-advancement. (Ward, 155) This empowerment linked to financial freedom and independence is definitely a Black feminist thought trope. Moreover, the song also draws on the bond between Black women, thus creating solidarity and sisterhood. By singing "We gon' slay (slay), gon' slay (okay), we slay (okay), I slay (okay) / I slay (okay), okay (okay), I slay (okay), okay, okay, okay, okay / Okay, okay, ladies, now let's get in formation, 'cause I slay / Okay, ladies, now let's get in formation, 'cause I slay<sup>45</sup>". The repetition of "ladies" and the use of "we", thus addresses women directly to "slay" and is a statement of female empowerment and a celebration of Black womanhood, which are Black feminist thought and hip-hop feminist tropes.

Moreover, the notion of the policing of Black women's bodies and the controlling images of Black womanhood were prevalent throughout this thesis. In this song it is addressed again, when Beyoncé sings " I like my baby heir with baby hair and afros /I like my negro nose with Jackson Five nostrils<sup>46</sup>". These lines concur Beyoncé's celebration of Blackness and the fact that Black bodies are beautiful. The "baby heir" line is combined with a visual of her daughter Blue posing confidently

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<sup>45</sup> <https://genius.com/Beyonce-formation-lyrics>

<sup>46</sup> <https://genius.com/Beyonce-formation-lyrics>

with her natural hair, an afro. This is again a validation of Black feminist thought and hip-hop feminist tropes in the song and overall, Beyoncé's music.

### 5.3 Conclusion

*Lemonade* focusses on difficulties with marriage and monogamy with the popular press describing it as a commentary on Beyoncé's marriage to Jay-Z. But it is equally about African-American history. It is a call to action. (Vernallis, 1) The two overlapping genres – music video and experimental film – provide *Lemonade* with a means to hold the past, present, and future together. Black people, and especially Black women, are still in danger in today's society. The merging of past, present, and future simultaneously functions as a forewarning to do better in the future, and that the past is still relevant in the present, especially considering the amount of racism and violence against Black people. *Lemonade* develops historical strands about Africa, the Middle Passage, slavery, the police murders of African-Americans and more. (Vernallis, 1)

Moreover, the representations of Black womanhood in *Lemonade* encourage the audience to make connections to Beyoncé's history of engagement with feminism and Black female empowerment. (Macrossan, 142) The content is centred on the promotion of Black female agency. *Lemonade* reflects on "advanced consciousness, particularly within a political milieu demanding recognition that Black lives matter". (Ward, 152) Beyoncé's feminist advocacy is inextricably linked with the politics of race, since she deploys her audiovisual agenda from the "organic position of Black female subjectivity, inhabiting an intersectional locus of identity crossed with racial and gendered markers". (Chatzipapatheodoridis, 407) *Lemonade* saw Beyoncé making a political and aesthetic statement by placing urban and peripheral Black culture at centre stage. In doing so, the artist materialised this movement with particular emphasis on Black womanhood and sexuality juxtaposed with narratives of Southern tradition and storytelling (Chatzipapatheodoridis, 407-408) Roxana Gay (2016) suggests that the "power of good storytelling" is that "we react, we feel ... seen and understood." She declares that Beyoncé is the ultimate storyteller whose power manifested a "new temporal reality ... 'AL', After *Lemonade*." (Gay as cited by Ward, 154)

In conclusion, Beyoncé presents Black female self-improvement through the visual and oral narratives of Black economic enfranchisement, female empowerment, and communal uplift. (Ward, 154) Beyoncé's portrayal of Black culture only further supports her role as a Black feminist that readily uses Black feminist thought and hip-hop feminist tropes in her work, and because of her

magnitude makes these brands of feminism easily accessible to everyday women. Furthermore, *Lemonade* serves as an intersectional body of work as well because of the focus on gender, race, and sexuality throughout the music and film. To conclude, the world in *Lemonade* is a distinctly Black female and feminist space and is laced with Black feminist thought, hip-hop feminist, and intersectional tropes.

## Conclusion

Feminism has undergone tremendous changes since the first-wave feminists were fighting for women's basic rights. Nowadays, feminism is dynamic, multifaceted, and moreover, has become mainstream. The fact that feminism is now so accessible is due to the endeavours of many feminists, especially those of colour, and Black feminist artists such as Beyoncé. What this thesis set out to prove, was how feminism developed into important subdivisions because of efforts made by Black feminists. This research has emphasized Black feminist thought, hip-hop feminism, and intersectionality. Black scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins, Aisha Durham, Brittney Cooper, and Kimberlé Crenshaw have proven to be quintessential pioneers.

In addition, this thesis has aimed to exhibit the most important characteristics and essential notions of Black feminist thought, hip-hop feminism, and intersectionality and consequently, their respective relevance to this thesis. Important notions such as sexuality, controlling images of Black womanhood, female empowerment, sisterhood, and so forth were all prevalent themes of the three aforementioned disciplines. These findings were then coupled together to analyse Beyoncé. Both her persona – performances, activism, etc. – and her music were scrutinized in order to validate the claim that she is a Black feminist artist. Her persona showcased many characteristics of Black feminist thought – sexuality, defying the stereotypical images of Black women, sisterhood, etc. – as well as hip-hop feminist tenets such as reaching everyday women and promoting feminist ideals in performances and music, voicing action and reclaiming the position previously held exclusively by men within hip-hop. Beyoncé is also regarded as an “intersectional icon” (Kohlman, 2016) because of her embrace of race, gender, and sexuality.

Furthermore, this thesis has then analysed Beyoncé's last two albums, *BEYONCÉ* (2013) and *Lemonade* (2016). By applying the theoretical framework of searching for Black feminist thought, hip-hop feminist and intersectional tenets, this thesis proves that both visual albums can be regarded as cultural texts within Black feminism and its subniches. Beyoncé's messages are resonant in a time of state and interpersonal violence against Black bodies, and institutionalized racism. Taken together as an imagined space of feminist and Black radicalism, *BEYONCÉ* and *Lemonade* are concept albums that, on the surface, present some of the “most commanding, visually stunning manipulations of the trope of Black female strength and its ability to heal human suffering, loss, and displacement”. (Ward, 153) Both albums clearly contain Black feminist thought and hip-hop

feminist tropes such as female empowerment, sisterhood, sexuality, commentary on the regulation of Black women's bodies and more. More importantly, since these two albums overtly contain feminist literature – Adichie and Shire respectively – it showcases that Beyoncé not only aligns herself with Black feminism, but that her embrace of feminist literature is used to further solidify herself as a Black feminist artist who makes feminism hyper visible on a world stage. Beyoncé continues the work started by the women blues singers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, yet her impact and relevance has never been matched before. Her influence must be interpreted within a dynamic of power that, historically, Black women have not occupied. (Ward, 148) Her last two albums corroborate this claim.

