

Before Blackness, Beyond Diaspora: Cosmopolitanism in Liverpool's Age of Sail

If there is one phenomenon that characterizes contemporary forms of globalization, it might be this: movement. As Arjun Appadurai once evocatively put it, “people, commodities and capital are increasingly chasing each other around the globe.” And if there is one phenomenon that is said to be the basis for the formation of diasporas, it is this: movement, specifically migration--forced or voluntary. Likewise, if there is one thing that is said to correlate with cosmopolitanism, it is this: movement, specifically itinerancy. Scholars across disciplines mobilize movement to show the ways that Place, and the forms of rooted identities that are said to sediment there, are either regrettably reinforced or happily transcended.

In this paper, I study the way that Blacks in contemporary Liverpool, England, use Place (and the forms of Movement through which they constitute it) to construct themselves as cosmopolitan. They do so employing a history of “the global” in which they actively participated. This is not the contemporary form of “globalization” in which worlds are connected through the integration of financial systems and markets, and through the revolution in communications technologies. Rather, the “global space” that concerns Black Liverpoolians relates directly to the worlds of which Atlanticist historians and cultural critics now write; this is the global space created by seafaring. Recent scholarship on seafaring--particularly as it has concerned *Black* seamen--alternately construct them as the ultimate diasporics or the ultimate cosmopolitans. While the ethnographic material I present also centers on seafaring--for Liverpool was a seaport of premier importance to Atlantic history--I analyze it toward different ends: first to argue against the privileging of the sea over the port as the premier site of movement, and relatedly, as the site of exemplary cosmopolitanism. Second, and more importantly, I argue for more critical attention to how cosmopolitanism actually gets invoked by the people who claim it, and toward what ends. That is, I do not simply want to argue for the inclusion of Black Liverpoolians at the port as an example of what Bruce Robbins has called “actually existing cosmopolitanism”. Rather, I want to call attention to the powerful ways they invoke cosmopolitanism--and the particular forms of movement it celebrates, and the forms it shuns--to construct difference. In so doing, I hope to show that cosmopolitanism--like “diaspora” before it--may be embedded in some of the same power relations that it seeks to answer. Therefore cosmopolitanism--again, like ‘diaspora’ before it--may not provide the antidote to narrowly construed forms of identity that often dominate political arenas.

There have been three failings in African diasporic studies in my view. First, in collecting places of settlement of African-descendants and of Black community life, African diasporic studies have rendered Place inert. African diasporic studies have emphasized ‘race’ so much, that they have missed the opportunity to study the ways Black social actors produce Place as a basis of subjectivity, identity, and community formation, and as an axis of power relations. Second, (as I’ve argued elsewhere) African diasporic studies have fixated on migration--whether forced or voluntary--at the expense of other forms of movement, and indeed, at the expense of studying the cultural construction of movement itself. Lastly, and perhaps most seriously, African diasporic studies have unwittingly promoted a kind of provincialism that isolates Black people from everybody else in the world--with the important and obvious exception of White people, who have by social, historical and political necessity, always been present as a frame of reference in these analyses--whether in the foreground or background. Where is everybody else? African diasporic studies have been provincial insofar as, as a field of inquiry, it has not sought to uncover past and present formations of identity and community in which racial identity was not paramount; it has been provincial insofar as it has not encouraged the study of those histories of Black identification with people who are neither Black nor White.

Under the rubric of Cosmopolitanism we might begin to correct this latter failing. Although the earliest proponent of cosmopolitanism is found in the Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant, who argued for a ‘universal humanism’, his is a version tainted by a touch of racism. David Harvey has recently described it as having a distinctly sinister side, for Kant’s remarks on universal man are couched in “all manner of prejudicial remarks concerning the customs and habits of different populations.”<sup>1</sup> Contemporary scholars eschew universalist approaches to defining cosmopolitanism and the ethics,

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<sup>1</sup> Harvey 2000:533

morals, and politics it should support.<sup>2</sup> But they generally agree that cosmopolitanism marks a sensibility that transcends the provincialism and absolutism of singularly construed identities--racial, ethnic, and especially national. The urgent search for actually existing cosmopolitanism is animated by the belief that cosmopolitanism may be the necessary component in building movements to bring about "justice on a global scale"<sup>3</sup>.

