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## Chapter 7

### **‘Shine on you Crazy Diamond/s’: Reversioning and Restorying Age and Race through Europe and across the Black Atlantic**

Kanye West headlined the iconic Pyramid Stage at the Glastonbury festival of Contemporary Arts in the summer of 2015. The stage was bare. No instruments, no turntables, no backing singers – nothing. But above the stage were hundreds of spotlights glaring down on him. They looked like search lights, like police interrogation room spotlights, and at the same time, they also looked like diamonds. In a set that spanned nearly two hours and which saw him hoisted aloft in the sky above the crowds in a crane, he sang his version of ‘Diamonds are Forever’, which he had released a decade earlier. His version is based around a sample from a song made famous by Shirley Bassey released as the title track for the 1971 Bond movie of the same name, and this chapter is about the journey of this song as it has made its way across the Atlantic and across time.

From Tiger Bay Cardiff, to St. Charles’ Bridge, Prague, via the diamond mines of Sierra Leone, the streets of New York and ‘The Whyte House’ (a casino) in Guy Hamilton’s (1971) *Diamonds Are Forever*, this chapter navigates a journey. It is not linear and it is chronologically chaotic, which befits any exploration of age (Baars 2012; Moglen 2008; Jennings and Krainitzki, 2015) but these places are points of enunciation on a multi-media and multi-layered map that is the territory of this chapter. This map encompasses song, film, music video and live performance which together add up to a ‘multitextual space in popular culture’ (Perry 2004, 181). It is a chapter about Black voices in, across and beyond Europe, about interconnectedness and cultural mapping. It is also about age. Of course, it is about age, about canons and memorialising processes of hip-hop sampling, but here we are also concerned with how age acts as an epochal flow and how it is inflected by, and in turn, inflects race and place.

The chapter is concerned with Shirley Bassey and Kanye West's coverage of the song 'Diamonds are Forever' from the perspective of age, inheritance and post-colonial hauntings of race and identity. The provenance of our thinking for this chapter stemmed from a conversation that we had shortly after Shirley Bassey had performed at the concert for Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee Concert, on June 4<sup>th</sup> 2012 in front of Buckingham Palace, the Mall, London. Subsequent to this viewing, we found ourselves thinking about age/ageing and the multiple possible connections that are forged across space and time by 'diamonds'. The most obvious connection was, of course, Bassey's choice of song for the occasion. When she took to the open-air stage on that summer day in 2012, she performed only one song, 'Diamonds are Forever'. As she sang to the British Queen, Bassey's song and performance signified not just the continuity of 60 years of monarchy (her diamond anniversary), but also the continuity of Bassey's own professional singing career of 57 years (she signed her first professional contract in 1953). In addition, it signaled the symbolic continuity of the gemstones themselves (these stones are 'forever'). In her appearance and performance, she illustrated a spirit of Britishness that was congruent with a national occasion such as a royal diamond jubilee. Her intervention was, however, evocative of a particular *version* of cultural identity; acting, if you will, as a mirror back to a British colonial past. A past that has been consistently nostalgised through a form of 'reflective' nostalgia for what 'was' or what 'might have been' (Boym 2001).

The 'Jubilee' was a celebration of cultural history as well as a 'jubilation' of a royal legacy. Its symbolic ritual enacted a process that brings a sense/feeling and, certainly for some of the older observers, also a knowledge of the past ('what was') into co-presence with not only 'the now' (what is') but with possible futures in terms of 'what might be' (Jennings and Krainitzki 2015). This co-presence brings some uncomfortable issues to the fore. Most pertinently for the discussion here, it raises spectres of a colonial past linked to the British

Empire that still endure and intervene in current understandings of identities in the United Kingdom and across the globe. When examined amidst the pomp of the jubilee celebration that is under scrutiny here, it suggests that the tenets of differential power, upon which British colonialism depended, have not completely evaporated into history but have undergone a process of nuanced modification over time. The events of this national public occasion bring into question dominant narratives of cultural progress in terms of race equality in British late modernity, and in the snapshot of this moment/cultural event which straddles ‘what was’ and ‘what is’, complex narratives of identity in relation to dominant cultural and political trends become reconfigured in their co-presence.

Bassey’s performance at this celebration concert is therefore a crucial starting point for this chapter; a starting point that contends that racism still maintains a currency within present-day Britain despite notions of the ‘colonial’ being relegated to a distant historic past in dominant contemporary discourse. We argue that a colonial perspective can be understood as being both ‘here’ and ‘there’ in cultural understandings of race in the United Kingdom and sadly not confined to ‘there’ of the past as is so often articulated within popular conception. The legacies of colonial power and associated racism are re-circulated between past and present and, specifically within the structure of this chapter, they are found within the complexities of the song ‘Diamonds are Forever’ as it is re-circulated and recast over time and space.

The perspective, that we set out above, suggesting a co-presence of British colonialism in contemporary understandings of British cultural identity, predicates the idea that this co-presence is also a concept that is inclusive of multiple, and often contradictory views and experiences. Bassey’s performance at the jubilee concert should not be seen as compliant to the dominant political and cultural constructs that are signified in such a national event; indeed, her performance on the day must be acknowledged as a powerful

challenge. As an older woman, she challenges dominant notions of age appropriacy in popular musical performance (Jennings and Gardner 2012). Her powerful onstage presence at the jubilee concert confronted and subverted many of the dominant concepts of race and gender that were held at the heart of this nostalgic process. As a woman with Black African heritage, she was also referencing, in the song and in her performance, a relationship that exists between women, femininity, race, age, power and materialism over a continuum of time, space and patriarchy.

As our post-concert conversation continued further, we began to make links between the song and Bassey and West's re-versioning of it (West had reworked sections of this Bond theme into two tracks on his 2005 album *Late Registration*: 'Diamonds from Sierra Leone - Remix' and 'Diamonds from Sierra Leone'). We began to understand that the subversions around race and colonialism that we had identified as being embodied in Bassey changed emphasis in their recontextualisation via West's tracks. They moved in status from an indirect and nuanced engagement with race, colonialism and also gender to a direct address of these issues. West's remix track, a hip-hop protest song, focused on the practices of diamond mining in West Africa, questioning the overt consumption and the exploitation of African workers, particularly children. The West version reframes the song to consider issues of materialism and oppression that are latent in Bassey's performance, so much so that we could see that we could use the song to interrogate relationships between race, gender, age and power on varying levels and suggest a rethinking of how race and colonialism haunt Europe (Gilroy 1993, 2004, 2011). Europe was home to the major colonial powers and these different versions of the song speak to the themes of European boundaries, identities, race, inheritances and power in relation to popular music, age, time and space. This chapter moves into a new generic TimeSpace (May and Thrift 2001) of age that is related to hip-hop and the recycling of older materials; thus, extending the address of our book.