However, Beyoncé did receive some criticism as well from some scholars, most notably bell hooks. When situated within the history and themes of Black and hip-hop feminisms, it is apparent Beyoncé could represent “both the problem and proposed solution for these feminist movements. From one standpoint, she sang some misogynistic lyrics and others that evoked Black stereotypes and sexual scripts counterproductive for Black female representation in mass media. Although, from another standpoint, in the midst of her presumed self-objectification, she presented lyrics that opened up metaphorical spaces for Black women that have been previously privileged for White men”. (Tyree and Williams, 138) This thesis has aimed to prove that some of the critique Beyoncé has received is debatable, for instance when she received criticism for wearing a blonde weave, the same person voicing these critiques is regulating and policing Beyoncé's body as well. I argue that what some see as conforming to the White patriarchy is in fact Beyoncé positioning herself in spaces as she pleases, as one of the first Black female feminist artist and doing so successfully. She succeeds in empowering women, addresses the minority role of the Black community but more importantly, puts her feminism on display for everyone to witness.

To conclude, Beyoncé is most definitely a self-defined Black feminist artist. Moreover, she is one of the first pop stars to publicly embrace and utilise feminist literature in her work. Nonetheless, the women blues singers from the 20<sup>th</sup> century have paved the way for Beyoncé to have the platform that she possesses today to promote Black feminism and Black issues. However, currently there is no other Black artist as influential as Beyoncé in regards to placing Black women and Black feminism and its subdivisions on full display, and doing so in an artistry way. Utilising her means and voice to put out the polarizing albums *BEYONCÉ* and *Lemonade*, only showcases that the

personal is in fact still political for many Black feminists, thus including herself. This is achieved by the presence of Black feminist thought, hip-hop feminist, and intersectional tenets in her work. Life may serve women lemons, but women should all strive to make lemonade. Beyoncé has the power to install this belief in women, by voicing these Black feminist themes in her music and by publicly and overtly positioning herself as a self-defined, Black feminist artist.

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## **Appendix**

### **Appendix one: Beyoncé Knowles' Discography**

#### **1. Dangerously In Love (2003)**

##### Track list

1. Crazy in Love (Feat. Jay-Z)
2. Naughty Girl
3. Baby Boy (Feat. Sean Paul)
4. Hip Hop Star (Feat. Big Boi & Sleepy Brown)
5. Be With You
6. Me, Myself And I
7. Yes
8. Signs (Feat. Missy Elliot)
9. Speechless
10. That's How You Like It (Feat. Jay-Z)
11. The Closer I Get To You (Feat. Luther Vandross)
12. Dangerously In Love 2 (Daddy is a hidden track here)
13. Beyoncé Interlude
14. Gift from Virgo
15. Work It Out
16. Bonnie & Clyde '03

#### **2. B'Day (2007)**

##### Track list

1. Beautiful Liar (Feat. Shakira)
2. Irreplaceable
3. Green Light
4. Kitty Kat
5. Welcome To Hollywood
6. Upgrade U (Feat. Jay-Z)
7. Flaws And All

8. If
9. Get Me Bodied [Extended]
10. Freakum Dress
11. Suga Mama
12. Déjà Vu (Feat. Jay-Z)
13. Ring The Alarm
14. Resentment
15. Listen
16. World Wide Woman
17. Check On It (Feat. Slim Thug)
18. Amor Gitano
19. Beautiful Liar (Remix) (Feat. Alejandro Fernández)

### **3. I Am...Sasha Fierce (2008)**

Track list [Disc 1]

1. If I Were A Boy
2. Halo
3. Disappear
4. Broken-Hearted Girl
5. Ave Maria
6. Satellites

Track list [Disc 2]

1. Single Ladies (Put A Ring On It)
2. Radio
3. Diva
4. Sweet Dreams
5. Video Phone

### **4. 4 (2011)**

Track list

1. 1 + 1
2. I Care
3. I Miss You
4. Best Thing I Never Had
5. Party (Feat. André 3000)
6. Rather Die Young
7. Start Over
8. Love On Top
9. Countdown
10. End Of Time
11. I Was Here
12. Run The World (Girls)

Disc 2 [deluxe edition]:

1. Lay Up Under Me
2. Schoolin' Life
3. Dance For You

## 5. BEYONCÉ (2013)<sup>47</sup>

Track list

1. Pretty Hurts
2. Haunted
3. Runk In Love (Feat. Jay-Z)
4. Blow
5. No Angel
6. Partition
7. Jealous
8. Rocket
9. Mine (Feat. Drake)
10. XO

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<sup>47</sup> Visual album

11. \*\*\*Flawless (Feat. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie)
12. Superpower (Feat. Frank Ocean)
13. Heaven
14. Blue (Feat. Blue Ivy)

Platinum Edition [More]:

1. 7/11
2. Flawless (Remix) (Feat. Nicki Minaj)
3. Drunk In Love (Remix) (Feat. Jay-Z & Kanye West)
4. Ring Off
5. Blow Remix (Feat. Pharrell Williams)
6. Standing On The Sun (Remix) (Feat. Mr. Vegas)

