Wider Horizons and Modern Desire: The Contradictions of America and Racial Difference in London 1935-45

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Just as we have dancing to substitute for sex, we have lyrics for our feelings[1]

Don't Fence Me In: White Women and Black Men

A little-known event occurred at the end of the Second World War which is nonetheless emblematic of a specific trajectory within English modernity. On an August afternoon in 1945 hundreds of young English women besieged the army barracks in Bristol at which black GI soldiers were stationed, protesting at their imminent departure for the United States and the refusal of their commanding officer to allow them to take leave of their girlfriends. Singing Bing Crosby's hit "Don't Fence Me In", the women broke down the barriers surrounding the encampment and later attempted to get through the gates at the train station shouting: 'To hell with the US army colour bars! We want our coloured sweethearts.'[2] This display of personal commitment, sexual desire, political opposition to segregation, disregard for convention and the law, and ironic deployment of American popular culture was probably unique in the way it made dramatically manifest the lineaments of a situation whose genealogy I want to explore in greater depth. But the relationships involved were not exceptional. They were among the very many sexual and romantic encounters between white British women and black servicemen from the United States which took place between 1942-1945, and which, I shall argue, can be traced back to the commercial and entertainment cultures of the inter-war period and the idea of America and the modern in the English popular imagination. These developments in turn laid the groundwork for the distinctive formation of British post-colonial domestic race relations in the second half of the twentieth century – and in particular, the gradual, albeit very uneven, normalisation of relationships between men of Afro-Caribbean descent and white English women.[3]

During the three years of the war in which American (mainly male) forces were stationed in Britain, interracial marriage was legally outlawed in almost half the states of the Union and heavily discouraged elsewhere. Yet in wartime Britain, although a minority of people disapproved of social (and certainly sexual) contacts with racial

others, what was remarkable – given the extensive influence of American culture – was that large numbers welcomed the black GIs and found the official segregation and the aggressively racist behaviour of most white servicemen shocking, particularly in the context of the war against fascism. The American army command was disturbed by this unanticipated response and, in an attempt to diffuse racial tension within its own ranks, considered it appropriate to warn its troops about what it had already perceived as the different "racial consciousness" of the British and especially of the women. As General Eisenhower himself made plain: 'The … British girl would go to a movie or a dance with a Negro quite as readily as she would go with anyone else'.[4] However, American anxiety about the repercussions of such behaviour, particularly "back home", was widespread. After the publication in the American press in 1943 of photos of black American servicemen dancing with white English women, the army command went to the extraordinary lengths of imposing military censorship on all photographs portraying interracial dancing and social mixing. It also did its best to discourage such behaviour in the flesh, though with only limited success, given its lack of authority over English women.[5] As Barbara Cartland put it, reflecting after the war on her experience as a WAAF moral welfare advisor: "It was the white women who ran after the black troops, not vice versa… [They] would queue outside the camps, they would not be turned away and they would defeat the Military Police by sheer numbers."[6] The indignation and aggression of many white American troops about this state of affairs eventually led to the establishment of separate social events and dancing clubs for black servicemen which white women could attend without fear of conflict. These were endorsed by the British government under pressure from the United States' army command. Among the black clubs in London were the Bouillabaisse, in New Compton Street and Frisco's International, in Piccadilly, both in the Soho area and around the corner from the Rainbow Club, the main social gathering place for white American troops. Images in a 1943 *Picture Post* photo essay entitled 'Inside London's Coloured Clubs' show a few white men and a few dark-skinned women, but most of the people dancing and socialising are black men and white women.[7]

Graham Smith has claimed that despite the general welcome extended towards black GIs in the context of war, there was "near-universal hostility towards interracial sexual relations" from the British public and the government.[8] This interpretive emphasis has been echoed by Bill Schwarz, who quotes the same phrase from Smith's book in order to support his argument about the "re-racialisation" of Britain in the post-war period. This process was largely determined, according to Schwarz, by the widespread fear of miscegenation.[9] Yet Smith has undermined his own claim by referring to a 1943 Mass Observation survey which showed that "one in seven people disapproved of mixed marriages".[10] One in seven is a remarkably low figure and hardly supports the contention of 'near universal hostility'. Moreover, evidence from the dance halls, cinemas, photographic archives and personal memoirs suggests that large numbers of young white women found black men socially and sexually interesting, despite public opposition. A more qualified analysis of social disapproval in terms of age and gender would probably have produced a different reading. In

a context in which the men in mixed relationships were mainly black outsiders, concerns about miscegenation were unsurprisingly greater among indigenous men, so the roots and components of the hostility were not homogenous. Anxiety was generated not only by the social and sexual success of dark and foreign men, that is to say by the issue of race; it was also generated by women's insubordination – by the uppityness and sexual fantasies of daughters, sisters, sweethearts and even wives.

The response a decade later to the arrival of mainly male migrants from the Caribbean displayed similar contradictions, despite the fact that during the 1950s British antagonism to outsiders was greater than it had been during the war. The increase in hostility was due in part to a domestic situation in which racial others, now no longer American and affluent, were competing for work and accommodation, especially in London. Among the continuities, however, was the welcome extended by English women, which as before, has tended to be excluded from the memories and written histories of the period. Yet, as with the 1940s, photos and archive film footage of metropolitan jazz and dance clubs depicted venues densely packed with black men and white women dancing and talking to each other.[11] The popularity of these urban meeting places, despite the more general climate of hostility, again provides evidence of the unevenness of the British response to miscegenation and the particularity of the experience of women.

English women's interest in dance and cultural difference, and the willingness of so many of them to operate against the grain of English prejudice and the far more deeply entrenched conventions of American society in the early 1940s, constitutes a significant milestone in the history of twentieth-century British race relations. The reception of the black GIs and the texture of the first widespread physical encounter between ordinary English people – predominantly women – and racial others in the British context was profoundly shaped by the impact of Hollywood cinema and the dissemination of American commercial culture and popular music in the 1930s. In relation to questions of race, the allure of the modern and the elaboration of an America of the imagination were to have paradoxical and unanticipated consequences.

America and Elsewhere in the Imagination

The 1930s, as Keith Williams has pointed out, were distinguished by a new "else awareness".[12] There was a new presence, particularly in the metropolitan consciousness and landscape, of abroad and cultural difference, though interpretations of this somewhere else were inevitably diffuse. America occupied the pre-eminent position in the league both of mythologies and anxieties about the foreign and in terms of its material impact imprinted on the buildings, imagery and sounds of London. Yet throughout the inter-war years the debate about this influence was monopolised by critical and pessimistic voices from both the right and left of the political spectrum.