At first, it may seem that this extension is somewhat labored and that Europe, as such, does not figure in an analysis of two singers' versions of a 1971 Bond film title track. But this chapter is about unpacking layers, and of assessing both provenance and remixes to strip back some of the narratives that imbue and haunt the popular cultural texts of contemporary transatlantic music culture. It is also important for a book on European music culture and aging to touch on those figures that cross through Europe and out of it; those that are present on its edges geographically, but are nevertheless fundamental to its understanding of itself as a political and ideological entity. Indeed, what the analysis of a text like 'Diamonds are Forever' and of singers like Bassey and West reveal, is that we need to reconsider marginality in relation to European and American popular music culture and consider the relationship between the construction of those entities and the imaginary they explore. Murray Forman's (2000) work talks of the alternative and 'internally meaningful' (2000, 68) cartographies of US hip hop that redraw maps and lines of belonging according to a 'proprietary discourse' (2000, 67). To that end, we must talk about Africa and the United States and some of the ways their geographical and historical co-ordinates map across, between, and through Europe in relation to popular musical cultures. And we must talk about Blackness and transactions, both of people and of goods, about slavery and capitalism. That might seem to be a tall order for a chapter pivoting on one song by John Barry that is sung by an older female Black Welsh ballad singer and then sampled by a Black American hip hop star from a film about a white British spy. But please bear with us.....

We start our analysis by turning back to the point of reference that sparked the thinking for this chapter, to Shirley Bassey. In doing so we reflect on the popular musical spectacle that was on display in front of Buckingham Palace on 4th June 2012, to celebrate Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee. More especially, we consider the culture of popular Britishness that was curated for the nationally significant occasion that prefaces our

discussions. The concert line-up was a musical mix of popular classical music, light opera and vintage pop. The performance mix reflected this through the participation of 'vintage' pop stars (Tom Jones, Cliff Richard, Paul McCartney, Elton John and Grace Jones as well as Bassey) and more contemporary pop stars (Kylie Minogue, Will.i.am, Cheryl Cole, Gary Barlow). The concert programme was designed to entertain both the intergenerational (live and television) audiences on the day as well as the primary addressee of the event, a monarch who was then in her mid-eighties. We take the view that, age and ageing can be understood in terms of Gullette 's notion of a: "confusing temporal component" (2004, 111) where individuals negotiate the passage of chronological time in complex ways in relation to complex contexts. For those viewing, this national occasion (the marking of the jubilee) and its curated musical event (the live and televised concert) presented the opportunity/possibility for acts of multiple reflection. The audiences for the event (including the Queen) were invited to participate in an act of public and private memorialization (Van Dijk 2007) of a marker of chronological time (60 years of a reigning monarch). A memorialization and celebration that prompted contemplation about the changing cultural identity of the United Kingdom over a period of six decades and invited the audience members to engage individually and collectively with this process (entering a process of self-reflection on their own experiences and understandings of their aging and identities along their lifecourse).

The music that was played, and the artists that performed on the day, facilitated this opportunity to blur not only past and present cultural identities as already outlined but equally' to also individually transcend some of the false and ageist dichotomies that cultural gerontology and ageing studies approaches have demonstrated as underpinning purely chronological understandings of young and old personal identities (Baars 2012; Moglen 2008). The jubilee concert was targeted to explicitly address an intergenerational live and television audience (a phenomenon that has recently also underpinned the financial success,

of British popular music festivals such as Glastonbury, where established and emerging artists share the bill and attract large intergenerational audiences). It provided time, space and place for the individuals (of all ages) who were engaging with the event to consider their own relationships between music, identity and ageing (Jennings 2017). The organisers of the concert, in their turn, produced their version of a soundtrack of British life, which they thought befitting for a national occasion.

Only three Black artists performed that day, an American (Will.i.am), a Jamaican (Grace Jones) and a daughter of Wales (Basseby), all three linked through lineages of oppression and by traces of the legacies of British colonialism and postcolonialism. In the symbolic celebration/memorialization of monarchy that took place in this event in 2012, the multiple interweaving of understandings of past and present are laid open for inspection in such a way as to operate as: 'Complex form that generates public memory in so far as 'untold recent and not so recent pasts impinge upon the present ....' (Huysen 2003, xii). In the Diamond Jubilee concert Basseby's role is significant. Not only has she been conferred with British formal and royal honours, she is a Dame Commander of the British Empire, but she also has attained the performing status of a 'Queenly Diva' (Jennings 2012). Thus, through the power of popular cultural opprobrium the queenly diva comes face-to-face with the Queen of the realm; the two national treasures embodying the differing struggles of age/ageing, race, sex, gender and power.

Shirley Basseby was one of the older stars performing on the day (aged 74 at the time of the Jubilee concert). Because of her micro-managed attitude to her work as a singer and maintaining an excellent standard of vocal delivery (Jennings 2012), Basseby chose to perform only one song and to perform it well. 'Diamonds are Forever' is one of her signature songs and, as indicated earlier, the resonance of 'diamond' in the song itself and in the 'Diamond Jubilee', is purposely emphasised in the TimeSpace of this performance. The song is



delivered in her 74-year-old late style voice (Elliott, 2015) and not the voice from more than 40 years before that was sampled by West in 2005. Her late style vocals are infused with the palimpsests of her lifecourse and vocal lifecourse history as a performer. For those aware of Bassey's star pedigree and star persona, her performance on the day is not only understood and enjoyed in the present but through the many layers of past performance that seep through her present-day delivery.

Diamonds are forever, or so the song's lyricist, Don Black maintains. This idea reinforces the connection between Bassey and the song. The notion of endurance is evident in Bassey's ability to sustain a successful career for nearly 60 years and is reinscribed further by her diva trajectory from working class poverty to the epitome of the glamorous female popular music star (Jennings 2012) – literally the rough diamond who is cut and polished over time. This concept of 'forever' is also reinforced by her legacy. Bassey's trajectory as a performer, her attitude and her talented vocal presence has influenced other pop music divas that have emerged at a later stage, ranging from Diana Ross to perhaps most recently Adele (certainly Adele's creation and performance of the twenty-third Bond theme, 'Skyfall' responds as homage to Bassey's two classic themes). In addition, she has been the inspiration for numerous queer drag tributes and impersonations that have taken her style and fame out of the mainstream into more diverse venues. She was also, importantly for this discussion, one of the first Black British entertainers to gain national and international fame (including a place in the listings for one of the *100 Great Black Britons* [<http://www.100greatblackbritons.com/home.html>] and the award in 1999 of the French *Légion d'Honneur*).

