

**Race and beauty in Canada:  
print culture, retail, and the transnational flow of products, images and ideologies,  
1700s to present**

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## Abstract

This dissertation is about race, class, gender, and the emergence of modern consumer capitalism. Using an historical approach, the project makes a link between transatlantic slavery, women's hair and beauty practices, and consumer culture. It pays particular attention to how black beauty and mainstream (read: white) beauty culture intersect, overlap, conflict, and mimic one another. Throughout this dissertation, I contextualize the growth and development of Canada's beauty culture by examining histories of migration and immigration to central and Atlantic Canada, and explain the rise of barbershops and hair salons in Toronto, Montreal, Halifax and Western Canada. I also examine the relationship between the sale of beauty products at retail and the visual representation of beauty in product advertising. Chapter one is an examination of Canada's colonial history of slavery, the advertisement of slave and runaway notices, the material conditions of black women's (and men's) labour, and the corporeality of the black female body with respect to hair care, dress, and resistance in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I pinpoint the cultural significance of headwrapping and dress among black slave women, in addition to the colonial regulation of dress and self-care practices across the transatlantic. In chapters two and three, I give detailed accounts of the commercialization and commodification of mainstream beauty in North America, and explain the impact of late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century feminist movements, such as suffragism, temperance, dress reform, and the ideology and practices of the New Womanhood on the beauty ideal. Chapter four outlines the rise of advertisements for barbershops, hair salons, and beauty products in black Canadian newspapers in the 1920s through the 1940s. Chapter five explains how political movements of the 1960s such as second wave feminism and Black is Beautiful shifted the visualization of beauty and the politics attached to women's hair. In chapter six I deconstruct the role black community newspapers and Canadian women's magazines played in the promotion of beauty in the 1970s through the 1990s, and explain the ways in which skin and hair care products geared toward black women entered department stores and drugstores. Lastly, I argue that when Canadian magazines and advertisers began to perceive multiculturalism as a fashion aesthetic in the late-1980s, it raised questions about the diversification of the beauty standard and the issue of white bias. I also explore the contemporary health concerns associated with chemical hair straightening, hair weaves, and skin lightening products. This project makes a contribution to the study of Canada as it relates to slavery, consumer culture, European settlement, print media, and retail history. It also contributes to a wider understanding of the sociocultural, triangular relationship between the United States, Canada and the Caribbean.

## Résumé

Cette dissertation traite de race, de statut social, de genre, ainsi que de l'émergence de la consommation capitaliste. En usant d'une approche historique, ce projet établit des liens entre l'esclavage transatlantique, les femmes, leur chevelure, et leurs pratiques de beauté, et une culture axée sur la consommation. Ce projet sert particulièrement à observer comment les idéaux de la beauté noire et ceux des pratiques dominantes s'entrecroisent, se chevauchent, s'imitent l'un l'autre ou encore peuvent être en perpétuel conflit. Tout au long de cette dissertation, je contextualise la croissance et le développement de la culture de la beauté au Canada en examinant les mouvements de migration et d'immigration vers l'est canadien. Je concentre aussi mon attention sur la naissance des salons de barbiers et des salons de coiffure principalement à Toronto, Montréal, Halifax, et également dans l'ouest canadien. De plus, j'examine la relation entre la vente au détail de produits de beauté et la représentation visuelle de la publicité de ces produits. Le chapitre 1 est une enquête de l'histoire de l'esclavage au Canada, incluant une étude des annonces d'esclaves fugitifs, des conditions de travail des femmes et des hommes noirs, de la corporéité de la femme noire en particulier du soin des cheveux, de l'habillement, et de la résistance sociale au dix-huitième et au dix-neuvième siècle. Je précise également l'importance de pratiques culturelles comme l'habillement et la coiffure de la femme noire esclave, en plus d'observer la structure sociale coloniale en place en ce qui a trait à la réglementation transatlantique de l'habillement et des soins corporels. Dans les chapitres 2 et 3, j'inclue des exemples détaillés sur la commercialisation et la réification de la beauté au Canada. J'explique l'impact des mouvements féministes sur les changements socio-culturels à la fin du dix-neuvième et au début du vingtième siècle, par exemple sur les suffragettes, la tempérance, les réformes vestimentaires, et les idéologies de mouvements tel que le «New Womanhood». Le chapitre 4 résume l'évolution de la publicité des salons de barbiers, des salons de coiffure, et des produits de beauté dans la presse canadienne publiée dans les communautés noires des années 1920 aux années 1940. Dans le chapitre 5, j'explique comment certains mouvements sociaux des années 1960, comme le mouvement féministe et le mouvement «Black is Beautiful», ont fait basculer les représentations visuelles dominantes de la beauté et les politiques axées sur la chevelure des femmes. Dans le chapitre 6, je reconsidère le rôle que les journaux publiés par la communauté noire et les magazines ciblant principalement des lectrices féminines ont joué dans la promotion et la construction d'une idéologie de la beauté dans les années 1970 jusque dans les années 1990. J'explique aussi l'évolution des produits de beauté pour femmes noires dans les commerces de grande surface et les pharmacies. Finalement, je soutiens que les magazines canadiens et les annonceurs publicitaires ont commencé à percevoir le multiculturalisme comme une esthétique à la mode à la fin des années 1980 et que cela a obligé un questionnement sur les préjugés blancs et donc entraîné une diversification des standards de beauté. De plus, j'explore les enjeux de santé engendrés par les produits de beauté utilisés par les femmes noires, comme les rallonges de cheveux et les crèmes éclaircissantes pour la peau qui contiennent souvent des matières chimiques dangereuses. Ce projet participe donc à l'étude du Canada en ce qui concerne l'esclavage, la culture de consommation, la colonisation européenne, la presse écrite, et l'histoire de la vente au détail. J'apporte également une contribution à l'étude de la relation socioculturelle entre les États-Unis, le Canada, et les Caraïbes.

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## Introduction

### I. Why a transnational approach to beauty

In the introduction to *Black Beauty: Aesthetics, Stylization, Politics* (2009), Shirley Tate admits that she had evolved from an earlier focus solely on the United Kingdom and United States to “thinking the Black Atlantic as a transnational structure of feeling which links diverse populations in a network of Black beauty ideology and practices ... [which includes] also looking at the Caribbean and Latin America.”<sup>1</sup> She writes further that this reframing “acknowledges that Black beauty has raised the possibility for political contestations and has subverted the hegemonic knowledge as it has reaffirmed new strategies of identification.”<sup>2</sup> This dissertation similarly acknowledges the transnational links between diverse populations in a network of black beauty ideology and practices, but it argues that the ideology and practices of what is often referred to as “mainstream beauty culture” has its own set of contestations that have helped to create the hegemonic knowledge that has politicized black beauty. While black beauty scholars have paid significant attention to how black women have developed strategies of identification in spite of pervasive racism, the debasement of their bodies, and hypersexual iconography, there has been less attention paid to how black beauty and mainstream (read: white) beauty culture intersect, overlap, conflict, and mimic one another. And further, what role has Canada played in the segmentation of beauty culture? This dissertation represents the first historical examination of the development of a beauty culture industry in Canada, and its transnational links with the Black Atlantic and European metropole.

Andrea Shaw observes that “showing black women that admittance into the mainstream beauty culture is achievable by the shedding of their racial identity creates space for racism to

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<sup>1</sup> Shirley Tate, *Black Beauty: Aesthetics, Stylization, Politics* (Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Tate, *Black Beauty*, 1.



justify itself.”<sup>3</sup> Stated otherwise, if a black woman needs only to become “white” perceived racial bias becomes harder to observe since whiteness becomes a synonym for “true” beauty. In order to understand how race has shaped the Western beauty ideal, this project positions notions of whiteness and blackness as key identifications that have shaped, and continues to shape what products are sold, through what visual forms, and to which groups. The black female body acquired its meaning as Other during transatlantic slavery but during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries particular advances in print media and visual mediums helped to normalize the white female body. This juxtaposition between the black female body and white female body has formed (and continues to form) the basis of what is considered beautiful/ugly, feminine/masculine, demure/hypersexual.

From the moment Africans were shipped across the Atlantic to the “New World” skin colour, facial structure, hair texture and genitalia contributed to the classification of human types; this classification regarded blacks as less morally, sexually and intellectually developed than whites.<sup>4</sup> As Nadine Ehlers posits, “by conceptualizing blacks as inherently distinct due to differences in appearance, Europeans formulated a ‘blackness,’ and by implication a ‘whiteness,’ that conflated color with fictionized racial *identities*.”<sup>5</sup> Charmaine Nelson poignantly notes that visual representations of black subjects demand that we understand them within the context of Canada and other locations of diaspora.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, since the very notion of beauty is imbued

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<sup>3</sup> Andrea E. Shaw, *The Embodiment of Disobedience: Fat Black Women’s Unruly Political Bodies* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2006), 3.

<sup>4</sup> Deborah Willis and Williams Carla, *The Black Female Body: A Photographic History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 1.

<sup>5</sup> Nadine Ehlers, *Racial Imperatives: Discipline, Performativity, and Struggles Against Subjection* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012), 35-6.

<sup>6</sup> Charmaine Nelson makes this argument in relation to the representations of black children, and the scant historical scholarship on black children in Canada. I draw on it here because few comparisons have been made between black women and white women in the context of colonial Canada. Too often, these two subjects are conceptualized separately, however, the argument that I am making here is that in order to understand one, we must contend with the other because the two are relational. See Charmaine Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject in Western Art* (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), 37-39.

with beliefs about the superiority of whiteness and the inferiority of blackness, this project argues that a transnational approach that considers the growth of Western capitalism and transatlantic slavery is necessary in order to place Canada in a discussion with other sites of diaspora.

In *Hope in a Jar* (1998) Kathy Peiss argues that beauty culture “should be understood not only as a type of commerce but as a system of meaning that helped women navigate the changing conditions of modern social experience.”<sup>7</sup> If the changing status of American women in the late-nineteenth century, both black and white, as workers, citizens, consumers, and pleasure seekers was acknowledged cosmetically, how was this changing status made visible in Canada? Peiss asserts further that racially segregated notions of beauty centred on the morality of makeup among white women but in African American communities, “beauty culture was explicitly a political issue, long before the contemporary feminist movement made it so.”<sup>8</sup> Skin whiteners and hair straighteners became heated debates in African American communities, and many women had to fight “against charges of white emulation and self-loathing, while others invoked their rights to social participation and cultural legitimacy precisely through their use of beauty aids.”<sup>9</sup> Did charges of white emulation and self-loathing circulate within black Canadian communities? How were skin whitening and hair straighteners sold to black Canadian women?

Black Canadian scholars such as Charmaine Nelson, Maureen Elgersman, and Dorothy Williams have pointed out that Canada shares much with America (continental South and North) and the Caribbean with respect to a colonial history of slavery, the advertisement of slave and runaway notices, the material conditions of black women’s (and men’s) labour, and the

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<sup>7</sup> Kathy Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America’s Beauty Culture* (New York: Metropolitan Books Henry Holt and Company, 1998), 6.

<sup>8</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 7.

<sup>9</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 7.

corporeality of the black female body with respect to hair care, dress, and resistance.<sup>10</sup> American and Caribbean scholars, such as Shane White and Graham White, Steeve Buckridge, Rebecca Earle and Monica Miller, have similarly pointed to the significance of headwrapping and dress among black slave women, in addition to the colonial regulation of dress and self-care practices.<sup>11</sup> Scholars such as Markman Ellis, Karen Halttunen, and Kate Haulman have noted that from the middle of the eighteenth century through the nineteenth century, there were a variety of books that addressed the conduct of young white women, written by both men and women that celebrated European dress, hairstyling and modes of appearance; fashion also became a site of contestation that helped to link the material and discursive transatlantic worlds while maintaining local, colonial social experiences among whites in North America.<sup>12</sup>

This dissertation relies on the aforementioned scholarship to locate the black female body in relation to the white female body as it relates to the transatlantic world, modes of dress and appearance, and beauty culture. Lorraine O'Grady has pointed out that the black female body and white female body are inextricably linked; "The two bodies cannot be separated, nor can one body be understood in isolation from the other in the West's metaphoric construction of

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<sup>10</sup> Maureen G. Elgersman, *Unyielding Spirits: Black Women and Slavery in Early Canada and Jamaica* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999); Dorothy Williams, *The Road to Now: A History of Blacks in Montreal* (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1997), 90-117; Charmaine Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject in Western Art* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 54-5.

<sup>11</sup> Shane White and Graham White, "Slave Clothing and African-American Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Past & Present* 148 (Aug. 1995): 149-186; White and White, "Slave Hair and African American Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *The Journal of Southern History* 61.1 (Feb. 1995): 45-76; Steeve O. Buckridge, *The Language of Dress: Resistance and Accommodation in Jamaica, 1760-1890* (Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2004); Monica Miller, *Slaves to Fashion: Black Dandyism and the Styling of Black Diasporic Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); Rebecca Earle, "'Two Pairs of Pink Satin Shoes!': Race, Clothing and Identity in the Americas (17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries)," *History Workshop Journal* 52 (Autumn 2001): 187-189.

<sup>12</sup> See Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982); Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Kate Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth Century America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Carol Mattingly, *Appropriate[ing] Dress: Women's Rhetorical Style in Nineteenth-Century America* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002).

‘woman.’”<sup>13</sup> At the same time the beauty of black women was racialized as Other, white women’s beauty was normalized as natural and race-less. This dissertation illustrates the centrality of race in the cultivation of the mainstream beauty ideal, just like race has shaped black women and other women of colour.<sup>14</sup> Importantly, just as beauty has been racialized and gendered, feminist debates on the topic of beauty have also been racialized and gendered.

## II. Feminist perspectives on beauty culture

In September 1968 as the 48<sup>th</sup> Miss America Beauty Pageant was underway, two protests were held. One protest sought to denounce the very idea of a beauty contest while the other, as Maxine Leeds Craig argues, “*was* a beauty contest.”<sup>15</sup> On the boardwalk in Atlantic City, New Jersey, roughly one hundred (mostly white) women who identified themselves as members of the Women’s Liberation, now often referred to as second wave feminists, dumped bras, girdles, makeup, curlers, hair spray and other beauty aids, into a trash can in protest of the Miss America beauty contest, which they had equated with sexism and the exploitation of women. Several blocks away at the Ritz Carlton Hotel, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) staged the first Miss Black America pageant as a “positive protest” against the

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<sup>13</sup> Lorraine O’Grady, “Olympia’s Maid: Reclaiming Black Female Subjectivity,” in *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Amelia Jones (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 174.

<sup>14</sup> This dissertation focuses primarily on black, Latina and white women. There is not as much attention given to Asian women. One reason for this exclusion has to do with the fact that qualitative research studies have shown that Asian women, more so than black and Latina women, are more likely to ascribe to mainstream standards of beauty. For instance, Peggy Evans and Allen McConnell (2003) found that while black women employ self-protective strategies against mainstream standards of beauty while also comparing themselves to those standards, Asian women are less likely to utilize such strategies; instead, Asian women appear to adopt non-ingroup, mainstream beauty ideals. Stated otherwise, Asian women are more likely to adopt mainstream standards of beauty and use those standards as relevant social comparisons. See Evans and McConnell, “Do Racial Minorities Respond in the Same Way to Mainstream Beauty Standards? Social Comparison Processes in Asian, Black, and White Women,” *Self and Identity* 2 (2003): 153-167. In addition, Keith Osajima (2005) argues that Asian Americans are often constructed as a model minority: an ideal (resembling whiteness) other minorities should strive to imitate. See Keith Osajima, “Asian Americans as the Model Minority: An Analysis of the Popular Press Image in the 1960s and 1980s,” in *A Companion to Asian American Studies*, ed. Kent. A. Ono (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 215-225.

<sup>15</sup> Maxine Leeds Craig, *Ain’t I a Beauty Queen? Black Women, Beauty, and the Politics of Race* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3. Emphasis added by Craig.

exclusion of black women from the Miss America title.<sup>16</sup> The Women's Liberation protest captured the mainstream media's attention, as the image of unruly white women mocking symbols of American beauty was broadcast by both television and print media outlets, but the Miss Black America pageant was scarcely noticed.

As a result of the 1968 Miss America protest there lies in the memory of many second wave feminists recognition that this public display announced the arrival of a new women's movement. At the same time, even though no bras were burned at the protest, the image of middle-class white women protesting against the celebration of a normative ideal of beauty<sup>17</sup> overshadowed the new Miss Black America contest, and the celebration of black women's beauty, which had, prior to the 1980s, historically been ignored by America's most prized beauty contest.<sup>18</sup> Natasha Barnes notes that by contesting the racial bias of beauty pageants, "black feminists sought to challenge Eurocentric ideologies that denied their identity as women, however much this focus on 'negative imagery' may [have seemed] politically misguided to their white feminist sisters."<sup>19</sup>

White feminist scholars such as Susan Brownmiller, Laura Mulvey, Susan Bordo, and Judith Butler have tackled the topic of beauty in Western capitalist society by exploring how the female body has been objectified in a patriarchal culture, and the role capitalism has played in this subjugation; others have deconstructed the female body as it relates to the social construction of gender, bodily difference, gender performance, notions of femininity, and the depiction of

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<sup>16</sup> Craig, *Ain't I a Beauty Queen*, 3. Also see Janell Hobson, *Venus in the Dark: Blackness and Beauty in Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 121.

<sup>17</sup> Subsequent media reporting on the Miss America protests described feminists as "bra burners." The term bra burning was coined by a reporter whose poetic license linked feminism to other protests that mainstream America found highly threatening: burning draft cards, burning crosses, and burning buildings in black urban America. See Deborah Rhode, "Media Images, Feminist Issues," *Sign: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 20.3 (1995): 693.

<sup>18</sup> Craig, *Ain't I a Beauty Queen*, 4.

<sup>19</sup> Natasha Barnes, *Cultural Conundrums: Gender, Race, Nation, and the Making of Caribbean Cultural Politics* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2006), 62.

women's roles in women's magazines in the twentieth century.<sup>20</sup> The writings of Michel Foucault and his emphasis on the organization and deployment of power as exercised by institutions and deployed in the body have influenced many of these scholars.<sup>21</sup> In *Power/Knowledge* (1978), Foucault asserts that "Power is constructed and functions on the basis of particular powers, myriad issues, myriad effects of power. It is this complex domain that must be studied."<sup>22</sup> In her use of Foucauldian theory, Bordo posits that in contemporary Western constructions of beauty there are dominant, "normalizing" (racial and gendered) forms to contend with; these forms include ideals of slenderness, hair, and the circulation of power.<sup>23</sup> In *The Beauty Myth* (1991), Naomi Wolf famously argued that the beauty myth tells a story; it is the story that "beauty" objectively and universally exists, and that women "must want to embody it and men must want to possess women who embody it."<sup>24</sup> Writing in the early 1990s, Wolf posited that the cultural fixation on thinness and beauty represented a "backlash" against the political and economic advances made by women as a result of feminism's second wave; she also noted that "the beauty myth is always actually prescribing behaviour and not appearance."<sup>25</sup>

Many of these feminist scholars have either ignored how race complicates notions of gender and the body or have used the black female body as a point of comparison to the normalized white female body. While white feminists have complicated how we think about

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<sup>20</sup> Susan Brownmiller, *Femininity* (New York: London Press/Simon and Schuster, 1984); Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (Berkeley, California: The University of California Press, 1995); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1993). See also Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred E. Knopf, 1961); Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1963).

<sup>21</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings: 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon. Trans. Colin Gordon and Leo Marshall, et al. (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

<sup>22</sup> Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 188.

<sup>23</sup> Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*, 254-64.

<sup>24</sup> Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth* (Vintage Canada: Toronto, [1991] 1997), 12.

<sup>25</sup> Wolf, *Beauty Myth*, 15. For more of a discussion on the backlash against feminism see Susan Faludi's *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (1991). In *Backlash*, Faludi argued that the gains made by the women's movement in the 1970s were followed by a "backlash" against feminism and women in the media in the 1980s.

beauty, the omission of black women's perspective from their theorizations points to how beauty culture is so often conceptualized through a lens of whiteness. For instance, Wolf famously argued that the way women have thought about beauty dates from the 1830s, when the cult of domesticity was first consolidated and the beauty index invented.<sup>26</sup> Such statements ignore the material conditions and psychological ramifications of transatlantic slavery as it relates to the degradation of the black female body but also the elevation of the white female body. The very notion of a cult of domesticity, for instance, is made possible because of black women (and men) who laboured outside the home. As such, black feminist scholars have critiqued the racial and gender bias of many white feminist scholars.

For black feminists, bodily difference and beauty have not singularly been framed through the lens of control/power and their cumulative effects on behaviour. For these scholars, appearance and the visualization of the female body have contributed to a racial/gender divide that has marginalized black women. Patricia Hill Collins points out that "The historical suppression of black women's ideas has had a pronounced influence on feminist theory. Theories advanced as being universally applicable to women as a group on closer examination appear greatly limited by the white, middle-class origins of their proponents."<sup>27</sup> Angela Davis also notes that as the ideology of femininity – a by-product of industrialization – was popularized and disseminated through ladies' magazines and romantic novels in the nineteenth century, white women came to be seen as inhabitants of a sphere separate from the realm of productive work (i.e. the cult of domesticity).<sup>28</sup> Given the dominant ideological pattern of equating the domestic sphere with notions of femininity, black women were essentially removed from the so-called

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<sup>26</sup> Wolf, *Beauty Myth*, 15.

<sup>27</sup> Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 7.

<sup>28</sup> Angela Davis, *Women, Race & Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 12.

beauty myth. Maxine Leeds Craig posits that the historical designation of a white, upper-class woman as “lady” for instance, “was distinguished by those it excluded – men, prostitutes, and black women. Black females, defined as they were by either their assumed capacity for arduous labor or their supposed lack of morals, were not, in the dominant culture, ladies.”<sup>29</sup> Sander Gilman’s “Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature” (1985) also called attention to the way Europeans sexualized black bodies, while disassociating such sexualization from white bodies.<sup>30</sup> The material conditions of slavery and the colonial power of literature and photography helped to create what Hill Collins has called “controlling images” of black womanhood as either lascivious or domineering and emasculating. Where caricatures of black woman’s bodies have been made to appear natural, normal and an inevitable part of every life, this dissertation examines how white women’s bodies been made to appear natural, normal and inevitable.<sup>31</sup>

In *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (1992), bell hooks posits that “representations of black female bodies in contemporary popular culture rarely subvert or critique images of black female sexuality which were part of the cultural apparatus of 19th-century racism and which still shape perceptions today.”<sup>32</sup> This dissertation argues that while the Foucauldian dialectic between institutional power and the body is important, the construction of racial and gendered difference on a material and psychic level are equally as significant. In her ethnographic study of black women’s hair, for instance, Ingrid Banks notes that while some white feminist scholars

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<sup>29</sup> Craig, *Ain’t I a Beauty Queen*, 7.

<sup>30</sup> Sander Gilman, “Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and literature,” *Critical Inquiry* 12 (Autumn 1985): 204-42.

<sup>31</sup> See Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 67-116; Hazel Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of Afro-American Woman Novelist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Davis, *Women, Race & Class*, chapters 1-4; Barbara Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1990); bell hooks, *Ain’t I a Woman?: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston: South End Press, 1981); Deborah Gray White, *Ar’n’t I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1985).

<sup>32</sup> bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 62.



have used a cultural framework to shed light on the different meaning of hair among different groups, few scholars have explicitly demonstrated why gender matters in examinations of women's hair.<sup>33</sup> This dissertation first explains how and why race and the physical markers of female beauty (hair texture, skin colour, and facial features) marked particular bodies as beautiful and other bodies as ugly in the eighteenth century. Second, I draw connections between the material and discursive development of Western beauty culture, and the strategies black-owned and white-owned companies used to cultivate women consumers in the nineteenth century. Third, I examine the promotional strategies used by beauty firms and retailers in the twentieth century to modernize and diversify the standard of beauty.

### **III. Black beauty culturists in the United States and Canada**

For centuries, white women dressed their own hair, or bourgeois women had their maids or black female slaves do their hair. Professional hairdressers, who were often men, also visited the homes of wealthy European women or a few opened their own exclusive salons in the United States, and later, Canada. By the late-nineteenth century, a number of white women developed franchise operations in conjunction with beauty schools, such as The Marinello Company founded by Ruth Maurer,<sup>34</sup> and Oakville, Ontario-born Martha Matilda Harper, who began to license her "Harper Method" in Rochester, New York in 1890. Harper is often credited with inventing the modern concept of women's hair salons.<sup>35</sup> After she moved to New York in the 1880s, by the end of the century, she had opened two hundred salons in United States, and in 1928, five hundred Harper salons were operating around the world, most of them in the United

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<sup>33</sup> Ingrid Banks, *Hair Matters: Beauty, Power, and Black Women's Consciousness* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 13.

<sup>34</sup> The Marinello Company opened its first beauty school in 1904, becoming one of the first businesses to train white and black women. See Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 75.

<sup>35</sup> See Jane R. Plitt, *Martha Matilda Harper and the American Dream: How One Woman Changed the Face of Modern Business* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000).

States, Germany and Scotland.<sup>36</sup> Women like Harper, who developed “systems” and “methods,” signature skin- and hair-care programs, and defined distribution networks were called “beauty culturists.” When beauty culturists appeared in the late-nineteenth century, they created specialized, coordinated products and step-by-step techniques that replaced miscellaneous creams and lotions of prior decades.<sup>37</sup> Significantly, Peiss points out that “white beauty culturists sloughed off their origins to perform the American myth of self-making and individual mobility, [while] black entrepreneurs tended to embed their biographies within the story of African American women’s collective advancement.”<sup>38</sup>

While barbering became one of the first black professions that developed out of slavery, it was exclusively a black male-dominated field. During the antebellum period, free black women were not very successful at hair dressing. Oppressive sexism and racism meant that black male barbers were charged with servicing both male and female clients.<sup>39</sup> Around the 1820s, however, free African American women began to make inroads as hair professionals in the North and South.<sup>40</sup> By World War I, black beauty salon owners had begun to train their own employees through shop apprenticeships; by the 1920 salons that trained hairdressers had begun to describe themselves as schools, or “colleges.”<sup>41</sup> Like the barbershop, the beauty salon became a ubiquitous feature in black America, and during the 1920s, beauty culture operations expanded into the mass market retail space. As Peiss observes, “over one hundred beauty parlors and nine toiletries companies served black Chicagoans; [and] beauty parlors in Harlem were reportedly

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<sup>36</sup> See Gustavo Briand, “The Hair at the Nineteenth Century,” [http://thehistoryofthehairworld.com/hair\\_19th\\_century.html](http://thehistoryofthehairworld.com/hair_19th_century.html) (date of last access 11 October 2013).

<sup>37</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 73.

<sup>38</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 80.

<sup>39</sup> Ayana D. Byrd and Lori L. Tharps, *Hair Story: Untangling the Roots of Black Hair in America* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2001), 74-5.

<sup>40</sup> Byrd and Tharps, *Hair Story*, 75.

<sup>41</sup> Julia K. Blackwelder, *Styling Jim Crow: African American Beauty Training during Segregation* (College Station, Texas: Texas A & M University Press, 2003), 8.

three times more numerous than elsewhere in New York.”<sup>42</sup> The first African American entrepreneur to sell black beauty products was a black man by the name of Anthony Overton.

Born of slave parents in Louisiana in 1865, after earning a law degree and working as a municipal judge Overton established the Hygienic Manufacturing Company in Kansas City in 1898. Overton’s fortunes blossomed after he introduced High Brown Face Powder, which targeted African American beauty tastes.<sup>43</sup> By 1900, Overton’s cosmetics business took off, especially in the South and Midwest.<sup>44</sup> In large part his success was spurred by advertisements in *Half-Century Magazine for the Colored Home and Homemaker* (1916-1925), for which he was an editor.<sup>45</sup> Noliwe Rooks asserts that *Half-Century*, which catered specifically to African American women, “sought to weave its story from a different, more ‘modern’ fiber that emphasized the cultural product of uplift in relation to fashion, race, and adornment in the context of African American migration out of the South.”<sup>46</sup> Overton also advertised a skin bleaching product known as Ro-Zol bleach in his magazine.<sup>47</sup> When African American women became beauty culturists, they used the mantra of “racial uplift” through enhancement not alteration, to sell black women on beauty consumption.

Annie Turnbo Malone was born in 1896. Although orphaned as a child, by the 1890s, she managed to become an ardent entrepreneur by experimenting with preparations to help black women, like herself, care for their hair and scalp. Many black women needed remedies for

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<sup>42</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 231.

<sup>43</sup> Blackwelder, *Styling Jim Crow*, 20. High Brown Face Powder was designed to harmonize with the colour and skin texture of black women. The Overton-Hygienic Company manufactured baking powder, preserves and extracts. When Overton began making High Brown Face Powder it was designed “to harmonize with the color and skin texture of the women of our race” and was created in part because Overton had discovered that women “used more face powder than baking powder.” See Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 108.

<sup>44</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 108.

<sup>45</sup> According to Peiss, Overton may have been the inspiration for a group of Chicago-based black investors, who formed the Kasmir Chemical Company and launched Nile Queen cosmetics in 1918. See *Hope in a Jar*, 108.

<sup>46</sup> Rooks, *Ladies’ Pages*, 64.

<sup>47</sup> Kathy Russell, Midge Wilson and Ronald Hall, *The Color Complex: The Politics of Skin Color Among African Americans* (New York: Anchor Books, 1992), 50. Ro-Zol was originally developed as a solution to remove various skin defects and discolorations but by the 1920s was marketed more as a whitening agent.

common problems at the time, such as hair loss, breakage, and tetter (a skin ailment), and they also considered lush, well-groomed hair a sign of beauty.<sup>48</sup> When Malone relocated to the predominately African American town of Lovejoy, Illinois she began to manufacture Wonderful Hair Grower, and went door to door to sell it. While her hair products contained common substances, such as sage and egg rinses, by canvassing among other black women, she became living proof of the financial benefits of hair care. In 1906, as competitors began to imitate her product, Malone registered the trade name “Poro,” a Mende (West African) term for a devotional society, and by 1914, Malone’s Poro was a thriving enterprise.<sup>49</sup> One of her former employees, Madam C.J. Walker, witnessed Malone’s success, and she was inspired to start her own business.

Born Sarah Breedlove in Delta, Louisiana in 1867, Madam C.J. Walker, as she became known, had worked in the cotton fields alongside her parents and siblings as a child, though she was the first member of her family to be born free.<sup>50</sup> By 1912, Walker claimed to have trained one thousand women at the Walker College of Hair Culture, and when she died in 1919, newspaper articles stated that she had employed more than ten thousand women at The Madame C.J. Walker Manufacturing Company, headquartered in Indianapolis, Indiana.<sup>51</sup> Like Malone before her, Walker’s product line also included a hair grower, glossine (a pomade), vegetable

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<sup>48</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 67.

<sup>49</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 67.

<sup>50</sup> Rooks, *Hair Raising*, 54. In 1910, she married C.J. Walker, and although they would divorce a few years later, she continued to use his name. Walker was a true anomaly. She was a poor, dark-skinned, large framed woman who had worked as a laundress. The odds that she would eventually become the world’s first woman millionaire had to have been a billion to one.

<sup>51</sup> Rooks, *Hair Raising*, 49. Madam C.J. Walker also formed influential organizations such as the Madam C.J. Walker Hair Culturists Union of America, founded in Philadelphia in 1917, and the National Negro Cosmetic Manufacturers Association, also founded in 1917. These associations were formed in order to better protect black women against what Walker called the “dishonest and illegitimate” manufacturers of hair goods and to “promote the spirit of business reciprocity among ourselves, to encourage the development of Race enterprises and acquaint the public with the superior claims of high class goods.” In 1919 a group of beauticians also formed the National Beauty Culturists League (NBCL), which soon was the first predominately female organization to become a part of the National Negro Business League (NNBL) in 1921 and the largest organization in the black beauty industry. See Tiffany Melissa Gill, “I Had My Own Business ... So I Didn’t Have to Worry”: Beauty Salons, Beauty Culturists, and the Politics of African-American Female Entrepreneurship,” in *Beauty and Business: Commerce, Gender, and Culture in Modern America*, ed. Philip Scranton (New York and London: Routledge, 2001), 177.

shampoo, tetter Salve (an antidandruff treatment), and temple grower. Often referred to as the “Walker system,” the product line was unique because it had to be used in conjunction with a “shampoo-press-and-curl” method of straightening hair. The shampoo-press-and-curl method involved the use of light oil and a wide-tooth steel comb heated on a stove. Although many African American historians often credit Walker for inventing the “hot comb,” French hairdresser Marcel Grateau had actually invented heated metal implements as early as 1872, and straightening combs were also available in Sears and Bloomingdale’s catalogues in the 1890s.<sup>52</sup> Thus, Malone and Walker likely modified existing formulas and improved hot combs that were already on the market, adjusting them for the condition and texture of black women’s hair.<sup>53</sup>

The shampoo-press-and-curl offered black women an affordable, relatively safe option for straightening their hair. Even though Malone had developed a system known as “pullers” in the 1880s, which flattened the hair by pulling it,<sup>54</sup> upon Walker’s invention in 1905, she immediately warned against working two combs at once (which had been a common practice and often led to burns to the hair) and she also discouraged the use of hair pullers because they damaged and ultimately thinned the hair.<sup>55</sup> Walker was ground-breaking in that she promoted the idea that all women had the potential for beauty, no matter their hair texture or skin colour, and by the 1920s, the Walker system became the industry standard for black hair care.<sup>56</sup> Walker may have diverged from Malone’s method of hair straightening but both women used a “door-to-door” and a pyramid selling strategy, methods they borrowed from the California Perfume

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<sup>52</sup> Mitchell C. Brown, “The Faces of Science: African Americans in the Sciences,” <https://webfiles.uci.edu/mcbrown/display/walker.html> (date of last access 11 October 2013).

<sup>53</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 70.

<sup>54</sup> Malone’s “hair pullers” stretched and straightened the hair by pulling it. Many women were dissatisfied with the slick, flattened appearance the pullers created and so Walker’s hot comb was a huge success because of how it improved the process of hair straightening.

<sup>55</sup> Blackwelder, *Styling Jim Crow*, 25. Ironically, an improved version of pullers, called flatirons, has made a comeback the twenty-first century beauty salon. See Russell, Wilson and Hall, *Color Complex*, 46.

<sup>56</sup> Victoria Sherrow, *Encyclopedia of Hair: A Cultural History* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2006), 186.

Company (later known as Avon), founded in 1886 by David H. McConnell.<sup>57</sup> Sara Spencer Washington was the third black beauty culturist to mass market hair care products in the early twentieth century.<sup>58</sup> Born in Berkley, Virginia in 1889, Washington opened her first beauty shop in Atlantic City, New Jersey in 1918, and soon thereafter she began marketing her own line of products. Following the death of Walker in 1919 and the decline of Malone's business following a divorce from her husband and a fight over control of her business, Washington's Apex Hair and News Company became one of the largest black-owned businesses in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>59</sup> Like Walker, who grew her business through a chain of beauty schools, before World War II, Washington added several beauty schools to her operations.<sup>60</sup> While Washington is often overshadowed by Walker and Malone she was instrumental in the expansion of black beauty schools across the South and North.<sup>61</sup>

By the 1950s, several African American men founded companies based on chemical hair straightening products. Often referred to as a pioneer of the black hair care industry, George E. Johnson and his company, Johnson's Products, became the first black-owned firm traded on the American Stock Exchange.<sup>62</sup> Johnson began his career as a chemist for the Fuller Products Company, founded by Samuel Fuller (publisher of two African American newspapers, the *New York Age* and *Pittsburgh Courier*). Born in Mississippi in 1927, by the early 1950s, Johnson

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<sup>57</sup> Byrd and Tharps, *Hair Story*, 79.

<sup>58</sup> Washington's Apex Beauty System was introduced roughly a decade after Malone and Walker had built sizable manufacturing plants but unlike the former, Washington added wigs and other hairpieces to the general line of hair products that Malone and Walker had marketed. See Blackwelder, *Styling Jim Crow*, 17.

<sup>59</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 113.

<sup>60</sup> Blackwelder, *Styling Jim Crow*, 21.

<sup>61</sup> I have yet to find any literature that places the products of Overton, Malone, Walker or Spencer in Canada. But through subscriptions of African American newspapers and travel abroad, black Canadians more than likely purchased their products. Michael Harris found that during its first decade of operation the Walker Company sold products across the United States and in the Caribbean and Panama. See Harris, "Mirror Sisters: Aunt Jemima as the Anonym/Extension of Saartjie Bartmann," in *Black Venus 2010: They Called her "Hottentot"* ed. Deborah Willis (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 168. The Indian Historical Society in Indianapolis, Indiana has a Madam C.J. Walker collection that would likely provide some answers as to whether her products were shipped to Canada.

<sup>62</sup> Johnson Products began trading on the American Stock Exchange in 1971.

collaborated with a Chicago barber, Orville Nelson, to improve a hair straightening product that he used in his barbershop.<sup>63</sup> After consulting a chemist at Fuller Products, in 1954, they developed Ultra Wave Hair Culture, the first chemical straightening system (known as a “relaxer”) that could be purchased at retail and applied at home. Johnson perfected the formula by mixing lye with petroleum instead of potatoes.<sup>64</sup> During and after slavery, lye was the most ardent chemical used to straighten the hair. Women would mix it with potatoes as a way to decrease its caustic nature and apply it to the hair in their homes.<sup>65</sup> This was an extremely painful process; as such, Johnson’s invention made the process less painful (it did not, however, eradicate the pain). By the 1970s, Johnson Products competed for control of the black hair care market alongside three other African American-owned companies – Carson Products, founded in Savannah, Georgia in 1951 by Abram Minis; Softsheen, founded in Chicago in 1964 by Edward and Bettiann Gardner; and Pro-Line Corporation, founded in 1970 in Los Angeles by Commer Cottrell. These companies would dominate the chemical relaxer market through the 1980s.

This history of African American beauty entrepreneurship is essential to any discussion of black beauty culture. These African American women and men exported their products across the Black diaspora, but they also created an image of blackness that has, since the late-nineteenth century, become the most widely circulated. This dissertation explains how African American beauty culturists entered the Canadian market, and the way in which advertisements in black community newspapers, in addition to hair care demonstrations at local hotels, helped black beauty products gain entry into Canadian department stores and drugstores. I also examine the entrepreneurship of one of Canada’s most well-known beauty culturists, Viola Desmond. Born in

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<sup>63</sup> Nancy J. Dawson, George E. Johnson.” *The American Mosaic: The African American Experience*, <http://africanamerican.abc-clio.com/> (date of last access 8 December 2011).

<sup>64</sup> Byrd and Tharps, *Hair Story*, 85.

<sup>65</sup> Black women would also use butter on their hair or bacon fat and then straighten the hair with a butter knife heated in a can over a fire as a crude version of a hot comb. See Byrd and Tharps, *Hair Story*, 17.

Halifax, Nova Scotia in 1914, Desmond bought and operated her own beauty parlour in 1940s Halifax. In her biographical book on the life of her sister, Wanda Robson explains that “Viola read about Madam Walker. And she was inspired. This woman’s success is what got Viola going.”<sup>66</sup> The business acumen of another Halifax-born African Canadian, Beverly Mascoll, is also examined. Born in 1942, Mascoll relocated to Toronto when she was a teenager. Her foray into the black beauty business began when she got a job as a receptionist at Toronto Barber and Beauty Supply store. She quickly noticed that there was a major gap in Canada’s beauty industry (i.e. a lack of black hair and skin care products), and in 1970, she started her own business, Beverly Mascoll Ltd. Soon-thereafter she approached Johnson Products to distribute the company’s products in Canada, and at one point was the largest distributor of black beauty products in Canada.<sup>67</sup> By adding Viola Desmond and Beverly Mascoll to the black beauty narrative in North America, I not only locate the contributions of black Canadian women, I also pinpoint how black women by way of beauty advertising, department stores and drugstores, entered Canada’s mainstream beauty culture. To date, this history has virtually been ignored by scholars of Canadian beauty and women’s history.

#### IV. The development of a mainstream beauty culture in Canada

In 1991, The Historica-Dominion Institute, and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) co-produced a series of television commercials called *Canada: A People’s History*. In the one-minute commercial, “The Underground Railroad,” a black woman named Eliza stands worriedly in front of a window looking out for her (and her brother’s) father to arrive in the

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<sup>66</sup> Wanda Robson, *Sister to Courage: Stories from the World of Viola Desmond, Canada’s Rosa Parks* (Wreck Cove, Nova Scotia: Breton Books, 2010), 38.

<sup>67</sup> In 1971, Beverly Mascoll said in an interview, “As a Black-owned company, the leader in the field, Johnson’s growth and success was due to the fact that they always realized that the black consumer knows quality. Now we can have, in Canada, a black cosmetics line that is quality right and priced right.” See “Black-Oriented Afro Sheen Being Introduced in Canada,” *Contrast*, 1 August 1971, 21. Beverly Mascoll died from breast cancer in 2001.



“Promised Land” of Canada. She wears a brown dress, shawl and headscarf, and is accompanied by a white woman who wears a black dress and a bonnet. When Eliza’s impatience forces her onto the street, we discover that their father had made it safely across the border by hiding in a wooden church pew. The voiceover says: “Between 1840 and 1860 more than 30,000 American slaves came secretly to Canada and freedom. They called it The Underground Railroad.”<sup>68</sup> A real Eliza might have lived in Canada during the mid-nineteenth century but her characterization in the *Heritage Minutes*, as they were also called, was fictional. The commercial represents a consistent institutional practice of positioning the mid-nineteenth century as the starting point of black Canadian history. In reality, blacks have been in Canada since the seventeenth century.<sup>69</sup> The commercial does, however, pinpoint how the dominant culture has viewed black history – often from the perspective of white Canadians. With respect to beauty culture, this perspective has tended to emphasize the development of a retail sector, women’s magazines, and products geared toward white, mostly English-speaking, middle-class women.

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<sup>68</sup> See “Underground Railroad: From the Heritage Minutes Collection,” *The Historica-Dominion Institute*, <https://www.historica-dominion.ca/content/heritage-minutes/underground-railroad> (date of last access 28 February 2013).

<sup>69</sup> The history of Canada as a European settler colony begins in the seventeenth century with the French, who were first to arrive, naming the territory New France. While French explorer Jacques Cartier first established a settlement at Montreal in 1535, it was not until Samuel de Champlain, a French explorer, cartographer and diplomat founded New France and Quebec City on 3 July 1608 that New France was transformed into an official French territory. After 1609, the imperial desire for a more concrete commercial exploitation of the newly formed French colony was manifest in the clearing of land for a trading post. Historians of Canadian history agree that the first black person to arrive at Port Royal as part of the French expedition in 1605 was a young boy named Mattieu da Costa. Canadian slavery was practiced in New France (Quebec), Nova Scotia, and Upper Canada (present-day Ontario). Slavery officially began in New France when the first African slave landed at Quebec in 1628. Olivier Le Jeune, as he was renamed, was the first documented black slave in Quebec. By 1709, however, when Louis XIV gave permission for New France colonists to own slaves that they had already been allowed to import, from the 1750s onward, slavery began to play a key role in New France’s attempt to promote and diversify its agricultural and economic base, particularly with tobacco and the cultivation of tropical crops. For detailed accounts see Frank Mackey, *Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal 1760-1840* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010); Elgersman, *Unyielding Spirits*, introduction; Williams, *Road to Now*, introduction and chapter one; Afua Cooper, *The Hanging of Angélique: The Untold Story of Canadian Slavery and the Burning of Old Montréal* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2006); Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, [1971] 1997). See also Nelson, “Sugar Cane, Slaves and Ships: Colonialism, Geography and Power in Nineteenth-Century Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica,” in *Living History: Encountering the Memory of the Heirs of Slavery*, ed. Ana Lucia Araujo (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 30.

In her examination of the history of department stores in Canada, Donica Belisle found that between 1890 and 1940, department stores became powerful agents of Canadian modernization. Companies such as Eaton's, Simpson's and the Hudson's Bay "helped revolutionize the ways Canadians thought about and experienced shopping, living standards, and goods."<sup>70</sup> These retailers also played a pivotal role in the construction of beauty culture in Canada; each company was owned and managed by Anglophones, and while they served customers of varying ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, English Canadian forms of retail and consumerism became the dominant forms in the country. As a result, English Canadian culture also became "quintessential Canadian culture."<sup>71</sup> The Hudson's Bay Company was established in the seventeenth century as a North American fur-trading venture backed by British financiers; in 1670, the company was granted by King Charles II of England exclusive trading rights to the territory.<sup>72</sup> Simpson's was founded by Robert Simpson in 1858, and Eaton's was founded in 1896 by Timothy Eaton.<sup>73</sup> By 1900, Eaton's was realizing larger annual sales than either Bloomingdale's in New York or Macy's, and by the Great Depression, the company had forty seven retail stores and one hundred mail order offices, and its main competitors, Simpson's and The Bay (now known as Hudson's Bay) also operated branches across the country and mail-order catalogues.<sup>74</sup> In 1929, these three major companies pulled in seventy percent of national department store sales.<sup>75</sup>

A Francophone culture also developed around retail and consumerism. Most notably, the largest Francophone store, the Dupuis Frères, which was founded by Nazaire Dupuis in 1868 in

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<sup>70</sup> Donica Belisle, *Retail Nation: Department Stores and the Making of Modern Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 7.

<sup>71</sup> Belisle, *Retail Nation*, 10.

<sup>72</sup> Belisle, *Retail Nation*, 25; 23.

<sup>73</sup> For the history of Eaton's see Joy L. Santink, *Timothy Eaton and the Rise of his Department Store* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

<sup>74</sup> Belisle, *Retail Nation*, 25.

<sup>75</sup> Belisle, *Retail Nation*, 14.

the east end of Montreal, became a model for Francophone consumer culture.<sup>76</sup> The French-Canadian origins of the owner, his links with the clergy, and the placement of the store in Montreal's east end, at a time when most department stores in Montreal were located further west, made the store extremely popular with its essentially French-speaking customers.<sup>77</sup> By and large, however, English-Canadian retailers had the power and financial wherewithal to create and disseminate beauty culture on a national level.

The MacLean Publishing Company's *Chatelaine* magazine was similarly a powerful and significant disseminator of beauty culture in English Canada. Launched in March 1928, *Chatelaine* got its name in a national contest, which offered a \$1,000 prize and drew over 75,000 entries. Hilda Paine, a rancher's wife from Eburne, British Columbia was, however, first to coin *The Chatelaine* ("The" was dropped in 1930), a name which recalled the ring of keys that was worn by housewives in centuries past – keys to every part of the house, from the linen closet to the wine cellar.<sup>78</sup> The success of the magazine hinged on the fact that by the 1920s, magazines had taken on a primary role in guiding children, immigrants, and people of colour in the values of the dominant culture. As Jaleen Grove notes, "Canadians had few radios, even in populated areas, making periodicals a chief source of cultural information."<sup>79</sup> *Chatelaine*'s first editor, Anne Elizabeth Wilson and her successor Byrne Hope Sanders helped to create a magazine that, for much of the twentieth century, stood as Canada's dominant medium for the espousal of white beauty culture based almost entirely on products and advertising from the United States.

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<sup>76</sup> See Mary Catherine Matthews, "Working for Family, Nation and God: Paternalism and the Dupuis Frères Department Store, Montreal, 1926-1952" (MA thesis, McGill University, 1997).

<sup>77</sup> See "Dupuis Frères Dept. Store, St. Catherine Street East," Montreal, QC, about 1910, *McCord Museum*, <http://www.mccord-museum.qc.ca/en/collection/artifacts/MP-0000.813.13> (date of last access 2 November 2013).

<sup>78</sup> Rona Maynard, "Introduction," in *Chatelaine, A Woman's Place: Seventy Years in the Lives of Canadian Women*, ed. Sylvia Fraser (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1997), 7.

<sup>79</sup> Jaleen Grove, "A Castle of One's Own: Interactivity in *Chatelaine Magazine*, 1928-35" *Journal of Canadian Studies* 45.3 (Fall 2011): 180.

## V. The American beauty culturists who created the mainstream beauty ideal

The first beauty mogul of the twentieth century was Max Factor. Born Maksymilian Faktorowicz in Poland in 1877, he was the first entrepreneur to bring theatrical makeup to the mass retail market. After immigrating to the United States in 1904, and after four years in St. Louis, Factor moved to Los Angeles in 1908 and quickly established a barbershop, wig business, and makeup studio.<sup>80</sup> In 1920 he introduced Society Makeup, a cosmetic line for everyday use but it was not until 1927 that he achieved national distribution, and a year later, Factor's first advertisements ran in mass-circulation movie and romance magazines.<sup>81</sup> In addition to Max Factor, the only pre-World War II makeup companies that managed to grow into large corporations (still in existence today) were Maybelline and Revlon, founded in 1914 and 1932 respectively. Both companies began as specialty firms – Maybelline producing mascara, Revlon nail polish – but grew after the war into general cosmetics firms.<sup>82</sup> Factor's biggest rivals, Helena Rubinstein and Elizabeth Arden, also launched their businesses around the turn of the century; each opened beauty salons that emphasized the importance of skin care and the luxuriousness of cosmetics.<sup>83</sup>

By all accounts, the development of the modern make up industry was in large part due to Rubinstein and Arden.<sup>84</sup> Like Factor before her, Rubinstein was born in Poland in 1870. She arrived in the United States following the outbreak of World War I, and opened her first salon in

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<sup>80</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 101. The movie industry had settled in southern California, and Factor's studio served both stage and screen performers.

<sup>81</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 101.

<sup>82</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 103. Andrew Tobias found that "the year lipstick was added to Revlon's line of nail-care products, 1940, sales more than doubled over the previous year, to \$2.8 million." See Tobias, *Fire and Ice: The Story of Charles Revson – The Man Who Built the Revlon Empire* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1976), 47.

<sup>83</sup> Fred E. Basten, *Max Factor: The Man Who Changed the Faces of the World* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2008), 69; 71.

<sup>84</sup> Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 109; also see Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 87.

New York City in 1915. Arden, whose real name was Florence Nightingale Graham, was born in Woodbridge, Ontario in 1884. When her elder brother moved to New York City in 1908, she followed him, and eventually ended up working for a pharmaceutical company where she learned about skin care products.<sup>85</sup> After changing her name to Elizabeth Arden, she opened a beauty shop and in 1918 began selling products.<sup>86</sup> Both women strategically placed ads in magazines like *Town and Country* and *Vogue*, which targeted the specific consumers (upper-class white women) they both sought after.<sup>87</sup>

The last female entrepreneur to transform the beauty culture industry was Estée Lauder.<sup>88</sup> In 1930, she married Joseph Lauter, and a few years later, she changed her married name from Lauter to Lauder, and thereafter she was known as Estée Lauder.<sup>89</sup> In 1946, the Lauders founded Estée Lauder Cosmetics, targeting a small number of fine department stores such as Saks Fifth Avenue, Neiman-Marcus, Bloomingdale's, and Marshall Field's.<sup>90</sup> By the 1950s, Lauder's products were competing alongside Factor, Rubinstein, Arden and Revlon, expanding eventually into the fragrances market. When Rubinstein died in 1965, and Arden the following year, it

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<sup>85</sup> Arden's work in a pharmaceutical lab is probably the reason why cosmetologists in department stores wear lab coats.

<sup>86</sup> Arden's name change may have been part of her plan to elevate beauty culture to a higher level of luxury and class. In 1917 Rubinstein established a manufacturing arm, and Arden followed suit in 1918. Both women were confronted with the paradoxical problem of preserving an aura of exclusivity and luxury while still attracting customers with money to buy their products. Arden and Rubinstein quietly urged their wealthy clientele to become fashion leaders, to distinguish themselves from the less modern bourgeois women who scorned makeup or hid their makeup practices. See Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 87; see also Peiss, "Making Up, Making Over: Cosmetics, Consumer Culture, and Women's Identity," in *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective*, eds. Victoria de Grazia and Ellen Furlough (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 323.

<sup>87</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 105.

<sup>88</sup> Born Josephine Esther (Esty) Mentzer in New York City in 1908, before she was twenty years old, Estée Lauder changed her first name at least twice, from her childhood name Esty to Estelle and then to Estella before settling on Estée in her early thirties. See Nancy Koehn, "Estée Lauder: Self-Definition and the Modern Cosmetics Market," in *Beauty and Business: Commerce, Gender, and Culture in Modern America*, ed. Philip Scranton (New York and London: Routledge, 2001), 218.

<sup>89</sup> Koehn, "Estée Lauder," 222.

<sup>90</sup> Koehn, "Estée Lauder," 227.

marked the beginning of a mergers and acquisitions frenzy that continued until century's end.<sup>91</sup>

In the 1990s, Estée Lauder established a separate division, Estée Lauder International Inc., to manage growth outside the United States.<sup>92</sup>

Meanwhile Avon, with its door-to-door sales strategy, made cosmetics accessible to the middle-class housewife on a budget. Founded in 1886 by David H. McConnell, the California Perfume Company changed its name to Avon in 1929. Significantly, the company never marketed its products under the allure of luxury; instead, it emphasized convenience and affordability. In June 1946 an Avon ad in *Chatelaine* proclaimed, "Let Beauty be Brought to You!"<sup>93</sup> The advertisement also instructed readers on how to purchase Avon products in the "privacy of your own home through the well-informed Avon Representative who calls on you with these exquisite preparations." By 1952, Avon established a Canadian location in Montreal to directly appeal to its Canadian customers' growing interest in lower-cost cosmetics. Although the company had been in Canada since the 1930s, the 1950s marked a period when it increasingly advertised in Canadian women's magazines.<sup>94</sup> Between the 1950s and 1960s as hair dyes entered the mass market, several other beauty firms emerged.

L'Oreal, a company founded in Paris in 1907 by French chemist Eugène Schuller, began as a manufacturing company, selling its products to Parisian hairdressers. The company, originally called Société Française de Teintures Inoffensives pour Cheveux (Safe Hair Dye Company of France) eventually became L'Oréal, and by the 1950s, was a competitor of the

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<sup>91</sup> In March 1968 Eaton's advertised in the *Toronto Telegram* the arrival of Estée Lauder cosmetics at its Queen Street, College Street, Don Mills and Yorkdale locations in Toronto. It marked the arrival of Estée Lauder in Canada. See Eaton's Advertisement for Estee Lauder, *Toronto Telegram*, 19 March 1968, 19.

<sup>92</sup> Koehn, "Estée Lauder," 245. In addition to Canada, Estée Lauder products were distributed in Germany, Japan, Russia, Australia, Singapore, Mexico, the Ukraine, Malaysia, and Venezuela.

<sup>93</sup> Avon Cosmetics Advertisement, *Chatelaine*, June 1946, 48.

<sup>94</sup> As a result of its direct approach, Avon's sales skyrocketed from \$10 million in 1940 to almost \$87 million in 1956. Between 1955 and 1965, the retail cosmetics market in the United States rose from \$1.2 billion to \$2.9 billion and Avon's annual sales more than doubled in the late 1950s and early 1960s, climbing to \$168 million in 1960 and then to \$352 million five years later. See Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 245; see also Koehn, "Estée Lauder," 235.

American brand Clairol, in the global hair colouring market.<sup>95</sup> Clairol was launched in 1931 as the personal care product division of the Procter & Gamble Company. By 1959, Clairol became the leading American hair-dye brand. Clairol's "Does she ... or doesn't she" ad campaign in 1956, and L'Oreal's series of advertisements throughout the 1960s, helped to transform blonde hair into a symbol of beauty.<sup>96</sup> Where white-owned conglomerates defined the mainstream standard of beauty, African American beauty entrepreneurs cultivated a standard of beauty that sought to affirm the beauty of black women absent from the mainstream. And from the 1920s onward, black Canadian newspapers took on the role of cultivating a domestic black beauty culture.

## **VI. Black Canadian periodicals and the promotion of black beauty**

In 1899, there were three "Negro" dailies and one hundred and thirty six weeklies in the United States, and none in Canada; these weekly newspapers played a critical role in shaping and mobilizing black public opinion; they also had a wide geographic reach, circulating throughout the South, Midwest, and Southwest as "national" newspapers.<sup>97</sup> The *Chicago Defender*, for example, had a circulation estimated to be at least one hundred and thirty thousand in 1919.<sup>98</sup> Significantly, the African American beauty culture industry had defied white advertising and marketing experts' assumptions that "black people were not worth selling to because they were too poor to be a significant market and too ignorant to understand modern advertising."<sup>99</sup> Sophisticated appeals to black women by black- and white-owned beauty companies were ubiquitous in African American newspapers, and they soon became commonplace within the

<sup>95</sup> See "L'histoire de L'Oréal Paris," *L'Oreal*, <http://www.loreal-paris.fr/inside-loreal/histoire.aspx> (date of last access 23 October 2013).

<sup>96</sup> Sherrow, *Encyclopedia of Hair*, 10.

<sup>97</sup> Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 392.

<sup>98</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 210.

<sup>99</sup> Susannah Walker, *Style & Status: Selling Beauty to African American Women, 1920 – 1975* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 28.

pages of black periodicals in Canada.<sup>100</sup> When the *Dawn of Tomorrow*, founded in London, Ontario in 1923 by James F. Jenkins appeared, it dubbed itself as “Devoted to the Interest of the Darker Races.” It also drew heavily upon the *Associated Negro Press* for most of its news.<sup>101</sup> Jenkins, an African American who had moved to the city from Georgia in 1904 when he was twenty years-old also co-founded the Canadian League for the Advancement of Colored People (CLACP) in 1924 along with J.W. Montgomery of Toronto. According to a 1950 article in the *London Free Press*, The *Dawn of Tomorrow* was “the only registered Negro paper in Canada.”<sup>102</sup>

In the years following World War II, Robin Winks found that “the metropolitan press had discovered the Negro and often was giving greater, more effective, and certainly more immediate

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<sup>100</sup> Before Canada had a newspaper that espoused black beauty culture a short-lived newspaper was published out of Saint John, New Brunswick by lawyer Abraham B. Walker. Calling itself *Neith*, Walker’s newspaper is the first known black periodical in Canada. Roughly half of each issue of sixty-two pages was devoted to black news, such as lynching in the United States and the black church. Unfortunately, very few black people seem to have subscribed to *Neith*. Most blacks were concerned with the problems facing the community in Saint John, something the magazine rarely mentioned, and were not that interested in Walker’s back to Africa movement, which had been inspired by Marcus Garvey. Walker soon became discouraged in Saint John, and eventually he relocated to the United States. If, as Winks has argued, Walker had established *Neith* in Ontario, where there was a larger and somewhat more prosperous black audience, he might have succeeded. See Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 400-01; see also W.A. Spray, *The Blacks in New Brunswick* (New Brunswick: Unipress, 1972), 66.

<sup>101</sup> In its first few years, the *Dawn of Tomorrow* reported on the death of Nancy Green (the first “real life” Aunt Jemima), the Ku Klux Klan in America, and other race-related crimes in the United States, all of which were reprints from the pages of Associated Negro Press. The vast majority of the editorials in the newspaper were also focused on black community news in Canada. Between 1923 and 1927, the newspaper reported on the establishment of a black community centre in Montreal, British Methodist Episcopal (BME) churches in Sydney, Nova Scotia, and subsequent black church meetings in London, Chatham, and North Buxton, including a conference that was held in Owen Sound in 1927. It also reported on Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), including an Annual Convention that was held in Montreal in 1923. By 1926 the paper dropped to a twice-monthly publication. When Jenkins died in 1931, his widow, Christina Elizabeth Jenkins continued to edit the newspaper in his name until her death in 1967. See “Original ‘Aunt Jemima’ Gone,” *Dawn of Tomorrow*, 15 September 1923, 1; “Klu Klux Leaders Are Arrested,” *Dawn of Tomorrow*, 21 July 1923, 7; “Chicago Whites Terrorize Light Colored Women,” *Dawn of Tomorrow*, 2 February 1924, 1; “Negro Community Centre is Inaugurated at Montreal,” *Dawn of Tomorrow*, 8 April 1927, 1, 8; “B.M.E. Church Established in Sydney, N.S.,” *Dawn of Tomorrow*, 5 April 1924, 1; “Report on Annual Conference of B.M.E. Church,” *Dawn of Tomorrow*, 30 July 1927, 1, 7-8; “The U.N.I.A. Convention at Montreal,” *Dawn of Tomorrow*, 25 August 1923, 1. See also Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 402. Although Christina Jenkins later married Frank Howson, she continued to use Jenkins name in the periodical’s masthead.

<sup>102</sup> Irene Taylor, “‘Dawn of Tomorrow’ a Family Affair,” *London Free Press*, 15 August 1950. The page number is unknown for this article. I located this article at the London Public Library and the page number had been removed.



attention to instances of discrimination than any weekly paper could hope to do.”<sup>103</sup> But, black beauty culture was still absent from the dominant Canadian media. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s barbershops, hair and skin care products, and beauty culturists had found a home in the pages of the *Dawn of Tomorrow*. And throughout the 1950s and 1960s, other black community newspapers took up the task of promoting black beauty culture. *The Clarion* (1946-1956), published out of New Glasgow, Nova Scotia became a credible voice for blacks in Atlantic Canada; the *West Indian News Observer*, published by Jamaican-born Olivia Grande-Walker and A.W. Hamilton, was launched in 1967 but ceased publication in January 1969 only to be reborn a month later as *Contrast*, which ran until 1991. In April 1978 *Share* magazine, a weekly community newspaper published by Arnold A. Auguste, who came to Canada in 1970 from Trinidad and Tobago, hit newsstands. Since its debut, *Share* has focused almost exclusively on the Greater Toronto Area’s (GTA) Caribbean community.<sup>104</sup>

In order to situate Canada’s black beauty culture industry I conduct a comparative analysis of African American magazines. Specifically, *Ebony* magazine founded in 1945 by John H. Johnson as a voice for middle-class African American culture, and *Essence* magazine, which was first published in May 1970 by Essence Communications Inc. as an African American women’s magazine. By drawing comparisons between nationally circulated Canadian women’s magazines, regional black Canadian periodicals, and African American magazines, this

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<sup>103</sup> Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 391. The *Toronto Star* and *Telegram* might have given more attention to black news stories, especially discrimination related news, but these outlets did not promote black culture. Between 1934 and 1941 The *Free Lance* and *The Outcome* were published out of Montreal, the *Canadian Negro* began in Toronto in June 1953, continuing through December 1956, and *Africa Speaks*, a Toronto monthly appeared shortly thereafter. In 1966 the monthly paper *Coppertone* was launched in Halifax but it did not survive past the first two issues, and in 1965 a group of West Indian and African students in Toronto began *Ebo Voice*, but it too disappeared after its first year. See Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 404-5.

<sup>104</sup> Trained as journalist, Auguste used a different tone to that of *Contrast* in the reporting on black community news in Toronto. *Share*’s articles were rarely political and edgy; instead, the newspaper sought to celebrate black culture by focusing primarily on community achievements and local events that were ignored in the mainstream media. It is interesting to note that just a few weeks after *Share*’s arrival its offices were burnt to the ground in what the Fire Marshall’s office concluded was the work of arsonists. See “Paper Will Continue Publisher Says,” *Share*, 29 April 1978, 3.

dissertation represents one of the first comparative analyses of the role print media in conjunction with retailers and advertising has played in the formation of black beauty culture in Canada. It also explains where and why black Canadian newspapers modelled their content after African American magazines and where and why they departed from such publications in terms of their editorial content and the promotion of black beauty culture. Despite lacking the promotional and distribution apparatuses that helped to create Canada's mainstream beauty culture, this dissertation explains how black Canadian beauty culture developed.

## **VII. The parameters of this study**

There has never been a study of Canada's beauty culture industry, and the transnational flow of products, beauty imagery and services between Canada, the United States, and Caribbean. As such, there were few resources that I could refer to that would speak to the beauty culturists who built the Canadian beauty market, the advertisers and companies that cultivated a beauty ideal, and the ways in which the black beauty market developed independent of mainstream advertisers. As such, I have relied on the work of black Canadian scholars of Black Diaspora, art history, migration and immigration, and other historical works that have examined Canada's advertising and retail industries, *Chatelaine* magazine, and the women's movement. At the same time, I have conducted extensive archival research in some cases handling materials that have scarcely been viewed at local libraries, provincial archives, photographic museums, and online newspaper databases. Some of the questions this dissertation explores are: what is Canada's beauty culture history? How is beauty culture interconnected with histories of slavery and colonialism, American capitalist expansion, and advertising imagery? If Canada, the United States, and Caribbean share similar colonial histories, what parallels can be drawn between race, beauty culture, and nationalism? What distinctions can be made between these distinct sites?

This dissertation moves back and forth between Canada, the United States and the Caribbean in order to understand how beauty culture has developed across different sites of diaspora. In the following seven chapters, I provide an analysis of not just beauty culture but also Western capitalism, feminism, photography and film iconography, and Canadian retail. I ultimately argue that in order to make sense of the contemporary milieu one must understand the impact of eighteenth-century transatlantic slavery, nineteenth-century industrialization and modernization, twentieth-century capitalist expansion and globalized distribution, and twenty-first-century media culture and advertising campaigns.

Chapter one explores the hair care practices, dress, and modes of appearance among black women and white women across the transatlantic world in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is here that I locate the black female body in a transnational context shaped by European conquest, and the racialization of bodily difference. The chapter also situates how print culture (newspapers, novels, and conduct books) worked in tandem with “high” visual culture (oil paintings and commodity advertising) to entrench beliefs about the supposed inherent differences between black women and white women. I discuss the visual representation of the black female body in Canada through an examination of François Malépart de Beaucourt’s oil painting, *Portrait of a Haitian Woman* (1786). It stands as one of (if not the only) existing depiction of a black woman in eighteenth-century Canada. The chapter concludes with an analysis of sentimental literature, most notably Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852), the most widely circulated novel of the nineteenth century, in order to demonstrate how hair texture and skin colour became racialized and gendered bodily markers that circulated in literature in addition to the visual culture of the period. The black/white binary becomes

embedded and entrenched within eighteenth- and nineteenth-century visual and print culture. This chapter demonstrates how this convergence took place in Canada.

Chapters two and three cover the period between the late-nineteenth century and World War II. Both chapters address the cultivation of the white beauty ideal and the social movements and transformations in the early-twentieth century that shifted the appearance and ideological meaning attached to womanhood for both blacks and whites. The New Negro Woman, like the New Woman, appeared at the turn-of-the-twentieth-century, becoming at once synonymous with consumerism as she did with beauty, public visibility, and modernity. This time period, I argue, is also the moment when the commercialization and institutionalization of beauty culture (as we know it today) took place. The political climate of this period may have given rise to new conceptions of womanhood that affected the lives of all women but race and class distinctions still determined who was beautiful, and who had access to beauty.

Chapter two addresses the social movements of the late-nineteenth century, such as dress reform, temperance, and the ideology and practices of the New Womanhood. As white women became more independent from men, more visible in the public sphere and increasingly consumers of not only fashion but cosmetics, they began to distance themselves from the cult of domesticity that had defined the nineteenth century. Conversely, as the New Negro Woman garnered a public visibility through cultural movements like the Harlem Renaissance, photography, which had been used to debase the black female body, now became a means to cultivate a sense of identity that refuted the scientific racism that had prevented black women from making claims to beauty. I explore several photographic portraits of black women in Canada taken between the mid-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century in order to

demonstrate how the appearance of black womanhood shifted, and the role of wider social movements, like the New Negro Woman, played in this shift.

Chapter three builds upon the ideologies and practices of the New Womanhood by exploring the development of women's magazines, beauty advertising, and the cultural milieu of the early-twentieth century that was shaped by a pervasive racism based on the principles of eugenics. In this chapter I explain how Canada's mainstream beauty culture formed by examining how beauty advertisers, most of whom were American, entered the pages of women's magazines in English and French Canada, most notably *Chatelaine*. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how *Ebony* magazine took on the role of cultivating a black beauty culture in the United States and Canada that was virtually absent in the mainstream beauty culture. This beauty culture, however, helped to perpetuate the notion that lighter-skin and straighter-hair were the symbols of a progressive black womanhood.

Chapter four isolates black beauty culture in Canada, and the strategies used by beauty culturists to build a market for black hair and skin care products, and a consumer culture geared toward black women. I provide a history of barbering and hairdressing in North America, and explain the ways in which the *Dawn of Tomorrow*, in the 1920s and 1930s, became the leading disseminator of beauty advertising in Canada. Through an analysis of advertisements from hair salons, barbershops, and product manufacturers located in London, Toronto, Montreal, and New York, I provide one of the first analyses of the birth of black hair care and beauty culture in Canada. This chapter examines the ways in which black Canadians relied upon, and in some cases reproduced, ideologies and practices circulating in African American communities, but in other ways, they departed from the African American press and beauty advertising.

In chapters five and six I provide detailed accounts of the commercialization and commodification of black hair care and skin care practices in Canada (i.e. chemical relaxers, wigs, hair weaves, hair dyes and skin bleaching creams), and the ways in which these products became available for sale at retail in the 1970s and 1980s, most notably at department stores and drugstores. Chapter five is framed within the context of the two social movements of the 1960s, the Women's Movement and Black is Beautiful, and the ways in which both movements coincided with shifts in the beauty culture industry. On the one hand, blonde hair became the symbolic embodiment of a new form of freedom for white women, but on the other hand, the Afro signalled a new form of freedom for black women. I provide an analysis of how cultural shifts impacted the visualization and sale of beauty products, how these developments were made visible for white women in *Chatelaine* and for black women through editorials and advertisements in *Contrast* and *Share*. The chapter concludes with an examination of dreadlocks, hair weaves, and the continued political contestations that surround black hairstyling – to go “natural” (i.e. to valorize blackness) or to straighten (i.e. to valorize whiteness).

Chapter six covers the time period between the early 1970s and early 2000s when black beauty culture entered Canada's mainstream retail market, most notably Eaton's, Simpson's, Hudson's Bay, and Shopper's Drug Mart. This account is the first month by month, year by year breakdown of how African American-owned and white-owned companies sold black Canadian consumers not only on the functionality of chemical hair straightening but also on the “safety” of the products. Through an in-depth textual analysis of beauty advertisements in *Contrast* and *Share*, I examine the strategies these companies used to promote chemical hair straightening, and then question how hair care advertising has, since the early 2000s, relied upon the visual display

of conspicuous consumption to reposition chemical straightening from a practical necessity into a “lifestyle” product.

The final chapter is a critique of the larger issue of white bias and racism that continues to permeate the contemporary beauty culture industry. It is here that I raise questions about the multinational companies who gained control of the global beauty culture industry in the 1990s by critiquing the attempts these firms have made at diversifying their advertising campaigns. If the same companies that once ignored black women are now overwhelmingly the companies that control the black beauty culture industry, how has this merger shifted the image of beauty in the contemporary? And further, if the mainstream beauty culture has now incorporated black women, and other women of colour into its ranks, why are issues of race, class, gender, and bodily difference still as politicized today as they were at the turn of the last century?

## Chapter 1

### Transatlantic beauty: slavery, dress and the body

#### I. The transatlantic slave trade

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries slaves were culled from the African tribes of the Wolof, Mandingo, Mende and Yoruba.<sup>1</sup> In his examination of Africa before the transatlantic slave trade John Thornton points out that there existed a bustling economic exchange between Africa and Europe:

Europe exported a wide range of goods to African before 1650, of which we can recognize several categories. First and surely foremost in terms of volume was cloth – a whole world of textiles of dozens of types by the seventeenth century. Then there were metal goods, principally iron and copper, in raw (iron bars and copper manillas) and worked form (knives, swords, copper basins and bowls, etc.). Next there was currency, consisting of tons of cowry (sic) shells.<sup>2</sup>

In general, West African aesthetics were frequently changing, and by the sixteenth century this adaptive and creative impulse permeated all aspects of Africans' wardrobe, from the combining of actual items of African and European dress to the reworking of cloth that composed that dress, Africans were as interested in dress and fine clothing as Europeans had become.<sup>3</sup>

Before European slavery, enslavement had been widespread in Africa for centuries. The transatlantic slave trade was in many ways an outgrowth of this internal slavery. Thornton explains further that slavery was widespread in Atlantic Africa because slaves were the only

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<sup>1</sup> These slaves were obtained from three distinct areas along the West African coastline: Upper Guinea coast (modern-day Sierra Leone), Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Senegal, and the Gambia; the other sites were the Gold Coast (present-day Ghana), and central and south central Africa (present-day Congo and Angola). See *Routes to Slavery: Direction, Ethnicity, and Mortality in the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, ed. David Eltis and David Richardson (London; Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1997). Also see Afua Cooper, *The Hanging of Angélique: The Untold Story of Canadian Slavery and the Burning of Old Montréal* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2006), 35.

<sup>2</sup> John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1680* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 45. Ira Berlin posits that depending on the location, the exchange also involved "guns, liquor, and beads for African gold, ivory, hides, pepper, beeswax, and dyewoods. The coastal trade or cabotage added fish, produce, livestock, and other perishables to this list, especially as regional specialization developed." See Berlin, "From Creole to African: Atlantic Creoles and the Origins of African-American Society in Mainland North America," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 43.2 (Apr. 1996): 261.

<sup>3</sup> Monica Miller, *Slaves to Fashion: Black Dandyism and the Styling of Black Diasporic Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 90.



form of private revenue-producing property recognized in African law.<sup>4</sup> Europeans, however, promoted the slave trade by using indirect military pressure on African leaders, such as controlling important military technology, such as horses and guns.<sup>5</sup> These economic pressures coupled with trade mechanisms, which had already been in place between Africa and Europe meant that by the fifteenth century, when the Portuguese reached the Senegal region they abandoned their earlier strategy of raiding for commerce and began to export African slaves.<sup>6</sup>

Once the slave trade commenced, the Portuguese, Spanish, and the Dutch were some of the first countries to escalate the capture and enslavement of Africans, shipping them across the Atlantic Ocean through what has become known as the Middle Passage to the “New World” of the Caribbean, the Americas (North and South). This voyage had the effect, among other things, of homogenizing the African body. Many of the ethnic and linguistic differences that had existed in Africa were neutralized. The voyage through the Middle Passage on the slave ship was instrumental to this process of renaming and (re)identification.<sup>7</sup> By the seventeenth century, Brazil, Cuba, Jamaica, Barbados and other Caribbean territories had slave populations that resisted their bondage by such means as malingering, petty theft, sabotage, arson, poisoning,

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<sup>4</sup> Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 74. Thornton explains that African slaves were typically used in two different ways: First of all, slaves became the preeminent form of private investment and the manifestation of private wealth – a secure form of reproducing wealth equivalent to landowning in Europe. Second, slaves were used by state officials as a dependent and loyal group, both for the production of revenue and for performing administrative and military service in the struggle between kings or executives who wished to centralize their states and other elite parties who sought to control royal absolutism. See *Africa and Africans*, 89. The use of slaves by private people to increase and maintain their wealth was just one of the ways in which slaves were used in African societies, another way was by the political elite, who employed slaves to increase their power. These slaves were used as a form of wealth-generating property, just as they were in private hands, or they might have been used to create dependent administrations or armies. See *Africa and Africans*, 91.

<sup>5</sup> See Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 98.

<sup>6</sup> Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 95.

<sup>7</sup> As Marcus Rediker explains, “the specific importance of the slave ship was bound up with the other foundational institution of modern slavery, the plantation, a form of economic organization that began in the medieval Mediterranean, spread to the eastern Atlantic islands (the Azores, Madeiras, Canaries, and Cape Verde), and emerged in revolutionary form in the New World, especially Brazil, the Caribbean, and North American during the seventeenth century.” See Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 43. See also Philip Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), ch. 2.

running away, suicide, and armed resistance.<sup>8</sup> In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Jamaica for instance, outbreaks occurred on an average of every five years.<sup>9</sup> Importantly, the centuries of exchange between Africans and Europeans before the slave trade meant that clothing, in particular, already carried meaning for enslaved Africans; there existed, as Monica Miller aptly notes, “a deeply ingrained cultural predisposition to exploring hybridity, syncretism, and displays of conspicuous consumption.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, although the wearing of fine clothing would become part of a strategy of slave resistance and escape, it had been a celebratory part of various African cultures for centuries before the slave trade.

The first African slaves were brought to North America after slaves arrived in the Caribbean. Over the course of the seventeenth century several American states implemented laws that sanctioned the institution.<sup>11</sup> The Dutch – roughly between 1620 and 1670 – were the first colonial powers to impact the Atlantic world. During those years, Ira Berlin notes that “the Dutch took control of Portuguese enclaves in Africa, introduced their commercial agents, and pressed their case for Dutch culture.”<sup>12</sup> By the mid-seventeenth century, the Dutch were actively supplying slaves to the Caribbean, South America, and even with the transformation of New Netherlands into New York with the English conquest of 1664, Dutch merchants were still participating in the slave trade.<sup>13</sup> By the end of the seventeenth and into the eighteenth century, the Dutch had an immense cultural impact on mainland North America. For example, even

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<sup>8</sup> Richard Sheridan, “The Jamaican Slave Insurrection Scare of 1776 and the American Revolution,” in *Origins of the Black Atlantic: Rewriting Histories*, eds. Laurent Dubois and Julius S. Scott (New York and London: Routledge, 2009), 26-7.

<sup>9</sup> Sheridan, “Jamaican Slave Insurrection Scare of 1776, 27.

<sup>10</sup> Miller, *Slaves to Fashion*, 90.

<sup>11</sup> In 1641 Massachusetts became the first state to legalize slavery; in 1662 Virginia courts enacted laws that ensured that children born to slaves would also be considered slaves; and finally in 1670 Virginia declared that baptism did not alter a person’s servitude – not even Christianity could “save” slaves from the chains of eternal servitude. See Ayana D. Byrd and Lori Tharps, *Hair Story: Untangling the Roots of Black Hair in America* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2001), 11-2.

<sup>12</sup> Berlin, “From Creole to African,” 264-65.

<sup>13</sup> Cooper, *Hanging of Angélique*, 53; 60-1.

though the Dutch lost control of New York, they still exerted strong linguistic influence in the Hudson Valley, and other areas of New York; a century after the English conquest, many people in North America, including some slaves, continued to speak Dutch.<sup>14</sup>

European contact with Africans, and the subsequent conquest and control of the black body through slavery irrevocably changed the course of modern history. In the context of the Atlantic world, racial distinctions based on supposed truths of colour and blood were made and confirmed in slavery, and as a result, blackness, as Nadine Ehlers asserts, “Became synonymous with servitude and whiteness with freedom.”<sup>15</sup> Those who possessed the phenotypic markers of white skin, straight hair, aquiline nose and thin lips were typologized as “Caucasian” and in opposition to those possessing “black skin-pigment, ‘woolly’ hair ... [and] thick lips,” those were identified as part of the “Negroid race.”<sup>16</sup> The bodily distinctions in hair, skin colour, and phenotype between black and white women gained intrinsic meaning in the institution of slavery.

## II. Racial phenotype and bodily distinctions in slavery

The first permanent English settlement in the North Americas was established at Jamestown, Virginia in 1607. Several scholars have noted that when the first slave ships arrived in Jamestown in 1619, blacks served no differently than white bondservants and, consequently, the markers of slavery were not immediately linked to a bodily difference.<sup>17</sup> Further, the word *slave* initially held no meaning in the English legal system; black subjects were regarded merely as servants.<sup>18</sup> In 1662, when Virginia law made a connection between black identity and slave

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<sup>14</sup> Cooper, *Hanging of Angélique*, 61.

<sup>15</sup> Nadine Ehlers, *Racial Imperatives: Discipline, Performativity, and Struggles Against Subjection* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012), 32.

<sup>16</sup> Ehlers, *Racial Imperatives*, 25. Also see Charles Davenport, *State Laws Limiting Marriage Selection: Examined in the Light of Eugenics*, Bulletin 9, Eugenics Record Office (Cold Spring Harbor, Long Island, New York, 1913).

<sup>17</sup> Ehlers, *Racial Imperatives*, 33; also see Leonard Higginbotham and Barbara Kopytoff, “Racial Purity and Interracial Sex in the Law of Colonial and Antebellum Virginia,” *Georgetown Law Journal* 77 (1989): 1970.

<sup>18</sup> Ehlers, *Racial Imperatives*, 33.

status by adopting the civil rule of *Partus sequitur ventrem* (Latin for “Follow the mother giving birth”) which held that the slave status of a child followed that of his or her mother, and then in 1664 when the colony of Maryland made a distinction between blacks and servants, blackness became increasingly conflated with the social status of slaves which stood in opposition to whiteness as a marker of freedom.<sup>19</sup> By the 1680s, the institution of slavery in the Atlantic colonies was premised on race. Blackness became intertwined with servitude whiteness became an attribute of the free and by extension white identity functioned as a “shield from slavery.”<sup>20</sup> Ultimately, as Ehlers poignantly observes, “the status of slave pervaded their very being.”<sup>21</sup> The naming of the “Negro” body also played a key role in constituting racial difference.

In the American and Caribbean colonies, a tiered system based on skin colour distinguished whites and light-skinned Creoles from Africans. The term “Creole” was used to describe both enslaved and free people of different races in the Caribbean but it had different meaning in the American colonies. The word “Creole” derived from the Latin *creare* – “to beget” or “create.” As Steeve O. Buckridge asserts, a process of *creolization* that occurred in the Atlantic colonies reflected the African customs that were brought there and the resourcefulness and the ingenuity of African people as well as an openness to use materials present in the new land, even acquiring knowledge of native plants from indigenous people.<sup>22</sup> For instance, Creole women in Jamaica often used plant fibres, pigments, and bark to make their own clothing, and

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<sup>19</sup> David H. Fowler, *Northern Attitudes Towards Interracial Marriage – Legislation and Public Opinion in the Middle Atlantic and the States of the Old North-West, 1780-1930* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1987), 41.

<sup>20</sup> Cheryl Harris, “Whiteness as Property,” *Harvard Law Review* 106.8 (1993): 1720; also see Ehlers, *Racial Imperatives*, 34.

<sup>21</sup> Ehlers, *Racial Imperatives*, 34.

<sup>22</sup> Steeve O. Buckridge, “The Role of Plant Substances in Jamaican Slave Dress” *Caribbean Quarterly* 49.3 (Sept. 2003): 62. In her analysis of the Italian painter Agostino Brunias’ scenes of Jamaica in the eighteenth century, Kay Dian Kriz asserts that in addition to showing enslaved and free people conversing, dancing, trading in local markets and along roadsides, Brunias frequently drew a distinction between the skin colour of Caribbean Creoles. “Light-skinned women of color [were] usually shown more lavishly dressed [in paintings] than their darker-skinned counterparts and [were] often accompanied by darker-skinned slaves or servants.” See Kriz, *Slavery, Sugar, and the Culture of Refinement: Picturing the British West Indies, 1700-1840* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 59.

Creole dress often displayed many indigenous and African cultural characteristics.<sup>23</sup> Buckridge asserts further that dress was a visually accessed language of the body in that one's dress "was constantly scrutinized and itself provided a narrative especially in the absence of a shared spoken language, culture or religion."<sup>24</sup> In the American South the term Creole grew out of the racial politics in the state of Louisiana. Under Spanish and French rule in the eighteenth century, Louisiana Creoles held a distinct intermediate position between African slaves and the white inhabitants.<sup>25</sup> Where in the Caribbean any person born in the Atlantic islands was considered Creole (including white Europeans), skin colour separated Creoles from blacks in America.<sup>26</sup> This separation, according to J.W. Blassingame, "was encouraged by the whites as a means of dividing the Negroes and making it easier to control them.... By law the light-skinned free Negro [Creole] was barred from mingling with the dark-skinned slave."<sup>27</sup>

By the late-nineteenth century, New Orleans's Creole community was not exactly white or black and not exactly free or enslaved.<sup>28</sup> The city operated in a three-tiered system with

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<sup>23</sup> Buckridge, "Role of Plant Substances," 61.

<sup>24</sup> Buckridge, *The Language of Dress: Resistance and Accommodation in Jamaica, 1760-1890* (Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2004), 78. Hilary Beckles has also done extensive work on slavery in the Caribbean, and the experience of African-born and Creole persons. See Beckles, "An Economic Life of their Own: Slaves as Commodity Producers and Distributors in Barbados," in *Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World: A Student Reader*, eds. Verene Shepherd and Hilary McD. Beckles (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2000), 732-742; Beckles, "'War Dances': Slave Leisure and Anti-Slavery in the British-Colonised Caribbean" in *Working Slavery, Pricing Freedom: Perspectives from the Caribbean, Africa and the African Diaspora*, ed. Verene Shepherd (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 2002), 223-246.

<sup>25</sup> Anthony G. Barthelemy, "Light, Bright, Damn Near White," in *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color*, ed. Sybil Kein (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 252-275.