This is to be contrasted with a different set of narratives of much longer duration associated with continental Europe which during this period possessed a powerful resonance for the English middle and upper classes. Inevitably these ideas about

the foreign tell us as much about the country and class in which they were generated – about a particular version of Englishness – as about elsewhere.[13] Paul Fussell, focusing specifically on the 1930s, has drawn attention not only to the fascination of abroad, but also to the hostility expressed by writers and intellectuals towards what they perceived as the small-mindedness, bleakness and xenophobia of an increasingly suburbanised Britain.[14] For these travellers, abroad represented culture, romance and sensuality; home was philistine, prosaic and frigid. Both were territories of the mind. Travel to other places made possible the break from home and a new beginning. As W. H. Auden put it as a young man on his departure for Berlin in 1928, "the real life-wish is the desire for separation from the family … and the immense bat shadow of one's home … from all opinions and personal ties: from pity and shame."[15] Expatriation was rooted in a psychic revolt against parents and the parental culture. Abroad offered a new degree of anonymity and personal and sexual freedom. Although these English travellers were predominantly men (those selected by Fussell entirely so) the inter-war expatriate writers and artists who moved to Paris and Florence because of the imagined freedoms that these cities offered, also included women. Among them were Violet Trefusis, a novelist and, like Auden, a homosexual, for whom France represented escape and who, after her notorious affair with Vita Sackville-West, was banned from England on pain of disinheritance by her mother.[16] Another was Nancy Cunard, poet and editor, and like Trefusis, from an aristocratic family, whose avant-garde lifestyle in Paris and her relationship with American Negro, Henry Crowder, expressed her rejection of the constraints imposed by her family and society in England.[17] During these years, Europe, and particularly the cities of Paris, Berlin and Vienna, seemed to offer more enlightened, liberal and sophisticated forms of sociability, set moreover among landscapes and architecture perceived to be of historical and aesthetic distinction.

Continental Europe was not only somewhere to go *to*. It also travelled as a cultural myth replete with élite and sometimes transgressive associations back to the cityscape of London – to the museums, theatres, shops and restaurants of the metropolis and occasionally to the provinces. This well-established and class-specific pattern of abroad in the imagination and the mapping of Europe onto the streets of Fitzrovia, Soho and elsewhere, has been vividly documented in the literature and correspondence of the writers of the time. Their voices have described and rationalised a romantic and intellectual commitment to different ways of living – to a cosmopolitan consciousness – generated by the existence of other urban environments to which, for them, escape was always materially possible.

There were few such eloquent advocates or biographers, however, to speak on behalf of America in the imagination and the influence of America on the topography and culture of London.[18] Yet the United States had a presence and a resonance that far exceeded that of Europe. Its connotations and its main constituency were however markedly different.[19] The myths of America which circulated in inter-war England were derived mainly from Hollywood and they reverberated most forcefully in the sphere of popular rather than élite culture, in the burgeoning world of consumption and entertainment, in cinemas, dance halls and shops. These sites and institutions

attracted lower-middle and working-class young people from the cities, predominantly women, as often as three or four times a week. They were among the popular urban environments which contributed to the transformation of the prosaic climate of inter-war Britain and disrupted the cultural authority of the educated classes.[20] The two most recurrent motifs which America symbolised in the discursive regimes of the cinema were modernity and opportunity. In addition to the cinematic projection of iconic modern urban skylines and the latest technological innovations, the image of America disseminated in the popular movies was of a forward-looking, democratic, irreverent, glamorous, jazzy and somewhat sentimental land, in which a working girl could marry a millionaire. As John Grierson put it when he wrote about how he preferred American to British cinema: 'Hollywood always had the good sense to … salute the common life. Behind its luxuries there has always been a suggestion of [ordinary] origin. Behind the gowns and gauderies there has been a frank allowance that the lady inside them started … as a shop girl'.[21] This optimistic vision of the new world was promulgated in the first instance by an industry improbably dominated by first-generation Jews from rural eastern Europe. Rooted in a history of marginalization and nurtured by fantasies of assimilation and metropolitan success, it had a relentless appeal.[22] In Britain as elsewhere, the narratives of Hollywood spoke to the aspiring working and lower middle classes with remarkable prescience – albeit in unfamiliar English. [23] This America, whose symbolic traces were present not only in London but also in the provinces, operated psychically (like Europe for the literati) as an imaginary somewhere else; as a refuge and a fantasy of a better future, as a means of breaking away from the constraints of class and parental conventions of deference, denial and despair.[24]

The American Beat: Music and Dance

America's influence did not derive only from the movies. Nor was it confined to the working girl. Another cluster of associations, which fed into popular images of America and transformed the social life of cities during the inter-war period, were generated by American popular music and dance styles. The continual references in both the critical and popular literature about this period to "syncopation" and the "syncopated beat" of the new clubs, music and dance steps convey a sense of the perceived physicality – as well as irregularity or off-beatness – of the impact of American sounds and movement which complemented the cognitive and emotional response to the movies. Syncopation – a beat that goes against the conventional grain and is not only played and heard but performed expressively with the body – connotes both rhythm and defiance. The music, whether big band swing or jazz, was usually performed in inter-war London by Americans and often blacks (the provinces had to make do with British swing bands, though few of these were considered of any worth).[25] Jazz and American swing appealed first, during the 1920s, to the middle and upper classes and then spread, in a modified form, with the epidemic of social dancing to the working class as well. Part of the attraction of American popular music in Britain, especially jazz, was, according to Eric Hobsbawm, precisely its

American provenance. "Jazz bands came from the same country as Henry Ford".[26] The music was played in the movies. It had a democratic and classless appeal. It connoted modernity. This was its overriding signification. During the course of the 1930s jazz and swing had become became increasingly associated with the urban and also with Jews: it was a "mongrel creation of the American metropolis", whose rhythms and lyrics were adopted and made popular by the (Jewish) composers of Hollywood musicals.[27] "True swing was… a fine product of Jewish sweet passion, negro relish of living and the stimulating climate of New York City" wrote the English commentators Robert Graves and Alan Hodge at the time.[28] The image of jazz and its derivative forms as metropolitan and cosmopolitan was much stronger in Europe, particularly in Britain, than the United States, where the music still retained evocations of slavery, the rural and the primitive, despite the modernism of the Harlem Renaissance. In Europe, American swing was popular not only because it connoted modernity but also because it was so suitable for dancing.