## **6. Lemonade (2016)<sup>48</sup>**

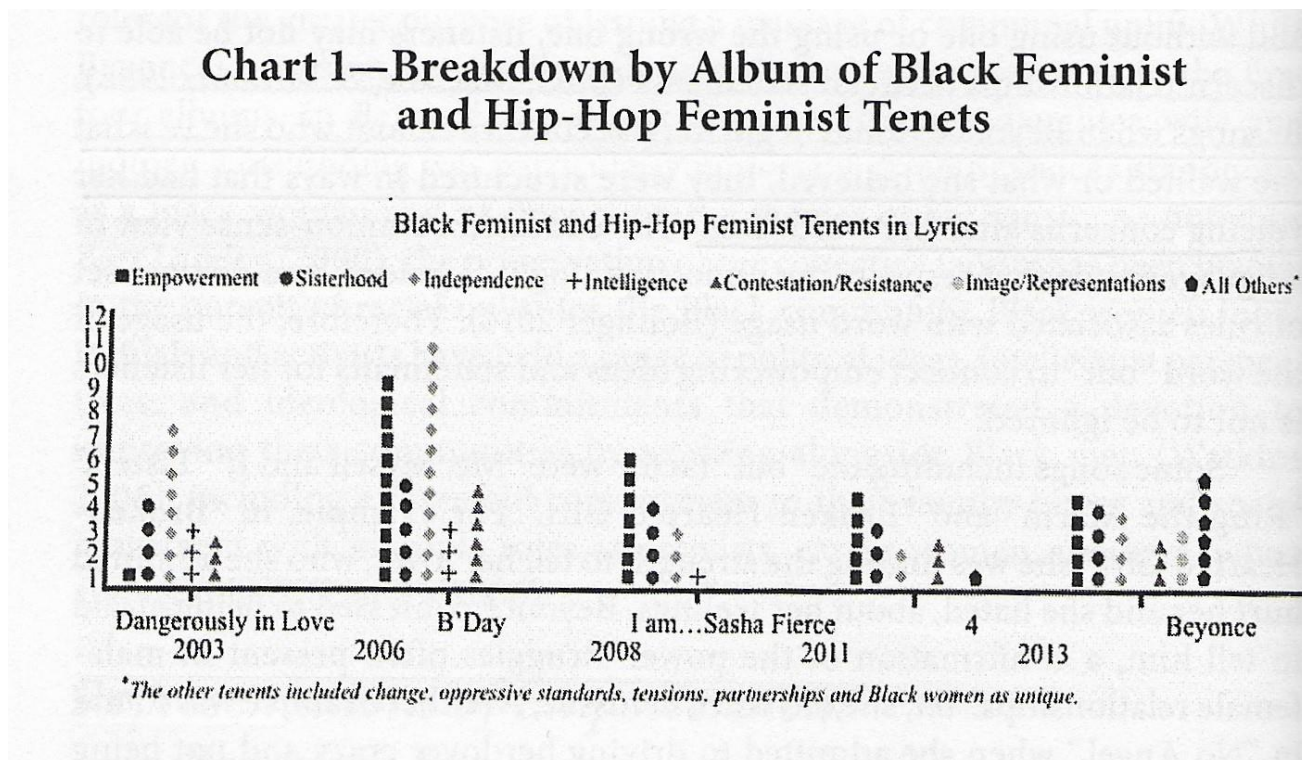
Track list

1. Pray You Catch Me
2. Hold Up
3. Don't Hurt Yourself
4. Sorry
5. 6 Inch (Feat. The Weekend)
6. Daddy Lessons
7. Love Drought
8. Sandcastles
9. Forward (Feat. James Blake)
10. Freedom (Feat. Kendrick Lamar)
11. All Night
12. Formation

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<sup>48</sup> Visual album

Appendix two: Chart 1 (Tyree and Williams, 134)



Appendix three: Partition<sup>49</sup>

[Part 1: Yoncé]

[Intro]

Let me hear you say "Hey, Ms. Carter!" (Hey, Ms. Carter!)

Say, "Hey, Ms. Carter!" (Hey, Ms. Carter!)

Give me some!

[Verse 1]

<sup>49</sup> <https://genius.com/Beyonce-partition-lyrics>

See me up in the club with fifty-eleven girls  
Posted in the back, diamond fangs in my grill  
Brooklyn brim with my eyes sitting low  
Every boy in here with me got that smoke  
Every girl in here got to look me up and down  
All on Instagram, cake by the pound  
Circulate the image every time I come around  
G's up, tell me how I'm looking babe

[Bridge]

Boy this all for you just walk my way  
Just tell me how it's looking babe  
Just tell me how it's looking babe  
(How it's looking babe)  
I do this all for you baby just take aim  
And tell me how it's looking babe  
(How it's looking babe)  
Tell me how it's looking babe, looking babe

[Verse 2]

Drop the bass, mane, the bass get lower  
Radio say "speed it up", I just go slower



High like treble, pumping on the mids  
Ya man ain't ever seen a booty like this  
And why you think ya keep my name rolling off the tongue  
Cuz when he wanna smash I'll just write another one  
I sneezed on the beat and the beat got sicker  
Yoncé all on his mouth like liquor  
Yoncé all on his mouth like liquor  
Yoncé all on his mouth like liquor  
Yoncé all on his mouth like liquor  
Like like liquor, like like like liquor  
Yoncé all on his mouth like liquor  
Yoncé all on his mouth like liquor  
Yoncé all on his mouth like liquor  
Like like liquor, like like like liquor

[Part 2: Partition]

[Verse 1]

Driver, roll up the partition, please  
Driver, roll up the partition, please  
I don't need you seeing 'Yoncé on her knees  
Took 45 minutes to get all dressed up

We ain't even gonna make it to this club  
Now my mascara running, red lipstick smudged  
Oh he so horny, yeah he want to fuck  
He popped all my buttons, and he ripped my blouse  
He Monica Lewinsky-ed all on my gown

[Pre-Hook]

Oh there daddy, daddy didn't bring the towel  
Oh baby baby we betta slow it down  
Took 45 minutes to get all dressed up  
We ain't even gonna make it to this club

[Hook]

Take all of me  
I just wanna be the girl you like, girl you like  
The kind of girl you like, girl you like  
Take all of me  
I just wanna be the girl you like, girl you like  
The kinda girl you like  
Is right here with me

[Verse 2]

Driver, roll up the partition fast

Driver, roll up the partition fast

Over there I swear I saw them cameras flash

Handprints and footprints on my glass

Handprints and good grips all on my ass

Private show with the music blasting

He like to call me Peaches when we get this nasty

Red wine drip, we'll talk that trash

Chauffeur eavesdropping trying not to crash

[Pre-Hook]

Oh there daddy, daddy now you ripped my fur

Oh baby baby be sweating out my hair

Took 45 minutes to get all dressed up

We ain't even gonna make it to this club

[Hook]

Take all of me

I just wanna be the girl you like, girl you like

The kind of girl you like, girl you like

Take all of me

I just wanna be the girl you like, girl you like

The kinda girl you like

Is right here with me

[Bridge]

Est-ce que tu aimes le sexe?

Le sexe, je veux dire: l'activité physique, le coït. Tu aimes ça?

Tu ne t'intéresses pas au sexe?