The recent re-incarnation of cosmopolitanism coincides with the growth of an inter-disciplinary Atlanticist literature that has returned to Kant's century, finding 'actually existing' examples of his universal humanism, so to speak, at work in the activities of Black seafarers who now find themselves situated, albeit posthumously, at the center of contemporary inquiries--or more appropriately, "celebrations"--of cosmopolitanism, in addition to "diaspora." Scholars such as Marcus Rediker, Jeffrey Bolster and Paul Gilroy are unearthing the histories of these Black men who, in their capacity as sailors, effected connections among dispersed Black populations, producing political communities beyond nation-state boundaries in so doing. In his recent book "Black Jacks: African Americans in the Age of Sail," Jeffrey Bolster vividly describes this process at work.

*"The constant movement of storytelling black sailors became an integral part of the process through which various blacks created a sense of both connectedness and individuality within their new black ethnicity. Fundamental to diasporic identity was the recognition that all New World blacks...inhabited a common ground closed to whites...But time after time, in seaport after seaport, vessels arrived with strange black men who led local blacks to the revelation, during lengthy port stays, that those strangers inhabited a definably black cosmos of dance, spirituality, and resistance to slavery; and that the African identity they imported had broad applicability."*<sup>4</sup>

While Bolster grants to Black seamen an affirmative role in forging *diasporic* connections in the racialized world of the 18th century, Marcus Rediker's emphasis is on the inherently cosmopolitan character of the seamen's world more broadly. He writes: "In an age when most men and women in England and America lived in small, clustered local communities, the early-eighteenth century sailor inhabited a world huge, boundless and international..."<sup>5</sup> The Age of Sail conjured up in these accounts is a distinctly romantic, and decidedly masculine world of both politics and adventure, for here Black seamen are sent *out* into the world--truly, as if The World, were only accessible by sea, as if The World were only reachable through the actual travel to and occupation of other places. The port is reduced to a foil; it is important only as the place where a seaman arrives, and then, as the place he triumphantly leaves behind.

Relatedly, as Paul Gilroy, wrote in the Black Atlantic--ships were "the living means by which the points within [the] Atlantic world were joined. They were mobile elements that stood for the shifting spaces in between the fixed places that they connected"<sup>6</sup>. So ships move, and ports stand still. Ships serve the same function in his new book "Between Camps: Race, Identity and Nationalism at the End of the Color Line", where he suggests that the ship and the experiences of sea travel in the 18th century promoted a fundamentally different ecology of belonging than would be found on land, where he says territorial sovereignty reigns supreme. So it is in Stable, Fixed Places where people get "rooted," while the ship allowed some Blacks to assert a defiant "rootlessness," which he sees as the starting point of their cosmopolitan, outward bound orientations and identifications--beyond both race and nation. Gilroy uses seafaring to hail both diaspora and cosmopolitanism, which he argues are "ready alternatives to the stern discipline of primordial kinship and rooted belonging." It is the "sublime force of the ocean," he says, that thwarts the fundamental power of territory in determining identity.<sup>7</sup> In another moment, Gilroy equates the term "local" with parochialism, and counters both of these to "cosmopolitan commitments."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Clifford 1998

<sup>3</sup>Robbins 1998:12

<sup>4</sup>Bolster 1997:41.

<sup>5</sup>Rediker 1987:10.

<sup>6</sup>Gilroy 1993:16

<sup>7</sup>Gilroy 2000:123.

<sup>8</sup>Gilroy 2000:289

As fraught with contradiction as I think Black Liverpoolians' articulation of a cosmopolitan subjectivity is, it nevertheless provides a valuable counter to the provincialisms of scholarly Diaspora discourse I spoke of earlier, while also highlighting the impending dangers of Cosmopolitan discourse, especially those that suggest that that subjectivity must be outward-bound, and can't possibly arise from Place, or "rootedness".

Yet, with these impressive political actions as the standard-bearers, it becomes exceedingly hard to spot 'actually existing' cosmopolitanisms that can measure up. In this paper, I pursue the question of whether cosmopolitanism--whether of the past or present--must necessarily be as momentous and transformative on a global scale as was the creation of the Black Atlantic world, to take one example, or as momentous as the promotion of "justice" on a similarly global scale, as Bruce Robbins advocates. Can cosmopolitanism effect transformation on a momentous, but decidedly "local" scale?