<sup>26</sup> For more of a discussion of creoles in Louisiana in the historical and contemporary context, see Yaba Amgborale Blay, "'Pretty Color 'n Good Hair': Creole Women of New Orleans and the Politics of Identity," in *Blackberries and Redbones: Critical Articulations of Black Hair/Body Politics in African Communities*, eds. Regina E. Spellers and Kimberly R. Moffat (Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press, 2010), 29-52.

<sup>27</sup> J.W. Blassingame, *Black New Orleans: 1860-1880* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 21.

<sup>28</sup> Joan M. Martin, "Plaçage and the Louisiana Gens de Couleur Libre: How Race and Sex Defined the Lifestyles of Free Women of Color," in *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color*, ed. Sybil Kein (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 57-70. Also see Marcia Alesan Dawkins, *Clearly Invisible: Racial Passing and the Color of Cultural Identity* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2012), 57.

whites at the top, Creoles in the middles, and blacks at the bottom.<sup>29</sup> American slavery was also made unique by its emphasis on blood quotient. As Ehlers notes, “the initial distinctions that were made based on skin pigmentation, facial lineaments, and body conformations were seen (and fabricated) to denote inherent subcutaneous differences of blacks – characteristics of blackness – that *determined* identity.”<sup>30</sup> In order to draw an invisible line between the white body and black body, laws against interracial unions began to appear in the United States as early as 1664.<sup>31</sup> In 1863 when the journalist David Goodman Croly published a pamphlet entitled “Miscegenation: The Theory and the Blending of the Races, Applied to the American White Man and Negro,” the pamphlet coined the word miscegenation, combining the Latin *misce*, “to mix,” and “*gene*” “race.”<sup>32</sup> Miscegenation was often the result of unwanted sex stemming from white males’ exploitation of black slave women, but there were also sexual intimacies between white European women and black slave men.<sup>33</sup> Ultimately, a racial hierarchy was maintained in the United States through a rigid colour line.<sup>34</sup>

Across the Atlantic colonies, light-skinned black women were often called *mulattos* or *mulattas* and were generally viewed by contemporary observers as being more sexually desirable because of the value placed on proximity to “European” facial features, hair texture and lightness

<sup>29</sup> Marouf Hasian Jr., “Critical Legal Theorizing, Rhetorical Intersectionalities and the Multiple Transgressions of the ‘Tragic Mulatta,’” *Anastasie Desarant*, *Women’s Studies in Communication* 27 (2004): 119-48.

<sup>30</sup> Ehlers, *Racial Imperatives*, 36.

<sup>31</sup> Virginia restricted intermarriage in 1691, Massachusetts in 1705, North Carolina in 1715, South Carolina and Delaware in 1717. See Stephen Talty, *Mulatto America: At the Crossroads of Black and White Culture: A Social History* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), 53.

<sup>32</sup> Talty, *Mulatto America*, 70.

<sup>33</sup> In the United States, historian Randall Kennedy has conducted an extensive historical analysis of interracial sex, marriage and adoption in America, see Kennedy, *Interracial Intimacies: Sex, Marriage, Identity, and Adoption* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003); for a discussion of white women and their sexual encounters with black men in the Caribbean see Beckles, “White Women and Slavery in the Caribbean,” in *Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World: A Student Reader*, eds. Verene Shepherd and Hilary McD. Beckles (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2000), 659-669.

<sup>34</sup> Martha Hodes posits that the colour line in the U.S. was also underpinned by the argument that “if whites and blacks could have children together, then racial categories could be preserved.” For more of a discussion on miscegenation see Hodes, “The Sexualization of Reconstruction Politics: White Women and Black Men in the South after the Civil War,” in *American Sexual Politics: Sex, Gender and Race Since the Civil War*, ed. John C. Fout and Maura Shaw Tantillo (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1993), 59-74.

of skin colour.<sup>35</sup> In the Spanish-speaking colony of Cuba, for instance, Alicia Arrizón explains that whenever the black population made attempts to separate from the white population, the process of *blanqueamiento* (whitening) was used in systematic ways reduce visible markers of an African ancestry. Arrizón asserts that “Mulattas were ‘seduced’ and impregnated by their white ‘masters,’ who envisioned a ‘better’ race through the process of *blanqueamiento*.”<sup>36</sup>

After the Dominican Republic separated from Haiti in 1844, Maxime Raybaud, the French consul-general in Haiti, also claimed that the people of the Spanish part of Santo Domingo were obviously “of mixed African and Spanish descent yet considered themselves not mulattos or colored, as the Haitians did, but ‘*blancos de la tierra* [whites of the land].”<sup>37</sup> Ana-Maurine Lara observes that in the Dominican Republic, a *mestizo* class and then a *mulatto* class of people developed.<sup>38</sup> By the sixteenth century, through the initiation and increase in the importation of peoples from Africa directly, and the increase in the *mulatto/mestizo* marriages and offspring, Lara writes further that

the overall population of African descendants and Africans grew to be significantly larger than that of the Spaniards/whites. It was then that the Spaniards began to implement policies to police the boundaries of a new ideology of race, juxtaposing the “*indio*” to the “*africano ladino/bozal*” to the “white

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<sup>35</sup> See Shirley Tate, *Black Beauty: Aesthetics, Stylization, Politics* (Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 61. Also see Barbara Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1990); Alicia Arrizón, *Queering Mestizaje: Transculturation and Performance* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2006); Ginetta Candelario, *Black Behind the Ears: Dominican Racial Identity from Museums to Beauty Shops* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

<sup>36</sup> See Arrizón, *Queering Mestizaje*, 103.

<sup>37</sup> Candelario, *Black Behind the Ears*, 42. Also see Silvio Torres-Saillant, “The Tribulations of Blackness: Stages in Dominican Racial Identity,” *Callaloo* 23.3 (Summer 2000): 1086-1111. The history of the Haitian revolution and the role of the Spanish Creole, their manumission practices have played a significant role in the demarcation of racial difference in the Dominican Republic.

<sup>38</sup> The term *mestizo* is used to specifically classify the offspring of Spanish Catholic/Indigenous people in the Dominican. See Ana-Maurine Lara, “*Cimarronas, Ciguapas, Señoras*: Hair, Beauty, Race, and Class in the Dominican Republic,” in *Blackberries and Redbones: Critical Articulations of Black Hair/Body Politics in Africana Communities*, eds. Regina E. Spellens and Kimberly R. Moffat (Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press, 2010), 117, also see note 6. Arrizón also explores the racial category of *mestizo* in the colonial Philippines; see *Queering Mestizaje*, 125-29.

Spaniard” and developing numerous categories by which to maintain a strict hierarchy of social-economic participation.<sup>39</sup>

Like in Cuba, through the process of *blanqueamiento*, “white” Europeans became the colonial powers and “true” models of the Dominican Republic’s nationhood over the course of the nineteenth century.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, in the English-speaking Caribbean, the large light-skinned population were called *mulattos* or *coloureds*, and they made up the majority of the emerging middle-class.<sup>41</sup> In 1820, for example, this middle-class, mixed-race group outnumbered the white population, as colour and phenotype became visible characteristics that distanced them from the supposedly lower African or Negro class.<sup>42</sup>

In America, a *mulatto* signified “one-half blood” or the child of a black and a white; a *quadroon* had “one-quarter blood” (or the child of a mulatto and a white); an *octoroon* had “one-eighth blood” (or the child of a quadroon and a white). As Jennifer De Vere Brody argues, octoroons might have had no apparent trace of black blood in their appearance but they were still subject to the legal disabilities which attached them to the condition of blacks.<sup>43</sup> The appearance of terms like *mulatto* or *quadroon* in eighteenth-century Canadian newspapers indicate that the white settler population was also well versed in the colonial language of race,<sup>44</sup> even though British and French colonialists did not create their own distinct terminology. The distinctions between the races during slavery, as Ehlers observes, were made at the “surface of the skin – the

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<sup>39</sup> Lara, “*Cimarronas, Ciguapas, Señoras*,” 118. Also see Donna Goldstein, “‘Interracial’ Sex and Racial Democracy in Brazil: Twin Concepts?,” *American Anthropologist* 101.3 (Sept. 1999): 563-78.

<sup>40</sup> Lara, “*Cimarronas, Ciguapas, Señoras*,” 119-20.

<sup>41</sup> Buckridge, *Language of Dress*, 113. Also see Patricia Mohammed, “‘But most of all mi love me browning’: The Emergence in Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century Jamaica of the Mulatto Woman as the Desired,” *Feminist Review* 65 (Summer 2000): 22-48.

<sup>42</sup> Buckridge, *Language of Dress*, 113-4.

<sup>43</sup> Jennifer De Vere Brody, *Impossible Purities: Blackness, Femininity, and Victorian Culture* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), 47.

<sup>44</sup> Charmaine Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject in Western Art* (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), 55.



epidermis functioning as the signifier of racial difference – the visible was perceived as that which indicated a subcutaneous natural difference between the races.”<sup>45</sup>

Significantly, the stigmatization of black people’s hair did not gain its historical intransigence by being a mere concept. As Kobena Mercer writes, once we consider that the “New World” was created on the basis of the slave trade economy, “we can see that where race is a constitutive element of social structure and social division, hair remains powerfully charged with symbolic currency.”<sup>46</sup> Among the diverse societies along Africa’s west coast, hair had carried different meanings; it had been used to indicate a person’s marital status, age, religion, ethnicity, wealth, and social standing within the community. In the Wolof culture of Senegal, for example, young girls who were not of marrying age partially shaved their heads to emphasize their unavailability for courting, while a recently widowed woman would stop caring for her hair in order to look unattractive to men during her time of mourning.<sup>47</sup> Traditionally, the leaders of a community, both men and women, showcased the most ornate hairstyles, and only royalty or the equivalent was expected to wear a hat or headpiece to signify their stature within the community.<sup>48</sup> Hairdressers were also prominent members of African communities because a person’s spirit was believed to be embedded in their hair.<sup>49</sup> Through the Middle Passage blacks were distanced from culturally-based hair care practices, in addition to the work of slavery which removed them from leisurely practices, such as elaborate self-care. As a result, black slave women’s hair was often unkempt. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, hair began to function in both scientific and public discourse alongside skin as a colour marker of racial

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<sup>45</sup> Ehlers, *Racial Imperatives*, 39.

<sup>46</sup> Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (New York & London: Routledge, 1994), 102.

<sup>47</sup> Byrd and Tharps, *Hair Story*, 2-3.

<sup>48</sup> Byrd and Tharps, *Hair Story*, 3.

<sup>49</sup> Hair grooming in African societies included washing, combing, oiling, braiding, twisting, and decorating the hair with adornments including cloth, beads, and shells; the tools at their disposal were hand-carved and specially designed to remove tangles and knots from the hair. See Byrd and Tharps, *Hair Story*, 5-6.

difference. As scientific and popular discourses became obsessed with the texture and stylization of black hair, some Europeans even went so far as to claim that hair served as a better indicator of racial identity than skin colour.<sup>50</sup> Importantly, newspapers played a key role in the normalization of racial and bodily difference across the Atlantic colonies.

### III. Eighteenth-century newspapers and the signification of the black body

In the United States by the 1720s, all towns housed weekly newspapers that disseminated information about trade, goods, the courts, and imperial and provincial politics.<sup>51</sup> In Canada, weekly newspapers did not become commonplace until the 1750s. The print culture in Nova Scotia, Lower Canada and Upper Canada was varied, and each developed under different circumstances. Bertha Bassam notes that “the news printers had to print depended on available ways of transportation and communication. Ships came from France in the summer months ... [as] there was no postal service in Canada.”<sup>52</sup> By all accounts the *Halifax Gazette* was the first newspaper in Canada. Established in March 1752, the *Halifax Gazette* was published by American John Bushell.<sup>53</sup> In 1776, the *Halifax Gazette* ceased publication but later that year Anthony Henry established the *Nova Scotia Chronicle* and *Weekly Advertiser*, which became the first Canadian newspaper completely independent of government funding.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Arthur Riss, *Race, Slavery, and Liberalism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 97-8.

<sup>51</sup> Kate Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth Century America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 17.

<sup>52</sup> Bertha Bassam, *The First Printers and Newspapers in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto School of Library Science, 1968), 1.

<sup>53</sup> Prior to Bushell, Bartholomew Green Jr., a Cambridge, Massachusetts-born printer travelled to Halifax in 1751 with the intent to print a newspaper, but he died shortly thereafter. Having been an associate of Green's in Boston, Bushell then traveled to Halifax and carried on the printing business Green had established. For almost a decade, Bushell remained the only Nova Scotia printer, until his death in February 1761 and succession by Anthony Henry. See Bassam, *First Printers*, 3.

<sup>54</sup> After the *Nova Scotia Chronicle* and *Weekly Advertiser* ceased in 1770, Henry formed the *Nova Scotia Gazette* and the *Weekly Chronicle*, which continued until his death in 1800.

The *Quebec Gazette* was the first newspaper in Quebec.<sup>55</sup> Printed by William Brown and Thomas Gilmore at Quebec, the first issue appeared on 21 June 1764.<sup>56</sup> The *Montreal Gazette* was the next newspaper founded in the former French colony. It was the creation of French printer Fluery Mesplet, who moved to Montreal from Philadelphia at the outset of the Battle of Quebec 1775-6 between American forces and British defenders of Quebec City, when the Americans were defeated.<sup>57</sup> The French-language paper that he launched on 3 June 1778, under the name of *La Gazette du commerce et littéraire*, was soon renamed *La Gazette littéraire du district de Montréal*; it would, however, cease publication in June 1779.<sup>58</sup> In Ontario (then known as Upper Canada), the *Upper Canada Gazette, or American Oracle* was the first newspaper. It was both a recorder of government acts but also a purveyor of news and information on developments across the British Empire. The first printer of the paper was Louis Roy, a 21 year-old native of Quebec who began to publish the paper out of Newark on 4 November 1792.<sup>59</sup> The first known Canadian slave sale notice appeared on 30 May 1752 when

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<sup>55</sup> The bilingual *Quebec Gazette*, a weekly publication, was suspended from 1 December 1775 to 14 March 1776 during the American invasion of Quebec. On 19 March 1789 William Brown published his last issue. He would pass away shortly thereafter on 22 March. Brown's nephew, Samuel Neilson, succeeded him, but he died on 10 January 1793 at the age of 22. Samuel's younger brother, John Neilson, then took over the reins and continued in that position into the nineteenth century. See Frank Mackey, *Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal 1760-1840* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), 312.

<sup>56</sup> The *Quebec Gazette* continued until 1848 or 1849, the exact date of its demise is uncertain. See "160 Years of the Canada Gazette," *Government of Canada*, <http://www.gazette.gc.ca/cg-gc/book-livre/pg10-eng.html> (date of last access 26 September 2013); also see Brian Tobin, *The Upper Canada Gazette and its Printers, 1793-1849* (Toronto: Ontario Legislative Library, 1993).

<sup>57</sup> Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, 312.

<sup>58</sup> On 25 August 1785 Mesplet launched the bilingual *La Gazette de Montréal*, but after his death on 24 January 1794, his widow continued publishing the paper until 13 February. After a year of silence it was reborn under the editorship of Montreal postmaster Edward Edwards. In 1822, the *Montreal Gazette* became an English-language newspaper. There were two other newspapers in Quebec that contained slave notices. The *Quebec Herald*, a weekly launched by William Moore on 24 November 1788 was published until 1793, and the *Quebec Mercury* was first launched on 5 January 1805 as an English-language Quebec newspaper, under the editorship of Thomas Cary, see Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, 312-3.

<sup>59</sup> "Ontario's First Newspaper," *Historical Narratives of Early Canada*, <http://www.uppercanadahistory.ca/hteuc/hteuc1.html> (date of last access 26 September 2013).

shipper and known slave trader Joshua Mauger posted an ad in the *Halifax Gazette*.<sup>60</sup> The first notice appeared in the *Quebec Gazette* on 18 June 1767 and the last on 9 October 1793; the *Montreal Gazette* printed its first slave-sale advertisement on 23 August 1786 and its last on 22 January 1798.<sup>61</sup> Finally, one of the first slave notices appears in the *Upper Canada Gazette* on 3 July 1793. These advertisements serve as public markers that place blacks in colonial Canada.

In the United States, historians have found four attributes that routinely appeared in newspaper slave advertisements: clothing, trades or skills, linguistic ability or usage, and ethnic or racial identity.<sup>62</sup> While the clothing of slaves was mutable and changeable their hairstyles and hair texture was a part of the identification of their racially and ethnically marked body as slaves.<sup>63</sup> Shane White and Graham White assert that “for many whites, the sight of a well-dressed slave, particularly one displaying expensive items of apparel, aroused suspicion that the wearer might be involved in some sort of illicit activity.”<sup>64</sup> White and White has also pointed out that field slaves in the American South “lacked both the time for ... elaborate hairstyling practices and the implementation with which they could most effectively be performed – the African pick, or comb, whose long, smooth teeth did not snag or tear thick, tightly curled hair.”<sup>65</sup> As a result, there are many instances in runaway notices across the American South where

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<sup>60</sup> Harvey Amani Whitfield explains further that “After the founding of Halifax, Mauger saw the opportunity to trade fish, molasses, and slaves between Halifax, Boston, and the West Indies. He accomplished this in the cheapest manner possible: black slaves even operated some of his vessels.” See Harvey Amani Whitfield, *Blacks on the Border: The Black Refugees in British North America 1815-1860* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 2006), 15.

<sup>61</sup> Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, 313.

<sup>62</sup> See David Waldstreicher, “Reading the Runaways: Self-Fashioning, Print Culture, and Confidence in Slavery in the Eighteenth-Century Mid-Atlantic,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 56.2 (Apr. 1999): 248.

<sup>63</sup> Waldstreicher, “Reading the Runaways,” 248; 254.

<sup>64</sup> Shane White and Graham White, “Slave Clothing and African-American Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” *Past & Present*, 148 (Aug. 1995): 158.

<sup>65</sup> White and White, “Slave Hair and African American Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” *The Journal of Southern History* 61.1 (Feb., 1995): 50.

unkempt hair is described as “bushy” or “uncombed,”<sup>66</sup> and some black slave women are described as sometimes allowing their hair to grow “naturally” without grooming or shaping it.<sup>67</sup> Since the commerce of slavery was transacted through the newspaper, printers played a key role in enforcing the slave system.<sup>68</sup> In that sense, printers and postmasters functioned as go-betweens, informing slave masters of the whereabouts of their captured slaves and servants, but also informing whites and other slave owners about the corporeality of the black body.<sup>69</sup>

American historians have also found that while slave notices often highlight a runaway’s unkempt hair there are several mentions of slaves wearing wigs.<sup>70</sup> Most notably, house slaves, who tended to be light-skinned, and in close proximity to their white masters (often living in the same house) typically styled their hair in imitation of their white masters, which often included the wearing of wigs or shaping the hair to resemble a wig in the likeness of those worn by white men of the upper classes.<sup>71</sup> Field slaves, on the other hand, tended to be dark-skinned, lived in separate quarters from their masters, and their hair was often unkempt or covered by head scarves or bandannas (slave men took to shaving their heads, wearing straw hats, or using animal shears to cut their hair short). Broadly speaking wigs in the American colonies served to minimize the distance between the black body and the white body. The wigs usually resembled

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<sup>66</sup> White and White culled newspapers in Virginia, Maryland, and South Carolina where slaves are described as having “a large bushy Head,” “a very busy Head of Hair” “a very bushy head of black hair,” “bushy hair, which she is apt to keep uncombed.” See White and White, “Slave Hair,” 54.

<sup>67</sup> Virginia slaves who escaped in the 1770s, were described in runaway notices as having “a large bushy Head,” “a very busy Head of Hair,” and “a remarkable large shock of hair.” See White and White, “Slave Hair,” 54; also see Williamsburg *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie & Dixon), 14 November 1771 (Windley, comp., *Runaway Slave Advertisements*, I, 103); Williamsburg *Virginia Gazette* (Dixon & Hunter), 28 January 1775 (Windley, comp., *Runaway Slave Advertisements*, I, 161); Williamsburg *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie), 2 May 1777, Supplement (Windley, comp., *Runaway Slave Advertisements*, I, 259).

<sup>68</sup> Shane White, *Somewhat More Independent: The End of Slavery in New York City, 1770-1810* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991), 119.

<sup>69</sup> Waldstreicher, “Reading the Runaways,” 269.

<sup>70</sup> See Waldstreicher, “Reading the Runaways,” 254; Shane White and Graham White, *Stylin’: African American Expressive Culture from its Beginnings to the Zoot Suit* (Ithaca, New York, 1998), 61; Ayana Byrd and Lori Tharps, *Hair Story: Untangling the Roots of Black Hair in America* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2001), 13.

<sup>71</sup> Byrd and Tharps, *Hair Story*, 13.

those worn in Britain and, as in Britain, “they were an easily recognizable sign of social status: the more elaborate and expensive the wig, the higher on the social scale its wearer was presumed to be.”<sup>72</sup>

With respect to bodily appearance, in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries sumptuary legislation in the United States had regulated what slaves could wear, forbidding extravagance and the display of individuality with clothing.<sup>73</sup> By the end of the eighteenth century dress codes set out in sumptuary legislation were breaking down, but it was still the case that the cut, texture, and style of one’s dress easily distinguished slaves from members of the elite.<sup>74</sup> In spite of such legislation, there are multiple examples in eighteenth-century Maryland of slaves who are described as “addicted to dress,” “remarkably fond of dress,” “generally dressy,” “very fond of showy dress,” and who “occasionally dressed gay.”<sup>75</sup> Similarly, in many Caribbean sites, dress restrictions were put in place in the eighteenth century in order to prohibit slaves from appearing in society with “lavish finery.”<sup>76</sup> As Hilary Beckles explains, “Legislators were as much concerned with enforcing provisions against unregulated movement as they were with these sumptuary laws that sought to tone down a celebratory culture in which slaves decorated themselves with silks, fine jewellery and lace.”<sup>77</sup> There is some evidence that sumptuary or restrictions in dress existed in Canadian slavery, and it is quite possible that de

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<sup>72</sup> White and White, “Slave Hair,” 61. From about the 1730s onwards, the part of the wig immediately above the forehead became more prominent and came to be known as the “toupee”; the toupee retained its popularity until the end of the century. See White and White, “Slave Hair,” 60; 61.

<sup>73</sup> Miller, *Slaves to Fashion*, 92; Rebecca Earle, “‘Two Pairs of Pink Satin Shoes!!’ Race, Clothing and Identity in the Americas (17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries),” *History Workshop Journal*, 52 (Autumn 2001): 187-189. There were also sumptuary laws in the Dutch West Indies. See Buckridge, “Role of Plant Substances,” 62. Also see Barry Higman, *Slave Society in the Danish West Indies: St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix*, ed. B.W. Higman (Mona, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 1992).

<sup>74</sup> White and White, “Slave Clothing,” 153.

<sup>75</sup> Miller, *Slaves to Fashion*, 92.

<sup>76</sup> Beckles, “War Dances,” 231. Also see Earle, “Two Pairs of Pink Satin Shoes,” 175-95.

<sup>77</sup> Beckles, “War Dances,” 231-32.

facto provisions were also in place.<sup>78</sup> Ultimately, Atlantic slaves were not merely imitating European hair arrangements or dress; they were, as White and White posit, “functioning as *bricoleurs*, drawing from both their African past and their American present to create a style that was new.”<sup>79</sup> The wearing of head coverings also served a similar function.

The practice of covering one’s hair had remained through the Middle Passage, and while the naming of the practice varied across the transatlantic from headwraps, tie-heads (as they were called in the Caribbean) to headdress or head coverings, the wrapping of fabric on one’s head developed differently in each site.<sup>80</sup> Though headdress is now associated with West Africa and widely regarded as a traditional African garment, Thornton suspects that head coverings likely emerged from the mixing of aesthetic traditions among Africans and Europeans during their trading exchanges along the Atlantic coast, and in slaveholding societies in the “New World.”<sup>81</sup> Headwraps carried both utilitarian functions (e.g., protection from the sun, to keep the hair clean, to preserve patterns of braiding and wrapping, and in the case of runaways, to conceal telltale scars of enslavement), but they also served as a “helmet of courage that evoked an image of true homeland – be that Africa or the new homeland, the Americas.”<sup>82</sup> In the Caribbean, headwraps were diverse in styles and colours, and carried specific meaning beyond mere sun protection. For example, Buckridge points out that in Martinique and Guadeloupe, the headwrap

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<sup>78</sup> See John Macgregor, *British America, Vol. 1* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1833), 569. Emma Bardes and Grace Fu’s recent work on slave dress in Canada represent some of the first examinations into how clothing was restricted and used during Canadian slavery. See Bardes, “The Great White North: Visual and Material Evidence of Black Slavery in the Quebec Winter,” in *Legacies Denied: Unearthing the Visual Culture of Canadian Slavery*, ed. Charmaine Nelson (Montreal: McGill-Queens, 2013), 14-24; 210-13; Grace, “A Comparative Analysis of Nova Scotian and Southern US Slave Dress in the Latter Half of the Eighteenth Century,” in *Legacies Denied: Unearthing the Visual Culture of Canadian Slavery*, ed. Charmaine Nelson (Montreal: McGill-Queens, 2013), 60-67.

<sup>79</sup> White and White, “Slave Hair,” 63; see also White, *Somewhat More Independent*, 199. The wearing of braids, plaits, and cornrows (made by sectioning the hair and braiding it flat to the scalp) was also practiced in the United States, and Caribbean.

<sup>80</sup> The terms “headdress,” “headwrap,” “tie-head,” or “bandanna” can be used interchangeably to describe the fabric used to cover the hair.

<sup>81</sup> Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 233.

<sup>82</sup> See White and White, “Slave Hair,” 71; Helen Bradley Griebel, “The African American Woman’s Headwrap: Unwinding the Symbols,” *Cornell*, <http://char.txa.cornell.edu/Griebel.htm> (date of last access 28 September 2013).

conveyed a woman's occupation or whether a woman was single; in St. Lucia, the style of a headwrap reflected the marital status of a woman; and in Dutch Guyana (Suriname) headwraps consisted of bright colours and fabrics.<sup>83</sup> In Jamaica, headwraps were also diverse and ornate and reflected the wearer's individuality and style.<sup>84</sup> While some Creole white women in the Jamaica, believing European dress to be superior to that of African dress, did not wear headdress in order to dissociate from slave women, others adopted a headdress similar to those worn by slave and freed women simply because it provided effective sun protection.<sup>85</sup>

There are many commonalities between America (continental South and North), the Caribbean, and Canada with respect to slave hair and bodily appearance. In each site there was a consistent desire to categorize the black female body not only in terms of corporeality but also the use of clothing. Slaves were astutely aware of this categorization and used dress as a resistance strategy. In Jamaica, for example, "those slave women who ran away sometimes disguised themselves by dressing as free or freed women and, as a consequence, were able to resist being caught. Others carried a bundle of clothing so they could change their disguise."<sup>86</sup> In New France, Upper Canada and Halifax, slave advertisements reveal much about black slave women's (and men's) awareness of the power of dress to not only disguise one's body but, if needed, to blend into white society without causing suspicion. Like in other sites across the Atlantic colonies, Quebec newspapers contain descriptions of slaves absconding with fine clothing: "she wore when she went away a striped woollen jacket and petticoat," "she carried with her a considerable quantity of Linen and other valuable Effects not her own," "she had upon

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<sup>83</sup> Steeve O. Buckridge, *The Language of Dress: Resistance and Accommodation in Jamaica, 1760-1890* (Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2004), 88-90.

<sup>84</sup> Buckridge, *Language of Dress*, 91.

<sup>85</sup> Buckridge, *Language of Dress*, 87.

<sup>86</sup> Buckridge, *Language of Dress*, 82.



her a Callico gown and Petticoat, a dress'd Cap, and a black silk Handkerchief," and "she had on a blue and white striped short gown, a blue druggist petticoat and black silk bonnet."<sup>87</sup>

In his examination of colonial Cuba and the process of *creolization*, Antonio Benítez-Rojo suggests that the plantation created a particular culture that formed as a crossing, combination, fusion, and mutual transformation of two or more pre-existing cultures.<sup>88</sup> Quebec newspaper descriptions similarly point to a level of individuality, self-expression and *creolization* – the blending of European-style clothing with Atlantic practices and a pre-existing Native culture. Brett Rushforth's recent work on Native slavery in New France suggests that Native slavery emerged at the nexus of two very different forms of slavery: one indigenous to North America and the other rooted in the Atlantic world; he notes further that slavery in New France drew upon and transformed indigenous and Atlantic cultures.<sup>89</sup> Historically, clothing has held a distinguishing role among white settlers in Quebec.<sup>90</sup> In a general sense, dress in Quebec can be best understood as having evolved from multiple forms, adopted in part from Native costume, including shirts, pants or leggings, stockings, coats, and hats from the lucrative fur trade.<sup>91</sup> For example, in an ad posted by Johnston & Purss in 8 March 1787 a slave woman is

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<sup>87</sup> Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, 321; 339; Also see the following newspapers drawn from Mackey's findings: *Quebec Gazette*, 20 August 1778; *Quebec Gazette*, 4 November 1779; *Quebec Gazette* 5 November 1778; *Montreal Gazette*, 20 August 1798. There are no page numbers given.

<sup>88</sup> Antonio Benítez-Rojo, "Three Words toward Creolization," in *Caribbean Creolization: Reflections on the Cultural Dynamics of Language, Literature, and Identity*, ed. Kathleen M. Balutansky and Marie-Agnès Sourieau (Miami: University Press of Florida, 1998), 55.

<sup>89</sup> Brett Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slavery in New France* (Williamsburg, Virginia: Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 2014).

<sup>90</sup> It would appear from Mackey's detailed culling of newspapers in Quebec that male slave might have outnumbered female slaves; I make this assertion based on the fact that of the 94 notices he found, female slave are only subject of 30 of these notices. But it might have also been the case that female slaves did not run as often as male slaves due to pregnancy or children. For more of a discussion on slave male to female ratios see, Maureen G. Elgersman, *Unyielding Spirits: Black Women and Slavery in Early Canada and Jamaica* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), chapters 2 and 4. Also see Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject*, chapter 5, 205-6, note 8.

<sup>91</sup> See Bardes, "The Great White North," 18. Also see Harold B. Burnham and Dorothy K. Burnham, *'Keep Me Warm One Night': Early Handweaving in Eastern Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 61.

said to have “had on when she went away, a blue Kersey Jacket and Pettycoat (sic), a dark cotton Cap with yellow strings, and an Indian Shawl round her neck.”<sup>92</sup>

Similar to slaves in the Caribbean who mingled with Natives, often borrowing some of their practices, black slaves in Canada appear to have adopted clothing worn by both Europeans and Natives. There are, for instance, advertisements that describe slaves as wearing moccasins when they fled. The moccasins described in the runaway slave ads use the term “Indian” and “Canadian” interchangeably to refer to the hide-skin shoes originally made and worn by Natives and then adapted by European settlers.<sup>93</sup> When British traveler John MacDonald visited Montreal in 1822, he documented that Native women were generally dressed “with an English half blanket wrapped about them, black leggings, and black hat, whilst the younger generally wear a black mantel, hat and leggings, with large gold rings and tassels in their ears.”<sup>94</sup> Dress in Quebec was thus malleable and often interchanged between black slaves, European settlers, and Natives.

The higher social orders in the eighteenth-century Caribbean colonies and later America paid close attention to distinctions in clothing: the clothing of the genteel had to be close (rather than loose-fitting), clean and brushed rather than soiled and, above all, smooth in texture rather than coarse.<sup>95</sup> White and White note that in eighteenth-century America, when most cloth and clothing was imported, the materials used for slaves’ garments fell into a separate category from that used to produce genteel apparel.<sup>96</sup> Specifically, in his study of slave clothing in Virginia, John Michael Vlach found that the basic clothing for slave men consisted of shirts, pants,

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<sup>92</sup> *Quebec Gazette*, 8 March 1787;

<sup>93</sup> Bardes, “Great White North,” 21.

<sup>94</sup> John McDonald, *Emigration to Canada: Narrative of a Voyage to Quebec and Journey from Thence to New Lanark, in Upper Canada*, 2nd ed. (Glasgow: William Lang, 1822), 31-2.

<sup>95</sup> White and White, “Slave Clothing,” 153; also see Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Vintage, 1992), 70-4.

<sup>96</sup> White and White, “Slave Clothing,” 154.

stockings and shoes, and for women a long shift and an over blouse. “The diversity of the slave experience is reflected in dress and other personal items. Field slaves had minimal clothing and furnishings, while slaves employed as house servants were equipped with better quality items.”<sup>97</sup> Slaves in the plantation South were given such items as hats, coats, vests, shawls, kerchiefs and belts, in Jamaica, slaves were given some autonomy to make their own clothing.<sup>98</sup> In Virginia, slaves also received their clothing from masters – field slaves sometimes received finer hand-me-downs, while slaves employed as house servants were given better quality clothes.<sup>99</sup> As slave escape became part of the culture of the transatlantic, clothing increasingly evolved as a central strategy to escape. For women, especially, when they ran away, if they dressed well and spoke good English they were rarely caught.<sup>100</sup>

The appearance of terms like *mulatto*, *quadroon* and *Creole* in Canadian advertisements affirms, as Charmaine Nelson argues, that European settlers in Canada were well versed in the colonial language of race but also fully aware of the interracial status of many slaves and the “miscegenating sex” that had created this population.<sup>101</sup> For instance, in August 1778 the *Quebec Gazette* announced the escape of a “Mulatto Negress named Bell” who took leave of her owner wearing only “a striped woolen jacket and petticoats.”<sup>102</sup> Similar to American newspapers, Canadian printers also paid significant attention to a slave’s linguistic capability, and where they came from (before arriving in Canada). In addition to English and French, some slaves in New France spoke a combination of Spanish, Dutch, German and Mi’kmaq in addition to English and French (or both). Printers described slaves as “born in Spanish-Town,

<sup>97</sup> John Michael Vlach, “Afro-Americans Domestic Artifacts in Eighteenth-Century Virginia,” *Material Culture* 19.1 (Spring 1987): 6.

<sup>98</sup> Slaves in Jamaica were given a minimum amount of clothing but for the most part, they were expected to obtain any additional clothing on their own, see Buckridge, “Role of Plant Substances,” 62-3.

<sup>99</sup> Vlach, “Afro-Americans Domestic Artifacts,” 6.

<sup>100</sup> Buckridge, *Language of Dress*, 83.

<sup>101</sup> Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject*, 55.

<sup>102</sup> See Elgersman, *Unyielding Spirits*, 81.

Jamaica,”<sup>103</sup> “born in Maryland,” “born in Africa,” “born in Albany,” “brought up in the province of New York,” “just arrived from Detroit,” “born in Philadelphia,” and “lately from Upper Canada.”<sup>104</sup> As previously noted, the Spanish and Dutch were actively involved in the slave trade in the Americas throughout the seventeenth century, and because the linguistic practices of descendants from these colonial regimes remained in eighteenth-century New York and Pennsylvania, it is possible that slaves in these states who ended up in Canada might have been bought by a Dutch or Spanish-speaking person.<sup>105</sup>

There are very few mentions in Canadian advertisements of black women’s hair. White and White note that the sample of black hairstyles in American advertisements provide a badly skewed sample, with women being seriously underrepresented. They reasoned that this absence might have to do with the fact that black women frequently had children to care for, and as a result, female slaves absconded less frequently than did males.<sup>106</sup> This accounts for the small sample of ads, but it does not help to explain why, in the context of Canada, when a black woman was the subject of an advertisement there was rarely any mention of her hair or the wearing of a head covering.<sup>107</sup> It is beyond the scope of this project to explore this absence

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<sup>103</sup> Jamaica’s St. Jago de la Vega or “Spanish Town,” was the island’s colonial capital from the 1530s until 1872. While Spanish Town had been laid out by the Spanish, the English seized Jamaica in 1655 and they retained the city as the island’s “Seat of Government.” Thus, Spanish-Town would have been a thriving port city in eighteenth-century Jamaica more so than Port Royal (established in 1655) and then Kingston (founded in 1692). See James Robertson, “Giving Directions in Spanish Town, Jamaica: Contemplating a Tropical Townscape” *Journal of Urban History* 35.5 (July 2009): 718-42.

<sup>104</sup> Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, 315-339; also *Quebec Gazette*, 30 September 1779; *Quebec Gazette*, 14 May 1767; *Quebec Gazette*, 27 November 1777; *Quebec Gazette*, 29 January 1778; *Quebec Gazette*, 4 November 1779; *Quebec Gazette*, 13 May 1784; *Quebec Gazette*, 24 August 1786; *Quebec Herald*, 14 April 1791; *Montreal Gazette*, 28 December 1795.

<sup>105</sup> Germans, who first immigrated to the U.S. in the seventeenth century, were by the eighteenth century also well-established in the northeast. In Pennsylvania, Maryland, Ohio, Tennessee and Wisconsin there are geographic neighbourhoods that date back to the first arrival of Germans in North America. These neighbourhoods are still referred to as “Germantown.”

<sup>106</sup> White and White, “Slave Hair,” 53.

<sup>107</sup> A more thorough reading of travel narratives, estate wills of known slaveholders, and analysis of a wider sample of newspaper advertisements would be required to find descriptions of black women’s hair in Canadian newsprint. There are numerous examples of black slave men’s hair. John Turner of Montreal described the hair of a runaway named Ishmael as “short, strong black and curly”; a second ad for Ishmael described him as having “black short

further but given that descriptions of black slave women in newspaper advertisements are as grossly underrepresented in Canada as they are in the United States, it might be a very difficult task to create a substantial enough archive of sources to piece together the historical hair care practices of enslaved black women.

#### IV. Canadian slavery and the black female body in visual art

Canadian slavery does not conjure up images of slaves toiling in fields or engaging in backbreaking work, as such, there is a misconception that enslaved black women and men were not similarly brutalized under the sanctioned institution of slavery. It may have been behind closed doors but, as runaway notices confirm, Canadian slavery shared much in common with other slave societies. In her writings on women in Caribbean slavery, Barbara Bush explains that “in the external work sphere, the woman’s role differed only marginally from that of the male slave. The female slave laboured as hard and as long, and was subjected to the same harsh punishments.”<sup>108</sup> She writes further that “because the woman was subjected to the same conditions as the male slave, she reacted to enslavement, punishment and coercion in similar ways, from everyday resistance to outright rebellion.”<sup>109</sup> Lucille Muir also points out that the majority of slave women in Jamaica were field labourers.<sup>110</sup>

Slave women in Canada may not have ran away as frequently as slave men but when they escaped, the distinction between the two genders was neutralized through the act of escape.

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curled hair”; a Negro boy named Ben is described as having “black hair, and very straight (sic)”; and two months later, Ben’s hair was said to be “straight black hair, not tied”; and in regards to the hair of a “Negro” runaway named William Spencer, Jacob Kuhn’s advertisement read, “he wore a short black Jacket, and red waistcoat, black breeches, a round hat and generally a wig.” See Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, 339; also see *Quebec Gazette*, 11 March 1784; *Quebec Gazette*, 26 June 1788; *Quebec Gazette*, 8 May 1788; *Quebec Gazette*, 19 June 1788; *Montreal Gazette*, 22 November 1792.

<sup>108</sup> Barbara Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838* (London: James Currey, 1990), 6.

<sup>109</sup> Bush, *Slave Women*, 6.

<sup>110</sup> Lucille Mathurin Muir, “Women Field Workers in Jamaica During Slavery,” *Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World: A Student Reader*, eds. Verene Shepherd and Hilary McD. Beckles (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2000), 390-97.

The similarity of their work coupled with the harshness of racial oppression for all enslaved blacks suggests that a general equality existed between men and women.<sup>111</sup> The question of what did black slave women in Canada “look like” remained unanswered until Nelson’s thorough reading of eighteenth- and nineteenth century portraits of black women. Most notably, using a postcolonial, black feminist approach, Nelson critiqued François Malépart de Beaucourt’s *Portrait of a Haitian Woman* (1786; fig. 1.1), one of the only known portraits of a black women in eighteenth-century Canada.<sup>112</sup>

Historically, those who sat for portraits in England or France were of the aristocratic and bourgeois classes. In eighteenth-century Canada, it was an activity largely exclusive to bourgeois mercantile classes, whose cultural traditions were very much tied to their place of birth.<sup>113</sup> In *Portrait of a Haitian Woman* (1786) a young black female sitter with a bare right breast holds a plate of tropical fruit.<sup>114</sup> The sitter is believed-to-be Marie-Thérèse-Zémire.<sup>115</sup> Visual archives, as Michelle Shawn Smith aptly notes, are ideological in that they make specific claims on cultural meaning. Such archives are also vehicles of memory, as they become “the trace on

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<sup>111</sup> Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 49. Also see Angela Davis, *Women, Race & Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 5-8.

<sup>112</sup> At the time of Nelson’s writing, the McCord Museum had titled Malépart de Beaucourt’s painting, *Portrait of a Negro Slave* (1786). In 2011, the name was changed to *Portrait of a Haitian Woman* (1786). There is no information given as to why the name was changed, and the reasons why the sitter in the painting is now to be read as a Haitian woman. For a rationale for the renaming, see Jacques Des Rochers, “Portrait of a Haitian Woman,” *M: The Magazine of the Montreal Museum of Fine Art*, Sept. - Dec. 2011, 15. For a full critique of the implication of the renaming see Charmaine Nelson, “Slavery, Geography, and Empire,” in *Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica* (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, forthcoming 2014). Significantly, there is no known visual rendering of Marie-Joseph Angélique a slave woman who was accused of starting a fire in Montreal on 10 April 1734, and later tried and condemned to death. For a detailed account of the fire, trial and execution, see Cooper, *Hanging of Angélique*, 175-285.

<sup>113</sup> Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject*, 64.

<sup>114</sup> Kai Thomas also conducted an analysis of this portrait, see Kai Thomas, “John ‘Daddy’ Hall’s Portrait: Layers of Identity of a First Nations-Black Legend” in *Legacies Denied: Unearthing the Visual Culture of Canadian Slavery*, ed. Charmaine Nelson (Montreal: McGill-Queens, 2013), 124-5.

<sup>115</sup> Charmaine Nelson is to be credited for using the work of Quebec scholar Marcel Trudel to make connections between Malépart de Beaucourt’s portrait and Marie-Thérèse-Zémire. See *Representing the Black Female Subject*, chapters 3 and 4, and endnotes 32-3 in chapter 3 for a discussion of the production of the portrait, and of other enslaved persons owned by Malépart de Beaucourt and his wife.

which an historical record is founded, it makes some people, places, things, ideas, and events visible, while relegating others, through its signifying absences, to invisibility.”<sup>116</sup> Previous art historians have noted that Malépart de Beaucourt may have travelled throughout the French West Indies, primarily Guadeloupe and Saint-Domingue (present-day Haiti), so while the sitter in the portrait is very likely Creole, she could have been from Guadeloupe or Martinique not necessarily Haiti.<sup>117</sup> The bared breast of the sitter in Malépart de Beaucourt’s painting juxtaposed with a plate of tropical fruit is also significant.<sup>118</sup> Tropical fruits were rare, expensive and visually striking in the context of eighteenth-century Quebec; as such, “it became the ultimate symbol of exoticism.”<sup>119</sup> Fruit still life paintings, as Nelson asserts, are also distinguished from flowers because “they presume the possibility of oral consumption that, for the most part, flowers do not. As such, they hold the potential of activating other senses beyond vision, like taste, smell and touch, in the imaginary anticipation of eating.”<sup>120</sup>

Patricia Hill Collins posits that during slavery the breeder woman image portrayed black women as more suitable for having children than white women; “by claiming that black women were able to produce children as easily as animals, this objectification of black women as the

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<sup>116</sup> Michelle Shawn Smith, *Photography on the Color Line: W.E.B. Du Bois, Race, and Visual Culture* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2004), 8.

<sup>117</sup> In 1979, Quebecois writer Madeleine Major-Frégeau said of Malepart de Beaucourt : « D’autres part, certains auteurs français croyaient pouvoir affirmer que Beaucourt est mort à la Guadeloupe. Il n’en est rien, mais cela permet peut-être de penser que l’artiste y a séjourné. À l’époque où Beaucourt quitta la France, le négoce entre celle-ci et les Antilles était bien établi. En effet, à partir du milieu du dix-huitième siècle, le trafic commercial entre Bordeaux et les Iles, c’est-à-dire la Martinique, la Guadeloupe et surtout Saint-Dominique, connaît un essor vraiment spectaculaire. Il n’est donc pas impossible que le ménage Beaucourt se soit embarqué sur un navire à destination des Antilles. » English Translation: “Furthermore, some French authors believe they can certify that Beaucourt died in Guadeloupe. However, this is not so, but it allows us to believe that the artist actually spent time there. When Beaucourt left France, the *negoce* between France and the Caribbean was well established. Indeed, from the mid-eighteenth century, commercial traffic between Bordeaux and the Caribbean islands, such as Martinique, Guadeloupe and especially Saint-Dominique, grows exponentially. It is thus not impossible that Beaucourt’s family boarded a ship and left for the Caribbean.” Major-Frégeau, *La Vie et l’œuvre de François Malepart de Beaucourt, 1740-1794* (Montréal: Ministère Des Affaires Culturelles, 1979), 31.

<sup>118</sup> Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject*, 23.

<sup>119</sup> Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject*, 82.

<sup>120</sup> Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject*, 78-9.

Other provided justification for interference in the reproductive rights of enslaved Africans.”<sup>121</sup> Angela Davis has similarly argued that ideological exaltation of motherhood did not extend to slaves. In the eyes of the slaveholders, “slave women were not mothers at all; they were simply instruments guaranteeing the growth of the slave labor force.”<sup>122</sup> In Canada, there might have been less emphasis placed on expanding the labour force, a reality that is only measurable by the fact that black enslaved women had fewer children born into enslavement, and it does not appear that slave owners introduced widespread measures to force or coerce increased reproduction.<sup>123</sup> This does not mean, however, that black slave women in Canada were not sexually exploited at some point in their enslavement. As Martha J. Bailey has argued, “Whether sexual relations between enslaved girls and masters were overtly forced or not, even seemingly consensual relations would have been abusive given the power imbalance between the parties.”<sup>124</sup>

The exposed breast of the black female sitter in *Portrait of a Haitian Woman* (1786) is connected to her sexual and reproductive utility. As Nelson writes, “her literal value for her owners is an *embodied* value that is economic, physical and symbolic.”<sup>125</sup> Examples of a black woman’s reproductive utility can also be found in the *Quebec Gazette*. When 18 year-old Bett ran from her owner in March 1787, for instance, the notice read, “Was big with child, and within

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<sup>121</sup> Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 76.

<sup>122</sup> Davis, *Women, Race & Class*, 7.

<sup>123</sup> Elgersman, *Unyielding Spirits*, 13. For a detailed description of how slave masters in the United States controlled the fertility and nutrition of slave women, see Richard H. Steckel, “A Peculiar Population: The Nutrition, Health and Mortality of America Slaves, from Childhood to Maturity,” *The Journal of Economic History* 46.3 (Sept. 1986): 721-41. For a comparative analysis between the United States and Caribbean, see Herbert S. Klein and Stanley L. Engerman, “Fertility Differentials between Slaves in the United States and the British West Indies: A Note on Lactation Practices and Their Possible Implications,” *William & Mary Quarterly* 35.2 (Apr. 1978): 357-74. According to Hazel Carby, the slave woman’s “reproductive destiny was bound to capital accumulation; black women gave birth to property and, directly, to capital itself in the form of slaves, and all slaves inherited their status from their mothers.” See Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of Afro-American Woman Novelist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 25.

<sup>124</sup> Martha J. Bailey, “Servant Girls and Upper Canada’s *Seduction Act: 1837-1946*,” *Dimensions of Childhood: Essays on the History of Children and Youth in Canada*, eds. Russell Smandych, Gordon Dodds and Alvin Esau (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, Legal Research Institute, 1991), 162.

<sup>125</sup> Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject*, 94.



a few days of her time.”<sup>126</sup> Such textual and visual records point to the fact that sexually coercive relationships were undoubtedly part of Canadian slavery.

With respect to the head covering worn by the black female sitter in Malépart de Beaucourt’s painting, in the French West Indies (Haiti, Guadeloupe and Martinique in particular), a headdress conveyed a woman’s availability to men but it also denoted a woman’s occupation – there were specific headdresses for the cane-cutter, the laundress, the nurse, the house servant and the field worker.<sup>127</sup> According to Nelson, the red and white coloured headwrap worn by the female sitter in *Portrait of a Haitian Woman* (1786) seems to serve more of symbolic, beautifying functions rather than practical, labour-related functions. “This is conveyed in part by the brilliantly coloured eye-catching fabric and its seeming refinement (the quality of the fabric), as well as the way that the garment is positioned and tied.”<sup>128</sup> When a runaway slave named Thursday ran from her owner in Halifax in 1772 she took with her when she ran “a red cloth petticoat, a baize bed gown, and a red ribbon about her head.”<sup>129</sup> The colour red held significant meaning in African communities, including strength and courage, as well as resistance.<sup>130</sup> Brightly coloured fabrics and elaborate tying patterns were characteristic in slave societies across the transatlantic.

Ultimately, the black sitter’s headdress in Malépart de Beaucourt’s painting is a symbol of cultural bricolage, food and clothing drawn from other slave societies and placed within the context of Canada through the institution of slavery. Where the naked breast of the black female

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<sup>126</sup> See Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, 349; *Quebec Gazette*, 8 March 1787. Any pregnant female trying to flee was surely an act of marked deprivation.

<sup>127</sup> Buckridge, *Language of Dress*, 88.

<sup>128</sup> Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject*, 98. She writes further, “it is interesting to consider whether or not the sitter in the portrait created her own headwrap or if it was a purchase or gift.”

<sup>129</sup> *Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle* 1 September 1772, 3; “Fugitive slave advertisement,” *Nova Scotia Canada (Online Virtual Archives)*, <http://www.gov.ns.ca/nsarm/virtual/africanns/archives.asp?ID=10> (date of last access 28 September 2013).

<sup>130</sup> See Fu, “Comparative Analysis of Nova Scotian and Southern US Slave Dress,” 63. Also see Buckridge, *Language of Dress*, 96.

sitter sits in contrast to the presumed “virtuosity of white women of the bourgeois class,”<sup>131</sup> her hair, which appears to be pulled back and flat to the skull, would have distanced her from the virtuosity attached to long, malleable hair. The painting stands in contrast to the cult of true womanhood, which proscribed that “true” women possessed four cardinal virtues: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity.<sup>132</sup> In the eighteenth century, black women used fine clothing to resist their enslavement, or they wrapped their hair in meaningful head coverings in order to continue a tradition practiced across the transatlantic. For bourgeois white women in Europe, the United States and Canada, fashionable dress was used to cultivate standards of femininity, which in turn contributed to beliefs about what was appropriate dress for one’s race and one’s socio-economic class. In order to grasp how the white female body became the ideal for the beauty culture industry, one must understand how dress and hair functioned in white society and the role print and visual culture played in elevating the white female body to the status of ideal.

## V. Nineteenth-century print culture and the conduct of white women

By the nineteenth century, print culture played an active role in the cultivation of a beauty ideal that was geared toward white, mostly middle-class women. In 1866, for instance, the *Toronto Globe*, reporting on the latest fashions from England and France, noted that “the hairdressers are very clever ... but a woman’s beauty never appears to so much advantage as when the hair is dressed in a simple and natural style.”<sup>133</sup> Male hairdressers claiming expertise in the hairstyles worn by upper- and middle-class women in Europe were regularly featured in newspaper columns in Ontario and Quebec and many of these hairdressers advertised their services in emerging women’s magazines, as well. One of the earliest examples of this appeared

<sup>131</sup> Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject*, 78.

<sup>132</sup> Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 70.

<sup>133</sup> *The Globe*, 22 February 1866, 1.

in the Canadian edition of the American fashion journal, *The Delineator* (1869-1953) when Toronto-headquartered hairdresser Mr. A. Dorenwend, claiming to have been trained in France, posted an ad for his hair salon, Paris Hair Works, located at 103 and 105 Yonge Street.<sup>134</sup> His services included hair dressings, hair singeing, shampoos, dyes and skin bleaches<sup>135</sup> in addition to “switches of the best cut of hair,” “pin curls,” “Parisian bang style bang fronts,” and “water waves of natural wavy hair.” There was a huge market in hair and false hairpieces in nineteenth-century France; in fact, the vast majority of hairstyling trends originated in France.<sup>136</sup>

During the 1820s, for instance, hairstyles for French bourgeois women got higher and fuller. In Carol Rifelj’s analysis of a plate from the *Costume parisien* of 1823, she notes that “larger curls clustered at the sides and piled up on top of the head around a braided bun, their form echoing the rolls of satin at the bottom of the dress and the puffs on its sleeves.”<sup>137</sup> Between 1852 and 1870 curls became the most prominent hairstyle worn by French women, and by the 1890s, “according to the 1897 *Dictionnaire de la femme*, if hair is curly, it is a sign that the woman has grace and vivacity. Curls are associated with beauty in novels as well, where they often appear in conjunction with a form of the adjective *charmant*.”<sup>138</sup> The fact that French fashions were publicized in Canada points to how interconnected the colony remained with not only the British but also the French metropole when it came to beauty matters.

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<sup>134</sup> A. Dorenwend Advertisement, *The Delineator*, November 1892, np.

<sup>135</sup> Kathy Peiss explains that skin whiteners among white American women were the most popular cosmetic throughout the nineteenth century. “Women ranked white powder – typically ground starch, rice, or chalk – most acceptable on sanitary and practical grounds. Especially in the West and South, women used powder to protect the skin from the climate, prevent tanning, and reduce perspiration and shine. Other skin lighteners, closer in definition to paints, also supported the aesthetic ideal. Known generically as lily white, white wash, and ‘white cosmetic,’ these products were used by some women irrespective of class and age.” See Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America’s Beauty Culture* (New York: Metropolitan Books Henry Holt and Company, 1998), 40.

<sup>136</sup> Carol Rifelj, *Coiffures: Hair in Nineteenth-Century French Literature and Culture* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2010), 15.

<sup>137</sup> Rifelj, *Coiffures*, 40.

<sup>138</sup> Rifelj, *Coiffures*, 43.

With respect to dress and the body, Kate Haulman posits that in eighteenth-century America, fashion in dress became a form of power and distinction that was conceptually feminized yet pursued by both men and women across ranks. Dress, she writes, served as a flash point for “social, economic, and political conflicts across the eighteenth century that were, fundamentally, about gender roles and relations.”<sup>139</sup> Carol Mattingly explains further that a woman’s gendered appearance in America was inscribed by an elaborately ornamented and detailed wardrobe that not only defined her femininity but also systematically and simultaneously distinguished her place. The cut and detail of a woman’s dress, “accompanied by the specific style of her hair, signified her proper temporal location – the ballroom gown, lawn party dress, riding habit, walking dress, or morning wrapper – as well as social or class position.”<sup>140</sup> Scholars of consumption in British North America have also noted that England loomed large for colonial consumers seeking the latest fashions.<sup>141</sup>

Black women in the Atlantic colonies were often removed from fashionable modes of appearance. There were, however, some exceptions to this rule. Miller observes that annual festivals like Pinkster, a holiday of Dutch origin, and Negro Election Day, an Anglo/African-American affair, which featured class and race cross-dressing were integral parts of early America’s performative culture.<sup>142</sup> “By performing who they were and who they were becoming

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<sup>139</sup> Kate Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth Century America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 3.

<sup>140</sup> Carol Mattingly, *Appropriate[ing] Dress: Women’s Rhetorical Style in Nineteenth-Century America* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), 7.

<sup>141</sup> See Haulman, *Politics of Fashion*, 34.

<sup>142</sup> Miller, *Slaves to Fashion*, 82. Each spring in eighteenth-century New York, the Dutch permitted slaves to dress for Pinkster celebrations. The name Pinkster derives from the Dutch word for Pentecost, a Christian holiday signifying the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus’ disciples. See Susan Hodara, “A Party, by Way of Africa and Holland,” *New York Times*, 7 May 2010, [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/09/nyregion/09spotwe.html?\\_r=1&](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/09/nyregion/09spotwe.html?_r=1&) (date of last access 18 November 2013). In Puritan New England in the nineteenth century, one of the few public holidays was Election Day. Even though African Americans were not permitted to vote, on this day, slaves would celebrated with parades, parties and general revelry, and they were permitted to dress in elaborate clothing. See “Negro Election Day,” *New England Folklore*, 17 January 2010, <http://newenglandfolklore.blogspot.ca/2010/01/negro-election-day.html> (date of last access 18 November 2013). In eighteenth-century Barbados, an annual festival filled

by means of fashion and style, African Americans redefined the markers of identity as they literally and symbolically changed clothes,” she writes.<sup>143</sup> Whether enslaved or freed, blacks were more often imbricated in a social, cultural and political milieu which routinely debased and degraded their bodies. Deborah Willis and Carla Williams argue that there has historically existed a contradiction between a black woman’s public image and her actual experiences:

The sexualized black female body took the form of the ... “mulatto” of fair-complexioned African American female, who possesses features that are considered European.... Skin color and hair texture played distinct roles in this visualization, bringing the [mulatto] closer to a white ideal. The traditional stereotype of the sexually aggressive, dark-skinned black was forsaken for a [mulatto] whose near-white appearance was generally the result of coercive sexual relations between white men and black slave women.<sup>144</sup>

From the eighteenth century onward, bodily appearance and hair functioned as powerful aesthetics that signified both white women’s status and their sense of individuality but also black women’s supposed lack thereof. Conduct books became one of the first popular forms to dictate how white, mostly middle-class women should “appear” and be “seen.”

In eighteenth-century Britain, conduct books mapped out a representation of a domestic and feminine ideal for white women that helped to depoliticize class relations.<sup>145</sup> At mid-century, as Christina Burr explains, these conduct books achieved their goal “by attaching psychological motives to what had previously been class differences and evaluating these [differences] according to a set of moral norms that exalted working-class women over their

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with weekend celebrations known as “crop-over” involved dances, and enslaved and freed blacks would dress extravagantly. In Jamaica, the celebration of “Jonkanoo” or “John Canoe” involved the wearing of masks and fancy costumes, and the parading around villages and towns at Christmas, often accompanied by a retinue of musicians. See Beckles, “War Dances,” 234-42; Kriz, *Slavery, Sugar, and the Culture of Refinement*, 136-39.

<sup>143</sup> Miller, *Slaves to Fashion*, 82.

<sup>144</sup> Deborah Willis and Carla Williams, *The Black Female Body: A Photographic History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 4.

<sup>145</sup> Christina Burr, *Spreading the Light: Work and Labour Reform in Late-Nineteenth-Century Toronto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 126

aristocratic counterparts.”<sup>146</sup> Conduct literature mapped out a field of knowledge that produced a specifically white female form of subjectivity.<sup>147</sup> While there was no explicit racial or ethnic identification made in this literature, “comparisons to aristocratic and middle-class women, and associations with older traditions of Protestant dissent in some of the columns, suggest that the ideology of womanhood articulated in the columns was that of white Anglo-Saxon Protestant women.”<sup>148</sup> On the one hand, conduct books were designed to educate young women in the behaviour “proper” for a young woman; on the other hand, the books paradoxically argued that this taught behaviour ought to appear “natural.”<sup>149</sup> As Markman Ellis explains, “the conduct books offer[ed] a model of feminine behaviour consciously different from the aristocratic (which was criticised as ornamental, luxurious, exhibitionist): one whose virtues were to be found not in display but in inner virtue.”<sup>150</sup>

By the middle of the eighteenth century there were a variety of books addressing the conduct of young white women, written by both men and women. The *Lady's Magazine* (1770-1838) became the leading women's periodical in Britain during the 1770s and 1780s in what became known as the “sentimental magazine” genre. The *Lady's Magazine* filled its pages with contents that sought to “create that domestic amiable sensibility of the middle station of life.... In addition to fiction, the magazine printed moral advice in the conduct-book tradition, descriptions of fashion (occasionally illustrated with plates), new recipes, literary reviews, poetry and a foreign news digest.”<sup>151</sup> In Britain, the ideal woman of the middle and upper-class was instructed to be a domestic woman in command of a private familial domain but also interested

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<sup>146</sup> Burr, *Spreading the Light*, 127.

<sup>147</sup> See Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 14-20.

<sup>148</sup> Burr, *Spreading the Light*, 128.

<sup>149</sup> Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 28.

<sup>150</sup> Ellis, *Politics of Sensibility*, 28.

<sup>151</sup> Ellis, *Politics of Sensibility*, 40.

in (as both participant and producer) a wider public culture of fashion, literature and current events.<sup>152</sup> Middle- and upper-class women in the United States and France during the eighteenth century were also part of an emergent discourse on gender, which positioned womanhood as both private and public. Published out of Philadelphia, *The Lady's Magazine and Repository of Entertaining Knowledge* appeared in 1792; it was a short-lived general interest three-hundred-page publication that came out every six months; it filled its pages with poetry, prose, literature reviews, and foreign news but only lasted about a year.<sup>153</sup>

Just as fashion in dress served as a system for distinguishing among groups and individuals in the colonial metropole, in America, it also provided an important means of connecting to England. As Haulman observes, “For men and women alike, particularly those with means, certain styles and the settings in which they were displayed represented access to the taste, refinement, and imagined order of the ‘fashionable world’ within the disorderly universes of colonial cities.”<sup>154</sup> At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Karen Halttunen explains that American aristocrats might have imitated the fashions set by the London court, but over the course of the century, “the increasing power of the middle classes gradually undermined the court’s domination of fashion.”<sup>155</sup> For example, Benjamin Franklin’s countrified appearance as the American representative to the court of Versailles in 1776 reflected a new dress style that embodied the industriousness and modesty of American society.<sup>156</sup> As Buckridge posits, “his

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<sup>152</sup> Ellis, *Politics of Sensibility*, 40.

<sup>153</sup> Jennifer Nelson, *Airbrushed Nation: The Lure & Loathing of Women’s Magazines* (Berkeley, California: Seal Press, 2012), 2.

<sup>154</sup> Haulman, *Politics of Fashion*, 34.

<sup>155</sup> Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982), 61.

<sup>156</sup> Buckridge, *Language of Dress*, 78.

clothing bespoke a republican frugality that symbolized resistance to European domination and its extravagant, corrupting influences.”<sup>157</sup>

In the fashion print, which emerged as a common printed form in England in the 1770s, dress was extravagant, emphasizing clothing but also physical characteristics.<sup>158</sup> Fashion plates and scenes of fashionable life were also constantly in flux.<sup>159</sup> By the nineteenth century, fashion prints appeared in women’s magazines. *Godey’s Lady’s Book* (1830-1898), which began publication in 1830, had, by 1860, at least one hundred and fifty thousand readers who regularly consulted the magazine to learn how to dress in the latest styles.<sup>160</sup> When Louis A. Godey began *Godey’s Ladies Book*, the magazine was distributed via mail throughout the U.S. and unlike previous magazines, *Godey’s* relied on subscriptions for its revenue, and because of this, the monthly magazine survived for over fifty years.<sup>161</sup> Perhaps taking its cue from the British *Lady’s Magazine*, the content and illustrated frontispieces of *Godey’s* throughout the 1830s and 1840s and into the 1850s were dominated by moral critique.<sup>162</sup> With respect to dress, a fashion plate from an edition of *Godey’s* in 1843 contained an illustration of “Four Ladies with Fashionable Dresses” (fig. 1.2), which aligned the middle-class body with that of the elite. The dress and hair of the women pictured in the fashionable dress plate capture a feminine style of dress and pose that was deemed virtuous, and representative of middle-class identity in America;

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<sup>157</sup> By the early 1730s, colonial spokesmen in the United States were arguing that their purchases of clothing made in England and their resale of such goods to the West Indies made crucial contributions to the imperial economy. This idea of dress as resistance was also observed during the French Revolution of 1789, when Frenchmen signalled their allegiance to revolutionary change and their rejection of the old regime by “wearing workingman’s trousers rather than the knee breeches of the wealthier class (thus their nickname, *sans-culottes*).” Buckridge, *Language of Dress*, 78.

<sup>158</sup> Kriz, *Slavery, Sugar, and the Culture of Refinement*, 63.

<sup>159</sup> As Kay Dian Kriz writes, “through their attentiveness to the latest variations in dress, hairstyle, and social setting, [fashion plates] enforce[d] the idea of change, because social standing in a commercial society depend[ed] upon a constant expenditure of money on clothing and accessories.” See Kriz, *Slavery, Sugar, and the Culture of Refinement*, 63.

<sup>160</sup> Halttunen, *Confidence Men*, 54.

<sup>161</sup> Nelson, *Airbrushed Nation*, 2.

<sup>162</sup> See Ellis, *Politics of Sensibility*, 42; Halttunen, *Confidence Men*, 54.



their tight sleeved dresses, which were well-established by the 1840s, also align the American woman with the British woman. In March 1843, for example, *Godey's* noted that "Her Majesty was habited in an elegant evening costume ... the corsage à point ... very short tight sleeves."<sup>163</sup>

When the *Delineator* (1863-1937) appeared, it became one of the first to focus almost exclusively on women's fashions. While *Godey's* contained fashion plates, they were simply colour illustrations rather than fashion advice; in the *Delineator*, on the other hand, publisher Ebenezer Butterick penned articles about women appearing "clean and chaste, and the health dangers of wearing corsets and hoops, and after having invented tissue paper dress patterns, he included one in every issue, which created a bulky but downright desirable magazine."<sup>164</sup> With this magazine, suddenly white women, irrespective of social class, could afford to make their own fashions, in large part due to the free design patterns printed in the magazine. Soon other women's magazines geared toward the fashionable middle-class woman, such as *McCall's* (1873-2002) and *Vogue* (1892 - ) jumped on the fashion bandwagon. In addition to articles and short stories, they included advice on clothing, accessories available at retail, and what styles were "in" for the season.<sup>165</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, the American women's magazine industry became the standard resource for American and Canadian women on fashion crazes and foibles.

By the late-Victorian period (approximately 1870 to 1900), conduct literature in Canada also proscribed what was appropriate dress and behavior for white women but instead of focusing on the middle-class, publications like the *Ontario Workman* were aimed at the working-class. Published as a weekly from 18 April 1872 to 9 April 1873, the column called "The Home

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<sup>163</sup> See Jacqueline Beaudoin-Ross and Cynthia Cooper, *Form and Fashion: Nineteenth-Century Dress in Montreal* (Catalogue of an exhibition at the McCord Museum of Canadian History, Montreal from 9 May 1992 to 15 Feb. 1993), 26; also see *Godey's Lady Book*, March 1843, 156.

<sup>164</sup> Nelson, *Airbrushed Nation*, 4-5.

<sup>165</sup> Nelson, *Airbrushed Nation*, 6.

Circle” instructed women on clothing and their moral character. Burr explains that “the artificial modesty of upper-class women who were slaves to fashion was contrasted with the ‘rosy-cheeked and bright-eyed daughters’ of working-class men.”<sup>166</sup> At the same time, fashionable attire was viewed by women of all classes as “a way to attract *beaux*.”<sup>167</sup> Where conduct books in the United States and Britain aimed their critiques at the false modesty of the upper class, it is interesting to note that in Canada, columns like “The Home Circle” pitted the working-class woman against her middle-class counterpart, who was deemed ornamental and luxurious. Conduct literature ultimately positioned the home as the ideal place for women and girls; thus, white womanhood became at once linked to the home, marriage and children, integral parts of the ideology of true womanhood and the cult of domesticity.

Significantly, certain elements of late-Victorian fashion spoke to concerns about gender and white women’s place in society. The hoop petticoat, for instance, an element of female dress that persisted in some form through the nineteenth century, asserted a woman’s economic power through its purchase; a woman could garner social power because the petticoat commanded significant attention.<sup>168</sup> White women’s dress had become an aesthetic language that spoke to class, race, and also morality. Kara Tennant argues that in the mid-Victorian period (the 1860s), social mechanisms allowed for the viewing and evaluation of female clothing and comportment. She writes further, “The literature of the mid-nineteenth century regularly articulates the importance of ‘seeing and being seen.’”<sup>169</sup> While there were defined rules and rituals imposed

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<sup>166</sup> Burr, *Spreading the Light*, 134.

<sup>167</sup> Burr, *Spreading the Light*, 134.

<sup>168</sup> Haulman, *Politics of Fashion*, 52. Manufactured of spring steel hoops, covered in cotton, and attached together by five bands of tape, the hoop petticoat replaced the multiple layers of petticoats previously needed to produce a fashionable full skirt. An F.A. Cosgrove is said to have advertised hoop petticoat skirts for sale in his fancy goods establishment in Saint John, New Brunswick, in 1862. See “Hoop Skirt (toy),” *McCord Museum*, <http://www.mccord-museum.qc.ca/en/collection/artifacts/10769.36> (date of last access 28 September 2013).

<sup>169</sup> Kara Tennant, “The Discerning Eye: Viewing the Mid-Victorian ‘Modern’ Woman,” in *Cultures of Femininity in Modern Fashion*, eds. Ilya Parkins and Elizabeth M. Sheehan (Durham, New Hampshire: University of New

upon Victorian women, historians of fashion have, in recent years, complicated this picture by suggesting that dress bestowed upon these women various degrees of self-expression, autonomy, and choice within a larger social sphere of physical and sartorial convention.<sup>170</sup>

With respect to hair, the appeal of long, flowing hair dates back to the stories of Mary Magdalene, Rapunzel, Lorelei and Lady Godiva. It is also firmly entrenched within the Bible. Corinthians I 11:15 in the King James Version reads: “If a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering.”<sup>171</sup> Where hair had become a work of art among aristocratic women in the late-eighteenth century, in that it was either “stuffed with wool or horse hair pads or wires and kept in place by pomade and flour, and decorated with tiny ornaments depicting landscapes and battle scenes,”<sup>172</sup> loose hair was considered a sign of distress. In the eighteenth-century French novel, for example, Rifelj found that “the expression *cheveux épars* had come to be used in a particular way, in scenes that combined the erotic with pain, situations we might therefore call sadistic: the female victim is attractive precisely because she is suffering.”<sup>173</sup> “Proper women” in France, as in Britain, wore their hair up and attached, or they covered it. Rifelj notes further that “by 1827, the word *modiste* referred in particular to those who made and designed hats and other head coverings for women.”<sup>174</sup>

In Canada, white women of the middle- and upper-classes looked to London and Paris for the latest hairstyles, and as the wearing of hats and bonnets changed overseas, fashions similarly

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Hampshire Press, 2011), 113. In the summer of 1862, Tennant writes further that “the periodical London Society published an illustrated two-part series entitled “Fashionable Promenades,” which featured an article entitled “Brighton – In and Out of Season” in its July issue, and a poem, “In Kensington Gardens,” the following month, in August.

<sup>170</sup> Kimberly Wahl, “A Domesticated Exoticism: Fashioning Gender in Nineteenth-Century British Tea Gowns,” in *Cultures of Femininity in Modern Fashion*, eds. Ilya Parkins and Elizabeth M. Sheehan (Durham, New Hampshire: University of New Hampshire Press, 2011), 45-70. See also Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

<sup>171</sup> I Corinthians 11:15.

<sup>172</sup> Nancy Etcoff, *Survival of the Prettiest: The Science of Beauty* (New York: Anchor Books, 1999), 122.

<sup>173</sup> Rifelj, *Coiffures*, 63.

<sup>174</sup> Rifelj, *Coiffures*, 67-8.

changed in Canada. In France in particular, “peasants were still wearing bonnets, and working-class women did their hair themselves.... More complicated styles required the services of a maid or a hairdresser, accessible to those who were better-off.”<sup>175</sup> A similar hair-class distinction appears in Henry David Thoreau’s travelogue, *A Yankee in Canada* (1866). In September 1850 Thoreau set out with nearly 1500 Bostonians on a package tour of Montreal and Quebec. On his tour of Quebec, he noted:

We soon began to see women and girls at work in the fields, digging potatoes alone, or bundling up the grain which the men cut. They appeared in rude health, with a great deal of colour in their cheeks, and, if their occupation had made them course, it impressed me as better in its effects than making shirts at four pence apiece, or doing nothing at all; unless it be sewing slate pencils with still smaller suite. They were much more agreeable objects with their great broad-brimmed hats and flowing dresses than the men and boys.<sup>176</sup>

His observations point to how white women’s bodies – skin complexion, size and style of their hats, cut of their dresses – were as much a concern to men as they were to women.

As previously noted, hairdressing was a pivotal part of African society but in Europe, the professionalization of hairdressing can be traced back to eighteenth-century France. Hairdressing was often called an “art” and it expanded and organized itself in eighteenth-century Paris.<sup>177</sup> At first, hairdressers were always men; they catered to bourgeois ladies and would visit them in their “salons,” although most upper-class women also had them come to their own homes, in addition to having their maids do their hair.<sup>178</sup> By the nineteenth century, French hairdressers travelled to North America, and as the profession expanded and organized itself during the nineteenth century, hairdressers who had their own associations, manuals, pamphlets and magazines, began to open salons that catered to middle- and upper-class women. Many of these

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<sup>175</sup> Rifelj, *Coiffures*, 166.

<sup>176</sup> Henry David Thoreau, *A Yankee in Canada, with Anti-Slavery Reform Papers* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1866), 31-2.

<sup>177</sup> Rifelj, *Coiffures*, 14.

<sup>178</sup> Rifelj, *Coiffures*, 14.

hairdressers also immigrated to the United States. For example, Mr. C. Fouladoux, the “Ladies Fashionable Hairdresser from Paris,” advertised in 1838 that his Philadelphia-based hairdressing service kept “a general assortment of curls, braids, ladies & Gentlemen’s wigs.”<sup>179</sup> In Canada, hairdressing was also a male-dominated profession at first, and by touting one’s self as having been trained in France, a hairdresser could legitimize his services. When the sentimental novel appeared in the mid-nineteenth century, it became a forum for novelists to espouse a new kind of ideology that was in some ways a response to debates over slavery and the “proper” place for blacks and whites in an increasingly industrialized America. Sentimental literature also played a pivotal role in shaping beliefs about race and gender difference.

## **VI. Sentimental literature and the difference of blackness**

The first sentimental novels were brought to America in the eighteenth century from Britain. Initially, the genre was thought to corrupt and delude its readers with extravagant fancies, as a result, each preface asserted the “useful knowledge” and the “truthful” record of life that the novel provided.<sup>180</sup> Authors purported that the characters and also the settings were those of the realistic novel; according to Barbara Carolyn Quissell, “the setting of the sentimental novel placed its characters in the midst of society – its drawing rooms, churches, markets and cottages. It was the house and its realm of manners and social groups that predominated.”<sup>181</sup> The sentimental novelist conscientiously took on the role of moralist and because they also purported to be “truth tellers” this genre, more so than novels before it, captured the public’s imagination, especially with respect to social issues such as slavery, abolition, women, and social class.

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<sup>179</sup> See American Antiquarian Society Ephemera Collection, C. Fouladoux. “Ladies Fashionable Hair Dresser from Paris,” 27 January 1838.

<sup>180</sup> Barbara Carolyn Quissell, “The Sentimental and Utopian Novels of Nineteenth Century America: Romance and Social Issues” (PhD. Diss., University of Utah, 1973), 19.

<sup>181</sup> Quissell, “Sentimental and Utopian Novels,” 22.

Most prominently, in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), characters crossed racial, class, and gendered boundaries in ways that captured in the public's imagination. First published in the *National Era* as a weekly serial between June 1851 and April 1852, Harriet Beecher Stowe allegedly made up the story as she went along; a story which she and the editor had originally envisaged as running for 14 weekly instalments but within nine months of its publication a single volume form of the book became a hit.<sup>182</sup> Using sentimental and romantic devices, Stowe galvanized the abolitionist movement by encouraging her white readers to identify with the black characters in her book. Slaves were portrayed as "human beings" who suffered inhumane indignities and felt the same pain and anguish that whites would have felt.<sup>183</sup> In reality, when *Uncle Tom's Cabin* appeared in 1852, Marcus Wood notes that "the treatment of Africans and African-Americans within Western cultural forms had significantly shifted over the preceding twenty years. Scientific racism had substantially developed and had infiltrated art and literature."<sup>184</sup> As such, while the sentimental novel galvanized the abolitionist cause, it did not refute widely held beliefs about the supposed inferiority of blacks. Scientific racism had played a pivotal role in entrenching such beliefs.

In the early nineteenth century, biological racialists, including phrenologists, craniologists, physiognomists, anthropometrists, ethnologists, polygenesisists and Egyptologists,

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<sup>182</sup> Marcus Wood, "Beyond the Cover: Uncle Tom's Cabin and Slavery as Global Entertainment," *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America, 1780-1865* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 145. Stowe based her novel on the life of Josiah Henson, an escaped slave whose biography overlapped with that of Uncle Tom, and he also corresponded with Stowe during the composition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Henson appeared in several English publications in 1853 and became a celebrity in his own right. Eventually he returned to Canada, residing in Dresden, Ontario. See Wood, "Beyond the Cover," 195-98. There is a tourist site to Henson in Dresden called "Uncle Tom's Cabin Historic Site," see *Heritage Trust*, <http://www.heritagetrust.on.ca/Uncle-Tom-s-Cabin-Historic-Site/Home.aspx> (date of last access 29 September 2013).

<sup>183</sup> Robert C. Toll, *Blackening Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 88-9.

<sup>184</sup> Wood, "Beyond the Cover," 143.

worked to establish innate biological differences between whites and blacks.<sup>185</sup> Contrary to the eighteenth-century race theorists who preceded them, and who generally attributed racial distinctions to environmental conditions, this new breed of scientists were particularly eager to not only establish differences between the races but also to “prove” the moral and intellectual superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race.<sup>186</sup> Nineteenth-century scientists even went so far as to disseminate theories to prove that “the Negro’s head was covered with wool rather than hair.”<sup>187</sup> Even African American abolitionist Frederick Douglass, in considering the “ethnological unfairness towards the Negro,” remarked upon how leading ethnologists had developed elaborate arguments to prove the Egyptian was distinct from Africans even though they were as dark as the Africans and “their hair was far from being of that graceful lankness which adorns the Anglo-Saxon head.”<sup>188</sup> Significantly, British scientists Francis Galton, cousin of Charles Darwin<sup>189</sup> often proclaimed that Anglo-Saxons represented “a modern racial pinnacle to which those of African descent would never rise.”<sup>190</sup> As Kathy Peiss points out, nineteenth-century travelers and missionaries also viewed beauty as a function of race, “and because appearance and

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<sup>185</sup> Smith, *American Archives: Gender, Race, and Class in Visual Culture* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), 30.

<sup>186</sup> Smith, *American Archives*, 30.

<sup>187</sup> Arthur Riss, *Race, Slavery, and Liberalism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 98. Peter A. Browne was the period’s foremost expert on trichology (the study of hair). In a paper Browne presented to the American Association for the Advancement of Science in March 1850 (about one year before Stowe began to serialize *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in the *National Era*), Browne argued that the relationship between hair and race is more stable than the relation between colour and race. Browne opposed his scientific work to the work of the British ethnologist James Cowles Prichard, the foremost champion of monogenesis, the theory that there was one origin for all human kinds and that racial difference developed over time. According to Prichard “the Negro is covered not with wool, but with hair that differs from the European’s only in the ‘degree of crispation.’” See Riss, *Race, Slavery, and Liberalism*, 99.

<sup>188</sup> Frederick Douglass, “The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered: An Address Delivered in Hudson, Ohio, on 12 July 1854,” in *The Frederick Douglass Papers Ser. I, Vol. 2, Speeches, Debate, and Interviews, 1847-1854*, John Blassingame et al., eds. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 508; also see Riss, *Race, Slavery, and Liberalism*, 103.

<sup>189</sup> Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871) had triggered a general interest in the documentation of the “other” in the scientific fields of anthropology, ethnography and ethnology.

<sup>190</sup> Smith, *Photography on the Color Line*, 52.

character were considered to be commensurate, the beauty of white skin expressed Anglo-Saxon virtue and civilization – and justified white supremacy in a period of American expansion.”<sup>191</sup>

In the 1850s, Dr. Robert W. Gibbes, a nationally recognized palaeontologist, hired local daguerreotypist Joseph T. Zealy to make photographic records of first-and second-generation slaves on plantations near Columbia, South Carolina for Swiss-born Louis Agassiz, the natural scientist and zoologist from Harvard University.<sup>192</sup> Using the frontal/profile combination that was first used in ethnographic photography, Zealy documented slave women and men in half-and full-length views stripped to the waist or, in the case of some of the men, totally naked.<sup>193</sup> The result was a denial of black women’s (and men’s) humanity and also control over the representation of their bodies, removing all agency and power from their naked bodies.<sup>194</sup> The visual “evidence” of scientists coupled with the rhetoric of the sentimental novel made the black female body a site of supposed deviancy but simultaneously also a site of white pity.

In 1854, for example, when English botanist, writer and artist Amelia Matilda Murray visited Quebec and Ontario, on her first trip to Quebec City she noted, “Canadian ladies” are more like the French “in their enjoyment of passing moments, and are generally pretty natural, and well dressed, so that I have found their acquaintances agreeable.”<sup>195</sup> On a visit to the Niagara Region, on the other hand, in a letter dated 28 October 1854, she lamented, “One of the evils consequent upon Southern slavery is the ignorant and miserable set of coloured people who

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<sup>191</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 31.

<sup>192</sup> Carla Williams, “Naked, Neutered, or Noble: The Black Female Body in America and the Problem of Photographic History,” in *Skin Deep, Spirit Strong: The Black Female Body in American Culture*, ed. Kimberly Wallace-Sanders (Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 2002), 185.

<sup>193</sup> Willis and Williams, *Black Female Body*, 22.

<sup>194</sup> Willis and Williams, *Black Female Body*, 23.

<sup>195</sup> Amelia M. Murray, *Letters from the United States, Cuba and Canada* (New York: G.P. Putnam & Company, 1856), 83. Other travel accounts of Canada in the nineteenth century provide a quantitative dictation on the black population of Canada West, see Benjamin Drew, *A North-Side View of Slavery, The Refugee or the Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada* (Boston: John P. Jewett and Company, 1856) or missionary accounts detailing differences between Americans and Canadians, see James Dixon, *Personal Narrative of a Tour Through a Part of the United States and Canada* (New York: Lane & Scott, 1849).



throw themselves in Canada.”<sup>196</sup> As Wood asserts, the evangelical sentiments in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* had been “music to English ears, articulating the entire rationale for missionary, political and economic colonisation of Africa – namely the enlightenment of the black heathen by the Christian Saxon.”<sup>197</sup> Stowe’s creation of primarily *mulatto* and *quadroon* slave children (with strong Christian values) whose skin colour differed little from that of whites appeased many British abolitionists. As Murray writes further,

black and mulatto children were playing about near some small log houses, close to a marsh, on its shore; one clean-looking intelligent girl, about seven helped to look for shells, and then asked me to visit her mother who, she said, was sick in a hut close by. I followed the child, and found her mother in bed, quite alone, with the exception of a tiny black babe, only two hours old, by her side.... Everything around this woman spoke of tidy and cleanly habits; a little Bible well bound and was on the table close to her bed, and other comforts evinced education and order beyond the usual negro habits.<sup>198</sup>

The association between the intelligence and cleanliness of black children was also perpetuated in Victorian era commodity advertising.

Anne McClintock has argued that one of the consequences of centuries of colonial domination was that whiteness functioned as both a form of spectacle and desire in capitalist production. The manufacture of soap had burgeoned into an imperial commerce at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and as a consequence, “Victorian cleaning rituals were peddled globally as the God-given sign of Britain’s evolutionary superiority, and soap was invested with magical, fetish powers.”<sup>199</sup> The cult of domesticity positioned white women’s bodies within the domestic space, but the imperialist production of soap advertising equated monogamy (“clean” sex) with industrial capital (“clean” money), Christianity (“being washed clean”), and class

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<sup>196</sup> Murray, *Letters from the United States*, 118.

<sup>197</sup> Wood, “Beyond the Cover,” 194.

<sup>198</sup> Murray, *Letters from the United States*, 119-20.

<sup>199</sup> Anne McClintock, “Soft-Soaping Empire: Commodity Racism and Imperial Advertising,” in *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 207.

control (“washing and clothing the savage”).<sup>200</sup> Soap companies even went so far as to use caricatures of black children to sell whiteness as “clean” and conversely, blackness as “degenerate.”