The meaning of dance has proved difficult to theorise.[29] It has nonetheless been a major feature of modern cultural life and represents a form of non-verbal expression which connects an embodied primal sense of the self to the social. In Britain, the dance boom of the 1930s formed an intrinsic part of the spread of greater personal and sexual freedoms for young people of all classes, and for women in particular. The aristocratic socialite, Lady Marguerite Strickland, described her experience of dance culture in the following way:

> I went to lots of clubs every night… [They were] all dark. The idea of the darkness was that you'd be dancing with someone else's husband and your husband was across the room with the man's wife. The dancing was so important, the new band music was so marvellous. I used to know all the tunes and the band leaders who used to play in the clubs were all friends of ours. It was all so exciting.[30]

These club encounters permitted the development of other kinds of socially transgressive relationships as well. Nancy Cunard, heiress and bohemian, included among her lovers in Paris black American jazz musicians; and Edwina Mountbatten, even more wealthy and related by marriage to the royal family, was also rumoured to have had an affair with a black band leader who played at private parties in London.[31]

Dance for working-class women was just as popular as it was for the middle and upper classes. Thousands of new dance venues opened in the inter-war years and many young women went to their local Palais or Mecca as often as four or five evenings a week. "The hot rhythm and syncopated music seem to be in the same tempo as the noise and speed of the factory and make an easy appeal to people who live in a continuous din", wrote sociologist Pearl Jephcott in her attempt to make sense of the cultural pursuits of the working girls in her study.[32] Dressed in fashions inspired by Hollywood, young women danced with each other until approached by the men. On the whole though, according to Jephcott, 'boys were less enthusiastic about dancing than girls'. Hobsbawm makes a related point when he stresses the preference of young men for buying records and listening to American music.[33] Women's passion

for dancing was not matched by men's; their desire to dance was not gratified as often as they wished. Englishmen were reticent and bashful dancers and their participation was often little more than a tactic in a strategy of sexual conquest. The reasons for this national and gendered discrepancy in the skills and pleasures of dancing are not clear. Dancing for English women was both narcissistic display and a form of sexual foreplay – a substitute for sex – at a time when full intercourse was both risky and disreputable. The ineptness on the dance floor of many Englishmen may have been related to the broader anxiety about the feminisation of society.[34]This in turn is likely to have been compounded by the tradition of a segregated pub culture which kept young men away from dances until after closing time.[35] Whatever the cause, this particular tendency was to be exacerbated during the war years when the dance skills of many GIs – and especially black GIs – filled the lacunae left by the ambivalence and physical absence of British men. Dancing and music for North American blacks was a form of self-expression in a context in which a public voice and democratic participation had been institutionally denied. As Duke Ellington put it "What we could not say openly we expressed in music".[36]

Hollywood in Oxford Street and the Holloway Road

The imprint of America on England in the inter-war period extended beyond the culture of music and dance to the materiality of the metropolis, its architecture and retailing institutions. London during the 1920s and 1930s was a rapidly expanding city unlike much of the rest of Britain which suffered more acutely from the depression. Among the new buildings were restaurants, cafes, chain stores, cocktail bars, dance halls, and cinemas, which all promoted a much more vigorous public sphere and fantasy life and were part of the burgeoning commercial and entertainment culture inflected by the idea of America. In Gavin Weightman and Steve Humphries upbeat account, during this period London became "shockingly and excitingly 'modern', pulsing to a syncopated American beat that pervaded the whole of its teeming life from the West End cocktail party to the Hollywood movie showing to packed houses in [the high street] picture palace".[37]

   The evidence for working-class attendance at the cinema, especially among the young and female, and mass participation in what was an overwhelmingly American movie culture during the inter-war years is well established.[38] But the integration of relatively poorly paid workers into the world of consumption and the consumer economy is less well documented and more disputed. Yet this period saw a steady expansion of low-priced chain stores throughout the country, and particularly in the high streets and newly built suburbs of London. Best known among these were Marks & Spencer (influenced by American retailing practices) and Woolworth's (an extension of the American chain) which targeted the lower middle-class and young workers with some disposable income. Despite the national economic recession of the 1930s, the newer industries of the south east remained buoyant and consumption levels increased overall, with the highest growth rates in London. Although the large department stores showed a decline in profit margins compared with their

highpoint before the First World War and compared with the expanding multiples, Oxford Street retained its position as the hub of British retailing and commercial culture.[39]

Selfridges, the largest department store in the street, was founded and owned by American magnate and cosmopolitan moderniser, Gordon Selfridge, whose explicit commercial strategy included the recruitment of customers from the lower middle classes and the improvement of working conditions for his mainly female staff. With some self-interest as well as accuracy, Selfridge described Oxford Street in one of his store's daily press columns in 1933 as "the Greatest Shopping Street in the World":

There are more spectacular streets than Oxford Street… But for the number of people per yard who go shopping in it, for the amount of business done and for the concentration of first-class stores and shops offering immense varieties of merchandise at prices which attract the general public, Oxford Street is … beyond all doubt the finest in the world… All day long and on to midnight the pavements are filled with people from all parts of the country and the world. Up to 7 o'clock they are shopping. After that they are looking at the displays in the windows, and these displays alone would make Oxford Street a place of international distinction.[40]

This passage draws attention to the activity and excitement of Oxford Street: the late night shopping, the celebrated windows, the cosmopolitan crowd and the unique combination of luxury and affordable prices which enabled the street to retain its pulling-power during the 1930s. Selfridges was a significant innovator in this respect, and in line with some American retailing practices, deliberately targeted the full range of the market. Although the store promoted its expensive merchandise (*haute couture* "cocktail suits and ball gowns for the sub-deb, the deb and her mother") in *Vogue*, *Tatler* and other society publications, it also advertised its low-cost clothes and household goods in the down-market press with full-page cluttered advertisements, deliberately designed in a style which connoted sales and bargains. "Selfridges is the cheapest shopping place in London" these announced. And indeed it was the case that bargain-basement goods at Selfridges were as cheap, if not cheaper, than at many provincial and suburban stores which were unable to compete with the attractions of Oxford Street and could not achieve the economies of scale required to keep prices down.

