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The (Grand) Maternal Queenly Canon

Abigail Gardner, University of Gloucestershire

Queens, both of them. Queen of Calypso and ‘Queene’ of English Folk, Calypso Rose and Shirley Collins are lauded musicians, recording and performing in their eighties. They are two female performers in ‘older age’ who make up a (grand)maternal canon within popular music. This canon goes across genre and includes women who are valued for both their ongoing contribution to music and for their participation in the formative histories of those musics. Performing well past the ‘menopausal gap’ they act as familial beacons in their respective genres, markers of a longevity imbricated and wrapped up with discourses of authenticity that in turn, speak to national and diasporic heritages (Bascombe, 2015).

Their contributions to music are recognised in film (*The Ballad of Shirley Collins*, 2017), cemented by memoir (*All in The Downs: Life, landscape and Song*, (2018), documented through official websites that measure musical outputs and significance against broader cultural markers ([www.calypsorose](http://www.calypsorose.com)) and presented in music video. Using an interdisciplinary methodology the paper focuses on these metatexts of Collins and Calypso Rose who are both in ‘old’ age and producing music anew and, in part, through alliance with younger musicians and producers. As one chapter in a book on ‘Ageing and Contemporary Female Musicians’, its motive is to spotlight age as a pertinent theme of enquiry within popular music studies and to note how the production and performances of these women in their 80s signifies a veneration of a ‘grand-maternal canon’ which is both a manifestation and a rebuttal of appropriate ageing.

Dr Abigail Gardner is Reader in Music and Media at the University of Gloucestershire. She writes on music and ageing, music video and music documentary and produces community film and media. Publications include *PJ Harvey and Music Video Performance* (Routledge, 2015) and *Rock On: Women, Ageing and Popular Music* (Ashgate, 2012, with Ros Jennings). She is a founder member of the Centre for Women, Ageing and Media (WAM <http://wamuog.co.uk>), and is PI on two Erasmus + European projects on diversity and digital storytelling.