In 1844, for instance, the N.K. Fairbanks Company introduced the cartoon images of two black children, the Gold Dust Twins (Goldy and Dusty), to promote its brand of soap (fig. 1.3). Meanwhile in Canada an advertising print produced by John Henry Walker (1831-1899) which depicted the stereotype of Sambo covered in buttermilk (fig. 1.4), a symbolic representation of a black child subsumed in whiteness, circulated between the 1850s and 1880s.<sup>201</sup> As Thomas Hine aptly notes, “these racist images ... that reflected ethnic stereotypes, provided products with personalities that were apparently unthreatening. They were a kind of servant just about anyone could afford, with the frequent exception of people who belonged to the groups shown on the package.”<sup>202</sup> The connection between empire and cleanliness was also promoted in hair care. By the 1870s, Britain began exporting shampoo to Europe and soon thereafter, the colonies.<sup>203</sup> Thus, while Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel was the first mass produced and widely distributed book to become a form of popular culture on both sides of the Atlantic, its success coincided with the popularity of scientific and commodity racism.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> McClintock, “Soft-Soaping Empire,” 208.

<sup>201</sup> See John Henry Walker, *Sambo and the Buttermilk*, ca. 1850-1885. Wood engraving, ink on paper on supporting paper, 9.5 x 14.1 cm. Paintings, Prints and Drawings, McCord Museum of Canadian History, Montreal, Quebec.

<sup>202</sup> Thomas Hine, *The Total Package: The Evolution and Secret Meanings of Boxes, Bottles, Cans, and Tubes* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), 91-2.

<sup>203</sup> Rifelj, *Coiffures*, 157.

<sup>204</sup> As an example of how *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* resonated with the British, when Amelia Murray visits Charleston, South Carolina in January 1855, she writes: “Mrs. Stowe’s Topsy is a perfect illustration of Darkie’s character, and many of the sad histories of which her book is made up may be true as isolated facts; but yet I feel sure that, as a whole, the story, however ingeniously worked up, is an unfair picture; a libel upon the slaveholder as a body. I very much doubt if a real Uncle Tom can be found in the whole Negro race; and if such a being is, or was, he is a great rarity as a Shakespeare among whites.” Murray, *Letters from the United States*, 198. Sarah Meer observes that the novel was transformed into songs, plays, sketches, and its imagery was soon transferred to paintings, puzzles, cards, board games, plates, spoons, china figurines, bronze ornaments, dolls, and wallpaper. See Meer, *Uncle Tom Mania: Slavery, Minstrelsy & Transatlantic Culture in the 1850s* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2005), 1-2.

Stowe first emphasizes the dress of her light-skinned slaves in order to evoke the sympathies of white middle-class Americans.<sup>205</sup> The character of Cassy, for instance, despite her racial status, is positioned to evoke empathy because of her light skin and garments that embodied white, middle-class values while other sympathetic characters – the slave mother and daughter, Susan and Emmeline – are also dressed in representative middle-class attire.<sup>206</sup> When Susan and Emmeline are introduced in “The Slave Warehouse,” their bodies, which are in close approximation to the white body, are described as follows:

One of these is a respectably-dressed mulatto woman between forty and fifty, with soft eyes and a gentle and pleasing physiognomy. She has on her head a high-raised turban, made of a gay red Madras handkerchief.... By her side, and nestling closely to her, is a young girl of fifteen, - her daughter. She is a quadroon, as may be seen from her fairer complexion.... She has the same soft, dark eye, with longer lashes, and her curling hair is of a luxuriant brown. She also is dressed with great neatness, and her white, delicate hands betray very little acquaintance with servile toil.<sup>207</sup>

Eve Allegra Raimon asserts that the “literary mulatto” emerged as a favourite theme of antislavery, sentimental fiction because these light-skinned characters could be appropriated and exploited to “suit the sentimental conventions and readerly expectations of the day. In both lived experience and in fiction ... the mixed-race body was perpetually refigured, regulated, and neutralized all at once.”<sup>208</sup> Similarly, in nineteenth-century Spanish-Caribbean literature and cultural production Alicia Arrizón notes that “the mulatta body [was] defined and constituted as

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<sup>205</sup> Mattingly, *Appropriate[ing] Dress*, 86.

<sup>206</sup> Mattingly, *Appropriate[ing] Dress*, 86.

<sup>207</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, “The Slave Warehouse” in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin of, Life Among the Lowly*, ed. Ann Douglas (New York: Penguin Books, [1851] 1981), 471. In some parts of the South mulattos were bred and sold for huge profit on the female slave market. “Pretty quadroons” and “exotic octoroons” were in particularly high demand, and light-skinned women were sometimes called “fancy girls,” and were auctioned at “quadroon balls” held regularly in New Orleans and Charleston. See Kathy Russell, Midge Wilson and Ronald Hall, *The Color Complex: The Politics of Skin Color Among African Americans* (New York: Anchor Books, 1992), 18.

<sup>208</sup> Eve Allegra Raimon, *The “Tragic Mulatta” Revisted: Race and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Antislavery Fiction* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 93.

an extension of oppressive colonial practices, a perspective that helped locate the embodiment of sexuality linked to this colonial order.”<sup>209</sup>

Some historians have argued that without blackface minstrelsy *Uncle Tom's Cabin* would not have existed, and without *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, minstrelsy would not have continued to flourish.<sup>210</sup> Stephen Johnson explains that small-scale minstrel show productions, which toured in New England and New York State likely came across the border to Canada and “these so-called ‘Tom Shows,’ in general, attracted a large segment of the population that otherwise would never expose themselves to the ... theatre.”<sup>211</sup> The two plots – the romantic and sentimental – played out through the juxtaposition of slave escape and martyrdom: Eliza Harris saves her son from slavery by crossing the icy waters of the Ohio River to join her fugitive husband George, while Tom, a devout Christian, accepts his fate patiently until he is required to punish other slaves, whereupon he refuses, and his owner beats him to death.<sup>212</sup> *Uncle Tom's Cabin*,

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<sup>209</sup> Alicia Arrizón, *Queering Mestizaje: Transculturation and Performance* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2006), 101. She writes further that “sexual encounters between the races and consequent mixed-raced offspring were accepted only if these relations were between white men and dark-skinned women, but not between dark-skinned men and white women (particularly the upper class).” See Arrizón, *Queering Mestizaje*, 103.

<sup>210</sup> See Jennifer De Vere Brody, *Impossible Purities: Blackness, Femininity, and Victorian Culture* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), 81. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a detailed discussion of the history of blackface minstrelsy in North America and Britain; for more on its rise and popularity as a form of popular culture see Michael Pickering, *Blackface Minstrelsy in Britain* (Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2008); Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Alexander Saxton, “Blackface Minstrelsy,” *The Rise and Fall of The White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (London and New York: Verso, 1990), 165-182; David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London and New York: Verso, 2007).

<sup>211</sup> Stephen Johnson, “Uncle Tom and the Minstrels: Seeing Black and White Stage in Canada West prior to the American Civil War” in *(Post)Colonial Stages: Critical & Creative Views on Drama, Theatre & Performance*, ed. Helen Gilbert (London: Villiers Publishing, 1999), 56-7. Shortly after it appeared as a serial in 1851 in *The National Era*, two panoramas of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* were presented at Toronto's St. Lawrence Hall, and then there were hundreds of performances in the city at the Toronto Lyceum in May and June 1853. See Frost, *I've Got A Home in Glory Land*, 283.

<sup>212</sup> Both Eliza and George cross racial and class boundaries by transgressing gender roles in their escape. As Eliza and George make their final escape into Canada, Eliza changes her identity to that of a man by “trimming her long hair, donning masculine clothing, and adopting a different manner of putting on her cloak. Her son, Harry, likewise becomes Harriet with a simple change of clothing.” See Mattingly, *Appropriate[ing] Dress*, 86.

appearing at the height of the Underground Railroad, essentially transformed the “realism” of the runaway slave into a sentimental narrative.

Significantly, in the two child characters, Eva and Topsy, Stowe reinforced the symbolic morality attached to a woman’s hair, and by extension, her beauty. When Stowe introduces Topsy, a stereotyped characterization of black childhood, she describes her as “one of the blackest of her race; and her round shining eyes, glittering as glass beads, moved with quick and restless glances over everything in the room.... Her woolly hair was braided in sundry little tails, which stuck out in every direction.”<sup>213</sup> When introducing Eva, Stowe describes her as “the perfection of childish beauty ... the long golden-brown hair that floated like a cloud around it, the deep spiritual gravity of her violet blue eyes ... all marked her out from other children.”<sup>214</sup> Stowe uses hair to inscribe a black-white binary into the visioning of childhood, which, as Robin Bernstein writes, “configured Topsy and Eva as a popularized dyad, the ‘two extremes of society’: the ‘fair’ child with a ‘golden head,’ and the ‘cringing’ black child who had been viciously beaten by her previous owners.”<sup>215</sup>

When staging Eva’s death, hair is also placed at the centre of mourning. On her death bed, Eva asks for a lock of her hair to be cut. As Arthur Riss posits, by fetishizing Eva’s hair, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* does “not simply represent a moment when Eva’s love, incarnated in the locks she distributes, overcomes bodily difference, but also enters into an on-going argument over hair as an indelible and ineffaceable racial marker.”<sup>216</sup> Stowe’s visioning of Topsy as the “blackest” of her race in addition to her “woolly” hair speaks to how hair texture (and length) in conjunction with skin pigment were key attributes that separated black women from white

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<sup>213</sup> Stowe, “Topsy,” 351.

<sup>214</sup> Stowe, “Evangeline,” 230.

<sup>215</sup> Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 15.

<sup>216</sup> Riss, *Race, Slavery, and Liberalism*, 97.

women. By the 1850s, black women were firmly positioned in an antithetical opposition to white women.<sup>217</sup> The public exhibition of Saartjie Baartman, Sarah Bartmann, Saat-Jee, or the “Hottentot Venus,” also played a pivotal role in the positioning of black women.<sup>218</sup>

When Saartjie Baartman, a South African Khoi or San woman of “mixed blood,” was exhibited as a curiosity in Europe, first in London and then Paris, from 1820 to 1815, she became an emblem of European fascination with the body and sexuality of black women.<sup>219</sup> In comparison to the Sable Venus that preceded her, Willis and Williams assert that Baartman was “given a sobriquet linking her to a Western icon of physical pulchritude and sexual desirability. Yet by European standards Venus, the Roman goddess of love and beauty, differed from Baartman as day from night.”<sup>220</sup> Saartjie Baartman occupies a special position in the genealogy of a race/gender visual, as an arbitrary starting point, which precedes photography because she was essentially the first black woman to be documented and have her image widely circulated through drawings, watercolors, and writings, in addition to the preservation of her private organs.<sup>221</sup> The “Hottentot Venus” was a colonial stereotype which attempted to homogenize representations of black female sexuality as “primitive” and pathological.<sup>222</sup> Since European

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<sup>217</sup> Sander Gilman, “Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and literature” *Critical Inquiry* 12 (Autumn 1985): 212.

<sup>218</sup> A recent collection, *Black Venus 2010: They Called her “Hottentot”*, ed. Deborah Willis (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010) provides a thorough account of Saartjie Baartman’s life.

<sup>219</sup> The term “Hottentot” had been dubbed by Dutch settlers of South Africa. See Willis and Williams, *Black Female Body*, 59.

<sup>220</sup> Willis and Williams, *Black Female Body*, 59-60. The Sable Venus’s nudity and black skin, as Kriz writes, “are signs of her [supposed] savagery and fitness to be enslaved. Likewise, the fullness of her thighs and limbs suggests her fitness for labor, her sexuality, and her ability to reproduce.” See Kriz, *Slavery, Sugar, and the Culture of Refinement*, 96.

<sup>221</sup> Michele Wallace, “The Imperial Gaze: Venus Hottentot, Human Display, and World’s Fairs,” in *Black Venus 2010: They Called Her “Hottentot”*, ed. Deborah Willis (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 150.

<sup>222</sup> Charmaine Nelson, “The ‘Hottentot Venus’ in Canada: Modernism, Censorship and the Racial Limits of Female sexuality,” in *Black Venus 2010: They Called her “Hottentot”*, ed. Deborah Willis (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 114. After her death in Paris in 1815, Baartman’s body was moved to a laboratory for further investigation and dissection and then to a museum shelf at the Musée de l’Homme in Paris, where her genitals were stored in a jar and displayed. Her body had been dissected after her death, her bones boiled, and her brain and genitals bottled. Cuvier, the father of both comparative anatomy and palaeontology, conducted the post-mortem examination and plaster casts were taken of her body. For nearly two centuries Baartman’s body parts were kept in

concepts of feminine beauty were bound up with notions of purity, delicacy, modesty and physical fragility, black women were viewed as physically strong, exuding an “animal sensuality,” which for many scientists was evidence of their inferiority and lack of beauty.<sup>223</sup> An 1822 etching of Baartman (fig. 1.5) produced by British engraver Charles Williams, for example, captures her nude, smoking a pipe, with the figure of cupid sitting on her buttocks. The print illustrates how visual and scientific discourses in nineteenth-century Britain saw the buttocks of the Hottentot as a “sign of the primitive, grotesque nature of the black female,”<sup>224</sup> but paradoxically, also an object of white men’s sexual desires.

The nineteenth century was ultimately a period filled with contradictions. While the domestic sphere increasingly became a site of agency in terms of white women’s ability to consume, it simultaneously remained a site of patriarchal oppression.<sup>225</sup> Behind an image of white middle-class gentility, the domestic interior also masked slavery’s exploitation of black women. With advancements in photography in the latter part of the century, black women acquired the means to self-represent, and an ability to create counter images which challenged scientists, the image of blackness in the sentimental novel, and commodity advertising. At the same time, social movements and transformations in women’s dress in the latter part of the nineteenth century ushered in a new ideology of womanhood that shifted the parameters of beauty, and the public visibility of both white and black women.

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on public display. In large part due to the efforts of South African political groups, Baartman’s body was repatriated back to South Africa. On 9 August 2002, to coincide with International Indigenous People’s Day and South African Women’s Day, Baartman was laid to rest. The process of repatriation and burial was not without political debate. See Clifton C. Crais and Pamela Scully, *Sara Baartman and the Hottentot Venus: A Ghost Story and a Biography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009); Rachel Holmes, *The Hottentot Venus: The Life and Death of Saartjie Baartman: Born 1789 - Buried 2002* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2007).

<sup>223</sup> Bush, *Slave Women*, 15.

<sup>224</sup> Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (Princeton, N.J., [1871] 1981), 2:317 and 2:345-46; also see Gilman, “Black Bodies, White Bodies,” 219.

<sup>225</sup> Karen Sánchez-Eppler, *Touching Liberty: Abolition, Feminism, and The Politics of the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 41.

## Chapter 2

### A modern beauty: the New Woman and the New Negro Woman

#### I. The visible woman as an embodied subject

On 10 June 1897 *Leslie's Weekly* (1852-1922), an American illustrated literary and news magazine, had as its cover page a print entitled, "First Parade of the New Woman's Society in Possumville" (fig. 2.1). The wood engraving depicts African Americans demonstrating for equal rights in a fictional town. The parody extends beyond their bodies to the signs they are carrying, which are riddled with spelling and grammatical errors. In the image, several overweight black women with exceedingly long feet<sup>1</sup> are overshadowed by a black girl who is standing in the forefront wearing a ragged dress (a symbolic gesture of her supposed parental neglect) with dishevelled hair and an exaggerated mouth.<sup>2</sup> This image is the stereotype of the pickaninny.<sup>3</sup> Illustrated magazines and images such as this were ubiquitous in the 1890s. Importantly, Michelle Shawn Smith aptly notes that "popular women's magazines targeted white middle-class women as the engineers of the mechanical reproduction of the white middle-class family."<sup>4</sup> Thus, the dominant culture viewed black women through the lens of abstraction. Where scientific and public discourses had positioned black womanhood as the biological inferior to

<sup>1</sup> Large feet were a device used on the blackface minstrel stage. Typically, male minstrel characters described ideal women with feet so big they "covered up de whole sidewalk" or lips "as large as all out doors," or so large a lover could not kiss them all at once. In every way, minstrels emphasized, that black women fell far short of white standards of femininity. See Robert C. Toll, *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 67.

<sup>2</sup> *Leslie's Weekly* was founded by English-born American engraver, illustrator, and publisher Frank L. Leslie; after his death in 1880, his widow, women's suffrage campaigner Mariam Florence Leslie, published the magazine.

<sup>3</sup> Characteristics of the pickaninny included dark or sometimes jet-black skin, exaggerated eyes and mouth, the action of gorging (especially on watermelon), and the state of being threatened or attacked by animals (especially alligators, geese, dogs, pigs, or tigers). Pickaninnies often wore ragged clothes (to suggest parental neglect) and were sometimes partially or fully naked. Not all pickaninny images included all these characteristics; and some pickaninnies were constructed as clean, well-dressed, and engaged in domestic chores. When threatened, pickaninny characters often ignored danger in exaggerated fear; when attacked, they usually laughed and they never experienced or expressed pain or sustained wounds in any remotely realistic way. See Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 34.

<sup>4</sup> Michelle Shawn Smith, *American Archives: Gender, Race, and Class in Visual Culture* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), 122.



white womanhood, the visual text and subtext of women's magazines helped to normalize and naturalize such differences.

The increased visibility of white women at the end of the Victorian era coincided with a widespread modernization. These developments gave rise to a new form of female identification. In addition to becoming a suffragist, the "New Woman" challenged the reproductive destiny of the Victorian "True Woman," who was moralistic and bound to the domestic sphere. By choosing education and professional work over marriage, motherhood, and the home, "the New Woman supposedly threatened the livelihood of her elite white social class in her refusal to procreate."<sup>5</sup> In this context, black women's appearance in the public sphere was as abject or as racial fetishes; they failed to appear as modern women.<sup>6</sup> The New Woman was thus a new form of subjectivity that as Liz Conor explains, became part of one's self-perception as modern:

Gendered representations became embodied.... The modern appearing woman did not step into modernity's symbolic systems, but was textually inscribed within its panorama. The picture formed part of her and she formed part of the picture as she became emblematic of the pictorial life of the modern scene.<sup>7</sup>

In Canada, Linda Kealey found that Canadian fiction in the 1890s "reflected a growing reality of the experimentation of the 'new woman' with dress reform, bicycle riding, spiritualism and women's rights became transformed into a concern with the reform movement and the duties of citizenship."<sup>8</sup> As Canada changed, so too did gender roles, and with that change, tensions grew between the ideal woman of the home and the reality of women working outside the home.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Smith, *American Archives*, 122.

<sup>6</sup> Liz Conor, *The Spectacular Modern Woman: Feminine Visibility in the 1920s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 176.

<sup>7</sup> Conor, *Spectacular Modern Woman*, 8.

<sup>8</sup> Linda Kealey, "Introduction," in *A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada, 1880s – 1920s*, ed. Linda Kealey (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1979). 1.

<sup>9</sup> See Gail Cuthbert Brandt, et al. *Canadian Women: A History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Don Mills, Ontario: Nelson Education, 2011), 136-137. With the development of Canadian industry after 1850, Brant et al. found that women were increasingly employed in factories or at piecework in the home. "Women played a particularly important role in the Canadian textile industry.... In the Quebec cotton industry in 1980, almost half the imperatives were women.... By

As discussed in chapter one, during slavery black women laboured outside of the domestic space and as such were denied a private familial life akin to white women. By the early-twentieth century, black women continued to be resigned to domestic work, remaining at the bottom of the socioeconomic scale. Thus, black women were, in the first decades of the twentieth century, removed from new forms of public visibility.<sup>10</sup> The appearance of “colored girl” domestics wanted ads in newspapers in Toronto at the turn of the twentieth century affirms that domestic service remained one of the few employment opportunities available to black women in Canada.<sup>11</sup> The vulnerable condition of the black female domestic worker continued to nourish many of the lingering myths about the “immorality” of black women.<sup>12</sup> Black women were described in public forums such as government publications, as mentally, morally, physically, and socially inferior and as a potential threat to Canadian society. In her research on Canadian immigration policy in the early-twentieth century, Agnes Calliste found that the Canadian government feared that if too many blacks immigrated to Canada it would cause

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1901, women represented 25 percent of the Canadian workforce engaged in manufacturing and mechanical work; in 1921, they still constituted 24 percent of a much-expanded industrial labour force. See Brandt, et al., *Canadian Women*, 150; 151.

<sup>10</sup> Angela Davis, *Women, Race & Class* (New York: Random House, 1983), 90.

<sup>11</sup> See *Toronto Daily Star*, 15 October 1900, 3; *Toronto Daily Star*, 16 May 1907, 8; *Toronto Daily Star*, 18 September 1906, 5. Since the settlement of New France, there had always existed a demand for immigrant domestic servants, especially from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In fact, domestic service continued to be the most important paid employment for women in Canada through the early part of the twentieth century; in 1881, 41 percent of all women considered to be working were employed in domestic service. While immigrant women from southern and northern Europe were more often than not considered for positions over black domestics, all immigrant women were treated different to those from the British Isles. Marilyn Barber notes “the British domestic workers had more freedom to complain [about working conditions] so the worst exploitation continued to be suffered by [black] women.” See Marilyn Barber, “Immigrant Domestic Servants in Canada,” *Canadian Historical Association* (Saint John, New Brunswick: Keystone Printing & Lithographing, 1991): 3; 25. See also Brandt, et al., *Canadian Women*, 148. As an example of white women domestics having a higher level of agency than black women domestics, in British Columbia in 1913, a group of white women established the Home and Domestic Employees Union to work toward obtaining a nine-hour day and minimum wages. The group was largely comprised of women from the British Isles. See Star Rosenthal, “Union Maids: Organized Women Workers in Vancouver, 1900-1915,” *BC Studies* 41 (Spring 1979): 50.

<sup>12</sup> Davis, *Women, Race & Class*, 92-3.

“economic and race-relations problems similar to those experienced in the United States.”<sup>13</sup> In the context of scientific racism, racist government policies and an emergent magazine culture disseminating stereotypical images of black women, white womanhood was positioned as “not the moral but the biological superiority of white middle-class character.”<sup>14</sup>

This chapter explores how the New Woman of the first decades of the twentieth century became not singularly white and middle-class but also black and middle-class. Specifically, I examine the role that social movements, such as dress reform, the temperance movement, and the Harlem Renaissance had on shaping the emergent New Woman and New Negro Woman’s public visibility. While this chapter does not specifically address developments in the beauty culture industry, its aim is to provide a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural landscape that shaped the development of the beauty culture industry I examine in chapter three. I argue that the shifts and transformations that occurred in the late-nineteenth century with regard to the visibility of white women’s bodies as it relates to their dress and hairstyling, coupled with the reaffirmation of black women’s bodies through the photographic self-portrait, were both significant to the eventual segmentation of the beauty culture industry. The cultural landscape of the late-nineteenth century played a pivotal role in positioning white women as natural appearing modern subjects, and black women as primitive abject subjects.

## II. Dress reform and the emergence of the New Woman

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<sup>13</sup> Agnes Calliste, “Race, Gender and Canadian Immigration Policy: Blacks from the Caribbean, 1900-1932,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 28.4 (Winter 1993/1994): 133. Embedded within Canada’s immigration policy in the early-twentieth century was the assumption that working-class black women, especially those from the Caribbean were “immoral,” likely to become single parents, and eventually public charges. See Bonham C. Richardson, “Caribbean Migrations, 1838-1985,” *The Modern Caribbean*, eds. Franklin W. Knight and Colin A. Palmer (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 203-28. For instance, in July 1911, eight Guadeloupean domestics were denied entry to Canada when it was presumed that they were likely to “become a public charge because they were single parents.” See Calliste, “Race, Gender and Canadian Immigration,” 134.

<sup>14</sup> Smith, *American Archives*, 124.

In addition to suffrage and temperance reform, dress reform became a concern of the New Woman. Barbara Epstein asserts that nineteenth-century America saw the emergence not only of the popular women's culture that these movements gave expression to but also of feminism. "The emerging popular women's culture at times overlapped quite significantly with feminism.... For feminism, women's equality was the central goal; women's evangelism and women's temperance took as their central goal the moral reformation of American life."<sup>15</sup> The first known attempt at the reform of women's dress was undertaken by a group of American feminists in 1851 at the Seneca Falls, New York.<sup>16</sup> The style, which consisted of Turkish trousers worn beneath a long, wide tunic that was tied with a sash, was named the "Bloomer costume" (fig. 2.2) after Amelia Bloomer, an American feminist. Bloomer's friend and fellow feminist Elizabeth Cody Stanton had been responsible for its adoption among fellow suffragists in America.<sup>17</sup> The style was eventually abandoned because it overshadowed the feminist cause and also linked feminism with masculinity, which was not what feminists had hoped to achieve.

In Britain, there was another voice of opposition to the fashions of the period coming from the artists of the pre-Raphaelite movement, which began in the 1840s.<sup>18</sup> Influenced by the paintings of the early Renaissance period (hence their name), Elizabeth Wilson argues that they developed a style of women's clothing based on their romantic vision of medieval simplicity. They "abandoned both the crinoline and the fashionable dropped shoulder seam and tight lacing, which together prevented the fashionably dressed woman from raising her arms to their full height or extent."<sup>19</sup> There were also socialist communities in France in the 1830s that, according

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<sup>15</sup> Barbara Leslie Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1981), 4.

<sup>16</sup> See Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 209.

<sup>17</sup> Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*, 209.

<sup>18</sup> Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*, 209.

<sup>19</sup> Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*, 209-10.

to David Kunzle, had “devised a uniform for both sexes which buttoned all the way down the back, so as to prevent one getting in or out of it on one’s own, and this to further a sense of their interdependence.”<sup>20</sup> Dress reform in the United States ultimately became an emblem of Victorian idealism, though it was initially associated with socialism in Europe, and religious communities. For instance, the plain dress of the Quakers was of interest to reformists; meanwhile Owenite and other communitarian settlements experimented with simplified dress, abandoning corsets, shortening their skirts and sometimes wearing a form of trousers.<sup>21</sup>

In many ways, the beliefs of suffragists were precursors to the beauty ideal of women’s magazines. Where beauty culture “proclaimed the superiority of white racial beauty,”<sup>22</sup> white suffragists, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Antony, famously derided the black race and loudly proclaimed the superiority of white Anglo-Saxon women.<sup>23</sup> At the first women’s rights meeting in New York City in 1866, for instance, the delegates decided to establish an Equal Rights Association (ERA) incorporating the struggles for black and women suffrage into a single campaign. At the first ERA annual meeting in May 1867, Elizabeth Cady Stanton strongly argued that it was far more important for women (i.e., white Anglo-Saxon women) to receive the franchise than for black men to win the vote.<sup>24</sup> As Angela Davis asserts, “Elizabeth Cady Stanton and others who believed that because, in their eyes, emancipation had rendered black people ‘equal’ to white women, the vote would render black men superior, were absolutely opposed to black male suffrage.”<sup>25</sup> Thus, the suffragist movement was as much about white supremacy as it was about gender equality between the sexes.

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<sup>20</sup> David Kunzle, *Fashion and Fetishism* (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1982), 122.

<sup>21</sup> Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*, 208-9.

<sup>22</sup> Kathy Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America’s Beauty Culture* (New York: Metropolitan Books Henry Holt and Company, 1998), 31.

<sup>23</sup> See Davis, *Women, Race & Class*, 71-86.

<sup>24</sup> Davis, *Women, Race & Class*, 71; 72.

<sup>25</sup> Davis, *Women, Race & Class*, 72-3.

The Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), founded by suffragist Francis E. Willard, also played a role in cultivating the New Woman and affirming the supposed superiority of white women over all other women.<sup>26</sup> Carol Mattingly explains that "most public women in the latter part of the century sought to enhance their ethos by presenting an 'appropriate' appearance. The most effective group at presenting a proper image and at glean[ing] positive press was the [WCTU]."<sup>27</sup> She writes further,

Inverting the sign of women's fragility, they enlisted "feminine" dress as a powerful rhetorical symbol of their stations and characters that helped to equalize the strong visual presence that men had been able to assume throughout the century. Such attention to appearance, especially with regards to the WCTU, changed early press focus on the "manly" or "masculinized" speaker to description of the "womanly" rhetor, a depiction that disarmed critics.<sup>28</sup>

The American WCTU was founded in 1874 at an international Sunday school conference in Chautauqua, New York.<sup>29</sup> WCTU members were guided to avoid "political dress" that blurred the boundaries of femininity. The primary goal of WCTU president Frances E. Willard was to convince the "average" woman of the need to become politically active in favour of women's needs, and she attached such goals to the need for women to dress "appropriately."<sup>30</sup> Willard was adamant that clothing was the key to a woman's success so much so that she designed a dress for WCTU members, which became known as the "Willard Dress" (fig. 2.3).

By the 1890s, it was no longer enough for a white middle-class woman to dress fashionably; clothing had to allow for physical movement in public spaces. As Wilson explains,

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<sup>26</sup> Francis Willard also publicly vilified black men for their alleged danger to white women, see Davis, *Women, Race & Class*, 187.

<sup>27</sup> Carol Mattingly, *Appropriate[ing] Dress: Women's Rhetorical Style in Nineteenth-Century America* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), 111.

<sup>28</sup> Mattingly, *Appropriate[ing] Dress*, 111.

<sup>29</sup> See Sharon Anne Cook, *"Through Sunshine and Shadow": The Women's Christian Temperance Union, Evangelicalism, and Reform in Ontario, 1874-1930* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 6.

<sup>30</sup> Mattingly, *Appropriate[ing] Dress*, 111.

Bustles as well as crinolines had at last ceded to the long, slender skirt, the high shoulder was fashionable, and soon to be exaggerated into the leg-of-mutton sleeve, and exercise, dancing and sport, together with changing views of women's roles, were beginning to have their effect on high fashion.<sup>31</sup>

The "leg-of-mutton" sleeve was a more dramatic version of the 1830s "gigot sleeve." The gigot sleeve started slightly off the shoulder and puffed out before narrowing again towards the lower arm, and in combination with the popular V-neckline and full skirt, gigot sleeves helped to give an illusion of a narrower waist.<sup>32</sup> At its most dramatic height, the upper arm of the leg-of-mutton sleeve required as much as two and a half yards of fabric, and in the 1890s, the sleeves were layered affairs, with up to four different fabrics piled on top of one another to help create the excessive volume.<sup>33</sup>

While the feminism of Elizabeth Cady Staton and Susan B. Anthony developed in the late-1840s out of their experiences in previous reform efforts like abolition, in Canada, the first generation of feminists did not appear until the 1870s and 1880s.<sup>34</sup> Wendy Mitchinson observes that women's reform organizations were one way in which Canadian women "hoped to protect the family and assert themselves in an acceptable way. Each organization was initially formed to right a specific wrong, but once formed, each tended to involve itself in a number of reform enterprises."<sup>35</sup> The WCTU was a vibrant organization in Canada, and it provides an example of the emergence of Canadian women from the domestic sphere to being active participants in Canada's public sphere. Significantly, the first local WCTU was formed in Ontario in 1874, the

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<sup>31</sup> Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*, 216.

<sup>32</sup> See Katy Werlin, "Gigot Sleeves," *The Fashion Historian*, March 2011, <http://www.thefashionhistorian.com/2011/03/gigot-sleeves.html> (date of last access 2 November 2013). Also Anita A. Stamper and Jill Condra, *Clothing Through American History: The Civil War Through the Gilded Age, 1861-1899* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2010), 278.

<sup>33</sup> Stamper and Condra, *Clothing Through American History*, 278.

<sup>34</sup> Kealey, "Introduction," 9.

<sup>35</sup> Wendy Mitchinson, "The WCTU: 'For God, Home and Native Land: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Feminism,'" in *A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada, 1880s - 1920s*, ed. Linda Kealey (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1979), 153-4.

first provincial union in 1877 in Ontario and the Dominion Union in 1883, and by 1900, the WCTU had approximately ten thousand members in Canada.<sup>36</sup> Lorene Bridgen found that black women and men were also active participants in Canada's temperance movement. While it is unknown whether black women were active members of Canada's WCTU, members of the educated black community, such as abolitionist Mary Ann Shadd Cary, were overwhelmingly supporters of temperance in Canada. There were also members of the working class who were supporters.<sup>37</sup> It is difficult to speak with certainty about a black "middle-class" in nineteenth-century Canada but those who worked as teachers, doctors or barbers would have been considered middle-class, as compared to blacks who worked as domestic servants or manual labourers. As Afua Cooper aptly notes, "Among blacks, like whites, allegiance to temperance signified middle-class respectability and good moral character,"<sup>38</sup> and as such, it gave many the belief in some level of equality with whites.<sup>39</sup>

Ultimately, women's causes in the late-nineteenth century may have appeared to be singularly about dress or alcohol consumption but they were intimately connected to issues related to race, gender and class.<sup>40</sup> For instance, two prominent black feminists in the nineteenth century, Mary Church Terrell, the first president of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW)<sup>41</sup> and Ida B. Wells, newspaper owner and activist, were born into families of ex-slaves, but both became strong voices for equal rights. Based on their efforts, for the first time in

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<sup>36</sup> Mitchinson, "The WCTU," 154.

<sup>37</sup> Lorene Bridgen, "On Their Own Terms: Temperance in Southern Ontario's Black Community (1830-1860)," *Ontario History* 101.1 (Spring 2009): 67.

<sup>38</sup> Afua Cooper, "'Doing Battle in Freedom's Cause': Henry Bibb, Abolitionism, Race Uplift and Black Manhood, 1842-1854," Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 2000), 288.

<sup>39</sup> See Bridgen, "On Their Own Terms," 72.

<sup>40</sup> Epstein, *Politics of Domesticity*, 4.

<sup>41</sup> The NACW reportedly had a membership of 50 clubs and over 500 participants in 30 thirty states by 1913. The NACW was also affiliated with organizations in Canada, Liberia and Madagascar. See *Encyclopedia of American History: 1896 to Present From the Age of Segregation to the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Paul Finkelman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 165.



Western history, newspapers began to deem black women of enough importance to present visual depictions, either in print or graphics that demonstrated that black women could also dress and appear as modern women.<sup>42</sup> By the twentieth century, fashion in dress became a democratic form of expression, and dress reform, temperance and the suffragist movement played a role in the empowerment of both white and black women.

### III. The New Negro Woman in African American literature and photography

Between 1900 and 1930 blacks in North America were venturing into new territories in terms of migration, education, employment, and the arts. The United States witnessed a massive internal migration of African Americans out of the South and into northern cities; in particular, New York and Chicago grew exponentially. In what became known as the “Great Migration” (roughly from 1915 to 1930), Lerone Bennett Jr. estimates that roughly “two million blacks had moved from the plantations of the South to the Harlems of the North.”<sup>43</sup> The predominately black New York City neighbourhood of Harlem became an epicentre for black culture. As Tiffany Melissa Gill explains, “Harlem in the first three decades of the century was at the center of the most volatile issues confronting the black community – namely, class and gender conflict and ideas about politics and leadership.”<sup>44</sup> Harlem was home to artists, educators, and writers, such as Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and Jamaican-born Claude McKay, not to mention an enumerable stretch of city blocks that housed some of America’s most successful

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<sup>42</sup> Mattingly, *Appropriate[ing] Dress*, 133.

<sup>43</sup> Lerone Bennett, Jr., *The Shaping of Black America: The Struggles and Triumphs of African-Americans, 1619 to the 1990s* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1993), 269. The Great Migration also resulted in a steady rise in the proportion of African Americans living in cities, from 27 percent in 1916 to 35 percent in 1920 and 44 percent in 1930, and by 1940, nearly half of all African Americans were urban. See Susannah Walker, *Style & Status: Selling Beauty to African American Women, 1920 – 1975* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 15.

<sup>44</sup> Tiffany Melissa Gill, “I Had My Own Business ... So I Didn’t Have to Worry”: Beauty Salons, Beauty Culturists, and the Politics of African-American Female Entrepreneurship,” in *Beauty and Business: Commerce, Gender, and Culture in Modern America*, ed. Philip Scranton (New York and London: Routledge, 2001), 179.

black-owned businesses. As African Americans in Harlem began to define how the New Negro appeared and was seen, blackness came to be viewed through a lens of racial uplift.

Deborah Willis and Carla Williams posit that “the New Negro imagery was created during an era when the overwhelming majority of postcard, advertisements, and popular cultural artifacts made of African Americans consisted of crude, degrading racial caricatures.”<sup>45</sup> As such, the New Negro was simultaneously about re-imagining the black body as it was about emancipation. For example, in 1900, Booker T. Washington helped edit a volume titled *A New Negro for a New Century* and in that same year at the Paris Exposition, one of the largest international exhibitions of its time, W.E.B. Du Bois organized three hundred and sixty three photographs into three albums entitled, *Types of American Negroes, Georgia, U.S.A.* (volumes I-3), and *Negro Life in Georgia, U.S.A.*, which challenged the photographic images of blackness that were made to uphold scientific discourses of “Negro inferiority” and “Negro criminality.”<sup>46</sup>

Significantly, where the “literary mulatto” had emerged as a favorite theme of antislavery fiction, embodying and dramatizing profound tensions and paradoxes of race and nation,<sup>47</sup> the “tragic mulatto” character emerged as the embodiment of a desire of whites to preclude mixed-raced women from full participation and acceptance in white society. The tragic mulatto was first introduced in two nineteenth-century short stories written by Lydia Maria Child, “The Quadroons” (1842) and “Slavery's Pleasant Homes” (1843). In both instances, Child portrayed light-skinned women, the offspring of white slaveholders and their black female slaves as tragic

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<sup>45</sup> Deborah Willis and Carla Williams, *The Black Female Body: A Photographic History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 144.

<sup>46</sup> Smith, *Photography on the Color Line: W.E.B. Du Bois, Race, and Visual Culture* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2004), 6-7. Also see Noliwe M. Rooks, *Hair Raising: Beauty, Culture, and African American Women* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 80; Ayana D. Byrd and Lori L. Tharps, *Hair Story: Untangling the Roots of Black Hair in America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001), 28.

<sup>47</sup> Eve Allegra Raimon, *The “Tragic Mulatta” Revisited: Race and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Antislavery Fiction* (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 93. The “literary mulatto” was a character that appeared in nineteenth century fiction as the light-skinned woman whose body and dressed was aligned with that of white women.

by emphasizing their displacement in a society that needed to maintain boundaries between blacks and whites. As David Pilgrim explains,

She was ignorant of both her mother's race and her own. She believed herself to be white and free. Her heart was pure, her manners impeccable, her language polished, and her face beautiful. Her father died; her "negro blood" discovered, she was remanded to slavery, deserted by her white lover, and died a victim of slavery and white male violence.<sup>48</sup>

A similar portrayal of the tragic mulatto appeared in *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter* (1853), a novel written by black abolitionist William Wells Brown. As one of the earliest published novels by an African American, *Clotel* perpetuated the doomed plight of the light-skinned woman.<sup>49</sup> Harriet Wilson's *Our Nig* (1859), one of the earliest known novels published by an African American woman, also drew from the tragic mulatto tradition to dramatize the theme of miscegenation as it bisected issues of division and dispossession.<sup>50</sup> While sentimental novelists created the literary mulatto, African American writers also penned narratives on the doomed light-skinned woman of mixed progeny.

In the novels of Charles Chesnutt, for instance, Claudia Tate found a "preponderance of light-skinned heroes and heroines, while the comic and local-color character roles are reserved for the folk who are literally black in hue."<sup>51</sup> Nella Larsen's *Quicksand* (1928) and *Passing* (1929) also depicted beautiful mulatto heroines, although in both instances they struggled with their racial identity and their place in society.<sup>52</sup> The pitting of light-skinned characters against

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<sup>48</sup> David Pilgrim, "The Tragic Mulatto Myth," *Ferris State University*, <http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/mulatto/> (date of last access 11 October 2013).

<sup>49</sup> Kathy Russell, Midge Wilson and Ronald Hall, *The Color Complex: The Politics of Skin Color Among African Americans* (New York: Anchor Books, 1992), 137. *Clotel* ends with a gang of white men chasing Clotel, a mulatto woman, who, unable to escape, drowns in the Potomac River within sight of the White House.

<sup>50</sup> Raimon, "Tragic Mulatta" *Revisited*, 13.

<sup>51</sup> Claudia Tate, *Domestic Allegories of Political Desire: The Black Heroine's Text at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 62. See also Charles Chesnutt, *The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color-Line* (1899). Similar tragic mulatto tropes appear in J. McHenry Jones' *Hearts of Gold* (1896) and Paul Laurence Dunbar's *The Sport of the Gods* (1902).

<sup>52</sup> Russell, Wilson and Hall, *Color Complex*, 138; 139.

dark-skinned characters was just as detrimental to black women's self-esteem as the stereotyped images circulating within the dominant culture. As such, African American novelists, who had been victimized by the racism of slavery and had survived it, unwittingly perpetuated a similar kind of colour prejudice and sexism. As Tate writes further,

These two prejudicial ideologies were heavily woven throughout the fabric of African-Americans postbellum social culture not as discourses of desire but as actual facts, because the dominant society sanctioned male privilege and those with light skin generally had more access to opportunities of advancement in both the black and white cultures.<sup>53</sup>

While some African American novelists and political leaders addressed taboo subjects like colour prejudice, in chapter three I examine how advertisements in African American newspapers also showed a preference for light-skinned women.

By the 1920s, the white avant-garde began to believe that African Americans were, as Noliwe Rooks asserts, “the embodiment of exotic primitivism and that they did not have the sexual restraints and repressions ... and confines of the Victorian era.”<sup>54</sup> For this group, Harlem symbolized a form of freedom from the constraint of the cult of femininity, which had proscribed that white women remain virginal, demure, and constrained to the domestic sphere. With this new found freedom, white men and women traveled up to Harlem, attended nightclubs like the Cotton Club, and like the French avant-garde whose “admiration and borrowing of [Negro] forms was as much to satisfy its own need for the ‘exotic’ and the ‘real’ (something that was lacking in its own culture) as it was economic exploitation,”<sup>55</sup> the American avant-garde indulged in the supposed exoticism of the jazz club. Black and white audiences gazed at chorus

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<sup>53</sup> Tate, *Domestic Allegories*, 58.

<sup>54</sup> Rooks, *Hair Raising*, 78.

<sup>55</sup> Petrine Archer-Straw, *Negrophilia: Avant-Garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920s* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 18. The 1939 song “Take the ‘A’ Train” by jazz legend Duke Ellington famously celebrated the fact that the A train on the west side of Manhattan was the best way to get to Harlem.

lines made up of light-skinned, scantily clad black women whose hair was straighter or straightened and who, for patrons of these clubs, exemplified sexual freedom and exoticism.<sup>56</sup>

Josephine Baker became the most famous of these light-skinned beauties. It is interesting to note, however, that when she auditioned for Eubie Blake's and Nobel Sissle's *Shuffle Along* (1921) (fig. 2.4), she was not offered the job because her skin was considered "too dark" for the part.<sup>57</sup> When one of the regular chorus girls did not show up, Baker convinced the director to let her go on and she eventually became a permanent cast member of *Shuffle Along*. Petrine Archer-Straw asserts that when Baker moved to Paris, in an era when artists were grappling with a polarized view of women that embraced both the creative and the subversive,

Baker was an icon of female sexual expression. Her image was a powerful one because she appeared to have liberated her female sexuality, and also because her blackness and the fantasy of her accessibility threw into contradiction social and moral mores regarding both sex and race.<sup>58</sup>

Baker became the most famous African American woman in the world in the 1920s but for the average black woman, her light skin and straightened hair was hardly attainable. With further advancements in photography, black women were now able to use the photographic image to create a new self; lighting and settings could be used to create a modern appearance.

Ultimately, the technological advances in visual imagery that occurred from the mid-nineteenth century onward would supersede eighteenth-century paintings and print culture in terms of their imperial function. Joy Sperling notes that prints and photographs crossed almost seamlessly between "overlapping visual cultures as independent works of art, as surrogates for

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<sup>56</sup> Rooks, *Hair Raising*, 78.

<sup>57</sup> Russell, Wilson and Hall, *Color Complex*, 142. Blake and Sissle brought *Shuffle Along* to Toronto in 1923 and 1924. See "Music in the Home," *The Globe*, 25 August 1923, 25; "Shuffle Along Scores Again," *Dawn of Tomorrow*, 19 January 1924, 6.

<sup>58</sup> Archer-Straw, *Negrophilia*, 119. While Harlem may have popularized black culture, it was nurtured and sustained in Paris in the 1920s; also see *Negrophilia*, 63-183.

paintings and for each other, and as illustrations and other visual ephemera.”<sup>59</sup> Prints and photographs were symbolically interconnected with ideas, themes, and materials related to exchange, reproduction, and consumption. For the first time, printmakers and photographers were able to offer relatively inexpensive pictures of people and places, which could then be proudly displayed on living room walls, or stored privately in cases or folios.<sup>60</sup> In the eighteenth century, British engravers and etchers had perfected the aquatint process, which, when finished with watercolor resembled an original watercolour.<sup>61</sup> Lithography, however, became a faster, inexpensive method of reproduction. In the United States, as Georgia Barnhill notes, “with a relatively small elite class and large middle and working class, lithography was the perfect medium to meet the demands of the public.”<sup>62</sup> If the nineteenth century was the age of mechanical reproduction, wherein the image became the most valued visual form, and print and photography were its agents, visual forms were also subject to the latent demands in society.<sup>63</sup>

#### IV. Photographic portraits of the New Negro Woman in Canada

The introduction of the Eastman Kodak box camera in 1888 and the subsequent proliferation of photographic “snapshot” images and postcards at the end of the nineteenth century had helped to disseminate ideas about racial difference.<sup>64</sup> The democratization of the technology, however, gave subjugated persons the ability to construct a new self-image. Where the white family was posed as a photographic reproduction, and “the photographic industry

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<sup>59</sup> Joy Sperling, “Multiples and Reproductions: Prints and Photographs in Nineteenth-Century England – Visual Communities, Cultures, and Class” in *A History of Visual Culture: Western Civilization from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, eds. Jane Kromm and Susan Benforado Bakewell (New York: Berg, 2010), 296..

<sup>60</sup> Sperling, “Multiples and Reproductions,” 296.

<sup>61</sup> Georgia B. Barnhill, “The Pictorial Context for Nathaniel Currier: Prints for the Elite and Middle Class,” *Imprint* 31.2 (Autumn 2006): 32-3.

<sup>62</sup> Barnhill, “Pictorial Context,” 33.

<sup>63</sup> Sperling, “Multiples and Reproductions,” 307.

<sup>64</sup> Willis and Williams, *Black Female Body*, 3.

situated white middle-class women at the cornerstone of this technological process,”<sup>65</sup> bell hooks observes that the box camera made it possible to see the walls of photographs in black homes “as a critical intervention, a disruption of white control of black images.”<sup>66</sup>

Cameras, as Susan Sontag has poignantly noted, “did not simply make it possible to apprehend more by seeing (through microphotography and teledetection). They changed seeing itself, by fostering the idea of seeing for seeing’s sake.”<sup>67</sup> Between 1895 and 1925, successful photography studios owned by and catering to African Americans in New York, Chicago, and Detroit, were ubiquitous features of the urban landscape.<sup>68</sup> The noted Harlem photographer James Van der Zee, for instance, made some of the best-known portraits of African Americans in the North during the period.<sup>69</sup> From images portraying well-groomed African Americans strolling around the streets of Harlem to numerous studio portraits of black women, Van der Zee imaged a distinctly urban people.<sup>70</sup> In her analysis of Van der Zee, Elizabeth M. Sheehan asserts that his images dramatized the process of transforming specific subjects into “types” through their composition, as his studio space and props transformed his sitters into the protagonists of recognizable bourgeois domestic scenes.<sup>71</sup> The combination of hair, cosmetics and dress in Van der Zee’s photographs positioned black women’s bodies as modern. “The prominence of and

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<sup>65</sup> Smith, *American Archives*, 118.

<sup>66</sup> bell hooks, “In Our Glory: Photography and Black Life,” in *Picturing Us: African American Identity in Photography*, ed. Deborah Willis (New York: The New Press, 1994), 46; 47.

<sup>67</sup> Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Picador, 1977), 93.

<sup>68</sup> Rooks, *Ladies’ Pages: African American Women’s Magazines and the Culture That Made Them* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 16.

<sup>69</sup> Rooks, *Ladies’ Pages*, 17-8.

<sup>70</sup> Rooks, *Ladies’ Pages*, 18. For a detailed historiography of African American photographers see Deborah Willis, *Reflections in Black: A History of Black Photographers 1840 to the Present* (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000).

<sup>71</sup> Elizabeth M. Sheehan, “The Face of Fashion: Race and Fantasy in James VanDerZee’s Photography and Jessie Fauset’s Fiction,” in *Cultures of Femininity in Modern Fashion*, eds. Ilya Parkins and Elizabeth M. Sheehan (Durham, New Hampshire: University of New Hampshire Press, 2011), 182-3.

attention to dress in Van der Zee's images underscore[d] the malleable and fantastic nature of modern racial and gender identity and its reliance on external cues and props."<sup>72</sup>

Photography had, since its invention, served an imperialist role in documenting racial difference in North and South America.<sup>73</sup> As noted in chapter one, Joseph T. Zealy photographs were taken for the purposes of illustrating theories of black inferiority. In her article "Icons of Slavery" (2009), Margrit Prussat examines how photography served as an important medium for the construction and communication of a modern Brazilian national identity related to empire.<sup>74</sup> Many of the first photographers in Brazil were European or of European descent, and in the photographs of urban slavery, "people are represented mainly as street-vendors, household-slaves, or carriers – professions that were very common among the African population."<sup>75</sup> Circulating photographs served an imperialist function similar to literature and travel writing, but a daguerreotype was still a luxury item in the 1850s, and given the plate size, one half of a full plate, it would have been quite expensive, and was typically made for a wealthy client or the daguerreotypist himself.<sup>76</sup> In Brazil, photographic images were typically available on the public market, but they were rarely published in travel literature or other media.<sup>77</sup>

The photographic portraits of black women in Ontario and Quebec in the 1860s to 1910s provide us with one of the truest glimpses into how freed black women visually represented themselves in the emergent medium in a post-slavery milieu.<sup>78</sup> Unlike the portrait painter, who

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<sup>72</sup> Sheehan, "Face of Fashion," 188.

<sup>73</sup> For a detailed discussion of National Geographic and the ethnographic photography, see Catherine A. Lutz and Jane L. Collins, *Reading National Geographic* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993).

<sup>74</sup> Margrit Prussat, "Icons of Slavery: Black Brazil in Nineteenth Century Photography and Image Art," in *Living History: Encountering the Memory of the Heirs of Slavery*, ed. Ana Lucia Araujo (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 203. Slavery was practiced in Brazil from ca. 1538 until its official end in 1888.

<sup>75</sup> Prussat, "Icons of Slavery," 207.

<sup>76</sup> Willis and Williams, *Black Female Body*, 51.

<sup>77</sup> Prussat, "Icons of Slavery," 209.

<sup>78</sup> There are numerous photographs of black women in Montreal, southern Ontario, and Halifax that I have not included in this analysis. I will need to conduct further research to locate these photographs; second, most of the photographs have been catalogued as "unidentified" or what is known of them is based on a limited oral history that



had to undergo extensive training in order to create a portrait in the likeness of a person, the photographer, outfitted with a camera and a tripod only had to aim and shoot, producing an easily identifiable likeness.<sup>79</sup> These photographs are a more historically accurate picture of how black women in colonial Canada scripted their own identities through visual representation. Additionally, unlike Canadian oil paintings or watercolours of black women from the eighteenth and early decades of the nineteenth century in which a headwrap was a prominent part of one's dress, the vast majority of Canadian photographs of black women from mid-century onward do not feature a head covering.<sup>80</sup> The shift toward styling one's hair might be viewed as an emulation of white middle-class aesthetics, but it is more appropriate to view this shift as an oppositional response to the ubiquitous image of the black female body as specimen and a conscious rejection of the servant stereotype. As bell hooks reminds us, "In the world before racial integration, there was a constant struggle on the part of black folks to create a counter-hegemonic world of images that would stand as visual resistance, challenging racist images."<sup>81</sup> Photography thus empowered the black subject, in slavery and freedom, to express the human condition in new ways.<sup>82</sup>

In one of the only known images of Mary Ann Shadd Cary (fig. 2.5), taken at some point in the late 1840s/early 1850s, the well-known African American abolitionist who lived in Canada

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is not conclusive enough to form the basis of an analysis at this moment. In the future I would like to conduct further study on photographic portraits of black women in nineteenth-century Canada as this is an area that has scarcely been explored, with the exception of Charmaine Nelson's work. See *Representing*, chapters 3, 4 and 5.

<sup>79</sup> Smith, *American Archives*, 60.

<sup>80</sup> There are two known watercolours of black women from the nineteenth century, *Rose Fortune* (c. 1830) and Caroline Bucknall Estcourt's *The Good "Woman of Colour"* (1838-1839). I have chosen not to include these artworks in my analysis because of the chapter's focus on the nineteenth-century shift toward photography and its imperial functions in many ways superseded prior mediums. Also, Nelson provides a thorough reading of these paintings that would be redundant to repeat here. See Nelson, *Representing the Black Female*, 99-101.

<sup>81</sup> hooks, "In Our Glory," 46.

<sup>82</sup> Marcus Wood, "Marketing the Slave Trade: Slavery, Photography, and Emancipation: Time and Freedom in 'The Life of the Picture,'" in *A History of Visual Culture: Western Civilization from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, eds. Jane Kromm and Susan Benforado Bakewell (New York: Berg, 2010), 255.

West faces the viewer with a direct gaze wearing a buttoned up dress.<sup>83</sup> Her hair is parted down the middle and cropped under. In a photograph of fugitive slave and Underground Railroad conductor, Harriet Tubman (fig. 2.6),<sup>84</sup> taken at some point between 1860 and 1875, she also wears a black dress and her hair is braided and parted down the middle. Both women's hair is styled in a "chignon." The word "chignon" comes from the Old French *chäengnon*, for the nape of the neck; the movement of chignons up and down the head was a major element in nineteenth-century hair fashions.<sup>85</sup> In this style, hair was often parted down the middle and arranged in a roll or tied in a knot at the back of the head. While we cannot see the back of Shadd Cary and Tubman's hair, the style resembles a photograph taken in 1868 (fig. 2.7) of a white woman whose hair is also braided, parted down the middle and likely tied in a chignon at the nape.

Built into advertisements and paintings of runaway slaves was an assumption of black disempowerment; this worked to "privilege black passivity, suffering, and victimhood, rather

<sup>83</sup> Mary Ann Shadd Cary (1823-1893), who was born into a free family in 1823 in Wilmington, Delaware had, by 1851, established a home in Windsor, just across the river from Detroit. Alongside African American author and abolitionist Henry Bibb (1815-1854), Shadd Cary opened a school for fugitive slaves, which was run by Mary Bibb. She helped to establish Canada's first black newspaper, the *Voice of the Fugitive* in 1851; the paper circulated both in Canada and the United States. In 1853, Shadd Cary became the first woman to edit a newspaper in North America; she ran the *Provincial Freeman* with Samuel Ringgold Ward (1817-1866), a black abolitionist. See Jane Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary: The Black Press and Protest in The Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indian University Press, 1999); Moira Ferguson, "Mary Ann Shadd Cary (1823-1893)" in *Nine Black Women: An Anthology of Nineteenth-Century Writers from the United States, Canada, Bermuda, and the Caribbean*, ed. Moira Ferguson (New York and London: Routledge, 1998), 201-235. There is a Heritage Ontario plaque of Mary Ann Shadd Cary on the south side of King Street East between 143 and 145 (between Church and Jarvis streets) in Toronto. The plaque notes that she published the *Provincial Freeman* out of that location during the 1850s, and that Shadd Cary returned to the United States during the outbreak of the Civil War to recruit African American soldiers for the union army. She also became one of the first American women of African descent to earn a law degree. She earned her law degree from Howard University Law School in 1883. The plaque was erected in 2011.

<sup>84</sup> Some scholars note that Tubman was born in 1819 while others cite 1820 as her birthdate. Known as "The Moses of her People" Tubman was one of the most recognizable fugitive slaves to have lived in Canada. Born a slave in Maryland around 1820, she was originally named Araminta Ross but in 1844 she changed her name to Harriet when she married John Tubman, a free black man. In 1849, fearing she was soon to be sold she left her husband and headed to the free state of Pennsylvania. Aided by a well-established network of regional anti-slavery activists and Underground Railroad agents she ended up in St. Catharines, Ontario. From there, it is believed that Tubman did about two slave raids a year to the United States for the next ten years, and based on her efforts it is speculated that she assisted thousands of slaves north to Canada. See Lerone Bennett Jr., "The Private War of Harriet Tubman," *Ebony*, July 1975, 65-72; Elizabeth Lawson, "\$40,000 Dead or Alive Slaveowners' Offer for Harriet Tubman," *The Clarion*, 6 October 1947, 6.

<sup>85</sup> Carol Rifelj, *Coiffures: Hair in Nineteenth-Century French Literature and Culture* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2010), 59.

than strength, violence, or imagination.”<sup>86</sup> The photographic portraits of Shadd Cary and Tubman, on the other hand, circumvent the visual positioning of the black female body as passive victim. Instead, each woman appears as an embodied subject, fully cognisant of her dress, hair and pose. The photographer of Shadd Cary’s image is unknown and H.B. Lindsley, the creator of Tubman’s image does not appear to have produced a large quantity of images, William Notman (1826–1891), one of Canada’s most lauded nineteenth-century photographers, took thousands of images; a very small percentage of which were of non-white subjects.<sup>87</sup>

Charmaine Nelson observes that “the images of carefully dressed, comfortable and poised black women [in Notman’s photographs] are inscribed with deliberate signs of the middle or upper classes, both within the women’s bodies and the studio settings.”<sup>88</sup> Notman gained most of his notoriety by selling pictures of prominent Montrealers, such as the first Prime Minister of Canada, Sir John A. MacDonald, whose picture was taken at Notman’s studio several times.<sup>89</sup> Whether their dress was their own or given to them by Notman the images of black women in Montreal between 1867 and 1885 reflect an aesthetic diversity with respect to hair and dress. In slavery, many black women laboured as wet nurses for white children. When these women were photographed in the nineteenth century, their images were then integrated into the culture-at-large. In Brazil, for instance, “the nurses do not only occur as integrated into the economic and

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<sup>86</sup> Wood, “Marketing the Slave Trade,” 261. For example, in *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America, 1780-1865*, Wood explained that advertisement sections in newspapers frequently provided “a concrete expression of the precise legal equation between slaves and other forms of livestock....In order to facilitate identification, the majority of advertisements also tended to emphasize physical peculiarities.” See Wood, *Blind Memory*, 80; 81.

<sup>87</sup> I make this statement after spending the summer of 2012 reviewing the entire Notman collection on microfilm. Founded in 1856, Notman’s studio “remained in the Notman family until it was sold in 1935 to another commercial concern, the Associated Screen News, which divided the operations into the historical division, run by Charles Notman, and the commercial studio, Wm. Notman & Sons.” See Martha Longford, *Suspended Conversation: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums* (McGill-Queen’s University Press: Montreal & Kingston, 2001), 203.

<sup>88</sup> Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject*, 30.

<sup>89</sup> Jonathan Vance, *A History of Canadian Culture* (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2009), 198.

social sphere, but also into the family life of the slave owners.”<sup>90</sup> In Canada, there are no known images of wet nurses (though black women nurses or nannies would have been responsible for feeding their white charges) but there are photographs of black women in the employ of whites.

In *Nurse and Baby, copied for Mrs. Farquharson* (1868; fig. 2.8), a nameless black female sitter wears a fancy dress with large sleeves, her hair is parted down the middle and likely tied in a chignon at the nape. Jacqueline Beaudoin-Ross and Cynthia Cooper explain that the expanding skirt of the 1850s was given buoyancy by flounces (a strip of decorative gathered or pleated material attached by one edge), and by the middle of the decade, the hoop petticoat dress (fig. 2.9) with pagoda sleeve became quite large,<sup>91</sup> and flounces with bold floral designs were popular.<sup>92</sup> In March 1855, a Montreal dressmaker, Miss Arthur, advertised in the *Montreal Transcript and Commercial Advertiser* that she could supply “Paper patterns of every description at very low price” as such it is possible that the dress in fig. 2.9 was made using such a device.<sup>93</sup>

By the late-1860s, the skirt became flatter in the front with fullness pushed to the back, and the small standing collar remained fashioned in the same style while the sleeve became narrower.<sup>94</sup> Significantly, given that the photograph was copied in 1868, it is difficult to say with certainty when the photograph was taken. However, it is quite possible that the dress worn in *Nurse and Baby* (1868) is a hand-me-down from her employer given the expanding skirt of her dress and the collarless upper garment, which is aesthetically different from what would have been considered fashionable dress in the late-1860s. There are images in the Notman Photographic Archive from the years 1866 to 1869 (fig. 2.10) that reveals how the skirt became

<sup>90</sup> Prussat, “Icons of Slavery,” 223.

<sup>91</sup> The pagoda sleeve was a wide, bell-shaped sleeve popular in the 1860s. See Stamper and Condra, *Clothing Through American History*, 96-98.

<sup>92</sup> Beaudoin-Ross and Cooper, *Form and Fashion*, 28. The dress in fig. 2.9 belonged to Harriet Bousfield Molson Clerk, daughter of Martha and Thomas Molson of the Molson brewery fame.

<sup>93</sup> Beaudoin-Ross and Cooper, *Form and Fashion*, 28.

<sup>94</sup> Beaudoin-Ross and Cooper, *Form and Fashion*, 32.

noticeably smoother in the front, with the fullness moving towards the back.<sup>95</sup> Thus, *Nurse and baby* is a visual record that the practice of white employers dressing and styling the hair of black domestic labourers in their likeness continued past the 1850s.

In *Mrs. Cowan's Nurse* (1871; fig. 2.11) Nelson notes that although “the young black female’s white charge is absent, white power and authority is mapped onto the image through the process of naming that displaced the black nurse’s name and replaced it with that of her white female employer.”<sup>96</sup> Similar to *Nurse and Baby* (1868), the black female sitter wears a fancy dress and while her hair is pulled back and held together at the back of the head in a chignon, the hair is styled with netting. It was common for Victorian women (fig. 2.12) to wear netting, lace, or flowers with chignons.<sup>97</sup> Both *Nurse and Baby* (1868) and *Mrs. Cowan's Nurse* (1871), a century removed from François Malépart de Beaucourt’s *Portrait of a Haitian Woman* (1786; fig. 1.1) mirror each other in that all three are structured by the same racialized power imbalances; “that of white owner/master/mistress/employer as the initiator of the commissioned portrait, and the black female slave/nurse as a considerably restricted agent in her own representation.”<sup>98</sup> Significantly, while both black nurses are unnamed, there are images of white nurses in the Notman Photographic Archive from the years 1862 to 1902 in which white female nurses are similarly unnamed. The difference between the black nurses and white nurses in terms of their photographic representation is that black nurses are almost exclusively captured wearing elaborate fancy dresses in the late-1860s and early-1870s while the latter are typically captured wearing a simple black or beige dress (fig. 2.13).<sup>99</sup>

<sup>95</sup> Beaudoin-Ross and Cooper, *Form and Fashion*, 32.

<sup>96</sup> Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject*, 52.

<sup>97</sup> Victoria Sherrow, *Encyclopedia of Hair: A Cultural History* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2006), 387.

<sup>98</sup> Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject*, 52.

<sup>99</sup> In one image in the Notman Photographic Archive, a black nurse wears a formal nursing uniform. Entitled *Baby Paikert and nurse, Montreal, QC, 1901*, the photograph captures a black nurse wearing a white uniform and nurses’

In an article on “Modes of Wearing the Hair” published in *Godey’s* in 1855, the most important decisions concerning the arrangement of the hair, *Godey’s* readers were informed, “was where to locate the bulk of the hair when it was swept up on top of the head, and smart women made this decision through the science of phrenology.”<sup>100</sup> By arranging one’s hair in a particular style, Victorian women were told that they could take on any character they wanted. When the dress and hair of Mrs. Cowan’s nurse is compared to a fashion print from the 1 July 1871 edition of *The Canadian Illustrated News* (fig. 2.14), it is a reminder that, by the 1870s, Victorian women read conduct books and viewed popular displays of fashion, which likely influenced the dress and hairstyles they preferred the black women in their employ to wear.

In addition to white women dressing black women in their employ in their likeness, there are other examples of white teachers doing the same to black children. In a photograph (fig. 2.15) in *The Mission to the Fugitive Slaves in Canada*, a booklet published in February 1859 produced by the Colonial Church and School Society, which established mission schools in London, Chatham, Amherstburg, and Toronto for the children of fugitive slaves in Canada,<sup>101</sup> six school children are pictured with the school’s headmistress, Miss J. Williams. In subsequent pages, Williams describes the dark-skinned girl to her right (in front) as being born into slavery. There is nothing said about the dark-skinned girl in the back row, but the young girl leaning

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cap while gazing onto a white baby, who is sitting on her lap. Her uniform also includes a white apron. According to Christina Bates, the first nursing caps were in the style of lady’s breakfast or morning caps, worn close to the back of the head, with frilled or goffered edges, and some with streamers down the back. Whereas fashionable ladies’ caps were made of velvet, lace, and ribbons, the restrained nurses’ caps were white, probably made of linen or muslin. Like the princess-style cotton dresses, ladies’ caps were meant to be worn in the home. Caps for nurses, like those for household servants, persisted past the 1870s. By the mid-1890s, Bates explains further that as nursing schools proliferated, “caps grew in variety and exuberance, the brim changing back and forth from gathered, goffered, and frilled, and the crowns from peaked, triangular, and bifurcated, the fabric from transparent scrim to muslin.” Christina Bates, ““Their Uniforms all Esthetic and Antiseptic”: Fashioning Modern Nursing Identity, 1870-1900,” in *Cultures of Femininity in Modern Fashion*, eds. Ilya Parkins and Elizabeth M. Sheehan (Durham, New Hampshire: University of New Hampshire Press, 2011), 171.

<sup>100</sup> Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982), 159-60.

<sup>101</sup> The book can be found in McGill University’s Rare Books Library.

beside her is described as “a beautiful little Quadroon girl” whom she can hardly believe was born into slavery.<sup>102</sup> The quadroon child’s hair, which is styled in ringlets, is identical to that of her white teacher. In France between 1830 and 1848 ringlets at the side became known as “sausage curls,” and from 1829 on as *tire-bouchons* (corkscrews) or *anglaises*.<sup>103</sup> Rifelj explains that the style “a l’anglaise” was partly inspired by imported keepsakes from England:

At first British imports, they had very popular French versions in the 1830s and 1840s. Their beautiful steel plate engravings were taken from the British publications and accompanied by French prose and verse. They featured many images of women in fashionable dress, often with these curls..... They may be found even later, flowing down the back amid masses of curls and braids in the evening hairstyles of the 1860s and 1870s.<sup>104</sup>

Significantly, elite white women (fig. 2.16) in Montreal also adopted the British hairstyle.

Importantly, not all black women photographed at Notman’s studio were positioned under the employ of a white woman. For example, the clothing, jewelry, coiffures and accessories, and the décor, drapery, columns, books and furniture in *Miss Guilmartin* (1885; fig. 2.17) and *H. Evans and Lady* (1871; fig. 2.18) are those of “ladies.” Both women are positioned firmly within an interior space of wealth, knowledge, learning and leisure.<sup>105</sup> Miss Guilmartin has a strong, direct gaze, her hair is parted down the middle and likely tied in a chignon, and her dress aligns her body with that of the “proper” Victorian lady. The puffing at the back of the skirt, as seen in *Miss Guilmartin* (1885), had evolved by the 1880s into what became known as the “bustle dress.” Bustles, worn off and on between the 1870s and early 1900s, were one of the many foundation garments worn by nineteenth-century Victorian women. Instead of the large bell-like petticoat silhouettes of the 1860s (see fig. 2.9), dresses began to flatten out at the front

<sup>102</sup> “Colonial Church and School Society,” *Mission to the Fugitive Slaves in Canada* (Macintosh Printers, London, 1859), 24-6.

<sup>103</sup> Rifelj, *Coiffures*, 45.

<sup>104</sup> Rifelj, *Coiffures*, 45.

<sup>105</sup> Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject*, 31.

and sides, creating more fullness at the back of the skirt. A photograph of a Mrs. G. S. Davidson (fig. 2.19) taken at Notman's studio a year before Miss Guilmartin's image captures the elongated back of the bustle dress. Beaudoin-Ross and Cooper explain that after the trend towards a more vertical line in the late 1870s, "a variant of back fullness just below the waist reappeared in the form of a ridge bustle in 1883."<sup>106</sup> Significantly, several historians have noted that the bustle dress, which accentuated the buttocks of the Victorian woman, mirrored the fascination white men had with the buttocks of black women during the period.<sup>107</sup> Bustles may have been considered "fashionable" but they quite visibly resembled the circulated image of the "Hottentot Venus."

With respect to *H. Evans and Lady* (1871), the black female sitter's cluster of curl bangs mirror that of a Victorian woman (fig. 2.20) whose portrait was also taken at Notman's studio in Montreal in 1871. It was exceedingly rare for a black couple in formal dress in the nineteenth century to be photographed together in one frame in an interior setting, but it was also rare for a black woman to be named as "lady" in a nineteenth-century photograph. The term lady was almost always designated for the white Victorian woman. In most English representations produced before the start of the American Civil War, as Jennifer DeVere Brody explains, "the 'darker-skinned' *mulattaroon* was permitted to become a 'proper' (and perhaps a propertied) *lady* provided that providence procured for her proximity to a white gentleman."<sup>108</sup> She could

<sup>106</sup> Beaudoin-Ross and Cooper, *Form and Fashion*, 40.

<sup>107</sup> See Sander L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), note 51, page 259; Jay Calderin, *Form, Fit and Fashion: All the Details Fashion Designers Need to Know But Can Never Find* (Minneapolis: Rockport Publishers, 2009), 3; Janell Hobson, *Venus in the Dark: Blackness and Beauty in Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 61; Debra S. Singer, "Reclaiming Venus: The Presence of Sarah Bartmann in Contemporary Art," in *Black Venus 2010: They Called Her "Hottentot"*, ed. Deborah Willis (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 90-1.

<sup>108</sup> Jennifer DeVere Brody, *Impossible Purities: Blackness, Femininity, and Victorian Culture* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), 17. Brody coined the word *mulattaroon* to stand for "the woman of color" (who can be designated also, if not always alternatively, as a *mulatta*, an *octoroon*, a *quadroon*, a *mustee*, *mestico*, *griffe*, or Creole) and is also a highly ambiguous figure. The *mulattaroon*, she writes, "was a blood vessel who could be described as being neither black nor white, yet also as both white and black."



shift her status only with the aid of an upstanding Englishman, who was typically her father or husband.<sup>109</sup> This explains why Miss Guilmartin and the unnamed sitter, both of whom appear to be of a mixed progeny, are given the elevated status of a name and/or a title. At the same time, the alignment of these two women with the Victorian lady points to how photography held the power to malign the black female body, to align it with whiteness.

By the turn of the twentieth century, blacks in Canada began to take their own family photographs for the first time. The New Negro Woman, though proportionately smaller in number as compared to the United States, began to redefine herself through photography. In North Buxton, for example, a portrait of two sisters taken at some point in the 1890s (fig. 2.21) is an example of a family memento.<sup>110</sup> Maria Black (seated) wears a black dress, her hair appears straightened, and is parted down the middle in a style that had been popular at mid-century. By the 1880s, curling or straightening the hair had become much easier to do when French hairdresser Marcel Grateau invented a new method of curling, by reversing the round and concave tongs of a hair-iron, which created the “Marcel wave.”<sup>111</sup> Toward the end of the century, Grateau’s curling iron gave women the ability to do fuller, more intricate hairstyles without false hairpieces. Maria’s cluster of curl bangs were likely styled with some form of heated iron. Meanwhile Martha Black (standing) wears a white dress, and her hair is styled in what became known as the “Gibson girl.” By the 1890s, the Gibson girl hairstyle (fig. 2.22) was made popular by graphic artist and illustrator Charles Dana Gibson who frequently crafted illustrations of women; the Gibson girl signified the New Woman who was independent and

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<sup>109</sup> Brody, *Impossible Purities*, 17.

<sup>110</sup> These photographs were given to me by Shannon Price, Curator, Buxton National Historic Site & Museum. There is little known about these photographs other than the two women pictured are sisters and while Martha Black remained in the Elgin Settlement raising several children, Maria Black eventually returned to Kentucky from where their family had come.

<sup>111</sup> Rifelj, *Coiffures*, 51.

youthful.<sup>112</sup> In the 1880s the “pompadour” hairstyle, which consisted of combing the hair upwards in the central part and leaving fallen curls at the side had been en vogue, but by 1890, the Gibson girl was the most commonly worn hairstyle lasting through the first decades of the twentieth century.<sup>113</sup> The dresses of both sisters are embellished with leg-of-mutton sleeves, which also reached the height of their popularity in the mid-1890s.<sup>114</sup> A plate from the October 1895 Canadian edition of *The Delineator* (fig. 2.23) depicts the popular leg-of-mutton sleeve.

Another example of a modern black woman in Canada can be seen in a photograph of Dr. Mary Waring, a physician who worked in the Windsor area in the late-nineteenth century (fig. 2.24). The portrait captures Dr. Waring wearing her “Sunday Best”; her hair is swooped up, and she wears an elaborate, fancy hat along with long white gloves, a fluffy scarf and necklace. Unlike photographs of black women from the 1860s, the New Negro woman of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century was increasingly linked to consumerism. Consumption was seen as a way to obtain citizenship and societal acceptance; accordingly, appearing modern was viewed as tangible evidence of the efficacy of the New Negro image.<sup>115</sup> Photographs of black women, such as Dr. Mary Waring, Martha and Maria Black reveal that the New Negro Woman in Canada was also a consumerist.<sup>116</sup> While there is little known about black Canadian women as consumers at the turn of the twentieth century, a photograph taken at the Notman studios titled, *G. Conway and Friends* (1901) (fig. 2.25) reflects the increased importance of

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<sup>112</sup> See Gustavo Briand, “The Hair at the Nineteenth Century,” [http://thehistoryofthehairworld.com/hair\\_19th\\_century.html](http://thehistoryofthehairworld.com/hair_19th_century.html) (date of last access 11 October 2013). To create the wide Gibson Girl hairstyle, women rolled their front hair over a “rat” made from human hair or horse hair. See Victoria Sherrow, *Encyclopedia of Hair: A Cultural History* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2006), 387. For a detailed analysis of Charles Gibson and the Gibson girl hairstyle see Martha H. Patterson, “Selling the American Woman as Gibson Girl” in *Beyond the Gibson Girl: Reimagining the American New Woman, 1895-1915* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 27-49.

<sup>113</sup> Briand, “Hair at the Nineteenth Century.”

<sup>114</sup> See Beaudoin-Ross and Cooper, *Form and Fashion*, 44.

<sup>115</sup> Rooks, *Ladies’ Pages*, 19-20.

<sup>116</sup> The New Negro woman in America was “urged both to consume and to teach the ethos of consumption to their husbands and children.” See Rooks, *Ladies’ Pages*, 19.

appearing fashionable. As Rooks writes further, “the first few decades of the twentieth century would bring more focus on how fashion marked both migratory and class status. In both centuries, fashion came to matter a great deal.”<sup>117</sup>

There are also Canadian photographs taken in the domestic space that reveal another aspect of the new image of black womanhood, that of mother. In the unnamed photograph (fig. 2.26) taken in the first decades of the twentieth century in Amherstburg, Ontario a seated black woman holds a child in both hands as she warmly gazes into the camera. It represents a rare glimpse of a black woman as loving nurturer to her own child, not a child in her employ. This image personifies the extent to which black women were acquiring degrees of agency not seen in the centuries before, though the image of the black domestic servant still formed part of the photographic collection of many whites in Canada. A photograph of a black nanny with her white charges in Guysborough, Nova Scotia taken around 1900 (fig. 2.27) for instance, is attributed to a William H. Buckley; the image is most often used to depict black women in early-twentieth-century Canada. Nelson poignantly observes that black child subjects, as black adult subjects, rarely appeared in finished individual historical portraits.<sup>118</sup> On the other hand, photography gave rise to the complete individual portrait. As Willis and Williams assert, the idealized poses in many photographic images addressed issues of class and racial identity as a way of “locating [blacks] as part of established communities concerned with their future.”<sup>119</sup> There is considerably less scholarship on the New Negro in Canada. As a result, this analysis is one of the first to link black Canadians in a socio-cultural exchange with African Americans.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Rooks, *Ladies' Pages*, 88.

<sup>118</sup> Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject*, 49; see also 37-58.

<sup>119</sup> Willis and Williams, *Black Female Body*, 147.

<sup>120</sup> From 1897 to 1912, in the largest immigration Canada has ever experienced, 2.3 million Europeans and Americans came to Canada while less than 1,000 blacks were officially admitted into Canada; and from 1916 to 1928 official immigration figures indicate that 1,519 blacks had immigrated to Canada, though these figures were probably more between 2,000 and 3,000. See Dorothy Williams, *The Road to Now: A History of Blacks in Montreal*

In the latter decades of the nineteenth century, lithographic prints in women's magazines would further disseminate beliefs about racial difference, extending the reach of the fashion print and the photographic image by linking the dress and hair of middle-class white women with mass consumption on a retail level. The power of print expanded into black communities in the United States and Canada, and by the 1920s, media outlets began to produce new narratives and images of black womanhood as modern, fashionable, and beautiful. At the same time, the dominant culture also grappled with the emergence of the New Woman, who "appeared" and was "seen" in women's magazines, which challenged the notion of true womanhood that had dominated the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In North America and Europe, the objects, gadgets and products with which the Victorian middle-class family could fill their homes provided an "imaginary way of relating to the real world" of commodity production, and after 1860, with the rise of the popular press, the imagery of mass commodity production would enter the world of the working classes via the spectacle of advertising."<sup>121</sup> Significantly, while black women in the United States and Canada appeared and were seen in a likeness that was fashionable and modern, this image was frequently debated by church and intellectual leaders.

## V. Debating the image of the New Negro Woman

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(Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1997), 40. While there are few detailed records of blacks at the turn of the century, in 1901, the black population in Hamilton remained about the same, at 450, as it had been in 1881, according to the published census records. Further, while in 1861, the majority of blacks in Hamilton were born in the United States (56 percent), by the turn of the century the vast majority of black Hamiltonians – 82 percent – were recorded as having been born in Ontario. See Adrienne Shadd, *The Journey From Tollgate to Parkway: African Canadians in Hamilton* (Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2010), 195. In Montreal, African American railway porters first established roots in the city's Little Burgundy neighbourhood during the 1890s. And in Toronto, 1921 figures indicate that there were 1,236 black people living in the city, which had a nearly half a million total inhabitants. See Daniel Hill, "Negroes in Toronto: A Sociological Study of a Minority Group" (PhD. diss., University of Toronto, 1960). The 1921 census reports the black population in Canada to be 18,291, of whom 7,220 lived in Ontario. See Jared G. Toney, "Locating Diaspora: Afro-Caribbean Narratives of Migration and Settlement in Toronto, 1914-1929," *Urban History Review* 38.2 (Spring 2010): note 16.

<sup>121</sup> See Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 240. Also see Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

The church has historically played a significant role in the lives of blacks across the Black Diaspora. W.E.B. DuBois once referred to the church as “the social center of Negro life.”<sup>122</sup> The earliest church in America established exclusively for blacks was the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) founded in 1793 in Philadelphia. Thereafter, AME denominations spread across Canada and the Caribbean.<sup>123</sup> Historically, certain black churches have been very conscious of the skin colour and hair texture of parishioners. By 1870, colour increasingly divided America’s black community, as lighter-skinned AME worshippers split off to form their own denomination, the Colored Methodist Episcopal (the “C” in CME was changed in 1954 to stand for Christian).<sup>124</sup> Black families wishing to join one of these colour-conscious congregations were often required to pass the paper-bag, the door, or the comb test:

The paper-bag test involved placing an arm inside a brown paper bag, and only if the skin on the arm was lighter than the color of the bag would a prospective member be invited to attend church services. Other churches painted their doors a light shade of brown, and anyone whose skin was darker than the door was politely invited to seek religious services elsewhere. And in still other “houses of worship” throughout Virginia and in such cities as Philadelphia and New Orleans, a fine-toothed comb was hung on a rope near the front entrance. If one’s hair was too nappy and snagged the comb, entry was denied.<sup>125</sup>

The black church played a significant role in the disparagement of darker skin, particularly for women, whose treatment was often based on their skin tone. Shane White and Graham White note that this phenomenon was “discernible in everything from blues lyrics and jokes through to the behavior of children in the schoolyard.”<sup>126</sup> And by the turn of the twentieth century, the

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<sup>122</sup> See W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, vintage ed. (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 1994).

<sup>123</sup> A denomination of the AME church formed in Toronto in 1833, and in Hamilton, the St. Paul AME was established in the 1830s. Other AME denominations formed in Chatham, Amherstburg, Brantford, Niagara Falls, and Dresden, Ontario. In 1907, Montreal’s black residents formed the Union Church.

<sup>124</sup> Russell, Wilson and Hall, *Color Complex*, 27.

<sup>125</sup> Russell, Wilson and Hall, *Color Complex*, 27-8. Colour discrimination was also practiced in black colleges established by and for the mulatto elite. “Dark-skinned blacks were often denied admission regardless of their academic qualifications.”

<sup>126</sup> Shane White and Graham White, *Stylin’: African American Expressive Culture from its Beginnings to the Zoot Suit* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998), 188.

same light-skinned blacks who had built America's black churches and schools began to live together in segregated communities.<sup>127</sup> This "mulatto elite," as they became known, was evident in virtually every major urban center across America where predominately light-skinned blacks resided. In Philadelphia, light-skinned blacks lived in areas unofficially called "lighty brighty" and "banana block." In Chicago, this group could be found in Chatham and East Hyde Park, and in New York, certain sections of Harlem were reserved for light-skinned elites.<sup>128</sup> The life of Marcus Garvey is one exception to this rule.

Garvey was born in Jamaica in 1887. After moving to Harlem, he founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), and a newspaper called the *Negro World*. As a dark-skinned man, his goal was to promote a "back to Africa" movement. Between 1919 and 1922, 32 separate UNIA divisions also emerged across Canada.<sup>129</sup> Like the political leader Booker T. Washington, who, even though he was light-skinned with more "European" features was often angered at the manufacturers of hair straightening products on the grounds that they promoted a white standard of beauty, Garvey called for not only a new political destiny for the masses of blacks in the diaspora, but also a new aesthetic.<sup>130</sup> In one of his famous speeches, Garvey proclaimed, "Don't remove the kinks from your hair! Remove them from your brain!"<sup>131</sup> The debate about hair straightening was often contradictory. Many of these light-skinned leaders had

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<sup>127</sup> At some black colleges and universities, for example, most of which were established in the nineteenth century, such as Spelman, applicants were allegedly required to pass a colour test before being admitted. See Russell, Wilson and Hall, *Colour Complex*, 28.

<sup>128</sup> Russell, Wilson and Hall, *Colour Complex*, 25.

<sup>129</sup> For more of discussion on the UNIA in Canada see Theodore G. Vincent, *Black Power and the Garvey Movement* (Berkeley: Ramparts, 1971), 151; Leo W. Bertley, "The Universal Negro Improvement Association of Montreal, 1917-1979" (PhD diss., Concordia University, 1983), 38-9; Robert A. Hill, *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). See also Carla Marano, "'Rising Strongly and Rapidly': The Universal Negro Improvement Association of Canada, 1919-1940," *The Canadian Historical Review* 91.2 (June 2010): 233-59.

<sup>130</sup> See Byrd and Tharps, *Hair Story*, 37; Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 208.

<sup>131</sup> A quote from a Garvey speech presented at a UNIA meeting cited in Byrd and Tharps, *Hair Story*, 38. The date when Garvey made this statement, and the location where he made it is unknown. Also see Rhode, L. Deborah, *The Beauty Bias: The Injustice of Appearance in Life and Law* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 72.

naturally wavy hair, and the wives of many of the church ministers who shouted from their pulpits that straightening the hair was the work of the devil were also consumers of straightening products. Additionally, Garvey's *Negro World* devoted approximately two-thirds of its advertising to hair products, including straighteners.<sup>132</sup> It is significant to note that the *Negro World* did not start out with such advertisements. Compared to other black newspapers of the time, such as the *Chicago Defender*, the NAACP's *Crisis* and the *New York Age*, early issues of the *Negro World* had been noteworthy for the lack of advertisements for skin-lightening and hair-straightening products. When financial problems hit the newspaper exacerbated by Garvey's legal costs, the black activist changed his position.<sup>133</sup> In November 1923 the *Chicago Whip* noted that Garvey "has been quite successful in cluttering up his paper, the *Negro World*, with hair straightening advertisements and face bleaches."<sup>134</sup>

Carla Marano found that the UNIA in Canada owed much of its success to the organization of West Indian – and to a lesser degree African American – immigrants, especially in Toronto and Montreal.<sup>135</sup> While it is difficult to speculate about a centralized debate around skin colour and hair texture in Canada's black churches and social clubs, given that African Americans visited Canada, and in some cases, migrated here during the period, the rhetoric of the black church and African American political leaders, especially Garvey, would have reached Canadian soil. In addition to holding formal associational meetings and events, the UNIA in Toronto housed the Toronto United Negro Credit Union as well as the Toronto United Negro

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<sup>132</sup> Byrd and Tharps, *Hair Story*, 39.