Even the cheap clothes at Selfridges were more stylish than elsewhere, and during the 1930s Selfridges specifically targeted a new kind of customer, the modern working girl, who, despite unequal pay, was at a life stage with relatively few domestic financial obligations. She was therefore able to spend a good proportion of the money she earned on herself in order to dress stylishly and transcend at least the appearance of class. In the 1936 Selfridges' advertisement entitled "Cheque and Chic", the copywriter succinctly acknowledged these skills of self-presentation and appealed to the working girl's aspirations for a modern and socially classless image:

Modern miss dresses so well … it is impossible to decide whether she is working-class, middle-class or – hold your breath please – a film star. 'Chic' you realise, doesn't always spell 'cheque'. Films create fashions and none are more sartorially mimetic than the

average working-class girl … Smartness these days can be achieved on a surprisingly modest outlay… the 'Inexpensive Department' is an adventure in charm and economy.[41]

This advertisement, surprising for its linguistic complexity and its uninhibited reference to class, spoke to young women already in the West End because of their jobs, as well as to those who travelled there specifically in pursuit of renewal and escape. Such fantasies were more vividly mobilised, though perhaps not gratified, by excursions to Selfridges and Oxford Street than the much less glamorous local high streets. As Jean Rhys's anti-heroine Anna put it epigrammatically in *Voyage in the Dark*, 1934, in an acute expression of elsewhere in the imagination: "I walked along Oxford Street thinking about my room in Camden Town and that I didn't want to go back to it." Observing other women looking at the Oxford Street shop windows, she 'saw that their eyes were fixed on the future. "If I could buy this then of course I'd be quite different". Keep hope alive and you can do anything.[42] Later Anna met her friend Maudie "coming out of Selfridge's and we went into a tea shop… she was full of a long story about an electrical engineer who was gone on her. She was sure she could get him to marry her if she could smarten herself up a bit… So I lent her eight pounds ten."[43] Like the myth of America, Oxford Street proffered the idea a better future, however precarious. Looking at the shoppers and the shop windows was also part of the process of learning about the world, an expansion of the field of the visible and the cognitive for the 1930s urban *flâneuse* which echoed the panoramic cinema experience.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the draw of Oxford Street, Hollywood stars and movie styles were used in attempts to attract customers to the less-favoured parts of town as well. The Nag's Head section of the Holloway Road in north London was one such centre. At the turn of the century this area had been quite prosperous (albeit not very fashionable according to Lupin, the rebellious son of Mr Pooter in George and Weedon Grossmith's *The Diary of a Nobody*, 1892) but by the 1930s it had declined.[44] Only alternate tube trains stopped at Holloway Road after 1932, so it was almost as easy for shoppers from the suburbs to go to the West End. The notorious Campbell Bunk, reputed to be the most criminal and poorest street in north London, was half-a-mile away.[45] Yet yards from Campbell Bunk, in the heart of this depressed working class area was one of the most extravagantly decorated, atmospheric cinemas in London, the Finsbury Park Astoria. Built in 1929, with 3,000 seats for which all-day tickets cost as little as fourpence, this exotic and luxurious venue had a retro-oriental foyer with Byzantine cupola, Moorish fountains, Bengali friezes and Baroque mirrors.[46] So international film culture penetrated here too – even if in oriental vernacular, and even if the buildings "smelt of poor people", as the Camden Town cinema visited by Anna did in Rhys's novel.[47] By the mid-1930s American modernist décor was in the ascendant, and in 1936 on the Holloway Road itself, Marks and Spencer confidently launched what it called a 'super-store', while across the road, an ultra modern Gaumont Picture Palace, one of the few in Britain designed by American cinema architect Howard Crane, opened its doors in 1937.

Both of these venues were yards away from Jones Brothers, which at the turn of

the century had been a very successful middle-range department store, but by the mid-1930s was struggling to survive, despite having been taken over in 1927 by Selfridges Provincial Group. In an attempt to revive the fortunes of the store, Gordon Selfridge Junior, managing director of Jones Brothers and son of the founder of Selfridges, commissioned a survey to report on the state of the local market and advise on the store's image and advertising methods. The result was a comprehensive report submitted in October 1936, which attributed most of the steep decline in sales over the preceding decade to the insensitivity of Jones Brothers to changing fashions.[48] One of the examples cited was the astonishing 82% decline in the sale of women's underwear, explained in part by 'the tendency for women to wear fewer and fewer underclothes' and in part by the rise of the neighbouring Marks and Spencer.[49] The overriding message of the recommendations proposed by the marketing consultants in their report was that the *modernity* of the store should be promoted. The new slogan was to be "There is always something new at Jones Brothers". In order to demonstrate the modernization of the enterprise there needed to be "a constant flow of exhibitions, demonstrations and free attractions… [and] the installation of a free cinema which… would keep a steady stream of people passing through the store."[50] On the fashion front, the store was advised to stock American shoes, stockings and dresses which, the report pointed out, were increasingly popular in Britain because they were stylish, well cut and cheap (even though 'the quality and finish may be very bad'). These items would boost sales because:

> young women are becoming more and more insistent on smart clothing, and this applies equally to the artisan class. An illustration of this …is that the working girl insists on wearing fine stockings undaunted by the fact that they will only last about a week. She can buy a good imitation of an expensive stocking for about 1/- and she prefers to buy a new pair every week than 'invest' in something more durable.[51]

The promotion of American goods, the report continued, would "give the advertising a powerful and original new story". This was required in order for the store to survive the competition from local multiples and the appeal of Oxford Street.

The Mississippi at Jones Brothers

At the centre of the new commercial strategy lay a recognition of the need to attract a new generation of women consumers to the store – young working women in particular. Jones Brothers was urged to do some 'bold thinking' and to position America and the modern as central features of its new publicity campaign.[52] Among the policy decisions stimulated by the marketing report was a special Christmas attraction launched in 1937. In addition to the normal Father Christmas for "the kiddies", the store presented a remarkable reconstruction of a Mississippi show boat, complete with accompanying "Uncle Tom" and "darky" musicians who sang and strummed banjos.[53] At the end of a trip in the boat down a simulated river, advertised as "full of fun and excitement", each visitor received a "surprise gift" from Uncle

Tom. The evidence about this tantalising event is scanty. Whether the "darkies" were hired from the small local population of Africans, West Indians and black Americans, many of them students, or from the indigenous mixed-race families of the dock areas of east London (from whom were recruited the extras for films about Africa and Empire made in the UK film studios), or whether they were blacked-up whites, is not known.[54] What is clear is that the performance was intended to increase the flow of customers to Jones Brothers, and that black men and the allusions to the Hollywood movie *Show Boat*, released in London in 1936, were considered a major attraction. They articulated the special appeal of America and the modern and were part of the design to draw in local female customers.