Just as the discourses on diaspora and cosmopolitanism have recently found their common ground at sea, converging especially on the Black seaman, so too do they meet in Black Liverpoolians' narratives about their history as a community. The tenor of their narratives is not one bit less romantic than that effected in the Atlanticist scholarship I've just cited. Moreover, Black Liverpoolians' construction of their seafaring past seems inspired by the same kind of critique of narrowly construed Identities that has inspired both Atlanticist scholarship and the search among political theorists and others for 'actually existing' cosmopolitanisms. The distinct contribution that Black Liverpoolians stand to make here is not in confirming those accounts and supporting their agendas; their contribution lay in questioning the way these scholars privilege "rootlessness" in the making of cosmopolitan subjectivities. Seaport families in Liverpool forged a 'local' community defined by an ethical worldliness, one that preceded the rise of a distinctly Black identity in that city. Their ethical worldliness was engendered by the intimate relation, indeed, between the sea and the port. Their vision of cosmopolitanism refutes the implicit separation that Atlanticist scholarship makes between, on the one hand, the dynamically fluid movement comprising the global--signified by ships at sea--and, on the other hand, "the local", or the port, which this scholarship constitutes as hopelessly still and fixed.

A sweeping historical overview is necessary here. Liverpool was, first and foremost, a port city. Although it is now defunct, Liverpool's shipping industry utterly dominated the city--indeed, built it. In its prime, it was of premier importance to Britain's slavetrading ring, and later, as British imperialist interests turned to *other* forms of trade, Liverpool facilitated Britain's control of African, Indian, Caribbean and Chinese colonial economies. Men were recruited as wage laborers from these societies to work as seamen for Liverpool shipping companies--and for obvious reasons: they could be paid less than White British seamen. For generations, all major and minor institutions and business concerns in Liverpool revolved around shipping and seafaring. Liverpool has always had its Back to Britain--even as it advanced British political and economic interests. It was a "global city" at its inception. In addition to sending men 'out' into the world accessible by sea, the port city of Liverpool also played host to 'global men' of every description; although they were transient by definition, seamen from around the world were a perpetual presence in Liverpool for generations.

Since at least the 19th century, then, African and Afro-Caribbean seamen (among others) docked in Liverpool, often eventually marrying English or Irish women, having children, and then settling in Liverpool after retiring from sea. The colonial discourse of the day resigned the children of these unions to the category "half caste"--a 'no man's land' of racial community and belonging. Black Liverpoolians' narratives on racial identity center on their struggle to overcome that pathological inscription.

World War Two ushered in two major developments: First, the large scale migration of Afro-Caribbean people into Britain, including Liverpool, and of course the rise of White British nationalism on an unprecedented scale in the decades following. The second development was in the influx of another group: Black American servicemen--or GI's--who were stationed just outside of the city beginning in World War Two, and continuing for some 25 years afterward. By all accounts, these Black Americans' physical presence in Liverpool was pivotal in the transformation of Black Liverpoolians' racial identity from 'half caste' to 'Black'.

If we were to restrict ourselves to the traditional concerns of African diasporic studies, the most relevant aspects of the history traced here might be the forging of Blacks' connections to other Blacks--be they African, Afro-Caribbean or Black American, or the transformation of racial identity from 'half-caste' to Black. Traditional African diasporic studies might constitute the rise of a Black identity as a 'high

point' in the development of their political subjectivity. Then, by implication, we would be forced to see the period prior in terms of "lack". Yet close attention to the way that Black Liverpoolians trace their history suggests a different way of seeing Blacks' identifications in the period prior. What they emphasize is a set of identifications that defied racial, ethnic and national allegiances altogether. They constitute the period prior to the rise of Black identity through the cosmopolitanism nurtured by and in "Place." Their narratives recall an ethical worldliness that was totally facilitated by their participation in a seafaring culture located not on sailing ships, but firmly at the port, in their dockside neighborhoods. The rise of Black identity should not be treated as a high point, but a turning point--again, one that cannot be understood without attention to the evolving meanings and salience of Place. Black Liverpoolians' historical narratives truly demand attention to Place as a basis of subjectivity in its own right. As one of my informants told me early in my fieldwork, "To understand Black people, you've got to understand Liverpool."