<sup>133</sup> The U.S. federal government took an interest in deterring Garvey, his UNIA and the back to Africa movement. In 1922 he was indicted for mail fraud. His legal costs mounted to fight this case but he was eventually sentenced to prison and began serving his sentence in 1925. When his sentence was commuted two years later, Garvey was deported to Jamaica, and his movement eventually lost its momentum. He died in London in 1940.

<sup>134</sup> "The Marcus Garvey and UNIA Papers Project," *UCLA American Series Introduction*, Volume V: September 1922-August 1924, <http://www.international.ucla.edu/africa/mgpp/intro05.asp> (date of last access 2 November 2013).

<sup>135</sup> Marano, "Rising Strongly and Rapidly," 236-7.

Association, and was regularly used as a meeting place for railroad porters (many of whom were African American), in addition to speakers, such Marcus Garvey.<sup>136</sup> If the *Negro World* was distributed during his appearances, blacks in Canada, most of whom were West Indians and African Americans, would have seen advertisements for skin whiteners and hair straighteners.<sup>137</sup>

Ultimately, while the New Negro Woman's image was hotly contested, in the dominant culture, the black body was still antithetical to the white body and the rhetoric of the New Womanhood, irrespective of the gains made by the New Negro. This distinction drew a metaphoric and actual line between the beauty of white women, and all other women. With the rise of beauty capitalism in the 1880s, and advertising in the first decades of the 1900s, the transnational dissemination of racist ideology would play a significant role in shaping the sale and advertisement of beauty culture. In many ways, women's magazines in the early-twentieth century became a stand-in for and an embodiment of white supremacist ideologies.

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<sup>136</sup> Toney, "Locating Diaspora," 82.

<sup>137</sup> In order to make this claim with more certainty I would need to undertake a thorough reading of UNIA materials for evidences of hair and/or skin debates. This would be a fruitful project to pursue in the future. According to Robin Winks account, annual conventions of the UNIA met in Canada each year. While Garvey was departed from the United States in 1927 for allegedly using defrauding the US postal service, he traveled to Jamaica and Britain to revitalize his movement and then set out for Canada in September 1928, perhaps hoping to use Montreal as a base in his attempts to regain full control of the association he had founded, and since the Canadian branches of UNIA had remained loyal to him while many of the American ones had not. See Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, [1971] 1997), 415-6.



### Chapter 3

#### The rise of beauty advertising in North America

#### I. American women's magazines and the cultivation of two racialized ideals

Women's magazines such as *Godey's Lady Book* had existed since the 1840s, but by the end of the nineteenth century, these magazines joined forces with mass-produced advertising, espousing images of white middle-class womanhood. This new consumer identity became as synonymous with the New Woman identity as dress reform and temperance. While manufacturers, merchants, and magazines had been cooperating to promote consumption since the 1860s, as Kathy Peiss asserts, "their systematic collaboration to sell cosmetics was new. It multiplied the impact of cosmetics advertising, further legitimating women's pursuit of beauty and binding that pursuit to the purchase of goods."<sup>1</sup> The "big six" women's magazines were *Ladies' Home Journal*, *McCall's*, *Delineator*, *Women's Home Companion*, *Pictorial Review*, and *Good Housekeeping*, all of which appeared between 1885 and 1910. If the women's magazines targeted white middle-class women, how were women of colour women portrayed? If black women were routinely depicted in these magazines as racial caricatures, what did it mean for them to appear modern, and how was this appearance different to that of white women?

When African American men and women authored, edited, and read their own newspapers and magazines, they grappled with race injustices and citizenship in ways never imagined or mentioned in the dominant culture. How was the New Negro Woman depicted in African American periodicals? Given that most of the widespread changes in the promotion and advertisement of beauty culture occurred in the United States, when did women's magazines appear in Canada and to what extent did these publications cultivate a white middle-class

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<sup>1</sup> Kathy Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture* (New York: Metropolitan Books Henry Holt and Company, 1998), 122.

Canadian ideal? When a black Canadian print culture emerged, how was it distinct from African American print culture?

African American women took up the imperative of the New Negro through beauty culture, a strategy that served to change the stereotyped representations that had socially and sexually debased them.<sup>2</sup> Between 1891 and 1950 there were eight African American women's magazines published for a variety of audiences and purposes:

*Ringwood's Afro-American Journal of Fashion* (1891-1894), *Women's Era* (1894-1897), and *The Sepia Socialite* (1936-1938) saw their role as providing a space for what one scholar has termed "culture by association."...Other publications, like *Half-Century Magazine for the Colored Home and Homemaker* (1916-1925), *Woman's Voice* (1912-1927), and the Home Magazine in *Tan Confessions* (1950-1952), described themselves as preparing African American women for a place in urban social landscapes and overwhelmingly focused on the significance of consumerism for African American women in these locales. Still others, like *Our Women and Children* (1888-1891) and *Aframerican Woman's Journal* (1935-1954), attempted to speak to specific political, domestic, or religious aspirations on the part of an African American female readership.<sup>3</sup>

Each magazine created the impression that middle-class African American women were as concerned with appearing modern as white women. Editors also constructed an image of black women as wives and mothers. As Noliwe Rooks explains, through the espousal of features that highlighted "manners, morals, refinement, and respectability, the stories [in African American magazines] made clear that success in such arenas would not only guarantee matrimonial bliss, but also assure the uplift and advancement of African Americans as a whole."<sup>4</sup>

Illustrations from Harlem Renaissance artists also appeared in African American periodicals, such as *Crisis* (1910-1940) and *Opportunity: Journal of Negro Life* (1923-1939).

Although this art has been minimized in art historical scholarship, Caroline Goeser poignantly

<sup>2</sup> Peiss, "Making Up, Making Over: Cosmetics, Consumer Culture, and Women's Identity," in *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective*, eds. Victoria de Grazia and Ellen Furlough (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 328.

<sup>3</sup> Noliwe Rooks, *Ladies' Pages: African American Women's Magazines and the Culture that Made Them* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 4.

<sup>4</sup> Rooks, *Ladies' Pages*, 114.

notes that the illustrations of these artists were “the earliest visual mediums to appear in the context of the Harlem Renaissance.... By contrast, Harlem Renaissance painting and sculpture developed, for the most part, later in the 1920s and 1930s, and these artistic forms of expression gleaned far less public exposure.”<sup>5</sup> Women illustrators, she writes further, “circumventing the stereotypes of the mammy or the tragic mulatta ... often created images of sophisticated brown-skinned African American women, whose fashionable clothing and hairstyles marked them as fully engaged with modern consumerism and beauty culture.”<sup>6</sup> Importantly, it is impossible to separate the development of an American women’s magazine culture from the socio-cultural milieu of the early-twentieth century where racist ideologies based on the principles of eugenics circulated across Europe and North America.

## II. Eugenics, sexism, and Anglo-Saxon ideology

During the first decades of the twentieth century racist ideologies were widely circulated in Anglophone public discourse in Canada, the United States, and Britain. The intellectual climate seemed to be fatally infected with irrational notions about the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race.<sup>7</sup> Although the term *race*, as Angela Davis writes, “allegedly referred to the ‘human race,’ in practice – especially as the eugenics movement grew in popularity – little distinction was made between ‘the race’ and ‘the Anglo-Saxon race.’”<sup>8</sup> One of the most famous eugenicists

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<sup>5</sup> Caroline Goeser, *Picturing the New Negro: Harlem Renaissance Print Culture and Modern Black Identity* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 3; 4-5.

<sup>6</sup> Goeser, *Picturing the New Negro*, 6. Joyce Carrington, for example, created a *Crisis* cover image in the September 1928 issue which “boldly asserted the modernity of African American identity. Wearing a modern, bobbed hairdo and popular neo-Egyptian jewelry accented in an emerald green, Carrington’s attractive female figure stood as an icon of contemporary fashion and upper-middle-class status” See Goeser, *Picturing the New Negro*, 173; also see 6-7. The image can be found at: Joyce Carrington, cover of the *Crisis* (September 1928). General Research & Reference Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lexson, and Tilden Foundations.

<sup>7</sup> Angela Davis, *Women, Race & Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 121.

<sup>8</sup> Davis, *Women, Race & Class*, 121.

was Francis Galton.<sup>9</sup> Since the nineteenth century, Galton had purported that Anglo-Saxons were the pinnacle race, but when he coined the term “eugenics” (derived from the Greek word meaning “well-born”) in 1883, he defined it as “the study of agencies under social control that may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations, either physically or mentally.”<sup>10</sup> Following Galton’s lead, eugenicists argued that measures such as involuntary sterilization, marriage laws, immigration restriction, and the segregation of the mentally disabled were necessary to prevent white Anglo-Saxons from inheriting the supposed pathological traits of the “other.”<sup>11</sup> As Michelle Shawn Smith aptly notes, “the ultimate project of eugenics aimed to improve society through ‘controlled breeding’ by encouraging reproduction of the so-called strong and discouraging reproduction of the so-called weak.”<sup>12</sup>

While Canada did not produce an internationally recognized authority on eugenics such as Britain’s Galton or America’s Charles Davenport, at universities such as McGill University, there were many Anglophone faculty members who espoused eugenicist ideology. For instance, in 1912 when the first international eugenics congress met in London, McGill’s renowned physician Sir William Osler was invited to attend.<sup>13</sup> In 1904, Carrie Derick, assistant professor of botany (the first woman of the faculty, and a prominent Montreal feminist) also petitioned the city of Montreal to have a separate category for those considered “feeble-minded” so as to

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<sup>9</sup> For more on Francis Galton and the use of photography to catalogue difference, not just in terms of race but also in terms of criminality, see Allan Sekula, “The Body and the Archive,” in *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, ed. Richard Bolton (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The MIT Press, 1989), 343-74. For an in-depth analysis of National Geographic, which emerged in the context of eugenics and white supremacy, see Catherine A. Lutz, and Jane L. Collins, *Reading National Geographic* (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1993).

<sup>10</sup> See Ian Robert Dowbiggin, *Keeping America Sane: Psychiatry and Eugenics in the United States and Canada, 1880-1940* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997), vii.

<sup>11</sup> Dowbiggin, *Keeping America Sane*, vii-viii.

<sup>12</sup> Michelle Shawn Smith, *Photography on the Color Line: W.E.B. Du Bois, Race, and Visual Culture* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2004), 52.

<sup>13</sup> Angus McLaren, *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990), 23.

prevent them from contaminating “normal” students at McGill.<sup>14</sup> Many of the principles and people associated with the suffragist movement (also known as first wave feminism) were also associated with the ideas and science of eugenics.<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, Quebec nationalists may have referred constantly to “race” and “blood,” but as Angus McLaren writes, “They were talking about the cultural attributes of a common language and religion. They could not help but see that Francophones would necessarily do poorly when judged according to eugenic measurements.”<sup>16</sup> In English-speaking Canada eugenicists were concerned with racial purity while in French-speaking Canada, eugenics was viewed as an instrument of the supposed superiority of Anglophones over the Francophone minority. Thus, eugenics, in the context of Canada, has historically been espoused by English-speaking whites and mostly those of British descent.<sup>17</sup>

The arrival of immigrants in English-Canada fostered an ideology that had as its main goal the assimilation of newcomers into Anglo-conformity. According to McLaren, “English Canadians assumed that white Anglo-Saxons were racially superior and immigrants were welcomed according to the degree to which they approached this ideal.”<sup>18</sup> These immigrants were ranked on a sliding scale – white British and Americans first, next northern and western Europeans, after them the central and eastern Europeans (including Jews), and last of all Asians

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<sup>14</sup> McLaren, *Our Own Master Race*, 24.

<sup>15</sup> See Carol Bacchi. “Evolution, Eugenics and Women: The Impact of Scientific Theories on Attitudes towards Women, 1870-1920,” in *Women, Class and History: Feminist Perspectives on Australia, 1788-1978*, ed. Elizabeth Windschuttle (Melbourne: Fontana/Collins, 1980), 132-56; Carrie M. Derick, “The Montreal Local Council of Women and Mental Hygiene,” *Canadian Journal of Mental Hygiene* 1.2 (1919-1920): 141-44; Mary Ziegler, “Eugenic Feminism: Mental Hygiene, the Women’s Movement, and the Campaign for Eugenic Legal Reform, 1900-1935,” *Harvard Journal of Law and Gender* 31 (2008): 211-35.

<sup>16</sup> McLaren, *Our Own Master Race*, 25.

<sup>17</sup> An example of the supposed superiority of English-speaking Canadians over French-speaking Quebecers can be found as far back as the nineteenth century when Lord Durham, the British government official who recommended that Upper and Lower Canada be united, expressed his disdain for French culture and people in written reports on Lower Canada (Quebec). In Durham’s opinion, “French Canadians were a backward race, a people without literature or history.” See Daniel Francis, *National Dreams: Myth, Memory, and Canadian History* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2011), 60. Significantly, this does not mean that racism did not or has not existed in Quebec; it means that Quebecers have tended not to identify as Anglo-Saxons.

<sup>18</sup> McLaren, *Our Own Master Race*, 47.

and blacks.<sup>19</sup> In the context of beauty culture, its creators and target consumers were white English-speaking, Anglo-Saxon Protestants. Where ethnic white women might have been presented with images and editorials that gave them the tools to acquire Anglo-Saxon values, given their close(r) proximity to whiteness, black women were removed from such standards of beauty.

### III. American beauty culture and the cultivated ideal of whiteness

By the 1880s, pharmaceutical houses, perfumers, beauty salons, drugstores, wholesale suppliers, mail order, and department stores all provided the infrastructure for beauty culture.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, vaudeville actresses helped to popularize the wearing of cosmetics. For example, actress Lillian Russell (born Helen Louise Leonard in 1861), who was at one time known as “the graceful and elegant ideal of ‘Anglo-Saxon’ female perfection and American artistry,”<sup>21</sup> became an advertising icon during this period.<sup>22</sup> In an advertising card for the hair product Carboline (fig. 3.1), Lillian wears a low midriff dress, her hair is blonde, her skin is lily white, and her face is painted with bright rouge lipstick and rose coloured blush. By the 1890s, Susan Bordo asserts that Russell became “the most photographed woman in America ... [and] was known and admired for her hearty appetite, ample body (over two hundred pounds at the height of her popularity), and ‘challenging, fleshly arresting’ beauty.”<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> For more of a detailed discussion about blacks from the Caribbean and Canada’s immigration policy during the first decades of the twentieth century see Agnes Calliste, “Race, Gender and Canadian Immigration Policy: Blacks from the Caribbean, 1900-1932,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 28.4 (Winter 1993/1994): 131-148.

<sup>20</sup> Peiss, “Making Up, Making Over,” 322.

<sup>21</sup> Susan A. Glenn, *Female Spectacle: The Theatrical Roots of Modern Feminism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000), 54.

<sup>22</sup> The American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts holds a rare advertisement featuring Lillian Russell. See Davis, C. H. “Use Carboline for the hair ...Carboline!!” Lith. of Heffron & Phelps, New York, c. 1870 to 1900, trade card illustration, 13cm x 9cm, American Antiquarian Society, Prints and Ephemera Collection.

<sup>23</sup> Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (Berkeley, California: The University of California Press, 1995), 102.

The term “makeup” had a vulgar connotation for most of the nineteenth century. It conjured up images of painted faces and a permissive, bohemian way of life, which was frowned upon by Victorians. By the turn of the twentieth century, however, middle-class women had no objection to the genteel use of cosmetics but they would have been shocked if anyone referred to these as “makeup.”<sup>24</sup> When stars of the stage began to appear in product advertising, it convinced “respectable” middle-class woman that cosmetics did not make them a prostitute; on the contrary, makeup allowed a person to acquire the glamour and beauty of their favourite celebrities. Where the “public woman” was a painted prostitute for much of the nineteenth century, by its end, the New Woman was “going public” as she crowded onto trolleys, promenaded the streets, frequented the theatres, and shopped in the new places of consumption.<sup>25</sup> Beyond the mere use of powders for a clearer complexion, bleaching creams and ointments were also used by the New Woman. Incorporating whitening creams or concoctions into one’s skincare regiment enhanced the Victorian ideal of being a “natural” faced genteel woman, and in the twentieth century advertisers relied on traditional appeals to gentility, social climbing, and Anglo-Saxon superiority to market these products.

For example, Dorothy Dignam’s ads for Nadinola skin bleach and Nadine face powder, appearing in mass-circulation women’s magazines, resurrected the Old South in order to appeal to the gentility of whiteness.<sup>26</sup> The whiter the skin the more likely a white woman could climb the social ladder, and a return to the Old South was a strategy to bring back a time when whiteness was believed-to-be “pure.”<sup>27</sup> While there is no such thing as a “pure” race, especially

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<sup>24</sup> Fred E. Basten, *Max Factor: The Man Who Changed the Faces of the World* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2008), 45.

<sup>25</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 7. For a discussion on the association between lipstick and prostitutes in Ancient Egypt among Romans through to the early Christian church see Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*, 108.

<sup>26</sup> Peiss, *Hope in Jar*, 149-50.

<sup>27</sup> The idea that whiter skin signaled a kind of racial purity is incongruent with the fact that miscegenation was rampant throughout the South and in the context of North America, the very notion of a “pure” race is but a fallacy.

given the ubiquity of miscegenation in North America, beauty companies actively sought to market this idea of purity in the context of black migration, and an influx of “dark” immigrants from southern Europe and Asia.

Paradoxically, at the same time whiteness was constructed as pure, sun-tanning became a social craze in the mid-1920s. Peiss asserts that the widespread desire for dark and darker skin “challenged the cosmetics industry’s basic assumption – that good skin was light skin – and many firms were slow to respond to the vogue.... It was not until the end of the decade that tanning lotions and darker face powders were generally available.”<sup>28</sup> The tanning craze of the 1920s permitted white Anglo-Saxon women to embody the Other while maintaining a “superior” social position. The middle-class white woman’s tan just like the short “bob” hair and show of long legs of the youthful flapper woman in the 1920s was a new kind of freedom which playfully destabilized the “natural” signs of femininity by showing that gender was not prescriptive; gender could be performative.<sup>29</sup> For example, a beauty expert in the 1920s advised that “right shade of tan has become so smart,” but once autumn arrived, “it is high time we returned to our natural [white] selves.”<sup>30</sup> The performance of race, as Homi Bhabha has argued, is a colonial imposition on the identity of the colonized, which aims to show them as imperfect and flawed or “almost the same, but not white.”<sup>31</sup> For Bhabha, mimicry is “thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which ‘appropriates’ the Other as it visualizes power.”<sup>32</sup> White women had the power to play in “darkness” because it

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<sup>28</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 150.

<sup>29</sup> The Flapper’s carefree, boyish style was also deemed part of the performance.

<sup>30</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 151. For more of a discussion on tourism in the Caribbean and tanning in the early-twentieth century, see Krista Thompson, *An Eye for the Tropics: Tourism, Photography, and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006).

<sup>31</sup> Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*, 163; see also Liz Conor, *The Spectacular Modern Woman: Feminine Visibility in the 1920s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 186-7; Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 85-90.

<sup>32</sup> Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 85.



was understood as play to be put on and taken off when they so desired, and by the 1930s, how-to manuals and product inserts began to give detailed instructions to white middle-class women on the “right” contouring and colouring with new foundation creams, lipstick, and eye shadow that could accomplish the need to perform beauty while appearing “natural.”<sup>33</sup>

Importantly, Petrine Archer-Straw uses the term “Negrophilia” in her discussion of the white avant-garde in Paris and their response to African American entertainers during the 1920s, when interest in black culture became highly fashionable and a sign of being modern. Like the tanning craze in America during the 1920s, the Parisian avant-garde would “play” in blackness because “Black culture facilitated their regression to the primitive within.... Participation in black culture meant rejuvenation and liberation from the trappings of bourgeois values.... But it was the ‘idea’ of black culture and not black culture itself that informed this modernity.”<sup>34</sup> Thus, the tanning craze of the 1920s can be directly linked to the fame and circulated image of Josephine Baker.

For black women, the aesthetic dimension of racism – gradations in skin colour and hair texture – meant that there were advantages given to those with lighter complexion and straighter hair.<sup>35</sup> Skin bleaching was seen as a “cure” for a disabling African heritage. In order to “fix” the “problem” of dark skin, Kathy Russell, Midge Wilson and Ronald Hall note that some women would rub lye (sodium hydroxide) directly on their skins, others applied harsh acidic products made for removing dirt and grime from floors and walls, while others prepared homemade concoctions of lemon juice, bleach, or urine to smear on the skin – all designed to “get the dark

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<sup>33</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 151.

<sup>34</sup> Petrine Archer-Straw, *Negrophilia: Avant-Garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920s* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 180; 183.

<sup>35</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 42.

out.”<sup>36</sup> These methods usually left women with blemishes, burns, and uneven skin.<sup>37</sup> Given the desire among black populations to lighten their skin, white-owned beauty companies soon realized that their products were in great demand in black communities. Rooks explains that

late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century beauty companies depended on the commonly held belief of a racial hierarchy and maintained it in their advertisements, even those aimed at an African American audience. Advertisements for skin lighteners and hair straighteners marketed by white companies suggest to blacks that only through changing physical features will persons of African descent be afforded class mobility within African American communities and social acceptance by the dominant culture. With the exception of wig manufacturers, no other companies advertised for products aimed at enhancing African American beauty.<sup>38</sup>

Packaged in attractive boxes and given fancy names, most of these early products contained nothing more than chalk and grease, and later, formulas actually did lighten the colour of the skin, but they were equally as harsh as homemade concoctions and usually damaged the skin.<sup>39</sup>

In 1925, sociologist Guy B. Johnson published a study, titled “Newspaper Advertisements and Negro Culture” that examined advertising in six prominent African American newspapers; he discovered that most of the ads made their appeal to the desire for straight hair and light complexion.<sup>40</sup> Vishnu V. Oak’s 1948 book *The Negro Newspaper* noted further that advertisements for hair and skin lotions remained through the 1940s, “the richest

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<sup>36</sup> Kathy Russell, Midge Wilson and Ronald Hall, *The Color Complex: The Politics of Skin Color Among African Americans* (New York: Anchor Books, 1992), 50.

<sup>37</sup> Sodium hydroxide, also known as caustic soda, or lye, is an inorganic compound with the chemical formula NaOH. Lye has been known to cause severe burns and can induce blindness if in contact with the eyes. When using lye, you must wear protective gloves to protect your hands from the corrosive chemical. There are numerous stories in the United States of African Americans going to great length to lighten their skin. One nineteenth-century mother tried unsuccessfully to lighten her “unacceptably” dark daughter by dunking her every day in a tub of bleach. While these methods failed to work, they successfully sent the message that dark skin was ugly, light skin was beautiful. See Russell, Wilson and Hall, *Color Complex*, 50.

<sup>38</sup> Rooks, *Hair Raising: Beauty, Culture, and African American Women*. (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 26.

<sup>39</sup> Russell, Wilson and Hall. *Color Complex*, 50.

<sup>40</sup> Guy B. Johnson, “Newspaper Advertisements and Negro Culture,” *Journal of Social Forces* 3 (May 1925): 707. Also see Weems, Jr., “Consumerism,” 167.

advertising contracts for the Negro Press.”<sup>41</sup> The proliferation of racially derogatory advertising aimed at black women in early-twentieth-century African American newspapers raises several questions about whether black women responded to these ads on the basis of disavowing their African heritage, if they were being sold “whiteness” or whether it was something else.<sup>42</sup> Just as products could only promise a caricature of white standards of beauty, the pictures that accompanied skin bleaching ads were also caricatures of a standard of beauty that was difficult, if not impossible, for most black women to meet.<sup>43</sup>

The vast majority of these skin bleaching products were promoted in black periodicals. In his 1922 study *The Negro Press in the United States*, for instance, Frederick G. Detweiler noted that “the persons and firms who do hairdressing or sell skin bleaches and hair straighteners are legion.”<sup>44</sup> In every sense, from the late-nineteenth century onward, black women were bombarded with messages to alter their hair texture and skin colour. The *Christian Recorder*, for example, first published on 1 July 1852, is riddled with skin bleaching and hair straightening advertisements.<sup>45</sup> In one representative skin bleaching ad for a product called Scott’s White Lily Toilet Wash (fig. 3.2) appearing on 30 September 1886, potential buyers were told: “NO LADY is Really BEAUTIFUL without a CLEAR, White COMPLEXION.” The product is not overtly marketed as a skin lightener but it does make it clear that attaining white skin is the optimal outcome. The woman featured in the ad has European features and a portion of the advertising copy read: “a valuable discovery that causes the cheek to glow with health and rival the lily in whiteness.” Robert E. Weems Jr. asserts that “advertisers, consciously or unconsciously, deemed the natural physical attributes of black women ‘ugly.’ Consequently, black women ... were

<sup>41</sup> Vishnu V. Oak, *The Negro Newspaper* (Westport, Connecticut: Negro Universities Press, 1948), 119.

<sup>42</sup> Weems Jr., “Consumerism,” 167.

<sup>43</sup> Rooks, *Hair Raising*, 13.

<sup>44</sup> Frederick G. Detweiler, *The Negro Press in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1922), 113-14.

<sup>45</sup> The *Christian Recorder* is the oldest existing black periodical in the United States.

urged to buy a myriad of concoctions to straighten their hair, whiten their teeth, and thin their lips.”<sup>46</sup> Most of these ads argued for the desirability of changing the physical characteristics of an African body (especially dark skin and coarse textured hair) by juxtaposing the characteristics of a light-skinned, straight haired woman with a dark-skinned, “kinky” haired woman.

Some of the earliest examples of the racialized juxtaposition were produced by the Chicago-based Ozonized Ox Morrow Company. Between 1866 and 1905 the company regularly advertised in black periodicals, and it made frequent use of the “before and after” visual. On 28 February 1901, for example, the company placed an ad in the *Christian Recorder* (fig. 3.3) which featured a black woman with dark skin in a before-and-after shot. The woman’s “before” hair is dishevelled while her “after” hair is coifed and straightened. While white-owned companies might have promoted the idea that black women had to alter their appearance to achieve beauty, African American newspapers also valorized lighter skin and straighter hair as the epitome of a black “feminine” beauty. In Canada, beauty culture in the early-twentieth century mirrored the imagery and ideology espoused by American magazines – the positioning of whiteness as desirable, and by extension, blackness as undesirable.

#### IV. Advertising beauty in English and French-speaking Canada

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<sup>46</sup> Robert E. Weems, Jr. “Consumerism and the Construction of Black Female Identity in Twentieth-Century America” in *The Gender and Consumer Cultural Reader*, ed. Jennifer Scanlon (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 166. In the contemporary, beauty standards have shifted toward bigger lips. There are many white women who get lip injections and treatments to expand the size of their lips. “Lips that are full and plump are a universal symbol of youth and sex appeal,” says a contemporary blog for white women (this is surmised by the images of white women on the site) about the best “lip plumpers” on the market. The copy continues, “Some women are simply blessed with pouty lips, but others need a little help to get the lips they’ve always wanted.” While collagen injections are also used, there are consumer products available at retail that can also perform the same result, see Cheryl Kramer, “Beauty News: Which Lip Plumpers are Most Effective?,” *TotalBeautyAnswers.com*, <http://www.totalbeautyanswers.com/lip-plumpers?gclid=CLHsnb-6groCFY6Z4Aod3RsA6Q> (date of last access 6 October 2013). In addition to the contemporary return of tanning and “darker” skin as the epitome of white women’s beauty, these shifts raise questions about why the historically maligned phenotypical characteristics of black women (large lips, dark skin, and fuller buttocks) are now part of the epitome of beauty for all women but are rarely attributed to black women.

Advertising initially developed during the eighteenth century when credit emerged and “imperialism enriched the bourgeoisie.”<sup>47</sup> Prior to 1850 advertising was not widespread in newspapers in Europe and North America. By the late-nineteenth century, however, newspapers and magazines expanded their operations to accommodate advertisers’ demand for space, and to realize the revenue that advertisers and advertising represented; this convergence between print and advertising marked a turning point in Western media culture.<sup>48</sup> This allowed for the creation and marketing of new kinds of products, and advertising thus made consumer products as much a part of people’s lives as more familiar, “natural commodities.”<sup>49</sup> The movement of American advertising agencies into Canada began in the early-twentieth century as British investment in Canada began to decrease and American interests increased their investments.

Magazines first took advertisers at the turn of the twentieth century, and by the 1910s, their style had settled into what Naomi Wolf has called “cozy, relaxed, and intimate.”<sup>50</sup> Between 1900 and 1930, department store advertisements in Canada became even more ubiquitous, appearing in national and local newspapers and magazines.<sup>51</sup> In an effort to create a dependency on consumer goods, department store ads portrayed consumerism as “natural”; a portrayal that indicated to Canadians that they were consumerist and that Canada was a consumer nation.<sup>52</sup> The Canada that *Chatelaine* magazine, department stores, and advertisers helped to build was based on class and race privileges rooted in the social relations of imperialism. Racist, imperialist ideologies were deeply embedded in Canadian advertising, in addition to consumerist and patriotic ideologies. For example, Simpson’s 1933 Christmas edition offered a “Happy Topsy”:

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<sup>47</sup> Donica Belisle, *Retail Nation: Department Stores and the Making of Modern Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 17.

<sup>48</sup> Belisle, *Retail Nation*, 47.

<sup>49</sup> Thomas Hine, *The Total Package: The Evolution and Secret Meanings of Boxes, Bottles, Cans, and Tubes* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), 109.

<sup>50</sup> Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth* (Toronto: Random House, [1991] 1997), 62.

<sup>51</sup> Belisle, *Retail Nation*, 47.

<sup>52</sup> Belisle, *Retail Nation*, 81.

the only black doll among a dozen whites, she was described as “a real lovable pickaninny” with a “roguish smile.”<sup>53</sup> An ad for a “Just grown up” Topsy doll also appeared in the September 1937 issue of *Chatelaine* read: “You just can’t help liking this happy-go-lucky, fat, colored baby doll.”<sup>54</sup> Women were a valuable audience to advertisers because they purchased products not only for themselves but were also the primary purchaser of goods and products for their families. Rhonda Mawmood found that the strongest themes in Canadian advertising of the early-twentieth century were modernity; beauty as a natural feminine interest or duty; the benefits human control over nature; beauty as an avenue of class mobility; and the possibility of attracting a man by improving one’s physical appearance.<sup>55</sup> According to advertising and magazines in the early-twentieth century, “every woman had the duty to try to make herself beautiful, and the chance to gain the status and benefits that came with physical attractiveness.”<sup>56</sup>

Before the 1910s, national advertisers played a small role in the sale of cosmetics. Firms had advertised their products on trade cards, posters, and in newspapers but much of the sale of these products were limited to word of mouth. By the end of the 1930s, however, advertising agencies boldly began to proclaim, “Extensive Use of Cosmetics Due to Advertising.”<sup>57</sup> French exporters and large American manufacturers of skin-care products were among the first to develop major national ad campaigns, and after 1918, beauty advertisements filled America’s popular media.<sup>58</sup> As Canada lacked a major beauty manufacturer, the advertisements that filled Canadian women’s magazines were virtually all from foreign entities.

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<sup>53</sup> Belisle, *Retail Nation*, 67.

<sup>54</sup> Topsy Advertisement, *Chatelaine*, September 1937, 57. The Topsy doll is said to have been “made in Canada by Canadian workmen.”

<sup>55</sup> Rhonda Mawmood, “Images of Feminine Beauty in Advertisements for Beauty Products, English Canada, 1901-1941 (M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1991), 45.

<sup>56</sup> Mawmood, “Images of Feminine Beauty,” 48.

<sup>57</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 105.

<sup>58</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 105. For example, in four popular women’s magazines studied in 1929, about 20 percent of advertising space was devoted to cosmetics.

Despite significant cultural differences between Anglophone and Francophone women, Mawhood found that ads in Canada aimed at the two groups were essentially the same:

Most advertisements in French-language publications were direct – and sometimes awkward – translations of English ads. A wide variety of beauty products was advertised in *Revue Moderne* from its establishment in 1919, but like English-Canadian Magazines, the *Revue* did not advertise rouge and other forms of make-up until the late 1920s and 1930s. Many advertisements expressed a disapproving attitude toward the use of “paint”; this attitude would linger for another decade or so, when it would be replaced by exhortations to use make-up artistically.<sup>59</sup>

Montreal’s *Revue Moderne* (1919-1960) relied on the authority of France in matters of fashion and beauty but Toronto’s *Chatelaine* relied on the United States for such concerns.<sup>60</sup> In English-Canada the feminine beauty ideal placed an importance on the self and male attraction. The feminine ideal espoused in the *Revue Moderne* had a dimension not found in English-language magazines: the importance of family, and the value of a woman’s beauty to her family.<sup>61</sup> This distinction is significant because, in the context of Canada, it affirms the importance of not just race and class but also language and culture. There has yet to be a comparative study with respect to beauty culture in English and French Canada, and while it is beyond the scope of this chapter, it must be duly noted that the concerns of the former have historically superseded the latter.<sup>62</sup> Women’s magazine in Canada and the United States became the popular medium for the dissemination of an Anglo-Saxon beauty culture, and when *Chatelaine* appeared in 1928, it immediately took on this role.

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<sup>59</sup> Mawhood, “Images of Feminine Beauty,” 58.

<sup>60</sup> Montréal-based manufacturers and retailers used the French authority in matters of fashion and beauty more than Toronto-based advertisers. See Mawhood, “Images of Feminine Beauty,” 60.

<sup>61</sup> Mawhood, “Images of Feminine Beauty,” 63.

<sup>62</sup> In her discussion of the female shopper between 1890 and 1930, Donica Belisle focuses on English-Canada, and when she does mention Quebec, drawing examples from the *Quebec Daily Telegraph*, they are in English. See Belisle, “Crazy for Bargains: Inventing the Irrational Female Shopper in Modernizing English Canada,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 92.4 (Dec. 2011): 581-605.

## V. *Chatelaine* magazine and the Anglo-Saxon Canadian ideal

*Chatelaine* magazine was not the first women's magazine in Canada, but by the 1950s, it was the most successful. Before it, the *Canadian Home Journal* (1905-59) was the first modern women's magazine in Canada. It contained recipes, dress patterns, behavioural advice and short stories.<sup>63</sup> Other magazines followed, such as *Everywoman's World* (1914-22), which was not that different from *Canadian Home Journal*; *Canadian Homes and Gardens* (1924-62) aimed higher on the social scale and tried to cut across gender; and then there was *Mayfair* (1927-59), published by the MacLean Publishing Company.<sup>64</sup> By the 1930s, *Mayfair* was a high fashion magazine catering to upper-class Canadian women; it had modelled itself very much on the style of American *Vogue*.<sup>65</sup> When *Chatelaine* appeared, it modelled itself after *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Better Homes and Gardens* with its advice columns, nonfiction, women's biographies, poetry, and articles on fashion and beauty; it also targeted the modern middle-class Anglo-Saxon housewife.<sup>66</sup> Jaleen Grove found that like *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Chatelaine* used "silhouettes of eighteenth-century sweethearts, fashion-plates, decorative mastheads with cartouches for the magazine's title, and italic serif display fronts with swashes."<sup>67</sup>

*Chatelaine's* female editors from 1928 through the 1950s conscientiously organized the magazine to both reflect and help shape modern, middle-class Canadian womanhood.<sup>68</sup> While the *Chatelaine* of today can hardly be considered a cultural assimilator given the diminished role of magazines over the last two decades, if you imagine an immigrant woman to Canada from

<sup>63</sup> Fraser Sutherland, *the Monthly Epic: A History of Canadian Magazines 1789-1989* (Markham, Ontario: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1989), 156.

<sup>64</sup> Sutherland, *Monthly Epic*, 156; 157.

<sup>65</sup> See Heather Rymell, "Images of Women in the Magazines of the '30s and '40s," *Canadian Women Studies* 3.2 (1981): 97.

<sup>66</sup> Jaleen Grove, "A Castle of One's Own: Interactivity in *Chatelaine Magazine*, 1928-35," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 45.3 (Fall 2011): 166.

<sup>67</sup> Grove, "Castle of One's Own," 171.

<sup>68</sup> Emily Spencer, *Lipstick and High Heels: War, Gender and Popular Culture* (Kingston, Ontario: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2007), 38.



eastern Europe in the 1930s with no access to a radio and a limited knowledge of the English language, *Chatelaine* provided a visual and textual guide for these women to aspire to a modern ideal of Canadian womanhood. The magazine was thus an active disseminator of Canadian nationalism and modern standards of beauty.

In its first issue, an article entitled, “Paris Favors a Feminine Mode” proclaimed that “women are still to look straight and graceful and strong, but their outlines are to be softened. The boyish figure is being slowly backed off the fashion map, as it were.”<sup>69</sup> The language of this article corresponds with the fact that in the 1920s when young white women began to flatten their breasts, suck in their stomachs, bob their hair, and show off their long legs, they believed they were pursuing a new freedom that demanded a carefree, boyish style.<sup>70</sup> By 1929, the magazine reported that its parent publication *Maclean’s*, dubbing itself “Canada’s National Magazine” had, for the first time, become “more widely read in the dominion than any weekly or monthly publication imported from the United States.... Its circulation in Canada now exceeds that of even such a widely-read American publication as the *Saturday Evening Post* by some 20,000.”<sup>71</sup> These figures suggest that national magazines were, by the 1930s, incredibly influential in shaping how English-speaking Canadians thought of themselves, and also the growing importance of a “unified” national voice, which conveniently ignored the presence of Francophones<sup>72</sup> and people of colour. Throughout the 1930s *Chatelaine* did very well at positioning beauty culture as part of the Canadian woman’s identity. For example, in March 1932, the magazine asked its readers, “Is the Canadian Woman better Dressed than her American

<sup>69</sup> Mary Wyndham, “Paris Favors a Feminine Mode,” *The Chatelaine*, March 1928, 22.

<sup>70</sup> Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*, 163-4.

<sup>71</sup> “Canadian Daily Newspapers Voice Public Sentiment,” *The Chatelaine*, March 1929, 52.

<sup>72</sup> There is a French-language version of *Châtelaine*. It did not appear until 1960. It is beyond my abilities engage in a comparison between the French-language and English-language versions of the magazine, but it is interesting to note the time lapse between both publications. In this regard, the arguments that I make in this chapter about Anglo-Saxon whiteness exclude Quebecois women, who created their own conceptions of beauty albeit based in large part on Anglophone beauty culture.

sister?” The piece continued, “It has been said that American women are the best dressed women in the world. Perhaps they are. At any rate Canadian women have good-naturedly allowed the statement to go unchallenged.”<sup>73</sup>

In October 1933, then editor-in-chief Byrne Hope Sanders proclaimed that there would be more realism in the magazine’s advertising: “In step with the times, is the new department ‘Beauty Culture,’ grouping all articles on style, health and personality – which together make for true beauty – into one department, similar to our successful ‘Housekeeping’ department.”<sup>74</sup> The establishment of a Beauty Culture department affirms that the magazine felt it was its duty to instruct, teach, and validate what fashions, cosmetics, and hairstyles were appropriate for Canadian women. In a February 1935 advertisement for the Beauty Culture department (fig. 3.4) for example, editors instructed blonde and brunette women on the “right” beauty choices: “Create for yourself an identity which reaches beyond the barriers of your self-made pigeon-hole. Learn to express your personality in small, subtle ways – with your makeup and with your dress – with the style of your hair and – very cautiously – with your mannerisms.” In terms of its editorials, *Chatelaine* became an outlet for the espousal of modern middle-class femininity, but its advertising copy played a key role in visualizing how to embody a modern look.

Similar to department store catalogues, women’s magazines and advertisements in the first decades of the twentieth century perpetuated theories of eugenics by applying its tenets to the cultivation of a personal beauty.<sup>75</sup> In Eaton’s catalogues, for instance, “people of African and Asian descent were never depicted in catalogues as wearers of department store clothing, users of department store furniture, or readers of department store books. Instead their

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<sup>73</sup> Gwenyth Barrington, “Is the Canadian Woman better Dressed than her American Sister?,” *The Chatelaine*, March 1932, 18.

<sup>74</sup> Byrne Hope Sanders, “More Realism in Advertising,” *Chatelaine*, October 1933, 84.

<sup>75</sup> See Mawhood, “Images of Feminine Beauty,” 30.

representation supplemented the value of goods for sale.”<sup>76</sup> Stated otherwise, blacks and Asians were exoticized within the pages of Eaton’s catalogues, they were not depicted as consumers.

Beauty companies also relied on scientific theories of racial difference to sell cosmetics. The Armand Company, for instance, an American complexion powder firm, founded by Carl Weeks in 1916, ran a series of advertisements in 1929 appealing to popular interest in psychology and beauty.<sup>77</sup> Armand’s advertising directed each woman to “find herself” and except for hairstyles and colour, “the faces of these women were hardly distinguishable, yet their personalities were classed with names – Sheba, Cleopatra, Cherie – that appear to be ethnic euphemisms.”<sup>78</sup> African American magazines also relied on skin typologies to promote beauty culture. As Shane White and Graham White found, in a June 1919 *Half-Century* magazine article entitled, “Types of Racial Beauty,” the feature was accompanied by a montage of photographs of black women:

The author began by claiming that even “the beauty of Helen would be dimmed by the pulchritude displayed in any part of the world where Colored girls are to be found.”... The writer went on to suggest that “our race has produced more varieties of beauty than any other race on earth.”<sup>79</sup>

By 1936 Canada’s *Chatelaine* magazine ran a series called “Type-Analysis,” which warned Canadian women about ethnic women. In one instance, it warned readers of Irish women: “The Northern girl has taken her tall stature and graceful carriage from Scottish and English blood, while the Southern Irishwoman gets her dark, mysterious beauty from the native ingenious stock

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<sup>76</sup> Belisle, *Retail Nation*, 69.

<sup>77</sup> For more about The Armand Company see “Companies,” *Cosmetics and Skin*, <http://cosmeticsandskin.com/companies/armand.php> (date of last access 19 October 2013)

<sup>78</sup> Peiss, “Making Up, Making Over,” 324.

<sup>79</sup> Shane White and Graham White, *Stylin’: African American Expressive Culture from its Beginnings to the Zoot Suit* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998), 191-2.

that is deeply rooted in Ireland's historic soil.<sup>80</sup> When the first wave of American beauty entrepreneurs entered Canada, they similarly promoted the beauty of Anglo-Saxon women.

In the United States, as Roland Marchand explains, mainstream advertising of the 1920s through the 1950s did not target African Americans because advertisers, who tended to model their audiences from personal experience, envisioned the average "consumer citizen" as white and middle class.<sup>81</sup> When these companies ventured into Canada, they maintained a similar business practices. The people depicted in *Chatelaine's* advertisements were very homogeneous (96% were white); there were only a handful of ads that featured people of colour, and when a black woman appeared in a *Chatelaine* ad, it was overwhelming advertisements for Aunt Jemima Pancake Mix.<sup>82</sup> This juxtaposition made it clear that white middle-class women were *Chatelaine's* target market. Even though the magazine tried, at times, to embrace the building of diversity, such as a March 1947 editorial "Race Hatred and You" written by editor Byrne Hope Sanders which cautioned readers that they were "in countless thoughtless ways ... building intolerance, misunderstandings and ill will,"<sup>83</sup> such stories only slightly hinted to the magazine's awareness of its readers' (white middle-class women) prejudices.

In the decades that followed World War II, mass media increasingly tied cosmetics to notions of feminine identity and self-fulfillment, proliferating images of flawless female beauty –

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<sup>80</sup> Verna M. Welsby, "The Irish Type," *Chatelaine*, January 1936, 33. Joan Nicks and Jeannette Sloniowski found that in the City News section of the Niagara Falls paper *Review*, "non-Anglo-Saxons were routinely identified by ethnic background when arrested for crimes ranging from public drunkenness to assault or gambling, while Anglo-Saxons were not." See Nicks and Sloniowski, "Entertaining Niagara Falls, Ontario: Minstrel Shows, Theatres, and Popular Pleasures," in *Covering Niagara: Studies in Local Popular Culture*, eds. Joan Nicks and Barry Keith (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2010), 301.

<sup>81</sup> Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 64.

<sup>82</sup> Valerie J. Korinek, *Roughing It in the Suburbs: Reading Chatelaine Magazine in the Fifties and Sixties* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 125. Between 1939 and 1962, Aunt Jemima was the dominant representation of black women in the magazine, except for an editorial by a West Indian immigrant, who lamented the country for its racial prejudice in the September, 1959 issue. See Jeannine Locke, "Are Canadians Really Tolerant," *Chatelaine*, September 1959, 27; 64; 66-7.

<sup>83</sup> See Emily Spencer, *Lipstick and High Heels: War, Gender and Popular Culture* (Kingston, Ontario: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2007), 55.

mostly youthful, white, and increasingly sexualized.<sup>84</sup> The woman of the 1940s had survived the Depression and a war. Thus, cosmetics bespoke an “American way of life” and a free society worth defending, and the white, American women who wore makeup became global commodities and symbols, exported in Hollywood films and promoted by cosmetics firms.<sup>85</sup> When these firms advertised in *Chatelaine*, it represented economic expansion but also signified the expansion of consumer ideals based on American notions of the pursuit of individual happiness. In August 1940, Max Factor of Hollywood announced in *Chatelaine* that it had arrived in Canada “with the make-up secrets of the screen’s beautiful starts.”<sup>86</sup> From its Toronto location on Spadina Avenue, the company offered for sale by mail-order a variety of products such as lipsticks and face powders. Using the image of RKO radio star Irene Dunne (fig. 3.5), the advertisement was the first of its kind to appear in the magazine. Helena Rubinstein and Elizabeth Arden’s first advertisements appeared in *Chatelaine* in May 1944 and February 1945 respectively.<sup>87</sup> In November 1945, ads from Avon entered the magazine’s pages.<sup>88</sup>

In September 1945, an ad for Helena Rubinstein’s skin toning lotion and face cream proclaimed: “Many, many ladies there are whose beauty lies a-drowsing because they’ve trusted to luck instead of logic, and dreams instead of creams. Here are special awakening aids by Helena Rubinstein – preparations fashioned with scientific care, and skillfully designed to arouse dormant loveliness.”<sup>89</sup> In September 1953, Elizabeth Arden told *Chatelaine* readers: “TODAY is the time to consider the future and Start Building Beauty.”<sup>90</sup> “Use the famous Elizabeth Arden Essentials night and morning to cleanse, refresh and smooth ... be loyal to Elizabeth Arden’s

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<sup>84</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 238.

<sup>85</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 239.

<sup>86</sup> Max Factor True Color Lipstick Advertisement, *Chatelaine*, August 1940, 27.

<sup>87</sup> Helena Rubinstein Lipstick and Power Advertisement, *Chatelaine*, May 1944, 28; Elizabeth Arden Velva Cream Mask Advertisement, *Chatelaine*, February 1945, 32.

<sup>88</sup> Avon Cosmetics Advertisement, *Chatelaine*, November 1945, 37.

<sup>89</sup> Helena Rubinstein Skin Tone and Face Cream Advertisement, *Chatelaine*, September 1945, 41.

<sup>90</sup> Elizabeth Arden Skin Care Advertisement, *Chatelaine*, September 1953, 49.

matchless makeup ... and realize that fine preparations are an economy in the end,” the ad declared. From the 1940s onward, large American conglomerates regularly advertised their beauty products in Canada. The industry could be categorized into three groups: dedicated cosmetics makers, large consumer-products companies, and proprietary drug producers.<sup>91</sup>

Generally speaking, American cosmetics firms showed little interest in black women until the 1960s when many white-owned companies began to make inroads in African American communities. While some of these firms had targeted the black beauty market since the early twentieth century, in the 1940s through the 1960s, these companies made more of a concerted effort to cultivate black female consumers. Avon, for instance, established ties to the black cosmetics market by placing ads in *Ebony* as early as 1961, and African American Avon representatives had been working in black neighbourhoods at least since the 1940s.<sup>92</sup> African American hair care businesses had suffered during the Depression, as drugstores and grocery chains began to sell black hair care products<sup>93</sup> but by the 1940s, Malia McAndrew posits that “African American hair care professionals [expanded] their business interests in the United States and abroad.”<sup>94</sup> Throughout the 1940s and 1950s *Ebony* magazine, which first circulated in Canada in 1946, played a significant role in the valorization of not only straightened hair, but also lighter-skin as the epitome of black beauty.

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<sup>91</sup> The cosmetics companies included older houses such as Avon Products, Max Factor, Coty, Elizabeth Arden, and Helena Rubinstein, and newer firms like Revlon. Each of these cosmetic firms had a significant cash flow and large advertising budget.... Consumer-product companies, such as Chesebrough-Ponds, Alberto-Culver, Helene Curtis, and Lever Brothers, produced a range of offerings, including cold creams, makeup, and hair colors.... Large drug manufacturers that also made cosmetics included Warner-Lambert and Lehn & Fink. See Nancy Koehn, “Estée Lauder: Self-Definition and the Modern Cosmetics Market,” in *Beauty and Business: Commerce, Gender, and Culture in Modern America*, ed. Philip Scranton (New York and London: Routledge, 2001), 228.

<sup>92</sup> Susannah Walker, *Style & Status: Selling Beauty to African American Women, 1920 – 1975* (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 2007), 270.

<sup>93</sup> Walker, *Style & Status*, 85. See also Malia McAndrew, “A Twentieth-Century Triangle Trade: Selling Black Beauty at Home and Abroad, 1945-1965,” *Enterprise & Society* 11.4 (Dec. 2010): 794.

<sup>94</sup> McAndrew, “Twentieth-Century Triangle Trade,” 794; 795.

## VI. Valorizing lighter-skin and straighter-hair in *Ebony* magazine

In 1940s and 1950s, the number of African American women employed as domestic servants dropped from sixty percent to forty one percent; and by 1960, that number fell even more significantly to thirty six percent.<sup>95</sup> Up until the 1940s, black women in Canada were ghettoized in domestic work (as mother's helpers, housekeepers, laundresses or nannies); it was not until the war effort that black women were given entry into industrial labour and clerical work.<sup>96</sup> Given that black women in the United States and Canada were entering white work places in higher numbers than black men, the onus often rested on women to prove the race worthy of social integration and white-collar status. As Laila Haidarali argues, this "proof" involved imparting "an image of clean, respectable, middle-class femininity."<sup>97</sup> *Ebony* magazine, the first popular magazine geared at a specifically black audience, popularized a new visual discourse on middle-class life via the photographic image of what Haidarali has called the "Brownskin" beauty:

Photographic magazines such as *Ebony* attempted to overturn the racist stereotyping of African American women as dark-skinned, unattractive mammies, maids, and laundresses by endowing the "Brownskin" with attributes historically denied African American women – beauty, poise, and success.... Postwar visual discourse allows us to glean some understanding of an era when African America began to visualize a different public racial reality, with the "Brownskin" woman – the polished "Brown" diamond – its center.<sup>98</sup>

I find Haidarali's articulation of the Brownskin ideal to be particularly useful to this discussion because it separates the tragic "light-skinned" woman of literature and film from the celebrated

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<sup>95</sup> Laila Haidarali, "Polishing Brown Diamonds: African American Women, Popular Magazines, and the Advent of Modeling in Early Postwar America," *Journal of Women's History* 17.1 (Spring 2005): 11.

<sup>96</sup> Dionne Brand, "We Weren't Allowed to Go Into Factory Work Until Hitler Started the War": The 1920s to the 1940s," in *We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up: Essays in African Canadian Women's History*, ed. Peggy I. Bristow (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 179. The majority of black women were still domestic labourers. James St. G. Walker points out that "in 1941, 80% of black adult females in Montreal were employed as domestic servants." See Walker, *A History of Blacks in Canada: A Study Guide* (Ottawa: Ministry of State of Multiculturalism, 1981), 132.

<sup>97</sup> Haidarali, "Polishing Brown Diamonds," 12.

<sup>98</sup> Haidarali, "Polishing Brown Diamond," 13.

“Brownskin” woman in photographic magazine features and product advertising in African American periodicals.

By 1947, *Ebony* reached a circulation of more than three hundred thousand becoming the most successful of the many publications founded by African American businessman John H. Johnson.<sup>99</sup> The magazine became a voice for blacks at a time when the majority of images in the dominant culture remained negative stereotypes. *Ebony*’s glossy pages displayed black middle-class prosperity but it also perpetuated consumerist ideals of the dominant culture by positioning the Brownskin with straightened hair as the emblem of middle-class America’s “progress.” As Haidarali observes, the Brownskin as a gendered and commodified representation emerged from the needs of advertisers to “attract a newly important demographic: the African American consumer.”<sup>100</sup> During the war years, the “Negro Market” emerged in business periodicals and market magazines as a consumer demographic. For instance, an article in a 1943 issue of *Sales Management* cautioned, “Don’t Do This – If You Want to Sell Your Products to Negroes!”<sup>101</sup> Marketers warned white advertisers about the use of skin tone in their advertisements, and they were told to use “brown-skinned girls for illustrations” because the image of the dark-skinned, fat woman too closely resembled the desexualized Mammy image. The Brownskin woman thus struck a happy medium – she was black, but removed from the image of the black servant.<sup>102</sup>

In September 1946 an advertisement in the *Dawn of Tomorrow* announced the arrival of *Ebony* magazine in Canada.<sup>103</sup> Dubbing itself as a magazine in promotion of “National Negro Life,” *Ebony* had modeled itself after *Life* magazine, and in its first few years it contained

<sup>99</sup> Other Johnson publications included *Negro Digest*, *Jet*, *Hue*, and *Tan*. See Susannah Walker, *Style & Status: Selling Beauty to African American Women, 1920 – 1975* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 93.

<sup>100</sup> Haidarali, “Polishing Brown Diamonds,” 13.

<sup>101</sup> Haidarali, “Polishing Brown Diamonds,” 15.

<sup>102</sup> Haidarali, “Polishing Brown Diamonds,” 15.

<sup>103</sup> “Ebony,” *Dawn of Tomorrow*, September, 1946, np.



frequent references to blacks in Canada.<sup>104</sup> The first issue of *Ebony* appeared in November 1945 and although no advertisements were included in the first issues, ads from major white-owned companies began appearing in 1946 after Johnson persuaded white advertising and corporate executives to give *Ebony* the same consideration extended to *Look* and *Life* magazines.<sup>105</sup> Almost immediately after its arrival the magazine took it upon itself to be the “voice of black America.” In reality, the magazine was ardently middle-class in its subject matter and editorial style.<sup>106</sup> This black middle-class image would come to define beauty culture through the 1960s before the Black is Beautiful movement contested this image, especially as it related to beauty, hair, and the aesthetics of dress.

When hair straighteners and skin bleaching crèmes appeared in *Ebony* throughout the 1940s and 1950s, these ads positioned brown-skinned women as the embodiment of black progress.<sup>107</sup> For editors, these products were uncontroversial; so much so that it caught them by surprise when in 1966, as Kathy Peiss notes, readers “complained about the magazine’s long-time depiction of black women, which featured models and beauty queens with European features, light complexions, and straightened hair.”<sup>108</sup> Nadinola, the skin bleaching crème manufactured by J. Strickland Co., of Memphis, Tennessee regularly advertised in *Ebony*. The white-owned J. Strickland Co. first entered the black hair care market in 1936, marketing such

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<sup>104</sup> Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, [1971] 1997), 394. In a footnote, Winks asserts further that *Ebony* gave attention to Canadian developments in thirteen issues between 1947 and 1959.

<sup>105</sup> Linda M. Carter, “John H. Johnson,” *The American Mosaic: The African American Experience*, <http://africanamerican.abc-clio.com/> (date of last access 8 December 2011).

<sup>106</sup> Walker, *Style & Status*, 93.

<sup>107</sup> *Ebony* flourished as one of the most widely circulated African American popular magazines of the period reaching a circulation of 500,000 by 1954. See Ronald E. Wolseley, *The Black Press, USA* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1971), 142. But after this, sales dropped. With the growing movement for Civil Rights throughout the decade its formulaic, optimistic depiction of African America life seemed antiquated.

<sup>108</sup> Kathy Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America’s Beauty Culture* (New York: Metropolitan Books Henry Holt and Company, 1998), 259.

products as Royal Crown and Magnificent, in addition to Nadinola.<sup>109</sup> In the November 1946 issue, a Nadinola ad featured a brown-skinned woman with straightened hair and a caption read: “There’s no greater beauty price than a light, clear, smooth complexion. And there’s no better way to win lovelier skin than with the help of NADINOLA Bleaching Cream.”<sup>110</sup> By January 1957, Nadinola told *Ebony* readers that it provided “a complexion he’ll love to remember ... so clear and bright and kissable.”<sup>111</sup>

Similar to the skin bleaching ads of the Negro press in the 1920s, black women in the 1940s and 1950s were still being told to lighten their skin in order to attract men. Additionally, readers were told that hair was an important element in attracting and keeping a man. For example, in a November 1956 editorial entitled, “Women’s Hair Styles That Men Prefer” an unattributed writer told readers that men preferred women who looked “feminine” which meant longer hair not “manish” cuts.<sup>112</sup> The assumption was not only that “all black women wanted shiny, wavy hair and would not hesitate to straighten and style their hair to achieve this look,”<sup>113</sup> but that long straightened hair (coupled with light skin) was the only measure of black beauty. A short pixie cut might have appealed to white women but black women were told to avoid it.

Significantly *Ebony* also drew upon foreign examples to help in its construction of an ideal African American beauty. In February 1956 the magazine reported on Jamaica’s “Ten Types – One People” beauty contest.<sup>114</sup> With a headline that read, “Ten Types of Colors of Beauties Emphasis Racial Harmony of West Indian Island,” it featured a photograph of the

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<sup>109</sup> In 2011, J. Strickland & Co. celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> year. Its other hair care brands include Blue Magic, Sulpur 8, White Rose, and Artra. See Toni Lepeska, “J. Strickland & Co. in Olive Branch celebrating 75th year,” *The Commercial Appeal*, 20 June 2011, <http://www.commercialappeal.com/news/2011/jun/20/strickland-celebrating-75th-year/> (date of last access 24 November 2013).

<sup>110</sup> Nadinola Skin Bleach Advertisement, *Ebony*, November 1946, 16.

<sup>111</sup> Nadinola Skin Bleach Advertisement, *Ebony*, January 1957, 145.

<sup>112</sup> “Women’s Hair Styles That Men Prefer,” *Ebony*, November 1956, 50-7.

<sup>113</sup> Walker, *Style & Status*, 100.

<sup>114</sup> “Ten Types of Colors of Beauties Emphasis Racial Harmony of West Indian Island,” *Ebony*, February 1956, 30-4.

contestants (fig. 3.6), with a description for each participant (in order of their appearance from left to right). There was “Miss Ebony,” for black complexioned women; “Miss Mahogany,” for women of “cocoa-brown complexion”; “Miss Satinwood,” for “girls of coffee-and-milk complexion”; “Miss Golden Apple,” for “Jamaican women with a peaches and cream complexion”; “Miss Apple Blossom,” for “a Jamaican girl of white European parentage”; “Miss Pomegranate,” for “white Mediterranean women”; “Miss Sandalwood,” for women of “pure Indian parentage;” “Miss Lotus,” who was a “pure Chinese woman”; “Miss Jasmine,” for “a Jamaican girl of part Chinese parentage”; and “Miss Allspice” for “part-Indian” women.<sup>115</sup> In addition to *Ebony*, *Time* magazine also covered the contest. And while *Ebony* viewed “Ten Types” as proof of a racial paradise that might offer hope to blacks in America, it failed to grasp the nuances of race that had historically divided Jamaican society.<sup>116</sup> “Ten Types,” as Rochelle Rowe argues, was an attempt to universalize a feminine standard by showing that “women of differently raced bodies could confirm to a recognizable Western ideal. The selected beauty queens were all, unsurprisingly, slim and petite in frame.”<sup>117</sup> It also suggested “a universal beauty standard to which all Jamaican women could conform, and furthermore that the differently raced ethnic groups of Jamaica could assimilate to modernity.”<sup>118</sup>

With respect to the foreign coverage of the pageant, Natasha Barnes aptly notes that “the journalistic adjectives used to describe the pageant’s philosophical and organizational impulse – ‘revolutionary,’ ‘dignified,’ ‘masterly’ – were coterminous with the national fiction that would

<sup>115</sup> See Edward Scott, “Beauty Contest of a ‘Revolutionary Character,’” *Daily Gleaner*, 10 August 1955, np.

<sup>116</sup> Rochelle Rowe, “Glorifying the Jamaican Girl”: The “Ten Types – One People” Beauty Contest, Racialized Femininities, and Jamaican Nationalism,” *Radical History Review* 103 (Winter 2009): 51. Starting in the 1940s, beauty contests in Jamaica had been open exclusively to white Creole girls, i.e. whites born in Jamaica. Andrea Shaw writes that “eventually the ideological disparity between the ethnicity of the contestants and the racial composition of the Jamaican population drew varying efforts to placate an increasingly disenchanted public,” which led to the “Ten Types, One People” contest in 1955. See Andrea E. Shaw, *The Embodiment of Disobedience: Fat Black Women’s Unruly Political Bodies* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2006), 5.

<sup>117</sup> Rowe, “Glorifying the Jamaican Girl,” 44.

<sup>118</sup> Rowe, “Glorifying the Jamaican Girl,” 44.

make multiraciality synonymous with racial harmony.”<sup>119</sup> The American media had grossly misunderstood the politics of race in Jamaica and its history of slavery under white European rule, not to mention the history of beauty pageants, which were historically highly racialized, politicized spectacles. The first beauty pageant in Jamaica, the Miss Jamaica contest, was held in Kingston in the 1940s.<sup>120</sup> The contest took place in a racial landscape where femininity was the guarded domain of white Jamaican females and they were held on a mantel of what Barnes describes as “respectability and civility that was denied to black people in general and black females in particular.”<sup>121</sup> The contest was, from the outset, a politicized event because of its white bias, which excluded the black majority of the population in addition to Chinese and East Indian Jamaicans from participation.<sup>122</sup>

Another example of the African American press’ ineptitude about Jamaica’s racial politics can be seen in the coverage of the first Miss Jamaica winner, Evelyn Andrade, a woman with a Syrian-Jewish father and “coloured” mother, who appeared at the 1954 Miss Universe contest. *Ebony* magazine declared, “Jamaican girl is the first Negro to enter top beauty contest.”<sup>123</sup> Where for *Ebony* blackness was identified through the presence of a black progenitor, in Jamaica, the progressive whitening of the island’s elite “mulatto” caste made individuals of Andrade’s background – irrespective of black ancestry – white to most

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<sup>119</sup> Natasha Barnes, *Cultural Conundrums: Gender, Race, Nation & the Making of Caribbean Cultural Politics* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2006), 65. As an example of the façade presented in the “Ten Types, One People” pageant, when the contest was re-launched as an annual competition in 1959, dark-skinned women were absent, just as “they were largely invisible as figures of feminine desirability in [Jamaica’s] newspaper advertising, glossy publications, and cinema.” See Rowe, “Glorifying the Jamaican Girl,” 45.

<sup>120</sup> Miss Jamaica winners not only represented the island at regional and international pageants, they also were frequently sent on publicity campaigns to the United States and Canada. See Barnes, “Face of the Nation: Race, Nationalisms and Identities in Jamaican Beauty Pageants,” *The Massachusetts Review* 35.3/4 (Autumn 1994): 474.

<sup>121</sup> Barnes, “Face of the Nation,” 474.

<sup>122</sup> Gina Ulysee, “Uptown Ladies and Downtown Women: Female Representations of Class and Color in Jamaica,” in *Representations of Blackness and the Performance of Identities*, ed. Jean Muteba Rahier (Westport, Connecticut: Bergin & Garvey, 1999), 153.

<sup>123</sup> “Miss West Indies in Miss Universe,” *Ebony*, November 1954, 79-83.

Jamaicans.<sup>124</sup> Thus, in the parade of feminine beauty at Jamaica's beauty pageants, the array of light-brown beauty queens may have outwardly suggested "the pre-eminence of brownness as a social category in the ascendancy, worthy of broad national representation"<sup>125</sup> but for black Jamaicans, it symbolically represented the valorization of whiteness as the ideal beauty.

Similar to the United States, the Jamaican newspapers the *Star* and the *Gleaner* had privileged brown skin over dark skin for decades, and these newspapers also took their cues largely from the African American press. For instance, the appearance of Brownskin women in Jamaican advertising was in large part drawn from the rise of the Brownskin model and celebrity in African American media culture. As Rowe observes, Jamaica's media "proudly reported on the smattering of light brown actresses, such as Eartha Kitt and Lena Horne, who had breached Hollywood."<sup>126</sup> Significantly, by the 1950s, straightened hair also became the preferred aesthetic across the Black Diaspora to signal middle-class status and beauty. For example, at various points throughout their careers in the 1940s and 1950s, African American actresses Hazel Scott, Lena Horne and Dorothy Dandridge became the epitome of a modern black beauty ideal. And their hair was at the centre of their beauty. For most of their careers these women wore a short pixie hairdo. The short pixie had been popularized by Josephine Baker in the 1920s, and later European women, but in the 1950s, two actresses, Audrey Hepburn and Leslie Caron,

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<sup>124</sup> Barnes, "Face the Nation: Race, Nationalism and Identities in Jamaican Beauty Pageants," *The Massachusetts Review* 35. 3/4 (Autumn, 1994): 477.

<sup>125</sup> Rowe, "Glorifying the Jamaican Girl," 44.

<sup>126</sup> Rowe, "Glorifying the Jamaican Girl," 45-6. In 1959 when "Ten Types" was renamed the "Miss Ebony" contest, a competition for "coal-black or cool-black girls, it failed to garner any attention from the American press. Importantly, Brown-skinned women are still overwhelmingly favoured to win the Miss Jamaica title. The skin colour of Miss Jamaica remained a politicized issue throughout the 1980s. When Lisa Mahfood, a brown-skinned, straight-haired Jamaican of Middle Eastern ancestry, was crowned Miss Jamaica in 1986, the crowd erupted in shouts and jeers and hurled debris on the stage. See "Politics and Race: Breakspeare v. Mahfood," *Globalization from the Local*, 15 May 2013, <http://sites.davidson.edu/anthro/global/2013/05/15/politics-and-race-breakspeare-v-mahfood/> (date of last access 20 October 2013).

popularized the style in America.<sup>127</sup> Grant McCracken asserts that “they made it a refuge for women who wished to escape the big hair enthusiasm of 1950s America and embrace something more continental, artistic, sophisticated and even slightly *demi-monde*. The pixie was a way out of the ‘50s construction of self.”<sup>128</sup> In the 1950s, white middle-class housewives living in suburbia briefly enjoyed a moment where the natural fullness of their bodies was accepted at the same time their minds were believed-to-be solely occupied on domestic concerns. The feminine ideal of long, flowing hair also became part of the construction of femininity during the decade. Thus, just as the bob of the 1920s had signified freedom from the constraints of the Victorian era, the pixie signified a new sense of post-war freedom. For black actresses who straightened their hair and adopted the new hairstyle, whether they were light-skinned or dark-skinned, it was an act which ultimately sanctioned the straight-hair aesthetic as the preferred texture to signal a black middle-class ideal.

In the 1940s and 1950s, most black women wore their hair in one of four styles. Some continued to wear their hair short in a pixie or bob either because they liked the style or because their hair had never grown to the lengths that other looks demanded.<sup>129</sup> Two advertisements appearing in the *Chicago Defender* on 9 October 1948 (fig. 3.7) depicted the four common hairstyles worn by black women in the 1940s. There was the “pageboy” (hair that is straightened and then curled under at the ends with bangs in the front), “cluster curls” (a modification of the pageboy; instead of bangs, hair is curled in the front), “chignons” and “feather curls” (finely textured layered hair). Each hairstyle involved some form of human hair attachment.

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<sup>127</sup> Grant McCracken, *Big Hair: A Journey Into the Transformation of Self* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1996), 151. Leslie Caron made her introduction in the 1951 film, *An American in Paris*, while Audrey Hepburn’s introduction came a few years later in the 1954 film, *Sabrina*.

<sup>128</sup> McCracken, *Big Hair*, 151-52.

<sup>129</sup> Ayana D. Byrd and Lori L. Tharps, *Hair Story: Untangling the Roots of Black Hair in America* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2001), 45.

According to a June 1947 *Ebony* feature, four million African American women used an average of two cranial falsies (hair attachments) each year in order to achieve the aforementioned hairstyles. The feature, entitled “Hair Attachments,” explained that before World War II, China had been a huge exporter of hair to the United States but it shut its doors after the United States entered the war in 1941. “During the war years, no hair imports were coming through save from India but today the market is flooded and a genuine boom in freshly-styled wigs and pompadours is in full swing,” *Ebony* noted.<sup>130</sup> Two of the biggest hair attachment firms at the time were Howard Wig Company and Bell & Hudgins Company, both located in Harlem. In comparing a sample of hair from 1919 with some 1947 samples, the article continued, “both leading hair attachment firms see emerging a new type of Negro hair, ‘less kinky, more wavy, finer-textured.’”<sup>131</sup> In addition to the importation of hair from China other countries, such as Italy, Czechoslovakia,<sup>132</sup> Sweden and Norway were also key exporters of hair.<sup>133</sup> Hair attachments were popular because many black women continued to suffer hair loss and damage to the scalp due to a lack of hair care products and/or improper straightening techniques. While Madam C.J. Walker and others had offered solutions to black women, their products could not produce miracles – the appearance of long, flowing hair. By the late-1940s *Ebony* was littered with advertisements from hair businesses in New York and Chicago selling not just hair but also the image of straightened hair as the epitome of black beauty. As they had been in the 1920s, New York and Chicago remained meccas for black hair care in the United States.<sup>134</sup>

The “falsies” market continued to grow throughout the late 1940s, but many black women longed for solutions to an age-old problem – hair that did not stay “straight” for extended

<sup>130</sup> “Hair Attachment,” *Ebony*, June 1947, 36.

<sup>131</sup> “Hair Attachments,” 38-9.

<sup>132</sup> The country is now known as the Czech Republic.

<sup>133</sup> The *Ebony* article also explained that the sterilization of the hair involved a 22-hour boiling process where one-sixth of the raw hair was lost.

<sup>134</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 231.

periods of time. Hot combs or thermal methods of hair straightening may have “straightened” the hair but when met with humidity, rain, sweat or physical activities, such as swimming, the hair reverted back to its natural state, a process often known as “turning back.” Around 1940, chemically-based hair straighteners, known as “perms” or “relaxers,” made with sodium hydroxide (lye) were introduced on the mass market.<sup>135</sup> As previously noted, since the nineteenth century, lye had been used as a chemical to straighten black women’s hair. When used in relaxers, it not only straightened tightly coiled black hair so that the treated hair would not turn back due to moisture, it also provided a “safer” alternative to the way lye had been used to straighten hair. The new relaxer did not burn the scalp as severely as pure lye, and it was also less damaging to the hair follicle.

In 1948 St Paul, Minnesota-based Lustrasilk announced in *Ebony* that its product was “a gift to humanity from a distinguished scientist ... long lasting hair beauty, your dream of dreams has come true!”<sup>136</sup> The company’s ad also subtly addressed the turning back problem: “Swing, dance, work, play effective, safe, clean and wholesome, professional.”<sup>137</sup> The chemical straightener, Lustrasilk Permanent, had been made available to licensed beauty shops as of May of that year in New York, Baltimore, Atlanta, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Chicago, Birmingham, St. Louis, Detroit, Memphis, Cleveland, and New Orleans. In June, the creator of Lustrasilk, Mexican-born chemist Jose Baraquiél Calva was interviewed by *Ebony* in a feature without a by-line, titled “New Hair Culture Discovery.”<sup>138</sup> Calva explained that his venture into the black hair straightening business occurred while he was searching for a process to turn raw

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<sup>135</sup> Pamela Ferrell, *Let’s Talk Hair* (Washington, D.C.: Cornrows and Co., 1996), 16.

<sup>136</sup> Lustrasilk Permanent Advertisement, *Ebony*, December 1948, 58-9.

<sup>137</sup> Lustrasilk Permanent Advertisement, *Ebony*, September 1948, 54-5.

<sup>138</sup> “New Hair Culture Discovery,” *Ebony*, June 1948, 58-9.



sheepskin into luxury furs.<sup>139</sup> As such, Lustrasilk's advertisements did not exactly celebrate black women's beauty. Noliwe Rooks posits that Lustrasilk argued that black women's lives would be "substantially changed by the purchase of this product. If African American women want a 'different' life, complete with 'beauty, comfort and lasting peace of mind' as well as a 'smile of confidence,' they must use this product."<sup>140</sup> While Madam Walker's "shampoo-press-and-curl" method had been the foundation on the black hair industry, it had not changed since its creation while white hair salons had progressed from the "Marcel wave" to the "Permanent wave," which began around 1915 to the "Cold wave" of the 1930s.<sup>141</sup> The chemical relaxer was sold as a revolutionary product, and by the early 1950s, several other chemical hair straighteners hit the market, such as Silky Strate, Perma-Strate, Hair Strate, and Sulpher-8, among others.<sup>142</sup>

George E. Johnson is often credited as the inventor of the chemical relaxer for three reasons. First, his Ultra Wave Hair Culture, invented in 1954 when he worked as a chemist for Fuller Products Company in Chicago, was the first straightening system that could be purchased at retail and applied at home; unlike Lustrasilk, it did not require a visit to a salon.<sup>143</sup> Created in his off-hours, Johnson perfected the formula by mixing lye with petroleum instead of potatoes.<sup>144</sup> Second, by 1964 the company recorded one million dollars in revenues, due in large part to the launch of the Ultra Sheen Permanent Crème relaxer in 1958, which catapulted Johnson to the top

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<sup>139</sup> "New Hair Culture Discovery," 59.

<sup>140</sup> Rooks, *Hair Raising: Beauty, Culture, and African American Women* (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 128.

<sup>141</sup> The "Permanent wave" is more commonly known as a "perm" and it involved wrapping the hair on a "perm rod," a waving lotion with a base was applied to the hair. See Notman Photographic Archive, "Electric Hair Curler, Hairdressing Department, Montreal, 1920," *McCord Museum*. In 1938, Arnold F. Willatt invented the "Cold wave," the precursor to the modern perm used by whites. It used no machines and no heat and the hair was wrapped on rods and a reduction lotion containing ammonium thioglycolate was applied. See Obituary, "Arnold F. Willatt, 102; Cold Hair Wave Developer," *Associated Press*, 13 March 1988, [http://articles.latimes.com/1988-03-13/news/mn-1575\\_1\\_cold-wave-kits](http://articles.latimes.com/1988-03-13/news/mn-1575_1_cold-wave-kits) (date of last access 20 October 2013).

<sup>142</sup> Walker, *Style & Status*, 106.

<sup>143</sup> In 1956, Lustrasilk offered a permanent straightener that could be applied at home. See Lustrasilk advertisement, *Ebony*, December 1956, 145.

<sup>144</sup> Byrd and Tharps, *Hair Story*, 85.

of the black hair care industry.<sup>145</sup> And third, in 1971 Johnson Products became the first African American company to be traded on the American Stock Exchange.

Importantly, chemical relaxers were not truly permanent. These products were called “permanents” or “relaxers” because they straightened or relaxed tightly coiled hair without thermal combs and they also kept the hair straight for weeks at a time. The relaxer was thus seen as a “freedom” product. By 1964, the *Chicago Defender* noted that more women were becoming aware of chemical hair relaxers, showing more interest, and adopting the “modern method of hair care.”<sup>146</sup> The article estimated that five out of every one hundred women chose relaxers over other methods:

The working girl finds it brings assurance of being well-groomed without the fuss and bother of previous hair care methods. The housewife discovers daily chores can be completed leaving the hair well groomed and suitable for attending any evening affair.... Professional women can enjoy an impeccable hair appearance throughout the day. Even school girls have discovered this modern type of hair technique permits them to participate in all sports and yet be presentable for other activities. The little girl can be taken out on spur-of-the-moment trips without worry about her hair.

While older women continued to use the Walker method, the chemical relaxer became the most popular form of hair straightening among young black women, especially middle-class women. Straightened hair was not just a preference; it also signaled one’s progressive social status.

Even African American men were encouraged to straighten their hair.<sup>147</sup> Hairstyles such as “the conk,” famously worn by Duke Ellington and Heavyweight boxing champion Joe Lewis, had been a popular style among black men since the 1920s. When members of the Harlem Renaissance immigrated to Paris in the 1920s, Petrine Archer-Straw notes that they “bleached

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<sup>145</sup> Byrd and Tharps, *Hair Story*, 86.

<sup>146</sup> “Beautician Answers Questions About Chemical Hair Relaxers,” *Chicago Defender*, 17-23 October 1964, np.

<sup>147</sup> Spike Lee’s 1992 film, *Malcolm X* based on Alex Haley’s *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, published in 1965, famously captured how black men “conked” their hair; the chemical process contained harsh amounts of lye that could, if applied improperly, cause severe scalp burns.

their skins, straightened and conked their hair ... in order to assimilate better.”<sup>148</sup> Josephine Baker had also famously worn her hair in a short lacquered hairstyle. By the early 1960s, companies like Murray’s Hair Pomade and King Konk were the leading producers of hair straightening products for men. In Canada, the exclusion of black women from Canada’s dominant media, and by extension beauty culture, meant that blacks in Canada had to cultivate their own beauty standards. This cultivation was closely tied to African American beauty culturists but, as early as the 1920s, a domestic beauty culture could be seen in the pages of black community newspapers.

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<sup>148</sup> Petrine Archer-Straw, *Negrophilia: Avant-Garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920s* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 97.

## Chapter 4

### Black Canadian beauty culturists and the community newspapers that made them

#### I. A brief history of barbering and hairdressing in North America

The history of black hair care in North America begins in slavery. When blacks arrived in the “New World” they were removed from the physical tools for hair care they had back in Africa, but what they gained was an ability to create something new out of what was lost by using and refabricating the tools of Europeans, in addition to the knowledge they already had about hairdressing. In this context, blacks turned the cutting and styling of hair into economic opportunities. Douglas Walter Bristol, Jr. explains that black barbers came to occupy a unique place in American society. “Even though other skilled trades excluded black men during the antebellum period, black barbers competed against white barbers for white customers, and they won, dominating the upscale tonsorial market serving affluent white men.”<sup>1</sup> Prior to the American Civil War, both enslaved and free black men and women in the North and South owned a few small business ventures; they were jewelers, merchants, steamboat owners, restaurateurs, grocers, real estate speculators, and most significantly, barbers, and hairdressers.<sup>2</sup> During the 1820s, black-run barbershops emerged, and between 1860 and 1880, the proportion of African Americans employed as barbers rose from 80 percent to 96 percent of the whole.<sup>3</sup> By the 1920s, barbering was firmly the cornerstone of America’s black community.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas Walter Bristol, Jr. *Knights of the Razor: Black Barbers in Slavery and Freedom* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2009), 2-3.

<sup>2</sup> Tiffany Melissa Gill, “I Had My Own Business ... So I Didn’t Have to Worry”: Beauty Salons, Beauty Culturists, and the Politics of African-American Female Entrepreneurship,” in *Beauty and Business: Commerce, Gender, and Culture in Modern America*, ed. Philip Scranton (New York and London: Routledge, 2001), 170.

<sup>3</sup> Bristol, Jr., *Knights of the Razor*, 51; 138.

<sup>4</sup> In Chicago, for example, the 1920 Blue Book, a directory of black businesses in the city, listed 211 barbers and 108 hairdressing shops. See Shane White and Graham White, *Stylin’: African American Expressive Culture from its Beginnings to the Zoot Suit* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998), 188.

By the 1860s in Canada, a barbershop could be found in almost every black community from Ontario to Quebec to the Maritimes. For black men who did not want subsistence employment, barbering gave them the opportunity to do something specialized that many white men often could not do themselves. In the 1861 census for Windsor, for example, abolitionist Mary Bibb's husband was listed as a barber.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, in London (Ontario), the vast majority of barbers in the city were black, and there were several prominent barbers in the city who appear to have been very successful, employing many other black men in their businesses.<sup>6</sup> In his analysis of three Ontario censuses from 1871, 1881, and 1901, historian Colin McFarquhar found that while many black men were barbers, a significant number of black women were also hairdressers: "more than one-half of the barbers and hairdressers in Essex county in 1881 were black, while such was the case for more than one-third in Hamilton, and almost one-quarter in Toronto."<sup>7</sup> Some men in Hamilton also reported income as a hairdresser.<sup>8</sup> In Montreal, barbering was among a list of the lowest occupational jobs black men could hold, in addition to shoe shiner or water boy.<sup>9</sup> In Saint John, New Brunswick, some black men established businesses and for a time there were barber shops in addition to restaurants, tailor shops, cartage firms, an ice business and a dying firm owned by black people.<sup>10</sup> Significantly, most black

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<sup>5</sup> Afua Cooper, "The Search for Mary Bibb, Black Woman Teacher in Nineteenth-Century Canada West," in *We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible: A Reader in Black Women's History*, eds. Darlene Clark Hine, Linda Reed and Wilma King (Brooklyn, New York: Carlson Publishing, 1995), 180.

<sup>6</sup> Tracey Adams, "Making a Living: African-Canadian Workers in London, Ontario, 1861-1901," *Labour/Le Travail* 67 (2011): 33.

<sup>7</sup> Colin McFarquhar, "The Black Occupational Structure in Late-Nineteenth-Century Ontario: Evidence from the Census," in *Racism, Eh?: A Critical Inter-Disciplinary Anthology of Race and Racism in Canada*, eds. Camille A. Nelson and Charmaine A. Nelson (Concord, Ontario: Captus Press, 2004), 55.

<sup>8</sup> Adrienne Shadd, *The Journey From Tollgate to Parkway: African Canadians in Hamilton* (Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2010), 167.

<sup>9</sup> Dorothy Williams, *The Road to Now: A History of Blacks in Montreal* (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1997), 31.

<sup>10</sup> W.A. Spray, *The Blacks in New Brunswick* (New Brunswick: Unipress, 1972), 65-66.

women could only find work as laundresses, seamstresses, or schoolteachers (for the more educated women); only a few made a living out of hairdressing in the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup>

By the 1920s and 1930s, black beauty culturists and barbers began to advertise their salons, products and services. Where in the United States by the 1930s, nearly 13,000 African American women worked as beauty operators, and the number of men in barbershops reached 21,500,<sup>12</sup> in Canada, there were considerably fewer barbers and hair salons. Significantly, the black population in Canada was considerably smaller than in the United States at the time, and was overwhelming an immigrant population. For instance, between 1931 and 1941, the West Indian population in Canada remained consistent at around 4,200.<sup>13</sup> In Montreal, by the time of the 1941 census, the black population was 1,718.<sup>14</sup> And in Toronto, the 1921 census figures indicate that there were 1,236 black people living in the city (a number that remained relatively flat by the 1931 and 1941 censuses).<sup>15</sup> Where nearly all black commercial districts in the United States, even in smaller towns, hosted at least one beauty shop by the 1930s,<sup>16</sup> black beauty shops were primarily located in either Montreal or Toronto, where the vast majority of the black population lived. Comparable numbers do not exist but it is unlikely that the number of hair salons and barbershops in Toronto and Montreal reached more than a dozen by the 1930s and 1940s, though there are records of West Indian immigrants to Toronto in the 1920s opening up barbershops on and around Queen Street and Spadina Avenue in the city's downtown core. In a

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<sup>11</sup> See Sharon Hepburn, "Following the North Star: Canada as a Haven for Nineteenth-Century American Blacks," *Michigan Historical Review* 25 (Fall 1999): 117-24. See also Shirley J. Yee, "Gender Ideology and Black Women as Community-Builders in Ontario, 1850-70," *Canadian Historical Review* 75.1 (1994): 58.

<sup>12</sup> Julia, K. Blackwelder, *Styling Jim Crow: African American Beauty Training during Segregation* (College Station, Texas: Texas A & M University Press, 2003), 12.

<sup>13</sup> James W. St. G. Walker, *The West Indians in Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1984), 10.

<sup>14</sup> Williams, *Road to Now*, 90.

<sup>15</sup> See Daniel Hill, "Negroes in Toronto: A Sociological Study of a Minority Group" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1960). The 1921 census also reported that the black population in Canada was 18,291, of whom 7,220 lived in Ontario.