At the time the Uncle Tom appellation was benign (it was not to acquire connotations of political accommodation until 1960s) and would have immediately evoked Paul Robeson, the celebrated and charismatic American Negro star of *Show Boat*. Robeson, resident in London from the 1920s because he found the atmosphere consistently less racist than in New York, was extremely well known to British cinema, theatre, concert and radio audiences during this period. Between 1935-40 he starred in six British feature films and received top billing in each. Among them was *Big Fella* which, in the week after the Christmas show at Jones Brothers, was screened half-a-mile away at the luxury Mayfair Cinema in the Caledonian Road. In 1937 Robeson was ranked tenth in the *Motion Picture Herald* list of the British cinema going public's most popular film personalities and voted the most popular singer on British radio. During this period he also played the lead part in several theatre performances, among them C.L.R. James' play about the revolutionary *Toussaint L'Ouverture*. At the same time he was becoming increasingly overt in his support for the left and anti-fascism. In the months before the Jones Brothers *Show Boat* tableau, Robeson was giving concerts with a popular political repertoire, sometimes as often as three a day, in ordinary music halls and cinemas like the Finsbury Park Astoria and the Holloway Gaumont. As Ron Ramdin noted: 'In these centres of working-class entertainment he was able to reach vast new audiences who understood the emotional depth of his folk-songs and Negro spirituals. Here Robeson touched the pulse of the British people'.[55]

There is no doubt that Robeson made an extraordinary impact on British culture between the wars. This was manifest across the range, from his performance of Othello to the dubious *Show Boat* tribute enacted at Jones Brothers. His stardom and particularly his American accent – heard as often on the radio as in the movies and inseparable from the celebrated and emotionally-charged timbre of his singing voice – evoked for English audiences a compelling identification with *American* culture. Robeson personified a complex range of attributes from the heroic to the abject, from the modern to the noble primitive. Bill Schwarz has suggested that he provided a 'potent means by which – for white English men and women – the possibilities of the modern world came to be… recognised. … English memories of becoming modern, and of first becoming aware of race, can still work through the figure of Robeson.'[56] Robeson was the single most significant black figure (indeed often the only one known) for most ordinary English people in the 1930s. Hence perceptions

of him made an important contribution to the prismatic understanding of blackness both then and later during the war years. The more nuanced English view during this period, in which blacks were seen as primarily American and therefore *modern*, must be contrasted with perceptions and practices in America itself, where the everyday experience of race was inseparable from its national history of slavery.

The Significance of Accent

Robeson's speech and accent were factors which contributed significantly to the British perception of blacks as inherently part of the landscape of the modern world. The connotations of American accentuation and speech rhythms and the ascendancy of American slang became increasingly contentious in Britain during the inter-war period. The resonance of this different way of speaking English was rooted in the influential narratives and aesthetic of American movies, which were consistently more popular than British-made films among working-class audiences throughout the 1930s and 1940s. The success of Hollywood cinema during this period was based on its idealism, its depictions of glamour and abundance, and its democratic story lines which featured ordinary men and women in a sympathetic light. And, of course, these ordinary heroes spoke American. The structure of feeling, the utopian sensibility and style of language, present in this genre of entertainment has been contrasted with the flatness and rigidity of most contemporary British films, in which characters knew their place and spoke either mannered upper-class English or caricatured Cockney.[57] The enunciation of English class-specific speech in English movies served to reinforce the stigmatisation of those among the British population whose speech was not "standard". It contributed to the defence of social hierarchy.[58]

But the cultural distinctions based on how people spoke (comparable in some ways to the American distinctions based on race) were to generate their own opposition. American speech patterns heard in the movies provided the first alternative to local or BBC "Oxford" English for most British people. American accents and phrasing were often adopted both as a fashion and a form of resistance to snobbish class-bound speech codes. There are many examples of the discomfort of the educated classes in the face of the rejection of "correct" English. As one schoolmaster concerned about the 'American nasal twang' put it: 'either ban talking films or have them made by people who can speak … the King's English'.[59] In fact the process was under way even before the talkies arrived. Expressions used in the subtitles of American films like 'OK', 'kid' and 'sex appeal' were enthusiastically embraced.[60] In 1927 (before the talkies) a Conservative MP complained: 'They talk American, think American, dream American. We have several million people, mostly women, who to all intents and purposes, are temporary American citizens'.[61] Despite the exaggeration, by 1936, the year of *Show Boat*, young working women up and down the country, consumers of the same narratives of romance and opportunity, were speaking 'cinema American' to each other as part of a culture of youth and opposition.[62]

Parodic American speech seemed to promise the possibility of self-realisation, and even perhaps collective empowerment. Part of the tourism of the mind and the

expansion of cognitive and imaginary horizons, these tongues of elsewhere were also the accents of song and swing and therefore of dance and the newly enlivened body. The singing and speaking voice, although clearly conveying complex meanings through speech, can also be argued to have a different modal significance as pre-verbal communication, as sound. Paddy Scannell, in relation to the technical transformations wrought by radio during this period, has suggested that voice was '*the* expressive register of being'.[63] What is clear is that the semiotics of voice have been singularly unattended to in the critical literature of modernity, in which the focus has been overwhelmingly on the expanding *scopic* regimes of the twentieth century: on observing and appearing; on the visual. What I am suggesting here is that the quality of inter-war American speech – that is to say accent, timbre, song, linguistic playfulness and disregard for the constraints of formal (British) English – and its association with both the cinematic experience and the idea of a better elsewhere, played an important part in laying the groundwork for the particular historical reception of black American soldiers by white English women during the Second World War. The evocative American speech patterns used by black as well as white GIs contributed during this conjuncture to a relative diminution of race and the visual as cultural signifiers.

White Women and Racial Others: Reaction and Identification

This is not to suggest however that race and racism were insignificant factors during the late 1930s. On the contrary, precisely at the time that racial difference was being reshaped by popular entertainment cultures it was *also* becoming increasingly politically salient. Responses were polarising. In this context women's fascination with cultural difference and their sexual interest in racial others was not only connected to fantasies of abroad and the constraints of Englishness, it was also often a self-reflexive act of defiance in a social climate in which the repudiation of racial others was increasingly widespread. (In the context of 1930s Europe, 'racial others' of course also encompassed Jews). This ambiguous dynamic was even detected, in a muddled way, by racial supremacists themselves. For instance, Henry Champly, author of a prurient travelogue entitled *White Women, Coloured Men* (published in 1936 and much reprinted) tracked the growing desire of white women for black men in Europe and around the world. He feared that miscegenation would bring about the downfall not only of the white race but the whole human race and attributed the problem to white men's "uncultivated sexual side" and to white women's fascination with the unknown and "legendary" which drives them "to prefer *even Negroes*".[64] Unexpectedly, the author also blamed the influence of commerce and the growing fashion for sun-bathing:

> The windows of our most up-to-date shops display… wax-dolls in swim-suits… with their faces, arms and legs dyed a deep ochre. *That is the ideal of fashion which is preparing white women to accept the idea of cross breeding.*[65]

Paranoid fears of this kind generated their own opposition and indeed even promoted empathy and identification with blacks on the part of some women. This process

of reaction was articulated in both polemical and fictional form by some of the figures from the 1930s to whom I have already referred. Thus Jean Rhys's white heroine Anna, who preferred Oxford Street to Camden Town, compared the cold anonymity of her life in London with her childhood in the Caribbean, where she had felt at home among the black people who cared for her and inducted her into the mysteries of the landscape and life. Anna remembered 'always wanting to be black' despite, or perhaps because of, the opposition of her snobbish and rejecting white step-mother who accused her of 'growing more like a nigger every day'.[66] Nancy Cunard's much more adversarial and conscious intervention into racial politics seems also to have been fuelled, in part, by a long battle with her racist and disinterested, American-born, mother and the people of her social class in London. Her identification with the socially excluded also shaped her relationship with black American Henry Crowder and endorsed her commitment to the Negro cause, as it was then called.[67] Jessica Mitford, who eloped with Esmond Romilly to Spain to support the International Brigades, was another upper-class woman who rebelled against her background. In her account of her growing commitment to communism, as an isolated adolescent in an autocratic family of Mosely supporters in the 1930s, she referred to her fantasies of "love-at-first-sight with some Sicilian peasant, Greek shepherd or swarthy African".[68]

The responses of these women to race and difference were composed of a complex interplay of reason, reaction, identification and empathy, set in a context in which abroad and the foreign seemed to represent new freedoms. The voices of Rhys, Cunard, Mitford and others like them, should not, however, be understood only in relation to the personal and biographical. These women were also part of a broader political opposition to the injustice of racist laws and practices, a movement which extended across the social spectrum and included within it working girls who shopped at Selfridges and 'fell in love' with Paul Robeson, not only for his beauty and his voice, but also for his left-wing politics and his opposition to the growth of fascism.[69] So the appeal of racial others was part of a rational contingent anti-fascist political stand. This political commitment was to be boosted at the beginning of the war, with the awareness of the contradiction between the Allied nations' condemnation of German racism and the continuing existence of American race laws.[70]

The fragments of these biographies and the narratives of inter-racial interest, also illustrate more complex and perhaps unconscious processes of psychic identification and realignment: they indicate the growing identification and empathy of white women *as women* with the colonised and excluded racial other. This is a dynamic which can be uncovered in other historical and geo-political instances of feminist consciousness as well (for instance in the anti-slavery movement), but it has been remarkably absent from psychoanalytic commentaries which have focused predominantly on the construction of blacks as "bad objects", on whom whites project negative feelings. Very little work has been done on the *attraction* of otherness. The empathetic identification of white women with black men and the construction of black men by white women as desirable – has also been neglected by post-colonial critics and historians of race, for whom the focus has justifiably been on the more injurious

legacies of difference. Yet the psychic and political forces at work in these relationships have had wide-ranging as well as contradictory repercussions. In the domain of sexual politics and everyday life, a romance with an excluded other man may enable the white woman to diminish her own social marginality – but only in the context of the relationship itself. The spin-off for the black man is an enhancement of his status in the broader community of men, both black and white. Another outcome of white women's desire for culturally and racially-different men is to force into social consciousness and onto the critical agenda a more assertive and contrary female sexuality than commonly acknowledged. This was particularly so during the middle decades of the century when transactions such as these will have undermined some of the privilege and authority of white men. The half conscious processes of identification and the juggling of power in this nexus of exchanges will have contributed to the wider democratisation and modernisation of socio-sexual relationships between men and women in this century.

The West Indian author, Ras Makonnen, described a comparable dynamic in the social encounters of the 1950s: "We recognised that the dedication of some of the [white] girls to our cause was an expression of equal rights for women. One way of rejecting the oppression of men was to associate with blacks."[71] White women's relationships with black men in the 1930s and 1940s were also a form of proto-feminism. They were expressive of a rebellion against the constraints of femininity as well as Englishness.

Different Modernities: the Contradictions of Americanisation

The anxieties of English educators and intellectuals about what was perceived as the excessive and negative influence of American popular culture has been well rehearsed in the critical histories of the inter-war period.[72] What is significant here is that the spectre of Americanisation – in this instance America's cultural conquest of Europe though Hollywood cinema – was considered by many influential thinkers in the 1930s to hold most dangers for young women. Socialist novelist John Summerfield expressed this concern characteristically in his 1936 reference to "silly girls" with their "synthetic Hollywood dreams, pathetic silk stockings and lipsticks, their foolish stirrings".[73] J. B. Priestley, in his lament about the influence of America, also implied that the most susceptible subjects were young women: "factory girls" who 'want to look like actresses'.[74] These anxieties about the colonising force of Hollywood and mass culture and the vulnerability of women were bolstered by the perceived diminution of men's authority in the home and workplace and the feminisation of culture. So it is pertinent that among the few inter-war intellectuals prepared to acknowledge the pleasures of consumption and the cinematic experience were a number of women, including Elizabeth Bowen, Winifred Holtby, Vera Brittan and Virginia Woolf. But the dominant voices from across the political spectrum were critical and anxious.

Underlying such criticisms are assumptions about how cultural influence works. Essentially, the model is one of an easily manipulated subject and a strategically

developed text. These pessimistic theories about cultural processes are not confined to the critics of the 1930s. Although generated predominantly during this period about the impact of mass American culture, most famously by the cultural analysts associated with the Frankfurt School, similar critical presuppositions are apparent in the writing of much more recent theorists and historians of commercial and entertainment culture. Thus Charles Eckert, in his richly detailed exegesis on the influence of cinema on commerce in the 1930s, 'The Carole Lombard in Macy's Window', has argued that 'films functioned as living display windows for fashion, music, emotion and the life-style of the middle and upper classes'. His thesis was that the cinema was part of a carefully planned strategy: a 'celluloid imperialism' designed to 'manipulate' 'captive audiences'. In this dystopian vision, messages are transmitted and received in unfractured unfettered way.[75] Victoria de Grazia's more recent history of Americanisation in the years before and after World War Two carries some of the same problematic assumptions. She has argued that the United States imposed a 'sociable market' on Europe over the course of this period which defined European modernity and domesticity.[76] Underlying accounts of this kind is the presupposition of a mimetic uptake of American styles, behaviour and values; of an easy, untrammelled influence transmitted to consumers throughout the world.