Les hommes pensent que les féministes détestent le sexe mais c'est une activité très stimulante et naturelle que les femmes adorent

[Hook]

Take all of me

I just wanna be the girl you like, girl you like

The kind of girl you like, girl you like

Take all of me

I just wanna be the girl you like, girl you like

The kinda girl you like

Is right here with me

#### **Appendix four: \*\*\*Flawless featuring Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie<sup>50</sup>**

[Intro]

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<sup>50</sup> <https://genius.com/Beyonce-flawless-lyrics>

Your challengers are a young group from Houston

Welcome Beyonce, Lativia, Nina, Nicky, Kelly and Ashley

The Hip-Hop Rapping: Girls' TYME

[Part 1: Bow Down]

[Chorus]

I'm out that H-town

Comin', comin' down

I'm comin' down, drippin' candy on the ground

H, H-town-town, I'm comin' down

Comin' down, drippin' candy on the ground

[Verse 1]

I know when you were little girls

You dreamt of bein' in my world

Don't forget it, don't forget it

Respect that, bow down bitches (crown)

I took some time to live my life

But don't think I'm just his little wife

Don't get it twisted, get it twisted

This my shit, bow down bitches

[Bridge]

Bow down bitches, bow-bow down bitches (crown)

Bow down bitches, bow-bow down bitches (crown)

H-Town vicious, H, H-Town vicious

I'm so crown, crown, bow down bitches

[Chorus]

I'm out that H-town

Comin', comin' down

I'm comin' down, drippin' candy on the ground

H, H-town-town, I'm comin' down

Com-com-comin' down, drippin' candy on the ground

[Part 2: \*\*\*Flawless]

[Intro: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie]

We teach girls to shrink themselves, to make themselves smaller

We say to girls: "You can have ambition, but not too much

You should aim to be successful, but not too successful

Otherwise, you will threaten the man"

Because I am female, I am expected to aspire to marriage

I am expected to make my life choices

Always keeping in mind that marriage is the most important

Now, marriage can be a source of joy and love and mutual support

But why do we teach girls to aspire to marriage

And we don't teach boys the same?

We raise girls to see each other as competitors

Not for jobs or for accomplishments, which I think can be a good thing

But for the attention of men

We teach girls that they cannot be sexual beings in the way that boys are

Feminist: a person who believes in the social, political

And economic equality of the sexes

[Chorus: Beyonce]

You wake up, flawless

Post up, flawless

Ridin' 'round in it, flawless

Flossin' on that, flawless

This diamond, flawless

My diamond, flawless

This rock, flawless

My Roc, flawless

I woke up like this, I woke up like this

We flawless, ladies tell 'em

I woke up like this, I woke up like this

We flawless, ladies tell 'em

Say "I look so good tonight"

God damn, God damn

Say "I look so good tonight"

God damn, God damn, God damn!

[Bridge: Beyonce]

Mama taught me good home training

My Daddy taught me how to love my haters

My sister told me I should speak my mind

My man made me feel so God damn fine (I'm flawless!)

[Chorus: Beyonce]

You wake up, flawless

Post up, flawless

Ridin' round in it, flawless

Flossin' on that, flawless

This diamond, flawless

My diamond, flawless

This rock, flawless



My Roc, flawless

I woke up like this, I woke up like this

We flawless, ladies tell 'em

I woke up like this, I woke up like this

We flawless, ladies tell 'em

Say "I look so good tonight"

God damn, God damn

Say "I look so good tonight"

God damn, God damn, God damn!

[Outro]

The judges give champion Skeleton Groove 4 stars, a perfect score

The challenger, Girls' TYME, receives 3 stars

Skeleton Groove, champions once again

Congratulations, we'll see you next week

### **Appendix five: Warsan Shire's poems**

"the unbearable weight of staying"<sup>51</sup>

i don't know when love became elusive

what i know, is that no one i know has it

my fathers arms around my mothers neck

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<sup>51</sup> <https://exceptindreams.livejournal.com/374551.html>

<https://warsanshire.bandcamp.com/track/the-unbearable-weight-of-staying-the-end-of-the-relationship>

fruit too ripe to eat, a door half way open  
when your name is a just a hand i can never hold  
everything i have ever believed in, becomes magic.

i think of lovers as trees, growing to and  
from one another searching for the same light,  
my mothers laughter in a dark room,  
a photograph greying under my touch,  
this is all i know how to do, carry loss around until  
i begin to resemble every bad memory,  
every terrible fear,  
every nightmare anyone has ever had.

i ask did you ever love me?  
you say of course, of course so quickly  
that you sound like someone else  
i ask are you made of steel? are you made of iron?  
you cry on the phone, my stomach hurts

i let you leave, i need someone who knows how to stay.

“dear moon – the distraction<sup>52</sup>”

We blame you for floods  
For the flush of blood  
For men who are also wolves  
and even though you could pull  
the tide in by its hair

---

<sup>52</sup> <https://warsanshire.bandcamp.com/track/dear-moon-the-distraction>

we tell people that we walked all  
over you

We blame you for the nights,  
For the dark  
for the ghosts  
You cold unimaginable thing,  
Following us home  
We use you  
to see each other's frail  
naked bodies beneath your blue light,  
We let you watch; you  
swollen against the glass  
Breath, a halo of steam  
as we move against one another

Wet and desperate  
like fish under  
a waterlogged sky

“How To Wear Your Mother's Lipstick<sup>53</sup>”

You must wear it like she wears disappointment on her face

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<sup>53</sup> <https://warsanshire.bandcamp.com/track/how-to-wear-your-mothers-lipstick-the-desperation>

You must hide the surprise of tasting other men on your lips  
Your mother is a woman and women like her cannot be contained.

You find the black tube inside her beauty case, where she keeps  
your fathers old prison letters,  
you desperately want to look like her,  
film star beauty, you hold your hand against your throat  
your mother was most beautiful when sprawled out on the floor  
half naked and bleeding.

You go to the bathroom to apply the lipstick,  
somewhere no one can find you  
your teeth look brittle against the deep red slickness  
you smile like an infant, your mouth is a wound  
you look nothing like your mother  
you look everything like your mother.

You call your ex-boyfriend, sit on the toilet seat and listen to  
the phone ring, when he picks up you say his name slow  
he says i thought i told you to stop calling me  
you lick your lips, you taste like years of being alone.

“For Women Who Are Difficult to Love<sup>54</sup>”

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<sup>54</sup> <https://warsanshire.bandcamp.com/track/for-women-who-are-difficult-to-love-the-affirmation>  
<http://livelovesimple.com/for-women-who-are-difficult-to-love/>

you are a horse running alone  
and he tries to tame you  
compares you to an impossible highway  
to a burning house  
says you are blinding him  
that he could never leave you  
forget you  
want anything but you  
you dizzy him, you are unbearable  
every woman before or after you  
is doused in your name  
you fill his mouth  
his teeth ache with memory of taste  
his body just a long shadow seeking yours  
but you are always too intense  
frightening in the way you want him  
unashamed and sacrificial  
he tells you that no man can live up to the one who  
lives in your head  
and you tried to change didn't you?  
closed your mouth more  
tried to be softer  
prettier  
less volatile, less awake  
but even when sleeping you could feel  
him travelling away from you in his dreams  
so what did you want to do love  
split his head open?

you can't make homes out of human beings  
someone should have already told you that  
and if he wants to leave  
then let him leave  
you are terrifying  
and strange and beautiful  
something not everyone knows how to love.