Geologically, diamonds are a form of compressed carbon producing one of the world's hardest surfaces. Diamonds simultaneously signify durability and strength. Crucially, their worth as jewels and objects of desire is that they also have the ability to refract light - to

dazzle. In terms of western and, more specifically Anglophone popular culture, diamonds are (and have been, since Marilyn Monroe musically extolled their importance as a source of financial security for women in Howard Hawk's Hollywood musical, *Gentlemen Prefer Blonds* [1953]), a 'girl's best friend'. Bassey's diva history, together with the content of the song and its relationship with her vocal delivery, all work together to produce a magical fit that renders the pairing of her and the song iconic. When Kanye West incorporated them into his own oeuvre, he instigated a process of reviving and recycling meanings and histories that resulted in some of the dazzle and iconic patina rubbing off on him. After all, as items of jewelry, diamonds have legacies as they are passed down through generations, and circulated between royal dynasties; in the process, frequently being re-sized, re-cut, re-polished and ultimately, being re-presented in time, space and place. Thus, as we explore in this chapter, the multiple significations of diamonds suture together our core concerns of age, race and popular music inside, across and beyond Europe. We argue that they are pivotal to a complex temporal union that disrupts linear chronologies and connects with Africa and 'Euro-American societies' (Kunow 2016).

As we have indicated, the song 'Diamonds are Forever' has become an anthem infused by Bassey's persona and history as a performer. Vocally, it has taken on a distinctive role in her performances (along with that other Black and Barry composed Bond theme 'Goldfinger'); namely as a vehicle to demonstrate, that though in her late vocal period, she is still a powerful singer. In terms of performative staging this was exemplified when Bassey selected 'Diamonds are Forever' to open her 2009 BBC Electric Prom (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/electricproms/2009/artists/shirleybassey/>). In this televised precursor to the jubilee concert performance, the song was deliberately utilised to construct a moment of denouement, an act of staging that responded to the live and television audience's anticipation of her first appearance on stage as an older woman who was still performing live

in concert. In the opening shot of the televised concert, just as the BBC Concert Orchestra starts up the opening bars of the song, a spotlight is shown to be trained on a narrow red curtain that is suspended from a lighting rig above. This curtain then falls away to reveal a shimmering diamond vision; Bassey in a strapless silver gown that is split to the thigh. She is standing with her arms outstretched to receive the adulation of a, by now, ecstatic audience. As she begins to sing it is evident that, in this moment, all the trademark elements of her performative signature are in place and are working together to blend the past and present of her public performative lifecourse. This synthesis with the content of the song and her presentation of self exemplifies the importance of the diamond metaphor in her performative biography. Whether at the start of her career in 1953 (before the song 'Diamonds are Forever' existed), or later (once it had become part of her repertoire) as a queenly diva in the performances we refer to in this chapter, it is evident that both her evolution as a performer and her personal journey from rags to riches (Jennings 2012) integrates both toughness and the sparkle.

Bassey was born in January 1937, at a time when the British Empire was still a significant entity in world politics and economies. She was born into the poor dockside community of Tiger Bay, in Cardiff, Wales. Like all British ports at the time, the community was in direct interface with the circulation of people and goods from the near and distant geographies of the Empire. Beneath the shiny exterior of Bassey's supreme manipulation of Robertson's (1996) notion of feminist camp, there is, as always with camp strategies, the hard edge of realism informing our readings. This 'Girl from Tiger Bay', as the James Dean Bradfield song written for her explores, moved on some time ago from her humble working class Welsh beginnings to mainland Europe to reside in the Mediterranean elegance of Monte Carlo. This trajectory echoes Bassey's own materialistic hunger; a feature in the British television listings magazine *Radio Times* (2011) quotes her biographer John L. Williams as

suggesting that Bassey enjoys living in Monte Carlo is because: “you can wear your diamonds with impunity there” (<http://www.radiotimes.com/news/2011-09-29/shirley-bassey-from-single-mum-to-superstar>). It also echoes the cultural and historical negotiations of race, heterosexual femininity, sexuality and power that have taken place within the patriarchal legacies of European colonialism and postcolonialism. If we return here again to the song ‘Diamonds are Forever’, then the diamonds in this song function as part of a western cultural and musical continuum that explores their associations with women and, more importantly, their role in the exchange of sex for material security (for instance, as emphasised by Marilyn Monroe in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* mentioned above). In societies where women are basically still valued for the way they look rather than for who they are and what they can be, diamonds become gendered and sexualized (and, as we will discuss later, also racialised) commodities; an investment for old age once youthful heterosexual allure fades. The song ‘Diamonds are Forever’ extols the importance of enduring material security rather than fleeting heterosexual connections and Bassey’s relationship with these diamonds ‘that are forever’, is further problematised by the dimensions of race. Her father was Nigerian and her mother was British. Her public persona one that is “Black and not Black at the same time” (Jennings 2012, 37). She has generally played down her blackness and her exposure to racism in Britain, explaining: “Being coloured was never my problem, never has been,’ she says. “In Cardiff, our problem was more basic. A four letter word: food” (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-1306907/Shirley-Bassey-terrible-secret-father-hid-world.html>). This lack of public acknowledgement in relation to her racial heritage notwithstanding, she remains an embodiment of the colonial and postcolonial legacies of race and power as they have played out in the territories we are mapping that are linked by histories of Euro-American colonialism (Kunow 2016). When this is brought into connection with her powerful heterosexual femininity, her use of feminist camp and of her longevity as a

female star vocalist, the afterlife of this particular Bond song takes on a poignancy in relation to Bassey's performance and biography. The fact that this is then taken elsewhere by Kanye West provides a further interesting dimension to this afterlife, not least because it seems as if West did not ask Bassey for the use of her voice or song, and so uses her work without due acknowledgement, so much so that Bassey threatened legal action at the time (Wales Online, 2005).