<sup>16</sup> Blackwelder, *Styling Jim Crow*, 47.

rare photograph taken around 1895 (fig. 4.1), Charles Duval and Fred Bolin appear in their Toronto-based barbershop. It stands as a visual record of black men who had the financial wherewithal to establish businesses that not only catered to black clientele but also whites. When community newspapers appeared, black beauty culture in Canada was given a public forum.

## II. The rise of a black Canadian beauty culture

At its height the *Dawn of Tomorrow*, founded in London, Ontario by James F. Jenkins, an African American who moved to the city from Georgia in 1904 reportedly had a readership of five thousand and a circulation that included countries in Africa, England, Brazil, the West Indies, Bermuda and New York. In addition to its editorials, the *Dawn of Tomorrow* mirrored itself after its African American counterparts in terms of its promotion of skin bleaches and hair straighteners. For example, I located several examples from the African American press in the 1920s and compared editorial and advertising content with that of the *Dawn of Tomorrow*. In the 3 May 1924 edition of the *Chicago Whip*, an editorial on skin bleaching products did not express any real opposition to the practice of bleaching the skin or hair straightening.<sup>17</sup> Similarly on 17 March 1923 an advertisement from the Beautiwhite Company appeared in the *Chicago Defender* using a before-and-after head shot of a black woman who had used the product to lighten her skin. The advertising copy explained the benefits of lightening:

At a church dance last week Helen Powell of Brooklyn, N.Y. surprised her friends, both men and women. She happened to know the inventor of Beautiwhite and he gave her a sample tube that day. At the dance she had a clean, light, radiant complexion that attracted all the men... She certainly was popular. You too can lighten and beautify your skin and improve your looks over one hundred per cent.... Beautiwhite lightens your skin quickly. It cleans, dark, muddy skins and gives you that delicate light appearance which so attracts.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Weems, Jr., "Consumerism," 168.

<sup>18</sup> The Beautiwhite Company Advertisement, *Chicago Defender*, 17 March 1923, 2.

Black women were often told that beautifying was about cleanliness and personal hygiene. When she faced a sceptical black community even Annie Turnbo Malone once said, “I went around in the buggy and made speeches, demonstrated the shampoo on myself, and talked about cleanliness and hygiene, until they realized I was right.”<sup>19</sup> By equating light skin and straightened hair with cleanliness, advertisements and beauty culturists reinscribed what Anne McClintock once described in relation to Victorian cleaning rituals. Where soap ads “offered the promise of spiritual salvation and regeneration through commodity consumption,”<sup>20</sup> ads for skin bleaching creams and hair straightening products similarly offered the promise of salvation (from the markers of slavery) and regeneration through commodity consumption (washing the body “clean” by approximating whiteness). With respect to hair straighteners, an advertisement for a product called No-Mor-Kink, produced by the Hawaiian Beauty Products Company, appeared in the 30 November 1929 issue of the *Chicago Defender*.<sup>21</sup> Declaring to be “Hollywood’s gift to all who desire beautiful, straight, lustrous hair” the company played off the “flapper” image by using a facial profile of a woman whose hair mirrored the short lacquered style of black entertainers, such as Josephine Baker. At the same time, the ad appealed to community worries regarding the safety of hair straightening products: “Without any trouble; without the least injury to the scalp or hair; you can now have that smart, fascinating appearance which comes only with long, soft, beautiful STRAIGHT hair.”

Skin bleaching and hair straightening advertisements in the *Dawn of Tomorrow* relied on the same techniques to convince black women in Canada of the benefits of hair and skin alteration. But for all the political and social consciousness of the *Dawn of Tomorrow*, which

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<sup>19</sup> See Kathy Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America’s Beauty Culture* (New York: Metropolitan Books Henry Holt and Company, 1998), 67.

<sup>20</sup> Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 211.

<sup>21</sup> “No-Mor-Kink” Advertisement, *Chicago Defender*, 30 November 1929, 2.



was also associated with the Canadian League for the Advancement of Colored People,<sup>22</sup> it had not developed to the point, as Robin Winks observes, that advertisements for a cleaning agent named Mammy's Wash-day Smile would be rejected.<sup>23</sup> On 12 April 1924 a hair straightening ad from the white-owned Ozonized Ox Marrow Company with the tagline "Have better hair ... Everybody likes to look their best" appeared.<sup>24</sup> "By using Ford's Hair Pomade and Ford's Hair Straightening and Shampoo Combs, stubborn, harsh, snarly and unruly hair becomes softer, straighter, more pliable, and easier to dress and put up in any style," the ad proclaimed. The Ozonized Ox Marrow preyed on the insecurities of black people, by promising a cure for the curse of "kinky hair."<sup>25</sup> Such advertisements ultimately read more like demeaning insults than encouraging enhancements.

When black Canadian beauty culturists advertised in the *Dawn of Tomorrow*, the tone of their ads also mirrored that of African American beauty culturists. On 2 February 1924 for example, Mesdames Wells and Hunter, a London, Ontario-based duo advertised a hair straightener and hair grower product with the slogan: "It makes your hair soft and silky, gives life to stubborn hair. Why not have a beautiful and luxuriant head of hair?"<sup>26</sup> The prior year, the paper printed a photograph of Madame Lillian D. Wells on its front page, proclaiming that

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<sup>22</sup> James Jenkins, founder of the *Dawn of Tomorrow* also founded the Canadian League for the Advancement of Coloured People in 1924. Formally chartered in 1925 as the Canadian equivalent to the American association, the Canadian league differed from its American counterpart in that it never achieved national status. It was operational only in Ontario, with affiliates in Dresden and, for a time, in Windsor and Hamilton. See *Encyclopedia of Canadian Social Work*, ed. Francis Joseph Turner (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier Press, 2005), 211-12.

<sup>23</sup> Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, [1971] 1997), 403. Mammy's Wash-Day Smile advertisements appear regularly between 1923 and 1924. Prepared by London-based Jenkins and Jenkins, the product claimed to "make your washing and cleaning easy." I could not find any information on Jenkins and Jenkins but the use of the name mammy was likely not coincidental as the Aunt Jemima trademark had long affirmed the belief that black women not only enjoyed manual labour but that they also had an innate aptitude for cleaning more so than other women.

<sup>24</sup> The Ozonized Ox Marrow Hair Straightener Advertisement, *Dawn of Tomorrow*, 12 April 1924, 6. The company also posted similar advertisements in August and September 1924.

<sup>25</sup> Ayana Byrd and Lori Tharps, *Hair Story: Untangling the Roots of Black Hair in America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001), 77.

<sup>26</sup> Mesdames Wells & Hunter Hair Grower Advertisement, *Dawn of Tomorrow*, 2 February 1924, 3.

Mesdames Wells and Hunter “conduct one of the finest hair dressing parlors in the Dominion.”<sup>27</sup> These women were black, and while there is little known of them, they operated a beauty parlor in addition to selling their own products. Kathy Peiss astutely notes that African American manufacturers, newspapers and consumers largely denied the contradiction between racial solidarity and cosmetics in three ways: “by positioning cosmetics within a race-conscious economic nationalism, by proclaiming black women’s beauty as a sign of racial pride, and by asserting that African Americans had the same ‘natural’ right as all women to be beautiful.”<sup>28</sup> The *Dawn of Tomorrow* never explicitly defended its promotion of hair straightening and skin bleaching, and given the comparatively smaller size of the black population in Canada, as compared to the United States, there was probably less public outcry about these practices.

In addition to its editorials and beauty advertisements, the *Dawn of Tomorrow* also shared with its African American counterparts a preference for featuring blacks who were generally light-skinned, straight-haired, and middle-class. These images ran in editorial pages as the pride of the New Negro. For example, the *Pittsburgh Courier* typically placed a photograph of an African-American beauty in the upper-left corner of the front page in the 1920s, a prominent location bespeaking the image’s importance.<sup>29</sup> The *Dawn of Tomorrow* followed a similar style guide. On 28 July 1923, a photograph of Miss Ethel Shreve, a light-skinned and straight-haired teacher of shorthand and typewriting at the Wilberforce Institute in Chatham appeared on the newspaper’s page two.<sup>30</sup> And in the 23 August 1923 issue, a photograph of Madame Berry-Hunter (of Wells and Hunter), a graduate of the State Normal Teachers Institute of Frankfort,

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<sup>27</sup> “Madam Lillian D. Wells,” *Dawn of Tomorrow*, 29 December 1923, 1.

<sup>28</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 211.

<sup>29</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 213.

<sup>30</sup> “Miss Ethel Shreve,” *Dawn of Tomorrow*, 28 July 1922, 2.

Kentucky, appeared on the cover page.<sup>31</sup> Her hair is also straightened and the photograph is so large that it takes up almost the entire top half of the front page.

There was, however, one major difference between African American periodicals and the *Dawn of Tomorrow*. African American newspapers and magazines saw little advertising revenue from national-brand companies, with the exception of black women's cosmetics and hair product advertising.<sup>32</sup> Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the *Dawn of Tomorrow* was riddled with non-beauty related advertisements from local companies and national firms. For example, McClary's, a London-based household products store with locations in Toronto, Montreal, Winnipeg, Vancouver, Saint John, Hamilton, Calgary, Saskatoon, and Edmonton, regularly advertised in the paper. Ads from smaller companies, such as cash-and-carry stores, funeral and undertaking businesses, furniture stores and florists, and retailers based in London, St. Catharines and Toronto also appeared. In 1932 Zeller's, the discount retailer founded in 1931 by Walter P. Zeller, placed an advertisement in the paper. There was support for the newspaper among white-owned businesses that would accept black patrons, and as these advertisements suggest, as early as the 1920s, white-owned businesses in Canada desired to cultivate black consumers.

Ultimately, the 1920s and 1930s witnessed the emergence of the beauty culturist, hair salons and a Canadian black beauty culture. The New Negro Woman not only took family photos, she was attuned to fashion, and she became a beauty consumerist. While black women may have used the hair care products of African American and black Canadian beauty culturists, their hairstyles mirrored those worn by white women. When black Canadian beauty culturists emerged they may have followed in the footsteps of African Americans like Madam Walker and

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<sup>31</sup> "Madame Berry-Hunter," *Dawn of Tomorrow*, 25 August 1923, 1.

<sup>32</sup> Susannah Walker, *Style & Status: Selling Beauty to African American Women, 1920 – 1975* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 20.

Washington but they also laid the groundwork for the development of an infrastructure for a domestic black beauty culture that expanded throughout the late 1960s and 1970s.

### III. The first appearance of black hair care advertising in Canada

Barbering may have existed in Canada since the nineteenth century, but in the 1920s black barbers began to advertise their services in the *Dawn of Tomorrow*. In March 1924 J.M. Jefferson Hair Dressing and Shaving Parlor in Montreal (Verdun) posted an advertisement for their “hair dressing and shaving” services,<sup>33</sup> and by November 1927, beauty salons like The Yale Tonsorial and Beauty Parlors in Toronto’s Queen West offered a range of hairstyles from the Marcel wave to curls.<sup>34</sup> The appearance of an ad in 1925 for the sale of a 3-chair barber business with “fifty years practice in the same building” points to a long history of barbering in London, and another ad two years later for the Wolverine Barber Shop in Toronto’s Queen West with the tagline, “ladies hair cutting, my speciality” suggests that male barbers likely outnumbered female beauty parlors, which is why some barbers also specialized in cutting women’s hair.<sup>35</sup> While Marcel Grateau had created a heated comb for styling the hair, when François Marcel Woelfflé, who later changed his name to François Marcel, obtained U.S. patents for the curling iron in 1905, by the 1920s electric curling irons were being used not only in white-owned salons but also in barbershops and black hair salons.<sup>36</sup> The fact that black barbers were, by 1927, well versed in the hairstyling techniques in the dominant culture illustrates the extent to which blacks in Canada were attuned to developments outside of their communities.

<sup>33</sup> J.M. Jefferson Hair Dressing and Shaving Parlor Advertisement, *Dawn of Tomorrow*, 1 March 1924, 6.

<sup>34</sup> The Yale Tonsorial and Beauty Parlors Advertisement, *Dawn of Tomorrow*, 5 November 1927, 6.

<sup>35</sup> 3-Chair Barber Business for Sale Advertisement, *Dawn of Tomorrow*, 25 April 1925, 6; Wolverine Barber Shop Advertisement, *Dawn of Tomorrow*, 5 November 1927, 6.

<sup>36</sup> Hairstyles, such as the “finger wave,” a styling technique in which the hair was wetted with a setting lotion before waves or curls were arranged by crimping hair between the index fingers of the hands or curling the hair around the finger, was occasionally requested by black women but white salon clients more frequently requested finger waves. See Blackwelder, *Styling Jim Crow*, 82.

For example, when William L. Berry, a London-based product distributor, advertised his Wavine Hair Preparations and Beauty Treatment in the *Dawn of Tomorrow* in June 1930 it stands as one of the first known ads produced by a Canadian beauty firm offering not just shampoos and soaps but also skin bleaching creams, “hot-comb” pressing oils and hair dressing oils.<sup>37</sup>

Wig manufacturers also advertised their services in Canada in the 1920s. Throughout 1924 and 1925 New York City’s Alex Marks posted an in the *Dawn of Tomorrow* for her mail order catalogue which consisted of “wigs of natural human hair made to your measure.”<sup>38</sup> Department stores in Canada may have begun to sell thousands of items, including wigs, designed to mould customers into images of conventional beauty,<sup>39</sup> but these wigs would have been marketed toward white women. The appearance of human wig ads from an African American firm suggests that Canada still lacked an infrastructure for the sale and advertisement of wigs geared toward black women both at retail and door-to-door. It is difficult to make claims about black Canadian women’s desires for wigs and hair attachments, as compared to African American women, but the appearance of advertisements for wigs and hair attachments does suggest that there was a market for these products north of the border.

In the 1940s, Viola Desmond made history, not as the first black beauty culturist in Nova Scotia, but as the most well-known one. Born in Halifax in 1914, Desmond had an entrepreneurial spirit from a very young age. According to Desmond’s sister, Wanda Robson, during their youth, black women were not accepted in professional beauty shops in Halifax. “If you went to a beauty parlour and you were black – well, you couldn’t go. You’d be refused. I was refused in one shop in the 1970s. ‘We don’t do your people’s hair.’ Training facilities in

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<sup>37</sup> Wavine Hair & Beauty Treatment Advertisement, *Dawn of Tomorrow*, 20 June 1930, 6.

<sup>38</sup> Alex Marks Hair Wig Advertisement, *Dawn of Tomorrow*, 11 October 1924, 4; and 24 October 1925, 4.

<sup>39</sup> Donica Belisle, *Retail Nation: Department Stores and the Making of Modern Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 70.

Halifax restricted black women from admission.”<sup>40</sup> Undeterred by such constraints, Desmond travelled to Montreal where she enrolled in the Field Beauty Culture School. After graduating from the Apex College of Beauty Culture and Hairdressing in Atlantic City, Desmond returned to Halifax and opened her hair salon on Gottingen Street in the north end of Halifax’s downtown and later, a beauty school. The north end of Halifax was a historically African Canadian neighbourhood that was largely segregated from the white populated parts of the city. But as Robson explains, “[Viola] put her name on the windows, and she would later put her name on her products – just like Madam C.J. Walker.... And the business grew.”<sup>41</sup>

At one point Desmond’s Studio of Beauty Culture was located alongside her husband Jack Desmond’s barbershop.<sup>42</sup> In addition to using the Walker method, Desmond made hairpieces, chignon attachments and wigs, and she also made her own face powders and hair pomade.<sup>43</sup> A few years after opening her salon she opened the Desmond School of Beauty Culture, which drew black students from across Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Quebec.<sup>44</sup> Undoubtedly, Desmond modeled her beauty salon and school after the African American women who had trained her. Black beauty schools, primarily in the eastern, southern, and Midwestern United States were experts on teaching black hair care methods. As Bonnie Claudia Harrison asserts, women who attended these schools “learned technologies to straighten, and therefore lengthen, the diversity of curl in the hair of African descended customers. In this era ... it was

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<sup>40</sup> Wanda Robson, *Sister to Courage: Stories from the World of Viola Desmond, Canada’s Rosa Parks* (Wreck Cove, Nova Scotia: Breton Books, 2010), 40.

<sup>41</sup> Robson, *Sister to Courage*, 40-1.

<sup>42</sup> Robson, *Sister to Courage*, 41.

<sup>43</sup> Robson, *Sister to Courage*, 41.

<sup>44</sup> Constance Backhouse, “Bitterly Disappointed’ at the Spread of ‘Colour-Bar Tactics’ Viola Desmond’s Challenge to Racial Segregation, Nova Scotia, 1946,” in *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada 1900-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 240.

particularly critical for striving black women to achieve a well-groomed appearance that was complimentary and socially presentable.”<sup>45</sup>

While Jim Crow segregation laws are often associated with the American South in 1940s Nova Scotia, de facto Jim Crow laws were practiced. The documentary *Long Road to Justice: The Viola Desmond Story* (2010) dramatizes the 8 November 1946 incident in which Desmond was arrested, spent a night in jail, went to trial, and was fined for sitting in the “white’s only” section of the Roseland Theatre in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia.<sup>46</sup> On the day of her arrest, Desmond had been driving throughout the province to sell her hair care products, just as African American women had done before her. When car troubles suspended her travels in New Glasgow, having never spent much time in the city, Desmond was completely unaware of its segregationist politics. In Canada, as in the United States, segregation had created an imperative among blacks to appear well-groomed in public, especially with respect to one’s hair, so as to avoid negative attention from whites. Even though Viola Desmond symbolized the essence of middle-class black femininity – she was a celebrated Halifax beautician, described as both “elegantly coiffed and fashionably dressed,” well-mannered, refined and a “demonstrably *feminine* woman”<sup>47</sup> – this did not preclude her from racism.

Viola Desmond’s ordeal was eventually brought to the attention of prominent members of Halifax’s black community such as Pearleen Oliver, the first black graduate of New Glasgow High School, and her husband, Reverend William Pearly Oliver. Pearleen Oliver had long been involved in community organizing. In 1944, Oliver spearheaded a campaign of the Halifax

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<sup>45</sup> Bonnie Claudia Harrison, “‘Shining in the Sun’: Remembering Gladys M. James and The Poro School of Beauty,” *Transforming Anthropology* 11.2 (2003): 43.

<sup>46</sup> *Long Road to Justice: The Viola Desmond Story*, Youtube video, 44:24, posted by Nova Scotia Government, 6 February 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yI00i9BtsQ8>. The film paints a picture of 1940s Nova Scotia as being highly segregated, and while there were no laws on the books, black people understood where they could and could not go.

<sup>47</sup> Backhouse, “Bitterly Disappointed,” 243.

Coloured Citizens Improvement League to remove racially objectionable reading material from its public schools and also campaigned to eliminate racial barriers from the nursing profession.<sup>48</sup>

It was Pearleen Oliver, at Desmond's request, who sought public support from the Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NSAACP), which led to the issue being taken up by Dr. Carrie Best's newspaper *The Clarion*, which included a portrait of Desmond on the cover of the 31 December 1946 issue.<sup>49</sup>

The *Clarion*, which took up Desmond's case, was like the *Dawn of Tomorrow* in that it became an outlet for black community news, beauty product advertisements, and race-related editorials.<sup>50</sup> In the December 1946 image (fig. 4.2), Desmond wears a pageboy hairstyle, which had become quite popular among middle-class African American women.<sup>51</sup> In 1949 when Best sought national circulation for *The Clarion* under a new name, the *Negro Citizen*, the costs of the venture proved to be disastrous as subscription rates doubled, circulation declined, and the newspaper eventually folded in 1956.<sup>52</sup> Winks posits that if black Canadian groups continued to be both geographically separate, as they were, and historically apart, as they increasingly became, "one could not expect a national newspaper to emerge when no national sense of

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<sup>48</sup> Backhouse, "Bitterly Disappointed," 245.

<sup>49</sup> Born and raised in New Glasgow, Dr. Best was well abreast of the city's Jim Crow laws. On 18 February 1942 Dr. Carrie Best issued a writ of summons against Norman W. Mason and the Roseland Theatre Co. Ltd., for ejecting her and her son, Calbert, from the theatre on 29 December 1941. See Backhouse, "Bitterly Disappointed," 412.

<sup>50</sup> *The Clarion* started as a church bulletin in July 1946 but by June 1947 it had expanded to a four page, bi-monthly edition. During this timeframe Best devoted herself to turning a spotlight on racism in the province. For example, on 1 August 1947, the paper reported on a West Indian man who was refused a meal in a local restaurant; on 6 October 1947 it reprinted a *Canadian Press* news story involving Marisse Scott, the young black woman who eventually graduated from nursing school in Guelph who was rejected from admission to the Owen Sound hospital's nurses training course. See "New Glasgow Restaurants Persist in 'Jim Crow,'" *The Clarion*, 1 August 1947, 1; "Girl Barred by Color From Nurses Training Course," *The Clarion*, 6 October 1947, 1.

<sup>51</sup> A similar photograph of Viola Desmond was used on a commemorative stamp, which was printed by Canada Post in 2012. Dr. Carrie M. Best also received a commemorative stamp in 2011. While these women are given commemorative stamps, outside of Nova Scotia, few Canadians (black and white) are aware of their stories.

<sup>52</sup> "Pictorial on Black History – Nova Scotia," *Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission*, 1974, np.



common identity, unity, or purpose had emerged.”<sup>53</sup> In the end, Viola Desmond hired a lawyer to appeal her conviction but the case was ultimately dismissed. Although she graduated her first large class of students from her beauty school in 1947,<sup>54</sup> she ended up closing down her beauty shop, abandoning her product line, and moving to the United States. While her intent was to establish a business Desmond fell ill and on 7 February 1965, at the age of fifty, Viola Desmond died in New York City of a gastro-intestinal haemorrhage.<sup>55</sup> Significantly, Desmond’s refusal to adhere to the Roseland Theatre’s policy of blacks sitting in the upper balcony, reserving the floor seats for whites, occurred nine years before Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a Birmingham bus. If racism had not stalled her beauty business, instead of drawing comparisons to Rosa Parks, Viola Desmond might be remembered as Canada’s Madam C.J. Walker.<sup>56</sup>

Importantly, *The Clarion* contained few advertisements for hair salons or barbershops. In the small and closed black communities within the larger cities, like Halifax, such advertising was scarcely needed, “since an effective grapevine kept black people informed of where they would be welcomed.”<sup>57</sup> A rare advertisement for a line of hair products called Mirror Tone appeared on 16 February 1949.<sup>58</sup> The product was said to be offered for sale “coast to coast” and its slogan, “Use Mirror Tone Hair Products to Beautify Your Hair” was accompanied by a photograph of a black woman and man with straightened hair.<sup>59</sup> Along with pomade and glossine oil, pressing oils were also included in Mirror Tone’s product line. The Mirror Tone

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<sup>53</sup> Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 410. Indeed, the historical lack of a national black media in Canada has remained a contemporary issue into the twenty-first century.

<sup>54</sup> Many of Viola’s students subsequently found employment in various parts of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Quebec. See Robson, *Sister to Courage*, 112.

<sup>55</sup> Backhouse, “Bitterly Disappointed,” 270.

<sup>56</sup> Forty five years after the Roseland Theatre, on 15 April 2010, the first African-Canadian Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, Mayann Elizabeth Francis posthumously pardoned Viola Desmond of her conviction, declaring her innocent of all wrong doing.

<sup>57</sup> Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 411-12.

<sup>58</sup> Mirror Tone Hair Products Advertisement, *The Clarion*, 16 February 1949, 5.

<sup>59</sup> I accessed this newspaper at Yale University’s Beinecke Library and was not permitted to photocopy or reproduce the image.

advertisement also provided a list of retail locations (or private homes) where the products were sold locally: New Glasgow (McLeod's Drug Store), Glace Bay (Miss Shirley King), Truro (Mrs. Merle Chase) and Halifax (Pat's Beauty Parlor). There are few existing copies of *The Clarion*, and as such it is difficult to know what other beauty products were advertised in the newspaper. Either way, Mirror Tone is a rare example of a black beauty ad in 1940s Halifax.

In the 1930s and 1940s, fewer hair and skin product advertisements appeared in the *Dawn of Tomorrow*. For the first time, however, white-owned beauty companies began to advertise in the newspaper. Where ads from white-owned companies in *Ebony* magazine were "cheerful and upbeat, promoting a fun, glamorous, romantic image of beautiful black womanhood,"<sup>60</sup> ads from white-owned companies in the *Dawn of Tomorrow* followed a similar strategy. An ad for Harriet Hubbard Ayer's "Beautifying Face Cream" appeared in May 1937.<sup>61</sup> Ayer, who established her business in 1874, is often credited as launching the first cosmetic firm in the United States.<sup>62</sup> The company's products were typically geared toward the higher end beauty market. As such, the presence of an advertisement from Ayer in a black Canadian newspaper is significant.<sup>63</sup> Du Barry Beauty Preparations was also a popular cosmetics firm. Established in 1874, the company created ads that blatantly sold the idea of a glamorous romantic beauty. In a representative Du Barry ad for "weathered skins" appearing in the *Dawn of Tomorrow* in April 1942, the firm proclaimed, "Soft, glamorous beauty – one must possess it to look right in the new clothes."<sup>64</sup> Du Barry's products were offered for sale at London's Strong's Drug Store. In August 1946, the largest department store in Canada at the time, Eaton's, also

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<sup>60</sup> Walker, *Style & Status*, 101.

<sup>61</sup> Harriet Hubbard Ayer Face Crème Advertisement, *Dawn of Tomorrow*, May 1937, np.

<sup>62</sup> See Kate Kelly, "First American Woman to Build a Cosmetics Empire: Harriet Hubbard Ayer," *Huffington Post*, 17 September 2012, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kate-kelly/cosmetics-harriet-hubbard-ayer\\_b\\_1885641.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kate-kelly/cosmetics-harriet-hubbard-ayer_b_1885641.html) (date of last access 20 October 2013).

<sup>63</sup> I have yet to find any literature that speaks to whether Ayer also advertised in black newspapers in the U.S.

<sup>64</sup> Du Barry Beauty Preparations Advertisement, *Dawn of Tomorrow*, April 1942, 3; another advertisement from Du Barry appears in the *Dawn of Tomorrow*, September 1944, 4.

promoted its Fall and Winter Catalogue for 1946-1947 in the newspaper.<sup>65</sup> These examples suggest that white-owned companies actively sought to cultivate black women consumers through the 1940s, though middle-class Anglo-Saxon women remained their target market.

Prior to the 1950s, Donica Belisle found many instances where black people were not allowed to patronize “whites-only” downtown shops in cities across Canada. As such we should be careful about nostalgia for old department stores because while companies like Eaton’s played a role in the building of the nation, “there is a latent sense that the nation it helped to build was white and Protestant.”<sup>66</sup> With respect to drugstores, there has been little research on the role they played in the expansion of beauty culture in Canada. As early as 1917, the United Drug Company, which distributed Rexall products, dispatched product demonstrators to small-town drugstores in the United States.<sup>67</sup> And by the early 1920s, both drugstores and department stores were regularly sponsoring “beauty marts” and “beauty weeks” filled with lectures, makeup sessions, and free samples.<sup>68</sup> For instance when *Chatelaine* magazine launched in 1928, in addition to newsstands and bookstores, it was also available for sale at drugstores.<sup>69</sup>

In the 1960s and 1970s the parameters of beauty culture shifted as African American women entered the pages of mainstream women’s magazines, such as *Ladies’ Home Journal*. In Canada, the beauty culture cultivated through mainstream women’s magazines, most prominently *Chatelaine* continued to exclude black women and other women of colour. At the same time, the hair care industry underwent massive changes as advancements in hair straightening and hair dying techniques made it possible for women to change their appearance

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<sup>65</sup> Eaton’s Fall and Winter Catalogue Advertisement, *Dawn of Tomorrow*, August 1946, np.

<sup>66</sup> Belisle, *Retail Nation*, 79-80.

<sup>67</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 128. For a detailed history on Rexall products see Mickey C. Smith, *The Rexall Story: A History of Genius and Neglect* (New York: Pharmaceutical Products Press, 2004).

<sup>68</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 128.

<sup>69</sup> Valerie J. Korinek, *Roughing It in the Suburbs: Reading Chatelaine Magazine in the Fifties and Sixties* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 33.

more frequently. Hair thus became a symbol of freedom for both black and white women. Likewise, gradations in skin colour continued to shape the black beauty ideal. Between the 1920s and 1950s, black women acquired new means of straightening their hair at the same time straightened hair became the preferred aesthetic in black communities. In the dominant culture, on the other hand, hair dyes played an increasingly important role in the visual depiction of beauty in women's magazines, film, and in advertising campaigns. By the 1960s, social and political shifts in the culture-at-large would alter the standard of beauty both in the mainstream and in black communities.

## Chapter 5

### Feminism and Black is Beautiful: hair as freedom and political statement?

#### I. Hair dyes and the impact of second wave feminism on women's advertising

Throughout the 1920s the chemical hair colouring process advanced. The first widely available commercial hair dyes became available first in Europe, and by the 1930s, were readily available in the United States and Canada. In the 1920s, blonde hair also became a symbol of beauty. In 1921, for instance, the first Miss America Margaret Gorman was a fifteen year-old with blue-eyes and blonde hair.<sup>1</sup> In Hollywood, Jean Harlow put blonde hair on the map when she appeared in *Hell's Angels* (1930) and then *Platinum Blonde* (1931).<sup>2</sup> Harlow was already a blonde when she came to Hollywood, but when Max Factor lightened her hair to a shade called "platinum blonde" she became a star. Harlow's look was widely replicated by other actresses, such as Mae West, Marlene Dietrich, and Jayne Mansfield, and in so doing, they helped to popularize hair dying. Significantly, Harlow was one of the first blondes in Hollywood to garner the title of "blonde bombshell" but within a few years she fell ill and eventually died of kidney failure in 1937 at the age of twenty six.<sup>3</sup> In order to become platinum blonde, highly toxic substances such as peroxide, ammonia and Clorex bleach were applied to Harlow's hair.

In 1953, the most famous blonde movie of all, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* starring Marilyn Monroe and Jane Russell, made blonde hair "sexy and dangerous." And as blonde heroines became light and fun, dark-haired women became "knowing and dangerous."<sup>4</sup> The popular stereotypes that blondes are "dumb" or "have more fun" are rooted in Hollywood

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy Etcoff, *Survival of the Prettiest: The Science of Beauty* (New York: Anchor Books, 1999), 118.

<sup>2</sup> A string of other Hollywood blonde films were made throughout the 1930s and 1940s: *Blonde Crazy* (1931); *Blonde Venus* (1932); *Blonde Fever* (1944); and *Blonde Trouble* (1944).

<sup>3</sup> Taylor Orci, "The Original 'Blonde Bombshell' Used Actual Bleach on Her Head," *The Atlantic*, February 2013, <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2013/02/the-original-blonde-bombshell-used-actual-bleach-on-her-head/273333/> (date of last access 23 October 2013).

<sup>4</sup> Etcoff, *Survival of the Prettiest*, 118.

imagery but its construction is also deeply embedded within the “racial economy of white dominance” that was shaped in the slave societies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>5</sup> The root of the concept of “the blonde” beauty, as Jennifer DeVere Brody writes, begins in “the circum-Atlantic vortex in which whiteness covers over blackness.”<sup>6</sup> Like the Victorian fashion of whitening one’s skin, the blonde beauty was also a fabrication of British culture; the use of blonde wigs, and the dying of one’s hair “expressed a need to artificially construct whiteness in an effort to emphasize difference – to make the whiteness of whiteness hypervisible.”<sup>7</sup>

When Clairol, which launched its hair dye campaign in 1955, conceived the idea of depicting the women in their ads as the girl next door, Jennifer Nelson notes that “having color-treated hair was no longer limited to actresses and high society mavens – now every woman could look like a movie star.”<sup>8</sup> In order to introduce its Miss Clairol home hair colouring kit, the company created one of the most memorable advertising campaigns of the twentieth century. It came up with the phrase, “Does she ... or doesn’t she?” and after the ad appeared in *Life* magazine in the fall of 1955, sales of the company’s Hair Colour Bath soared.<sup>9</sup> The women in Clairol ads were not glamorous models; instead, they looked like “attractive, everyday people.” In order to attract these everyday people, the company ran ads featuring “mothers” with similarly blonde-haired “daughters.”<sup>10</sup> Paris-based L’Oreal also produced a series of advertisements that claimed that its formulations were superior and more “natural” looking than those made by

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<sup>5</sup> Nadine Ehlers, *Racial Imperatives: Discipline, Performativity, and Struggles Against Subjection* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012), 24.

<sup>6</sup> Jennifer DeVere Brody, *Impossible Purities: Blackness, Femininity, and Victorian Culture* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), 88.

<sup>7</sup> Brody, *Impossible Purities*, 88.

<sup>8</sup> Jennifer Nelson, *Airbrushed Nation: The Lure & Loathing of Women’s Magazines* (Berkeley, California: Seal Press, 2012), 75.

<sup>9</sup> Victoria Sherrow, *Encyclopedia of Hair: A Cultural History* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2006), 9.

<sup>10</sup> Sherrow, *Encyclopedia of Hair*, 10.

competitors, namely, Clairol.<sup>11</sup> By the 1960s, hair dyes marked the return of a hypervisible form of whiteness – to go blonde was not singularly about the changing of one’s hair colour, it was also about the construction of a new embodied gender/sexual identity. In the pages of *Chatelaine* throughout the 1960s and 1970s, hair dye advertisements reflected white women’s increased purchasing power while also piggybacking on the sexual revolution of the period.

In the 1960s, the inside front cover of almost every issue of *Chatelaine* was devoted to Miss Clairol products.<sup>12</sup> The first of these ads appeared in October 1960 (fig. 5.1). The full-page advertisement featured a close-up head shot of an attractive, well-coifed brunette placed below the trademarked caption, “Does she ... or doesn’t she?” The model is leaning to one side while holding a child’s toy. In the background, a young boy with blonde hair – presumably her son – is seen playing outside, perhaps at a park, and the text invites the viewer to look again and re-evaluate this image of a married woman: “Hair color so natural only her hairdresser knows for sure!” Clairol’s message was clear – hair dyes were respectable and married, middle-class women had a right to look beautiful, an image which dispelled previous notions that only women of disrepute “coloured” their hair.<sup>13</sup> Between 1960 and 1965 the women in Miss Clairol ads were always shown with a child, even though the image seemed at odds with the product’s “Miss” name. In her biography, Shirley Polykoff, the creator of the Miss Clairol ads, confessed that she worried that the women in the ads would be interpreted as unwed mothers, so she halted production, and each model was then given a gold ring for her ring finger.<sup>14</sup>

The Miss Clairol ad campaign reflected the growing tension that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s between traditional and modern ideas about women. On the one hand, white women

<sup>11</sup> Sherrow, *Encyclopedia of Hair*, 10.

<sup>12</sup> Valerie J. Korinek, *Roughing It in the Suburbs: Reading Chatelaine Magazine in the Fifties and Sixties* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 151.

<sup>13</sup> Korinek, *Roughing it*, 151.

<sup>14</sup> Shirley Polykoff, *Does She ... or Doesn’t She? And How She Did it* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1975), 31.

were becoming “liberated” from the domestic sphere, but on the other hand, marriage and children were still symbols of a normative, heterosexual feminine ideal. Importantly, there are parallels to be drawn between the social movements of the 1960s (i.e. the women’s movement) and women’s hair colouring,<sup>15</sup> in that each offered some form of emancipation. Hair dyes, however, offered women something that political movements did not – the immediate transformation of themselves as opposed to long term change.<sup>16</sup> When traditional beliefs about women’s sexuality gave way to a new sense of sexual liberation, blonde hair dyes were well-positioned to exploit this cultural shift.

In the pages of *Chatelaine* during this period, the sexual revolution hit the advertising pages at the same time feminism hit the editorial pages. In April 1966, an ad for Clairol’s Born Blonde Lotion Toner featured a cropped image of a blonde-haired woman, which revealed one eye in a seductive stare above a caption that read: “Maybe the real you is a blonde.”<sup>17</sup> The advertising copy continued:

Every smart woman keeps searching for her identity – the inner woman she really is, and the outward expression of it. She looks for a special way to shape her mouth or tilt her chin... a new color that will light up her skin.... Often a woman who looks merely pleasant with dark hair could be a beauty as a blonde.

Between 1966 and 1969 Clairol ads in *Chatelaine* equated blonde hair with freedom and choice: “If you’re going to be a blonde be a good one,” “Blonding Simplified,” “Clairol thinks if you’re lucky enough to be a blonde (one way or another) you ought to make up like one,” “Even the Atlantic Ocean can’t wash Naturally Blonde out of your hair,” “Go blonde ... what a way to

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<sup>15</sup> Malcolm Gladwell, “Annals of Advertising: True Colors; Hair Dye and the Hidden History of Postwar America” *The New Yorker*, 22 March 1999, 70-81. The Pill was marketed in the United States in 1960, approved for prescription in Britain in 1961. In Canada, it was available with a doctor’s prescription as early as 1957 but it was not legal until 1969. The government under Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau passed a bill in Parliament that legalized birth control pills and also “therapeutic” abortions and homosexual acts between consenting adults. See “Birth-control pill turns 50,” *The Canadian Press*, 7 May 2010, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/birth-control-pill-turns-50-1.908892> (date of last access 23 October 2013).

<sup>16</sup> Gladwell, “True Colors,” 72.

<sup>17</sup> Clairol’s Born Blonde Lotion Toner Advertisement, *Chatelaine*, April 1966, np.



go!”<sup>18</sup> Significantly, under the editorship of Doris Anderson, who had assumed the editorship in 1957, *Chatelaine* began to tackle topics related to housework, sex discrimination in the workplace, and divorce.<sup>19</sup> This editorial shift coincided with Women’s Liberation, also known as second wave feminism. While *Chatelaine*’s advertising content was disconnected from the women’s movement, and hair dye ads simply played off women’s increased sexual freedom, the magazine’s editorials did reflect some of the growing concerns of second wave feminists.

One of the first organized protests by second wave feminists occurred in 1969 in front of New York City’s Macy’s department store. In response to a Mattel ad in *Life* magazine that pitched its toy products using the following ad copy: “Little girls dream about being a ballerina or a young fashion model, while boys were born to build, learn, and find science fun,”<sup>20</sup> protesters, who were mostly white women, claimed that the ad implied mind-enriching toys were only suitable for boys, not girls, and women were simply not going to take it anymore.<sup>21</sup> This ad, the Miss America Pageant, the sits-in and confrontations over sexist ad campaigns that erupted at *Ladies’ Home Journal*, *Playboy*, and Clairol’s “Does she... or doesn’t she?” were viewed by feminists as blatantly devaluing women.<sup>22</sup> In the September 1969 issue of *Chatelaine*, a six-page length feature written by a man, Jack Batten, chronicled the development of the women’s movement in the United States and Canada. With a subtitle read, “A new breed of female, mainly young, brainy and North American, is calling for a new revolution. The goal: to free women from second-class status and sexual slavery,”<sup>23</sup> the article noted that some

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<sup>18</sup> Blonde hair ads appeared in *Chatelaine* in April and May 1966, January and February 1967.

<sup>19</sup> Rona Maynard, “Introduction,” in *Chatelaine A Woman’s Place: Seventy Years in the Lives of Canadian Women* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1997), 9.

<sup>20</sup> See Julian Sivulka, *Ad Women: How they Impact What We Need, Want, and Buy* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2008), 348.

<sup>21</sup> Nelson, *Airbrushed Nation*, 77.

<sup>22</sup> Nelson, *Airbrushed Nation*, 77-8.

<sup>23</sup> See Jack Batten, “After Black Power, Woman Power” *Chatelaine*, September 1969, 36-7; 105-7.

Canadian women had begun to hold feminist meetings but by and large, feminism was expunged from Canada and placed onto American soil.

By 1970, *Chatelaine* still presented an image of white middle-class femininity in its advertising pages. Interestingly enough, brunette hair dyes dominated the magazine's pages throughout 1970, perhaps as a response to the women's movement,<sup>24</sup> but by 1971, blonde hair was back. As one representative Revlon ad proclaimed in October 1971, "Brunettes, now you can go up to three shades blonder ... with no pre-lightening."<sup>25</sup> When Rona Maynard became editor-in-chief of *Chatelaine* in the 1990s, she admitted that while the magazine made attempts over the years at diversity on its covers, in its articles and advertising, "The truth is that blondes still sell more, they do. We have to remember that our job is to sell magazines, not to be politically correct."<sup>26</sup> Blonde hair dyes permitted white women to change their identities and, by extension, it also gave ethnic white women an opportunity to acquire a form of whiteness that was sanctioned in mainstream beauty culture. Since the 1960s "blonding" has effectively become a strategy to minimize one's ethnic Otherness. At the same time blonde hair made whiteness hypervisible allowing white women to experience a new form of freedom, the Afro, which appeared at the same time, made blackness hypervisible; it stood in opposition to the dominant culture's hegemonic standard of beauty – long, flowing straight hair.

## II. The Afro as a new symbol of blackness and beauty

Between 1964 and 1966, "coloured people" and "Negroes" became *black* and with this name change, black people on a global scale began to adopt a new, black-identified visual

<sup>24</sup> In 1973, likely in response to second-wave feminists, Clairol ditched the "Does she... or doesn't she" hair-dyeing tagline and portrayed women as artists, doctors, and politicians, with the feminists-slanted tagline, "To know you're the best." Soon thereafter, L'Oréal also adopted the tagline "Because I'm worth it."

<sup>25</sup> Revlon Advertisement New 'Colorsilk' Ultra Soft Blonde, *Chatelaine*, October 1971, 7.

<sup>26</sup> See Barbara Freeman, "From No Go to No Logo: Lesbian Lives and Rights in *Chatelaine*," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 31 (2006): 831.

aesthetic, the Afro.<sup>27</sup> Against the backdrop of the assassination of two African American activists, Medgar Evers and Malcolm X, and the rise of the Black Panthers, founded by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale in 1966, and other activists such as Stokely Carmichael, the movement, which became known as Black Power, was not only about political, social change and the reclaiming of Africa; it was also a celebration of naturally coarse textured hair (hence the colloquial use of the term “the natural”). In Canada, the Black United Front of Nova Scotia (BUF), a Black Nationalist organization founded by Burnley “Rocky” Jones in Halifax in 1965, which modeled itself after the Black Panther Party, began to lecture about black pride; Toronto’s West Indian Federation Club, the venue used to launch Austin Clarke’s early novels, and Halifax’s Kwacha House, also led by Jones and others, sought to raise the political consciousness of black people in Nova Scotia.<sup>28</sup> Additionally, the Congress of Black Writers was held at McGill University in October 1968,<sup>29</sup> followed by the February 1969 protest at Sir George William’s University in which black West Indian students occupied the Computer Room in an act of protest against the alleged racism of white professor.<sup>30</sup>

The Afro, which stood as the primary hair style of the movement’s leaders, became an aesthetic of political change and black self-love/knowledge.<sup>31</sup> As Susannah Walker posits, “[the Afro] was one of many cultural symbols and practices in the late 1960s that had a powerful

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<sup>27</sup> Ayana D. Byrd and Lori L. Tharps, *Hair Story: Untangling the Roots of Black Hair in America* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2001), 51.

<sup>28</sup> Ken Alexander and Avis Glaze, *Towards Freedom: The African-Canadian Experience* (Toronto: Umbrella Press, 1996), 216-17.

<sup>29</sup> The Congress of Black Writers was once again held at McGill University on 18-20 October 2013.

<sup>30</sup> The George William affair played a role in bringing Black Power onto Canadian soil. See David Austin, “All Roads Led to Montreal: Black Power and the Black Radical Tradition in Canada,” in *Ebony Roots, Northern Soil: Perspectives on Blackness in Canada*, ed. Charmaine A. Nelson (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), 206-35.

<sup>31</sup> Debra Weekes, “Shades of Blackness: Young Black Female Constructions of Beauty,” in *Black British Feminism: A Reader*, ed. Heidi Safia Mirza (London: Routledge, 1997), 113-26. Also see Shirley Tate, “Black Beauty: Shade, Hair and Anti-Racist Aesthetics,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30.2 (2007): 302.

message to convey about racial pride and solidarity.”<sup>32</sup> When black women (and men) stopped straightening their hair it was, at first, a way of directly rejecting commercially promoted white beauty standards.<sup>33</sup> Importantly, several historians have observed that the Afro appeared even before the Black Power movement emerged. In the 1950s, for instance, the earliest female Afro wearers came from the fringes of African-American society, such as Avant-garde artists, intellectuals, and elite urban trendsetters.<sup>34</sup> Robin D.G. Kelley notes that in the “bourgeois high fashion circles in the late 1950s ... the Afro was seen by the black and white elite as a kind of new female exotica.... The Afro entered public consciousness as a mod fashion statement that was not only palatable to bourgeois whites but, in some circles, celebrated.”<sup>35</sup>

For the most part before 1966, the Afro was hardly commercially popular as the vast majority of black women continued to straighten their hair. Even during Black Power, black women continued to use chemical relaxers. For example, an article appearing in the *Chicago Daily Defender* on 2 August 1966 promoted the arrival of a new relaxer, Epic Soft-Styling. The no by-line article contained a descriptive title “Why Use Chemicals For Modern Day Hair Care?” and it informed readers of the following: “Whether at home, work, play, school, church, or a social affair, the impeccable hair appearance throughout the day ... should create greater confidence for a woman. Why? Because it makes her always ready to ‘go,’ rain or shine.”<sup>36</sup> While the appearance of the Afro, as Ayana Byrd and Lori Tharps observe, sparked generational conflicts with black parents, grandparents, and clergymen who thought their children’s

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<sup>32</sup> Susannah Walker, “Black is Profitable: The Commodification of the Afro, 1960-1975,” in *Beauty and Business: Commerce, Gender, and Culture in Modern America*, ed. Philip Scranton (New York and London: Routledge, 2001), 261.

<sup>33</sup> Walker, *Style & Status: Selling Beauty to African American Women, 1920 – 1975* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 170.

<sup>34</sup> See Walker, “Black is Profitable,” 255.

<sup>35</sup> Robin D.G. Kelley, *Yo’ Mama’s Disfunktional!: Fighting the Culture Wars in Urban America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 27.

<sup>36</sup> “Why Use Chemicals For Modern Day Hair Care?,” *Daily Defender*, 2 August 1966, 18.

appearance was an unforgivable disgrace,<sup>37</sup> the hair care industry soon stepped in to capitalize off the hairstyle's increased popularity among young blacks.

Significantly, the Afro was complicated by skin colour. For the first time in the mid-1960s, darker skin was reconfigured as beautiful, in some case, more beautiful than lighter-skinned women. The darker one's pigment and the larger one's Afro, the more authentically "black" one was believed to be. This sentiment was also embedded within the Black is Beautiful slogan, which became a badge worn by those in the movement. Even though political activist Angela Davis was (and remains) one of the symbols of Black is Beautiful, she garnered most of her attention despite her light brown skin. Her famously large Afro contested the white beauty ideal but it also gave lighter-skinned blacks (and some whites) permission to align themselves with the aesthetics of black liberation. For the first time, lighter skin became a liability; some dark-skinned political leaders even questioned the militancy of light-skinned black radicals, believing that they had benefited too long from colour privilege to understand oppression.<sup>38</sup>

For black women, the Afro represented more than just freedom, it was a political statement. The valorization of white womanhood as the epitome of beauty had for so long marginalized black women that while some participated in the protests and organizing of second wave feminists, such as Reverend Dr. Pauli Murray who along with Betty Friedan, author of *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), was instrumental in the founding of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966,<sup>39</sup> overwhelmingly, black women felt disconnected from the women's movement. Lisa Farrington observes that many black women "believed themselves to be already 'liberated' because, unlike so many of the white middle-class proponents of the women's

<sup>37</sup> Ayana D. Byrd and Lori L. Tharps, *Hair Story: Untangling the Roots of Black Hair in America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001), 55.

<sup>38</sup> Kathy Russell, Midge Wilson and Ronald Hall, *The Color Complex: The Politics of Skin Color Among African Americans* (New York: Anchor Books, 1992), 36.

<sup>39</sup> See "Pauli Murray Project," *Duke Human Rights Centre*, <http://paulimurrayproject.org/pauli-murray/timeline/> (date of last access 9 November 2013).

movement, their presence in the work force was strongly felt, although their jobs earned them far lower wages and inferior working conditions.”<sup>40</sup> Racism had remained such a pervasive force in the lives of black women that it was impossible to singularly define their experiences through the lens of their gender. As a result, black women began to define their own feminism, and the Afro was at the centre of this new identity.

In the United States, a new group of African American artists such as Betye Saar, Freida High W. Tesfagiorgis, and Faith Ringgold challenged commodity stereotypes, such as the Aunt Jemima trademark, making it their feminist issue by offering up reinterpretations of the trademark through the eyes of a black woman.<sup>41</sup> Other artists incorporated the Afro into their art as a form of social protest; a rediscovery of the African Diaspora; and as a symbolic affirmation of the new politically-minded black subject. In Barbara J. Jones-Hogu’s silkscreen *Unite (AfriCOBRA)* (1971) (fig. 5.2), for instance, the Chicago-born artist captures how the Afro was a symbol of black protest that challenged the dominant culture, and it was also interconnected with a defiant raised fist.<sup>42</sup> In Canada, there were no known artists with a national profile critiquing Canada’s cultural and political hegemonic institutions but there were black feminists who began

<sup>40</sup> Lisa A. Farrington, *Creating Their Own Image: The History of African-American Women Artists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 150-51.

<sup>41</sup> In the 1960s, Saar began collecting derogatory black memorabilia (i.e. mammy salt and pepper shakers, cookie jars, ashtrays, and notepads), becoming among the first African American antique collectors to reclaim these objects. Farrington, *Creating Their Own Image*, 164. In Saar’s mixed media assemblage, *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima* (1972), multiple Aunt Jemima Pancake Mix trademarked images serve as backdrop to an oversized Aunt Jemima cookie jar. Within the belly of the cookie jar sits a third smiling Jemima, who holds a white baby in one arm, while a Black Power fist cuts through cuts through the image. With a broom in one (black glove wearing) hand, a small pistol in the same hand, and a rifle in the other, Saar’s Jemima stands not only for Black Power but also for black feminism. In Tesfagiorgis pastel entitled *Aunt Jemima Matrilineage’s* (1982-3) Aunt Jemima is transformed from a commodified trademark into a symbolic representation of the trademark’s repressed origins in the cultures of West Africa. See Robert Henkes, *The Art of Black American Women: Works of Twenty-Four Artists of the Twentieth Century* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 1993), 114. In Ringgold’s story quilt, *Who’s Afraid of Aunt Jemima* (1983), a more elaborate deconstruction of the mammy cook stereotype is offered, in that it dialogized not just the visual trademark but also the so-called legend of Aunt Jemima, as a faithful servant to whites. See Ruth Megan Granda. “Aunt Jemima in Black and White: America Advertises in Color” (MA. thesis. University of Texas at Austin, 1992), 71-75.

<sup>42</sup> The iconic Black militant raised fist was made infamous by Tommie Smith and John Carlos during their medal ceremony at the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico City.

to challenge the white, mostly British view of Canadian history. In 1976, Rella Braithwaite produced one of the first books exclusively on black women's history in Canada;<sup>43</sup> in Halifax, Iona Crawley became one of the first child care activists;<sup>44</sup> and in London, Ontario Elaine Crowell was instrumental in the organization of a black Canadian cultural workshop which was "aimed at making whites in the city more aware of black heritage and contributions to society."<sup>45</sup> Importantly, all of these women wore Afro hairstyles. Ultimately, the world of advertising was as disconnected with black feminism as it was with second wave feminism. Hair care firms actively exploited the Afro hairstyle, and by 1968, a vast array of Afro-related products hit the marketplace. The Afro was effectively transformed from a political hairstyle into a depoliticized fashion aesthetic.

As a black woman of Antiguan-descent living in Toronto in the 1960s, black Canadian scholar Althea Prince recalls how black American music but also the Afro aesthetic became a pivotal part of her identity: "In 1968, when James Brown intoned, 'Say it loud – I'm Black and I'm proud,' it became an anthem for Black people because they were ready to live it."<sup>46</sup> In 1969 Nina Simone belted out, "To be young, gifted, and Black!" and her neatly coifed Afro coupled with her dark skin also had an impact on Black is Beautiful. Simone's "Four Women," released on the 1966 album *Wild Is the Wind*, was also a song about black women of varying skin tones and hair textures that questioned ideas of beauty and the connection between these ideas and self-acceptance and love. In the 1950s, both Brown and Simone had straightened their hair but when they claimed the Afro and sang of political and social change, people followed suit. Several other African American singers had a profound impact on changing the image of blackness in the late

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<sup>43</sup> See Rella Braithwaite, *The Black Woman in Canada* (unknown, 1976).

<sup>44</sup> See Harry Bruce, "Women of Halifax Pattern Breakers," *Chatelaine*, December 1974, 38.

<sup>45</sup> "Black Canadian Culture Workshop set for Saturday," *London Free Press*, 25 April 1975, np.

<sup>46</sup> Althea Prince, *The Politics of Black Women's Hair* (Toronto: Insomnia Press, 2009), 107.

1960s. Singer Abbey Lincoln began wearing her hair unstraightened in the late-1950s and in 1966 she also went natural; and most prominently, the Jackson Five helped to popularize the Afro aesthetic among black youths.

### III. The commodification of “the natural”

By the late-1960s, the Afro was perceived as having so many advantages that to remain content with “processing” or straightening one’s hair brought “both one’s intellectual savvy and political wisdom into serious question.”<sup>47</sup> From Raveen Hair Sheen, Afro Sheen, and Ultra Sheen, to name a few, Afro hair care products dominated black hair care advertising. Clairol, which had courted black consumers since the early 1960s by placing ads for its hair colouring in *Ebony*, also began to conduct research on potential black markets for its products by sending representatives and demonstrators to black hair shows in order to sell products catering to the Afro.<sup>48</sup> In doing so, Clairol became the first white firm to attach itself to the Black Is Beautiful.

In 1968, advertisements for Afro products, including Afro wigs, could be found in the pages of *Ebony*. A product called Raveen Au Naturelle appeared in the November 1968 issue with the caption, “easy-to-comb to condition your hair.”<sup>49</sup> In December 1970 a Clairol advertisement for Afro hair setters, which promised to “free the ‘fro,” also illustrated the co-optation of the vernacular of Black Power and Black Is Beautiful.<sup>50</sup> According to Noliwe Rooks, the Clairol ad’s use of slang vernacular not only trivialized the significance of black political resistance but it diminished “the political significance of the Afro itself.”<sup>51</sup> In reality, such

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<sup>47</sup> William L. Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965-1975* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 198.

<sup>48</sup> Walker, “Black is Profitable,” 269.

<sup>49</sup> Raveen Au Naturelle Advertisement, *Ebony*, November 1968, 22.

<sup>50</sup> Clairol’s Afro Advertisement, *Ebony*, December 1970, 167. Also see Noliwe Rooks, *Hair Raising: Beauty, Culture, and African American Women* (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 130.

<sup>51</sup> Rooks, *Hair Raising*, 130.



tactics by a white-owned company was nothing new. Like Lustrasilk in the 1950s, Clairol failed to focus on what was naturally beautiful about black women's hair; instead, the company only pointed out what needed to be fixed. In October 1975, Clairol promoted its Miss Clairol Natural Wear Shampoo hair colouring product in *Ebony*, while Lustrasilk promoted a product to repair hair damage with a caption read: "This is the way to beautiful hair."<sup>52</sup>

Johnson Products, which continued to promote the Ultra Sheen brand of straightening products throughout the 1960s, also launched an Afro Sheen line of conditioners, shampoos, and sprays, the first of which appeared in *Ebony* in November 1968. One representative ad proclaimed: "Natural hair hangs out. Beautiful! But Mother Nature doesn't care. She rains. She blows. She dries out hair. Afro Sheen cares. That's why we created a shampoo and a conditioner-hair dress that really takes care of the business."<sup>53</sup> When *Essence* appeared in May 1970, specifically targeting African American women, it incorporated the Afro aesthetic and the politics of black liberation into its editorial content. In December 1972, for instance, an *Essence* editorial declared, "You're Not – A Black Woman. You Are Five or Six Women. All Black. All Beautiful."<sup>54</sup> In an ad published in *Essence* in November 1970, Clairol also declared: "No matter what they say ... Nature Can't Do It Alone! Nothing pretties up a face like a beautiful head of hair, but even hair that's' born this beautiful needs a little help along the way."<sup>55</sup>

Where by 1969 salon owners and cosmetic companies began to offer black women an array of products and services to help them achieve the new, racially conscious hairstyle,<sup>56</sup> a January 1969 *Ebony* article with no by-line, titled "Hairstyle that began as a symbol of protest is big fashion trend" revealed that many black hairdressers were actually against the new

<sup>52</sup> Lustrasilk Advertisement, *Ebony*, October 1975, 5; 150.

<sup>53</sup> Johnson Products Afro Sheen Advertisement, *Ebony*, November 1968, 207.

<sup>54</sup> *Essence*, December 1972, 92.

<sup>55</sup> See Kelley, *Yo' Mama's Disfunktional*, 27.

<sup>56</sup> Walker, "Black is Profitable," 263.

hairstyle.<sup>57</sup> Back in 1966, it was almost impossible to determine the “degree of a woman’s militance by the state of her hair” because only brave women dared to “do the thing,” the article stated, and “naturals were encountered almost exclusively on picket lines at civil rights meetings and protest demonstrations.”<sup>58</sup> By 1969, however, a “mid-western stylist” complained that the Afro had negatively affected many black hair businesses: “People do all this talking about black power and going natural,” she states, “but they don’t stop to think that it might all backfire.... If they go all the way with this thing, they’ll just be putting people out of work.”<sup>59</sup> Compared to chemically relaxed hair, Afros could be maintained without visiting a hair salon, thus, many salons feared the loss of clientele.

Despite such worries, the Afro became a youthful, “hip” style that beauty companies promoted in conjunction with the new, gentler hair relaxers that came onto the market in the 1960s.<sup>60</sup> Even though the number of ads in *Ebony* promoting hair straightening and skin lightening products declined between 1949 and 1972, the most dramatic drop occurring between the years 1968 and 1972,<sup>61</sup> the magazine continued to promote hair straightening product. By 1970, the Afro was firmly a lucrative portion of the hair care market; at the same time, hair dyes were also lucrative. According to U.S. figures, hair colouring was a \$250 million market split equally between home use and salon products, and nearly one-third of American women dyed their hair regularly.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> “The Natural Look – Is it Here to Stay?,” *Ebony*, January 1969, 104.

<sup>58</sup> “The Natural Look,” 104.

<sup>59</sup> “The Natural Look,” 108.

<sup>60</sup> Walker, *Style & Status*, 171.

<sup>61</sup> Robert E. Weems, Jr. “Consumerism and the Construction of Black Female Identity in Twentieth-Century America,” in *The Gender and Consumer Culture Reader*, ed. Jennifer Scanlon (New York and London: New York University Press, 2000), 171.

<sup>62</sup> Geoffrey James, *Beauty Imagined: A History of the Global Beauty Industry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 170

In Canada, the *West Indian News Observer* did not just contain advertisements for the Afro but it did celebrate the hairstyle in several editorials throughout 1968. In November, six black women with Afros of varying shapes and sizes appeared in a feature, “For Women Who Wear It Like It Is.”<sup>63</sup> The size of each Afro, from small to large, was given a name: the “Petite,” “Ebonette,” “Princess,” “First Lady,” “Elegante,” and “Afrique.”<sup>64</sup> In an accompanying editorial, titled “BLACK IS IN” the newspaper proclaimed that the black woman who wears her hair natural, or Afro, with minimum makeup was “in.”<sup>65</sup> Quoting New York wig makers, the article noted, “Afro-styles, real hair wigs, and synthetic Afro-wigs are now greatly in demand.” The *News Observer* also profiled black hairstylists who, like their African American counterparts, were contesting the Afro. In December 1968 Azan’s Beauty World, a beauty shop opened by Kemeel Azan in Toronto, appeared in a feature. “I do not promote the Afro-look. I do not think the black woman needs the Afro-look to identify herself,” said the Trinidad-born hairstylist to *News Observer*. “Just being black, dignified and proud of it is all I think she needs to portray a true black identity.”<sup>66</sup> Unlike African American hairdressers who worried over the economic impact of the natural, Azan’s Beauty World points to a cultural difference between Canada and the United States. In Toronto, some stylists were not principally concerned about the potential loss of income resulting from the Afro; instead they opposed the rhetoric of Black is Beautiful which positioned the Afro as the only signifier of one’s socio-political consciousness.

In January 1969 the *News Observer* ceased publication; a month later, however, it was reborn as *Contrast*, under the editorial guidance of Jamaican-born Olivia Grange-Walker and A. W. Hamilton. The newspaper, which proclaimed to “Service the Black Community Coast to

<sup>63</sup> “For Women Who Wear it Like It Is,” *West Indian News Observer*, November 1968, 7.

<sup>64</sup> The “Petite” was a small, round shaped Afro; the “Ebonette” was slightly larger and more oval in shape; the “Princess” was a large sized, round Afro; the “First Lady” was a medium size, round Afro; the “Elegante” was a short cut Afro, and the “Afrique” was a coifed Afro that was curved and elongated at the front.

<sup>65</sup> “BLACK IS IN,” *West Indian News Observer*, November 1968, 7.

<sup>66</sup> “Azan’s Beauty World,” *West Indian News Observer*, December 1968, 9.

Coast,” was a twice-monthly periodical that appealed largely to West Indian readers covering news from across the Caribbean and Canada.<sup>67</sup> By April, in a column called “Primarily For and About Women,” *Contrast* declared that for some, wearing their hair in its natural state, also referred to as the “Freedom Cap” or the “Nappy Explosion,” was seen as “a significant cultural trend” and yet to others, it was “simply a fashion.”<sup>68</sup> Similar to the *News Observer* before it, *Contrast* supported the Afro but it also promoted beauty salons that specialized in hair straightening. For instance, when Ken and Tony of Jamaica Beauty Salon placed a large advertisement in the newspaper in April 1969 to announce their grand opening on Bathurst Street in downtown Toronto, their ad read: “Specialists in All Types of Hair-Dressing. Cold Wave, Hair Straightening, Colouring and Styling.”<sup>69</sup> *Contrast* also reported on one of the first hair presentations for hair straightening products in Toronto, which had taken place at The Four Seasons Hotel earlier that month.<sup>70</sup> The presentation included a hair relaxing clinic for hairdressers who were shown how to use Ultra Sheen relaxers and Ultra Wave (used primarily by men). “The general consensus of opinion after the show was unanimous ULTRA SHEEN is a tremendous breakthrough in the relaxing field for the beauty industry,” the article noted. By the end of 1969, black women in Canada, as in the United States, continued to use chemical hair relaxers, and it was just as common for women to naturally grow their hair into an Afro as it was for some women to wear an Afro wig.

In May 1969 in a *Contrast* article, titled “Keep Your Natural Looking Great” two black women are profiled: one wears an Afro wig, the other a naturally grown Afro.<sup>71</sup> The article provided maintenance tips for both options. For women who wore a “natural” Afro, the article

<sup>67</sup> Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, [1971] 1997), 404.

<sup>68</sup> “Today’s Look – The Natural You,” *Contrast*, April 1969, 8.

<sup>69</sup> The Ken and Tony of Jamaica Beauty Salon Advertisement, *Contrast*, April 1969, 10.

<sup>70</sup> “Hair Relaxing Clinic,” *Contrast*, April 1969, 8.

<sup>71</sup> Tessa Judi Been, “Keep Your Natural Looking Great,” *Contrast*, 10 May 1969, 9.

advised to shampoo it at least two or three times a week with a non-alkaline shampoo, but for the Afro wig wearer, the wig “should not be washed or become wet because most of them are made of nylon. In order to clean the Natural or Afro wig, use an aerosol spray CLEANER, spray the wig completely.” By the early 1970s blonde hair was firmly positioned as a liberator for white women, but the Afro (whether one’s natural hair or a wig) had similarly transformed into a freedom hairstyle for black women, albeit a different kind of freedom. The Afro was viewed as a liberator from the constraints of hot combs, and other hair straightening products. This transition could be seen in the pages of black community newspapers in Toronto, which became the centre of black hair care in the early 1970s.

#### **IV. Toronto becomes a mecca for black beauty culture**

Several editorials and advertisements in *Contrast* throughout 1970 heralded the popularity of not just the Afro but also the “soul aesthetic.” In February *Contrast* ran a full page cover story on a “dashiki party” organized by designer Ola Skanks.<sup>72</sup> “Everyone sported an exclusive designed dashiki and had a chance to sample an African dish,” the article noted. As part of the “soul aesthetic,” an amalgam of African cultural elements into a personal style, and clothing, like the dashiki (fig. 5.3), the Afro went along with Black is Beautiful. As William Van Deburg explains, “soul style was a type of in-group cultural cachet whose creators utilized clothing design, popular hair treatments, and even body language (stance, gait, method of greeting) as preferred mechanisms of authentication.”<sup>73</sup> In keeping with Black is Beautiful, beauty product manufacturers incorporated the soul aesthetic into their advertising campaigns. Johnson Products marketed the Afro Sheen product line with the Swahili slogan, “Watu-Wazuri (Beautiful People) use Afro Sheen” (fig. 5.4), and the company also used other Swahili slogans

<sup>72</sup> Dasheiki Party, *Contrast*, 16 February 1970, 10.

<sup>73</sup> Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon*, 195.

such as “Kama Baba, Kama Mwana” (like father, like son), Pamoja! (Together!), and “Kama Mama, Kama Binti (like mother, like daughter)” in Afro Sheen campaigns.<sup>74</sup>

In September *Contrast* published a black business directory for the city of Toronto. It listed social clubs, cuisine, dentists, doctors, lawyers, and food markets. It also provided a list of barbershops, beauty salons, and beauty supply shops. There were five barbershops listed, 12 beauty salons, and seven beauty supply shops. These businesses were primarily located in the city downtown, west of Bathurst Street, including St. Clair Avenue West, Oakwood Avenue, Queen Street West, Ossington Avenue, Dupont Street, Davenport Road, and College Street. By the late-1960s, Toronto had become a central point of entry for American beauty companies. While the city was hardly New York or Chicago, in relation to the rest of Canada, black culture was visible in Toronto and there was an ever-growing presence of black hair-care businesses.<sup>75</sup> In March for example, *Contrast* reported on the rise of black business ownership: “Two years ago there were no black owned book stores, today there are three. Two years ago black people could only buy West Indian food stuffs at Gonsalves or at the Kensington Market. Today supermarkets are filling the need.”<sup>76</sup> In the United States, a person could acquire a soul aesthetic without growing an Afro, but the political and intellectual savvy of those individuals who continued to “process” was often brought into question.<sup>77</sup> In Toronto, the does not appear to have been one “authentically” black aesthetic, thus, *Contrast* did not equate soul style with black

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<sup>74</sup> Johnson Products ran a series of ads using these tag lines between 1970 and 1975 in *Ebony* and *Essence* magazines.

<sup>75</sup> Ken Alexander and Avis Glaze aptly note that approximately two-thirds of Canada’s West Indian population reside in the greater Toronto area. Since the 1960s, this community has grown into one of the area’s most substantial and politically active groups. In 1967 the Caribana festival – expanding on the Calypso Carnival program previously established by the Canadian Negro Women’s Association – was founded. Canada was celebrating its Centennial, and Caribana represented black participation in the festivities. From relatively small beginnings, it now attracts upwards of a million participants from across North America to its annual August parade. See Alexander and Glaze, *Towards Freedom: The African-Canadian Experience* (Toronto: Umbrella Press, 1996), 223.

<sup>76</sup> “Black Business Ownership on the Rise in Toronto,” *Contrast*, 20 March 1970, 5. The article also used the phrase “Buy Black,” adding, “For too long black people have economically supported every ethnic group, and now is the time to help ourselves.”

<sup>77</sup> Deburg, *New Day in Babylon*, 198.

politics. Significantly, Toni King found that *Ebony* “offered black women of the 1970s an opportunity to witness themselves negotiating new occupational terrain, while at the same time accommodating current mainstream ideologies of womanhood.”<sup>78</sup> On the one level, she writes further, “this format helped black women find a sense of solidarity in their collective image of themselves” but on another level, *Ebony* “was a vehicle for black aspirations of middle-class status, which often implies some level of assimilation.”<sup>79</sup> *Contrast* did not brand itself as a “middle-class” periodical and given the disparate black population its pages were not filled with a collective consciousness; instead, the newspaper simply reported on black developments, from the non-political to the seemingly middle-class, and its advertisements also played a dualist role.

In May 1970 *Contrast* announced that two beauty salons, Azan’s Beauty World and Nouveau Femme, had teamed up to bring model Naomi Sims to Toronto.<sup>80</sup> Dubbed as “The world’s top black model,” Sims appeared at the Royal York Hotel on 17 May 1970 and the following month, Sims along with two other black models, were featured in a page-length fashion spread in the newspaper.<sup>81</sup> In August advertisements in the newspaper spoke to a lack of consensus on black cultural expression. Placed side-by-side on the page an ad for Third World Books and Crafts promoted “Dashikies and African Fabrics ... Specializing in Afro Asian Books and Crafts,”<sup>82</sup> another ad from a hairstylist named Mr. Stephen proclaimed: “Let Mr. Stephen Straighten You Out...When You Feel The Urge To Be BEAUTIFUL Call Me Anytime.”<sup>83</sup> And further down in the same issue, Harvey Gellman, Sales Manager for Townecraft Industries, placed an ad for Afro wigs with the slogan, “Black Is Beautiful ... With Kinky Hair” read:

<sup>78</sup> Toni C. King, “‘Who’s That Lady?’: *Ebony Magazine and Black Professional Women*,” in *Disco Divas: Women and Popular Culture in the 1970s*, ed. Sherrie A. Inness (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 94.

<sup>79</sup> King, “Who’s That Lady?,” 94.

<sup>80</sup> Azan’s Beauty World and Nouveau Femme Advertisement, *Contrast*, 1 May 1970, 12.

<sup>81</sup> Ken Johnson, “Glamorous Models!,” *Contrast*, 1 June 1970, 11.

<sup>82</sup> Third World Books Advertisement, *Contrast*, 1-15 August 1970, 10.

<sup>83</sup> Hair Straightening Advertisement, *Contrast*, 1-15 August 1970, 10.

No more expense at the Beauty Parlour – Just Wash ‘n Wear – Permanently Kinky.... The only synthetic Afro wig in Canada that looks natural.... Also available long wigs, short wigs, and 100% human hair pieces.... These wigs are not sold in the stores but only in the comfort of your home.<sup>84</sup>

Gellman also informed readers that his company’s wigs were only available for sale in the home. From dashikis to Afros, hair straighteners to wigs, Canada’s largest black periodical in the early 1970s celebrated the diversity of black cultural expression and by extension its contradictions.

In July, Townecraft Industries placed a second ad in the newspaper adjacent to a feature by Olivia Grange-Walker, titled “There Is More to a Wig Than Hair.”<sup>85</sup> “If you have to wear a wig, read on,” the first line of the article read. “One of my pet peeves is seeing a wig which looks ‘wiggy’ and since the synthetic wash ‘n Wear wigs have revolutionized the wig industry (human hair is now apparently passé) I decided to look into what is being offered to the woman of today,” Grange-Walker continued. The investigation, which involved department stores, beauty salons and wig stores, led her to conclude that few people knew anything about synthetic wigs and that most women were wearing wigs that, in her words, looked “wiggy.” Wigs and hair straightening ads appeared in the newspaper, it also promoted Afros, for example, in one representative ad appearing in December 1970, a beauty supply shop promoted the sale of Afro wigs and a Posner Afro care kit (fig. 5.5).<sup>86</sup> At the same time the Afro was adopted across the Black Diaspora, Afros entered the pages of *Chatelaine* and department store catalogues.

## V. Black models in *Chatelaine* and Eaton’s catalogues

In March 1973 *Chatelaine* published an article, titled “Black Women in White Canada: The Lonely Life.” Written by Linda Diebel, the tagline set the article’s tone: “Sad days, solitary

<sup>84</sup> Townecraft Industries Advertisement, *Contrast*, 1-15 August 1970, 13.

<sup>85</sup> Olivia Grange-Walker, “There Is More to a Wig Than Hair,” *Contrast*, 18 July 1970, 11.

<sup>86</sup> Wigs and Posner Products Advertisements, *Contrast*, 18 December 1970, 16.



nights and a wall of silent bigotry greet immigrant women from the Caribbean.”<sup>87</sup> Adjacent to the feature sat a portrait of a black woman whose face was cut in half, and shadowed by two faceless silhouettes (fig. 5.6). Diebel’s profile included first-person narratives from multiple West Indian women (from Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, and Antigua), who spoke of their experiences in Canada. Most of the women had entered the country under the West Indian Domestic Scheme.<sup>88</sup> The problems faced by women, as well as nurses, teachers, social workers, and office clerks, the article claimed, “are the same: the heartbreak of leaving children back home; the humiliation of searching for eligible men and soliciting friendship; the nagging pain of discrimination in housing and jobs.”<sup>89</sup> Members of the Canadian Negro Women’s Association (CANEWA) wrote letters to *Chatelaine*, contesting the magazine’s depiction of black women. “We feel that the ignorance of a white reporting about a Black community condition has been revealed; a white writer has written about a black situation and slanted the facts to suit the picture she wishes to convey,” CANEWA argued, adding:

Contrary to Ms. Diebel’s statement, current statistics indicate that now only a small portion of Black women coming from the West Indies are domestics. Why the necessity to describe the physical characteristics of the women, and that in such a way as to convey the impression that almost all immigrant women are big, buxom and gentle – for which we could read, simple? It seems that rather than endure some of the situations mentioned, the smart thing to do would be to leave that job and get another!<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Linda Diebel, “Black Women in White Canada: The Lonely Life,” *Chatelaine*, March 1973, 38.

<sup>88</sup> Implemented in 1955, the West Indian Domestic Scheme was a Canadian strategy to allow West Indian women to migrate to Canada. Under the scheme, women had to be between the ages of 18 and 35, single, have at least a grade eight education, and be able to pass the medical examination. On arrival in Canada, the majority of the women were placed in a home in Montreal, Toronto or Ottawa for a period of one year. Based on the restrictions of this policy it was fraught with abuse and many women under the scheme laboured in environments where they had to endure racism, abuse and neglect. By 1965 a total of 2,690 West Indian women had been admitted under the scheme. For more see Frances Henry, “The West Indian Domestic Scheme in Canada,” *Social and Economic Studies* 17.1 (March 1968): 83-91; Alexander and Glaze, *Towards Freedom*, 178-80; James W. Walker, “The West Indians in Canada,” *Canadian Historical Association* (Saint John: New Brunswick, 1984), 10.

<sup>89</sup> Diebel, “Black Women in White Canada,” 84.

<sup>90</sup> See Lawrence Hill, *Women of Vision: The Story of the Canadian Negro Women’s Association 1951-1976* (Toronto: Umbrella Press, 1996), 62.

With the exception of an article, “Are Canadians Really Tolerant?,” written by a Trinidad-born black woman who had immigrated to Canada, which appeared in *Chatelaine*’s September 1959 issue, Diebel’s 1973 article was only the second time that black women had formed part of the magazine’s editorial pages. In addition to black women, in the 1950s, *Chatelaine* had begun to move toward diversity when it ran multi-page articles on Eastern European immigrants and First Nations women.<sup>91</sup> The magazine, however, still fell into the trap of making ethnicity, as bell hooks has argued, “the spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture.”<sup>92</sup> Aunt Jemima advertising (fig. 5.7) also remained the dominant image of black womanhood in the magazine throughout the 1950s, and that was not a real black woman but a fictionalized advertising trademark. As such, the 1973 feature was rightfully interpreted as a token attempt at inclusion.

In December 1970 a black model appeared in an Eveleen Dollery<sup>93</sup> fashion spread (fig. 5.8).<sup>94</sup> The model is dressed identically to her white counterparts. She wears a large Afro (likely a wig) and in another instance her hair is straightened and pulled back. The only discernible marker distinguishing her from the white models is her dark skin and Afro. Just as an Afro made one’s blackness hypervisible, in the fashion world, dark-skinned models were often used to

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<sup>91</sup> See Jeannine Locke, “Can the Hungarians Fit In?,” *Chatelaine*, May 1957, 24-5; Christina McCall Newman, “Canada’s Eskimos: A People Trapped between Two Worlds,” *Chatelaine*, November 1960, 35-7; Frances McNab, “The Forgotten Canadians,” *Chatelaine*, June 1962, 34-5; Sally Tootoo, “Anguilik’s Wife,” *Chatelaine*, April 1963, 32-3; 58; Barbara Frum, “How Ottawa (And We) Slept,” *Chatelaine*, November 1968, 48-55.

<sup>92</sup> bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 21.

<sup>93</sup> According to a *Toronto Star* obituary on Dollery, she worked as a fashion editor for three decades at *Chatelaine* and was a founding member of *Flare* (*Miss Chatelaine*) from 1958 to 1988. Dollery died in 2011. See Susan Pigg, “Obituary: Eveleen Dollery,” *Toronto Star*, 16 August 2011, [http://www.thestar.com/life/2011/08/16/obituary\\_eveleen\\_dollery.html](http://www.thestar.com/life/2011/08/16/obituary_eveleen_dollery.html) (date of last access 10 August 2013).

<sup>94</sup> Eveleen Dollery, “Sparkle In Your Own Holiday Life-Style,” *Chatelaine*, December 1970, 36-9. I make the assumption that the two appearances in the fashion feature are from the same model based on the fact that white models in the feature appear more than once. It is difficult to discern if it is a different model because of the quality of the reproduction. This assumption, however, does not detract from my arguments. See *Chatelaine* microfilm, AP5 C43 micro film in McLennan Humanities and Social Sciences Library, McGill University.

accentuate the blackness of blackness.<sup>95</sup> While the model's name is not listed, her appearance represents the first time a black model appeared in a *Chatelaine* photographic feature. Another black model appeared in the magazine in October 1971 (fig. 5.9) she was also a dark-skinned woman with an Afro. Where black models such as Naomi Sims, Peggy Dillard and Beverly Johnson appeared on the cover of America's women's magazines for the first time in the late 1960s<sup>96</sup> black models in Canada were resigned to fashion features or catalogues.

At the same time black models entered the country's largest women's magazine, they also entered the Eaton's catalogue. In the 1970s, Eaton's was still the largest department store in Canada. In her examination of the history of women at Eaton's, Lorraine O'Donnell found that "through the medium of its covers ... Eaton's proposed ways of seeing the female customers to whom it appealed, the country in which it operated, and itself: the meanings of all three were mutually constructed through this popular, powerful medium."<sup>97</sup> Like *Chatelaine*, Eaton's covers remained exclusively the domain of white women, men and their children. Throughout the 1970s, no black model (female or male) appeared on the department store's catalogue covers. In the Fall/Winter 1971 catalogue, two black women are featured in separate pages. Where the first black model is wearing an Afro (fig. 5.10), a second black model in the same catalogue (fig.

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<sup>95</sup> An example of the fashion world exploiting the blackness of dark-skinned women can be seen in the work of 1980s Italian photographer Oliviero Toscani (b. 1942). He drew upon the controversial image of black women as wet nurses in a clothing advertisement he created for the Italian clothing company, Benetton. The advertisement featured a close-up of a white infant suckling the breast of a dark-skinned black woman who is wearing a red Shetland Benetton sweater. See Deborah Willis and Carla Williams, *The Black Female Body: A Photographic History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 133.

<sup>96</sup> Naomi Sims appeared on the cover of *Ladies' Home Journal* in November 1968 and *Life* magazine in October 1969; Donyale Luna appeared on the cover of UK *Vogue* in March 1966; Beverly Johnson appeared on the cover of *Vogue* in August 1974; and Peggy Dillard appeared on the cover of *Mademoiselle* in March 1974.

<sup>97</sup> Lorraine O'Donnell, "Visualizing the History of Women at Eaton's, 1869 to 1976" (PhD diss., McGill University, 2003), 352.

5.11) is wearing a straightened “Greek boy” (closely cropped) hairstyle.<sup>98</sup> Significantly, black models only appeared in the pages of Eaton’s catalogues between 1972 and 1975.<sup>99</sup>

In the 1980s, Kathy Peiss asserts that American magazines and advertisers began to perceive multiculturalism as a fashion aesthetic. For instance, *Vogue* loudly proclaimed, “Everybody’s all-American,” and “The face of American beauty has changed to reflect the nation’s ethnic diversity.”<sup>100</sup> After 1971, another black model did not appear in *Chatelaine* until 1979<sup>101</sup> and by the end of the 1980s, black women remained absent from the magazine’s cover.<sup>102</sup> It is interesting to note that throughout the 1980s black models are also overwhelmingly represented in the ads of American beauty firms. For example, in a full-page advertisement for Clairol’s Claireese no ammonia shampoo-in hair colour product, placed on the inside cover of *Chatelaine*’s February 1982 issue, supermodel Beverly Johnson appeared

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<sup>98</sup> For more of an explanation on the origins of the short, closely cropped Greek boy, see William Smith, “Coma,” *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, John Murray, London, 1875, [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/secondary/SMIGRA\\*/Coma.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/secondary/SMIGRA*/Coma.html) (date of last access 15 November 2013).

<sup>99</sup> The company ended its mail-order catalogue business in 1976.

<sup>100</sup> See Kathy Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America’s Beauty Culture* (New York: Metropolitan Books Henry Holt and Company, 1998), 263. Also see Shirley Lord, “Everybody’s All-American,” *Vogue*, February 1989, 312-19.

<sup>101</sup> In 1979, a black model appeared in an advertisement in *Chatelaine* for the clothing line Cachet. See *Chatelaine*, April 1979, 37.

<sup>102</sup> There are a few editorials on black women that appeared in *Chatelaine* in the late 1970s and 1980s. See Dorothy Sangster, “Sylvia and Kathy Searles – Catalysts for the Black Community,” *Chatelaine*, February 1979, 24-5; Rosemary Brown the first Black Canadian woman to be elected to a Canadian provincial legislature, is featured in a 1980 editorial on the possibility of a woman becoming the next Prime Minister of Canada, see “Judith Timson, “A Canadian Woman Prime Minister, Why Not!” *Chatelaine*, July 1980, 28-9; Olympic sprinter Angella Taylor-Issajenko appears in a feature in 1983, see Rosie DiManno, “Zip! There Goes Angella Taylor,” *Chatelaine*, October 1983, 54; 230; 258; Taylor-Issajenko is featured again in 1988, see Nora McCabe, “The Flying Mom,” *Chatelaine* May 1988, 188-199; 212. Also see Doug Doig’s feature on sprinter Angela Bailey in “Canada’s Olympic Women Think Gold,” *Chatelaine*, August 1984, 46-7. In 1989, a black family from Barbados appears in a *Chatelaine* editorial with the sub-title, “From Barbados to Toronto is quite a leap, but Radiance and Walter Pollard have achieved a middle-class life-style in suburbia, and they encourage their daughters to aim for the education they themselves had to forgo.” See Suzanne Zwarun, “Between two Worlds,” *Chatelaine*, October 1989, 117; 119; 121; 161; 164. These editorials all sought to position the black Canadian woman as middle-class yet simultaneously active and politically minded, like many white, middle-class women had become.

alongside Cheryl Tiegs and three other models.<sup>103</sup> Between 1982 and 1989, black models appeared less than ten times in either an advertisement or a fashion feature in *Chatelaine*.<sup>104</sup>

When taken together, black women's bodily difference was made invisible through a white washing of any racial distinction. Stated otherwise, by the 1980s, black women in beauty advertisements lacked a cultural signifier, other than the colour of their skin that distinguished them from the depiction of white middle-class femininity. As Susan Bordo aptly notes, "The general tyranny of fashion – perpetual, elusive, and instructing the female body in a pedagogy of personal inadequacy and lack – is a powerful discipline for the normalization of *all* women in this culture."<sup>105</sup> In order to gain entry into the mainstream beauty culture, there has historically been a double bind placed on black women. On one hand, their very presence in the predominantly white world of beauty advertising had made their blackness hypervisible; on the other hand, in order to gain acceptance in these spaces they have had to either engage in a whitening process by adopting the aesthetics deemed beautiful by the dominant culture or be "lucky" enough to "naturally" appear this way – i.e. straight hair, slender nose, light skin, and a slender body. When blacks began to wear their hair in dreadlocks in the 1970s, the hairstyle challenged the straight-haired rule, but hair care firms showed little interest in co-opting the hairstyle as they had the Afro.