**Appendix six: official *Lemonade* credits**



**Appendix seven: *Lemonade* script<sup>55</sup>**

MUSIC CUE: "PRAY YOU CATCH ME"

PART 1: Intuition

EXT. BAYOU SHACK

Title is displayed from monochromatic low angle; camera near tree root. Wooden outhouse in background about fifteen feet away. Cut to pale female next to wooden cabin, looking in the other direction. Food lies on the table in the background.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): I tried to make a home outta you.

Cut to shot of woods from view of wooden cabin porch.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): But doors lead to trapdoors. A stairway leads to nothing.

Cut to black, then to a shot facing upwards, shot filled with tree branches covered in a whitish, bunched up cloth material. Camera moves forward.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Unknown women wander the hallways at night.

Cut to shot of at least twelve black middle-aged women in a pavilion-type wooden structure, all dressed in elaborate white gowns. At least four are sitting with their legs hanging over the side on

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<sup>55</sup> <https://genius.com/Beyonce-lemonade-script-annotated>



the floor of the pavilion, and at least eight are standing. Camera pans behind women, who are perfectly still.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Where do you go when you go quiet?

Cut to shot of a black woman wearing a dress with an elaborate black bodice with red-tinting, her left shoulder emblazoned with a tattoo reading “Dream Big”. She holds onto the railing of a wooden fence-like structure with her left hand.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): You remind me of my father, a magician. Able to exist in two places at once.

Cut to shot of black woman in green dress, sitting on a set of wooden steps, eyes closed.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): In the tradition of men in my blood you come home at 3AM and lie to me.

Cut to shot of woman dressed in white, about ten feet away, rocking in rocking chair. In the foreground, the leaves of a plant block the face of the woman in the rocking chair.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): What are you hiding? The past, and...

Cut to shot under the table, with backside of woman sitting at wooden porch steps in view, picking at something.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): ...the future merge to meet us here.

Cut to Beyoncé in an archaic tub in a brick room lighted by natural lighting and a few meager candles in the background, face calm, legs up.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): What luck. What a fucking curse.

MUSIC CUE: "PRAY YOU CATCH ME"

BEYONCÉ is submerged in water, unclear.

PART 2: Denial

Title is displayed over a zoom in on her chest area, the golden zipper on her black jacket being undone by her left hand. Unzipping the jacket reveals a nude-colored dress.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): I tried to change, closed my mouth more.

Cut to BEYONCÉ trying to swim submerged in the water.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Tried to be soft, prettier.

Cut to BEYONCÉ's face behind a curtain of bubbles, drowning.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Less...awake.

Cut to various shots: one underneath a mass of fabric, another of BEYONCÉ floating inside a decked out, regal bedroom completely submerged in water. Close up shots of her calm face come, then, and one of her sleeping on the floor emerges.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Fasting for...

Cut to BEYONCÉ looking downwards.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): ...60 days. Wore white.

Cut to two BEYONCÉs, one wearing the outfit from the previous shot and looking towards the right of the screen, body upright, and the other laying down with a maroon tarp over her body, oriented towards the left of the screen but eyes closed.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Abstained from mirrors.

Cut to BEYONCÉ sleeping by herself on the bed, holding onto the bedpost with her right hand.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Abstained from sex.

Cut to a closeup of BEYONCÉ's face, camera from above. BEYONCÉ looks left and then right.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Slowly did not speak another word.

Cut to BEYONCÉ blowing massive air bubble in water, which consumes the visibility of her face.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): In that time my hair grew...

Beyoncé's sleeping body begins floating upwards.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): ...past my ankles. I slept on a mat on the floor. I swallowed a sword.

Cut to close up shot of just BEYONCÉ's mouth from a side angle lipsyncing the following words. Air bubbles come freely out of her mouth.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): I levitated...

Cut to BEYONCÉ's body flipping around erratically. Back to shot of body floating upwards towards light source above.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): ...into the basement, I confessed my sins and was baptized in a river.

Cut to BEYONCÉ's covered by maroon tarp, in prayer position, legs crossed, floating slightly above mattress of bed.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Got on my knees and said, "Amen." And...

Closeup from under BEYONCÉ's face, her fingers together at the base of the shot, her hair streaming upwards. Air bubbles float into her nose instead of out of it.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): ...I said Ameen. I whipped my own back and asked for dominion at your feet.

Violent succession of shots, some of which it appears BEYONCÉ is screaming. Shot of her body floating upwards, eyes covered by bubbles, mouth slightly open, body language open and vulnerable. Her head pivots, mouth closing.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): I threw myself into a volcano, I...

Close up shot of just her mouth, hair, and part of her nose, lipsyncing next words.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): I drank the blood and drank the wine.

More violent successions of shots, body warping quickly. Shot from side profile, BEYONCÉ is praying, hands together, eyes closed, head slowly tilting upwards. The bubbles start moving into her nose instead of out of it.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): I sat alone and begged and bent at the waist for God.

Shot from behind her, maroon tarp floating freely in water.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): I crossed myself and thought I saw the devil.

Cut to BEYONCÉ looking upwards, hands still together in prayer. Light source shines directly on her face.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): I grew thickened skin on my feet.

Shot from behind BEYONCÉ, her head towards the camera, legs kicking.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): I bathed...in bleach and plugged my menses with...

Cut to shot from above of a thick, black-covered book labeled “HOLY BIBLE” in silver text and a silver cross on it with white pages floating down towards floor.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): ...pages from the Holy Book. But...

Cut to BEYONCÉ swimming out of the bedroom through a doorway into the rest of the presumed building, a stone staircase in sight through the doorway.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): ...still inside me coiled deep was...

Cut to BEYONCÉ, face completely covered by an upwards floating thick stream of bubbles. Her face penetrates the curtain of bubbles as the shot progresses forward.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): ...the need to know. Are you cheating? Are you cheating on me?

Cut to BEYONCÉ exiting large stone building in yellow dress, water flowing underneath her feet as she goes down steps.

MUSIC CUE: "HOLD UP"

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Cars line the street on either side. A monster truck enters left and begins crushing the line of cars on the far side of the street. Cut to BEYONCÉ at the wheel of the monster truck, then cut back to a full view of the monster truck as it smashes more vehicles. Cut to left-panning shot of a suburban neighborhood.

PART 3: ANGER

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

Title sits over four men in a marching band full regalia, performing in a parade. Cut to the women, marching along in equally flashy getup. They perform different gymnastic moves as they proceed.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): If this what you truly want, I can wear her skin...over mine.

Cut to a group of women in dresses with too-long sleeves standing together in a parking lot. They are writhing in unison. Water droplets fall from the ceiling, but the footage is reversed to make it appear they are falling upward.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Her hair, over mine.

Cut to a closeup of the writhing women.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Her hands as gloves.

Cut to a staircase in an abandoned building.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Her teeth as confetti.

Cut back to a closeup of the women, then to a wider shot, then back to a closeup.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Her scalp, a cap. Her sternum, my bedazzled cane.