West takes the song on a journey that can be understood as one part of a 'crossroads', a metaphor taken from Paul Gilroy's work, which highlights the links on this chain between him, Bassey and James Bond. In a piece on the familial qualities of hip hop Gilroy talks about: 'The notion of the crossroads - as a special location where unforeseen, magical things happen.... the crossroads has a nicely Africological sound to it too: a point at which the flows of black popular culture intersect' (2004, 87). Crossroads are points where differences meet and where we might stop to pause. They are places drenched in mythological and religious significance, where choices are made and futures sealed. But as well as flat temporal locations where diversification may ensue, they can also be chronological and more complex temporal intersections that defy imposed chronology; crossroads where versions of the past are in exchange with versions of the present. That is, crossroads allow for cross-temporal hybridity, something that West uses in his sampling of Bassey.

Paul Gilroy, whose work has been foundational to post-colonial theory for popular culture in general, and music in particular, writes how colonial (and post-colonial) cultures, might be understood as 'promiscuous', as 'mosaics' and as being typified by 'flow'; where there is a shift from 'understanding of space based on notions of place and fixity to an understanding of place based on flows' (Gilroy 2004, 87). Contrary to the reification of place in hip-hop (Forman and Neal, 2004), West's track narrates such flows and so connects Gilroy's 'Black Atlantic' to his own contemporary African American experience. The flows

that are part of Ciccarello-Maher's (2007) claim that West is voicing a critical Black subject position also reach to the 'unexpected' racisms of mid-century Britain, via Fleming and Bassey. 'Unexpected encounters' is how Perry describes Russell Simons of Def Jam's view of hip-hop, whose hybridity derives from piecing together the unexpected (Perry 2004, 13). Hip-hop's found/collage aesthetic has been much written about (Williams 2014) but here, our argument is that West's 'unconcealed' and 'textually signified' (Williams 2014, 194) use of Bassey becomes the opposite, its use becomes accepted and its lineages are part of what Williams (2013) calls 'memorial processes' that begin to unravel the distinction between past and present and so, form a hip-hop family (Gilroy 2004) across ages. Gilroy calls his chapter 'It's a Family Affair', a reference to Sly and The Family Stone's 1971 funk classic and West's use of Bassey pulls her too, into an extended hip-hop family that pushes the connections between musical inheritances as well as Black experiences.

Williams (2013) work concentrates on hip-hop's celebratory (2013, 171) technique of borrowing, arguing that it ushers in a culture of memorialisation, canonisation and multi-vocalisation. An 'open-source' culture (2013, 1), it borrows from the past in a fashion that precludes any neat delineation between 'old' and 'new', indeed, the dominant constructions of temporal chronology are disrupted to become young and old at the same time (Moglen 2008) and thus: 'Borrowing in hip-hop's highly multi-vocal, and there may be more than one source or in fact a lineage that complicates any sort of dialectical reading between "old" and "new" texts' (Williams 2013, 15). Williams notes how some song's 'genealogies' may be complex (he uses 'Apache' as an example) and it is worth dwelling on this notion of genealogy in order to pull out just how age, in the form of 'epochal' age, colours the use of Bassey in West's version; that is, how the sound of the 1971 film title track grounds West's work within a Hollywood cinematic tradition that somehow validates his own work further. A genealogy, in familial terms, is unchangeable. Although the unexpected may occur and

alliances formed in the on-going formation of that genealogy, once it is fixed it is set. The family tree cannot be re-drawn from the present. But hip-hop genealogy works in the opposite way, whereby the past is picked out and drawn into the present, in the same way that the jubilee event outlined earlier creates co-present connection between past and present. The consequence is therefore the forming and reforming different ‘family trees’. It is wholly liberatory in this respect, and as Williams and Gilroy both write, this aspect, which is a re-purposing of the past, acts too, to memorialise. This is especially salient in the use of dead rappers (like Tupac Shakur and Biggie Smalls, [Williams 2013, 18]) where remembering works as a narrative of narrative of collective remembrance (2013, 119). Hip-hop increasingly has a rich heritage of its own to draw from, but this trait is also found in reggae and ‘versioning’, where due respect is paid to previous MCs or dubplates (Henriques 2011; Hebdige 1987). The mosaic that Gilroy describes is, in hip-hop, one where music from (predominantly Black African America is referred to, remixed, re-envisioned and put to work in new musical narratives. On *Late Registration*, when West samples ‘It’s a Hard Knock Life’ from the musical *Annie* (1976), he uses Curtis Mayfield’s ‘Move on Up’ (on ‘Touch The Sky’) and of course, on the same album he uses Bassey. To sample a Black British singer, to use her song from a 1971 Bond film, is to extend the genealogical reach of hip-hop across borders, of time and nation. West broadens on the hip-hop family to include the Welsh singer from Tiger Bay, an historically disadvantaged area in the Welsh capital city Cardiff, now gentrified and rebuilt. As indicated earlier, place matters to how Bassey has been positioned within British media representation and in the generation of her star persona; she has always been ‘the girl from Tiger Bay’ but when West cites her, this provenance is not as important as the contemporary resonance (the successful glamorous diva and Dame) and relevance of the sound, and the phrasing her voice.

To some extent therefore, West’s use of Bassey echoes what Daub and Kronengold

say is characteristic of Bond songs in general, in that they are not placed; that they are timeless. Furthermore, her singing of the song as a Black woman, also encapsulates their argument about the fears coalescing across the times of the original book, film and song's creation (and since) over Black subjectivity and agency. In their 2015 work on the Bond songs, Daub and Kronengold argue that *Diamonds are Forever* is one of 'The 70s Bond films [where] "fear of a black planet" parallels their anxieties about women as figures of authority' (2015, 99) making it a narrative within which non-whites and non-men were vilified. It must be remembered that the Ian Fleming novel that provided the basis for the film was written in 1956, only four years after Queen Elizabeth II came to the British throne and three years after Bassey's singing career began. Thus, the palimpsest of time and the spectre of colonialism explored in this chapter can be seen to merge further. The imposition of multiple layers of colonial legacy come together symbolically positioning Britain at the top of a global hierarchy looking down upon all around her, including her long lost colony, the United States.