The real power of that statement is not in whatever truth value it might have, but in the fact that it could even be uttered, that it would be logical for people to suggest that Place has explanatory power in understanding community and identity formation based on Race. That Liverpool is the Place named as explanatory does not render their view narrow, or 'provincial', in opposition, for example, to the expansiveness of the worlds Black seamen occupied as global wanderers. The content of the Liverpool that is said to "explain" Black people is filled to overflowing. That content is the value placed upon Movement itself, a celebration of the way the world was brought into the port by the sea; and that content is also in Blacks' appropriation of this quite specific form of Movement as the cornerstone of their origin story. For the romanticism of their portrait, I refer to their nostalgia about their city as "The Liverpool that Was."

Early in my fieldwork in 1991, one of my informants, Scott, the Black man who told me I needed to "understand Liverpool" offered to take me on a walking tour of the Liverpool that Was. Scott was born in Liverpool in 1932 and has lived there his entire life there. Though he never went away to sea, his tour was just as romantic and nostalgic for the seafaring tradition as it was, at other moments, condemnatory of what has followed it. Scott took me to the general area where most Black families lived when he was a boy: Pitt Street. Pitt Street was bombed in WW2, and no longer exists; so we stood on a corner that approximated where Pitt Street would have been. He drew me a vivid verbal picture of it by specifically asking me to imagine Chinese and Indian people and a host of other national groups, each wearing the traditional garb with which they were associated. He specifically asked me to visualize them walking around. The social scene he painted depicted Africans amidst people from a variety of other far-flung places. His description defied Black/White binaries completely, focusing my attention instead on the mixing of groups in distinctly national terms. "Mixing" is an idiom of profound importance to Black Liverpoolians, and others who grew up in the glorious the Age of Sail. Black Liverpoolians tend to celebrate "mixing," and always speak of it in the past tense. If sea travels produced seamen as cosmopolitan subjects, so too did Liverpool--as port--produce the cosmopolitan subjectivities of this seaport community of Blacks, who lived cheek to jowl, as they often say, with Chinese, Poles, Jews, Arabs, Indians. The list is vast.

Another Black male informant, Morris, was born in Liverpool in 1915, to a White English mother and a Barbadian father. Morris was a seaman for some 30 years. He imbues Pitt Street with an explicitly ethical worldliness. His vantage point as a seaman is useful in providing a suggestive counterpoint to the view espoused in the new Atlanticist literature that implies that ports are only interesting as the places seamen leave behind. In what follows, Morris draws on his life at sea to wax romantic about Pitt Street. *"...from the time I grew up--I grew up in the heart of what they called Chinatown at that time. That was Pitt Street. And that neighborhood, even though I traveled quite some places, I've never met a neighborhood like that. It was an international neighborhood. I think every nationality in the world was represented in Pitt Street. And everybody intermingled and helped each other. I can remember myself, being asked by my aunt who reared me at the time, to go to a certain Chinaman and ask him for the loan of a shilling. Now this is a man who come from way over the other side of the world, who settled in Liverpool, but he understood the difficulties of everybody else beside himself..."*

The ethical worldliness Black Liverpoolians celebrate is grounded in the vicissitudes of the sea life, as experienced on Pitt Street. With seamen away on voyages for months and months and months at a time, their families depended on allotments of seamen's salaries, which they were to pick up monthly at a

shipping office downtown. But they could not rely upon the allotments to actually be there, and quite often they weren't. Black people frequently mention receiving loans from next-door neighbors, and in the same breath that they mention their neighbors' trust and generosity in times of scarcity, they make special reference to the different nationality of those neighbors.

Atlanticist scholarship emphasizes the role of Black seamen in producing transnational community. Here in Liverpool, Blacks emphasize the contribution of Black seamen to the formation of a community which, though localized, was no less transnational. Black seamen are noted in particular for their role in bringing back music from the rest of the Black world, especially the US, and for providing their children with clothes from abroad. This was important, for it gave those children some cache in the White-dominated school setting. And one Black woman, Clara, joyfully recalled how her father would bring her copies of Reader's Digest, which was important to her because--like her father--she was interested in the World, and that's how her seafaring father nurtured that interest in her. Black seamen are also credited for fostering good community relations insofar as their triumphant return to Liverpool was always accompanied by a sharing of the spoils of their voyages with others in the neighborhood.