Cut back to the stairs. Pan below the upward flight to reveal the downward flight into darkness.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): We can pose for a photograph. All three of us, immortalized. You and your perfect girl.

Cut back to a closeup of the women. With their hands above their heads, they all bend backwards in unison. Cut to a flickering lightbulb.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): I don't know when love became elusive. What I know is no one I know has it.



Cut to BEYONCÉ, staring into the back window of a vehicle. She is dressed in fur and her hair is in cornrows.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): My father's arms around my mother's neck. Fruit too ripe to eat.

Cut to a Black woman sitting at a drum set. She is looking backwards over her shoulder at the camera.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): I think of lovers as trees...

Cut to a distorted image of three women from behind, walking down the ramp of a parking garage.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): ...growing to and from one another.

Cut to a clip of the drummer girl playing in slow motion.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Searching for the same light.

Cut to a Black woman lying on the hood of a car, then cut to BEYONCÉ at the side of the same car, walking towards the camera in slow motion.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Why can't you see me? Why can't you see me? (Why can't you) Why can't you see me? Everyone else can.

MUSIC CUE: "DON'T HURT YOURSELF"

INT. PARKING GARAGE

Drummer girl is pictured to the left of the frame, sitting at her drum set. She is motionless. The lights flicker on and off.

PART 4: Apathy

INT. SUBWAY

MUSIC: Pyotr Tchaikovsky "Scene from Swan Lake"

Title sits over a closeup of the inside of a subway car. Lights are reflecting off of its surface.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): So what are you gonna say at my funeral now that you've killed me?

Cut to an assembly of feet lining the seats of the subway car. Cut to reveal the feet belong to a group of Black women, their faces painted in different white designs. They are swaying left to right in unison, and then begin to perform a choreographed dance.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Here lies the body of the love of my life, whose heart I broke without a gun to my head. Here lies the mother of my children both living and dead. Rest in peace, my true love, who I took for granted, most bomb pussy, who because of me, sleep evaded. Her shroud is loneliness.

Cut to a single person sitting alone in the subway car. Their face is obscured by a rimmed hat.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Her God is listening.

Cut to BEYONCÉ, sitting beside the group of painted girls.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Her heaven would be a love without betrayal.

Cut to an extreme closeup of lights playing off the roof of the subway car.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Ashes to ashes...dust to side chicks.

Cut to an upward view of trees in the sunlight, then to the front of a manor surrounded by gardens.

MUSIC CUE: "SORRY"

EXT. FIELD - DAY

A group of five Black women are walking naked through the field. The camera follows them from behind, moving through the grass.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): She sleeps all day...dreams of you in both worlds.

PART 5: Emptiness

EXT. UNKNOWN STREET - NIGHT

Title sits in front of a streetlight viewed from below. Zoom on the streetlight until the light consumed the entire frame. Cut to a forward panning shot of a wet concrete floor doused in orange light.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Tills the blood in and out of uterus. Wakes up smelling of zinc.

Cut to a closeup of the fabric of a red dress.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Grief, sedated by orgasm.

Cut to a rear view of BEYONCÉ's head. She is wearing the red dress.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Orgasm heightened by grief.

Return to the upward panning shot on concrete. A wide shot reveals BEYONCÉ is sitting surrounded by flames. Slow zoom on BEYONCÉ.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): God was in the room when the man said to the woman, "I love you so much. Wrap your legs around me and pull me in, pull me in, pull me in." Sometimes when he'd have her nipple in his mouth, she'd whisper, "Oh my God." That, too, is a form of worship.

Cut to a closeup bust of BEYONCÉ. She is wearing an ornate gold head adornment consisting of chains and spikes, and a patterned gold collar.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Her hips grind pestle and mortar, cinnamon and cloves, whenever he pulls out.

Cut to black, then to a narrow hallway veiled in red light. There is a square of white light at the far end. Slow zoom towards the white square.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Loss. Dear moon, we blame you for floods...for the flush of blood...for men who are also wolves. We blame you for the night, for the dark, for the ghosts.

MUSIC CUE: "6 INCH"

After the first few bars of the song, the music stops. Cut to a room lit with the same red light as the hallway. BEYONCÉ is swinging a wire with a light bulb at the end in circles over her head.

BEYONCÉ: Every fear...

Cut to three other women who are also in the room. They are sitting side-by-side on a couch.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Every nightmare...anyone has ever had.

MUSIC CUE (RESUME): "6 INCH"

EXT. BURNING BUILDING - NIGHT

Closeup of BEYONCÉ. Red lights flash across her face. Slow zoom out to reveal she is standing in front of a burning building with four other women. They stand motionless in the smoke. Cut to a bayou, and then to a bedroom in a manor on the bayou.

PART 6: Accountability

EXT. MANOR - DAY

Title sits over a downward view from the balcony of the manor. A young girl is walking through the manor's courtyard Cut to a second-floor hallway in the manor.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): You find the black tube inside her beauty case.

Two girls walk up the stairs and into the hallway.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Where she keeps your father's old prison letters. You desperately want to look like her.

Cut to two girls sitting on a bed, talking. One has her back turned and the other is facing the camera.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): You look nothing like your mother.

Cut to a closeup of the girls' hands. The girls are making dolls.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): You look everything like your mother.

Cut to a different girl, jumping on a bed.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Film, star, beauty.

Cut to closeup of a young girl, pictured left. She is staring at BEYONCÉ, pictured right, who is fixing her hair.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): How to wear your mother's lipstick.

Cut to an upward shot of three girls coming down the stairs of the manor.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): You go to the bathroom to apply the lipstick.

Cut to a room in the manor. On the left is a small table with a flower pot and a sculpture of a face atop it. In the middle is a chair. On the right is an empty crib.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Somewhere no one can find you.

Cut to an adolescent girl standing sideways. She is staring at herself in a mirror.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): You must wear it like she wears disappointment on her face.

Cut to an blurred extreme closeup of a young girl. Another young girl sits behind her, facing sideways.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Your mother is a woman.

The blur effect shifts so the girl in the foreground is clear and the girl in the background is blurry.  
Cut to an elderly woman, sitting in a chair. She is staring at the camera.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): And women like her can not be contained.

Cut to an extreme closeup of a car window from the inside. Condensation has collected on the exterior.

MALE VOICE (V.O.): I even met the president one time, man. I ain't tell you that? Yeah, I met the president, you know. Before I met him, you dig...

Cut to a side view closeup of the driver, a Black male in modern attire.

MALE VOICE (V.O.): I didn't see myself going nowhere. I mean, really. I ain't...you know...I ain't really cared if I lived or died.