Though not explicitly voiced in the substance of the film's theme song that Bassey sings, the underlying racism of the film is taken up by West in his remix and its traces haunt the track (Fisher 2011). As we established earlier, the diamonds to which Bassey refers are shiny metaphors for money, materialism and capital; they are desired but do not disappoint (like lovers) and importantly, they do not age. Diamonds are therefore a constant. In the film, however, their meaning takes on a darker and more sinister layer for although they are initially premised as tools for space exploration, they are also used as components for lasers, which are, in turn, used for torture. Their function as objects of desire thus extends from sexuality to death and to control, of other people and of environments. Bassey's vocal and performative emphasis of the song (whether on the film soundtrack recording or live on stage) narrates an erotic desire for wealth in the form of diamonds. In her performance of the



song, her identity as a Black Welsh woman is important when we start to consider Kanye West's treatments on it. This is because the song and its sampling, the 1971 Bond film and the 2005 music video that accompanied the West track, can be considered as related events in what might be described as an 'unexpected encounter' (Perry, 2004:13), a trait that arguably characterises hip-hop aesthetics. Kanye West's work manipulates encounters that splice the past into the present (Richardson 2011) or co-presence, and consistently refer back to Black artists of significance (including older female artists such as his use of Nina Simone's recording of 'Strange Fruit' in the track 'Blood on the Leaves' in his 2013 album, *Yeezus*) and, thus, establish a canon of Black musical artistry (Richardson 2011; Ciccariello-Maher 2007; Williams 2014). That Bassey remains the voice of 'Diamonds are Forever', a Black aging female presence who 34 years later when sampled by West, still defines the film to the audience, shows how he rewrites and reframes cultural history from a consciously political Black perspective. This is hugely important given the colonial and racist connotations of both Fleming's novel and the subsequent film. In West's use of Bassey's vocal performance in 'Diamonds from Sierra Leone - Remix' and 'Diamonds from Sierra Leone' West is 'restorying' (Kunow 2016) Ian Fleming, giving voice to those Black characters demeaned in the original.

*Diamonds are Forever* was Fleming's fourth novel, and the plot line saw the now well-established character, James Bond sent by the British secret intelligence service to investigate diamond smuggling. The narrative begins in Sierra Leone and ends in Los Angeles, bringing Bond into confrontation with American gangsters in the form of 'The Spangled Mob' (Chapman 2000; Black 2001) clarifies the narrative background to the film whereby: 'A rise in diamond smuggling threatens the market, as the diamonds are apparently being stockpiled, in order either to dump them, and thus cut the price, or expose the market to blackmail' (1956, 127). Bond is therefore tasked to protect the business interests of the

British Empire, a force that is waning (Black 2001; Chapman 2000). The 1971 film loosely adapts this narrative but importantly continues the premise that Bond is only reluctantly recruited into investigating the smuggling, as it is clearly an area that he sees as not worthy of his department's energies. Indeed, at this point in the early 1970s, bereft of Empire and political importance and increasingly on the periphery of international significance, Bond's villainous nemesis in the story, Ernst Stavro Blofeld refers to Britain as a 'pitiful little Island' (Chapman 2000, 159). Bond is therefore positioned as protector of material not national interests, or rather of national interests that are now only capitalist and monetary. He has become the protector of profit. As capitalist saint, his (and, in the narrative, also the USA's) enemies are the smugglers, and of clear significance to this discussion, they are also African.

Corporate capitalism and white supremacy are, according to Metz (2004), integral to Bond film narratives. When discussing *Diamonds are Forever*, he explains that the film:

uses an ironic disjuncture between sound (a British official stating how trustworthy the black workers in South Africa's mines are) and image (black workers smuggling diamonds out of the mine) to argue that it is unreliable black people who are threatening the British economy by destabilizing the diamond mines. 2004,65.

This take on power and race is not surprising considering its basis in Fleming's oeuvre. In the late-twentieth century Fleming's racism began to be openly debated (Richler 1973; Amis 1966; Synnott 1990) especially with respect to his 'fascist' (Synnott 1990) equation of aesthetics to ethics, and of beauty to goodness, where beauty was always white and preferably English, and foreignness was described with 'a catalogue of invectives' (Synnott 1990, 422). Fleming's racism and anti-Semitism is exposed in the language he uses to describe a whole list of 'foreigners' that are reliant on racist formulations of physiognomy. For this chapter, and in relation to 'Diamonds are Forever', it is instructive to assess his language in relation to Blackness. 'Blacks are "clumsy apes" and have a "feral smell"; Jamaicans are "lazy"; Nigerians are "simple" and ignorant' (Synnott 1990, 422). These are

clearly reliant on crude derogatory racist stereotypes that are commensurate with a colonial mentality that despite starting to be questioned at the time Fleming was writing, remain central to his description of Otherness to it. Indeed, when discussing this point during the writing of this chapter, it became apparent to us that the attitudes that Fleming was criticised for in 1950s and 60s are not consigned to that historical period. In fact, they are seeping into contemporary public debate with increasing impunity as Europe and America see populist political parties coming more and more to the fore (Geert Wilders Party for Freedom in the Netherlands, Marine Le Pen's National Front in France, the United Kingdom Independence Party [UKIP] in Britain and of course the election of Donald J. Trump as American President at the end of 2016). Racist colonial mentalities, therefore, have not disappeared under post-colonialism; they are alive and making themselves felt. Colonial infused racism is not something that can be mapped temporally within a specific chronological period and certified as 'past', and thus, the idea that 'colonial' or 'post-colonial' might segue each other in a neat and linear fashion is not the case. It would seem that racist attitudes based in colonial hierarchies of power similar to those enunciated by Fleming in the 1950s, re-surface at times of anxiety, national and global.

When reworking Bassey's version of 'Diamonds are Forever', a political awareness of colonial injustice is brought to Kanye West's new mix. It is of course open to speculation as to whether he is knowingly or unknowingly engaging with the racist legacies of the novel and the film, when he reverts to it. What we cannot deny, however, is that he is bringing both biographical and generic (hip-hop) experience of being a Black man in American society to the track. In doing so he directly confronts a key articulation that Fleming made in the novel *Diamonds are Forever* when he describes Bond's relationship with Black people and his differential understandings of racial identity in the United Kingdom and America. Fleming writes that: "Bond had a natural affection for coloured people, *but* he reflected how

lucky England was compared with America where you had to live the colour problem from your schooldays up!” (Fleming, 1956 in Synnott 1990,420). West deals with this ‘problem’ by rewriting cultural history and inserting the margins (the songs, sung by the extra-diegetic Black singer Bassey) into the centre of his version. The hip-hop *reversioning* of ‘Diamonds are Forever’ performs the: “restoring and re- storing” of the silenced and marginalized voices from the ‘peripheries’ of Western economic, social, and cultural hege-mony” (Kunow 2016, 102) that is so typical of postcolonial narration.