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<sup>103</sup> Clairol Claireese No Ammonia Shampoo-in Hair Colour Advertisement, *Chatelaine*, February 1982, 2.

<sup>104</sup> A black model appeared in a Sears advertisement placed in the inside cover of *Chatelaine*'s May 1982 issue. In July 1986, a black model is featured by herself in a *Chatelaine* fashion spread, titled "black and white, always right." The spread captures the model in four separate looks, but in each case she is encased in a white background, she wears a white jacket and her hair is straightened. See *Chatelaine*, July 1986, 68-71. In an Eveleen Dollery and Donna Alexander Zaica fashion feature, titled "Classy Classic," a black model appears in three frames. In one frame, her outfit is described as "The '50's sweater set a la Grace Kelly" see Dollery and Zaica, "Classy Classic," *Chatelaine*, November 1986, 66-9. In December 1987 two black models appeared in a Christmas feature alongside ten white models. The two black models are draped in white and encased in a white background. Finally, in the inside cover of the February 1989 issue, a black model appeared alongside seven other models in a Clairol hypo-allergenic temporary colour rinse advertisement, with a tagline read, "Clairol introduces instant beauté."

<sup>105</sup> Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (Berkeley, California: The University of California Press, 1995), 254

## VI. Dreadlocks challenge the straight hair rule

On 12 August 1976, Jamaican reggae artist Bob Marley appeared on the cover of *Rolling Stone* magazine.<sup>106</sup> The Annie Leibovitz photograph captured Marley with his arms raised and his dreadlocks flying in mid-air. The iconic image marks the first time a reggae artist graced the cover of *Rolling Stone* but it also introduced dreadlocks, Rastafari and Jamaican culture to America.<sup>107</sup> Outside of Jamaica, most people had never seen dreadlocks, and most knew very little about Rastafari. Emerging in Jamaica's poorest black communities in the 1930s, the Rastafari movement openly defied British colonial rule on the island, and was associated with Marcus Garvey's Pan-Africanist movement, and the name *Rastafari* was also rooted in African spiritualism. Derived from Ras Tafari, the black man who was crowned Haile Selassie I, Emperor of Ethiopia in 1930, those who consider themselves to be "Rasta" believe that Haile Selassie I is the Second Advent of God and therefore Rastafari is a Rasta's religion.<sup>108</sup> Stephen King asserts that as Rastafari challenged Jamaica's colonial society they grew dreadlocks, an Ethiopian-inspired hairstyle, smoked marijuana, and proudly displayed the colours of the Ethiopian flag (red, gold and green).<sup>109</sup> While dreadlocks were synonymous with Rastafari they did not invent the hairstyle. Bahatowie priests of the Ethiopian Coptic Church had been locking their hair since the fifth century; in New Zealand, Maori communities have historically worn

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<sup>106</sup> Ed McCormack, "Rastaman with a Bullet," *Rolling Stone*, 12 August 1976, <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/bob-marley-with-a-bullet-19760812> (date of last access 10 November 2013).

<sup>107</sup> The reggae film *The Harder They Come* (1972) starring Jimmy Cliff was actually the first exported product from Jamaica that showcased dreadlocks and Rastafari culture. The film and its reggae soundtrack has been credited by music critics as the first film to "bring reggae to the world." See Dennis McLellan, "Perry Henzell, 70; his movie 'The Harder They Come' brought reggae to the world," *Los Angeles Times*, 2 December 2006, <http://articles.latimes.com/2006/dec/02/local/me-henzell2> (date of last access 22 November 2013).

<sup>108</sup> Rastafari demanded repatriation to Africa, and also "challenge[d] not only the Caribbean but the entire Western World to come to terms with the history of slavery, the reality of white racism and the permanent thrust for dignity and self-respect by black people." See Horace Campbell, *Rasta and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney* (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1987), 1.

<sup>109</sup> Stephen A. King, "The Co-optation of a 'Revolution': Rastafari, Reggae, and the Rhetoric of Social Control" *The Howard Journal of Communication* 10 (1999): 78.

dreadlocks for sartorial purpose; and in India, sadhus (*sadhvis*, the female counterpart) – mendicant mystics of the Hindu faith – have been locking their hair for centuries.<sup>110</sup>

By the 1970s, however, Rastafari was exported to other sites of Black Diaspora through reggae music. As such, dreadlocks were also coded as a “Jamaican” hairstyle. Kobena Mercer asserts that dreadlocks embodied an interpretation of a religious, biblical injunction that forbade the cutting of hair (an act which paralleled the Sikh religion), however, “once ‘locks were popularized on a mass social scale – via the increasing militancy of reggae, especially – their dread logic inscribed a beautification of blackness remarkably similar to the ‘naturalistic’ logic of the Afro.”<sup>111</sup> Like Black Power and the Afro, Rastafari and dreadlocks were a symbolic reclaiming of Africa as an ancestral and cultural site of black culture. As Mercer writes further, where the Afro suggested an articulating link with Africa through its name and its association with a radical politics, “dreadlocks similarly implied a symbolic link between their naturalistic appearance and Africa by way of a reinterpretation of biblical narrative which identified Ethiopia as ‘Zion’ or Promised Land.”<sup>112</sup> Thus, dreadlocks negated the pervasiveness of the straight-haired rule by revalorizing the aesthetics of Africa as a marker of blackness.

In the United States, African Americans did not initially embrace dreadlocks or Rastafari. The hairstyle had come to America during the height of the soul aesthetic, and while some African Americans dabbled with reggae and Rastafari, few adopted dreadlocks. In the forward to *Dreads* (1999), Alice Walker recalls,

It wasn’t until the filming of *The Color Purple* in 1985 that I got to explore someone’s dreads. By then I had started “baby dreads” of my own, from tiny plaits, and had only blind faith that they’d grow eventually into proper locks. It was during a scene in which Sofia’s sisters are packing up her things, as she

<sup>110</sup> See Francesco Mastalia and Alfonse Pagano, *Dreads* (New York: Artisan, 1999), 10-11; 14; 18; 20.

<sup>111</sup> Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (New York & London: Routledge, 1994), 108.

<sup>112</sup> Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle*, 108.

prepares to leave her trying-to-be-abusive husband, Harpo. All Sofia's "sisters" were large, good-looking local women ("location" was Monroe, North Carolina), and one of them was explaining why she had to wear a cap in the scene instead of the more acceptable-to-the-period head-rag or straw hat. "I have too much hair," she said. Besides, back then (the 1920s) nobody would have been wearing dreads. Saying this, she swept off her roomy cap, and a cascade of vigorous locks fell way down her back. From a downtrodden, hardworking Southern Black woman she was transformed into a free, Amazonian goddess. I laughed in wonder at the transformation, my fingers instantly seeking her hair.<sup>113</sup>

When most African Americans think of dreadlocks, many likely think of the *Color Purple*'s lead actress Whoopi Goldberg, who adopted the hairstyle in the early 1980s. Importantly, Goldberg was often criticized for wearing dreadlocks, a style that many associated with a perceived "backwards island religion." As Kathy Russell, Midge Wilson and Ronald Hall note, Goldberg often had "members of her own community tell her that her dreadlocks [were] disgusting and that she should 'take those nappy braids out.'"<sup>114</sup>

In 2010, I stumbled across a poster in a window display in a hair salon in Toronto (fig. 5.12) with the following caption, "Oh My GAWD!!! I'm having a bad HAIR DAY." In addition to Marge Simpson, Whoopi Goldberg's dreadlocks were among the list of bad hair victims. Just like Cicely Tyson, who was told by members of the black community in the early 1970s that she might be a gifted actress but "her short natural hairstyle was detrimental to the image of black women,"<sup>115</sup> Goldberg's dark skin and dreadlocks have often positioned her as an aberrant figure as compared to other straight-haired black women in Hollywood.<sup>116</sup> Further, given the fact that dreadlocks were at first mostly worn by black men, the hairstyle carries a masculine connotation for many people across the African Diaspora. Meanwhile, some African Americans also felt that

<sup>113</sup> "Introduction" in Mastalia and Pagano, *Dreads*, 8.

<sup>114</sup> Russell, Wilson and Hall, *Color Complex*, 86.

<sup>115</sup> Russell, Wilson and Hall, *Color Complex*, 86.

<sup>116</sup> When Lisa Bonet, who played Denise Huxtable on the *Cosby Show*, adopted dreadlocks in the 1990s it was viewed as an oppositional act to break from her squeaky clean, middle-class image on the beloved sitcom.



the adoption of dreadlocks, removed the Rastafari culture, was a co-optation that felt inauthentic to the African American experience.<sup>117</sup>

As Kofi Tomahe explains, “the main problem [was] the absence of any of the original spiritual process that the decision to dread [one’s hair] once implied, or any of the political action that gave the style that name.”<sup>118</sup> In “Invisible Dread,” Bert Ashe recalls why he hesitated ‘locking his hair in the early 1980s:

My first real flirtation with dreadlocks happened while I was working as a radio disc jockey in Louisiana starting in 1983. Dreadlocks was standoffish, and did not respond to my flirtation at all. Actually, I’m not sure I could have gone through with it then, anyway. One reason was that I was dating a Caribbean woman who was adamant that dreadlocks were solely a sacred mode of expression for the Rastafari. She argued passionately that my wearing dreadlocks without “wearing” the religion would be a massive cultural insult.<sup>119</sup>

Thus, it was difficult for many African Americans who contemplated dreadlocks in the early 1980s to reconcile the fact that the style was not a symbolic gesture to Rastafari but was an

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<sup>117</sup> There are also whites and Asians who wear dreadlocks as part of a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle. At the same time, there are those whites in the twenties and thirties who wear dreadlocks merely to rebel against their middle-class upbringing. For this group, dreadlocks are symbolic of a rebellious way of life and are often abandoned in a few years once they seek employment.

<sup>118</sup> See Byrd and Tharps, *Hair Story*, 129-30. The colours red, gold, and green are also associated with Rastafari but they have become the cultural property of a global marketplace, and are an example of the absence of signification as it relates to black political struggle. In 2004 the multinational companies Roots, Gucci, Puma, and Christian Dior capitalized on the trademark Rastafari colours for their brands. See Krista Thompson, *An Eye for the Tropics: Tourism, Photography, and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 306.

<sup>119</sup> Bert Ashe, “Invisible Dread: From *Twisted: The Dreadlock Chronicles*” in *Blackberries and Redbones: Critical Articulations of Black Hair/Body Politics in African Communities*, eds. Regina E. Spellens and Kimberly R. Moffat (Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press, 2010), 55. African Americans were deeply aware of the politics around the co-optation of a black aesthetic. In an effort to sell “soul culture” to white America in the 1970s for instance, Mark Anthony Neal aptly notes that “corporate America’s exploitation and revisioning of the meanings and icons of blackness introduced both cartoonish and surreal constructions of blackness to a mass buying public.” See Mark Anthony Neal, “Sold Out on Soul: The Corporate Annexation of Black Popular Music” *Popular Music & Society* 21.3 (1997): 120. Steven Haymes writes further that corporate America thus transformed black American culture “into signifiers, absent of historical references to black life and absent of signification other than making luxury consumer goods pleasurable to middle-class whites. This stripping of history and signification from black culture ... reduced it to a simulacrum.” See Stephen Haymes, *Race, Culture and the City: A Pedagogy for Black Urban Struggle* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 51. Simulacrum, as Jean Baudrillard has argued, reduces representation to an illusion; that is to say, representation thus becomes something that is not exchanged “for the real, but exchanged for itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference.” Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, [1981] 1994), 6.

alternative to Afros, cornrows,<sup>120</sup> and chemical straightening. Eventually, dreadlocks became a lifestyle for many black women who viewed the hairstyle as part of a natural way of life. As one woman in Chicago said of her dreadlocks in the early 1990s:

I love my hair like this. I wouldn't trade it for straight hair. There is something so spiritual and in-touch about my hair. I feel connected to my roots. My hair gives me a sense of oneness with nature. You know how beautiful nature is when it's just left alone to grow naturally the way God intended? Well, that's how I look at my hair. Just growing naturally the way God intended.<sup>121</sup>

Misconceptions about cleaning and grooming, in addition to misrepresentations in the media continued to demonize dreadlocks in American culture. When *Essence* magazine began to run a series of how-to articles on dreadlocks in the 1990s, for instance, the magazine only marginally noted that the style was popularized in Jamaica, and according to Ayana Byrd and Lori Tharps, a number of readers wrote in to lambast the publication for having “crucified the dread!”<sup>122</sup> Judy Davis observes further that because of the association between dreadlocks and Rastafari, it is often believed that those who wear ‘locks “do not wash or comb their hair, allowing it to become dirty and unkempt.”<sup>123</sup> Despite such misconceptions, dreadlocks have, over the past thirty years, become increasingly popular in urban cities across North America, even among people not of African descent. At the same time since the late 1980s, many black women have made the hair weave in addition to chemical relaxing their hairstyle of choice. This adoption, however, has coincided with the emergence of a new natural movement which is largely disconnected from a wider socio-political movement a la Black is Beautiful.

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<sup>120</sup> Cornrow is hair that is braided very close to the scalp, producing a continuous row of straight lines, also known as “canerows” in the Caribbean.

<sup>121</sup> Russell, Wilson and Hall, *Color Complex*, 87-8.

<sup>122</sup> Byrd and Tharps, *Hair Story*, 130.

<sup>123</sup> Judy Foster Davis, “New Hair Freedom? 1990s Hair Care Marketing and the African-American Woman,” in *Milestones in Marketing History*, ed. Terrance H. Witkowski (Long Beach, California: Association for Historical Research in Marketing, 2001), 34. Whites, Asians and persons of mixed race often have a difficult time getting their hair to form into ‘locks; it is often the case that they may not wash their hair in order to adopt dreadlocks. For blacks with naturally coarse hair, however, dreadlocks like other black hairstyles require regular cleaning and maintenance.

## VII. Hair weaves and the neo-natural movement

By the 1990s, hair weaves (the process of adding synthetic or real hair to one's own hair) became a popular hairstyling technique. While the term "hair weave" had been patented in 1950 by African American Christina Jenkins, a housewife in Malvern, Ohio, who invented and then patented the style,<sup>124</sup> weaves exploded in the United States after 1990 – 1.3 million pounds of human hair valued at US\$28.6 million were imported from countries like China, India and Indonesia, where poor women sold their hair by the inch.<sup>125</sup> The "Global Hair Trade," as it was called, involved an economic system where hair was sourced in Asian and South Asian countries, sterilized and cut, then shipped to wholesalers in Europe and North America, who sold the hair to beauty supply shops, beauty parlors, and hair retailers. Today, the human hair business in the United States and increasingly in Canada, especially the retail end-point, is dominated by Korean immigrants. At the same time dreadlocks were popularized by black celebrities, such as Bob Marley and Whoopi Goldberg, it became virtually impossible to ignore the image of a black woman with long, coifed straight hair that continued to be the predominant image not only in the mainstream but also in black beauty culture.<sup>126</sup>

In 1990, *Essence* magazine declared "Sisters love the weave!"<sup>127</sup> From the modelling world (i.e. Naomi Campbell, Iman, Tyra Banks) to actresses and celebrities (i.e. Beyoncé, Janet Jackson, and Diana Ross), in order to attain long flowing tresses, black women have adopted the hair weave in droves.<sup>128</sup> Oprah Winfrey has long defended that she does not wear a weave but in

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<sup>124</sup> See "Who Invented the Weave," *Thirsty Roots*, 20 March 2010, <http://thirstyroots.com/who-invented-the-weave.html> (date of last access 25 October 2013).

<sup>125</sup> Byrd and Tharps, *Hair Story*, 95.

<sup>126</sup> Byrd and Tharps, *Hair Story*, 155.

<sup>127</sup> Byrd and Tharps, *Hair Story*, 122.

<sup>128</sup> A new series on Oprah Winfrey's OWN network called *Houston Beauty*, which debuted on 2 November 2013, chronicles the life of Glenda "Ms. J" Jemison, the owner and director of Franklin Beauty School, the oldest continuously operated licensed beauty school in Texas. Hair weaves are prominently worn by the shows cast and the hairstyling techniques is overwhelmingly the preferred style taught at the school, in addition to chemical relaxing.

the 1990s, she once used her talk show to out those black celebrities who did. Even though women have been wearing weaves since the 1960s (wigs and hair attachments since the nineteenth century), the weaves of the late 1980s and early 1990s were major improvements on prior weaves. The “modern” weave was less bulky than earlier versions and was also available in a variety of colours and textures. Initially, the weaving technique involved cornrowing the weave wearer’s hair and then hair extensions called “wefts” were sewn into “tracks” (strips of hair sewn into netting) directly onto the hair. This style eventually grew out of favour because it left a bump of hair at the crown of the head, and gave rise to the joke “obvious weave” or OW for short. Current techniques involve a “bonding” method (where tracks are glued to chemically straightened hair at the roots) and “singeing” (using heat, synthetic hair is machine pressed onto the weave wearer’s natural hair).<sup>129</sup> Another popular weave is known as a lace front wig. With lace fronts, tracks are tied individually strand by strand to the hair cuticle to create a hair line that gives the appearance of hair that looks more “natural” than a weave.

Hair salons in Toronto first began to advertise hair weaves in the mid-1980s. One of the first ads was posted by Soul Cut, a black hair salon located on Bloor Street West. In the October 1985 ad customers were told, “If your weave or braiding is unnatural, try the invisible look.”<sup>130</sup> Sheer Advantage Hairstylists and Braiding Centre also advertised in *Contrast* in December 1986 that its stylists specialized in “all types of braids – curly braids and weave on.”<sup>131</sup> While a few hair salons in Toronto have, since the 1990s, specialized in dreadlocks and natural hair, such as Strictly Roots, a presence on Bathurst Street south of Queen Street in the city’s downtown, Nanni’s Hair Salon, located near Weston Road and the 401 Highway in the city’s northwest, and the Loc ‘N Twists Natural Hair Studio in Brampton (in business since 2005), most black hair

<sup>129</sup> The cost of a “good” weave can range anywhere from \$200 to \$1,500.

<sup>130</sup> Soul Cut Weave Advertisement, *Share*, 31 October 1985, 19.

<sup>131</sup> “Sheer Advantage Hairstyles and Braiding Centre Advertisement,” *Contrast*, 19 December 1986, 17.

salons in Toronto have specialized in hair weaves or chemical straightening. From 1987 onward, weaving and relaxing became the two main services provided by hairdressers in the GTA, and it was very common for beauticians to describe their weaving services as “weave on.” The term was used to describe hair extensions (synthetic hair) that was sewed or glued to one’s hair for length and texture. In the 1980s, few hairdressers worked with human hair on the weft; synthetic hair was more common. A weave on required a lot of care.

In a September 1988 an article in *Contrast*’s Montreal edition, titled “Caring Your Weaves,” Doreen’s Maison De Beaute on Victoria Avenue provided the following weave tips:

Before washing weave, braid each weave section to avoid tangles. Cleanse hair and scalp between weave thoroughly as well as around weave base, run shampoo over braids. Do not massage or scrub weave. Always wash weave with lukewarm water. When shampoo and conditioning is complete, squeeze excess water out of braids then carefully remove braids and comb free tangles, remembering to hold weave at base so as not to loosen weave. Applying designing lotion to weave to help eliminate tangles and proceed with styling. Never apply spray or gel moisturizers to weave, they cause weave to mat. Use a lubricant daily such as designing lotion or oil sheen spray. Always hold weave at base while brushing or combing to avoid undo pressure on weave base. Do no sleep or set in pony tail when weave is wet for it will shrink up when drying.<sup>132</sup>

By April 1990, Armonie International, a hair product distributor announced that it “now offers you a *new* standard of quality in *human hair* weaves and braids.”<sup>133</sup> The style ranged from straight to French refined, water weave, and deep wave.<sup>134</sup> Given the high maintenance of synthetic weaves, by 1994, the label “100 percent human hair” became the industry standard for weaves and wigs as women increasingly demanded “real human hair” weaves.

In the mid-1990s, Lisa Jones published an article entitled “The Hair Trade.” It was one of the first academic writings on the global human hair trade. At the time, Jones explained that very

<sup>132</sup> “Caring Your Weave,” *Contrast*, 7 September 1988, 26.

<sup>133</sup> Armonie International Advertisement, *Share*, 26 April 1990, 24.

<sup>134</sup> “Water weave” is not a straight-haired weave like “straight” or “French refined” hair. The hair is slightly wavy. “Deep wave” is wavier than a “water weave,” and more closely resembles naturally wavy black hair, especially that of women who are of mixed race.

few countries actually processed hair – i.e. converted it from straight to curly/wavy textures. “Most ‘raw hair,’ as the trade calls it, is processed abroad, in Korea primarily, and sold prepackaged [in the U.S.] at Asian retail shops,”<sup>135</sup> she noted. The few American companies that traded human hair were mostly based in New York and California. While African Americans were in the hair trade, the processing companies or “hair factories” were mostly family outfits operated by Jews and Italians.<sup>136</sup> Raw hair product from China, Korea, and India used to dominant the market but in the early 1990s, Koreans began to buy from the same sources, processing the hair themselves, and shipping it to their own retail networks in the U.S.<sup>137</sup> Jones noted that to ask industry types where raw hair came from, and how the business was organized abroad was “to knock up against a covenant of silence.”<sup>138</sup>

In 2009, the Chris Rock documentary *Good Hair* attempted to turn a spotlight on the human hair trade. In the film, Rock investigated the global hair trade and the relationship black women have with wearing weaves and using chemical relaxers, the latter of which was euphemistically called “creamy crack” throughout the film. Most notably, Rock exposed the fact that many black women spend upwards of a \$1,000 on hair weaves, sometimes deferring payment through a layaway plan in order to maintain the façade of long flowing hair. The film included a voyage to India, interviews with hairstylists, and celebrities like Nia Long and Raven Symone, and a visit to Dudley Products’ North Carolina facility where Rock was taught how chemical relaxers are made. It also followed competitors through a season of the annual Bonner Bros. Hair Battle in Atlanta, which attracts upwards of one hundred and twenty thousand hair-care professionals, and is almost exclusively comprised of weave and chemically relaxed

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<sup>135</sup> Lisa Jones, “The Hair Trade,” in *Talking Visions: Multicultural Feminism in a Transnational Age*, ed. Ella Shotat (New York: The MIT Press, 1998), 120.

<sup>136</sup> Jones, “Hair Trade,” 121.

<sup>137</sup> Jones, “Hair Trade,” 121.

<sup>138</sup> Jones, “Hair Trade,” 123.

hairstyles.<sup>139</sup> While *Good Hair* sought to explore the question of whether black women spent countless hours and hundreds of dollars in hair salons to make their hair straighter and silkier because they want to “look white,”<sup>140</sup> it was ultimately a simplified glimpse into the complex global hair trade. Hair weaving is not singularly a black woman’s practice, women of all races wear hair weave and wigs, and human hair is a highly sought after commodity, even among criminals.<sup>141</sup> In metro-Atlanta in 2011, for instance, a series of smash and grabs at beauty supply stores resulted in at least US\$100,000 of hair being stolen and similar thefts occurred in Chicago, Houston, and San Diego, where the take has ranged from US\$10,000 to US\$150,000 worth of hair per heist.<sup>142</sup>

In the 2006 documentary *Black Hair: The Korean Takeover of the Black Hair Care Industry*, Aron Ranen explored how Korean interests gained control of the human hair trade. The film, which is viewable on YouTube, explains that distributors in Korea only sell products to Korean stores strategically located in black communities, thereby cancelling out opportunities for black distributors to sell their products. The largest black hair care trade magazines are also printed in Korean. For example, in the November 2011 issue of the trade publication *OTC Beauty Magazine* an article written in English and Korean entitled “Hair, Hair, Hair: Human, Synthetic, Animal” explains the variations in human hair that are currently on the market.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Ashante Infantry, “Documentary Weaves Hair into Laughter,” *Toronto Star*, 18 September 2009, [http://www.thestar.com/entertainment/movies/2009/09/18/documentary\\_weaves\\_hair\\_into\\_laughter.html](http://www.thestar.com/entertainment/movies/2009/09/18/documentary_weaves_hair_into_laughter.html) (date of last access 29 November 2013).

<sup>140</sup> Maria Puente, “Chris Rock’s ‘Good Hair’ Gets Tangled Up in Controversy,” *USA Today*, 25 October 2009, [http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/life/movies/news/2009-10-22-good-hair-main\\_N.htm](http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/life/movies/news/2009-10-22-good-hair-main_N.htm) (date of last access 29 November 2013).

<sup>141</sup> Numerous white and Latina women have admitted to wearing hair weaves, most notably Celine Dion, Angelina Jolie, and Cameron Diaz.

<sup>142</sup> Nedra Rhone, “Premium Human Hair Latest Target for Thieves,” *Globe & Mail*, 13 September 2011, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/premium-human-hair-latest-target-for-thieves/article594162/> (date of last access 11 November 2012).

<sup>143</sup> Llonneau, “Hair, Hair, Hair: Human, Synthetic, Animal,” *OTC Beauty Magazine*, November 2011, 66-70, <http://issuu.com/otcbeautymagazine/docs/nov11> (date of last access November 26 2013). According to its website, *OTC Beauty Magazine* has a current circulation of 6,000, its readership consists of retail store owners, store

While *Good Hair* gave the impression that human hair is only culled from women in India, in reality, the human hair trade involves countries in Asia and Europe.<sup>144</sup>

About sixty percent of sales in most Korean beauty supply stores are for commercial hair and related grooming products. Despite the fact that African Americans are about thirteen percent of the population, they are responsible for over eighty percent of hair sales, which explains why Korean beauty supply stores are located predominately in black neighbourhoods.<sup>145</sup>

Koreans also import approximately 85 percent of all commercial hair in the U.S.<sup>146</sup> There are eight types of hair:

“French, European or Italian hair” is considered the highest quality hair because it is less coarse than Asian or Indian hair but is essentially hair from a “Caucasian” person. “Cuticle hair” is hair is human hair that has been scrutinized to insure that the cuticles are in the same direction on each strand, a procedure that prevents tangles, snarls and matting when the hair is combed. “Synthetic hair” is made from nylon and polyester fibers. “Yak hair” is culled from a yak, an animal native to Thailand; it most resembles human hair and grows long enough to be harvested. “Virgin hair” is human hair or sometimes animal hair that has not been chemically treated. “Yaky, Yaki or Yakie hair” most closely resembles natural black hair that has been chemically relaxed and is also referred to as Afro Yaky, Perm Yaki, Curly or Geri Curl Yaky. “Remi hair” is high quality human hair that is usually silky, straight and smooth, it is also considered to be Virgin hair because it is not processed with chemicals. “Indian hair” describes the source of the hair and it is obtained as a result of a religious ceremony called Tonsure, whereby the hair is shaved from the heads of women.<sup>147</sup>

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employees, manufacturers, and distributors and the magazine is primarily published for the U.S. beauty supply industry, but it also has international distribution through outlets in South Korea, China and parts of the Caribbean.

<sup>144</sup> For a detailed account on the Hindu human hair trade see Britta Sandberg, “Hindu Locks Keep Human Hair Trade Humming,” *Spiegel Online*, 19 February 2008, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/business/globalization-s-personal-link-hindu-locks-keep-human-hair-trade-humming-a-536349.html> (date of last access 24 November 2012).

<sup>145</sup> Llonneau, “Hair, Hair, Hair,” 66.

<sup>146</sup> According to the *Guardian*, the hair extensions industry in the UK is estimated to be worth between £45 million and £60 million (according to London based industry research firm IBISWorld, revenue from hair and beauty salons will be £3.64 billion in 2012-13). See Homa Khaleeli, “The Hair Trade’s Dirty Secret,” *The Guardian*, 28 October 2012, <http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2012/oct/28/hair-extension-global-trade-secrets> (date of last access 11 November 2012).

<sup>147</sup> See “Hair, Hair, Hair,” 68-70. While the Yak was originally used as a beast of burden, it is now mostly raised for its hair.



The U.S. government has mandated that hair labelled as “100 percent human hair” can legally contain up to 10 percent of other fibers other than human hair such as synthetic or animal hair.<sup>148</sup>

There are no known mandates in Canada. While Canada Border Services Agency has a custom tariffs schedule that includes “Human hair, unworked, whether or not washed or scoured; waste of human hair” the importation of human hair is not governed by specific regulations from any government agency. As such, labelled warnings on these products are purely superficial. Weave wearers (and women who wear braids in which synthetic or real hair is attached to one’s real hair) know very little about the hair on their heads, where it derives from, and you are hard pressed to find any labels that identify in detail how the hair is treated or the distribution chain.

The African American and black Canadian media have too often ignored the health effects of hair weaves, and have instead focused on Korean control of the hair trade. In a May 2008 feature in *Ebony* magazine entitled “Guess Who Sells Your Weave?” Adrienne Samuels reported that there were about nine thousand Korean-owned beauty supply stores in the United States.<sup>149</sup> Koreans first started opening businesses in black communities in the 1970s and 1980s by selling wigs, then weaves and extensions and now they sell it all, including chemical relaxers, shampoos, hair dyes, and moisturizing products. Back in 2000, Eric Choi, a Korean businessman and CEO of a hair care company based in the United States told *Share* in an interview that he had plans to expand into Canada, Toronto in particular.<sup>150</sup> There has been a virtual silence in Canada about the increased Korean ownership of black hair care, in addition to the health concerns related with hair weaves, which I discuss in detail in chapter seven. Since the late 1990s

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<sup>148</sup> Llonau, “Hair, Hair, Hair,” 70.

<sup>149</sup> Samuels, “Guess Who Sells Your Weave,” 141.

<sup>150</sup> Eric Choi’s firm, headquartered in Syracuse, New York, was the parent company of YTT Canada, with six outlets throughout the northeastern U.S. it was at the time the largest mass merchandiser in the region. Three months before the *Share* interview, the first of five superstores were opened in Toronto, and one store in the city’s east end was 3,100 square feet of retail space. See Fitzroy Greene, “New Concept for Beauty Supply Market,” *Share*, 26 October 2000, 18.

the wig and weave ads in *Share* have included Beverly Johnson's Black is Beautiful human hair wig collection<sup>151</sup> and the Calypso Silky Straight human hair brand. Today, hair weaves can be found at Korean-owned/black-owned beauty supply shops and big box retailers in Toronto, Montreal, Edmonton, Calgary, and Ottawa.<sup>152</sup> In July and December 2011 ads from the Beauty Supply Warehouse (fig. 5.13) appeared in *Share*; each included images and accompanying names for the human hair weaves available for purchase at retail in the GTA.

It has become increasingly common for hair weaves and wigs to be sold using the names of celebrities, such as the Beyoncé or Rhianna, or with the descriptors "Brazilian" or "Malaysian." In some cases, these celebrities are unaware that their name is being used to sell hair.<sup>153</sup> Further, hair labelled Brazilian and Malaysian are not culled from either country but are used to create the allure of "virgin Remy" hair as exotic. The question of black beauty is still linked to the question of why long, straight hair continues to captivate black women such that many are willing to spend exorbitant amounts of money that they do not have, wear animal hair that has been chemically processed (which may result in irrevocable hair loss), and endure health problems, such as fibroids, all so that their hair "swings from side to side." As Jones poignantly notes, "If hair is the key racial signifier after skin, then the trade makes a fine mockery of it. Processed Asian hair passes as black hair. Italian stock is allegedly blended with hair from the Third World and this passes as European. The hair of yaks ... passes as nappy hair."<sup>154</sup>

Ironically, at the same time hair weaves remain popular, natural hair has re-entered the fashion and celebrity worlds. In 2009 Solange Knowles, the sister of Beyoncé took off her weave

<sup>151</sup> Beverly Johnson's wig collection has been available for sale in Canada since 1998.

<sup>152</sup> White-owned companies are also active in the hair weave market. In 2008, Softsheen-Carson introduced a Weave Care product specifically geared toward synthetic and human hair extensions.

<sup>153</sup> In 2013, Tyra Banks filed a lawsuit in a Los Angeles County Court claiming that ten wig companies had been wrongfully using her name to sell wigs. See Julee Wilson, "Tyra Banks Slaps Wig Companies With \$10 Million Lawsuit," 2 October 2013, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/10/02/tyra-banks-wig-lawsuit-suing-companies-10-million\\_n\\_4030682.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/10/02/tyra-banks-wig-lawsuit-suing-companies-10-million_n_4030682.html) (date of last access 3 October 2013).

<sup>154</sup> Jones, "Hair Trade," 135.

and cut her hair into a short pixie cut; Viola Davis appeared at the 2012 Oscars not in her usual weave but a short auburn colour Afro; singer Jill Scott also flaunted a natural in 2012, and that same year actress Nicole Ari Parker debuted a short natural curly hairstyle, after years of wearing hair weaves. In June 2012 Parker, along with University of Pennsylvania professor Anthea Butler, cultural critic Joan Morgan, and *CurlyNikki.com* founder Nikki Walton also appeared on the Melissa Harris Perry show on MSNBC. The show reported that as of 2011 36 percent of African American women no longer chemically straighten their hair.<sup>155</sup> In 2013, songstress Goapele appeared at premiere of the film *Baggage Claim* with a short Afro, and spiritual author and advisor Iyanla Vanzant graced the February 2013 cover of *Essence* with a short auburn-brown Afro hairdo. Websites like *CurlyNikki.com* and *Nappturality.com*, and natural hair care companies like Carol's Daughter,<sup>156</sup> which caters to women with natural hairstyles, give black women the opportunity to not only purchase naturally-based products but also get styling tips in discussion forums. Mainstream beauty firms like L'Oréal, however, are not far behind companies like Carol's Daughter. In recent years, L'Oréal has launched the Dark & Lovely Au Naturelle line. Thus, just as the Afro was commodified, naturals today run the risk of becoming just another fashion aesthetic with no political currency. In fact, many black women switch back and forth between a natural and straightened hairstyle without contemplating why they get "bored," as some women say, with their real hair texture.

In 2013, Jill Scott and Nicole Ari Parker once again appeared with hair weaves in television and film roles, proving that natural hair is still a difficult commitment for many black women in a culture that continues to place a premium on long flowing straight hair. As Davis

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<sup>155</sup> Melissa Harris-Perry, "There's Big Business in Black Hair," *MSNBC*, 10 June 2012, <http://video.msnbc.msn.com/mhp/47755691/#47755691> (date of last access 11 June 2012).

<sup>156</sup> Carol's Daughter was founded by an African American woman named Lisa Price in 1993. It was initially a mail-order business. The first retail store opened in Brooklyn in 1999. The product has been endorsed by Jada Pinkett-Smith, Mary J. Blige, and Solange Knowles, to name a few.

argues, hair product advertising's "emphasis on relaxer products and on straight-textured 'fake' (manufactured) hair teaches [black] women to continue to embrace a non-black standard of beauty, often at great monetary expense ... and frequently to the detriment of the health of their own hair and scalp."<sup>157</sup> Despite the fact that hair weaves, skin bleaches, chemical relaxers, and tight braids cause irrevocable damage, the capitalist machine behind the straight-haired rule and the brown-skinned advertising ideal remains so powerful that for all those women who either resist or are removed from such aesthetics, the battle is an uphill one. While Maya Angelou once said, "Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better," when it comes to the big business of black hair and skin care, knowing better and doing better are two mutually exclusive realities that will take a lot more than *Black is Beautiful* to transcend. If you consider how chemical relaxers entered Canada's drugstores and department stores in the 1970s, it becomes possible to understand why straightened hair remains the preferred hairstyle of so many black women, and why natural hair is so difficult for many to commit to.

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<sup>157</sup> Judy Davis, "New Hair Freedom," 38.

## Chapter 6

### Black hair and skin care at retail: selling cosmetics and relaxers in Canada

#### I. White-owned beauty firms solicit black consumers

During the era of Black is Beautiful, Afros and other natural hairstyles became the valorized signifiers of the ideal of “natural black beauty.”<sup>1</sup> In the hope of securing black business, white-owned companies were faced with increased pressures to make their products more racially inclusive. Over the course of the 1970s, several companies responded with strategies for market expansion and segmentation, for instance Revlon developed a line of chemical relaxer and Alberto-Culver, Clairol, and L’Oreal also expanded their appeals to black consumers.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, black women continued to face tremendous sociocultural pressures to straighten their hair. For instance, Susannah Walker found articles about the Afro “trend” written in the late 1960s that mentioned that some women wore wigs over their naturals when at work in order to avoid trouble with white employers.<sup>3</sup> Between 1970 and 1990 black beauty culture entered Canada’s “mainstream.” By mainstream I mean black skin care and hair care products could be found at drugstores and department stores in cities and towns with significant black populations, alongside all other beauty products. Eaton’s and Simpson’s, Shoppers Drug Mart (Pharmaprix in Quebec) all helped to mainstream black beauty culture.

By the late 1970s, “no-lye” chemical relaxers became available with claims that they were gentler and “safer” than prior hair relaxers, and by the early 1980s, chemical relaxing

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<sup>1</sup> Shirley Tate, “Black Beauty: Shade, Hair and Anti-Racist Aesthetics,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30.2. (2007): 303.

<sup>2</sup> Kathy Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America’s Beauty Culture* (New York: Metropolitan Books Henry Holt and Company, 1998), 263.

<sup>3</sup> Susannah Walker, “Black is Profitable: The Commodification of the Afro, 1960-1975” in *Beauty and Business: Commerce, Gender, and Culture in Modern America*, ed. Philip Scranton (New York and London: Routledge, 2001), 274. Walker writes further that in 1971, *Jet* magazine reported that the Philadelphia Commission on Human Rights had received several complaints from black women who had been sent home from work, or even fired for wearing Afros.

became the standard black hair care method, though other chemical-based hairstyles, such as the “Jheri Curl,” which I discuss later in this chapter, also emerged. In May 1970 *Essence* became the first black periodical “to fill its pages with stories and photo layouts of wigs (including Afro wigs), weaves, hairpieces, and straight styles alongside styles for natural hair.”<sup>4</sup> In Canada, *Contrast* was the first black publication to do the same thing. While the *West Indian News Observer* (1967-1968) had promoted black beauty culture, it was mostly local hair salons, barbershops and mail-order products. In the 1970s *Contrast* became the primary outlet for white-owned and African American-owned beauty companies to advertise new black beauty products, promote in-store product demonstrations, and announce the locations where products were sold.

Importantly, this chapter is not concerned with official corporate documents, the actual practices that created the corporate advertisements or the retailer strategies. Instead, I focus on the textual and visual strategies used by corporations to cultivate a black beauty culture in Canada, and the social and cultural factors that impacted the image of black womanhood. How did black beauty culture, which was generally seen as a small niche market, enter the mainstream retail sector? How did this entry impact the representation of black women in product advertising? Did black women’s inclusion in the mainstream beauty culture shift the representation of white womanhood?

## II. Black cosmetics and skin bleaching products at retail

The year 1971 was a transitional year for black beauty culture in Canada.<sup>5</sup> It marked the first time black beauty products not only entered large department stores, specifically Eaton’s

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<sup>4</sup> Ayana D. Byrd and Lori L. Tharps, *Hair Story: Untangling the Roots of Black Hair in America* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2001), 67.

<sup>5</sup> The year 1971 also marks the first time a black woman hosted a television show in Canada. In February and March, Kay Livingstone, the first president of CANEWA, hosted a news program on Channel 19 called *Your Weekly Calendar*. The now defunct Channel 19: CKXT-DT-2 was a television station in London, Ontario. “She has

and Simpson's, but it also marked a period of cultural debate about the Afro, black women's beauty, and other natural hairstyles, such as braids. In January, in an article titled "Afro Debate" *Contrast* reported on a grievance by members of the Pan-African Students Organization of the Americas (PASOA) in the United States who had refuted statements printed in *Jet* magazine about the origins of the Afro.<sup>6</sup> In 1971, the newspaper remained committed to promoting the Afro hairstyle. In a December article with no by-line, titled "The Freedom of the Afro," *Contrast* highlighted the variations in the Afro hairstyle, some of which even involved hair straightening. "The very latest hair styles are here," the article stated,

The Bird requires medium length hair that is straightened and then set in soft curls.... The Puff is created by parting the hair down the middle, combing it flat at the top, then fluffing both ends into two large black balls. The Afro Shag – A short Afro with straightened hair descending along the neck and into the sideburns. The Cornrow – Fashioned by parting the braiding sectors of the hair to form geometric patterns (on the head). The Buckwheat – This is done by making very small braids and tying with ribbons.<sup>7</sup>

Earlier in 1971, in an article written by hair braider Veronica Challenger, the newspaper posed the question, "Would you dig a BRAID?"<sup>8</sup> Accompanied by a series of four photographs capturing various types of braided hairstyles, Challenger explained, "Most of us were aware ... of the need to wear our hair natural but those of us that didn't, went back to the hot irons. But these hot combed, ironed hair sisters must realize that our natural kinks isn't a fad but a part of us which is just as beautiful and unique as our flat noses and thick lips." Initially, when white-

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been doing the copy writing as well as broadcasting for this program and will return in the fall as part of a team of broadcasters," *Contrast* reported. See "Black Hostess on TV," *Contrast*, 20 March 1971, 3. In the 1940s, Livingstone also hosted a radio show in Ottawa, "The Kathleen Livingstone Show," which she continued when she moved to Toronto with her husband on several stations including the CBC. See "Kay Livingstone," *Library and Archives Canada*, <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/women/030001-1109-e.html> (date of last access 26 March 2014).

<sup>6</sup> "Afro Debate," *Contrast*, 23 January 1971, 5.

<sup>7</sup> "The Freedom of the Afro," *Contrast*, 22 December 1971, 22.

<sup>8</sup> Veronica Challenger, "Would you Dig a Braid?," *Contrast*, 3 May 1971, 7.

owned American entered Canada's Black Market (formerly the Negro Market), they relied upon the Afro and Black is Beautiful rhetoric to cultivate black consumers.

The Flori Roberts Company was the first black cosmetics firm to advertise in Canada. Established in 1965 by Roberts, a white woman with an extensive background in the fashion industry, the company came to life because Roberts had noticed the problems faced by black models seeking desirable facial makeup.<sup>9</sup> When Roberts spoke to company executives and advertising representatives at an industry seminar in 1969, for instance, she told them that the history of neglect of black women's cosmetic needs required established white companies to develop separate product lines with different brand names."<sup>10</sup> In an April 1971 *Contrast* article, "Now Black Can Be More Beautiful," Roberts' cosmetic products were introduced to readers both through an advertisement and feature article read: "It is a fact that Black women have a proud, natural beauty and a graceful style which is distinct and unique. At last there is an entire line of cosmetics catering to this unique style of Black women."<sup>11</sup> Alyce Stoney, a former modeling school director, and self-dubbed black beauty expert, had travelled to Toronto to introduce the Flori Roberts cosmetic collection. "Researched for over a year and formulated with scientific data, the entire line is based on the Melanin concept which revolves around the fact that it is the dark pigment present in the skin that makes one complexion different from the other," the article noted, adding "These colorings will be available at Eaton's in products that include a sheer liquid foundation in nine sepia shades, plus an undertoner, facial-Do crèmes to cover shadows, wrinkles, or blotches and to reshape large unattractive features."

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<sup>9</sup> Robert E. Weems, Jr. "Consumerism and the Construction of Black Female Identity in Twentieth-Century America" in *The Gender and Consumer Culture Reader*, ed. Jennifer Scanlon (New York and London: New York University Press, 2000), 172.

<sup>10</sup> Walker, *Style & Status: Selling Beauty to African American Women, 1920 – 1975* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 175.

<sup>11</sup> Joan Young, "Now Black Can Be More Beautiful," *Contrast*, 19 April 1971, 7.



For the first time in “any local cosmetic department” a Flori Roberts trained beauty consultant, Gloria Shreve, was on hand full-time at Eaton’s Queen Street location to measure every skin tone, offer a free introductory gift and teach the principles of Melanin makeup to the public. In the accompanying advertisement (fig. 6.1), a drawing of a black woman with a perfectly coiffed, medium length Afro and hoop earrings is prominently featured. For all intents and purposes the Flori Roberts Company was a black beauty firm; even though it was owned by a white woman, its products were purposefully aimed at black women, not marketed to black women in a secondary form (i.e. the hair products were not invented to be used by non-black women).<sup>12</sup> The Flori Roberts Company was not simply jumping on the Black is Beautiful bandwagon; black women consumers were its target market from the outset.

In June 1971 a dark-skinned black woman with a similarly sized Afro and earrings was again prominently featured in a Flori Roberts ad for the company’s wig collection (fig. 6.2). The following month, Roberts formally introduced the sale of Afro wigs at Eaton’s Queen Street location with the tagline, “It’s a Natural, the Softest, Silkiest Afro Stretch Wig Ever.” The ad’s copy read: “All Part of the Flori Roberts’ Way to be BLACK, BEAUTIFUL AND TOGETHER!!!”<sup>13</sup> The fact that Flori Roberts also sold black hair wigs at Eaton’s was not coincidental. Eaton’s had been in the wig business for years. For example, throughout 1968 it regularly advertised its Wig Shop in the *Toronto Star* and *Telegram*. In one representative ad in the *Star*, Eaton’s proclaimed, “Change your hairdo as often as your mood!”<sup>14</sup> And in the *Telegram* the company declared, “If you already own a wig or hairpiece from Eaton’s Fashion Wig Salon – no need to persuade you. But it’s a great time to add to your collection! If not –

<sup>12</sup> I make this argument given the fact that many chemical relaxer and skin bleaching companies had originally invented their products for industrial cleaning, not for use on black women’s hair and skin, most notably, Lustrasilk. As discussed in chapter three, the chemical relaxer firm is credited with inventing one of the first mass produced chemical relaxers, though the product was originally invented to turn raw sheepskin into luxury furs.

<sup>13</sup> Flori Roberts’ Afro Wig Advertisement, *Contrast*, 19 July 1971, 13.

<sup>14</sup> Eaton’s Wig Shop Advertisement, *Toronto Star*, 17 September 1968, 58.

there never was a better time to try one. Take ... a wiglet to add height and body to your own. Or a full wig to keep at-the-ready for great evenings – or emergencies!”<sup>15</sup>

While Eaton’s promoted the sale of black beauty products in *Contrast* it is significant to note that it played a secondary role in the entry of American firms into Canada’s black beauty market. When Eaton’s advertised in the mainstream media, it emphasized its role in bringing brands from L’Oreal or Helena Rubinstein into its stores. For example, when Estée Lauder came to Canada in 1968, Eaton’s announced the cosmetic firm’s arrival in the *Toronto Star*: “Now we are able to supply the exciting line of Estée Lauder cosmetics at both your favorite downtown stores. At Eaton’s College Street, a bright new counter has been set up. An Estee Lauder cosmetician is at all stores to guide your selection.”<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, in the black beauty ads appearing in Toronto’s only black periodical, Eaton’s voice was absent, except for the store’s logo. American interests were front and centre in the promotion of black beauty culture in Canada. Further, unlike products from Helena Rubinstein, Max Factor and Estée Lauder’s, black beauty products were only available at Eaton’s Queen Street location.<sup>17</sup> Thus, while Canadian retailers were interested in black consumers, they played a passive role in cultivating black beauty culture. Following Eaton’s lead, in July 1971 black beauty products were offered for sale at Simpson’s. An ad for the white-owned company Posner declared: “Custom blends cosmetics for black complexions” were now available at the department store, in addition to Afro products, which were similarly made available at Simpson’s downtown Queen Street location only.<sup>18</sup>

Throughout 1971, Flori Roberts continued her aggressive expansion into the Toronto market. In September of that year, the company held a “Black and Beautiful” workshop at

<sup>15</sup> Eaton’s Wig Shop Advertisement, *Telegram*, 21 October 1968, 16. A “wiglet” is a small wig used to enhance a hairstyle.

<sup>16</sup> Eaton’s Estée Lauder Advertisement, *Toronto Star*, 18 March 1968, 57.

<sup>17</sup> These products could be found at Eaton’s Queen Street but also Don Mills, Oshawa, Yorkdale, Shopper’s World (Brampton), Hamilton, and Kitchener.

<sup>18</sup> Posner Black Cosmetics and Afro Sheen Advertisement, *Contrast*, 19 July 1971, 11.

Eaton's Queen Street location.<sup>19</sup> Tailored specifically for "dark skins," the promotional ad for the workshop read: "Find out the best treatments for your skin type.... Even learn the basics of Hair and Wig Care. You'll watch a demonstration, then these experts will help you make up your own face, with individual instructions, complimentary samples and personal attention to special problems." Flori Roberts' marketing strategy was genius in that it carefully persuaded black women that their darker skin was beautiful, and it could be improved (not cured) through the use of Flori Roberts' makeup. In August 1971, the company also set up a booth at the annual Caribana Festival to promote its products, which suggests that it was paying particular attention to the nuances of Toronto's black community, and its growing West Indian population. By early 1972, Flori Roberts's advertisements grew into full-page spreads. In one representative ad (fig. 6.3) for the company's Melanin Cosmetics line appearing in April, the company continued to make prominent use of the Afro.<sup>20</sup> With the aid of a Toronto-based distributor, Beverly Mascoll, Johnson Products became the first African American-owned beauty firm to expand into Canada.

After working for a white-owned beauty products store, Mascoll had noticed that black beauty products were virtually non-existent at Canadian retail. After she approached George Johnson in Chicago, she soon became the first distributor of Johnson's Ultra Sheen Facial Fashions cosmetics in Canada. By September 1971, Mascoll placed an advertisement in *Contrast* (fig. 6.4) which noted that the Ultra Sheen product was now available directly through Mascoll.<sup>21</sup> In December 1972 Mascoll Ltd., dubbing itself "Canada's Largest Distributor of Black Beauty Products," placed another ad in the newspaper with the tagline, "We knew Black was beautiful,

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<sup>19</sup> Flori Roberts Black & Beautiful Workshop Advertisement, *Contrast*, 18 September 1971, 13.

<sup>20</sup> In January 1972 there was another first in Canada when Reverend Addie Aylestock became the first black woman to be appointed as an ordained minister in the BME church in Ontario. See Rella Braithwaite, "Ontario's First Black Woman Minister," *Contrast*, 1 February 1972, 11.

<sup>21</sup> Beverly Mascoll Advertisement, *Contrast*, 18 September 1971, 11.

long before it became popular.”<sup>22</sup> In addition to Ultra Sheen, the company’s distribution list had grown to include products from white-owned companies such as Posner, Hair Strate, Black Velvet and others; and all of these products were available at Simpson’s Queen Street location. By 1975 other African American-owned cosmetic firms advertised in *Contrast*. In February, Monette Cosmetics posted an ad for its line of over 12 products specifically formulated for black skin.<sup>23</sup> The ad stated that the product had been “featured on the August cover of *Essence* magazine.” And in 1975, the largest black cosmetics firm at the time, John H. Johnson’s Fashion Fair Cosmetics arrived in Canada.

Founded by the *Ebony* magazine publisher in 1973, Fashion Fair was an outgrowth of the magazine and its popular *Ebony* Fashion Fair Show.<sup>24</sup> Prior to the 1970s, white-owned cosmetic firms offered limited cosmetics shades, often only selling those colours which suited the complexions of white women. Similar to Flori Roberts, Eunice Johnson (the wife of John H. Johnson) was frustrated by this practice. When the Johnsons noticed that the Fashion Fair models had to blend cosmetics to match their skin tones they approached cosmetic companies to create products for black women; after their attempts proved futile, they went into a laboratory and created Fashion Fair Cosmetics.<sup>25</sup> Outside of Flori Roberts, white-owned beauty companies did not consider black women a viable market. In chapter seven, I explain how market research and popular culture in the 1990s helped to shift the marketing strategies of white-owned firms such

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<sup>22</sup> Beverly Mascoll Advertisement, *Contrast*, 22 December 1972, 16.

<sup>23</sup> Monette Cosmetics Advertisement, *Contrast*, 21 February 1975, 10.

<sup>24</sup> The *Ebony* Fashion Fair show began in Chicago in 1958 as a traveling fashion show that showcased African American women. Due to pervasive racism, black women had been excluded from the fashion runway. *Ebony* Fashion Fair was thus the first show to bring European fashion to black communities. Eunice Johnson became producer and director in 1963, and under her direction, the traveling show expanded into Canada. *Ebony* Fashion Fair made frequent trips to Toronto throughout the 1970s and 1980s. In the pages of *Contrast* advertisements for the show can be found in October 1977; October 1981; July and October 1983; January and February 1984; and April 1989.

<sup>25</sup> Linda M. Carter, “John H. Johnson,” *The American Mosaic: The African American Experience*, <http://africanamerican.abc-clio.com/> (date of last access 8 December 2011).

that black women became a primary market for their cosmetic products. Before this shift, however, Fashion Fair Cosmetics was the first black-owned cosmetics product to be sold at high end department stores such as Bloomingdale's in New York City, Marshall Field in Chicago, and Neiman Marcus in Dallas.<sup>26</sup> Significantly, Johnson never aligned Fashion Fair with the soul aesthetic. As Susannah Walker observes, "Fashion Fair ads tended to mimic the celebrity-studded articles common in the parent company's magazines."<sup>27</sup>

In 1975 a full-page Fashion Fair Cosmetics ad appeared in *Contrast* (fig. 6.5). It featured a white, Asian, and black woman (in that order from left to right) similar skin tones and straightened hair. Unlike Flori Roberts' products, which were available at Eaton's and Simpson's Queen Street locations only, Fashion Fair Cosmetics became the first black beauty product to be sold at Eaton's Queen Street but also at Yorkdale (in the city's north end), and its Hamilton location. "It's the difference that delights," the advertisement read, "Fashion Fair cosmetics from EATON'S can help bring out *your* individual beauty."<sup>28</sup> The ad copy then explained why Fashion Fair was "every woman's cosmetics":

Fashion Fair is a welcome new beauty preparation created especially for Black, Oriental or brunette complexions. It's rich in the colours needed to make the most of your skin; yet it is not overpowering. The look is healthy and radiant, but most of all, natural.... Fashion Fair lets you be beautiful by being yourself!"<sup>29</sup>

Given its ties to the fashion industry, there was no hint of Black Power in Fashion Fair advertising. Conversely, when a second African American-owned cosmetics firm, Barbara Walden Cosmetics came to Canada, an article in *Contrast* in April of 1975 explained that

<sup>26</sup> Weems Jr., "Consumerism," 172.

<sup>27</sup> Walker, *Style & Status*, 176.

<sup>28</sup> Fashion Fair Cosmetics Advertisement, *Contrast*, 20 December 1975, 12.

<sup>29</sup> "Oriental" is now considered a politically incorrect term to describe people of Asian descent.

Walden, a former dancer and actress, had launched her product in 1960 and after sales “boomed all across the United States” she decided to expand her Black is Beautiful themed products.<sup>30</sup>

Similar to Eunice Johnson, Walden had noticed that on film sets and in photographs her skin would lose its tone after she applied make-up made solely for white women. “In exasperation she sought a chemist’s help and together they developed a formula to meet her particular skin problems,” *Contrast* reported. “I’ve been black all my life and I always felt beautiful.... It’s just sad that it has taken so long for black women to become proud of their looks and to really believe that black is beautiful,” said Walden the interview. A week prior, a Walden ad explained to *Contrast* readers why her cosmetics were unique:

Because no matter how light or dark, there is an orange, or sometimes a blue undertone to black skin. That’s why makeup created for the pink undertones of the Caucasian skin can never be right for the black. Also there are more oil glands in the black skin, which make water base or matte finish foundations unsuitable. Barbara Walden makeup preparations are made with natural oils and they’re also transparent to let the warm skin tones glow through.<sup>31</sup>

Following in the tradition of Madam C.J. Walker, Walden desired to uplift black women’s self-esteem. Thus, instead of pitting a light-skinned woman against a dark-skinned woman, she focused on the commonality of the problem – finding the right cosmetic shades for all black skin. Even Fashion Fair had been guilty of reproducing the dichotomous position between lighter skin and darker skin women. In a May 1976 ad for instance, the company used the tagline “Fashion Fair for the dark-skinned woman” but the ad text immediately aligned this beauty with that of lighter-skinned women. “Black is beautiful,” the ad asserted, adding “as is Oriental, brunette and even deeply sun-tanned skin.”<sup>32</sup> While a spectrum of beauty was being presented, in

<sup>30</sup> Sandy Newton, “Enhancing the Beauty of the Black Woman,” *Contrast*, 11 April 1975, 3. According to an August, 1978 *Black Enterprise* article, Barbara Walden Cosmetics gross sales were around \$1 million a year, and its skin care products and fragrances were sold high-end department stores in New York City, Atlanta, Chicago, and Los Angeles. See Grayson Mitchell, “Battle of the Rouge,” *Black Enterprise*, 9 August 1978, 25.

<sup>31</sup> Barbara Walden Cosmetics Advertisement, *Contrast*, 4 April 1975, 5.

<sup>32</sup> Fashion Fair Cosmetics Advertisement for Dark-Skinned Women, *Contrast*, 27 May 1976, 17.

comparison, when Walden Cosmetics entered Towers Department store at Jane-Finch Mall in Toronto's northwest end in May 1976, the company used the slogan, "Make Up Just Right For You," without drawing a distinction between darker and lighter skin tones.<sup>33</sup> The juxtaposition between darker skin and lighter skin had long been used in before and after advertisements as a strategy to position the latter as more beautiful than the former, as such, Walden's emphasis solely on the beauty of dark skin without a lighter-skinned comparison held significant meaning.

At the same time cosmetic firms promoted products for black women's skin, paradoxically, advertisements for skin bleaching products appeared in the pages of *Contrast*. In February 1972 the skin bleaching firm Nadinola placed its first ad in the newspaper.<sup>34</sup> While the ad did not include an image, and the product was only available through home delivery via a small network of distributors in Toronto, Ottawa, St. Catharines, and Montreal, it marked the regular appearance of skin bleaching advertisements in the periodical. By this time, Nadinola advertisements appeared regularly in *Ebony* and *Essence* (which had also dubbed itself as, "The Magazine for Today's Black Woman"). In one representative ad in *Essence* in November 1972, the skin bleaching firm proclaimed: "Nadinola beauty creams are specially formulated for you."<sup>35</sup> The ad also noted that the product contains "hydroquinone," a skin lightening agent that specifically targeted dark areas of the skin. In chapter seven I discuss studies on hydroquinone that would reveal that while the ingredient lightened the skin, it did so by killing pigment cells and was highly toxic. At this point in the product's history, however, hydroquinone was a reassurance to consumers that the product was "scientifically" based. By the 1980s, other skin bleaching creams began to be advertised in Canada. Dr. Fred Palmer claimed that its products

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<sup>33</sup> Walden Cosmetics Advertisement, *Contrast*, 20 May 1976, 5.

<sup>34</sup> Nadinola Advertisement, *Contrast*, 1 February 1972, 9.

<sup>35</sup> Nadinola Advertisement, *Essence*, November 1972, 29.

possessed special gifts, invented by “secret formulas.”<sup>36</sup> In one of its first ads in Canada, the company promoted a facial soap and skin whitener.<sup>37</sup> With respect to the latter, the ad claimed:

Dr. Fred Palmer’s SKIN WHITENER, an exclusive formula, will help give you a lovelier complexion. Your skin will be lighter and smoother and seem to glow as it succinctly comes alive! A pleasant, easy way to a soft, lovely and glowing skin ... beauty cream that works to produce a clearer, lighter, brighter complexion.

Despite *Black Is Beautiful*, skin bleaching products never waned in popularity.

Ambi Fade Crème, which had first been advertised in *Ebony* in the mid-1970s, also hit the Canadian market by the early 1980s. In one representative ad from the October 1975 issue of *Ebony*, Ambi introduced itself to African American readers: “Welcome to AMBI’s world of beauty.... AMBI helps clear your complexion leaving it radiantly alive and more naturally clear. AMBI leaves your skin looking more evenly toned, lovelier, soft and glowing. Blotches and ashiness seem to fade away.”<sup>38</sup> By June 1983 the company’s advertisements included the slogan, “Show-off the natural you... with Ambi skin toning cream.”<sup>39</sup> Significantly, Ambi never branded its product as a “skin whitener”; instead, it emphasized the need for a clearer complexion. According to one regular user, many black women bought skin whiteners not to look white but to lighten their freckles and smooth out dark spots.<sup>40</sup> With respect to Nadinola, unlike its advertisements in *Ebony* in the 1940s, 1950s and early 1960s, which had celebrated the “Brownskin” beauty, in the 1980s, the company refrained from placing an emphasis on skin colour. Instead, its skin bleaching crèmes became age-defying products. In one representative ad in February 1985, the company’s tagline read: “Smoother, Youthful-looking Skin All Over In

<sup>36</sup> Julia, K. Blackwelder, *Styling Jim Crow: African American Beauty Training during Segregation* (College Station, Texas: Texas A & M University Press, 2003), 17.

<sup>37</sup> Dr. Fred Palmer Skin Lightener Advertisement, *Share*, 31 May 1980, 2.

<sup>38</sup> Ambi Skin Bleaching Crème Advertisement *Ebony*, October 1975, 6.

<sup>39</sup> Ambi Skin Bleaching Crème Advertisement *Share*, 26 June 1983, 2.

<sup>40</sup> Kathy Russell, Midge Wilson and Russell Hall, *The Color Complex: The Politics of Skin Color Among African Americans* (New York: Anchor Books), 1992, 51.



Just Minutes a Day.”<sup>41</sup> Over the course of the 1970s, skin bleaching products become widely available, and when the chemical relaxer came to Canada, the soul aesthetic companies relied upon in the early part of the decade was replaced with a straight-haired aesthetic.

### III. Black hair salons transition from Afros to relaxers

Some of the first hair salons in Toronto were opened by black West Indian men, such as Kemeel Azan, who, as discussed in chapter five, opened Beauty World in 1968. Several black women, however, also opened salons in the late 1960s. In December 1967 Mells Hair Dressing posted an ad in the *News Observer* for her salon at Yonge and Dundas. An ad for Phyllis’ Authentic Hair Styles on Vaughan Road (at Oakwood) appeared in January 1968, and in April of that year, Rose’s Beauty Salon on Oakwood Avenue also advertised her services. Black hair care in the late 1960s almost exclusively involved thermal (hot comb) hair straightening, with the exception of Rose’s Beauty Salon which also offered wig services. By 1970, however, Afro hairstyling became part of the repertoires of most black hairstylists in Toronto. By 1973, even Azan’s Beauty World, which had vehemently resisted the Afro back in 1968, openly embraced the style. In November, the beauty salon’s advertisement read, “Living black – From the Afro to the Cornrow.”<sup>42</sup> Other hair salons also began to use the Afro soul aesthetic in their advertisements (fig. 6.6).

In April 1970, *Contrast* reported on the one-month anniversary of Chalet Beauty Bar, a beauty salon operated by Jamaican-born Dorothy Flint.<sup>43</sup> Located at Queen Street East near Coxwell Avenue, a predominantly white neighbourhood at the time (and today), Flint derived 75 percent of her business from white clientele. When by the mid-1960s, “beauty salons in urban

<sup>41</sup> Nadinola Skin Bleaching Advertisement, *Share*, 7 February 1985, np.

<sup>42</sup> Azan Beauty World Advertisement, *Contrast*, 16 November 1973, 3.

<sup>43</sup> “Beauty Bar’s First Anniversary,” *Contrast*, 4 April 1970, 14.

business districts [in the U.S.] were increasingly integrated, with about one-quarter of black beauticians working in white-owned shops or on white customers,”<sup>44</sup> in Canada, most black beauty salons were located in predominantly white communities. As the black population was largely dispersed, there was no critical mass that would have justified servicing a black clientele exclusively. As such, black hairdressers who serviced white customers were not an anomaly; if a business were to survive it had to cater to whites and blacks.<sup>45</sup>

Significantly, Flint had received her formal training at Toronto’s Marvel Beauty School.<sup>46</sup> While black women were precluded from such training schools a generation before, in the early 1970s, beauty schools were actively seeking to expand their black enrollment. In 1972, for instance, Marvel advertised its training for black hairstylists.<sup>47</sup> In an advertisement in *Contrast*, the school proclaimed, “It takes a SPECIAL talent to become a BLACK HAIR STYLIST”:

Few hair stylists have the skill to work properly with black hair and white hair. A true styling specialist can achieve the sensational natural look in both. That specialist should be *you*. Marvel Schools is the only Beauty School in Canada teaching the professional level in both. You’ll learn the art of temporary pressing, thermal setting and permanent hair straightening.

It is important to note that Marvel did not provide training in natural hairstyling; instead, it valorized the practice of hair straightening as the only technique for the handling of black hair.

In 1979 *Contrast* introduced a series on black women’s hair called “Hairways.” Written by columnist Phyllis Broom, the features instructed black women on how to properly use chemical relaxers, explaining the benefits of thermal hair straightening methods as compared to

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<sup>44</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 257.

<sup>45</sup> Black hairstylists began to work at white-owned hair salons, such as Eaton’s Hairworks, in the mid-1970s.

<sup>46</sup> In 1928, Marvel Beauty School first advertised in *The Globe* that its Yonge Street location (opposite the Pantages Theatre) was seeking hairdressers. See *The Globe*, 24 February 1928, 16. And by 1947, Marvel was operating out of a location on Bloor Street West, and had opened schools in Bramalea, Hamilton and Ottawa. See *Globe & Mail*, 26 June 1947, 29.

<sup>47</sup> Marvel Beauty School Advertisement, *Contrast*, 29 September 1972, 9.

Afros. In April, Broom complained about the poor pay black hairdressers received for hair care. “Many black women still feel that they can go out and spend \$70 to \$80 on a pair of shoes or \$90 on a silk shirt but that they should get a hairdo for next to nothing.”<sup>48</sup> Broom argued that where a white nurse or school teacher got the same salary as a black nurse or teacher, white women paid twice or three times as much for hair care as compared to black women, in spite of the fact that black hair took more time to care for. Meanwhile in the United States, a customer at a black beauty salon in the late-1970s paid from \$25 to \$50 to have her hair relaxed, a markup of six hundred to twelve hundred percent compared to the cost of the relaxer product.<sup>49</sup> While the comparable figures are not available in Canada, Broom’s anecdotal account suggests that a similar markup on black hair care did not exist in black hair salons in Canada.

Two months prior, Broom also argued that thermal hair straightening was a better option for black women’s hair than wearing an Afro. “Properly done thermal straightening does not harm the hair and in many instances ... helps damaged hair to grow,” she argued, adding that the Afro was a “destructive hairstyle” because unless it was cropped closely to the head, the hair would break off.<sup>50</sup> While the Afro had made a positive statement about cherishing one’s blackness, Broom argued that

that time is now past and [we have] moved on to more urgent matters. Just as we now know that an Afro does not mean that a person is even remotely concerned with blackness and that that person could be wearing an Afro because it is convenient for their life-style, we also accept that the Afro is a very time-consuming hairstyle unless it is kept very short.

Even though many white-employers disparaged braided hairstyles, like cornrows, Broom argued that such styles were a better option for black women than the Afro: “It is neat; it can always be controlled; it does not require a great deal of after-care and it is truly beautiful if properly

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<sup>48</sup> Phyllis Broom, “Black Hair Dressing,” *Contrast*, 27 April 1979, 16.

<sup>49</sup> Yla Eason, “Battle of the Beautician,” *Black Enterprise*, November 1980, 36.

<sup>50</sup> Phyllis Broom, “More about Damaged Hair,” *Contrast*, 8 February 1979, 12.

executed.”<sup>51</sup> This historical discourse demonstrates how black hairstyling, irrespective of its political connotation, was often reduced to the issue of maintenance. At the time, health professionals had not yet begun to question the health effects of thermal straightening (i.e. burnt ears!), and the fact that, if done improperly, tight braiding could also lead to hair loss. Similarly, when the chemical relaxer was available for sale at retail, there was very little concern of its potentially harmful effects.

#### IV. The chemical relaxer comes to Canada

In 1973, black beauty products entered drugstores, malls and shopping plazas. In February of that year, Libra Cosmetics was the first product to be promoted as a “cosmetics collection designed expressly for deep skin tones” at multiple drugstore locations in Toronto.<sup>52</sup> Robert E. Weems Jr. suggests that in the United States, “although there existed a sizable market for high-priced black cosmetics during the 1970s, the beauty and personal care products industry did not ignore the needs of less-affluent African American women.”<sup>53</sup> In the August 1977 issue of *American Druggist*, a drug and pharmaceutical publication, drugstores were given advice on how best to reach black women seeking more economical products. Some retailers believed that black cosmetics should be given its separate section, while others felt that black cosmetics should be included in the regular cosmetic department.<sup>54</sup> One retailer explained:

There’s a dichotomy here and I don’t know how to solve it. Blacks have a definite desire for ethnic cosmetics. But psychologically, no one wants to be singled out by announcing, in effect, “I’m black and I have to buy black cosmetics.” With Revlon’s Polished Ambers, she feels more comfortable because everyone buys

<sup>51</sup> Broom, “More about Damaged Hair,” 15.

<sup>52</sup> Libra Cosmetics Advertisement, *Contrast*, 9 February 1973, 1. Black cosmetic products were made available at Super-Save Drug Mart (St. Clair and Yonge St.), K-Mart (Albion Mall), Triangle Drugs (St. Clair Ave. W.), Flemingdon Park Pharmacy, Rosebury Square Drug Mart (Marlee Ave.), and several downtown Toronto pharmacies.

<sup>53</sup> Weems, Jr., “Consumerism,” 172.

<sup>54</sup> “Selling Black Cosmetics Proves a Tricky Business,” *American Druggist* 176 (August, 1977): 60; Weems Jr., “Consumerism,” 173.

Revlon. But if she buys Ultra Sheen, she's saying she's different. And in America, everybody wants to be the same.<sup>55</sup>

Despite the fact that the black population in the United States was, by the 1970s, diverse and one's racial identification was based on a myriad of factors including geographic location, language, and culture, it is interesting to note that white retailers, as revealed in the aforementioned quote, categorized African American women into a monolithic group, speaking for and about their psychic state and their conceptions of what it meant to be "American."

In Canada, black cosmetics have historically been located on a separate shelf in drugstores and at a separate counter in department stores. Flori Roberts and Johnson Products, for instance, were, from the start, exclusively sold at separate department store counters.<sup>56</sup> Meanwhile "blow-out" crèmes for Afros,<sup>57</sup> skin bleaching crèmes, and less expensive cosmetics, such as Monette and Barbara Walden, were made available at drugstores and lower end department stores, such as Towers. In 1974, when chemical relaxers entered drugstores, even though hairdressers had, since the 1960s, used these straightening products, with the arrival of Revlon's French Perm, chemical relaxers were now advertised for sale at licensed hairdressers. When Revlon entered Canada's black beauty market, it continued the historical practice of white-owned companies masking their ownership of a black hair care product. Instead of using a before-and-after image, at first, Revlon used its product's name, French Perm. In April 1974, for instance, the company informed *Contrast* readers that French Perm No-Base Crème Relaxer,<sup>58</sup> was distributed locally by Ebony Eye Beauty Supplies, and was available at beauty salons, all of

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<sup>55</sup> "Selling Black Cosmetics," 60.

<sup>56</sup> Fashion Fair Cosmetics has never been sold in Canada anywhere other than Eaton's, Simpson's, and more recently, at Hudson's Bay.

<sup>57</sup> A "blow-out" crème for an Afro is a product that is used to moisturize the hair. After washing an Afro, the hair shrinks into tight curls, expanding the hair into a larger Afro requires the use of a blow dryer. Because blow drying can be very damaging to the hair, blow-out crème protects the hair by adding moisture to the process.

<sup>58</sup> The difference between "base relaxers" and "no-base relaxers" are as follows: Base relaxers require the person to base their entire scalp with a protective cream prior to the chemical relaxer being applied. No-base relaxers have a protective cream built in the relaxer that settles onto the scalp.

which were located on Eglinton Avenue West.<sup>59</sup> The company's name did not appear in the ad. In May, Royal Crown also promoted the sale of its no-base crème relaxer at "most food and drug stores."<sup>60</sup> In June, Ebony Eye Beauty Supplies alerted *Contrast* readers that its list of beauty salons had expanded to include salons on St. Clair Avenue West and Dufferin Street.<sup>61</sup> By 1975 the black beauty supply chain was as follows: high end cosmetics were offered for sale in department stores, drugstores and food marts sold bleaching crèmes and lower end cosmetics, hairdressers offered chemical relaxers, and American firms, through a local network of distributors, had gained a foothold in Canada's black beauty market.

In November 1975 when Eaton's placed an advertisement in *Contrast* it marked the decline of the Afro as the preferred hair texture of black beauty advertising:

For today's contemporary young woman, here's a great way to be first in hair fashion – and it won't cost you a penny. Walter Fountaine, internationally known fashion and technical director for Glemby International, is coming to town – with a brand new technique called 'Defrisage'. A contemporary method of relaxing hair to form its own curl pattern.<sup>62</sup>

The ad also featured an image of a light-skinned woman wearing the new chemical style with a caption that read, "We'd Like To Use Your Head." A few weeks later, Eaton's added "Defrisage" to its beauty salon repertoire at its Queen Street, College Street, Yorkdale, Sherway Gardens, Don Mills, Bramelea, and Oshawa locations:

Different heads need different care and Eaton's 'Hairworks' has the answer. The ultimate fashion experience. After a soothing shampoo, trained specialists smooth your hair with a new relaxer technique – Defrisage press-and-curl – and your hair emerges sleek and satiny. Then talented fingers snip and shape it into just the right style ... and it's blown dry into a look you'll live happily with.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Revlon's First French Perm Advertisement, *Contrast*, 12 April 1974, 13.

<sup>60</sup> Royal Crown Chemical Relaxer Advertisement, *Contrast*, 10 May 1974, 13.

<sup>61</sup> Ebony Eye Beauty Supplies Advertisement, *Contrast*, 14 June 1974, 14.

<sup>62</sup> Eaton's Hairworks Advertisement, *Contrast*, 21 November 1975, 3.

<sup>63</sup> Eaton's Hairworks Advertisement, *Contrast*, 5 December 1975, 16.

In May 1976, Johnson Products, in cooperation with Marvel Beauty School, held one of the first chemical relaxer demonstrations in Toronto. According to *Contrast*'s reporting, a large number of hairstylists gathered at Yonge and Bloor in the city's core to hear advice from Marcia Glenn, a representative of Johnson Products in Chicago.<sup>64</sup> The newspaper may have continued to promote the soul aesthetic, such as a September 1972 feature called, "Headwrapping Made Easy," which instructed readers on how to wrap their hair in a traditional African style,<sup>65</sup> but as the decade progressed, the advertising imagery of American beauty firms increasingly privileged straightened hair. One of the last ads to make prominent use of the Afro appeared in a July 1974 Flori Roberts ad; it featured a drawing of a dark-skinned woman with full lips and an exceedingly large Afro (fig. 6.7). By 1975, however, the demise of the Afro could be seen in product advertising, and in the black film genre known as blaxploitation.

## V. Blaxploitation and the fall of the Afro

In her 1977 single "Yu-ma/Go Away Little Boy" soul singer Marlena Shaw sang, "Some Afro Sheen, some Afro clean/Some Afro fluid, some Afro do it to it/Come on and sit it up in the room and look at the Black is Beautiful."<sup>66</sup> Even though beauty companies were, by 1977, actively pursuing a strategy to expand the sale of the chemical relaxer, the Afro was still firmly a part of the black cultural experience. There were several Hollywood films in the early 1970s that seemed to transcend the marginalized status of black women in film but which also captured the increased popularity of the Afro and the valorization of dark skin as beautiful. The 1972 film *Sounder* starring Cicely Tyson, for instance, was ground-breaking for several reasons. It was one

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<sup>64</sup> "Hairdressers Gather For Demonstration," *Contrast*, 7 May 1976, 3. At the event, Glenn used Canadian models to demonstrate how chemical straightening worked, all the while stressing the fact that the chemical process was "permanent."

<sup>65</sup> Logan Lessona, "Headwrapping Made Easy," *Contrast*, 15 September 1972, 14.

<sup>66</sup> Marlena Shaw, "Yu-ma/Go Away Little Girl," *Sweet Beginnings*, Columbia Records, 1977.

of the first films of the decade to feature a black woman in a leading role who was not a maid or a menial. Further, as film critic Donald Bogle notes, “the fine-boned, slender Tyson did not physically fit the traditional image of the strong black woman, that of the large, physically overpowering mammy heroine.”<sup>67</sup>

Following Tyson’s breakthrough, Diahann Carroll starred in *Claudine* (1974), a film about a single black mother living in Harlem who falls in love with a black man (played by James Earl Jones). “A heart and soul comedy, can you dig it?” read the promotional poster for the film, which also garnered Carroll an Academy Award nomination.<sup>68</sup> R&B Singer Diana Ross starred in the Billie Holliday biopic *Lady Sings the Blues* (1972) for which she also received an Academic Award nomination. These films, however, would be overshadowed by the Blaxploitation genre, which as Stephanie Dunn describes was a “cycle of studio-supported 1970s ghetto action films [that] ... became a hotly contested site over the proliferation of negative black imagery and Hollywood exploitation.”<sup>69</sup> By the time of the blaxploitation genre, which ran from 1970 to approximately 1978, the black “ghetto” became the backdrop to almost every film with a predominantly black cast. The leading women of blaxploitation, most notably Tamara Dobson and Pam Grier, had significant cultural impact on black womanhood, especially as it relates to hairstyling and the historical depiction of light-skinned women as lascivious.

The “ghetto” backdrop to blaxploitation was intensified by a merchandising industry that capitalized on the genre with a flood of “commodity spinoffs.”<sup>70</sup> Mario Van Peeble’s *Sweet Sweetback’s Baadasssss Song* (1971) included a book and soundtrack album, Gordon Parks Sr.’s

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<sup>67</sup> Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, & Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films* (New York: Continuum, 2000), 250.

<sup>68</sup> Diahann Carroll was the first African American actress to be nominated for an Academy Award in the Lead Actress category.

<sup>69</sup> Stephanie Dunn, “*Baad Bitches*” and *Sassy Supermamas: Black Power Action Films* (Champaign, Illinois: The University of Illinois Press, 2008), 1.

<sup>70</sup> Ed Guerrero, *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 97.



*Shaft* (1971) and its soundtrack album by Isaac Hayes was the first of the genre to go platinum, and the song became so popular that Hayes won a Grammy Award for Best Original Score and the “Theme from *Shaft*” won the Academy Award for Best Original Song in 1972. The following year, Curtis Mayfield’s album for the film *Super Fly* also went platinum. While the genre’s leading men, Mario Van Peebles (*Sweetback*) and Richard Roundtree (*Shaft*) all wore Afros when Ron O’Neal (*Super Fly*) wore a straightened hairdo, “Afro hairdos and dashikis were soon replaced by the long, chemically straightened locks and wide sideburns of the Super Fly coiffure.”<sup>71</sup> The supposed realism of the blaxploitation genre coupled with the soul aesthetic and soul music made popular by the films had a profound influence on black consumption.

Among the most famous women of the genre were Tamara Dobson, who starred in *Cleopatra Jones* (1973) and its remake *Cleopatra Jones and the Casino of Gold* (1975), and Pam Grier, who starred in *Coffy* (1973), *Foxy Brown* (1974), *Friday Foster* (1975), and *Sheba Baby* (1975).<sup>72</sup> It is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a detailed reading of Grier’s and Dobson’s films. However, their portrayals coupled with their hairstyles helped to construct new forms of black subjectivity. The filmic images of Grier, as Dunn asserts, “personify historical, popular notions of black femininity that merged in the ‘new’ image of the baad black, sexy supermama born out of the popular culture confiscation of Black Power and feminism.”<sup>73</sup> In *Foxy Brown* (fig. 6.8), Grier wore a large bouffant wig, low midriff dresses, and often appeared

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<sup>71</sup> Guerrero, *Framing Blackness*, 96. In 1973, a poster for the blaxploitation film *The Mack* appears in *Contrast*. It features a black male holding a cane, wearing a long white mink coat, and a fedora hat (the stereotypical image of a pimp). Four black women and a stretch Cadillac are located behind the “Mack.” Each woman wears a different hairstyle – two women wear Afros, one wears a blonde straight-haired wig, and the other wears her hair straightened. All the women are also scantily clad in sexualized poses.

<sup>72</sup> The other black actresses of blaxploitation included: Vonette McGee, Gloria Hendry, Judy Pace, Esther Anderson, Paula Kelly, Carol Speed, Lisa Moore, Rosalind Cash, Jaki Demai, Rosalind Miles, Kathy Imrie, Sheila Frazier and Brenda Sykes. See Luci Horton, “The Battle Among the Beauties,” *Ebony*, November 1973, 144-46; 148; 150.

<sup>73</sup> Dunn, “*Baad Bitches*,” 108. Also see Jennifer DeVere Brody, “The Returns of Cleopatra Jones,” *Signs* 25.1 (Autumn 1999): 91-121.

naked. As Cleopatra Jones (fig. 6.9), on the other hand, Dobson wore a large Afro but at other times, her hair was covered with elaborate, wide-brimmed hats, scarves, and turbans. In *Cleopatra Jones and the Casino of Gold*, for instance, Cleopatra's masculine pant suits and large brimmed hats were juxtaposed with ultra-feminine, petite framed Asian women, and a blonde villain whose "appearance presents an idealized traditional vision of white American female glamour and beauty ... the viewer is invited to focus on her white bloneness."<sup>74</sup> Even though she had been a fashion model, Dobson's pant suits and covered hair positioned her as a woman who lacked a sexuality as compared to her hypersexual white and Asian counterparts, as well as Grier, who were frequently captured in states of undress with long, flowing hair. In a November 1973 *Ebony* feature "Battle of the Beauties," Dobson seemed astutely aware of how the genre had hypersexualized its black female characters: "The only similarity between the character of Coffy and Cleopatra Jones is that Coffy is a woman and so am I.... The difference is that Cleo is a lady, and ladies are always sexy and well-groomed. Ladies don't have to take anything off to excite anyone."<sup>75</sup> While Grier had an Afro in *Coffy* (1973), by the time of her most famous film *Foxy Brown* (1974), she wore a long, straight-haired wig.

In 1994, Angela Davis said that the commodification of her Afro image in a *Vibe* fashion feature had the effective of erasing the political connotation of the hairstyle:

The way in which this document provided a historical pretext for something akin to a reign of terror of black women is effectively erased by its use as a prop for selling clothes and promoting seventies fashion nostalgia. What is also lost in this nostalgic surrogate for historical memory – in these 'arrested moments' to use John Berger's word – is the activist's involvement of vast numbers of black women in movements that are now represented with even greater masculinist contours than they actually exhibited at the time.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Dunn, "Baad Bitches," 104.

<sup>75</sup> Horton, "Battle Among the Beauties," 150. It is important to note that in the 1973 *Ebony* article, all of the women featured wore Afros, including Pam Grier. The shift toward the appearance of black female lead characters wearing wigs and straightened hairdos can be seen in blaxploitation films made after 1974.

<sup>76</sup> Angela Davis, "Afro Images: Politics, Fashion, and Nostalgia," in *Picturing Us: African American Identity in Photography*, ed. Deborah Willis (New York: New Press, 1994), 177-78.

When taken together, Grier's flowing hair became a sign of black femininity while Dobson's Afros and headwraps became the aesthetics of the desexualized black woman preaching Black Power. Style as resistance becomes commodified as chic when, as Danae Clarke notes, "it leaves the political realm and enters the fashion world. This simultaneously diffuses the political edge of style. Resistant trends [such as wearing an Afro] become restyled as high-priced fashion"<sup>77</sup>

While the Afro may have become a fashion aesthetic in the early 1970s, as the decade of the 1970s progressed, long flowing hair became the new "sexy." As the culture shifted, hair care firms were well-positioned to respond to the shift. By 1977, the relaxer was rebranded from a "freedom" product (i.e. it had solved the turning back issue) into a sexually liberating commodity. This shift was made visible in product advertisements. Since commodities, as Sut Jhally posits, become "highly complex material-symbolic entities,"<sup>78</sup> blaxploitation may have helped to diminish the popularity of the Afro but in the late 1970s, chemical relaxer advertising symbolically repositioned chemical relaxing into a new form of black femininity and beauty. The sexualization of the women in chemical relaxer advertising could be seen throughout the pages of *Contrast*, and in 1978 in the pages of *Share* magazine, which hit newsstands in the GTA in April of that year.

## VI. Sexualizing black women in chemical relaxer advertising

In May 1977 one of the largest chemical relaxer demonstrations took place in Toronto at the Westbury Hotel on Yonge Street. *Contrast* dubbed the Beverly Mascoll organized event as "Hair relaxing and Mind-Blowing All in One Show."<sup>79</sup> The leading hair care product firms,

<sup>77</sup> Danae Clark, "Commodity Lesbianism," in *Out in Culture: Gay, Lesbian, and Queer Essays on Popular Culture*, ed. Corey Creekmur and Alexander Doty (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995), 494.