Cut to grainy footage of the stoop of an apartment. A young girl is standing on the stoop in her pajamas. A pregnant woman is standing in front of the stoop, looking at a young man. The young man is sitting on the hood of his car. He is sifting through a stack of cash.



MALE VOICE (V.O.): Now I feel like I gotta live, man, for my kids and stuff, you know? He...he from the hood just like me. He from Chi-Raq, you know. I'm from New Orleans.

Cut back to a closeup of the driver.

MALE VOICE (V.O.): You know, that give me inspiration on I can be whatever I wanna be, like, you know, whatever I wanna be.

Cut to a stormy sky over an open field in the day.

MALE VOICE (V.O.): You know, I'll probably be the next Spike Lee and shit, or something. You understand what I'm saying?

Cut to a closeup of leaves, and then to a puddle rippling with falling rain.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Mother dearest, let me inherit the Earth.

Cut to a grainy extreme closeup of a young girl's face.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Teach me how to make him beg. Let me make up for the years he made you wait.

Cut to grainy footage of a home from across the street. A large tree stands directly beside it. Cars pass by in front of it.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Did he bend your reflection?

Cut to a closeup of a paper boat floating in a puddle.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Did he make you forget your own name?

Cut to grainy footage of a disheveled man waving his hand around, then to a bridal figurine, then to a woman putting a Band-Aid on a young girl's finger and kissing it.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Did he convince you he was a God?

Cut to an adolescent girl walking down the street.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Did you get on your knees daily?

Cut to an upward view of an angry woman, yelling at an unknown figure.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Do his eyes close like doors? Are you a slave to the back of his head?

Cut to a young boy resting against the hood of a car, then to a closeup of a young girl staring blankly into the camera.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Am I talking about your husband or your father?

MUSIC CUE: "DADDY LESSONS"

Music stops. Cut to grainy footage of DADDY and CHILD BEYONCÉ sitting next to each other on a pink couch.

DADDY: You wish your grandmother and grandfather was here with us?

CHILD BEYONCÉ: Yes.

DADDY: Tell 'em.

A baby cries in the background.

CHILD BEYONCÉ: I wish they was here with us.

DADDY: Why? What would we do?

CHILD BEYONCÉ: What?

DADDY: What would we do, if they were here with us?

Cut to a clip of DADDY when he is older, jumping on a bed. A small girl jumps onto the bed after him.

CHILD BEYONCÉ: Have fun.

DADDY: Have fun?

CHILD BEYONCÉ: Yes.

DADDY: What would we do to have fun? Give me a kiss.

Cut back to DADDY and CHILD BEYONCÉ sitting on the pink couch. CHILD BEYONCÉ kisses DADDY.

DADDY: Love you.

CHILD BEYONCÉ: I love you too.

MUSIC CUE (RESUME): "DADDY LESSONS"

Cut to a parking garage

EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM

A woman stands on a balcony in the stadium seats. She is facing away from the camera, looking down at the field. Cut to BEYONCÉ, lying on her side on the field. Pan out to reveal her arm draped over her stomach.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): He bathes me...

Cut to BEYONCÉ in the parking garage, staring at the camera angrily.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): ...until I forget their names...and faces.

PART 7: Reformation

EXT. MANOR PORCH - NIGHT

Title sits over the porch. The left side of the porch is cloaked in shadow. The far right side is illuminated with light. A woman stands in the light, looking out over the railing. Cut to BEYONCÉ laying on her side in bed. Her eyes are closed.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): I ask him to look me in the eye when I come...home.

BEYONCÉ opens her eyes.

Cut to a view of the manor's field through sheer drawn shades.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Why do you deny yourself heaven?

Cut to an extreme closeup of moss growing on the railings of the manor's porch.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Why do you consider yourself undeserving?

Cut to an upward view of the trees surrounding the manor.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Why are you afraid of love? You think it's not possible for someone like you.

Cut back to BEYONCÉ lying on the football stadium field. She is staring at the camera as it pans out to a wide shot of the field.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): But you are the love of my life...love of my life...the love of my life...the love of my life.

MUSIC CUE: "LOVE DROUGHT"

PART 8: Forgiveness

EXT. BEACH

Title is displayed over open ocean waters viewed from the shore.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Baptize me...

Cut to an upside down shot of two black females laying naked on the beach with their backs to the camera. They are looking at each other.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): ...now that reconciliation is possible.

Cut to BEYONCÉ's lower body. She is lying on the beach, parallel to the water, wearing a sheer dress. The waves are lapping at her body.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): If we're gonna heal, let it be glorious.

Cut to an upward sweeping shot of trees. Immediately cut to nine black females in sheer dresses. They are standing in the shallow water, hand-in-hand, with their arms raised above their heads in unison.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): One thousand girls raise their arms.

Cut to BEYONCÉ's upper body. She is lying as before, looking out at the water.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Do you remember being born?

Cut to a fire, burning in an open fireplace. Two wooden rocking chairs sit on either side of the flames.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Are you thankful?

Cut to a closeup of BEYONCÉ's bare feet on a wooden floor, walking towards the camera.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Are the hips that cracked, the deep velvet of your mother...

Cut to a closeup of a bowl on a raised surface. A crack in its surface shows signs of having been broken and repaired.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): ...and her mother...

Cut to a closeup of two black-and-white photos on a shelf. One features a full body shot of a solemn-faced man sitting in a wooden chair. The other features a  $\frac{3}{4}$  shot of a solemn-faced woman in a white dress.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): ...and her mother?

Cut to a blurred closeup of a vinyl record player with Nina Simone's Silk & Soul LP resting against the wall behind it.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): There is a curse that will be broken.

MUSIC CUE: "SANDCASTLES"

PART 9: Resurrection

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD



Title is displayed in front of a young Black female wearing a white dress with her back pressed against a large tree. A residence with a garden is in the background. Cut to a left-panning shot of several Black women dressed in old-timey attire.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.): Something is missing. I've never seen this in my life.

Cut to a young Black woman operating an antique camera.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.): So many young women...They take our men, huh?

Cut to a shot an abundance of Black women posing for the photo shoot.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.): Say, "All them men make them feel better than you."

OTHER FEMALE VOICE (V.O.): What?

Cut to a right-panning closeup shot of the women

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.): So how are we supposed to lead our children to the future? What do we do?

Cut to an upward angle shot of three Black women of varying ages, separate from the others. The youngest is standing in front, and the two older women flank her on either side. Slow zoom on their faces.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.): How do we lead them?

OTHER FEMALE VOICE (V.O.): Love. L-O-V-E, love.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.): Mmm, mmmm, mmm. Hallelujah. Thank you, Jesus. I just love the Lord, oh yeah. I'm... I'm sorry, brother.