American films, stars and music did indeed have a powerful presence in Britain during the inter-war years. Commercial culture was saturated with the imagery of cinema and this predominantly American presence was materially mapped onto the streets, bodies and the imagination in the ways I have shown. Nevertheless, an analysis of how this influence operated, how "America" was read and made sense of and acted on, points to a more problematic and contrary picture. Cultural colonisation is transmitted through a range of discursive registers and its impact is extremely uneven. There are contradictory legacies. It backfires. Thus in relation to the meaning of racial difference, Britain did not simply "follow the USA". Different histories produce different outcomes and "the Negro" in Britain during the inter-war period, although still discriminated against in multiple ways, was nevertheless associated increasingly with the modern and with the Hollywood landscape of the new world, rather than with narratives of empire or America's internal memories of slavery.

There are also implications here for the way in which modernity has been conceptualised. What emerges from this fractured picture is that modern ideas and the experience of being modern in the twentieth century, which include relations between "races" and perceptions of racial difference, have not developed in a uniform way across the globe.[77] Nor has modernity been all-embracing *within* English society. Rooted in a broader cosmopolitan consciousness, whose existence and structure were shaped in part through a history of conflict and tension with dominant conservative and nationalist traditions within British culture, English modernity has been a distinctive formation.[78] And pivotal to it have been the complex and contradictory fantasies of "elsewhere", the new, the more democratic and the sexually free. This more utopian and insurrectionary version of modernity is at odds not only with British traditionalism, but also with what Alison Light has identified as the mood of *conservative* modernity of the inter-war period.[79] The strand of modern

experience explored in this article was not only more cosmopolitan and racially diverse, it was also articulated through popular consumerism and the cinema and dance cultures of the moment – through mass culture. However, in common with Light's thesis, my argument also confirms that women played a central part in the social reconfigurations of the period. The cultural response of English women to racial others which emerged during this conjuncture was ultimately both a product of Americanisation and a critical repudiation of it. Paradoxically the white working girls who wanted to look like movie stars, and about whom the left so despaired, in the end, through their defiant relationships with their 'coloured sweethearts', contributed significantly, if indirectly, to the struggle against American race policies and the expedient wartime supporters of racism in Britain. At the vanguard of English modernity, these young women and their fantasies of a better life laid the ground work for a more liberal cosmopolitan culture, one which anticipated the post-war "emancipation of emotions" and the escalating miscegenation of white, black and mixed-race British at the end of the twentieth century.[80]

Notes

[1] Sally Belfrage, *Un-American Activities: A Memoir of the Fifties*, HarperCollins, New York, 1994, p. 166.

[2] Graham Smith, *When Jim Crow Met John Bull: Black American Soldiers in World War II Britain*, IB Tauris, London, 1987, p. 204.

[3] According to Tariq Madood, et. al., *Ethnic Minorities in Britain*, Policy Studies Institute, London, 1997, 50 per cent of British-born men of Aftro-Caribbean descent now have white partners, p. 30.

[4] Quoted in Juliet Gardiner, *'Over Here': The GIs in Wartime Britain*, Collins and Brown, London, 1992, p. 155.

[5] Les Back, 'Nazism and the Call of the Jitterbug', in Helen Thomas (ed.), *Dance in the City*, Macmillan, London, 1997, p. 190; Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

[6] Quoted in John Costello, *Love, Sex and War*, Collins, London, 1985, p. 319.

[7] *Picture Post*, (PP1486), vol. 20, no. 3, 17 July 1943.

[8] Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 188, see also pp. 121-3.

[9] Bill Schwarz, 'Black Metropolis, White England', in Mica Nava and Alan O'Shea (eds.), *Modern Times: Reflections on a Century of English Modernity*, Routledge, London, 1996, p. 197.

[10] Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

[11] See for example the 1998 BBC television production of *Windrush* directed by Mike and Trevor Phillips. Paul Gilroy describes the clubs in *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, Hutchinson, London, 1987.

12 Keith Williams, *British Writers and the Media 1930-45*, Macmillan, London, 1996.

13 See Edward Said, whose influential *Orientalism*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1978, opened up this debate in relation to the Middle East. See also Mica Nava, 'The Cosmopolitanism of Commerce and the Allure of Difference: Selfridges, the Russian Ballet and the Tango 1911-1914', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1998, pp. 163-196.

14 Paul Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1980.

15 From Auden's journal cited in H. Porter, 'Dreams of Leaving', *Guardian*, 11 July 1998.

16 Diana Souhami, *Mrs Keppel and her Daughter*, Flamingo, London, 1997.

17 See Cunard's attack on her mother in 'Black Man and White Ladyship' [1932], in Bonnie Kime Scott (ed.), *The Gender of Modernism*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1990. See also Anne Chisholm, *Nancy Cunard*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1981.

18 This changed towards the end of the thirties when a number of literary figures actually visited the United States and favourably described their perceptions, see for example Vera Brittain, cited in Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, *The Long Weekend* [1940], Cardinal, London, 1991, p. 435.

19 There was some overlap of course, for instance Elizabeth Bowen wrote about the pleasures of the picture palaces (see Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 79) *and* about Europe and foreign men (see her *House in Paris* [1935], Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1946).

20 Pearl Jephcott, *Girls Growing Up*, Faber and Faber, London, 1942; Jeffrey Richards, *The Age of the Dream Palace: Cinema and Society in Britain 1930-1939*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1984; Williams, *op. cit.*

21 Forsyth Hardy (ed.), *Grierson on the Movies*, Faber and Faber, London, 1981, p. 74 (from a review published in 1932). Siegfried Kracauer makes the same point in *The Mass Ornament*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1995.

22 Neal Gabler, *An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood*, Doubleday, New York, 1988. Alexander Korda, director of the most successful British film of the 1930s, *The Private Life of Henry VIII*, was also Jewish from eastern Europe. From 1938 the most widely consumed imagery of Englishness in England, *Picture Post*, was produced predominantly by central European refugee photographers and journalists.

23 For further discussion of the utopian in Hollywood cinema see: Richard Dyer, 'Entertainment and Utopia', in his *Only Entertainment*, Routledge, London, 1992, and Alan O'Shea, 'What a Day for a Daydream: Modernity, Cinema and the Popular Imagination in the Late Twentieth Century', in Mica Nava and Alan O'Shea (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp.239-268.