Kanye West’s ‘Diamonds from Sierra Leone’ appears on his 2005 album *Late Registration* in two guises, as an original and a remix, with the remix having prior place as track 13 out of 22 and the original at 20. Both begin with the sample from the start of Bassey’s version, with her singing ‘Diamonds are Forever’, repeatedly, her voice singing the ascending minor fifth and West continuing with repeating and echoing ‘Forever, ever, ever’. In the remix version verse three is sung by fellow hip hop artist, Jay-Z and both singers narrate both their place in the hip-hop game (Forman and Neal 2004) and their rise to music and business stardom. Their narrations dwell on the material goods that this life now affords them. Daub and Kronengold note that across the Bond themes there is a formula at work which consists of: ‘sadistic glee, lustiness, swagger, bravado, menace, not to mention the tongue-in-cheek attitude that often governs the songs’ mix of sex and violence’ (2015, 38). By using a Bond sample, West self-reflexively and ironically notes the similarities between the Bond franchise’s, stereotypical representations of hip-hop and the ways that some hip-hop artists have articulated their own experiences. It is this representation and performance of swagger, particularly in relation to the consumption, that West is critiquing in his account of the reality of diamond smuggling in ‘Diamonds are forever - Remix’. This version focuses on the provenance of the diamonds themselves and, more especially, on the ‘blood’ or ‘conflict’ diamonds from Sierra Leone. He steers this hip-hop narrative away from excessive

consumption and the desire for 'bling' towards a Pan-Africanist sentiment that highlights the mistreatment of young Black African children as part of a global capitalist system of commodity trading. In this configuration, what cannot be ignored, however, are the parallels between African legacies of the postcolonialism and the current context of many Black African-American lives within an: "established white supremacist order that still insists upon the underclass status of Black Americans" (Curry 2014, 25).

The brutal civil war in Sierra Leone lasted from 1991-2002, and in the post-Cold War political context that it took place, was generally perceived something detached and distant from Europe and America. As Prestholdt the explains: "the raw reality [was] that much of the world saw its destruction as inconsequential" (2009, 202). In the war diamonds were, it is claimed, used to trade arms and fuel Charles Taylor's RUF (Revolutionary United Front) which was operating in Sierra Leone and in Liberia (Miesen 2012; Francis 2001). The purchase of these diamonds therefore financially supported brutal guerrilla forces that used child miners to supply diamonds to the arms traffickers and who, at the same time, also used child soldiers to implement brutality and terror. 'Diamonds are Forever – Remix' comes first on the album and foregrounds diamonds as they are articulated and connected to Shirley Bassey's performance and star persona. They are Bassey's diamonds, her objects of desire and of gendered power and trouble. As incorporated by West, however, they no longer shine so brightly. The power struggles shift beyond just those associated with sex and gender (though these are still strongly implicated in their exchange) and they become the tarnished artefacts of a bloody political and racial history. In the song, West describes the amputees ("Til I seen a picture of a shorty armless') who were victims of civil war (estimates are that around 200,000 civilians had limbs removed by soldiers) and positions them in a narrative that critiques of consumption and 'exaggerated materialism' (Ciccarellio-Maher 2007, 22). His critique explores an awareness of the lure of such goods and their status within Black

American hip hop culture (Ciccarello-Maher 2007) and highlights the: “contradictions found in arguing against corporatism while seeking to establish oneself as a corporate brand” (Curry 2014, 20).

Ciccarello-Maher’s work situates West within a Black American ideological struggle foregrounded by Du Bois’ concept of double consciousness, a position wherein the Black American subject is aware of a sense of being split, a ‘two-ness- an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body’ (Du Bois 1897, 194 in Ciccarello-Maher 2007, 1). For Ciccarello-Maher, West’s *Diamonds* track typifies this sense of split-ness whilst also, through acknowledging the connections between those mining the diamonds to those wearing them, and to Pan-African experience. The track is ‘an extraordinary and powerful recognition of the interconnectedness of struggles’ and is part of his argument that West’s work forges a ‘critical Black consciousness’ (2007:25). West, in this ‘bold political statement’ (Ogbar 2007, 70) is able to map out the international flows of geo-politics, trafficking and consumption and write Black expectation and experience into it. As West articulates in verse one of ‘*Diamonds are Forever – Remix*’:

How when I know what a blood diamond is?  
Though it's thousands of miles away  
Sierra Leone connects to what we go through today  
Over here it's a drug trade, we die from drugs  
Over there they die from what we buy from drugs

Further layers of contradiction, which offer supplementary ironic nodes of interconnectedness are provided by the fact that, as Presholdt (2009) reveals, the RUF child soldiers sported deceased hip-hop legend Tupac Shakur tee shirts as their preferred uniform.

There has been some debate over the extent of Bassey’s ‘blackness’, including, as we discussed earlier in this chapter, her own sense of racial identity as simultaneously ‘Black and not Black’ (Jennings 2012, 37). In terms of her generic positioning and vocal materiality and Daub and Kronengold’s work on Bond songs discusses this before then marking her out as

Black. Their work on the Bond songs is particularly useful for two reasons; for indicating the ‘untimeliness’ (2015, 12) of a Bond song and for underlining the pre-eminence of Black femininity. Their first point relates to their argument that the songs (a specific canon in and by themselves) stand outside of time and place. They note that Bond songs were ‘untimely’ (2015, 12) and never “‘of the moment’” (2015, 3); that is, they operated to their own logistics and orchestral trajectory, dominated by the musical signatures of John Barry’s compositions. They were never beholden to a contemporary ‘pop’ aesthetic, making sense as, and only as, ‘Bond’ themes that would be reheard and re-interpreted as signifiers over the many times and spaces of western dominated popular culture. They also note how ‘Diamonds are Forever’ specifically voices a Black femininity that has no need for Whiteness or for masculinity. They write that ‘If “Diamonds” is a song about how unnecessary a thing the phallus is, it is also a song about how unnecessary a thing white people are’ (2015, 95) and so, from their position, ‘Diamonds are Forever’, the song, reverses the racism that was overt in Fleming’s novel and which is latent within the film. They argue that Bond themes function to question the ideologies represented within the films’ narratives, providing a musical critique of the visual texts across many of the Bond films. More specifically, the ‘non-white’ women (who often older artists even at the time of recording) serve to articulate a desire, power and agency that no women in the films themselves are able to do:

The singers were frequently non-white (Shirley Bassey, Gladys Knight, Patti Labelle, Tina Turner) and they were sexually ambiguous – female voices are ubiquitous in the Bond songs as they are absent from the Bond films. The song was where the film’s sexual politics were turned on their head.

Daub and Kronengold 2015, 6.