<sup>78</sup> Sut Jhally, *The Codes of Advertising: Fetishism and the Political Economy of Meaning in the Consumer Society* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 21.

<sup>79</sup> "Hair Relaxing and Mind-Blowing All in One Show," *Contrast*, 12 May 1977, 10.

Revlon, Johnson Company, and Clairol all appeared at the show. The demonstration was called “Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow” and was attended by over two hundred people. According to *Contrast*’s reporting, “[it] combined demonstrations in the new techniques of ‘hair-relaxing’, and the latest examples of the new range of hair colouring open to Black people with a dazzling fashion parade.” Beverly Mascoll introduced the hair show by telling the audience that ten years prior “few black women wore make-up – a fact which indicates the great strides which had been made by Black entrepreneurs in their efforts to bring the ‘business’ of beauty to the heart of beauty, The Black woman of today.”

Revlon launched its Realistic relaxer, which was purported to be “gentler” than previous products. And alongside Avril Spence, a contestant in the 1977 Miss Black Ontario Beauty Pageant,<sup>80</sup> Bill Madison, Vice-President of Revlon-Realistic demonstrated how to use the new chemical product. Madison was followed by the husband and wife team of Bill and Phyllis Broome from Johnson Products Company who “willingly gave away some of their own trade secrets as they demonstrated the Afro-Sheen range of hair products from Johnson’s.” The show was essentially a coming out party for American companies and their new formulated relaxers. It also marked the historical moment when chemical hair straightening became the cornerstone of the black hair care industry. Product advertising from 1977 onward positioned the chemical product as “safe,” while also equating hair straightening with sexual availability. Straightened hair signaled a new form of feminine blackness; conversely, natural black hair – that is, tightly coiled hair – became an undesirable “masculine” look.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> The Miss Black Ontario Pageant was founded in 1975 and continues to this day. In 1979 the Miss Black Quebec Pageant was also founded.

<sup>81</sup> Noliwe M. Rooks, *Hair Raising: Beauty, Culture, and African American Women* (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 130.

In May 1977, an Eaton's Fashion Fair advertisement for the new product line called "Sophisticated Lady" (fig. 6.10) appeared in *Contrast*.<sup>82</sup> It featured a black model with chemically relaxed hair. The model's eyes gaze outwardly in a seductive pose and her bare shoulder is the image's focal point. The "sophisticated lady," the ad implied, was a woman who straightened her hair. The model invites a heterosexual "to-be-looked-at-ness" as the viewer gazes upon her desirability made possible, presumably, because of her long, flowing straight black hair. In "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Laura Mulvey famously argued that women in film were simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they could be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*.<sup>83</sup> She writes further that woman "stands in patriarchal culture as a signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer, not maker, of meaning."<sup>84</sup> Several feminist scholars have astutely pointed out that race and gender complicate Mulvey's theory. As Jane Gaines has argued, "the notion of patriarchy is most obtuse when it disregards the position white women occupy over black men as well as black women"<sup>85</sup> bell hooks notes further that black female critical thinkers who are concerned with creating space for the construction of radical black female subjectivity, and the way cultural production informs this possibility, fully acknowledge the importance of mass media, "as a

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<sup>82</sup> Fashion Fair Sophisticated Lady Advertisement, *Contrast*, 19 May 1977, 8.

<sup>83</sup> Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader*, ed. Sue Thornham (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 62-3. This article was originally published in *Signs* 16.3 (1975): 6-18.

<sup>84</sup> Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure," 59.

<sup>85</sup> Jane Gaines, "White Privilege and Looking Relations: Race and Gender in Feminist Film Theory," in *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader*, ed. Sue Thornham (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 295. This article was originally published in *Screen* 29.4 (1988): 12-27. bell hooks also talks about the oppositional gaze of black female spectators. In looking at films with an oppositional gaze, she writes, "black women were able to critically assess the cinema's construction of white womanhood as object of phallogocentric gaze and choose not to identify with either the victim or the perpetrator." See bell hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze," in *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 115-32.

powerful site for critical intervention.”<sup>86</sup> My aim is to critique the ways in which, from the late 1970s through the 2000s, chemical relaxer ads constructed an image of “black woman-as-spectacle”; as passive (i.e. feminine) and male-seeking (i.e. bearer, not maker, of meaning).

In October 1977, the African American-owned Pro-Line Corporation, founded in 1970 in Los Angeles by entrepreneur Commer Cottrell, placed an advertisement in *Contrast* for its Hair Food and Kiddie Kit relaxer for children.<sup>87</sup> The ad copy read: “Deep feelings create special occasions for you to look good. Beautiful luxurious hair requires the best Pro-Line Hair Food.” In effect, the ad equated straightened hair with the act of “appearing” and being “seen.”<sup>88</sup> In the 1920s, black women faced a particular burden of appearing “that is, of deploying their own status as spectacular objects and as types or representations of a collectivity.”<sup>89</sup> Chemical relaxer ads in the late 1970s also reveal a tension between the representation of one’s self and that of the collective race. Chemical relaxers were also targeted toward young black girls which helped to cultivate the idea that straightening one’s hair was a rite of passage into womanhood. While the chemicals in “kiddie relaxers” are less harsh than relaxers geared toward adult women, the products still contain the caustic compound lye. For example, in her analysis of the Motions for Kids comic book, *The Big Girl’s Chair (TBGC)*, Shauntae Brown White found that the ultimate goal of the comic book was to sell Motions for Kids products to mothers and young girls, and that within the story, the reader learned the benefits of the products (it is mild, it feels good, it smells nice, there is a colour change that signals that the relaxer is not completely

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<sup>86</sup> bell hooks, “Oppositional Gaze,” 128.

<sup>87</sup> Pro-Line “Kiddie Kit” Advertisement, *Contrast* 27 October 1977, 14. Pro-Line’s founder and president, Commer Cottrell, parlayed an initial \$600 investment into a \$7 million a year hair care products company by 1978, with a full line of shampoos, conditioners, and hair sprays available in stores around the country. See Mitchell, “Battle of the Rouge,” 25.

<sup>88</sup> Like in the 1920s, the “appearing modern black woman” of the late 1970s also straightened her hair.

<sup>89</sup> Elizabeth M. Sheehan, “The Face of Fashion: Race and Fantasy in James VanDerZee’s Photography and Jessie Fauset’s Fiction,” in *Cultures of Femininity in Modern Fashion*, eds. Ilya Parkins and Elizabeth M. Sheehan (Durham, New Hampshire: University of New Hampshire Press, 2011), 181.

washed out of the hair), which are all tucked into the story.<sup>90</sup> White also observed that natural hair was equated with lacking modernity and with the “dark ages.”<sup>91</sup>

Where *Black Enterprise* had listed Pro-Line and Johnson Products on its list of the one hundred largest black-owned firms (the BE100) in 1977,<sup>92</sup> these companies had, paradoxically, created an image of black womanhood that evoked the image of the Jezebel. Deborah Willis and Carla Williams point out that the majority of black photographers in the early-twentieth century had favored models who approximated a white European standard of beauty; their “stock, soft-core imagery with an ethnic spin was created for the audience it represented and perpetuated the ideal of black female beauty that closely resembled a white body.”<sup>93</sup> I would argue that African American beauty firms similarly perpetuated a stock characterization of black womanhood.

By 1978, Johnson Products and Pro-Line began to face tough competition from Revlon, a company that also relied on a to-be-looked-at-ness to sell its chemical relaxers. For example, in June, a Revlon advertisement for its Realistic Permanent Crème Relaxer declared, “Go Swingy! Go Straight! Go Smooth!” (fig. 6.11).<sup>94</sup> In the ad, an exceedingly light-skinned model has her head leaning to one side while looking outwardly in a seductive stare. Her body is engulfed in the whiteness of the page and her hair is straightened. While advertisements for hair straighteners in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century relied on techniques that disparaged African features – often referring to black women’s hair as “kinky,” “ugly,” or “unruly” and dark skin

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<sup>90</sup> Shauntae Brown White, “The Big Girl’s Chair: A Rhetorical Analysis of How Motions for Kids Markers Relaxers to African American Girls,” in *Blackberries and Redbones: Critical Articulations of Black Hair/Body Politics in African Communities*, eds. Regina E. Spellers and Kimberly R. Moffitt (Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press, 2010), 25.

<sup>91</sup> White, “Big Girl’s Chair,” 25.

<sup>92</sup> Cecelia A. Conrad, “Black-Owned Businesses: Trends and Prospects,” in *African Americans in the U.S. Economy*, eds. Cecelia A. Conrad, et al. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 241. Kimberly Seals McDonald notes that these firms disappeared from the list in 1997 not because they experienced a decline in sales but because they were taken over by large, white-owned conglomerates. See Kimberly Seals McDonald, “Hair Care Firms Get Ownership Makeover,” *Black Enterprise*, September, 19, 1998.

<sup>93</sup> Willis and Williams, *Black Female Body*, 156.

<sup>94</sup> Revlon Realistic Relaxer Advertisement, *Contrast*, 8 June 1978, 16.

was “connected to a dark past ... [while] a brighter future [depended] on brighter and lighter skin tone,”<sup>95</sup> by the 1970s, this dichotomy was replaced through the erasure of natural black hair and dark skin. Straightened hair and lighter-skin became the dominant image of black beauty, and in turn, darker-skin and natural black hair ceased to exist as symbolic representations of Black Is Beautiful. While the turn of the twentieth century black beauty culturists were often criticized for exploiting black women’s insecurities, the argument can be made that chemical relaxer firms in the 1970s similarly exploited black women’s feelings of inadequacy. By the end of the decade, white-owned companies gained more control of the black hair care market by employing strategies first used by African American-owned firms, most notably Johnson Products. When, in 1975, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) forced Johnson Products to sign a consent decree acknowledging safety problems with its Ultra Sheen Crème Relaxer, which according to the FTC contained sodium hydroxide (lye) a chemical that could cause hair loss and eye and skin damage, the company’s hold on the chemical relaxer market began to decline.<sup>96</sup>

The FTC ultimately mandated that Johnson Products place a special warning for consumers on all its chemical relaxers that improper use could result in eye and skin damage.<sup>97</sup> The company agreed to the consent decree because it was under the impression that its competitors, most notably Revlon, would also be forced to follow suit. Instead, Revlon was not required to place a warning on its advertising and relaxer products until approximately two years later.<sup>98</sup> In the meantime, black consumers were given the impression that Revlon’s French Perm and Realistic Crème Relaxer were safer products than Johnson’s Ultra Sheen Permanent Crème

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<sup>95</sup> Rooks, *Hair Raising*, 35.

<sup>96</sup> Mitchell, “Battle of the Rouge,” 25.

<sup>97</sup> Mitchell, “Battle of the Rouge,” 25.

<sup>98</sup> Mitchell, “Battle of the Rouge,” 25.



Relaxer, despite the fact that Revlon's relaxer products continued to contain sodium hydroxide.<sup>99</sup> It is unknown why Johnson Products were singled out while Revlon's products, which still contained lye, were given a two year reprieve before a warning label had to be affixed on their relaxers. While the reasons behind the FTC's pursuit of Johnson Products remain unknown, outwardly, it appeared that the government was actively involved in a strategy to limit African American business development especially in the context of a decade marked by white-owned companies' increased control of the black beauty market, both in the United States and Canada.

By 1986, members of the African American community began to protest against companies like Revlon. In November, the Reverend Jesse Jackson called upon members of the African American community to boycott Revlon's products.<sup>100</sup> In an article a month prior in the *Chicago Defender*, Jackson had urged African Americans not to buy products from the company until it pulled "its business out of South Africa and develops better relations with black America." In the opinion of Jackson and others, Revlon was "stealing business away from black companies." While there was some truth to Jackson's claims, nothing was said about the damaging effects of long-term chemical relaxer use, and the ways in which white-owned and African American-owned companies alike had once again, as had been the case before *Black Is Beautiful*, singularly valorized the beauty of the light-skinned, straight-haired woman to advertise their products.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Weems Jr., "Consumerism," 174.

<sup>100</sup> Peter Scott, "Hairstylist Seek Opinion about Boycott," *Share*, November 13 1986, 26.

<sup>101</sup> At the same time advertisements for chemical relaxers privileged light-skinned models, members of the African American community were outraged when a light-skinned black woman was endorsed by the mainstream culture. In 1983 when the green-eyed, light-skinned Vanessa Williams became the first black woman to be crowned Miss America, The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) went so far as to issue a statement declaring that Williams was not "in essence black." When *Chicago Tribune* columnist Leanita McClain wrote favorably about Williams's victory, she was swamped with calls and letters from angry blacks. See Russell, Wilson and Hall, *Color Complex*, 151. Williams became the first black Miss America, but she gained notoriety when she was later stripped of the crown because she had posed nude in photographs before she entered the pageant. The charge of "not black enough" reflected the extent to which colour still divided African American communities. At the same time, Williams' nude photographs still positioned her, as Janell Hobson aptly notes, "in the traditional iconography of hypersexed black

Following the Johnson decree and Revlon's increased presence in the black hair care market many African American entrepreneurs began to fear that they were losing their grip over an industry that they had created. It did not help that some black hairdressers publicly expressed a preference for Revlon products. In 1980, for instance, Barbara Ruffin, Vice President of Black Hair Is, told *Black Enterprise* that Revlon's products were superior to Johnson's. "It would not be fair to my customers to use a product just because a black made it," she told the magazine.<sup>102</sup> According to Irving J. Bottner, President of Revlon's Professional Products (salon) division, the company sold over 17 million units of relaxer in 1978 and salon sales had rose 250 percent since 1975.<sup>103</sup> By the 1990s, the vast majority of the African American-owned beauty firms, including Johnson Products and Pro-line, would be acquired by Revlon and other white-owned companies. By the end of the 1970s, L'Oréal introduced its Radiance relaxer, Max Factor established a cosmetics line geared toward black women, and Revlon continued to push its French Perm and Realistic relaxers. The black cosmetics market was still nearly five times larger than the black hair care market, and as a result, Fashion Fair Cosmetics remained a profitable African American-owned company with products reportedly in over 800 department stores across the United States and Canada.<sup>104</sup> In the 1980s, the battle for control of the black hair care market would intensify as firms feverously attempted to minimize the damaging effects of relaxers on the hair and scalp.

## VII. Chemical relaxers branded "safe"

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womanhood." See Hobson, *Venus in the Dark: Blackness and Beauty in Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 123.

<sup>102</sup> Yla Eason, "Battle of the Beautician," *Black Enterprise*, November 1980, 36.

<sup>103</sup> Eason, "Battle of the Beautician," 36.

<sup>104</sup> Mitchell, "Battle of the Rouge," 29.

Carson Product, the first black hair care firm to advertise in *Share* magazine,<sup>105</sup> was founded in 1951 by African American Abram Minis, a native of Savannah, Georgia. Carson Products introduced a line of hair colour formulated specifically for black women in the early 1970s, but by 1978, it developed one of the first “no-lye” relaxers. On the heels of the FTC ruling against Johnson Products, Carson introduced the Dark & Lovely relaxer. The company’s Sta-Sof-Fro product for natural hair was still a top seller, but Dark & Lovely soon became Carson Products’ flagship product. The first ad for Dark & Lovely appeared as a full-page spread on the inside cover of *Share* in July 1978 (fig. 6.12).<sup>106</sup> In addition to Toronto, the advertisement alerted readers that for the first time, Dark & Lovely was available for sale at beauty salons in Hamilton, Edmonton and Calgary. The ad copy also provided a detailed explanation of how to use the chemical product, including the following disclaimer: “No base formula – one strength beautifully relaxes all hair textures. Gentle enough for colour treated hair. (DO NOT USE ON BLEACHED HAIR) DOES NOT CONTAIN SODIUM HYDROXIDE (Caustic Soda – Lye).”

Black women had commonly complained about damaged hair and burnt scalps from the use of chemical products; as such, in addition to the disclaimer, from the late-1970s onward, chemical relaxer companies also instructed users to “follow directions carefully to avoid hair loss, scalp and eye injury.”<sup>107</sup> The Dark & Lovely ad explained that Carson Products had conducted “interviews at beauty counters, in homes and beauty salons,” with black women to find out what they wanted and did not want in a hair relaxer, and they were told:

1. The product **must** work – it **must** relax the hair.
2. It should not irritate or burn the scalp.
3. It shouldn’t break the hair or cause hair loss.

<sup>105</sup> “Keeps your hair as soft as a baby’s” the ad copy read. See “Sta-Sof-Fro” Advertisement, *Share*, 8 April 1978, 3.

<sup>106</sup> Carson Products’ Dark & Lovely Advertisement, *Share*, 22 July 1978, 2.

<sup>107</sup> See also Judy Foster Davis, “New Hair Freedom? 1990s Hair Care Marketing and the African-American Woman” in *Milestones in Marketing History*, ed. Terrance H. Witkowski (Long Beach, California: Association for Historical Research in Marketing, 2001), 33.

4. It should produce permanent results, the hair shouldn't revert
5. It shouldn't have that caustic smell.

In September 1978 a Carson Products demonstration for Dark & Lovely took place at Shoppers Drug Mart at the Jane and Finch Plaza in Toronto's northwest end.<sup>108</sup> With a headline read, "No Burns, Product Claims," the *Share* article marked the first time black beauty products were sold at Shoppers Drug Mart, the drugstore founded by Romanian-born pharmacist Murray Koffler in 1962. "In its promotional material Carson Products, the makers of Dark & Lovely hair preparations, claim beautiful hair is the result of good nutrition, adequate exercise, enough sleep and proper basic care," *Share*'s Jules Elder explained. "While some of the most popular relaxers contain lye which burns the hair and irritates the scalp, the Dark & Lovely product which does not contain soda or lye, is claimed to have proven in tests that it is less irritating." By the following year, Dark & Lovely's safety claims grew even more convincing.

In a representative ad in April 1979 the company declared that Dark & Lovely was "guaranteed less burning than other leading relaxers." The copy then asked a series of questions, which were followed by detailed answers.<sup>109</sup> Some of the questions included: "How does a relaxer work?" "Isn't relaxing harmful to the hair?" "Aren't relaxers pretty much the alike?" "How is Dark & Lovely different?" With respect to the claim that Dark & Lovely caused "less irritation and burning" the company was asked how they could prove it. "First of all with animals," the ad read, adding:

In independent laboratory tests, Dark & Lovely produced far less swelling and reddening [less than half as much] than the mild formulas of leading lye based relaxer. Then we supplied an independent laboratory with Dark & Lovely, Ultra Sheen and Revlon Realistic for testing on human volunteers. The products were coded so the technicians would not know which product was being applied to

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<sup>108</sup> Jules Elder, "No Burns, Hair Product Claims," *Share*, 2 September 1978, 9. The Toronto neighbourhood of "Jane and Finch" has, since the 1970s, had a comparatively higher population of people of African descent than other Toronto neighbourhoods.

<sup>109</sup> Dark & Lovely Full-Page Advertisement, *Share*, 21 April 1979, 2.

individual test areas. Each product was applied to its own test area on each of 100 persons. Each person was asked to comment on any burning sensation at the test sites. The areas were also closely examined by laboratory personnel.

Not surprisingly, Johnson Products' Ultra Sheen was said to cause the most number of irritations and/or burning sensations, Revlon placed second, and Dark & Lovely was said to cause the least number of burns and/or scalp irritations. Carson Products essentially affirmed the fact that while a chemical relaxer would cause some degree of burn, the burning was a "natural" part of the process, and at least Dark & Lovely was the "safer" option. By the end of 1979, the Dark & Lovely Permanent Crème Relaxer was reportedly "the largest selling complete line of hair products for the black woman" and the product was described as "a beautiful way to relax your kind of hair."<sup>110</sup> Advertisements, as Jhally notes, "have to move us in some way, make us think or react; they have to pull at our emotions, desires and dreams; they have to engage the audience actively in some thought process that will, advertisers hope, lead to the purchase of their product in the marketplace."<sup>111</sup> The power of advertising had spoken. Even though "no-lye" relaxers still contained a chemical compound that was just as damaging as lye-based relaxers, Carson Products had skillfully marketed Dark & Lovely as "safe" and the result was big profits.<sup>112</sup>

With respect to Johnson Products, though the company took a hit in 1975, by 1980, it aggressively made an attempt to reclaim its place atop the chemical relaxer market. After the FTC decree, Johnson Products had a drop in market share from sixty percent to forty percent.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Dark & Lovely Advertisement, *Share*, 10 November 1979, 8.

<sup>111</sup> Jhally, *Codes of Advertising*, 106.

<sup>112</sup> The main, active ingredient in a "no-lye" relaxer is calcium hydroxide or guanidine hydroxide. Although the pH (acidity) of a no-lye relaxer is typically lower than a "lye-based" one, no-lye relaxers are often associated with dryer hair due to potential calcium buildup. The only potential benefit of a no-lye relaxer is that it is milder on the scalp at the time of application but in the long-term, a no-lye relaxer has the effect of damaging the hair follicle. The bottom line is, both types of relaxers contain ingredients that work by breaking chemical bonds of the hair, and each will damage the hair. The Federal Drug Administration (FDA) in the United States has received complaints about scalp irritation and hair breakage related to both lye and "no lye" relaxers. There are no published Health Canada complaints about chemical relaxers. See "Guide to Less Toxic Product," *Environmental Health Association of Nova Scotia*, <http://www.lesstoxicguide.ca/index.asp?fetch=personal#hairr> (date of last access 7 November 2013).

<sup>113</sup> Byrd and Tharps, *Hair Story*, 90.

In April 1980, however, it unveiled its new relaxer, Ultra Sheen Precise TM Conditioning, at the Sheraton Centre in Toronto.<sup>114</sup> According to *Contrast*'s reporting, the Precise Relaxer was the first product to combine relaxing and conditioning in one step: "No one has ever been able to combine a relaxer and conditioner into one product, though some of the most sophisticated laboratories in the country have been working on it for years," said George E. Johnson to *Contrast*. The verbal sparring between African American-owned companies and white-owned companies became increasingly public by the early 1980s. "We've gone into salons and talked to stylists. We've gone into the streets and talked to Black women.... Other relaxers, both professional and retail, are effective straighteners but they tend to leave hair dry and brittle, with split ends.... Precise changes all that," Johnson added. In the same issue, a full-page advertisement for Johnson's Ultra Sheen Permanent Crème Relaxer (fig. 6.13) appeared. The ad features a light-skinned woman with coifed straightened hair, and with one hand rested on her bare shoulder, the caption states: "Because you're ultra special."

When an ad for Johnson Product's Ultra Sheen Precise Conditioner Relaxer appeared in August 1980, the copy included the words "scientific" in order to, as Carson Products had done, downplay its caustic nature.<sup>115</sup> Available only through licensed hair salons, the ad copy read:

The Johnson Products Research Center is proud to announce Ultra Sheen's New Precise Conditioning Relaxer, an incredible scientific breakthrough in hair relaxers. Developed after years of research, this fabulous product is the only one of its kind. The first relaxer that relaxes and conditions your hair in just one step and actually makes your hair look healthier."

These claims and those of Carson Products were grossly misleading and some might even go so far as to call them negligent but at this point, such claims remained unchecked. In May 1981 Johnson Products renamed its Precise Relaxer "Gentle-Treatment," and added the "contains no

<sup>114</sup> "Johnson Company Unveils New Products at Sheraton Centre Next Weekend," *Contrast*, 3 April 1980, 9.

<sup>115</sup> Ultra Sheen Precise Conditioning Relaxer Advertisement, *Contrast*, 15 August 1980, 12.

sodium hydroxide (lye)” disclaimer to its advertisements (fig. 6.14). Throughout the 1980s, chemical relaxers became widely available at Shoppers Drug Mart, Boot’s Drug Stores, Super-X Drug Stores, Drug City, Woolworth’s, K-Mart, Miracle Mart and Eaton’s at the Eaton Centre and Yorkdale. For the first time, a Quebec-based company, Beau-Pro Distributors also distributed black beauty products out of Montreal. In 1983, Honest Ed’s, the discount store located at Bathurst and Bloor in Toronto also added the Dark & Lovely relaxer to its black beauty offerings.<sup>116</sup> By the 2000s, however, health researchers began to challenge the black hair care industry’s claims that no-lye relaxers and hair weaves were “safe”.

In 2003, dermatological researcher Amy McMichael found that chemical relaxers cause hair shaft dryness, and increased fragility of the hair cuticle, which is why users are required to treat hair with oils and other products – in most part to lessen the potentially damaging effects of the chemicals on the hair.<sup>117</sup> A published 2011 study in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* linked the use of hair relaxers with an increased risk of uterine leiomyomata (also known as uterine fibroids) in black women.<sup>118</sup> And when researchers at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center in North Carolina sampled one hundred and three black women from the area in 2013, they found that about a third exercised less simply because they were concerned it would

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<sup>116</sup> Honest Ed’s Dark & Lovely Advertisement, *Share*, 18 April 1983, np.

<sup>117</sup> Amy McMichael, “Hair and Scalp Disorders in Ethnic Populations,” *Dermatologic Clinics* 21.4 (October 2003): 629-644. South African studies have also found that chemical relaxers are used by more than two thirds of African women to straighten their hair. Relaxed hair lengths were found to be much shorter than non-relaxed hair, suggesting increased fragility. See Nonhlanhla P. Khumalo, et al., “Relaxers’ Damage Hair: Evidence From Amino Acid Analysis,” *J AM ACAD DERMATOL* 62.3 (March 2010): 402-8.

<sup>118</sup> Lauren A. Wise, et al. “Hair Relaxer Use and Risk of Uterine Leiomyomata in African-American Women” *American Journal of Epidemiology* 175.5 (September 2011): 432-40. Scientists followed more than 23,000 pre-menopausal black American women from 1997 to 2009 and found that the two to three times higher rate of fibroids among black women may be linked to chemical exposure through scalp lesions and burns resulting from chemical relaxers.

jeopardize their (chemically relaxed) hair.<sup>119</sup> In addition to severe allergic reactions, long-term weave wearing, lace front wigs, and tight braiding also cause hair loss.

A 2009 national study in the U.S. indicated that an estimated fifteen percent to nineteen percent of all African American women – more than 36.6 million women – had a history of hair loss; most notably Central Centrifugal Cicatricial Alopecia (CCCA) was the most common type of scarring hair loss found in African American women.<sup>120</sup> CCCA, which was at one point called “hot comb alopecia,” is a permanent form of hair loss that begins at the central scalp. While for many years there was no conclusive evidence that weaves, relaxers or hot combs caused CCCA, a 2011 study published in *JAMA Dermatology* (formerly *Archives of Dermatology*) suggests that hair grooming practices that cause traction, such as weaves and braids, may be contributing to the development of CCCA. These styles are more commonly used by those with the most severe central hair loss to increase hairstyle versatility while camouflaging hair loss.<sup>121</sup> For example, a 2012 photograph on *ABCnews.com* of former supermodel Naomi Campbell revealed that the model’s hairline had receded approximately two inches, likely a result of years of weaves and lace front wigs.<sup>122</sup> Before health researchers began

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<sup>119</sup> Anahad O’Connor, “Surgeon General Calls for Health Over Hair,” *New York Times*, 25 August 2011, <http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/08/25/surgeon-general-calls-for-health-over-hair/?hp&r=0> (date of last access 30 November 2013).

<sup>120</sup> Sonya Smith, “National Study on Why Black Women are Balding,” *Examiner.com*, 28 March 2009, <http://www.examiner.com/article/national-study-on-why-black-women-are-balding> (date of last access 26 November 2012).

<sup>121</sup> Angela Kyei, et al., “Medical and Environmental Risk Factors for the Development of Central Centrifugal Cicatricial Alopecia: A Population Study” *JAMA Dermatology* 147.8 (August 2011): 909-14.

<sup>122</sup> See Luchina Fisher, “Naomi Campbell’s Hair Weave Disaster,” *ABC News*, 9 August 2012, <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/entertainment/2012/08/naomi-campbells-hair-weave-disaster/> (date of last access 26 November 2013). In March 2014, television actress Countess Vaughn appeared on the CBC show *The Doctors* to discuss the health issues she has suffered as a result of wearing lace front wigs. After five years, her lace front wig, which requires the constant re-application of wig glue to stay in place, resulted in Vaughn developing a severe scalp infection, in addition to discharge from her scalp, hair loss, and skin discolouration on her scalp, the nape of her neck, and beneath her eyes. See Julee Wilson, “Countess Vaughn Reminds Us Of The Dangers Of Wigs And Weaves,” *Huffington Post*, 17 March 2014, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/03/17/countess-vaughn-hair-loss-lace-front-wigs\\_n\\_4980998.html?ir=Black+Voices](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/03/17/countess-vaughn-hair-loss-lace-front-wigs_n_4980998.html?ir=Black+Voices) (date of last access 19 March 2014).



to warn against chemical straightening another style appeared in the 1980s that for a brief moment usurped the popularity of the relaxer.

### VIII. The Jheri Curl craze of the 1980s

In the 1980s, the Jheri Curl, marketed as a “low-maintenance” curly style, briefly challenged the chemical relaxer. As Judy Davis explains, the style did not require the use of hot curlers or rollers for daily styling, and the curly texture was achieved via a two-step process: “an ammonium thioglycolate base used to straighten the natural hair followed by a roller set doused with a second chemical solution to create permanent curls. The style is thereafter maintained by liberal daily applications of a curl activator or moisturizing product.”<sup>123</sup> The original “curly perm” as it was first known, was created by Jheri Redding, a white, Illinois-born farm boy turned hair care entrepreneur who invented a chemical process to convert straight hair into curly hair. Importantly, Redding’s invention was not intended to be used on coarse-textured hair; it was originally formulated for naturally straight hair.<sup>124</sup> Willie Lee Morrow, author of the 1973 book *400 Years Without a Comb*, and creator of the plastic Afro pick, had been working on a chemical process to turn kinky hair curly since 1966, and following Redding’s invention, in 1977, he changed the name of his company from the Tomorrow Curl to the California Curl, and the style began to take off.<sup>125</sup> The Jheri Curl was essentially a colloquial term for the hairstyle. In the late 1970s numerous Jheri Curl products hit the market, all of which used a different brand name. The African American-owned SoftSheen, founded in Chicago in 1964 by Edward and Bettian Gardner, marketed a Care Free Curl product, Pro-Line had Curly Kit, Johnson Products sold Classy Curl, and Carson Products’ Sta-Sof-Fro was also used to maintain a Jheri Curl.

<sup>123</sup> Davis, “New Hair Freedom,” 34.

<sup>124</sup> Byrd and Tharps, *Hair Story*, 89.

<sup>125</sup> Byrd and Tharps, *Hair Story*, 89.

The supposed low maintenance claims made by Jheri Curl companies were appealing to many because chemically relaxed hair was quite labour intensive to maintain. In reality, however, the product contained similarly harsh chemicals and, if not cared for, left the hair brittle and dry. Further, the style was very expensive to maintain because it required a chemical process to start but also daily excessive use of multiple products from curl activator sprays to oils and moisturizers. The product-intensive nature of the Jheri Curl catapulted African American-owned companies – SoftSheen, Carson and Pro-Line – to the top of the black beauty market. Within months of the Jheri curl’s arrival, African American celebrities also adopted the style, from The Jacksons to New Edition, Nikolas Ashford and Lionel Ritchie, and even actress Debbie Allen sported the new look. Unlike chemical relaxers, which were primarily used by black women, Jheri Curls were worn by both men and women. I would argue that the universal appeal of the Jheri Curl had much to do with the fact that most of its first adopters were male and female celebrities (like the aforementioned). Second, the Jheri Curl did not require the need for curlers and irons, which were costly, time consuming, and historically coded as feminine beauty aids.

In March 1980 Eaton’s made the Jheri Curl its number one priority by placing an advertisement in the pages of *Share* which gave a 20-percent discount on all relaxer perms, including the “exciting new ‘Is Curl’ (Jerry Curl).”<sup>126</sup> The ad’s caption read: “Is” ... it’s the right chemistry. More than a look, it’s a let-go, laid-back feeling. In fact, a whole new no-fuss life for black hair. Leaves the shine behind. Makes hair easier to manage. You’ll love it!” When Michael Jackson was injured while filming a Pepsi commercial on 27 January 1984, the hairstyle gained a lot of negative notoriety. During a pyrotechnic stunt sparks made contact with Jackson’s Jheri Curl, which was coated with curl activator. It caused extensive burns to his hair and scalp.

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<sup>126</sup> Eaton’s Is Curl Advertisement, *Share*, 29 March 1980, 5. The Jheri curl was also called “Is curl,” “Jerry curl” or “Jeri curl.”

While many blacks suffered no ill effects with the style, some did encounter problems, including hair breakage and thinning.<sup>127</sup> By 1984, the Jheri Curl had lost much of its luster, and chemical relaxers once again became the dominant chemical hair product.<sup>128</sup>

In April, for instance, SoftSheen introduced the Optimum Conditioning Relaxer System by placing a full-page ad in *Share*.<sup>129</sup> In cooperation with Mascoll Beauty Supply, the company launched the product at the Sheraton Centre on Queen Street to an audience of licensed hairdressers. By December, Optimum was reportedly being used at 52 hair salons across the GTA.<sup>130</sup> By the end of the 1980s, advertisements for Johnson Products' Gentle-Treatment, Carson Product's Dark & Lovely, SoftSheen's Optimum and its new product Wave Nouveau, Revlon's Realistic Permanent Crème Relaxer, and Alberto-Culver's relaxer TCB (Taking Care of Business) filled the pages of *Contrast* and *Share*. Eaton's continued to offer Fashion Fair Cosmetics, Flori Roberts and Zuri Cosmetics; and Shoppers Drug Mart became one of the main retailers selling chemical relaxers, in addition to Wal-mart, which entered Canada in 1994; skin bleaching crèmes from Ambi, Nadinola and Dr. Fred Palmer also became widely available at drugstores. By the 2000s, as hip-hop culture became the dominant black cultural expression in the United States, chemical relaxer ads began to reflect some of the consumer habits and behaviours celebrated in hip-hop, such as conspicuous consumption.

## IX. Hair care product advertising and conspicuous consumption

In *Society of the Spectacle*, Guy DeBord explains that as social systems shift from industrial to post-industrial economies they undergo ontological changes. Rather than being

<sup>127</sup> See Andre Walker, *Andre Talks Hair* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), 98.

<sup>128</sup> In Eddie Murphy's *Coming to America* (1988) the character of Darryl Jenks (played by Eriq La Salle) was a model and heir to his family's company "Soul Glo," which was a Jheri Curl-like product. This film parodied the fact that Jheri Curls needed to be kept wet with activator products and in many cases the excessive wetness of the hairstyle would stain pillow cases, couches, and other fabrics.

<sup>129</sup> SoftSheen Optimum Conditioning Relaxer System Advertisement, *Share*, 12 April 1984, 11.

<sup>130</sup> Beverly Mascoll Advertisement for Optimum Conditioning Relaxer System, *Share*, 6 December 1984, 17.

organized around the exchange of goods based upon actual use values, the spectacle establishes mass consumption of as a way of life.<sup>131</sup> Importantly, Jean Baudrillard has argued that as a medium becomes its own message, we then have a demand for advertising in and of itself and the question of “believing” in it or not is no longer relevant. Advertising, he asserts, “is completely in unison with the social, whose historical necessity has found itself absorbed by the pure and simple demand for the social: a demand that the social function like a business, a group of services, a mode of living or of survival.”<sup>132</sup> As the spectacle structures both work and play, diverse aspects of life are thus made significant inasmuch as they can be made marketable.<sup>133</sup> This process of magnification cultivates a spectacular form of consumption which, as Eric Watts and Mark Orbe argue, is structured in a fashion different from traditional spectacle; “its rhetorics respond to cultural variables in diverse patterns oriented by the logic of sign value.”<sup>134</sup> As we come to think something is real, its authenticity is only related to its existence as a serialized commodity, and as something that can be bought and sold.<sup>135</sup> The marketing strategies used to sell chemical relaxers from the 2000s onward reflect the repositioning of straightened hair by hair care firms not as simply sexually liberating but also lifestyle-related. This repositioning was interconnected with conspicuous consumption.

In 2002 Pro-Line aggressively relied upon hip-hop imagery in its advertisements in *Share* magazine. Though the company had been acquired by Alberto-Culver in 1999, only Pro-Line’s name appeared on its relaxer ads. In one representative ad for Motions (fig. 6.15), a dark-skinned woman sits against a white car with her legs wide-open. She wears a white, spaghetti-strapped

<sup>131</sup> Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 2004), 32-4.

<sup>132</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 90.

<sup>133</sup> Eric King Watts and Mark P. Orbe, “The Spectacular Consumption of ‘True’ African American Culture: ‘Whassup’ with the Budweiser Guys?,” *Critical Studies in Media Communications* 19.1 (March 2002): 4.

<sup>134</sup> Watts and Orbe, “Spectacular Consumption,” 4.

<sup>135</sup> Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *The Postmodern Turn* (New York: Guilford Press, 1997), 102.

low midriff dress with a black fur coat wrapped around her shoulders. The ad copy above her read: “Only your stylist can relax your hair with ... Motions.” The hypersexual imagery in this ad is a direct reflection of the popularization of the term “ghetto fabulous,” which first appeared in hip-hop lyrics in the late 1990s/early 2000s. The term is used to describe the extravagant behaviours among lower-income blacks who live in impoverished neighbourhoods. In 1998, the West Coast rapper Ras Kass’ single “Ghetto Fabulous” featuring rappers Dr. Dre’s and Mack 10 rejoiced about the extravagant lifestyle of food, women, and drink, and the “ghetto fab” lifestyle also appeared in the 1999 song “Bling Bling” by B.G. (Baby Gangsta) of the New Orleans rappers “Cash Money Millionaires.” As hip-hop culture constructed an image of a fictive black woman who engaged in the conspicuous consumption of bourgeois luxuries, the mainstream culture constructed a similar image. As Katrina Bell McDonald explains,

To be ghetto fabulous can mean any number of things... the most dangerous form of ghetto-fabulous attitude is when black women ‘embrace the worst parts of themselves and tout them as being fabulous.’ For others, being ghetto fabulous means being frivolous and irrational in the way one spends what little money one has. It means her poor attempt at mimicking a life of luxury through the conspicuous consumption of cheap, tacky clothing and accessories.<sup>136</sup>

Even though those women who have lived in the ghetto, with its lack of safety, security, autonomy, beauty, and freedom of mobility, are far from living a fabulous life,<sup>137</sup> as Catherine Ross-Stroud poignantly notes, the girls/women who live in housing projects are often referred to as “ghetto girls” because it is assumed that their dress (a low midriff top, fancy fingernails, large gold chains, even larger hoop earrings, and cheap clothing) is the aesthetic of the ghetto chic girl/woman.<sup>138</sup> While the woman in fig. 6.15 could be read as embodying the term “ghetto”

<sup>136</sup> Katrina Bell McDonald, *Embracing Sisterhood: Class, Identity, and Contemporary Black Women* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 139.

<sup>137</sup> See Karen Bettez Halnon, *The Consumption of Inequality: Weapons of Mass Distraction* (New York: Pelgrave MacMillan, 2013).

<sup>138</sup> Catherine Ross-Stroud, *Janet McDonald: The Original Project Girl* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2008), 84.

as a synonym for allegedly dysfunctional behaviour (i.e. hypersexuality) and values (i.e. materialism) of black people from urban neighbourhoods, it could also be read as reflection of a positive articulation of ghetto as a source of “pride in struggle, creativity, and the ability to survive [or embody beauty] amidst economic and criminal dysfunction.”<sup>139</sup>

While ghetto fabulous has been taken up in the popular culture as a quasi-joke, as Ross-Stroud observes, the term is bound up in class issues: “Popular culture portrays ghetto fabulous aesthetic as evoked by those who grow up poor and then somehow, either through luck, fame, or hard work, gain disposable income, which they spend on nonnecessities. These items are often ostentatious, verging on tacky.”<sup>140</sup> The dark-skinned woman in the Motions ad (fig. 6.15) is symbolically attached to the ghetto fabulous lifestyle, and her chemically relaxed hair serves to complete the ghetto chic image. In comparison, a subsequent Motions ad appearing in 2002 (fig. 6.16) features a brown-skinned woman in an elegant strapless dress and soft make-up. While her body, dress and hair presents an image of middle-class femininity, her pose (she is leaning against two multi-coloured pillows) coupled with the interior décor (a luxurious rug hangs on the wall behind her) aligns straightened hair with luxurious taste and refinement. In an April 2002 ad for Soft & Beautiful (a Pro-line brand also owned by Alberto-Culver) (fig. 6.17), a head shot of a brown-skinned woman with a perfectly coiffed, straightened hairdo is adjacent to a caption read: “I AM SENSUAL ... I AM DESIRED ... I AM ALWAYS SOFT & BEAUTIFUL.”<sup>141</sup> These two ads reflect an image of sophistication and glamour. Significantly, these ads (fig. 6.15 to 6.17) represent the two depictions of black womanhood that have come to dominate

<sup>139</sup> See Cora Daniels, *Ghetto Nation: A Journey into the Land of Bling and Home of the Shameless* (New York: Doubleday, 2007); Murray Forman, “Represent: Race, Space, and Place in Rap Music,” *Popular Music* 19.1 (2000): 65-90; Nelson George, *Buppies, B-Boys, Baps & Bohos: Notes on Post Soul Black Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1992); Robin D.G. Kelley, *Yo Mama’s Disfunktional: Fighting the Culture Wars in Urban America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997).

<sup>140</sup> Ross-Stroud, *Janet McDonald*, 84.

<sup>141</sup> Pro-Line Advertisement for Soft & Beautiful, *Share*, 18 April 2002, 19.

contemporary media culture – that of the ghetto fab woman with “ghetto” sensibility or the “respectable” middle-class lady. Black women who deviate from either one of these archetypes are often the butt of jokes or are rarely represented in the mainstream culture as an ideal.<sup>142</sup>

A second Pro-Line ad for TCB in July 2002 (fig. 6.18) also features a black man embracing a black woman with straightened hair alongside the caption, “the one.”<sup>143</sup> The spectacle of commodity inscribed along the edges of the ad – “the candlelight, the conversations, the memories, the melodies, the breakups, the makeups, the clubs, the parities, the dates, the flicks, the outfits, the shoes, the phone calls, the concerts, the restaurants, the museums, the book clubs” – encodes chemical relaxers with a symbolic value that eerily mirrors the rhetoric of skin bleaching advertisements from the 1920s and 1930s which aligned skin whitening with racial uplift. The imagery in this advertisement is also about the luxuriousness and importance of straightened hair in heterosexual courtship. The desire of men to touch women’s hair is tied to the notion of long, flowing hair as a signifier of femininity. Thus, the ad in fig. 6.18 represents a rigid symbolic classification that positions black men and women as polarized opposites.

When chemical relaxers were first advertised, the use value was most prominently highlighted but as large multinationals have gained control of black hair care since the 2000s, chemical relaxers have become a commodity spectacle that is intimately linked with gender expectations, socio-economic mobility and conspicuous consumption. Frederic Jameson once proclaimed that “the image is the commodity today.”<sup>144</sup> The image of heterosexual courtship

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<sup>142</sup> On 12 September 2013 during an episode of *The View*, Barbara Walters asked Sherri Shepherd why she wears wigs. “Because if I didn’t I’d look like a prisoner,” Shepherd replied. On the *Arsenio Hall Show* on 11 September 2013, Latino comedian George Lopez said that black and Latinos should have babies together because they would be so beautiful but they would also have “some ugly hair.” These comments reflect how the hair of black and Latina women (who are rarely constructed as black even though Latinas are also black) is frequently a site of public ridicule from members of their own communities.

<sup>143</sup> Pro-Line Advertisement for TCB, *Share*, 4 July 2002, 21.

<sup>144</sup> Frederic Jameson, *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998* (London and New York, 1998), 134.

and displays of one's sexual desirability has usurped the actual use value of chemical relaxers. Significantly, chemical relaxers geared toward young black girls send clear messages that equate straightened hair with femininity and heterosexual desirability. In a Just For Me relaxer ad appearing in *Share* in March 2000, for example, a young black girl wears her hair straightened with ringlets. While she reads a book, behind her lurks a young black boy who is staring intently at the young black girl, presumably because he desires her.<sup>145</sup> This kind of imagery sends the message that even though young black girls should be focused on their education, it is still necessary for them to appear sexually desirable to the opposite sex. Similar to fig. 6.18, chemical relaxers are marketed to black girls as a means to cultivate femininity and attract male attention.

Importantly, there are many examples in the contemporary media where natural hair continues to be equated with an antiquated past and/or ugliness. In August 2013, for instance, Sheryl Underwood, co-host on the CBS show *The Talk*, spoke disparagingly of natural black hair. In a discussion about Heidi Klum saving the hair of her biracial children, Underwood, a dark-skinned woman who often celebrates the fact that she wears hair weaves, railed against what she called "nappy Afro" hair.<sup>146</sup> "Why would you save Afro hair?," Underwood asked. When her white co-host Sarah Gilbert responded that she, too, sometimes saves her children's hair, Underwood interjected, "[It's] probably some beautiful, long, silky stuff." This kind of discourse also serves to affirm widely held beliefs that natural black hair is not desirable, even for young girls. Such messages adversely impact young black girls who face tremendous pressures to straighten their hair through advertising, television and cartoons.

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<sup>145</sup> Just For Me Advertisement, *Share*, 14 March 2002, 19.

<sup>146</sup> Tracy Clayton, "Sheryl Underwood Slams Natural Hair," *The Root*, 2 September 2013, [http://www.theroot.com/blogs/the\\_grapevine/2013/09/sheryl\\_underwood\\_slams\\_nappy\\_afro\\_hair.html?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed%253A+TheRootRssFeed+%2528TheRoot+RSS+Feed](http://www.theroot.com/blogs/the_grapevine/2013/09/sheryl_underwood_slams_nappy_afro_hair.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%253A+TheRootRssFeed+%2528TheRoot+RSS+Feed) (30 November 2013).



The “ugly reality behind the glossy cover” of African American magazines is, as Carolyn Brown observes, that black magazines have been the most consistent place where blacks have been able to find reflections of themselves.<sup>147</sup> In her analysis of 685 advertisements for hair care products published between 1990 and 1999 in *Ebony* and *Essence* magazines, Judy Davis found that while all of the ads depicting hair featured black models, nearly seventy three percent of the ads depicted straightened or chemically-derived curly/wavy hair textures, while natural hair textures appeared overwhelmingly on men and boys.<sup>148</sup> Ads for relaxers were the dominant hair care product category represented over the decade, accounting for 161 ads or 23.5 percent of the total sample.<sup>149</sup> Even before the 2000s Davis’ research suggests that the advertising copy for chemical relaxers had begun to link straightened hair with heterosexual attractiveness, sex appeal and career success. For example, a 1997 ad for the Optimum brand stated: “You like your hair the way you like your men...straight, nice body and rich.”<sup>150</sup> A 2003 ad for TCB also proclaimed that “With all it takes to be a mother, isn’t it nice that someone’s taking care of you? While you’re taking care of your life, we’ll take care of your hair.”<sup>151</sup> In the next chapter, I examine how all of these shifts in the imagery of black beauty are linked to ownership changes that occurred in the late 1990s. As global, multinational companies have gained control of the black beauty industry, it has become increasingly important to question the visualization of black womanhood. Are these companies invested in “uplifting” black women’s beauty or are they simply exploiting historical insecurities related to skin colour and hair texture?

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<sup>147</sup> Carolyn Brown, “Changing the Face of the Magazine Industry: *Black Enterprise*, *Essence*, and *Ebony*,” in *Facing Difference: Race, Gender, and Mass Media*, eds. Shirley Biagi and Marilyn Kern-Foxworth (Thousand Oaks, California: Pine Forge Press, 1997), 154.

<sup>148</sup> Davis, “New Hair Freedom,” 36.

<sup>149</sup> Davis, “New Hair Freedom,” 36.

<sup>150</sup> Davis, “New Hair Freedom,” 37.

<sup>151</sup> TCB Advertisement, *Share*, 6 March 2003, 19.

## Chapter 7

### The question of diversity in contemporary beauty culture

#### I. An overview of the ownership shifts in the beauty market

Back in 1973, there were three leading white-owned cosmetics firms in the United States and Canada, Estée Lauder, Avon and Revlon. All three companies had a different strategy for success. Avon, with \$1 billion in sales, was still selling products with its door-to-door strategy; Revlon distributed its high end lines through department stores but also through drugstores and other mass-market outlets, which accounted for its \$506 million in annual sales; and Estée Lauder targeted the department stores and specialty stores for its high-end products.<sup>1</sup> By 1978, the cosmetics and hair care products industry was valued at US\$7 billion in the United States.<sup>2</sup> With respect to the black cosmetics and the hair care market, it is estimated that by the late 1970s, African Americans spent US\$750 million annually for toiletries, cosmetics, and hair care products.<sup>3</sup> By the 2000s, white-owned firms began to acquire black-owned firms. In a 1998 article entitled, “Hair Care Firms Get Ownership Makeover,” for instance, *Black Enterprise* declared that the battle to dominate the ethnic hair care market had just begun.<sup>4</sup>

In June of 1998, Revlon acquired African Pride, and with it gained ten percent control of what became known as “ethnic hair care” market.<sup>5</sup> When global multinationals entered the black hair care market it was suddenly rebranded the “ethnic market.” It is unclear who is responsible for this rebranding but based on my analysis of the market, the term ethnic does not appear until

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy Koehn, “Estée Lauder: Self-Definition and the Modern Cosmetics Market,” in *Beauty and Business: Commerce, Gender, and Culture in Modern America*, ed. Philip Scranton (New York and London: Routledge, 2001), 237.

<sup>2</sup> Grayson Mitchell, “Battle of the Rouge,” *Black Enterprise*, 9 August 1978, 23.

<sup>3</sup> Mitchell, “Battle of the Rouge,” 23.

<sup>4</sup> Kimberly Seals McDonald, “Hair Care Firms Get Ownership Makeover,” *Black Enterprise*, September 1998, 19.

<sup>5</sup> Elsevier Business Intelligence, “Revlon’s African Pride buy offers A.P. Products International Opportunities,” 15 June 1998, <http://www.elsevierbi.com/publications/the-rose-sheet/19/024/revlons-african-pride-buy-offers-ap-products-international-opportunities> (date of last access 24 November 2013).

the late 1990s when the merger and acquisition of African American firms begins to take place. In September, L'Oréal acquired SoftSheen, gaining control of the brands Optimum, Mizani and Wave Nouveau. SoftSheen, which had a reported US\$95 million in sales, was the industry leader in both the retail and salon categories.<sup>6</sup> In 2000, the Colomer family, together with the investment company CVC, purchased the Professional Products division from Revlon, which included several chemical relaxer lines (Crème of Nature, Realistic, and Fabu-laxer) that are today sold through Colomer U.S.A. based in Jacksonville, Florida.<sup>7</sup> The company was first created in 1933 by Spaniard José Colomer Ametller who, upon his return to Spain after a period in Paris training as a hairdresser, created the company.<sup>8</sup> With the Colomer family's purchase of Revlon's Professional division, the Barcelona-based firm became known as The Colomer Group.

In 1998, Carson Products was the only African American-owned firm to make an acquisition. It acquired Johnson Products from the Miami-based IVAX Corporation for US\$70 million; IVAX had acquired Johnson Products in 1993.<sup>9</sup> In addition to its existing brands Dark & Lovely, Excellence, and Beautiful Beginnings, Carson Products gained control of Gentle Treatment, Ultra Sheen, Afro Sheen and the Classic Curl lines. Just two years later L'Oreal acquired Carson Products, creating the SoftSheen-Carson division, which includes the

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<sup>6</sup> McDonald, "Hair Care Firms," 19.

<sup>7</sup> Revlon had entered the black beauty business in the early 1960s when it acquired an African-American owned relaxer company, Deluxol. The company soon abandoned the strategy of advertising under the Deluxol name and began to use its own name in the 1970s by employing marketing strategies used by African American-owned firms, most notably Johnson Products, which lost 50% market share to Revlon after the 1975 FTC decree. See Edward Tony Llonau, "Mergers and Acquisitions," Black Owned Beauty Supply Association, 19 July 2013, <http://bobsa.org/todays-post> (date of last access 24 November 2013).

<sup>8</sup> "The Beginning," *Colomer Group*, <http://www.thecolomergroup.com/en/el-inicio.asp> (date of last access 29 November 2013).

<sup>9</sup> IVAX acquired Johnson Products in 1993 in a transaction valued at between US\$61 million and US\$73 million. At the time, Johnson Products was the largest African American-owned companies. See George White, "Black-Owned Hair Care Firm OKs Purchase: Buyout," *Los Angeles Times*, 15 June 1993, [http://articles.latimes.com/1993-06-15/business/fi-3370\\_1\\_johnson-products](http://articles.latimes.com/1993-06-15/business/fi-3370_1_johnson-products) (date of last access 27 November 2013). In 2006, the Israel-based Teva Pharmaceutical Industries acquired IVAX, which it now operates as part of the Teva Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients division.

aforementioned brands, in addition to the Precise relaxer, and Let's Jam hair oils.<sup>10</sup> In 1999, Alberto-Culver acquired Pro-Line Corporation, gaining control of Soft & Beautiful, Just For Me, TCB (Taking Care of Business) and Motions brands.<sup>11</sup> With the acquisition of Pro-Line, Alberto-Culver became the second largest black hair care firm, behind L'Oréal.<sup>12</sup> In 2010, however, Alberto-Culver was acquired by the Dutch consumer goods company Unilever for US\$3.7 billion, making Unilever one of the largest manufacturers of black beauty products.<sup>13</sup>

After L'Oréal's buy of Carson, Johnson Products was purchased by Procter & Gamble (P&G), the Cincinnati-based multinational consumer goods company. In March 2009, however, an African American-owned holding company headed by Eric and Renee Brown, the son-in-law and daughter of the former Pro-Line CEO Commer Cottrell, bought Johnson Products, repositioning the company once again as an African American-owned firm.<sup>14</sup> In 2003, P&G had expanded into the foreign hair colouring market when it acquired Wella, a German-based hair colouring and fragrance business for US\$7 billion.<sup>15</sup> The company first entered the hair dye business when it acquired Clairol, a division of the New York-based pharmaceutical giant

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<sup>10</sup> L'Oréal New Release, "L'Oréal Signs Definitive Agreement to Acquire Carson," 28 February 2000, <http://www.loreal-finance.com/eng/news-release/loreal-signs-definitive-agreement-to-acquire-carson-72.htm> (date of last access 24 November 2013).

<sup>11</sup> Industry Today, "Pro-Line International," [http://industrytoday.com/article\\_view.asp?ArticleID=1475](http://industrytoday.com/article_view.asp?ArticleID=1475) (date of last access 24 November 2013). Alberto-Culver was founded in Illinois in 1955 by Leonard H. Lavin. The company also owned VO5, St. Ives (skin care products) and TRESemmé.

<sup>12</sup> Karen Bitz, "The Ethnic Hair Care Market," 9 November 2005, [http://www.happi.com/contents/view\\_features/2005-11-09/the-ethnic-hair-care-market-84783/](http://www.happi.com/contents/view_features/2005-11-09/the-ethnic-hair-care-market-84783/) (date of last access 25 November 2013). Together, TCB and Motions accounted for more than US\$50 million in global sales.

<sup>13</sup> Clementine Fletcher, "Unilever Agrees to Buy Alberto Culver for US\$3.7 Billion," *Bloomberg*, 27 September 2010, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-09-27/unilever-agrees-to-buy-chicago-based-alberto-culver-for-3-7-billion-cash.html> (date of last access 24 November 2013). The deal was final in May 2011, with Unilever paying US\$3.7 billion in cash for Alberto-Culver, which generated annual sales in excess of €1.2 billion (US\$1.6 billion) in fiscal year 2010. See "Unilever Completes Alberto Culver Acquisition," [http://www.unilever.ca/aboutus/newsandmedia/pressreleases/Unilever\\_Completes\\_AlbertoCulver\\_Acquisition.aspx](http://www.unilever.ca/aboutus/newsandmedia/pressreleases/Unilever_Completes_AlbertoCulver_Acquisition.aspx) (date of last access 27 November 2013).

<sup>14</sup> Ni'kita Wilson, "Johnson Products Back in Black Hands," *The Grio*, 16 July 2009, <http://thegrio.com/2009/07/16/johnson-products-the-company-behind/> (date of last access 24 November 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Andrew Ross Sorkin, "Procter & Gamble Agrees to Acquire Clairol for \$4.95 Billion," *New York Times*, 22 May 2001, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/05/22/business/procter-gamble-agrees-to-acquire-clairol-for-4.95-billion.html> (date of last access 24 November 2013).

Bristol-Myers Squibb (BMS) in 2001.<sup>16</sup> Clairol controlled 39 percent of the U.S. hair colouring market, according to market research firm A.C. Nielsen, with L'Oréal controlling 50 percent.<sup>17</sup> Given all the mergers and acquisitions that have taken place over the last 15 years, only a few African-American owned beauty firms are still in existence today such as Luster Products of Chicago,<sup>18</sup> North Carolina-based Dudley Products Inc., and Georgia-based Bronner Bros. Enterprise, which comprises Bronner Bros. Beauty Products (maker of BB, African Royale, the Nu Expressions lines, and publisher of *Upscale* magazine), to name a few.<sup>19</sup>

As private family-owned businesses, African American-owned firms are in a tough battle with global multinationals – L'Oreal, P&G, Unilever, The Colomer Group, Shiseido (of Japan), Estée Lauder, Avon, and Johnson & Johnson, the New Jersey-based pharmaceutical and consumer products multinational – which have, since the late 1990s, steadily increased their control of the black beauty culture industry. Combined, these firms account for almost half of global revenues, competing with each other for market share in established and emerging markets.<sup>20</sup> L'Oreal and P&G also account for over one-fifth of total world sales of cosmetics.<sup>21</sup> With respect to the black beauty market, L'Oréal, Unilever, The Colomer Group, P&G and Avon have over 50 percent market share.<sup>22</sup> As of 2013, it is estimated that L'Oreal controls 61.9

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<sup>16</sup> Jack Neff, "P&G's \$7 Bil bid for Wella Seen as Wise," *Advertising Age*, 24 March 2003, <http://adage.com/article/news/p-g-s-7-bil-bid-wella-wise/49954/> (date of last access 27 November 2013). BMS acquired Clairol in 1959.

<sup>17</sup> "Procter & Gamble to add Clairol to hair-care lineup," *Chicago Tribune*, 22 May 2001, [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2001-05-22/business/0105220046\\_1\\_clairol-hair-coloring-hair-care](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2001-05-22/business/0105220046_1_clairol-hair-coloring-hair-care) (date of last access 27 November 2013).

<sup>18</sup> Luster's most successful product is Pink Moisturizer.

<sup>19</sup> Other African American-owned companies include Kizure Iron Works in Carson, California, manufacturer of curling irons and pressing combs; Summit Laboratories in Illinois, manufacturer of hair and skin care products; and L'oneau Products in Los Angeles, which produce Liquid Gold Hair Bonding and Lace Front Adhesives.

<sup>20</sup> Koehn, "Estée Lauder," 245.

<sup>21</sup> Geoffrey James, *Beauty Imagined: A History of the Global Beauty Industry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 2. Avon, the world's biggest beauty brand, was worth US\$11.3 billion in 2008, and Unilever's Dove and P&G's Pantene, in second and third place, had sales of US\$5.3 billion and US\$4.5 billion respectively.

<sup>22</sup> Significantly, L'Oréal also owns Helena Rubinstein, and Elizabeth Arden has been a subsidiary of Unilever since the 1990s. See Nancy Koehn, "Estée Lauder: Self-Definition and the Modern Cosmetics Market," in *Beauty and*

percent of the hair colouring market, and 51.2 percent of the chemical relaxer market.<sup>23</sup> Overall, black hair care is valued at US\$684 million of the total US\$7 billion U.S. hair-care market.<sup>24</sup> In an effort to expand its reach in the black hair care market, in 2000, L'Oréal opened a multimillion-dollar research and development laboratory in Chicago called the "L'Oréal Institute for Ethnic Hair and Skin Research." The company claims that it is the first lab to focus specifically on the study of "ethnic" skin and hair.<sup>25</sup>

With respect to black cosmetics, in 1989, there were four cosmetics firms owned by African American women: Barbara Walden, Naomi Sims Beauty Products (founded in 1985 by the former model), Paris-based Gazelle International (founded in 1983 by Patricia A. French and chemist Amale Ayad), which first operated as a salon in Dakar, Senegal before launching in France in 1986 and in America in 1987, and former Max Factor executive Juin Rachele Cooper along with her husband Patrick D. Cooper, founded Juin Rachele Cosmetics in Houston in 1986.<sup>26</sup> Alongside Fashion Fair and Flori Roberts, these women vied for a percentage of the upscale black cosmetics market. While Naomi Sims, Gazelle and Juin Rachele were available in stores like Saks Fifth Avenue, Nordstrom, Macy's, and the Milwaukee-headquartered Carson Pirie Scott, these lines were also sold in Europe, Canada and the Caribbean.<sup>27</sup> In 1994, Somali-born supermodel Iman also launched a cosmetics line. Today, Iman Cosmetics is sold in the

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*Business: Commerce, Gender, and Culture in Modern America*, ed. Philip Scranton (New York and London: Routledge, 2001), 237.

<sup>23</sup> Ebony Onyxx, "Black Hair: Boomin' Billion Dollar Industry," *Community Steeple*, 20 April 2013, <http://www.communitysteeple.com/urban-business/137-black-hair-boomin-billion-dollar-industry.html> (date of last access 24 November 2013).

<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth Dwoskin, "Startups, Target Go After the Multiracial Hair-Care Market," *Bloomberg Businessweek*, 20 June 2013, <http://mobile.businessweek.com/articles/2013-06-20/startups-target-go-after-the-multiracial-hair-care-market> (date of last access 1 December 2013).

<sup>25</sup> "L'Oréal's Commitment to Research on Ethnic Hair and Skin," 11 May 2001, [http://www.hair-science.com/\\_int/\\_en/toolbox/detail\\_news.aspx?topicDetail=LOREALS\\_COMMITMENT\\_TO\\_RESEARCH\\_ON&](http://www.hair-science.com/_int/_en/toolbox/detail_news.aspx?topicDetail=LOREALS_COMMITMENT_TO_RESEARCH_ON&) (date of last access 27 November 2013).

<sup>26</sup> Alfred Edmond, Jr., "Battle of the Vanities," *Black Enterprise*, March 1989, 46.

<sup>27</sup> Edmond, Jr., "Battle of the Vanities," 46. Although Gazelle, Naomi Sims and Juin Rachele were said to have limited their advertising to radio and women's and black-oriented magazines, I did not locate any advertisements from either company in *Contrast* or *Share*.

United States, UK, France, Brazil, Africa, and the Caribbean. In Canada, Iman Cosmetics is exclusively sold at Sears.<sup>28</sup>

After large conglomerates conducted market research on black consumers in the early 1990s, they began to expand their cosmetics blends to include darker shades. According to Business Trends Analysts Inc., a market research firm in New York, although African Americans comprised twelve to thirteen percent of the U.S. population, 1989 market research revealed that black women spent three times more per capita than white women on cosmetics and toiletries, and total black spending on personal-care (cosmetics, skin care, fragrance and hair care) products was projected to grow an average of 10 percent each year through 1995.<sup>29</sup> After the 1990 U.S. census further revealed that one in four American women described themselves as non-white, several white-owned beauty companies sought after the black beauty market with separate distribution networks and advertising strategies.<sup>30</sup> In 1991, Maybelline (acquired by L'Oréal in 1996) introduced Shades of You Cosmetics, which had an expanded range of foundation tints. In an attempt to compete with Maybelline, Revlon introduced Darker Tones of Almay in 1991, and then in 1992, its ColorStyle Cosmetics also hit mass outlet shelves.<sup>31</sup> CoverGirl (acquired by P&G in 1989) also launched its Queen Collection in 1991. Since 2001, Queen Latifah (Dana Owens) has been a Queen Collection spokeswoman. In one representative ad in *Essence* in December 2007, an up-close shot of the rapper turned actress/talk show host captures her with a flawless face, wearing the company's Natural Hue Foundation below a caption that read: "Every

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<sup>28</sup> Iman Cosmetics (along with Flori Roberts) can also be found at independent beauty supply shops.

<sup>29</sup> Edmond, Jr., "Battle of the Vanities," 51.

<sup>30</sup> The 1990 census figures also showed that the 16 million African American women were younger (30% were in the prime purchasing age of 18 to 34), better educated and more affluent than prior generations, thus, black women became a sought-after segment of the beauty culture market. Further, the black female population in the early 1990s was growing at twice the rate of its white counterpart, see Caroline V. Clarke, "Redefining Beautiful: Black Cosmetics Companies and Industry Giants Vie for the Loyalty of Black Women," *Black Enterprise*, June 1993, 243-44. See also Kathy Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture* (New York: Metropolitan Books Henry Holt and Company, 1998), 263-64.

<sup>31</sup> Clarke, "Redefining Beautiful," 248.

woman is a queen, and deserves a makeup that celebrates her beauty.”<sup>32</sup> As of 2013, Yves Saint Laurent has its Le Teint Éclat foundation in twenty two different shades and Lancôme’s Teint Idole Ultra 24H foundations also comes in eighteen different shades.

When industry marketers realized that in addition to cosmetics, black women changed their hairstyles more frequently than other women and that this fickleness also extended to hair colour, companies began to formulate hair dyes specifically geared toward black women. In an ad appearing in *Share* in November 2003, Softsheen-Carson’s Hi Rez Hair Color was promoted in a beauty supply shop ad with a caption that read: “Takes You From Dark to Rich Reds & Bold Browns the First Time & Every Time You Color!”<sup>33</sup> Revlon also launched HiLites, the first at-home semi-permanent highlighting kit created specifically for black women’s hair texture, and Clairol launched its Beautiful Collection Gentle Crème Permanent Color, the first low-ammonia crème permanent hair colour specifically designed for chemically relaxed hair.<sup>34</sup> All of these products ranged in shades from light ash blonde to black. By 2004, the Chicago-based Hunger Miller Group projected that African American spending power was expected to grow from US\$645.9 billion to US\$852.8 billion by 2007, and the African American spending share in the hair care sector was nothing to ignore at thirty percent of the overall market.<sup>35</sup>

This ownership history is significant because it underscores the fact that black beauty culture is almost entirely intertwined with mainstream beauty culture. Additionally, since the North American beauty market is majority controlled by foreign entities in Europe and Asia, the

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<sup>32</sup> CoverGirl Queen Collection Advertisement, *Essence*, December 2007, 26-27. In the 1990s, Queen Latifah rose to fame as a rapper. But over the last decade, she has increased her profile by starring in Hollywood films like *Bringing Down the House* (2003), *Taxi* (2004), *Last Holiday* (2006), *Hairspray* (2007), *Mad Money* (2008), and *Valentine’s Day* (2010). In 2013, Latifah’s talk show *The Queen Latifah Show*, debuted. In addition to host, Latifah is also executive producer of the talk show.

<sup>33</sup> Softsheen-Carson Advertisement for Hi Rez Hair Color, *Share*, 6 November 2003, 13.

<sup>34</sup> Karen Bitz, “The Ethnic Hair Care Market.”

<sup>35</sup> Veronica MacDonald, “Ethnic Hair Care: Options for Everyone,” *Happi*, April 2004, <http://shows.happi.com/articles/2004/04/ethnic-hair-care-options-for-everyone> (date of last access 25 November 2013).



transnational links between advertising, consumers, and power has never been more central to the question of beauty in contemporary society. As black women have become “the face” of global multinational brands, how has the image of beauty changed?

The threat of foreign takeover first began to worry African American beauty entrepreneurs in the early 1980s. At that time several firms mobilized against what they believed was a forthcoming onslaught by white-owned companies. In 1981, ten African American hair care manufacturers joined forces and founded the AHBAI (American Health and Beauty Aids Institute).<sup>36</sup> The founding chairman, George E. Johnson, conceived the AHBAI to urge consumers to “buy Black” and the design, a profile of a black woman, produced by Chicago-based artist Richmond Jones, was meant to capture “the proud lady.”<sup>37</sup> For a short time *Ebony*, *Essence*, and *Jet* supported the AHBAI’s efforts by refusing to feature ads from Revlon and other white-owned companies but these efforts ultimately backfired as these companies simply solicited black celebrities to promote their products in advertisements in mainstream publications.<sup>38</sup> Today, the “Proud Lady” logo (fig. 7.1) can be found on brands produced by black-owned firms but white-owned companies such as L’Oréal through its SoftSheen-Carson division are also part of the AHBAI.<sup>39</sup>

In 1996, three years before Eaton’s closed its doors, the Hudson’s Bay began to sell Fashion Fair cosmetics.<sup>40</sup> Since the early 2000s, black hair care products have been readily available and strategically placed on a separate shelf at Wal-mart, Zellers and Shoppers Drug

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<sup>36</sup> Ayana D. Byrd and Lori L. Tharps, *Hair Story: Untangling the Roots of Black Hair in America* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2001), 91.

<sup>37</sup> Byrd and Tharps, *Hair Story*, 91.

<sup>38</sup> Byrd and Tharps, *Hair Story*, 91.

<sup>39</sup> Adrienne P. Samuels, “Guess Who Sells Your Weave?: Koreans Capitalize on Black Beauty’s Big Business,” *Ebony*, May 2008, 176. Currently, the Luster family, the Dudley family, and the Bronner Brothers, to name a few, are all members of the AHBAI, and in recent years, at least one Korean businessperson sits on AHBAI’s advisory board.

<sup>40</sup> In August 1999 Eaton’s was acquired by Sears. The first ad for the sale of Fashion Fair Cosmetics at Hudson’s Bay appears in *Share* in February 1996.

Mart in English Canada, and at Jean Coutu and Pharma Prix, in addition to Wal-mart and Zellers, in Quebec. As two representative photographs taken in a U.S. discount outlet in Toronto reveal, the black hair care products sold at Canadian retail are overwhelmingly for hair straightening, both for men and women (fig. 7.2). The wider distribution of black hair care products into American big box stores coincided with white-owned conglomerates' increased presence in the black beauty market, and while many have viewed this entry as a sign of progress (that is, black beauty products are now more widely available in Canada than ever before), black women with natural hair have been entirely excluded from such developments. And further, the politics surrounding the hair texture of black women's hair have only intensified with such inclusion.

## II. The racialized, gendered politics of black hair

In 1998, an incident at a predominantly black and Latino public school in New York brought the notion of “good hair” versus “bad hair” into the headlines in newspapers in the United States. Ruth Sherman, a grade three teacher at Public School (P.S.) 75 in Brooklyn, believed that Carolivia Herron's children's book *Nappy Hair* (1997) was the perfect piece of literature to expose to her class in order to teach them about beauty and black hair.<sup>41</sup> When more than 50 parents protested and threatened the teacher with physical harm because they deemed *Nappy Hair* to be racially insulting and culturally insensitive, Sherman was dumbfounded by the response.<sup>42</sup> It had not dawned on her that the image of a white blonde-haired teacher instructing a classroom of black and Latino children about beauty and hair would become a hotly contested event. While most of the protesters and parents had not read the book (which was not filled with

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<sup>41</sup> The story's main character, Brenda, has long and “kinky” or “nappy” hair (evident in the image on the cover of the book), and some black Brooklyn residents living near P.S. 75 felt the book “was inappropriate because of the reference to nappy hair” see Banks, *Hair Matters*, 1. Also see Liz Leyden, “N.Y. Teacher Runs Into a Racial Divide” *Washington Post*, 3 December 1998, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/national/frompost/dec98/hair3.htm> (date of last access 28 September 2013).

<sup>42</sup> Byrd and Tharps, *Hair Story*, 173.

stereotypical caricatures of pickaninnies or mammies, but rather based on the Herron's childhood memory of her uncle telling a story at a family gathering about the "fuzziest, most screwed up, squeezed up, knotted up, tangled up, twisted up, nappy hair"),<sup>43</sup> its contents did not matter as much as the connotative meaning of the words "nappy" along with "kinky" and "bad hair." Chris Rock's *Good Hair* (2009) was also a not-so-subtle reminder of the power of these politically charged phrases.

In the nineteenth century white Europeans had derogatorily described black hair as "wool" but historically, in Anglo, French, Portuguese and Spanish-speaking colonies, a negative pathology with respect to tightly coiled hair has been passed down from generation to generation. The term "good hair" is used to describe hair that is straight or loosely textured and "bad hair" is attached to those with coarse or "nappy" hair. Girls/women with "good hair" tend to be light-skinned or of mixed race, while "bad hair" is typically attached to girls/women with dark skin or markers of a visible African ancestry (i.e. a wider nose and fuller lips than the Eurocentric ideal). Across the Black Diaspora, the texture of black women's hair, along with skin colour, continue to hold tremendous social and cultural currency. In Jamaica, for instance, Christopher Charles explains that "light skin is the cultural ideal [for women and men who bleach their skin], and dark skin is anathema. The negative images collectively create the hegemonic representation that light skin is superior to dark skin."<sup>44</sup> In the Dominican Republic, Ginetta Candelario notes that hair is the principal bodily signifier of race, followed by facial features, skin colour and, last, ancestry. "*Pelo malo* [bad hair] is hair that is perceived to be tightly curled, coarse, and kinky. *Pelo bueno* [good hair] is hair that is soft and silky, straight,

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<sup>43</sup> Byrd and Tharps, *Hair Story*, 173.

<sup>44</sup> Christopher A.D. Charles, "Skin Bleachers' Representations of Skin Color in Jamaica," *Journal of Black Studies* 40.2 (Nov. 2009): 163.

wavy, or loosely curled.”<sup>45</sup> There are also colloquial expressions for women’s hair texture. For Dominican women, “the notion of *pelo malo* implies an outright denigration of African-origin hair textures, while *pelo bueno* exalts European, Asian, and indigenous-origin hair textures. Moreover, those with *pelo bueno* by definition are ‘not black,’ skin color notwithstanding.”<sup>46</sup>

In 2001, New Orleans-based artist Kiini Ibura Salaam wrote about the different reactions she got to her hair in the Dominican Republic:

More interesting than the multitude of hair transgressions I suffered, was the way I mutated from one race to another based on the way I wore my hair. When I arrived, the men on the street called me “morena” (brown girl/woman) and “india” (Indian) based on my skin colour and short curly afro. Halfway through my trip, I started locking [my hair], and suddenly I became “negra” (black girl/woman) and “prieta” (darky). Now I had experienced it all, hair had not only the power to make me unacceptable and uncool, but suddenly it had the ability to change my race! What power to place on the wiry strands growing from my scalp.<sup>47</sup>

While Salaam’s account is a personal one and there are likely women with dreadlocks in the Dominican Republic who do not experience such negative naming, there have been recent reports where dreadlocks have been negatively viewed in the Dominican Republic. For example, in January 2013 *The Dominican Today* reported that San Pedro de Macoris prison authorities sought to cut rapper Vakero’s dreadlocks.<sup>48</sup> In Brazil, Kia Lilly Caldwell asserts that the concept of “bad hair” is associated with individuals who have black or African ancestry but Brazilian notions of *cabelo bom* (good hair) and *cabelo ruim* (bad hair) also permeate Brazilian society as

<sup>45</sup> Ginetta E.B. Candelario, *Black Behind the Ears: Dominican Racial Identity From Museums to Beauty Shops* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 182.

<sup>46</sup> Candelario, *Black Behind the Ears*, 182.

<sup>47</sup> Cited in Ana-Maurine Lara, “Cimarronas, Ciguapas, Señoras: Hair, Beauty, Race, and Class in the Dominican Republic,” in *Blackberries and Redbones: Critical Articulations of Black Hair/Body Politics in Africana Communities*, eds. Regina E. Spellens and Kimberly R. Moffat (Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press, 2010), 114.

<sup>48</sup> “Singer’s dreadlocks shorn, vows court action,” *Dominican Today*, 23 January 2013, <http://www.dominicantoday.com/dr/local/2013/1/23/46474/Singers-dreadlocks-shorn-vows-court-action> (date of last access 26 March 2014).

a whole.<sup>49</sup> As a result, “it is not uncommon to hear White Brazilians describe someone as having ‘bad’ hair. Widespread familiarity with the significance of hair texture amongst all racial groups further underscores the significance of hair as a marker of racial and social identity in Brazil.”<sup>50</sup> Margaret Hunter also found that Mexican women “shared painful experiences of being the ‘dark’ one in the family, or of feeling less favored than lighter-skinned family members.”<sup>51</sup> In her 2006 study on the language of hair within African Americans’ everyday lives, anthropologist Lanita Jacobs-Huey found that humour was one of the prevailing forums where the phrases “nappy,” “kinky” and “good hair” versus “bad hair” are continually used. Hair jokes, she writes, “often focused on ... debates about ‘good’ versus ‘bad’ hair, black women’s hair rituals in beauty salons and kitchens ... [and] hair and head coverings ... also emerge in some jokes as signifiers of ‘authentic’ racial and gendered consciousness.”<sup>52</sup>

In 2007 when I interviewed black Canadian women about their hair, I asked them to describe what it means to have “good hair” and “bad hair.” Overwhelmingly, their responses suggested a shared understanding of the power associated with adhering to the Western beauty standard of having hair that is straight, long and flowing, in addition to lighter skin.<sup>53</sup> In the United Kingdom, Debbie Weekes observed that when black women talk about their identities they are highly gendered. The historical association of whiteness as a yardstick of beauty, she writes, “has become internalized not just by Black women but by Black men also. This process

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<sup>49</sup> Kia Lilly Caldwell, “‘Look at Her Hair’: The Body Politics of Black Womanhood in Brazil,” *Transforming Anthropology* 11.2. (2004): 20.

<sup>50</sup> Caldwell, “Look at Her Hair,” 20. See also Angela Gilliam, “The Brazilian Mulata: Images in the Global Economy,” *Race & Class* 40.1 (1998): 57-69.

<sup>51</sup> Margaret Hunter, *Race, Gender and the Politics of Skin Tone* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 79.

<sup>52</sup> Lanita Jacobs-Huey, *From the Kitchen to the Parlor: Language and Becoming in African American Women’s Hair Care* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 72. By “artifice”, Jacobs-Huey refers to “weaves and extensions) and by “head coverings,” she notes “wigs and bandannas.”

<sup>53</sup> In July 2007 I interviewed black and bi-racial women about their hair. These women lived in Toronto and Hamilton, Ontario. See Cheryl Thompson, “Black Women, Beauty, and Hair as a Matter of *Being*,” *Women’s Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 38.8 (2009): 831-56.

of negating the beauty of Black textured hair and darker shades of skin has strong implications for Black women in terms of appearing attractive to males.”<sup>54</sup>

While there is some debate as to whether the choice of one’s hairstyle automatically signifies one’s alliance with, or opposition to, the European standard, what is often overlooked, as Bertram Ashe aptly notes, are the specific male expectations about black women’s hairstyles that influence how women style their hair.<sup>55</sup> The cultural practice of hair straightening and skin bleaching among some black women is similarly bound up in heterosexual courtship. These women believe that altering their natural hair will make them more attractive to men who equate straightened hair with femininity and natural hair with masculinity. Since black beauty has coincided with a struggle against the cultural imperative to internalize the judgment of one’s own being as ugly, there remains an imperative among many blacks to remove dark skin and replace it with skin that is shades lighter or white. Dark skin is still connected to a “dark past” while lighter skin is positioned as a “brighter future.”<sup>56</sup> This straight-haired rule, as Paul C. Taylor posits, might be more precisely stated as “the principle that *long* straight hair is a necessary component of *female* beauty.... The straight hair rule dominates [black] culture to such an extent that one commentator can meaningfully [asked in 2000], ‘Have we reached the point where the only acceptable option for [black] women is straight hair?’”<sup>57</sup>

The ubiquity of advertising imagery of bouncy, shiny, long, straight hair impacts black women because this image is antithetical to what is naturally attainable for many women. Amina

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<sup>54</sup> Debbie Weekes, “Shades of Blackness: Young Black Female Constructions of Beauty,” *Black British Feminism*, ed. Heidi Safia Mirza (London & New York: Routledge, 1997), 115.

<sup>55</sup> Bertram D. Ashe, “‘Why Don’t He Like My Hair?’: Constructing African-American Standards of Beauty in Toni Morrison’s *Song of Solomon* and Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes were Watching God*,” *African American Review* 29.4 (Winter 1995): 579-80.

<sup>56</sup> Noliwe M. Rooks, *Hair Raising: Beauty, Culture, and African American Women* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 35.

<sup>57</sup> Paul C. Taylor, “Malcolm’s Conk and Danto’s Colors; or, Four Logical Petitions Concerning Race, Beauty, and Aesthetics,” in *Beauty Matters*, ed. Peg Zeglin Brand (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2000), 60; see also Rooks, *Hair Raising*, 132.

Mama's research on black women demonstrated that there remains an ambiguous feeling among many black women with respect to a natural hair texture and darker shades of skin.<sup>58</sup> Thus, black beauty politics are as much about notions of whiteness as they are about blackness. Further, the cultural currency of African American culture has also played a significant role in the cultivation of black beauty ideals in sites of diaspora. In her conversations with black women from Canada, the Caribbean, England, the United States, and South America, for example, Althea Prince found that while there are a small number of books on the topic of black women's hair in the United States, there are none in Canada, the Caribbean, or the United Kingdom. Prince's *The Politics of Black Women's Hair* (2009), and Shirley Tate's *Black Beauty* was the first books to address the politics of black women's hair and beauty in Canada and the United Kingdom.<sup>59</sup> Through interviews with black women, both authors explored how ideals of femininity in terms of skin and hair politics have inscribed onto bodies particular meanings about beauty, race, and identity. Both of these scholars also noted that African American cultural production has greatly impacted black women's conception of beauty and the politics of hair and skin in Canada and the United Kingdom.

### III. How African American novels and films have tackled black beauty issues

Throughout the twentieth century, African American novelists examined the intersections of colorism (showing prejudice against darker-skinned blacks), hair texture and beauty. In Wallace Thurman's *The Blacker the Berry* (1929), for example, the pain of being a dark-skinned woman in Harlem is reflected in the character of Emma Lou who laments about her skin colour: "She should have been a boy, then the color of her skin wouldn't have mattered so much, for

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<sup>58</sup> Amina Mama, *Beyond the Masks: Race, Gender and Subjectivity* (London: Routledge, 1995), 115.

<sup>59</sup> Althea Prince, *The Politics of Black Women's Hair* (Toronto: Insomniac Press, 2009); Shirley Tate, *Black Beauty: Aesthetics, Stylization, Politics* (Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2009).

wasn't her mother always saying that a black boy could get along, but that a black girl would never know anything but sorrow and disappointment?<sup>60</sup> In Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970) the character of Pecola Breedlove, an eleven-year-old black girl believes that she is ugly because of the way that she is treated by people in her life. Pecola comes to believe that if only she had blue eyes then she would become beautiful.<sup>61</sup> When the lighter-skinned character of Shug Avery is introduced to the darker-skinned Miss Celie in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982), Miss Celie recounts: "Under all that powder her face black as Harpo. She got a long pointed nose and bit fleshy mouth. Lips look like black plum. Eyes big, glossy.... She look me over from head to foot. Then she cackle. Sound like a death rattle. You sure *is* ugly, she say, like she ain't believed it."<sup>62</sup> In her comparative reading of Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* (1977) and Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes were Watching God* (1937) Bertram found that both authors engaged how black women struggle between their own hairstyle preference and the hairstyle preference of black men. "These two authors offer dissimilar but compatible discussions of not only the black female's encounters with the white-female standard of beauty, but also the black female's difficulties negotiating her black-male partner's conception of that standard."<sup>63</sup> Most recently, in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013) the character of Ifemelu, a young black woman who comes to America from Nigeria is faced with pressures to chemically straighten her hair in order to fit in with other African American women.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Kathy Russell, Midge Wilson and Ronald Hall, *The Color Complex: The Politics of Skin Color Among African Americans* (New York: Anchor Books, 1992), 42. Harlem Renaissance poet and author Langston Hughes also explored the issue of colour in a number of stories, essays, and plays, including a poem called *Mulatto*. See *The Collection of Poems of Langston Hughes*, eds. Arnold Rampersad and David Roessel (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 100-01.

<sup>61</sup> In one scene it occurs to Pecola, "if her eyes, those eyes that held the picture, and knew the sights – if those eyes were different, that is to say, beautiful, she herself would be different." Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (New York: Plume Printing, 1994), 46.

<sup>62</sup> Alice Walker, *The Color Purple* (Orlando: Harcourt, 1982), 46.