These important material contributions notwithstanding, Black Liverpoolians' lore about seafaring is not at all limited to the role of *Black* seamen. Rather, they celebrate the fluidity of movement in this place, created by the full plethora of international seamen who would wash ashore on a daily basis. Local space--in Black Liverpoolian eyes--was worldly, transnational and global *by definition*. Clara can again testify to this worldliness, for she described the way she experienced her 'localized' existence in worldly terms. She was educated in an elite school, which she claimed was widely known as "the cosmopolitan school," around Pitt Street, near Liverpool Cathedral and the docks. "It's been torn down now," she says. "But there were Chinese in my school, there were Arabs, because this is a seaport and they were all mixed."

Far and away, the social arena that Black Liverpoolians most frequently invoke, celebrate and mourn, is the club life that this seafaring milieu produced. It would be impossible to overstate the joy with which Black Liverpoolians, older African ex-seamen, and indeed, the White women whom they often married, speak of Liverpool nightlife in the Age of Sail. The club scene was profoundly international in character, and it was centered around Granby Street, where Blacks relocated after Pitt Street was bombed. Some of the nightclubs were Black owned, and all had a distinctly international flavor. Although some of these clubs had thematic names, like The Fortune Club (where gambling took place), many others announced the nationality of the owners--but not necessarily the clientele, for these clubs were not in any way ethnically, racially or nationally exclusive. There was the Nigerian Club, the Yoruba Club, and the Sierra Leone. And there was also Dutch Eddie's, named for the owner who, as a citizen of Dutch Guyana [now Surinam], went by the nickname Dutch Eddie. An ex-seaman himself, Dutch Eddie became so prosperous as a club owner, that he was able to launch a side business: floating loans to people in the Granby area who couldn't get them from banks. It is said that he facilitated Black homeownership in Liverpool. And when, in this era, two White women club owners couldn't get a liquor license from the city, the owner of The Fortune Club--a Jamaican who got to Liverpool by stowing away on a ship--intervened on their behalf, through some Greek club owner who had connections. In any story about clubs in the Granby area, nationalities are invoked not as a point of difference, but of cooperation and alliance.

Although Liverpool, writ large, was an international seaport city, it was not true that the city as a whole was this cosmopolitan. Anything but. Downtown Liverpool was off limits to Blacks, who would be routinely terrorized for trespassing there. Despite the virulent racism of the era, here in the Granby Street area, and in Pitt Street before that, Black people--some as locals, and some originally from Africa and the Caribbean--participated in the production of a worldly ethics that utterly defied the lines of race that divided them from "mainstream" Liverpool, which is marked spatially by reference to 'town'.

The hallmark of community, based on cosmopolitanism, is the "mixing" across racial lines. It is not that they all happened to be physically placed in the same environs--cheek to jowl--but that they truly thrived on it. Through narrating the cosmopolitanism of Place---that is, Granby Street (in the postwar period) and Pitt Street before that--so too do they narrate themselves as such. These identifications derive from the fluidity of Place, and completely eschew allegiances based on ancestry, phenotype, and citizenship. The ethical worldliness that is sought in contemporary scholarship on cosmopolitanism was not, in Liverpool, directed 'outward' to the world. Their orientation is inward, but it is no less worldly for its directionality. For the constant, defining presence of global men, international music and commodities,

the world was effectively in Liverpool--or more particularly prewar Pitt Street and postwar Granby Street. Rootedness in Place did not thwart cosmopolitanism; rather, Black people rooted themselves through and in Place *because of* its cosmopolitanism--which they themselves participated in producing.