24   See also Sally Alexander, 'Becoming a Woman in London in the 1920s and '30s', in her *Becoming a Woman*, Virago, London, 1994, pp. 203-224.

25   Graves and Hodge, *op. cit.*, p. 385.

26   Eric Hobsbawm, 'Jazz comes to Europe', in his *Uncommon People*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1998, p. 267.

27   Les Back, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

28   Graves and Hodge, *op cit.*, p. 386.

29   See for example the dilemmas of Andrew Warde, 'Dancing Around Meaning (and the Meaning Around Dance)' in Thomas (ed.) *op. cit.*, pp. 3-20.

30   Gavin Weightman and Steve Humphries, *The Making of Modern London 1914-1938*, Sidgewick and Jackson, London, 1984, p. 34.

31   It was also claimed that Edwina Mountbatten had an affair with the Afro-American Paul Robeson, see Martin Duberman, *Paul Robeson*, Bodley Head, London, 1989, pp. 618-9.

32   Jephcott, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

33   Hobsbawm, *op. cit.*, p.268.

34   See: J. B. Priestley, *English Journey* [1934], Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1977, and Mica Nava, 'Modernity's Disavowal: Women, the City and the Department Store', in Nava and O'Shea (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 38-76.

35   Frank Mort, 'Social and Symbolic Fathers and Sons in Postwar Britain', *Journal of British Studies*, vol.38, no. 3, July 1999, (forthcoming).

36   Quoted in Back, *op. cit.*, p. 175. Paul Robeson took a more essentialist line and attributed the development of modern American dance steps and the expressivity of black dancers to the heritage of Africa, Duberman, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

37   Weightman and Humphries, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

38   Richards, *op. cit.*, chapter 1.

39   See Mica Nava, 'Modernity Tamed? Women Shoppers and the Rationalisation of Consumption in the Interwar Period', *Australian Journal of Communication*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1995, pp. 1-19.

40   Selfridge's and Co. Ltd. (Editorial Rooms), 'The Greatest Shopping Street in the World', 11 December 1933. For further information about Gordon Selfridge's syndicated press columns and his cosmopolitan modernism, see Nava, 'Cosmopolitanism', *op cit*.

41   Selfridges' advert in the *Jewish Chronicle*, 17 April 1936.

42   Rhys, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

43   *Ibid.*, p. 136.

44 George and Weedon Grossmith, *The Diary of a Nobody* [1892], Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1965.

45 Jerry White, *The Worst Street in North London: Campbell Bunk, Islington, Between the Wars*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1986.

46 David Atwell, *Cathedrals of the Movies*, Architectural Press, London, 1980.

47 Rhys, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

48 F.C. Pritchard, Wood and Partners Limited, *Report on Jones Brothers (Holloway) Limited*, October 1936, Islington Library Local History Archive. The report included a detailed analysis of the social decline of housing and transport in the surrounding district and a review of the social class of customers based on the coding of addresses and census information about family size. 50% of customers were estimated to be working class.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 34.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 50.

51 *Ibid.*, p.53.

52 *Minutes*, Jones Brothers Board Meeting, 29 July 1936, John Lewis Partnership Archive, Stevenage, no. 604.

53 *Islington Gazette*, 17 December 1937.

54 Since this was first published Les Back has pointed out to me that during this period there was a night bus from Soho to the Holloway Rd. It is therefore possible that the banjo players were African-American jazz musicians who worked in Soho clubs and lived in the cheap accommodation around the Holloway Rd.

55 Quoted in Stephen Bourne, *Black in the British Frame: Black People in British Film and Television 1896-1996*, Cassell, London and Washington, 1998, p. 244.

56 Schwarz, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

57 See Dyer, *op. cit.*; Richards, *op. cit.*; Williams, *op. cit.*; Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, Vintage Books, New York, 1994.

58 See Alan Ross, 'U and Non-U', in Nancy Mitford (ed.), *Noblesse Oblige*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1956, pp. 9-32.

59 Quoted in Audrey Field, *Picture Palace*, Century Books, London, 1974 p. 111.

60 Graves and Hodge, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-140.

61 *Daily Express*, cited in Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

62 Winifred Holtby, *South Riding* [1936], Fontana/Collins, Glasgow, 1981, p. 35.

63 Inaugural Lecture, University of Westminster, 17 June 1998.

64 Henry Champly, *White Women, Coloured Men*, John Long, London, 1936. Champly's ideas about black masculinity echo those of nineteenth century traveller

and scholar Richard Burton, see Nava, 'Cosmopolitanism', *op. cit*., pp. 174-175 and pp. 264-265.

65   *Ibid.* p. 276.

66   Rhys, *op. cit*., pp. 45, 54.

67   Chisholm, *op. cit*.

68   Jessica Mitford, *Hons and Rebels*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1960, p. 97. Mitford later married an American Jew.

69   Appendix 1, 'The Paul Robeson Letters', in Bourne, *op. cit*., pp. 244-255.

70   Smith, *op. cit*.

71   Quoted in Gilroy, *op. cit*., p. 163.

72   See: John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses*, Faber, London, 1992; Dick Hebdige, 'Towards a Cartography of Taste 1935-62', in his *Hiding in the Light: on Images and Things*, Routledge, London, 1988; Williams, *op. cit*.

73   Quoted in Alexander, *op. cit*. p. 204.

74   Priestley, *op. cit*.

75   Charles Eckert 'The Carol Lombard in Macy's Window' in Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog (eds.), *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body*, Routledge, London, 1990, pp.103-4, 120.

76   Victoria de Grazia, 'The Great Detergent Wars of the 1960s: How American Multi-Nationals Stepped Over the Thresholds of European Households', paper presented at "Paths to Mass Consumption", ESRC Research Seminar Series 'Commercial Cultures: Economies, Practices, Spaces', University of East London, 20 March 1998.

77   David Feldman makes a similar point about English Jews: 'Was Modernity Good for Jews?', in Brian Cheyette and Laura Marcus (eds.), *Modernity, Culture and 'the Jew'*, Polity, Cambridge, 1998, pp. 171-187.

78   See Nava, 'Cosmopolitanism'1998, *op. cit*., for further discussion.

79   Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism Between the Wars*, Routledge, London, 1991.

80   Cas Wouters, "How Strange to Ourselves Are Our Feelings of Superiority and Inferiority?", *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 15, no.1, 1998, pp. 131-150. See also Mica Nava, "Diana and Race: Romance and the Reconfiguration of the Nation", in Adrian Kear and Deborah Steinberg (eds.), *Mourning Diana*, Routledge, London, 1999 (forthcoming).