Cut to a grainy video recording of two Black women in modern attire embracing. They are facing the camera, smiling. The one on the right is waving to the camera.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.): I love the Lord, that's all I got.

Cut to a closeup of the waving woman. Cars pass by on the road behind her.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.): When your back is against the wall and your wall against your back, who you call? Hey!

Cut to a closeup of the waving woman's hair. She turns side to side, showing her hair to the camera.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.): Who you call? Who you call? You gotta call him.

Cut to a panning shot of photographs strewn across the ground.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.): You gotta call Jesus. You gotta call him. You gotta call him, cause you ain't got another hope!

Cut to an obscure view of BEYONCÉ in a dirty mirror. She is wearing a gown.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): You are terrifying...and strange...

Pan to BEYONCÉ from the side. She is looking at a picture and then places it down.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): ...and beautiful.

MUSIC CUE: "FORWARD"

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The dining room table is set and lit with candles. A young girl dressed in Native American garb is walking around the dining room table, playing a tambourine. She walks past the camera into an endless loop of table circling. Cut to BEYONCÉ standing in a bus, surrounded by Black women with their faces and bodies painted in white designs.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Magic.

Cut to a zooming shot of Black baby lying on a bed. Music plays in the background. Cut to a shot of BEYONCÉ from behind. The camera follows her as she walking through a set of double doors.

PART 10: Hope

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

A group of Black women are preparing many different kinds of food.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): The nail technician pushes my cuticles back...

Cut to an alternate view of the kitchen. Two of the women are working on preparing other food elements.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): ...turns my hand over, stretches the skin on my palm and says:

Cut to a group of Black women on a stage in white dresses. Half of them are standing in the back of the stage, while the other half either sit on the edge of the stage or stand to the side.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): "I see your daughters, and their daughters."

Cut to black. The camera slowly pans through a hole in a brick wall.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): That night in a dream the first girl emerges from a slit in my stomach.

Cut to a bald Black figure standing bare-chested in the center of a room. He is wearing a golden shoulder piece and a yellow skirt.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): The scar heals into a smile. The man I love pulls the stitches out with his fingernails.

Cut to a stormy sky over an open field

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): We leave black sutures curling on the side of the bath.

Cut to BEYONCÉ sitting in a chair. Immediate cut to a shot of BEYONCÉ from behind. The camera follows her as she walks down a dark hallway, touching both walls.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): I wake as the second girl crawls headfirst up my throat.

Cut to the gold-shouldered figure, sitting in a chair. They are looking up. The camera pans up to reveal they are staring at a hole in the roof.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): A flower blossoming out of the hole in my face.

Cut to an above shot of a group of people sitting on benches.

MUSIC CUE: "FREEDOM"

PART 11: Redemption

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Title sits over a closeup of a screen door. Three young Black girls run out into the daylight.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Take one pint of water, add a half pound of sugar, the juice of eight lemons...

Cut to a closeup of a hanging sheet. Two Black women pull it open from either side, revealing people walking through a garden. Both women turn to face the camera.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): ...the zest of half lemon.

Cut to a rear view of five Black women walking through a yard towards a house.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Pour the water from one jug, then into the other, several times.

Cut to a dinner table set with food. Each chair is filled by a different woman. They are conversing happily.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Strain through a clean napkin.

Cut to a view of a BEYONCÉ's feet through the legs of a wicker chair. She is wearing ornate shoes adorned with flowers.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Grandmother, the alchemist.

Cut to a rear view of the BEYONCÉ's head

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): You spun gold out of this hard life.

Cut to another woman, standing by the corner of a house. Her eyes are obscured by a leaf.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Conjured beauty from the things left behind.

Cut to a front view of BEYONCÉ sitting in the rocking chair.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Found healing where it did not live.

Cut to BEYONCÉ in a room with her hair styled differently. She is talking to a girl standing in front of her and admiring her hair. Cut to a closeup of an elderly woman's hands.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Discovered the antidote in your own kitchen.

Cut to a room full of women sitting together, talking. Pan up to BEYONCÉ, standing behind one of the women and brushing her hair. She is smiling.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Broke the curse with your own two hands.

Cut back to BEYONCÉ in the rocking chair.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): You passed these instructions down to your daughter.

Cut back to the three girls from the beginning of the scene. They are out running in the field.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Who then passed it down to her daughter.

Applause can be heard. Cut to a words illuminated on a wooden floor reading, “Hattie’s 90th,” then cut to a side view of GRANDMOTHER (HATTIE), reading a speech to a crowd.

GRANDMOTHER (HATTIE): I’ve had my ups and downs, but I always find the inner strength to pull myself up.

Cut to two children at the party, a boy and a girl, then cut back to GRANDMOTHER (HATTIE).

GRANDMOTHER (HATTIE): I was served lemons, but I made lemonade.

The crowd laughs and applauds. Cut to an upward view of trees.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): My grandma said, nothing real can be threatened.



Pan down to the ocean, revealing the trees are growing directly out of the water. BEYONCÉ is in a white dress, standing atop one of the tree's roots. Cut to a closeup of a woman. She is moving her hands and fingers in front of her face.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): True love brought salvation back into me.

Cut back to BEYONCÉ, her back now against the tree.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): With every tear came redemption.

Cut to BEYONCÉ and the woman tugging on either end of a rope, in a stalemate. Cut to a swathe of high grass. Fade to black.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): And my torturer became my remedy.

Cut to an extreme closeup of BEYONCÉ. She is staring through the camera, then closes her eyes, then opens them again.

BEYONCÉ (singing V.O.): (I love...)

Cut to two woman in a garden. One is in the background, kneeling. The other is carrying a bucket full of vegetables. Cut to a rear view of the woman carrying the bucket of vegetables. The camera follows her as she walks out of the garden and into the yard.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): So we're gonna heal, we're gonna start again. You've brought the orchestra.

Cut to a rear view of three women. Two are sitting, wearing yellow dresses. One is standing, wearing a red dress. The camera slowly zooms in on the one wearing a red dress.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Synchronized swimmers, you are the magician. Pull me back together again the way you cut me in half.

Cut to a closeup of a man and a woman, standing side by side.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Make the woman in doubt disappear.

Cut to BEYONCÉ and six other women, sitting on a porch stoop.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): Pull the sorrow from between my legs like silk, knot after knot after knot.

Cut to a wide view of a sparse forest through which the setting sun can be seen.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): The audience applauds...

Cut to black.

BEYONCÉ (V.O.): ...but we can't hear them.

MUSIC CUE: "ALL NIGHT"

Credits roll.

MUSIC CUE: "FORMATION"

**Appendix eight: stills from “Anger”**





*The most unprotected person  
in America is the black woman.*



*The most neglected person  
in America is the black woman.*

Appendix nine: stills from “Resurrection”