The world that Black people conjure, when speaking of the Liverpool that Was, is akin to that described by scholars who study ancient worlds, before the rise and hegemony of the nation-state. Here I'm thinking of Janet Abu-Lughod's "Before European Hegemony", Ammiel Alcalay's "After Jews and Arabs: Remaking Levantine Culture" and Amitav Ghosh's historical novel "In an Antique Land." These texts richly conjure the vitality of social networks created in Markets, and Ports--sites that were defined by the constant movement of merchants, artists, scholars, and sailors who, together, produced a place of total--and totally unproblematical--cultural and linguistic difference. Whether such present day depictions match past realities is another question--one that could similarly be posed to the portrait that contemporary Black people paint of The Liverpool that Was. I shall return to this point. First I want to pose another question. Despite its hegemonic glory, did the nation-state really have the power to obliterate the inter-cultural vitality that reputedly obtained in its ports? If it's really the hegemony of the nation-state that cosmopolitan and diasporic formations are said to counter, should we not also ask how much hegemony national allegiance really had in places like ports? Is it not possible that intrinsically international Places like Ports could have been hold-outs, that they could have resisted the demands to define themselves in strictly national terms--especially since they were making so much money from international trade, and having such a good time? To wit, Liverpool, in its national context, is famous for having had its back to Britain for generations. Liverpudlians, writ large, may have had very little investment in national identity during the eras under discussion, and perhaps especially before World War Two. Liverpool, in the early twentieth century, was largely denigrated. For its profoundly working class status, the city as a whole was inscribed (along with working class London) as "darkest England" by William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army. As well, Liverpool had a significant Irish population--not something that would gain it much centrality to dominant discourses on Englishness. And Liverpool may have indeed cultivated its outsider status; after all, it was oriented toward the world beyond.

These points raise the also-historical question of how we are to understand transformations in the identifications of Black Liverpudlians who, with the exception of the sailors among them, lived dockside lives. For example, in positing the importance of transatlantic travel, Gilroy says that Black Atlantic personages began "as African Americans or Caribbean people, and then changed into something else which evades those specific labels, and with them all fixed notions of nationality and national identity...They repeatedly articulate a desire to escape the restrictive bonds of ethnicity, national identification and sometimes even 'race' itself."<sup>9</sup> I would argue that being 'rooted' in 'Place'--in this case, a Port--did not stop Blacks from also escaping those restrictive bonds. It would be hard to use the usual racial or national terms to say what Black Liverpudlians might have 'begun as,' because the hegemonic understandings of national and racial belonging were totally closed to them. They were excluded from British national identity, and were largely considered to be between racial categories until the rise of Black identity in the 60s and 70s. If we can infer from the ways Black people talk about their neighborhoods and relations--and whom they include in them in their contemporary narratives--we might have a better clue as to how they imagined themselves in the era before Blackness. What is clear is that by their accounts they began as a seafaring community.

Now, I'd like to move on to consider the transformations that take place when British Nationalism and Black Identity do actually gain footholds, for Black Liverpudlians' relationship to these hegemonic constructions of race and nation throw their articulations of cosmopolitanism into a sea of contradiction. It is worth emphasizing here that The Liverpool That Was is a present day construction about the past. It is a world that is portrayed through the idiom of profound loss. The rise of both British Nationalism and Black Identity emerged, historically, at roughly the same time--in the 1960s and 1970s. Though these events are also, historically, "in the past" they seem to animate Black Liverpudlians' desires to paint that glorious picture of the seafaring community into which they were born.

The first contradiction arises in the self-portrait they paint--that is, who is in frame, and who is left off the canvas. Black Liverpudlians draw on seafaring--complete with its dockside cosmopolitanism--to construct an Authentic History for themselves, and the others with whom they lived "cheek-to-jowl".

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<sup>9</sup> Gilroy 1993:19

That is, Chinese, Poles, Arabs, Irish, etc. However, this Authentic History effectively excludes those newcomers who were not part of the seafaring milieu. Among those written out of the authentic history of the Black community, are Afro-Caribbeans. They are associated with Immigration to Britain, writ large. They are regarded in terms similar to those evoked by the White British nationalists of the 1960s and 70s, who thought of Afro-Caribbeans (and South Asians) as “the alien wedge.”

Clara, who earlier remarked upon the worldliness that her father’s seafaring activities afforded her, and who proudly described having attended what was known as “the cosmopolitan school” had later occasion to say about Afro-Caribbeans that they would pander to their White bosses in the factories where she used to work. They “scurry around like little animals,” she said.