Although Daub and Kronengold question Bassey’s ‘blackness’, a question that is based on background in showbiz and the grain of her voice in general, they do acknowledge that in ‘Diamonds Are Forever’, she is – the song treats her like one (2015, 95) and this is due to its broader cultural context and timing of the recording and the film. *Shaft* (dir. Parks, 1971) had

been released the same year and had proved to be a crossover success, paving the way for more African-American voices to be heard in popular cultural discourse. Daub and Kronengold's argument is that: 'This blackening of grown-up pop meant that Bassey, a showbizzy Anglo-Nigerian Welsh belter who was never associated with the soul- music tradition, fronting a bunch of British studio hacks, could count as soulful – yes, "black" – singer asserting African-American musical authority over what was a very white film' (Daub and Kronengold 2015, 96). If Bassey's voice overlays 'experience' as part of the polysemic construction of the film (rather than the film's narrative itself), what Daub and Kronengold's point leads to is the idea that the experiences of older Black women, who are wholly unreliant upon whiteness for agency, are made present.

This is also how Kanye West uses Bassey. In 'Diamonds are Forever – Remix' her importance, or perhaps just the alignment between what they both have to say about diamonds is emphasised. As Jay-Z vocalises in the following line that comes after the sample of her vocal refrain in verse three: '*Shirley Bassey's in the rear saying exactly what I've been saying practically my whole career*'. She is 'in the rear', behind him, supporting him, echoing his ideas, she validates them and in turn, his opinions are validated by her. Just as she can wear her diamonds with impunity in Monte Carlo, West's vocals in verse 1 suggest that: 'It's in a black person soul to rock that gold. Spend your whole life trying to get that ice'. The acknowledgement of her viewpoint offers a seal of approval. She is 'in the rear', in a temporal sense, and so goes before him as part of a Black oral lineage but her comments are parsed into the present tense 'saying'. This brings her into the present and so confuses temporal boundaries. This obfuscation of clear delineation between past, present and also future is underpinned by West echoing the word 'Forever', pointing to a continuity of 'diamonds' as both signifiers of capitalism and Black aspiration and of Black suffering.



Richardson has argued that West's 'musical appropriation of the past in order to keep it alive in the present' (2011, 106) might be understood via Pierre Bourdieu's notion of 'habitus'.

This, he claims, works to position West as an important figure within a Black historical continuum:

Bourdieu writes that habitus "is a past which survives in the present and tends to perpetuate itself into the future" (*Outline* 82). In this way, "the past remains present and active in the dispositions it has produced" (*In Other Worlds* 64). West's talent for retrieving powerful elements from his musical roots and embedding them with references that compare such connotations, memories and intertextual linkages with those of his generation can be seen as a sort of *habitus* at work.

Richardson 2011, 106.

By using Bassey's voice, and referring to her influence on him and her presence within the contemporary song, Kanye West thus pulls into his version, the universality and the non-place that Daub and Kronengold argue for. Bond and Bassey float somehow outside of the contemporary and Kanye uses this to ground his own contribution. More especially, he makes their 'non-place' a Black space. He inserts a Black subjectivity into this supposed 'non-place' and by so doing, marks it out as his (and by extension, Black African Americans') habitus.

Richardson's argument foregrounds the intergenerational and trans-historical connections that West utilises and we extend this idea to consider how West 'crosses' not only temporal modes to highlight moments of Black achievement, but how he 'crosses' age. West is a cultural and political figure whose work is important not only for its championing and validation of Black American history and expression, but alongside this and imbricated with it, what he does is somehow both bound up in and disregarding of age as a distinctly delineated concept. That is, the voices from America's past, both Black and white, its musicals (*Annie*), Soul icons (Curtis Mayfield/Nina Simone), showbiz heroines (Bassey) emerge as present to West's narratives. This is possible through the 'presenting' (with the stress of the first syllable) that West does with verb tenses. It is also further enabled more broadly by a dominant music culture whereby the past, via digital media, is ever more present within contemporary music, making it accessible as new releases and through the materiality

and grain of sampled voices that are spliced into West's tracks and which emerge into a co-present alongside West's own vocals. This co-existence of past and present voices is different to the 'hauntology' of the past that Mark Fisher (2011) proposes illustrates some parts of contemporary popular music and culture. Where hauntology relies on the idea of the spectral and the retrieval or disinterment of the obsolete or forgotten pasts by a present characterised by its technological atemporality, West's 'presenting' is a more positive, politically focused approach. The past has not died and ripe for resuscitation, as the hauntological imperative would require, the past is within the present and so, West refuses to consider the past as gone that he might retrieve it. The past remains concurrently in and as the present (Baars 2012, Kunow 2016). What this then does is construct a form of musical intergenerationality whereby the bold and progressive Black voices that have shaped Black musical and cultural history are harvested and their voices and sounds are spliced as material testimony into the now. Age, however, becomes secondary to the voice and the sounds of Black experience. It might also be noted that West's work is not rooted in any one place. He does not sing of 'the hood' (Forman 2004; Williams 2013) and is much more concerned with the dynamic interplay between the local and the global, between roots and routes (Straw 1991) than with a reification of home and place. In West's oeuvre, Blackness can therefore be located in any place within the spaces he evokes, be it Sierra Leone, Europe (be it Tiger Bay or Monte Carlo) or America. In this sense, he positions Blackness within a post-slavery/postcolonial continuum that links Europe and America. Thus, in terms of the two tracks 'Diamonds from Sierra Leone – Remix' and 'Diamonds from Sierra Leone', they are part of, and written into, European and American history and contemporary culture; he foregrounds a Black presence that Europe and American cannot ignore.

Whilst Gilroy has positioned hip-hop as a Black Atlantic medium and expression, Perry claims it as peculiarly American. For him it is the voice of Black America, it articulates

specifically located concerns that can be nationally, and locally identified 2004,18, 20). His argument rests on the notion that migratory histories of contemporary African-Americans are intra-national rather than international and so Americaness must be factored in more than Gilroy's triangular model of the Black Atlantic allows. However, despite agreeing with this to an extent, we argue that West's work on the two 'Diamonds from Sierra Leone' track branch back out of America, to Africa and to the United Kingdom and so revisits Gilroy's Black Atlantic from the point of departure of America in the early 2000s. The music video for the track articulates this journey well.