Morris is the ex-seaman who, earlier, talked glowingly of Pitt Street, where people from a variety of ethnic and national backgrounds helped each other survive. Morris later lived in the Granby Street area--in its early years, just as Black people moved up there after Pitt Street was bombed. Back then Granby Street was home to doctors, lawyers and shipping magnates, he says. Now, by contrast, the people of Granby Street “are looking for this racism and all that kind of thing.” Morris noted that in the postwar era, the Granby area changed fundamentally. In what follows, he constitutes postwar Caribbean migration as the problem--and he is not alone. His narrative contains some pregnant references to Englishness, Britishness, immigration, and colonial relations with the West Indies--his own father’s birthplace.

*“...After the war it just deteriorated, you know? I could never understand why that attitude developed around Granby Street ‘cause it didn’t come from the original international area of Pitt Street. It didn’t come from there. My belief, really speaking, is that it came from the West Indies. The poorer type of the West Indies came over with a chip on their shoulders, and unlike the Arab, unlike the Chinamen, the Indian and the Jewish person, they didn’t seem to want to make way of their own accord...They came over and right away, they didn’t seem to want to seek employment of any description...They came and they gave a bad image--I’ll put it that way. Because they didn’t seem to--I believe that when this immigration started in the West Indies, the Italians advertised just to get their shipping popularized by the passengers coming across. I was told that they had vast adverts in the island of Jamaica and various other small islands telling the people that the streets of England were lined with gold more or less and the people that hadn’t been to the island fell for this, sold everything at home and came over here. They found it totally different from what they were told. I believe it was purely the Italian shipping magnates who encouraged them to pack up and come over to England, ‘they were British and they were able to come over to England’ and all that sort of thing.*

Morris’s critical emphasis on the postwar period resounds so thoroughly with the nationalist narratives on Britishness (that so thoroughly gripped racial politics of the 1970s), that it is hard to imagine that it does not derive from them. Morris’s use of World War Two as a historical break is important, for it separates the seafaring-based Black community from later histories of movement that are referred to as, simply, Migration. It is not, then, people of the Caribbean writ large who are the subject of his critique; some Caribbean men (like his own father) were seafarers, and did participate in the seafaring milieu. And in a later narrative, he reveals a sense of belonging with other “West Indies children,” so it is not that he disparages Afro-Caribbean people as a whole--just those who had high expectations of England, did not want to make way of their own accord and open up businesses like other national groups, nor to engage in the cosmopolitanism already established in Liverpool. It is postwar Caribbean immigrants to Liverpool who are the source of ‘the race problem,’ one epitomized by the movement of a particular attitude from the West Indies to Granby Street. The postwar break distinguishes between the international community that he and others use to define Pitt Street, and the more *narrowly* racial, or ‘Black,’ community that begins the transformation of Granby from cosmopolitan glory to localized ghetto. As Morris went on to argue,

*“...in Granby Street they have an area that they made through themselves, a no-go area. And they were able to get away with quite a lot of disturbances, and that, because of the fact that they had this attitude to law and order they wouldn’t abide by. They only wanted the difference to be maintained....[T]hey wanted an area on their own, kind of thing. I didn’t believe in ghettos yet they want them. And that’s what they did: they made a ghetto out of Granby Street. I don’t believe in ghettos at all.”*

Scott, who took me on the tour of The Liverpool That Was, also decried the lack of movement that now characterizes Blacks’ relationship to Place, and specifically Granby Street. The fluidity of movement that characterized Pitt Street is gone, and in its place is current day Granby Street, which he

dismissed on two counts. First, as far as Blacks' history is concerned, it is inauthentic; Granby Street is an area that got overrun by postwar Caribbean migrants. He specifically said that if I were to talk to Blacks around there, I would be told that the Black community's history begins in the 1950s. And if Morris emphasized that Blacks on Granby Street don't let others in, having constituted it as a "no-go area," Scott emphasized the opposite side of that coin: Black people don't venture out, he said. They are "putting shackles on themselves," he said. If I were like Blacks on Granby Street, he told me on our very first meeting, I would not have come to Liverpool to conduct this study; I would not have ventured out of my neighborhood, much less traveled this far from home. His disdain for that mentality was emphasized by the fact that Granby Street did not feature in his tour at all--except as a foil for the glorious Pitt Street of The Liverpool that Was.

Veronica, a thirty-two year-old Black woman who has lived most of her life in the Granby Street area, would be just one of those people Scott is talking about when he decries the "lack of movement" among Blacks presently. Most of her daily social activities--work, leisure, shopping--are handled in that area. As she and I walked through her neighborhood one day, she expressed a certain disdain for having to occasionally go shopping in 'town,' about a mile away, and with this comment she began painting her own glorious portrait of the seafaring era, and the Liverpool That Was. This area had changed completely since she grew up. It used to be so alive, she said, "back when all the ships were coming in" as she put it. On Granby, there were loads of shops, stocking goods from everywhere on the globe, she continued, as we walked through this lifeless area. Then Veronica made an utterly arresting little remark--one that would, at first blush, seem to confirm Scott's condemnatory assessment of Blacks' contemporary relationship to movement. Veronica said "It was so cosmopolitan around here, you never had to leave the area." I was floored. What kind of cosmopolitanism was this? How could such an avowedly global orientation be expressed through a desire not to go so far as town, a half a mile away? This was what Scott and others who remembered Pitt Street, and who are not of Granby Street themselves, also posed. But what it points to is not provincialism, but resistance to the hostile white world that still lay beyond Granby Street.

But the fact that there are even these competing perspectives points to a larger set of contestations: the very use of Place to mark and differentiate subjects through their relationship to movement. Global movement is the stuff of lore for Black Liverpoolians, young and old. For my part, I would rather not index Veronica's lament as "tragically local" if by that term we differentiate it from 'cosmopolitan' as Marcus Rediker and Paul Gilroy do. Rather, the local is here the ultimate celebration of cosmopolitanism. It was in this 'small, bounded, and local' space where the 'huge, boundless and international world'--to use Rediker's words--was best accessed. Veronica was celebrating it as much as was Scott. Neither had the experience of being seamen themselves, but this did not stop them from defining the ultimate in Black life as having been located in The Liverpool That Was, defined by seafaring.

What is largely considered the tragedy of "rootedness" in Liverpool now, stems from the fact, indeed, that global wandering is no longer an option. The shipping industry died a long time ago. But something much smaller, but no less significant, did take its place. With the rise of Blackness and its articulate critiques of racism in the city and across Britain, what emerged was a plethora of race relations organizations and self-help agencies, along with an (albeit) embattled set of anti-discrimination policies that were meant to open up other avenues of employment for Blacks in Liverpool. In the 1980s, and into the mid-1990s or so, these organizations and agencies were a fairly significant source of employment for the first generation of Black youth who had no access to the seafaring jobs that had barely sustained the earlier generation. But now, increasingly, those organizations are falling by the wayside in Liverpool. They are seen to have done their work. So the 'tragedy' of a localized existence around Granby Street is that Blacks' material well-being depends upon them venturing into 'town' for jobs. Town--no more than a 15 minute walk from Granby Street--has *always* been a hostile and alien space for Black people in Liverpool, and it is this youngest generation that is now expected to go boldly into this new frontier. Many are declining to take the journey, and this the older generation (and some members of the younger one) simply cannot fathom. Veronica told me that when she was about 17--which would have been about 1977--she ventured into town, whereupon a White man spat at her.

At the risk of concluding on such a sober note, let me say that the thorny contradictions and antagonisms I've pointed to, do not in my view suggest a failure of cosmopolitanism among Black

Liverpudlians, but a failure among theorists who, in their urgent search for the antidote to narrow exclusivisms make overly facile programmatic statements about how cosmopolitanism is derived, and what it stands against. In these meditations, Place has perhaps been under-appreciated as a legitimate basis of subjectivity and community formation. Place does not *have to* be transcended in order for cosmopolitanism subjectivities to emerge. My real point is that there are no guarantees with cosmopolitan subjectivity, just as there were none before in race, nation, or diaspora. There is no telling how social actors will configure these various and inter-related formations of identity, nor what political practices they will enact in their name. To blame Place and “rootedness” for the most egregious forms of nationalism seems to me to miss the point that Place--like race and nation before it--has no intrinsic or inherent content or potentiality, either reactionary or progressive. Social actors fill it with content in determinate historical conditions and with identifiable cultural materials, and they do so as they participate in the larger social and political arena where meanings are made.