The video for 'Diamonds from Sierra Leone' visually and sonically manifests the key themes that we have outlined. The video is shot in monochrome and the first frame sets the political attitude which opening titles stating 'Little is known about Sierra Leone and how it connects with the diamonds we own – Kanye West'. It then cuts to shots of child miners wielding pick axes digging for diamonds deep underground. In the thirty seconds or so before the sound of Bassey's sample becomes recognisable, we hear African voices describing the horrific realities of diamonds as part of the civil war. Once the vocals of Bassey's 'Diamonds are Forever' established, the scene moves to early morning in Prague. The setting encodes a sense of 'class' and European sophistication and the choice of shooting in black and white works to generate a perceived authenticity (Railton and Watson, 2011). Kanye West is walking along St Charles Bridge, an American in Europe. It makes no narrative sense for him to be doing this other than to establish both his international reach and to perhaps add a sense of European 'style' to both himself and to underpin the international scope of the smuggling rings that he discusses. The child miners in the open shots begin to appear in Prague gravitating towards West as the video's protagonist. The video offers visuals of white customers receiving diamonds as engagement rings that then pour blood all over their hands, underpinning West's narrative drive. He is the narrator,

breaking the fourth wall as hip-hop visually does in video and in album cover, to directly address the viewer. He strolls along Prague's bridge and streets and is also seen driving a Mercedes SLR Gullwing James Bond style which he then drives into a jeweller's shop; an act that might be interpreted as a direct practice of resistance' (Lamotte 2014). The video ends with West in a church surrounded by the child miners illustrating not only a space within the narrative of this video where religion is held up for scrutiny in the face of suffering, but also as White Hodge' (2013) indicates, a space that has existed for some time within hip-hop itself where it has shown: "a capacity to provide meaning and hope to people who have, in large part, been ignored by many Christian churches" (p. 98). The closing title "Please purchase conflict free diamonds" reinforces the opening political message of the video. The video is a clear representation of Ciccariello-Maher's argument about West and the DuBoisian double-consciousness, but also goes beyond DuBois.

Writing in the closing years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, DuBois encapsulated the contradictions experienced by African Americans living in a society whose 'universal' ideals and aspirations were white. He argued that there was a 'veil' that divided the Black from the White American and moving between the two worlds, resulted in an 'anguished, divided self' (Ciccariello- Maher 2007, 16). The ideals of white society, of capitalism and consumerism, which were predominantly middle-class were at odds with a progressive Black consciousness, that measuring one's Black self to White standards only resulted in misery ('amused contempt and pity' Du Bois 1897,194, in 2007,18). West, in his first album *College Dropout* (2004) is, according to Ciccariello-Maher (2007), active in breaching, questioning and critiquing this 'veil'. And this seems to be consistent concern for West. Curry (2014) contends that this is also apparent in more recent songs such as 'New Slaves' (*Yeezus*, 2013) where: "West offers a paradigmatic lens through which scholars and thinkers can view the world, an aesthetic provocation against the accepted narrative of racial progress that calls for

the racially oppressed to consider the possibility that slavery never ended” (33). The thirst for material goods and for consumption to be the standard for success within the African American community, is the material for West’s lyrics on *Late Registration* where the two tracks ‘Diamonds from Sierra Leone - Remix’ and ‘Diamonds from Sierra Leone’ appear. However, whilst critiquing the consumption that drives the trade in diamonds, and which remains the marker of success for Blackness in terms of achievement, West, critiques not only the thirst that leads to this trade, his own included, but moves away from Black material desire and double-consciousness towards formulating a more complex Black consciousness that looks outward from America to Europe and Africa. In so doing, he narrates a journey through European colonialism from Africa to America that recalls the routes of slavery. As Bassey sings to him, he opens up to embrace the spaces, places and times of the Black Atlantic, her delivery of ‘Diamonds are Forever’ provides an iconic package of Black European mature female experience to underpin his process of reversioning and restorying.

## **Conclusion**

An occasion such as a Royal Jubilee acts as a temporal and cultural marker. It offers space to reflect on individual and collective identities and to celebrate. It is a memorialising occasion, like any other celebration of longevity, such as age or marriage or commemoration of loss or bereavement. Such occasions are a validation of a life lived and the British Royal Jubilee that took place in 2012, and which was the starting point of our thinking for this chapter, was a celebration and endorsement of monarchy and of lineage. The accompanying celebration concert offered a rare live performance from Shirley Bassey, and the opportunity for Bassey to sing a Bond song that, exploiting the metaphor of diamonds, chimed closely with the occasion. The substance of this chapter has been the ways that Bassey’s iconic connection

with the song 'Diamonds are Forever' imbued the musical text with a richness of meaning that Kanye West then creatively used to 're-story it'.

How is Blackness figured within this story, and how does this story, by its telling, reframe an understanding of nation and of age? When we first started out writing this chapter, building on a conference paper given six months after the jubilee concert at the 'After life of the Film' symposium at the University of Bristol in 2012, and we mentioned our interest in the connectivities between Shirley Bassey and Kanye West to colleagues, it appeared that we were asking an arcane question on song lyrics akin to 'what is the connection between...?'. It seemed insignificant, arcane, niche. But the more we considered it, the more we thought there was material there to be discussed, particularly in relation to age and Blackness. To focus in on the extras, the 'below the line', the marginal, is a trend within media and cultural studies that has informed our choice of engagement with the key concepts at play. We therefore looked to the snippet of a chorus, to the three words of a song title, noting its reverberations across popular film and music culture to see what cultural work it was doing. And what we think we have found is that beneath the jubilations, hidden by the official histories but now, making themselves known, are the untold stories of Europe's continuing links to notions of Empire, power and race. And these stories reveal an interdependent complexity, they are stories that confuse expectations of age as a process and of Europe as a place. For a book on aging and Europe, the material we uncovered revealed different dynamisms at play. These were trans-Atlantic, trans-European and trans-age; conversations and interpretations that resist a codified chronology and are more ergodic in movement. 'Diamonds are Forever' has echoes of Marilyn Monroe, of Bassey, of Bond and of Kanye. It sings of materialism, it sings of corruption and blood, it is out of time and across time, it is hip-hop and it is showbiz.

As you will have noticed, we haven't discussed ageing as a process, or as a disadvantage or even as a position in this final chapter of the book. What we have proposed

though, is that by looking at songs and their performers, and by seeking to focus in on the interconnections of specifics, of things that matter (here, diamonds and their trafficking), specifically on the ‘diamonds’ of our chosen song, we flag up the ways in which race is tempered within dominant tropes of aging; Bassegy the Welsh diva, West the upstart hip hop star. Both two upset a conservative reading of aging, when seen as placed on each other (Kanye on Bassegy, Bassegy on Kanye). They are multi vocal and multi aged and through their crazy/unanticipated co-presence of their musical oeuvre, their star personas and their creative possibilities shine on, and if you will forgive this final pun.... Like diamonds?