<sup>63</sup> Bertram, "Why don't he Like My Hair," 579-592.

<sup>64</sup> After arriving in America, Ifemelu attends a West Philadelphia hair salon to get her hair chemically straightened. The text reads: Since she came to America, she had always braided her hair with long extensions, always alarmed at



Contemporary African American films have also played a role in the continued pitting of darker-skinned black women against light-skinned women. Most notably, Spike Lee's *School Daze* (1988) satirized the extent to which colour and class continued to divide black communities. Set at a historically black college in the United States, the lighter-skinned blacks in the film are reduced to caricatures of "wannabe" whites and the darker-skinned "Jigaboos" are those who proudly affirm their love of blackness. This juxtaposition seemed to trivialize the issue of colour and the painful realities of colorism for many black women. In *Jungle Fever* (1991) Spike Lee explored the issue of colour through the character of Flipper Purify (played by Wesley Snipes), a dark-skinned man who is married to a light-skinned woman named Drew (played by Lonette McKee). In the film, Flipper has an extramarital affair with an Italian-American woman named Angela "Angie" Tucci (played by Annabella Sciorra). The politics of skin colour are first revealed through Drew, who laments to her black girlfriends that she had been the victim of name calling by African Americans throughout her life because of her light skin, and that to Flipper, she must not have been "light" enough. Second, when Flipper discusses Angie with his black male friends her whiteness is framed as a site of curiosity for which a darker-skinned man, like Flipper, naturally held. *Jungle Fever* tried to present the complexity of race in America but it failed to do so without presenting rigid, unchanging binaries of white versus black, dark-skinned versus light-skinned, African American versus ethnic.

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how much it cost....And so it was a new adventure, relaxing her hair. She removed her braids, careful to leave her scalp unscratched, to leave undisturbed the dirt that would protect it. Relaxers had grown in their range, boxes and boxes in the "ethnic hair" section of the drugstore, faces of smiling black women with impossibly straight and shiny hair, beside words like "botanical" and "aloe" that promised gentleness.... Ifemulu felt only a slight burning, at first, but as the hairdresser rinsed out the relaxer, Ifemulu's head bent backwards against a plastic sink, needles of stinging paint shot up from different parts of her scalp, down to different parts of her body, back up to her head....Her hair was hanging down rather than standing up, straight and sleek, parted at the side and curving to a slight bob at her chin. The verve was gone. She did not recognize herself. She left the salon almost mournfully; while the hairdresser had flat-ironed the ends, the smell of burning, of something organic dying which should not have died, had made her feel a sense of loss. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Americanah* (New York: Alfred A. Knoff, 2013), 205.

Kathe Sandler's documentary *A Question of Color* (1993) also explored the impact of colour consciousness within African American communities. Instead of focusing on others, Sandler used her body (as a light-skinned, bi-racial woman) to examine constructions of blackness and colour relativity. But as Janell Hobson points out, "Sandler seem[ed] anxious to 'prove' her blackness by donning Afrocentric attire and dwelling in a predominately black urban neighbourhood. These actions imply that her ... blonde hair and blue eyes, is not enough to establish her black identity."<sup>65</sup> In contrast to the filmic representation of black beauty as constantly in a binary between light-skinned/dark-skinned, beautiful/ugly, an emulation of whiteness/a validation of blackness, Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust* (1992) affirmed the beauty of all black women without privileging one body type, hair texture, identity position, over another.<sup>66</sup> Sadly such filmic representations have been few and far between.

In the documentary *Dark Girls* (2012), filmmakers Bill Duke and D. Channsin Berry documented how colorism continues to divide many black communities. For instance, in interviews with black men, one said of dark-skinned women: "[They] have low self-esteem, while light-skinned women have more confidence because they're closer to white." In Canada, a 2010 video on YouTube called *Shadeism*, created by undergraduate students at Ryerson University's School of Journalism, similarly addressed the issue of light-skinned, long-haired black beauty ideal, the pressures to live up to such standards, and the ways in which family members treat young girls who are darker-skinned different to lighter-skinned family members.

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<sup>65</sup> Janell Hobson, *Venus in the Dark: Blackness and Beauty in Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 124.

<sup>66</sup> Hobson, *Venus in the Dark*, 127. The film, set in 1902, captures the beginnings of the New Negro sociocultural movement of the early-twentieth century and addresses the politics that were attached to hair texture and skin colour at a time when the light-skinned "mulatta" woman became the emblem of a progressive and dignified New Negro Womanhood. As Greg Tate observes, "Check [Hollywood] history and you'd think that compared to white women or their own lighter-skinned sisters, dark-skinned women had no glamour that any camera could see ... *Daughters* sent all of that nonsense screaming and kicking to the curb." See Greg Tate, "Of Homegirl Goddesses and Geechee Women: The Africentric Cinema of Julie Dash," *Village Voice*, 4 June 1991, 72; 78, cited in Rooks, *Hair Raising*, 117.

Significantly, beauty advertising outside of North America also perpetuates the idea of whiteness as an enabler of confidence, blackness (or dark skin) as a disabling liability. In India, for example, a 2009 skin bleaching television commercial featured two men – one with dark skin, the other with light skin – standing on a balcony overlooking a neighbourhood.<sup>67</sup> The darker-skinned man turned to his friend and said, “I am unlucky because of my face.” His lighter-skinned friend replied, “Not because of your face, because of the colour of your face.” By its end, the darker-skinned man, now several shades lighter appeared with a woman by his side. Such ads circulate across Indian and Pakistan, and in another version a young dark-skinned woman is not able to find a husband until she lightened her skin. Hindustan Unilever, one of the largest consumer products companies in India, noted in a 2009 annual report that “skin lightening continues to be a major area of emphasis” for its skin care division.<sup>68</sup> Globally, the skin lightening market is expected to reach US\$10 billion by 2015.<sup>69</sup>

Despite the fact that the active ingredient in skin bleaching crèmes, hydroquinone, has been found to cause severe allergic reactions (rash, hives, difficulty breathing, tightness in the chest, swelling of the mouth, face, lips, or tongue), blistering, blue-black darkening of the skin, excessive redness, stinging, and irritation,<sup>70</sup> it continues to gain in popularity. When I visited a black beauty store near Dufferin Street and Bloor Street Toronto in 2013, I counted eight skin bleaching crèmes on the store shelf – Dr. Clear, Dr. Fred Summit (formerly Dr. Fred Palmer), Nadinola, Ambi, Venus de Milo, Carotone, Dermaclair, Sure White, and Palmers. Black women (and men) in Canada, like in India, the United States, Caribbean, and Africa (and Asian women

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<sup>67</sup> Sara Sidner, “Skin Whitener Advertisements Labeled Racist,” *CNN.com/Asia*, 9 September 2009, <http://edition.cnn.hu/2009/WORLD/asiapcf/09/09/india.skin/index.html> (date of last access 30 November 2013).

<sup>68</sup> Sidner, “Skin Whitener Advertisements.”

<sup>69</sup> “Global Skin Lighteners Market to Reach \$10 Billion by 2015,” *Skin Inc. Magazine*, 23 June 2009, <http://www.skininc.com/spabusiness/global/48898927.html> (date of last access 27 November 2013).

<sup>70</sup> See “Side Effects of Hydroquinone - for the Consumer,” *Drugs.com*, <http://www.drugs.com/sfx/hydroquinone-side-effects.html> (date of last access 11 November 2013).

in Korea, Japan and China) are using skin bleaching crèmes because darker skin continues to be viewed as a liability, both socially and economically. Significantly, as Kathy Russell, Midge Wilson and Ronald Hall conclude, “many Whites in positions of authority remain ignorant of and insensitive to the role of color in the lives of [blacks].”<sup>71</sup>

As black women have increasingly entered the mainstream beauty culture, which has, since the 1990s, claimed to be multicultural and “colour-blind,” how have the issues surrounding hair texture and skin colour been made to appear as non-issues? That we are surrounded by homogenizing and normalizing images, whose content, as Susan Bordo has argued, is far from arbitrary, “but instead suffused with the dominance of gendered, racial, class, and other cultural iconography”<sup>72</sup> seems on one level so obvious that it is hardly worthy of mention. But on another level, gender, race and class have typically been issues overlooked by mainstream beauty firms. Since white-owned companies, which for most of the twentieth century ignored black consumers, are now the leading manufacturers of “ethnic” hair care and cosmetics brands, I argue that questions must be raised about the representation of black beauty.

In the preface to *The Politics of Race in Canada* (2009), Maria Wallis observes that “Canadians continue to be widely applauded for promoting achievement over skin colour as a basis for recognition, rewards, and relationships. But like all powerful national dreams, this myth conceals more than it reveals, resulting in distortions that confuse or divide.”<sup>73</sup> Kobena Mercer also notes that dominant ideologies such as white bias do not just dominate by universalizing the values of hegemonic groups so that they become accepted as norm. “Their hegemony and

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<sup>71</sup> Russell, Wilson, and Hall, *Color Complex*, 166.

<sup>72</sup> Susan Bordo, “‘Material Girl’: The Effacements of Postmodern Culture,” in *Negotiating at the Margins: The Gendered Discourses of Power and Resistance*, eds. Sue Fisher and Kathy Davis (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1993), 297.

<sup>73</sup> Maria Wallis, “Preface,” in *The Politics of Race in Canada*, eds. Maria Wallis and Augie Fleras (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2009), v. Also see Cecil Foster, *Where Race Does Not Matter: The New Spirit of Modernity* (Toronto: Penguin, 2005), 24-30.

historical persistence is underwritten at a subjective level by the way ideologies construct positions from which individuals recognize such values as a constituent element of their personal identity and lived experiences.<sup>74</sup> The composite nature of white bias is both physiological and cultural, and intermixed with symbolic representations of racialized bodies.<sup>75</sup> There is ultimately a pervasive white bias in the beauty industry that defines what is considered beautiful, what bodies appear in consumer advertising, and who gains entry into the mainstream beauty culture's most prized spaces – the fashion and modelling worlds.<sup>76</sup>

#### IV. The white bias of the fashion and modelling industries

When most people think of black beauty advertising today, they probably think of Queen Latifah, and other black spokeswomen, such as Halle Berry, Beyoncé Knowles even Kerry Washington has appeared in ads for cosmetics geared toward darker-complexioned skin. Historically, however, cosmetic firms have offered a range of foundation which has suited the complexions of mostly white women. Kathy Peiss notes that when advertising executives for CoverGirl were interviewed in 1991, “[they] voiced discomfort about discussing the racial implications of the look they had created, a look they knew had alienated a number of black consumers.”<sup>77</sup> The first black model to appear in a CoverGirl ad did so in 1994 when Canadian-born Lana Ogilvie was featured in an ad for CoverGirl lipstick. In the December issue of *Chatelaine*, Ogilvie appeared for the first time alongside two white models in a campaign for

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<sup>74</sup> Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (New York & London: Routledge, 1994), 103.

<sup>75</sup> See Stuart Hall cited in Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle*, 103.

<sup>76</sup> Mercer has argued that hair functions as a key ethnic signifier because “compared with bodily shape or facial features, it can be changed more easily by cultural practices such as straightening.” I would argue that this reality has now changed. Today, through digital technology such as Photoshop, dark skin, a wide nose and coarse textured hair are all malleable in photographic images. Further, improvements in plastic surgery have improved the effects of scarring after surgery. Keloid scarring has historically deterred many black women from pursuing plastic surgery.

<sup>77</sup> Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 263.

CoverGirl's Luminesse Lipcolour Collection.<sup>78</sup> Prior to 1991, there were only seven brands tailored toward black women's skin tones, and six of these brands were owned by black firms – Naomi Sims, Gazelle, Juin Rachele, Barbara Walden, Zuri Cosmetics, and Fashion Fair.<sup>79</sup> When Estée Lauder launched its Prescriptive All Skins line in 1991, with an unprecedented range of one hundred and fifteen custom-blended shades, expanding its Clinique brand with the Color Deep line, the company, along with Maybelline and CoverGirl, established black consumer divisions. Although each company had established cosmetics lines by cultivating an image that linked its products with upper class white women, black women were now on the radar.<sup>80</sup>

The U.S. 1990 census figures coupled with a growing awareness of black women's spending power in the United States meant that by the mid-1990s, the black cosmetics market was dominated by multinational companies.<sup>81</sup> Fashion Fair, Iman and Zuri Cosmetics continued to advertise in *Share*, but over the course of the decade, Estée Lauder, CoverGirl, L'Oréal, and Revlon promoted their new image of diversity in the pages of *Chatelaine*. As a spokesperson for L'Oréal, Vanessa Williams appeared in several ads for the Futur-e moisturizer brand throughout 1998, since 1997 Halle Berry has appeared as a spokesperson for Revlon's lipstick brand, and the singer/actress Brandy Norwood appeared in CoverGirl ads in 2000.<sup>82</sup> In 1993 CoverGirl focus groups had concluded that black women did not want separate cosmetics lines, but Revlon's marketers found the contrary: Black women wanted a line from a major company that

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<sup>78</sup> See CoverGirl Lip Color Collection Advertisement, *Chatelaine*, December 1994, 11. Ogilvie was also the first non-white model to be given a contract with CoverGirl.

<sup>79</sup> Clarke, "Redefining Beautiful," 246.

<sup>80</sup> Robert E. Weems, Jr., "Consumerism and the Construction of Black Female Identity in Twentieth-Century America" *The Gender and Consumer Culture Reader*, ed. Jennifer Scanlon (New York and London: New York University Press, 2000), 175.

<sup>81</sup> Estee Lauder's Prescriptive All Skins, which offered over 100 custom-blended makeup shades, is reported to have attracted nearly 50,000 new black customers during its first year. See Weems, Jr., "Consumerism," 175.

<sup>82</sup> It is interesting to note that in her ad campaigns for Revlon Berry appeared alongside either two white women or in a group shot with white and Latina women, but in 2000, she began to appear by alone. It is not a coincidence that in 2000 Berry starred as "Storm" in the box office hit *X-Men*, which catapulted her into the mainstream.

specifically addressed who they were.<sup>83</sup> As a result, all mighty eight of Revlon's ColorStyle were given names that symbolically invoked "black culture" such as Brazil Nut liquid makeup, West Indies Wine lipstick and Jungle Orchid nail enamel. Under the guise of inclusion, the taxonomic language of these products not only made the blackness of blackness hypervisible, but through the invocation of the "exotic" (Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa) they also perpetuated the historical juxtaposition of blackness with the primitive.

Historically, as Petrine Archer-Straw observes, "the Primitive represented the process through which Europeans suggested their own superiority by placing inferior status on others. This process was entirely one-sided: it was simply a way for Europeans to project their fear of difference onto other races."<sup>84</sup> While black women such as Veronica Webb joined the ranks of Cindy Crawford and Claudia Schiffer as a Revlon spokesmodel in 1992, cosmetics for the "ethnic market" continued to exaggerate the difference of blackness in either the naming of the product, or the ad campaign focused on the product's use value, not the intrinsic beauty of the black celebrity spokeswoman. On the other hand, when white women appeared in L'Oréal ads, the product was often framed as an enhancement of an already existing beauty.

For example, when the Italian actress and model Isabella Rossellini began her stint as spokeswoman for L'Oréal's anti-aging brand Lancôme, in one representative ad in *Chatelaine* in April 1994, a full-page length close-up head shot of Rossellini appeared on one side of the page, while on the other side of the page the caption read: "A look that defies time. RÉNERGIE YEUX." Her beauty was framed as an intrinsic part of her embodiment, which the product

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<sup>83</sup> Clarke, "Redefining Beautiful," 250.

<sup>84</sup> Petrine Archer-Straw, *Negrophilia: Avant-Garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920s* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 12.

simply accentuated (and persevered).<sup>85</sup> On the contrary, when Vanessa Williams appeared in a Futur-e ad in August 1998, she similarly appeared via a head shot, but the benefits of the product, not her beauty, was emphasized: “L’Oréal invents the moisturizer of the future.... Skin looks smoother in just 1 day. Looks healthier in just 1 week.”<sup>86</sup> Cosmetics, in addition to hair dyes, allowed black women to engage in normalizing practices (in addition to hair straightening) that minimized the difference of blackness, especially in the fashion world where the markers of whiteness remained highly sought after by agents, casting directors, and magazine editors.<sup>87</sup>

Initially in the 1990s, the high fashion world sought after black models that were dark-skinned, such as Iman, Naomi Campbell and Alek Wek, who entered the ranks of the runway world and the pages of *Vogue*, *Harper’s Bazaar*, *Mademoiselle*, and *Elle* magazines. In her autobiography, Sudanese model Alek Wek talked about her experiences as a model in Europe and America in the 1990s.<sup>88</sup> In one example, Wek recounted her struggles convincing white executives that she was worthy enough to appear in a video shoot: “They wanted someone exotic who lived in a jungle,” she recalls.<sup>89</sup> Similarly, in a 2006 interview, Iman spoke of not being “black enough” for some executives even though she was Somalian: “I hated being told that I look like a white girl only browner. I look very Somali, very Bantu. I didn’t have to define myself as Black where I come from we are all Black.”<sup>90</sup> When Naomi Campbell and the singer-actress Grace Jones, both of whom were born in Jamaica, entered the fashion and modelling worlds, similar to Wek and Iman, they were highly sought after because of their dark skin. For

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<sup>85</sup> Significantly, in the documentary *About Face: Supermodels Then and Now* (2012), Isabella Rossellini commented that “advertising is about dreams not reality.” The statement was in regards to her being replaced as Lancôme’s spokeswoman even though marketing research showed that she was well liked. L’Oréal replaced her with someone younger because in Rossellini’s opinion, the company’s ideal was “youth, not reality.”

<sup>86</sup> Vanessa Williams’ L’Oréal Futur-e Advertisement, *Chatelaine*, August 1998, np.

<sup>87</sup> Since the 1990s, Asian, Indian, and Latina women have also increasingly dyed their hair blonde.

<sup>88</sup> Alek Wek, *Alek: Sudanese Refugee to International Supermodel* (London: Virago Press, 2007).

<sup>89</sup> Wek, *Alek*, 106.

<sup>90</sup> Iman cited in Shirley Tate, *Black Beauty: Aesthetics, Stylization, Politics* (Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 106.



example Jones – who in the 1970s wore her hair in a shortly cropped Afro, a style known as the flattop (which was perhaps an echo of Vidal Sassoon’s wedge-cut of the 1960s)<sup>91</sup> – almost always appeared as the exotic black woman. At the same time these women gained entry into the fashion world, they faced criticism from some blacks. Campbell and Iman were accused of “compromising” their heritage by wearing “platinum and honey-blond wigs” while Wek and Jones also criticized for not altering their hair.<sup>92</sup> Either way, dark-skinned women ruled the runway and high fashion magazines, but when it came to beauty product advertising, light-skinned models/actresses, such as Tyra Banks, continued to be the rule.

A 1991 study found that out of more than two hundred models associated with top New York’s agencies, such as Elite Model Management only fourteen were black; of the one hundred and eighty models with the Ford Modeling Agency only eight were black; and among the one hundred and twenty four models working at Wilhelmina only twelve were black.<sup>93</sup> A 1991 report entitled *Invisible People* also tallied the number of black models appearing in over eleven thousand ads in twenty seven different national magazines in the United States. While approximately eleven percent of the magazines’ readership was black, over ninety six percent of the models were white. Additionally, most of the blacks in the ads appeared in group shots dominated by whites, and the black women were usually light-skinned and had long, wavy hair.<sup>94</sup> While a comparable study has never been done in Canada, in my assessment of *Chatelaine* magazine since its inception in 1928, in 1991, political figure Zanana Akande (born 1937) was the only black woman to appear on its cover. Similar to the United States, she appeared in a group shot for a feature in the January issue alongside ten other women, all of

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<sup>91</sup> Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle*, 125.

<sup>92</sup> Russell, Wilson, and Hall, *Color Complex*, 154.

<sup>93</sup> Russell, Wilson, and Hall, *Color Complex*, 155.

<sup>94</sup> Russell, Wilson and Hall, *Color Complex*, 156. The report was issued by the Department of Consumer Affairs of New York and it also noted the description of models’ physical appearance and their positioning in each ad.

whom were white.<sup>95</sup> When dark-skinned models appeared in *Chatelaine* throughout the 1990s, the magazine also emphasized the difference of their blackness. In the September 1992 issue, an article titled “Skin Color: Meet Your Match” featured a dark-skinned model alongside the subtitle “If your skin tone is ebony.” The ad copy read:

Beautiful skin comes in many shades. But for years, women of color have complained about foundations that are too pink, too ashy (caused by high levels of titanium dioxide, a white pigment commonly used in cosmetics) or simply the wrong shade. Now, the cosmetic industry is addressing the special needs of multicultural women by reducing the titanium dioxide and upping the pigment needed to keep cosmetic color true.... Try Maybelline’s Shades of You collection: Mahogany Oil-Free Soufflé Makeup and Rich Mocha Oil-Free Pressed Powder.<sup>96</sup>

By invoking the word “multicultural” *Chatelaine* envisaged a “culture-blind” beauty and by extension a nation in which, as Augie Flera argues, “The ethnicities of minority women ... are channelled (“de-politicized”) into aesthetic pursuits in personal or private domains.”<sup>97</sup> Susan Bordo similarly notes that it has become increasingly difficult in contemporary culture to sustain any significant political critique about beauty because

Everything is the same in its unvalanced difference. (“I perm my hair. You’re wearing makeup. What’s the difference?”) Particulars reign, and generality – which collects, organizes, and prioritizes, suspending attention to particularity in the interests of connection, emphasis, and criticism – is suspect.<sup>98</sup>

In the National Film Board short film *The Colour of Beauty* (2010) Elizabeth St. Philip followed a black Canadian model Renee Thompson as she tried to make it as a top fashion model

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<sup>95</sup> See Charlotte Gray, “Yes, 11 Ministers!,” *Chatelaine*, January 1991, 21-3; 86. In 1990 Akande became the first black woman elected to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, serving as a cabinet minister for the Toronto riding of St. Andrew-St. Patrick. A second black woman politician, Jean Augustine (b. 1937 in Grenada), the first black woman elected to the Parliament of Canada and subsequently the first black woman in a federal Cabinet, was featured in a multi-page feature in 1994; the feature was written by the renowned black Canadian author, Cecil Foster who wrote a few black-focused articles for *Chatelaine* in the early 1990s. See Cecil Foster, “Can Jean Augustine Deliver?,” *Chatelaine*, November 1994, 52-6. Also see Foster, “Why Blacks Get Mad,” *Chatelaine*, November 1992, 70-75; 118.

<sup>96</sup> Charmaine Gooden, “Skin Color: Meet Your Match,” *Chatelaine*, September 1992, 84.

<sup>97</sup> Augie Fleras, “Racializing Culture/Culturalizing Race: Multicultural Racism in Multicultural Canada,” in *Racism, Eh? A Critical Inter-Disciplinary Anthology of Race and Racism in Canada*, eds. Camille A. Nelson and Charmaine A. Nelson (Concord, Ontario: Captus Press, 2004), 441.

<sup>98</sup> Bordo, “Material Girl,” 302.

in New York. The film exposed the fact that black models still struggle in an industry where white women continue to represent the standard of beauty. Most notably, the film captured how modelling agencies rarely hire black models, and when they do, they want them to essentially look, as one New York casting director admitted, “Like a white girl dipped in chocolate.” Thompson recounted hearing comments like “No black girls allowed on casting calls” or “We’re not looking for black girls only Brunette white girls.” Thompson’s agent Justin Peery admitted that the fashion world was only interested in the different skin pigment of black women and those “lucky few girls” with white features (a skinny nose, not too big lips) are the ones that are considered to be beautiful. According to a 2008 survey of models in New York Fashion week, six percent were black, six percent were Asian, six percent were Hispanic, and eighty seven percent were white. While Lisa Tant, editor-in-chief of *Flare Magazine* and Jeanne Baker, host of Fashion Television were reluctant to call such evidences racist, both openly admitted that from the designer through to the magazine editors, there is a lack of interest in black models.<sup>99</sup>

In an attempt to debunk allegations of racism, in July 2008 *Italian Vogue* released the “Black Issue,” which exclusively featured black models. While the issue sold out in the United States and in the UK in just seventy two hours, in Thompson’s words, “It was just an attempt to prove that we’re not racist and unfortunately it worked.” The unspoken truth about the beauty culture industry and by extension the fashion world is that whiteness continues to be the benchmark for what is deemed beautiful. Whether a model is black, Asian or Latina, the “woman of colour” whose body and phenotype is more closely aligned with whiteness is the one who is used in fashion spreads and product advertising. As Margaret Hunter observes, “the lightest women get access to more resources because not only are they lighter-skinned and therefore

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<sup>99</sup> *Flare Magazine* was created by Maclean-Hunter publishing in 1979. Unlike *Chatelaine*, which is promoted as women’s lifestyle magazine, *Flare* promotes itself as a fashion magazine.

racially privileged, but their light skin is interpreted in our culture as more beautiful and therefore they are privileged as beautiful women.”<sup>100</sup> With respect to hair, black models whose hair is not straightened are often photographed wearing straight-haired wigs; especially if the model is dark-skinned.<sup>101</sup> Thus, while darker-skinned women sometimes appear in beauty advertising, such as Kerry Washington, they are more the exception than the rule. The case of World Rio Corporation is one of the most infamous examples of the tension between white bias and the cultivation of black women consumers.

## V. Rio World Corporation and the invocation of the exotic

In early 1994, a late-night television infomercial promoted a new method of hair care. The product, called Rio, was said to have been used successfully for over 40 years by Brazilians who wanted to straighten their hair without the use of chemicals.<sup>102</sup> Marketed specifically toward black women, Rio told viewers that the product was “chemical free” and to prove it, a male spokesperson ate a portion of the product on the air. Produced by De Classe Cosmetics Ltd., a Rio de Janeiro-based company, but distributed by World Rio Corporation in Nevada, Rio was advertised as an “all-natural, chemical-free relaxer” that was derived from “exotic flora” that grows in the rain forests of Brazil.<sup>103</sup> Within a few months of the product’s debut consumers began to report hair loss and in some cases baldness. Instead of providing soft, flowing hair, as the infomercial had promised, Rio caused many users’ scalps to itch and burn, while others said it took out their hair in clumps, leaving embarrassing bald spots.<sup>104</sup> By April 1995, more than

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<sup>100</sup> Hunter, *Race, Gender*, 71.

<sup>101</sup> bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1992), 71.

<sup>102</sup> I have vivid memories of watching the Rio infomercials back in 1994. Though I was not tempted to purchase the product, I remember how the infomercial aligned itself with Brazil as an exotic representation of blackness that was somehow more beautiful and “exotic” than the blackness of African Americans.

<sup>103</sup> Deborah R. Grayson, “Is it Fake?: Black Women’s Hair as Spectacle and Spec(tac)ular,” *Camera Obscura Collective* 36 (1995): 20.

<sup>104</sup> Rooks, *Hair Raising*, 118.

fifteen hundred lawsuits had been filed and attorneys were considering consolidating them into one class action suit.<sup>105</sup> According to a Virginia newspaper, Arthur Rieman, general counsel for World Rio Corporation, argued that Rio was not to blame for any suffering users might have experienced. In his opinion, the people who had problems with Rio probably did not follow the instructions properly.<sup>106</sup> In December 1994, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) warned consumers not to use Rio after the agency had received eighteen hundred complaints.

What Rio product users did not know, and what many consumers in general do not know is that, unlike drugs, the FDA does not require cosmetics to be tested before being sold to the general population.<sup>107</sup> Under the law, cosmetic products and ingredients are not preapproved by the FDA before they enter the consumer marketplace, with the exception of colour additives, and the FDA only investigates a product after it is on the market and consumers complain. Similarly, Health Canada only investigates after consumers complain about a cosmetic product and there is very little information on their website about chemical relaxers or black beauty products.<sup>108</sup> Only after consumers complained to the FDA did the California Department of Health Services test Rio and determine that despite claims to the contrary, the product was not “all-natural and chemical-free” and that it actually contained harsh chemicals.<sup>109</sup> The key ingredients in Rio – the cupric acid basic (the ingredients that turned the hair green), with the ascorbic acid acting as

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<sup>105</sup> Rooks, *Hair Raising*, 119.

<sup>106</sup> Tananarive Due, “Thousands of Women Say Rio System Ruined Their Hair,” *The Free Lance-Star*, 14 February 1995, D6.

<sup>107</sup> See U.S. Food and Drug Administration, “Does FDA approve cosmetics before they go on the market?” [http://www.fda.gov/cosmetics/guidancecomplianceregulatoryinformation/ucm074162.htm#Does\\_FDA\\_approve](http://www.fda.gov/cosmetics/guidancecomplianceregulatoryinformation/ucm074162.htm#Does_FDA_approve) (date of last access 22 November 2013).

<sup>108</sup> In April 2009 Wave Nouveau Revitalizing Mousse and Body & Shine, a conditioning enhancer, both sold under the Soft Sheen Optimum Care brand name were recalled by Health Canada for improper labelling. There were, however, no reports of incidents or injuries related to the use of these products. See “Hair Care Products,” *Health Canada*, <http://www.healthycanadians.gc.ca/recall-alert-rappel-avis/hc-sc/2009/12632r-eng.php> (date of last access 7 December 2013).

<sup>109</sup> Grayson, “It is Fake,” 22.

the stabilizer – were used at levels that were more acidic than is considered safe for use even in heavy industrial products.<sup>110</sup>

In order to sell the product, the infomercial constructed an exotic image of blackness by invoking the Caribbean. As Noliwe Rooks explains,

The infomercial's set design evokes visions of a Caribbean resort, and audience members are seated in groups of three or four, at tables made of rattan and bamboo. Large palm trees and numerous "colorful" plants give the appearance of an exotic tropical locale, and a long, large structure in the middle of the set resembles a beach bar. The theme music sounds distinctly like steel drums and does indeed have a "rocking" calypso beat. The spokesman who joins Mary, the model and spokeswoman for Rio, is dressed in a tropical shirt. Mary is dressed in a red, skintight sundress. The set suggest informality. There is no pressure here. We are all relaxed and friendly.<sup>111</sup>

The tropical theme was also resurrected by other multinational corporations in the 1990s as a strategy to sell the idea of consuming the exotic. In 1991, for instance, an American firm started producing clothing and furnishing lines it christened Tommy Bahama, which was based on a tropical theme. As Krista Thompson asserts, Tommy Bahama was a contemporary testament to the power of the earliest tourism promoters to inspire travelers to seek out their tropical dreams by venturing to an island. "Now by simply attaching 'Bahama' to a brand, the company could persuade customers to go virtually native, to fulfill their tropical dreams without leaving home."<sup>112</sup> I would argue that Rio similarly employed the tropical setting as a symbolic representation of taming the "natural" black body into an "exotic" sexual body. Conveniently,

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<sup>110</sup> Grayson, "It is Fake," 22.

<sup>111</sup> Rooks, *Hair Raising*, 120.

<sup>112</sup> Krista Thompson, *An Eye for the Tropics: Tourism, Photography, and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 301. Thompson observes further that while tourism-oriented representations of the Bahamas and Jamaica, whether of land, sea, or human-spaces, often heightened the tropicality of the islands in the 1920s and 1930s, these depictions also "conveyed a domesticated version of the tropical environment and society. Such photographs of tamed nature and disciplined 'natives' ensured potential travelers of their safety in a tropical environment." Thompson, *Eye for the Tropics*, 7. Thompson uses the terms "tropicalization" or "tropicality" to describe the complex visual systems through which the islands were imaged for tourist consumption and the social and political implications of these representations on actual physical space on the islands and their inhabitants.

the infomercial ignored the fact that the physical markers of blackness, as previously noted, were similarly highly politicized in Brazil and in the Caribbean in general.

At one point in the infomercial André Desmond, a black man, spoke of his travels throughout Brazil; “Rio frees you. It doesn’t put you in bondage. With Rio you are free,” he proclaimed.<sup>113</sup> Through the use of taped testimonials of black women, the infomercial also debased natural hair, and by extension, reasserted the notion of lighter-skin and straightened hair as more beautiful than darker-skin and natural black hair. In one testimonial, an overweight, dark-skinned woman confided: “I hate my hair, it doesn’t move at all. I just wake up in the morning and put on a hat.”<sup>114</sup> Not surprisingly, several other testimonials also applaud the product for working on their “bad hair” or for helping to fix their “kinky, fuzzy and curly” hair problem. While Rio was just an infomercial, the use of such colloquial language reveals how the naming of difference still permeated beauty advertising. Significantly, “bad hair” claims have become not just a matter of texture or appearance. Since the 1980s, the workplace and school have become sites where black women’s hairstyling choices have consistently been under attack.

## **VI. Black women’s hair becomes racialized and politicized in the workplace**

In March 1980, *Share* ran an editorial, titled “African Braids Are in this Summer.” The article, written by one of Eaton’s Hairworks’ black stylists, informed readers that braiding had once been considered a casual hairstyle but that it since had become a trend.<sup>115</sup> “It has been shunned and still is, by many who cannot appreciate the beauty, the art, and message that each individual strand of hair carries ... a message of strength, beauty and wonder,” *Share* reported. African American singers such as Peaches (of the group Peaches and Herb), and Patrice Rushen

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<sup>113</sup> See Rooks, *Hair Raising*, 121.

<sup>114</sup> Rooks, *Hair Raising*, 123.

<sup>115</sup> Daphne Estelle, “African Braids are in This Summer,” *Share*, 29 March 1980, 3.

had worn braids, but in the mainstream media (and in some black circles) braids as a “trend” was soon attributed to the blonde haired, blue-eyed actress Bo Derek. In the film *10* (1979), Derek wore her hair in cornrows, and by 1980, the pages of *Time* and *Newsweek* and in the lexicon of the dominant culture cornrows become known as “Bo Braids.”

Even though hair braiding was rooted in Africa history, and several African American actresses had worn the style on screen, most notably, Cicely Tyson in the television drama series *East Side, West Side* (1963-1964),<sup>116</sup> there were seldom any photographs or articles written about black women who cornrowed their hair. The mainstream media helped to brand Derek’s image as a “multicultural, more inclusive beauty ideal” which was, for many black women, an added insult to injury.<sup>117</sup> Singer Roberta Flack, who had been wearing her natural hair braided for years, expressed anger over the “Bo Braids” phenomenon. “Black women were wearing cornrows long before Bo Derek,” she told *The Christian Science Monitor*.<sup>118</sup> “I took issue that they made such a big thing about Bo Derek and cornrow,” Flack said further. “I can see this Bo Derek doll going out, the ‘10’ doll, with braids. And they’ll make a zillion dollars off it.”

At the height of the Afro’s popularity in the early 1970s, cornrows and braids had emerged as alternatives for women who felt Afros were too commercial and not authentically “African.”<sup>119</sup> Following Derek’s popularization of the style, however, white women were suddenly given liberty to once again appropriate the Other, and the style quickly swept across the mainstream hair care industry. Places like Le Braids Cherie, a braids-only salon opened in Hollywood, specifically catering to the new look; New York City’s Pierre Mitchell Salon

<sup>116</sup> Byrd and Tharps, *Hair Story*, 54.

<sup>117</sup> Byrd and Tharps, *Hair Story*, 101. In the 1960s and 1970s when black women were wearing beaded braids and cornrows as an expression of their African heritage, significantly, this act was not considered a mainstream thing to do. And within black communities many only adopted the still after the film *10*. See Russell, Wilson and Hall, *Color Complex*, 89-90.

<sup>118</sup> Louise Sweeney, “Roberta Flack; A VIOLA IN HER VOICE,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 6 March 1980, <http://www.csmonitor.com/1980/0306/030653.html> (date of last access 25 October 2013).

<sup>119</sup> Walker, “Black is Profitable,” 275.



charged \$500 dollars to braid white women's hair and add accessories like semiprecious stones, and white women looking to spend less could go to a beauty salon in Harlem to get cornrows.<sup>120</sup> While several non-black celebrities had adopted the Afro hairstyle in the 1960s, such as Barbra Streisand, and Afro wigs in various colours had been sold at stores such as Macy's,<sup>121</sup> the adoption of cornrows by white women was different. While on the surface, it appeared that whites were taking their beauty cues from black culture, in reality, the appropriation of the hairstyle was mostly superficial and had very little to do with black culture. As Bordo asserts, with Bo Derek, and by extension all white women who wore cornrows, there was a privilege that was "so unimpeachably white as to permit an exotic touch of 'otherness' with no danger of racial contamination."<sup>122</sup> Once "Bo Braids" had run its course, white women discarded the hairstyle as swiftly as they had adopted it. But for black women who continued to wear the hairstyle, the response was not celebratory but often punitive in nature.

Back in 1969 Deborah Renwick, an African American flight attendant, was fired by United Air Lines after three years of employment because she wore a natural hairstyle rather than straightening her hair.<sup>123</sup> Airline officials considered Renwick's naturally short Afro, about three inches from her head, inappropriate. By the 1980s, other African American women would be fired for wearing braids, cornrows or dreadlocks. In 1981, Renee Rogers, a ticket agent for American Airlines, was fired for wearing cornrows. She filed a discrimination suit against the company challenging its policy prohibiting employees from wearing an all-braided hairstyle. Rogers claimed that American Airline's grooming policy violated the Civil Rights Act of 1964 because the policy discriminated against her as a woman, but also as a black woman. In effect,

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<sup>120</sup> Byrd and Tharps, *Hair Story*, 102.

<sup>121</sup> Byrd and Tharps, *Hair Story*, 103.

<sup>122</sup> Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (Berkeley, California: The University of California Press, 1995), 254.

<sup>123</sup> "What's Wrong With Her Natural Hair?," *Contrast*, 29 September 1969, 8.

her claim was based on both racial and sex discrimination. The U.S. Federal District Court of New York rejected Rogers' claim that the style evoked her African heritage, observing that her wearing of the hairstyle came after the release of *10*. The court then dismissed Rogers' argument that it was not Bo Derek who popularized cornrows but rather it was a style worn by black women that was reflective of cultural, historical meaning.<sup>124</sup> The case represented a denial of African cultural history and an erasure of black self-grooming practices. In her analysis of Rogers' case, Paulette Caldwell also notes that the court chose to base its decision principally on distinctions between biological and cultural conceptions of race, and it also treated the plaintiff's claims of race and gender discrimination as independent of each other, thereby denying any relationship between the two.<sup>125</sup> The way the court distinguished between phenotype and cultural aspects of race, Caldwell continues, were two-fold.

First, the court rejected Rogers' claim that braids were akin to Afros. The court argued that the two were not the same because braids were not the product of natural hair growth but were in fact "artifice."<sup>126</sup> Second, in response to Rogers' argument that, like the Afro, the wearing of braids reflected her ethnic and cultural identification, the court distinguished between the unchangeable aspects of race and those characteristics that are socially-culturally associated with a particular race.<sup>127</sup> Stated otherwise, the court positioned braids as a matter of personal choice, and not reflective of one's cultural heritage or race. After this ruling, several other black women were fired or reprimanded by an employer for wearing cornrows and braids.<sup>128</sup> The

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<sup>124</sup> D. Wendy Greene, "Black Women Can't Have Blonde Hair ... in the Workplace," *Journal of Gender, Race, and Justice* 14.2 (2011), 413.

<sup>125</sup> Paulette Caldwell, "A Hair Piece: Perspectives on the Intersection of Race and Gender," in *Critical Race Feminism: A Reader*, ed. Adrien Katherine Wing (New York and London: New York University Press, 2003), 310.

<sup>126</sup> Caldwell, "Hair Piece," 314.

<sup>127</sup> Caldwell, "Hair Piece," 314.

<sup>128</sup> In 1987, Pamela Walker, a full-time teacher and doctoral student at the University of Illinois at Chicago, was fired from her part-time job at the Chicago Regency Hyatt for wearing cornrows. A year later, in 1988, the Marriott Hotel in Washington, D.C., sent home part-time employee Pamela Mitchell because she wore her hair, in their

Rogers case helped to position braids as a style separate from black culture, and by implication, a style derived from white women, and because mainstream (white) culture determined what was popular, braided hairstyles were trivialized as mere style, or trendy fashion.<sup>129</sup>

In a *Share* article in December 1985, hairstylist Veronica Ciandre explained to Ebonnie Rowe why braids had become so popular among black women.<sup>130</sup> “[Veronica] does not believe in applying chemical treatments, preferring instead to work with braids, twists and sculptured cuts,” Rowe noted. When Ciandre approached black salons with that attitude, Rowe explained further, they thought she was “crazy” but eventually they changed their minds. “People seem to forget that it’s not a natural-thing to put chemicals in hair. More people should get used to and take pride in their natural hair, understand it and make it work them! Especially those who are balding from repeated chemical treatments,” Ciandre told *Share*. Significantly, the article pointed out that Bo Derek had actually impacted black culture, especially black men. “When I first wore braids, a black man said to me ‘oh, you got that from Bo Derek,’” Ciandra explained. Such statements point to the ways in which black women’s beauty was, by the 1980s, increasingly compared to white women’s beauty, but where white women still had permission to play in blackness, black women were still being accused of approximating whiteness. As Bordo observes, when Bo Derek wore cornrows, she was viewed as “engaging in normalizing feminine practice”<sup>131</sup> but when black women did the same, they were seen as a mimic. Significantly, since the 1990s, black women and men have also been criminalized for wearing dreadlocks.

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words, in an “extreme, cornrowed hairstyle.” Two months later, D.C. was the site of another braids incident when 37 year-old Cheryl Tatum, a restaurant cashier at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City was told by a supervisor to pull her braids into a bun to comply with the company’s dress code, after she complied, the personnel director told her to take out the braids once again because the Hyatt prohibited “extreme and unusual hairstyles.” See Byrd and Tharps, *Hair Story*, 105-6.

<sup>129</sup> Caldwell, “Hair Piece,” 315.

<sup>130</sup> Ebonnie Rowe, “Sophisticated Braids by Veronica,” *Share*, 20 December 1985, 18.

<sup>131</sup> Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*, 255.

In 1996, Education officials in the Cayman Islands refused to allow a five-year old boy back into any government-funded primary school until he “complies with the dress code” and cut his long dreadlocks.<sup>132</sup> That same year, school policies at several Chicago area junior high and high schools designated that hairstyles such as braids and dreadlocks violated school dress code policies. School officials argued that the codes had nothing to do with race and culture but instead had to do with “keeping kids safe and preventing distractions in the classrooms.”<sup>133</sup> In 1998, 17-year old Michele Barskile of North Carolina was told by her black sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha, that because she wore her hair in dreadlocks, she would not be allowed to attend the debutante ball.<sup>134</sup> In April 2006, Susan Taylor, Executive Editor of *Essence* magazine was forced to cancel a speaking engagement at the historical black college, Hampton University in Virginia, when she learned that a department had a strict, “no-braids, no dreadlocks policy” for its students. After cancelling the engagement, Taylor issued a statement which read in part, “The freedom to wear our hair in ways that celebrate our heritage is one of our ‘rites of passage.’ Students would benefit from learning how to care for and groom locks and braids and wear them in ways that are appropriate in a business setting.”<sup>135</sup>

In the United States, black hair lawsuits have included claims against police departments and prison authorities, schools and retailers, all of which have “rules against knotted ‘locks [that] unfairly single out [Rastafari] in particular and [blacks] in general.”<sup>136</sup> As Deborah Grayson

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<sup>132</sup> See “Cayman Islands: No Dreadlocks,” *Share*, 22 February 1996, 13.

<sup>133</sup> See Stephanie Davis and Jerry Thomas, “School’s Hairdo Ban All Tangled: See It Clashing with Ethnic Culture,” *Chicago Tribune*, 12 November 1996, [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1996-11-12/news/9611120106\\_1\\_gang-symbols-school-s-ban-hair](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1996-11-12/news/9611120106_1_gang-symbols-school-s-ban-hair) (date of last access 22 November 2013). Thomas Ryan, superintendent of District 168, said further, “We have never had a gun in the school or a kid stabbed. I don’t ever want to call to a home and say to a parent, ‘Your kid was stabbed in school.’”

<sup>134</sup> See “Dreadlocks,” *Los Angeles Times*, 27 November 1998, <http://articles.latimes.com/1998/nov/27/local/me-48232> (date of last access 10 November 2013).

<sup>135</sup> “Susan Taylor Protests School’s No-Braids Policy” *Maynard Institute*, 12 April 2006, <http://mije.org/richardprince/hair-wars> (date of last access 10 November 2013).

<sup>136</sup> Tracey Owens Patton, “Hey Girl, Am I More than My Hair?” *African American Women and Their Struggles with Beauty, Body Image, and Hair*, *NWSA Journal* 18.2 (Summer 2006): 37-8.

aply notes, “because of the hierarchical structure of beauty culture, the choices Black women make about their personal appearance are political choices whether we intend them to be or not.”<sup>137</sup> In November 2002, for instance, two years after Patricia Pitts began working for a theme park in Valdosta, Georgia she decided to wear her hair in a cornrow style. Wendy Greene recounts that

Pitts’ manager informed Pitts that she did not approve of her cornrow hairstyle and suggested that “she should get her hair done in a ‘pretty’ hairstyle.” Attempting to satisfy her supervisor’s request, Pitts revamped her hairstyle by placing extensions on her hair and styling it in two strand twists. Because Pitt’s hair had the appearance of dreadlocks, Pitts’ supervisor again disapproved of her hairstyle....Shortly thereafter, the company issued a memo barring “dreadlocks, cornrows, beads, and shells’ that are not ‘covered by a hat [or] visor.”<sup>138</sup>

In *Santee v. Windsor Court Hotel* (2000) a black woman lost an employment opportunity and her job not because she wore dreadlocks or cornrows but because she dyed her hair blonde.<sup>139</sup> In April 1999, Andrea Santee applied for a housekeeping position at the Windsor Court Hotel in New Orleans, Louisiana, and when she interviewed for the position, her hair was dyed blonde.<sup>140</sup> In the Executive Housekeeper’s opinion, Santee’s hair colour was “extreme under the parameters of the [h]otel’s grooming policy [and therefore] she inquired into whether [Santee] would be willing to change her hair color for the job.”<sup>141</sup> Other cases involving black women and blonde hair include *Burchette v. Abercrombie & Fitch* (2009) and *Bryant v. BEGIN Manage Program* (2003).<sup>142</sup> Even though blonde is a rare natural hair colour for all women, and is much more

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<sup>137</sup> Grayson, “Is it Fake,” 22.

<sup>138</sup> Greene, “Black Women Can’t Have Blonde Hair,” 415. The U.S. military also had an anti-braid policies and in the late-1980s several women were fired or threatened with dismissal for wearing braids or cornrows to work. See Pamela Ferrell, *Let’s Talk Hair* (Washington, D.C.: Cornrows and Co., 1993), 20. These occurrences, however, led to lawsuits which eventually outlawed discrimination in the workplace on the basis of hair style, such as the U.S. Navy which abolished its anti-braid policy in 1994 after Navy Board of Dress Regulators were convinced that braided hair was more practical for ship-bound black women, also see Ferrell, *Let’s Talk Hair*, 20.

<sup>139</sup> Greene, “Black Women Can’t Have Blonde Hair,” 411-12.

<sup>140</sup> Greene, “Black Women Can’t Have Blonde Hair,” 417.

<sup>141</sup> Greene, “Black Women Can’t Have Blonde Hair,” 417.

<sup>142</sup> Dulazia Burchette, who worked for the clothing retailer Abercrombie & Fitch, decided to wear blonde highlights to work one day. She was allegedly told by a supervisor that she could not continue to work at the store with blonde

common in children,<sup>143</sup> the fact that black women who dye their hair blonde are reprimanded for a supposed artifice speaks to the pervasiveness of white bias. Hairstyle, hair colour and dress continue to function as battlegrounds where, as Grayson notes further, “issues related to the politics of personal appearance and beauty are being fought out.”<sup>144</sup>

In 2007, when an unidentified editor from *Glamour* magazine spoke to a group of lawyers at the offices of Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton in New York she gave a presentation on the “Dos and Don'ts of Corporate Fashion.”<sup>145</sup> The first slide was allegedly of a black woman wearing an Afro, in which the *Glamour* editor declared was “a real no, no.” And for dreadlocks, the room of approximately 40 lawyers were told, “How truly dreadful!” The style editor reportedly commented that it was “shocking” that some people still thought it “appropriate” to wear those hairstyles at the office, adding that “political” hairstyles really had to go. In November 2013, the *New York Daily News* reported that a white woman, Katherine Lemire, who served as a special counsel for NYPD Commissioner Raymond Kelly, claimed she was terminated from the position at a leading security firm for standing up for a black colleague, Chanissa Green, who wore a braided hairstyle.<sup>146</sup> In the filed lawsuit it is alleged that Green’s supervisor told her that “when someone like me ... sees someone with a style like that, we think

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highlights because they were “not natural.” Shirley Bryant, who worked as an Orientation and Assessment Facilitator for a work-study program for BEGIN, a U.S. federally mandated program that assisted welfare recipients to return to the workforce, wore her short, curly hair in a shade of blonde. In Bryant’s case, at issue was the fact that the other black women at BEGIN wrapped their hair in African-inspired headwraps and wore “Afrocentric” clothing while Bryant, who was light-skinned, did not. As such, Bryant’s supervisor, a black woman, is alleged to have terminated her not because she was black but because she was light-skinned, wore business attire (read: white) and dyed her hair blonde; Bryant claimed that the supervisor also called her a “wannabe” for such aesthetics. See Greene, “Black Women Can’t Have Blonde Hair,” 421; 423-24.

<sup>143</sup> See Nancy Etcoff, *Survival of the Prettiest: The Science of Beauty* (New York: Anchor Books, 1999), 126.

<sup>144</sup> Grayson, “Is it Fake,” 22-3.

<sup>145</sup> See “‘Glamour’ Editor To Lady Lawyers: Being Black Is Kinda A Corporate ‘Don’t,’” *Jezebel*, 14 August 2007, <http://jezebel.com/289268/glamour-editor-to-lady-lawyers-being-black-is-kind-a-corporate-dont> (date of last access 10 November 2013).

<sup>146</sup> Hannington Dia, “Woman Claims She Lost Job For Defending Black Co-Worker’s ‘Ghetto’ Braids,” *NEWSONE*, 27 November 2013, <http://newsone.com/2792628/katherine-lemire-msa-lawsuit/> (date of last access 1 December 2013).

ghetto – not professional” and further, the supervisor is alleged to have said, “I’ll tell you what’s beautiful: my daughter, with blond hair and blue eyes.” A few weeks later, 12-year-old Vanessa VanDyke, who wears her hair in an Afro hairstyle, was allegedly told that she would have to leave her school, the Faith Christian Academy in Orlando, unless she cut her hair.<sup>147</sup>

Caldwell’s compelling arguments in regards to *Rogers v. American Airlines* (1981) illuminated how black women’s hairstyling choices, from childhood through adulthood, are consistently compounded by external forces which creates a series of conflicting juxtapositions: wear it chemically straightened or natural, cut it low or wear it long, braid it or wear it “out,” “wrap it” or plait it, put a weave in it or put a wig over it, twist, braid, or dreadlocks, colour, highlight, or not to colour at all.<sup>148</sup> Such choices are not mere juxtapositions; in some instances, they mean the difference between gaining social acceptance or ostracization. While there has never been a publicized black hair lawsuit in Canada, black women have undoubtedly faced similar discrimination at work because of their hair.<sup>149</sup> Thus, while black women may be more visible in the mainstream culture via advertising, film and television, this ascendancy has made hypervisible the ways in which Western standards of beauty continue to impose limits on beauty. Instead of the mainstream beauty industry, and the cultural milieu in general, expanding to include difference, it has simply narrowed the parameters of beauty by demanding that the visible markers of racial difference are muted. Increasingly, the brown-skinned woman has reappeared as the perfect body-type to satisfy the narrow parameters of contemporary beauty.

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<sup>147</sup> Kate Dries, “Black Girl Threatened With Expulsion Over Hair Goes Back to School,” *Jezebel.com*, <http://jezebel.com/black-girl-threatened-with-expulsion-over-hair-goes-bac-1474934908> (date of last access 2 December 2013). This story also caught the attention of Canadian media, see Andrew Ryan, “Why is a Florida school threatening to expel a student for her natural hairstyle?,” *Globe & Mail*, 26 November 2013, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/the-hot-button/why-is-a-florida-school-threatening-to-expel-a-student-being-bullied-for-her-natural-hairstyle/article15618385/> (date of last access 26 November 2013).

<sup>148</sup> See Greene, “Black Women Can’t Have Blonde Hair,” 406.

<sup>149</sup> In order to determine whether Canadian courts have ever heard a case involving black hair, I would have to review case law and legal decisions. This will likely be the basis of a future project.

## VII. The illusion of diversity in contemporary beauty culture

In chapter three I referred to the “Brownskin” model of the post-World War II photographic magazine as a figure who served to overturn what Laila Haidarali describes as the racist stereotyping of African American women as dark-skinned, unattractive mammies, maids, and laundresses.<sup>150</sup> By endowing the brown-skinned woman with attributes historically denied African American women – beauty, poise, and success – these women became the ideal advertising image for black America. Today, the brown-skinned spokeswoman is a figure that has become the dominant image of black womanhood in mainstream beauty campaigns, occupying a space that is believed to signal the beauty industry’s new found “colour-blindness.” Janell Hobson has theorized about the “illusion of inclusion” on shows like *American Idol*, which has had the effect of reinforcing a new form of racism that ignores the “systemic racial hierarchies that continue to advance white supremacy or normalcy while non-white spectacle is always viewed as ‘different’.... [Such public representations] lull us into accepting the ‘hyperreal’ of what many like to call a ‘postracial society.’”<sup>151</sup> This pretense of “transparency” has much in common with Jean Baudrillard’s notion of the “hyperreal,” which becomes “more real than the real, that is how the real is abolished.”<sup>152</sup> In the context of beauty culture, the pretense of transparency and the illusion of diversity acts as a blinder to the realities of systemic racism, prejudice, and discrimination that continue to exist in the boardrooms and backrooms of the world’s largest beauty companies.

<sup>150</sup> Laila Haidarali, “Polishing Brown Diamonds: African American Women, Popular Magazines, and the Advent of Modeling in Early Postwar America” *Journal of Women’s History* 17.1 (Spring 2005): 11.

<sup>151</sup> Hobson, “Pop Goes Democracy: Mediating Race, Gender, and Nation on *American Idol*” in *Body as Evidence: Mediating Race, Globalizing Gender* (New York: State University of New York, 2012), 41.

<sup>152</sup> Hobson, “Pop Goes Democracy,” 23. See also Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, [1981] 1994).



In 2007, the Garnier division of L'Oréal, along with a recruitment agency it employed, were fined €30,000 (US\$40,650) each after they recruited women on the basis of race, excluding non-white women from promoting Garnier's shampoo.<sup>153</sup> Back in 2000, a fax detailed the profile of hostesses sought by L'Oréal. It stipulated that women should be 18 to 22, size 38-42 (CA size 10-14) and "BBR," the initials for bleu, blanc, rouge, the colours of the French flag, which was a well-known code used by right-wing conservatives in France to mean "white" French people and not those of north African, African and Asian backgrounds.<sup>154</sup> In August 2008, L'Oreal was also accused of "whitewashing" Beyoncé in an advertisement in which the R&B singer's skin appeared visibly lighter.<sup>155</sup> There have been several allegations levied against the French government, not to mention a culture of racism and xenophobia in France that has also been made public through online blogs and discussion boards.

When *Think Like a Man*, based on the book by comedian Steve Harvey, was released in 2012 for instance, the film was allegedly banned in France due to a "lack of diversity in the cast."<sup>156</sup> A Global Voices blogger and several other French-speaking bloggers were adamant that someone in a position of power in France is uninterested in promoting films by and about black people, unless the majority of the cast is white. As one blogger claimed, "Tyler Perry's movies are never scheduled in any French movie theaters or are only released in DVDs, even

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<sup>153</sup> Angelique Chrisafis, "You're Worth it - If White. L'Oréal Guilty of Racism," *The Guardian*, 7 July 2007, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/jul/07/france.angeliquechrisafis> (date of last access 24 November 2013).

<sup>154</sup> Chrisafis, "You're Worth It - If White."

<sup>155</sup> Alanah Eriksen, "White Out of Order! Beyoncé is Looking Several Shades Lighter in Promo Shoot for Her New Album," *Mail Online*, 7 January 2012, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-2087388/Beyonc-white-skin-row-Controversial-photo-shows-singer-looking-shades-lighter-usual-tone.html> (date of last access 24 November 2013).

<sup>156</sup> Boyce Watkins, "'Think Like a Man' Gets Banned from French Theatres," *Your Black World*, <http://www.yourblackworld.net/2012/05/black-news/think-like-a-man-gets-banned-from-french-theaters/> (date of last access 30 November 2013). Even though Gabriele Union's character was in a relationship with a white man, the film was supposedly not racially diverse enough for French officials.

though he has been used to leading the U.S. box office.”<sup>157</sup> Further, in December 2013 when Flora Coquerel, a 19-year-old biracial woman whose mother is from the West African country of Benin, was crowned Miss France 2014, that night there were over 1.1 million tweets on Twitter, according to *TF1*, *Gala*, and *Le Télégramme*, and a portion of those comments ranged from “I’m not a racist but shouldn’t the Miss France contest only be open to white girls?” to “Fuck, a nigger” to “Death to foreigners.”<sup>158</sup> In the United States, the issues are no better. When Nina Davuluri became the first Indian woman to be crowned Miss America in September 2013 several racists comments also appeared on Twitter lambasting the pageant for its choice of winner.<sup>159</sup>

Given the cultural and political climate in France, and similar patterns of racism and xenophobia in the United States, more questions must be raised about the implications of racial diversity in mainstream beauty culture that still seeks to maintain long-held beliefs – that white skin is the ultimate symbol of beauty.<sup>160</sup> Such inclusion has only made hypervisible the lack of real commitment on the part of beauty firms to disrupt the hegemonic standard of beauty. On the one hand, these companies have increasingly relied on the brown-skinned woman to cultivate black women consumers, but on the other hand, these strategies have not coincided with

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<sup>157</sup> Jessica Wakeman, “‘Think Like A Man’ Allegedly Banned In France Because It’s Not ‘Diverse’ Enough,” *The Frisky*, 21 May 2012, <http://www.thefrisky.com/2012-05-21/think-like-a-man-allegedly-banned-in-france-because-its-not-diverse-enough/> (date of last access 30 November 2013).

<sup>158</sup> Alice Pheiffer, “Explaining the Racist Response to the New Miss France,” *Elle.com*, 10 December 2013, <http://www.elle.com/news/culture/french-response-to-miss-france-reveals-racism> (date of last access 11 December 2013). In an interview with *Elle.com* Carol Mann, a professor of Sociology and Gender Studies at Paris’ Sciences Po University, said in response to the Miss France racism: “France has a deeply ingrained colonialist culture and still believes in a form of racial hierarchy and Gallic supremacy. The situation is especially touchy with women: ‘la petite française,’ ‘la parisienne’ are highly exportable and marketable myths that the French work hard at maintaining. And those expressions are usually synonymous with fair, European features such as Brigitte Bardot or Marion Cotillard.”

<sup>159</sup> “Miss America crowns 1st winner of Indian descent,” *CNN.com*, 17 September 2013, <http://www.cnn.com/2013/09/16/showbiz/miss-america-racist-reactions/> (date of last access 18 September 2013).

<sup>160</sup> In a November 2013 ad campaign for Chanel No. 5, the first perfume launched by Parisian couturier Gabrielle “Coco” Chanel, a series of vintage clips of the late Marilyn Monroe captures the “blonde bombshell” dazzling the paparazzi with her blonde curls, and glamorous wardrobe, and a voiceover of Monroe recounts, “Marilyn, what do you wear to bed? So I said Chanel No. 5, because it’s the truth.” While fashion and women’s magazines have celebrated the 30-second spot, it is another example of how bloneness continues to be positioned as the pinnacle of beauty, even in the fragrances market.

dedicated efforts to shift who gains entry into the mainstream beauty culture in the first place. The beauty culture industry has subtly persuaded us that the barriers that once prevented black women from entry are no more; that beauty is now “post-racial” and all women are equally represented, as they are equally made to feel inadequate by an unwavering standard of beauty. As Imani Perry observes, “the beauty ideal for black and Latina women [of light skin and long, flowing hair]... is as impossible to achieve as the waif-thin models in *Vogue* magazine are for white women.”<sup>161</sup> If beauty firms are packaging their products in terms that give the appearance of political and ideological gains but in reality only a specific “type” of black and Latina woman is permitted entry into their advertising campaigns, how might such inclusion actually be more damaging than the absence of racial diversity?

While there is the argument that lighter-skinned or biracial models are simply reflecting shifts in the culture at large<sup>162</sup> these women are more likely to have straight or less “kinky” hair, and possess European features which ultimately sends the message that the most desirable or most attractive black or Latina woman is one who approximates the white standard of beauty.<sup>163</sup> The likes of Halle Barry, Alicia Keyes (who initially wore cornrows but eventually straightened her hair, possibly to garner more mainstream appeal), Vanessa Williams, Queen Latifah and Beyoncé are examples of this preference for brown-skinned women, lighter-skinned Latina women, such as Jennifer Lopez, Salma Hayek and Sofia Vergara, are examples of who represents Latina women in cosmetic and hair product advertisements.

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<sup>161</sup> Imani Perry, “WHO(SE) AM I? The Identity and Image of Women in Hip-Hop,” in *Gender, Race, Class in Media: A Text-Reader*, eds. Gail Dines and Jean M. Humez (London: Sage Publications, 2003), 138.

<sup>162</sup> In one representative feature in December 2003 for instance, a *New York Times* writer explained that “Among art directors, magazine editors and casting agents, there is a growing sense that the demand is weakening for P&G, industry code for blond-haired, blue-eyed models.” As a result of the 2000 census data which showed that nearly 7 million Americans identified themselves as members of more than one race, the article noted that advertisers increasingly relied on the marketability of the biracial woman. See Ruth La Ferla, “Generation E.A.: Ethnically Ambiguous” *New York Times*, 28 December 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/12/28/style/generation-ea-ethnically-ambiguous.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm> (date of last access 23 November 2013).

<sup>163</sup> Hunter, *Race, Gender*, 85.

In Canada, the beauty messaging of foreign multinational companies, like L'Oréal, Revlon and P&G has historically dominated the print and television advertising landscape as such ads featuring the aforementioned women are ubiquitous across the country. There are, however, recent examples where beauty culture imagery has been produced and disseminated by Canadians, for Canadians. In September 2011 for instance, Hudson's Bay launched a new digital beauty magazine that mixed editorial content with e-commerce. The *National Post* described the new flipbook-style magazine as giving customers the ability to flip, click and buy any of the products on the virtual page "everything from NARS lip pencils and Shiseido's latest eye shadow palettes to Marc Jacobs Lola perfume (more proof that the department store's cosmetics division, under Shelley Rozenwald's direction, is getting serious about online beauty retailing in Canada)."<sup>164</sup> The monthly edition of *Beauty: The Guide* is edited by former *Cosmetics* magazine editor Dave Lackie and includes regular updates and instructional videos by Hudson Bay's national makeup artist Dino Dillio. It has seemed to go completely unnoticed by media outlets and consumer critics that this "guide to beauty" features almost exclusively white women. For instance, in the January/February issue of *Beauty: The Guide*, in the eighty two-page document, there are three black models – a dark-skinned model on the runway appears on the cover page; an exceedingly light-skinned woman appears alongside two other racially ambiguous women in an ad for Lancôme's Dream Tone;<sup>165</sup> and finally R&B singer Alicia Keyes appears in an ad for Kiehl's, the high end skin care product line, alongside four black children in a campaign called "keep a child alive."<sup>166</sup> There are no Asian, Hispanic or Indian women featured in the "guide to

<sup>164</sup> Nathalie Atkinson, "The Bay Launches Digital Beauty Magazine with E-Commerce," *National Post*, 6 September 2011, <http://life.nationalpost.com/2011/09/06/the-bay-launches-digital-beauty-magazine-with-e-commerce> (date of last access 29 January 2014).

<sup>165</sup> The tagline for Lancôme's Dream Tone advertisement read: "a skin tone correcting serum for dark spots." This is the contemporary marketing language used to sell what is essentially a skin bleaching crème.

<sup>166</sup> See *Beauty: The Guide*, January/February 2014, <http://beautytheguide.com/magazine/#1> (date of last access 29 January 2014).

beauty.” What does this guide tell us about the standard of beauty in Canada? For one, it reflects how Canada’s mainstream beauty culture has no interest in reflecting the increased biracialism of the Canadian population<sup>167</sup> and two, beauty executives are either unwilling or disinterested in deviating from the “blonde-haired, blue-eyed” standard of beauty.

With respect to *Chatelaine*, in late 2004, Rona Maynard, who had been editor since 1997, retired and was replaced by Kim Pittaway, who left a few months later. The current editor-in-chief, Jane Francisco, is *Chatelaine*’s fourth editor since 2004. Since then, the magazine’s focus has shifted away from fashion and beauty to lifestyle features related to fitness and diet. Additionally, models and/or celebrities no longer appear on *Chatelaine*’s cover page. In the late 1990s, however, non-white women made their first appearances on the magazine’s front page. In June 1993, a Latina model named Serena Rojas appeared on the cover; in 1996 Filipino-Canadian model Joanna Bacalso made two cover appearances – in July and December; and a black woman appeared in the May 1998 cover alongside two white women for a feature story on finding clothes that fit all sizes of women. The first black Canadian woman to appear alone on the cover of *Chatelaine* was Gloria Rueben. In March 1999, the Toronto-born actress who was starting on the hit television show *ER* was the subject of a six-page feature. Then in December 1999, Toronto-born R&B singer Deborah Cox became the second black woman to appear alone on a *Chatelaine* cover. Cox was the subject of a seven-page feature on her musical success states-side. If you consider that this splash of diversity occurred nearly twenty five years after African American models first graced the cover pages of women’s magazines in the United States, why did it take so long for this breakthrough to occur in Canada? Additionally, if Rueben

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<sup>167</sup> A 2010 Stats-Canada report, “A Portrait of Couples in Mixed Unions,” claimed that more than 340,000 children in Canada were in mixed-race families, and that the number of mixed unions was growing much more quickly than that of other partnerships. See Shannon Proudfoot, “Number of mixed-race couples on the rise in Canada: StatsCan,” *Canada.com*, 23 April 2010, <http://www.canada.com/Number+mixed+race+couples+rise+Canada+StatsCan/2928592/story.html> (date of last access 2013).

or Cox had not become famous in the United States, would they have even made a *Chatelaine* cover? This issue of diversity in Canada is not only limited to print media. A quick glance at television reveals similar challenges with respect to the representation of black women and men, though in the late 1990s, the topic of black women's hair did receive some mainstream coverage.

On 7 February 1999 the CBC program *Rough Cuts* aired the Canadian film production, *Black, Bold and Beautiful*, which explored the issue of black women's hair. Produced by Jennifer Kawaja, Julia Sereny of Sienna Films, Karen King of the NFB, Jerry McIntosh of CBC Newsworld, and directed by Nadine Valcin, the film explored the "dilemmas" black women faced in terms of hairstyling choices, but also celebrated the bonds that women formed while tending to each other's hair. In an article in *Share*, titled "CBC Explores Black Hair," the film was described as one that allowed the viewer into debates not only on black hair but also on the position of black people in Canada.<sup>168</sup> For nearly a decade, there were no further Canadian film productions on a national network that focused on black women's stories until *'da Kink in My Hair* (*'da Kink*) appeared over 15 years later.

In 2001, Trey Anthony, a then-unknown Jamaican-Canadian playwright, took her play *'da Kink* to the Fringe Festival in New York City. On a shoestring budget, Anthony, along with the cast (six other black women) stayed in a house several miles away and commuted on the subway each day to perform the play, which garnered critical acclaim.<sup>169</sup> In 2007, Global TV brought *'da Kink* to Canadian television. Set in a Jamaican beauty parlor in Toronto's Little Jamaica neighbourhood on Eglinton Avenue West, *'da Kink* became the first black sitcom in Canadian television history. In many ways Anthony's show followed on the heels of film productions in the United States, such as *Barbershop* (2002) and *Beauty Shop* (2005), which

<sup>168</sup> "CBC Explores Black Hair," *Share*, 28 January 1999, 14.

<sup>169</sup> See Rebecca Caldwell, "Fringe Drifts More Toward Mainstream," *The Globe and Mail*, 2 July 2003, R5.

chronicled the goings on at two of black America's cornerstone businesses. Back in 2003, the stage production of *'da Kink* appeared at Toronto's Theatre Passe-Muraille, and in 2005, it became the first black production to appear at the Princess of Wales Theatre.<sup>170</sup> Before its appearance on Global, the play was transformed into an hour-long television pilot that aired on Vision TV in 2004. Before *'da Kink* landed on national television, it underwent massive changes.

In the initial Passe-Muraille play, the emphasis was on one-person monologues about black women's experiences with their hair, abuse in black communities, and self-esteem issues. Set on a small, black curtained stage each of the women in the play wore natural hair – either a short Afro or dreadlocks. In the Princess of Wales adaptation, the show was given a Mirvish Productions makeover – the dramatic monologues disappeared into comedic scenes with the focus on Anthony as a dark-skin, overweight woman with bright coloured wigs, hair weaves and extensions. When *'da Kink* was revamped for Vision TV, it included an appearance from the African American actress Sheryl Lee Ralph. In this version of *'da Kink*, the story centred on Novelette “Letty” Campbell (played by Ralph), her hair salon, and her sister Joy (played by Trey Anthony) who also worked as a hairstylist. While the show returned to its dramatic Passe-Muraille roots, Anthony was once again diminished to a supporting role, and it was not picked up for further episodes.

When *'da Kink* premiered on Global on 14 October 2007, Anthony (who by then had lost a tremendous amount of weight), was still a supporting character but her ghetto fabulous outfits, intermitted use of Jamaican patois, multi-coloured wigs, and off-hand humour once again returned. Instead of Sheryl Lee Ralph as the lead character of Letty, a lesser known actress, Ordena Stephens, assumed the role. Letty, who now spoke a Standard English, dressed

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<sup>170</sup> *'da Kink* productions also ran at the San Diego Repertory Theatre in San Diego, and at the Hackney Empire in London, England.

conservatively, and was raising a young boy while dating a professional black man, unlike Joy who was perpetually single or dating “Mr. Wrong.”

The nuances of the stage play, especially as it relates to hair and beauty were largely expunged from the black hair salon, which was presented as space where chemical relaxers, weaves and wigs, in addition to a backlog of appointments that frustrate many women who frequent black hair salons, were depicted. Sure, the show touched on issues like interracial dating, immigration, and dancehall music but *‘da Kink* had lost all of the cultural currency that made the stage play so successful. It was as though *da Kink*, in a space of Canadian hegemony – a large theatre house or a national broadcaster – had to be whitened; the narrative had to appeal to a mainstream audience that presumably knew very little about black women’s beauty politics, and/or were not interested in learning about such topics. In 2009 after two seasons, *‘da Kink* was cancelled. As the first black-focused television show in Canadian history, were there constraints placed upon the show by the network to downplay its racial and gendered difference? Were black women (the patrons of black hair salons) the show’s target audience or were white Canadians, who have never set foot in or mingled amongst Jamaican-Canadians at a beauty salon the target? *‘da Kink* stands as a compelling example of how difficult it is for black women to find a place in mainstream (coded white) Canadian media, in addition to the country’s beauty culture industry. Despite the illusion of diversity in beauty advertising, the pageant, fashion and modelling worlds, the question of beauty remains a highly political and contentious issue in contemporary Western capitalism.



## Conclusion

### I. The more things change

In 2010, the Dove Movement for Self-Esteem launched at the G(irls) 20 Summit. Modeled after the G20 Economic Summit, this convention brought together young women from Argentina, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom, United States, and the European Union to discuss education, health, and economic initiatives that could stimulate girls' activism and advancement in their communities. Dove, the personal care products division of Unilever that has been operating since 1957, through the Movement, and by extension, its brand Campaign for Real Beauty or CFRB), emerged as an agent of female empowerment via beauty consumption in the global marketplace.<sup>1</sup> As Dara Persis Murray observes:

The construction of CFRB was based on Dove's 2003 global research study, "The Real Truth About Beauty." This research involved the participation of thirty-two hundred women, ages eighteen through sixty-four, in ten countries, in a twenty to twenty-five-minute long telephone interview. The study found that less than 2 percent of women feel beautiful; 75 percent want representations of women to reflect diversity through age, shape, and size; and 76 percent want the media to portray beauty as more than physical.<sup>2</sup>

Based on these findings, Dove announced its challenge to the dominant ideology of beauty. It would feature "real" women and girls of "various ages, shapes, and sizes" in its television and print advertising, billboards, new media, and national and grassroots outreach campaigns.<sup>3</sup> The Dove Movement for Self-Esteem launched in Canada and the United States in fall 2010. While

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<sup>1</sup> Dara Persis Murray, "Branding 'Real' Social Change in Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty," *Feminist Media Studies* 13.1 (2012): 84.

<sup>2</sup> Murray, "Branding 'Real' Social Change," 84. See also Nancy Etcoff, Susie Orbach, Jennifer Scott and Heidi D'Agostino, "The Real Truth About Beauty: A Global Report: Findings of the Global Study on Women, Beauty and Well-Being" [http://www.clubofamsterdam.com/contentarticles/52%20Beauty/dove\\_white\\_paper\\_final.pdf](http://www.clubofamsterdam.com/contentarticles/52%20Beauty/dove_white_paper_final.pdf) (date of last access 30 January 2014).

<sup>3</sup> Murray, "Branding 'Real' Social Change," 84.

on the surface the campaign appears to challenge the dominant standard of beauty, it does not go far enough as far as black women are concerned. Why are issues that profoundly affect black women's lives, those related to hair texture (i.e. the historical valorization of straight, long flowing hair) and skin colour (i.e. the consistent preference for lighter-skin) absent from a global campaign that proclaims to be for *all* women and young girls?<sup>4</sup> For instance, in a recent Jergens lotion commercial a black model with light skin appears in a before shot with dry skin and “frizzy” hair, but in the after shot she appears with (soft, moistened skin) and straightened hair. This juxtaposition when placed in historical context is a reminder of how the same tropes related to skin colour gradation and beauty from the nineteenth century continue to appear in the contemporary.

Back in the 1940s and 1950s, for example, two African American scientists, Dr. Kenneth Clark and Dr. Mamie Clark conducted an experiment known as the Clark Doll test in order to access the psychological effects of segregation on African American children. Black children were asked to choose between a black doll and a white doll. The dolls were the same except for their skin colour. In the experiment Clark showed black children between the ages of six and nine two dolls, one white and one black, and then asked a series of questions: “Show me the doll that you like best or that you’d like to play with,” “Show me the doll that is the ‘nice’ doll,” “Show me the doll that looks ‘bad.’” The majority of the black children, Kenneth Clark reported,

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<sup>4</sup> The print ads for the CFRB campaign comprised of six images: portraits of five women (three close-ups of faces and two body shots at a distance) and one composite picture of them; each of the five women posed with questions that addressed the dominant ideology of beauty, and each question offered two options as a response. For example, in one ad, an elderly black woman wearing a colourful headscarf smiles with the text asking, “Will society ever accept old can be beautiful” and two options as a response: “wrinkled? wonderful?” A white woman wearing a white tank top with freckles is juxtaposed with the question, “Does beauty mean looking like everyone else?,” and the response: “flawed? flawless?” In a third ad, a dark-skinned, small-breasted black woman wearing a white tank top and jeans with her hands in her pockets stands beside the question, “Does sexiness depend on how full your cups are?,” and the response: “half empty? half full?” The ways in which race has differently marked black women's bodies is rendered neutral in these ads; the issues that have historically politicized white women's bodies – aging, perfection, and breast size – are presented as issues that affect “every woman.”

attributed the positive characteristics to the white doll and the negative characteristics to the black doll. In 2006 filmmaker Kiri Davis recreated the famous Clark experiment.<sup>5</sup> In *A Girl Like Me*, Davis asked four and five year olds at a Harlem school the same set of Clark questions and she found that the children's answers, over fifty years later, remained the same.<sup>6</sup> More recently in 2010, CNN hired child psychologist Margaret Beale Spencer to recreate another Clark experiment at eight schools in the New York area and the results were the same.<sup>7</sup> There is a multi-generational pathology that continues to influence how black children see themselves, and in turn, who they become as adults. Since whiteness continues to determine what and who sells beauty culture in Western society (and increasingly, on a global level) hair straightening, and for some, the bleaching of one's skin are still practices that are used to approximate this ideal.

In 2006, R&B singer India Arie released the single, "I Am Not My Hair" in which she sang: "I am not my hair / I am not this skin / I am not your expectations no no / I am not my hair / I am not this skin / I am a soul that lives within."<sup>8</sup> While those lyrics are inspirational, the reality is that for many black women, hair and skin do matter. There are constant reminders in the media and advertising that position black women's bodies as Other and the visible markers of blackness – dark skin or "kinky" hair – are frequently relied upon to accentuate such differences. For example, in her experiences with her biracial child Cassie, Susan Bordo describes how the straight-haired aesthetic sends a conflicting message to black and mixed-race children:

It pains me when Cassie tells me she hates her curls (as she calls them). But how could she not, when even [Queen] Latifah – one of her idols – has hair like satin? In the doll world, there's been an explosion of "ethnic" or "urban" production and marketing, as dolls like the saucy and style-conscious Bratz have started to give Barbie a real run for her money (or rather, ours). But although some of these dolls

<sup>5</sup> "What Dolls Can Tell Us About Race in America," *ABC News.com*, 11 October 2006, <http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/story?id=2553348> (date of last access 17 January 2014).

<sup>6</sup> In Davis' test, 15 of the 21 children said that the white doll was good and pretty, and that the black doll was bad.

<sup>7</sup> "Study: White and Black Children Biased Toward Lighter Skin," *CNN.com*, 14 May 2010, <http://www.cnn.com/2010/US/05/13/doll.study/> (date of last access 26 March 2014).

<sup>8</sup> India Arie, "I Am Not My Hair," *Testimony: Vol. 1, Life & Relationship*, Motown, 2006.

have hair done in cornrows and braids, undo those dos and it's still the same old white-girl hair.... These dolls are clearly an illustration of the principle that this culture mostly let's "difference" in by exoticizing it.<sup>9</sup>

The exoticization of difference is not just limited to North America. In 2012, for example, *The Guardian* posted the following editorial on its Facebook page regarding white models wearing Aunt Jemima earrings on a catwalk at Dolce and Gabbana during Milan fashion week:

Some might argue that they're harmless, even cute, but there's nothing cute about two white men selling minstrel earrings to a majority non-black audience. There wasn't a single black model in Dolce and Gabbana's show, and it's hard not to be appalled by the transparent exoticism in sending the only black faces down the runway in the form of earrings [of stereotypes of black women].<sup>10</sup>

The article with no-by line continues, "When you're explicitly pandering to such a shameful era of western racism and colonialism, it's time to move on to the future."<sup>11</sup>

In January 2014, the *Huffington Post* reported on an editorial released on the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday in the United States, which appeared on the Russian website *Buro 247*. In it, Dasha Zhukova, the Russian editor-in-chief of *Garage* magazine is photographed perched atop a chair designed to look like a half-naked black woman.<sup>12</sup> While the piece, created by Norwegian artist Bjarne Melgaard, was part of a series that "reinterpreted" artworks from historical artists like Allen Jones, and both Zhukova and Melgaard immediately apologized for the photograph claiming it was not their intent to be "racist," the event reaffirms the problem in the contemporary moment where bodies are depoliticized as neutral canvases without histories or politics. The photograph also speaks to the historical categorization of black women as furniture,

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<sup>9</sup> Susan Bordo, "Cassie's Hair," in *Material Feminisms*, eds. Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman (Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 2008), 404-05.

<sup>10</sup> "There's nothing cute about accessories that make light of colonial imagery," *The Guardian*, 26 September 2012, [https://apps.facebook.com/theguardian/fashion/fashion-blog/2012/sep/26/dolce-gabbana-racist-earrings?post\\_gdp=true](https://apps.facebook.com/theguardian/fashion/fashion-blog/2012/sep/26/dolce-gabbana-racist-earrings?post_gdp=true) (date of last access 17 September 2012).

<sup>11</sup> "There's nothing cute," np.

<sup>12</sup> Julee Wilson, "Garage Magazine Editor-In-Chief Dasha Zhukova Sits On A 'Black Woman' Chair In Shocking Editorial," *Huffington Post*, 20 January 2014, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/01/20/dasha-zhukova-black-woman-chair-buro-247-editorial\\_n\\_4633544.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/01/20/dasha-zhukova-black-woman-chair-buro-247-editorial_n_4633544.html) (date of last access 20 January 2014).

as under slavery, black slave women were frequently documented as “chattel.” Thus, since black women remain marginally represented in the fashion world, and when they are, there is a heightened exoticism attached to and projected onto their bodies, such images do not exist in a vacuum. But it does point to a current dilemma: can women undo the legacies of racism and colonialism that are interwoven into the fabric of the beauty culture industry? Is it possible to cultivate counterhegemonic beauty ideologies and practices?

## II. Re-imagining beauty in the twenty-first century

In April 2013, P&G released the film *Imagine a Future* in conjunction with its consumer campaign My Black is Beautiful (MBIB). In participation with the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) and BLACK GIRLS ROCK!, an organization founded by celebrity DJ Beverly Bond in 2006 to promote positive images of women of colour in the media, the documentary film examined the topic of beauty among black women and the self-esteem issues that challenge black women and girls. The film aired in the United States and Canada on Black Entertainment Television (BET) in July 2013. According to the MBIB website, its mission is to:

Imagine a Future. Imagine a future where every black girl believes her black is beautiful. You know your black is beautiful ... but what about young black girls? Together, we can empower the next generation of black women to confidently be their best, most beautiful selves. Three years. One million black girls. A beautiful future starts with you.<sup>13</sup>

If the problem with the beauty culture industry is simply a matter of its unrealistic depiction of thin, youthful (increasingly sexualized) bodies, MBIB campaigns would not need to exist. MBIB should be read as a counterhegemonic response to CFRB-type campaigns. MBIB points to two possibilities. One, that the consumer marketplace can be a site where the diversity of black womanhood is represented, and two, that white-owned conglomerates can work alongside black

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<sup>13</sup> My Black is Beautiful, <https://www.myblackisbeautiful.com/#home> (date of last access 30 January 2014).

women to not only celebrate their beauty but also raise questions about the images of beauty that are absent in the dominant media.

Significantly, not all black-focused media are invested in challenging the beauty ideal of straightened hair and lighter skin. A quick glance at black hair care magazines like *Today's Black Woman*, *Upscale*, *Sophisticate's Black Hair*, *Essence*, and *Ebony*, even *Black Hair: Fashion, Beauty, Style* reveal that there is a clear preference for straightened hair, especially chemical relaxers and weaves. Hair alteration is still valorized as ideal while natural hair is marginally depicted. Sure, these magazines, as compared to mainstream beauty culture, have embraced the beauty of black women in all shades, however, advertisements for chemical relaxers and related products from companies like Softsheen-Carson, Crème of Nature, Motions, Pro-Line, Clairol, Ambi, even Pantene, dominate the ad pages. When natural hairstyles appear in these magazines, it is typically as “how to care your hair” features. Natural hair is constructed as more of burden than chemical relaxing and hair weaves. Even though a 2013 report from the consumer trends firm Mintel revealed that chemical relaxer sales have declined twenty six percent since 2008 (when sales were at US\$206 million) and fifteen percent since 2011 when sales reached US\$179 million,<sup>14</sup> and “in the past twelve months, nearly three-fourths (70%) of black women say they currently wear or have worn their hair natural (no relaxer or perm), more than half (53%) have worn braids, and four out of ten (41%) have worn dreadlocks,”<sup>15</sup> in the pages of African American magazines, chemical relaxers and hair weave ads have not declined.

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<sup>14</sup> “Hair Relaxer Sales Decline 26% Over the Past Five Years,” *Mintel*, 4 September 2013, <http://www.mintel.com/press-centre/beauty-and-personal-care/hairstyle-trends-hair-relaxer-sales-decline> (date of last access 30 November 2013). Mintel reports further that nearly 70 percent of African American women reported that they currently wear or have worn their hair natural (without a relaxer), more than 53 percent have worn braids, and 41 percent have worn dreadlocks.

<sup>15</sup> See Nana Ekua Brew-Hammond, “Natural Hair Care’s Next Wave,” *The Grio*, 6 November 2013, <http://thegrio.com/2013/11/06/natural-hair-cares-next-wave/> (date of last access 30 November 2013).

In the one hundred and sixty two pages of the June/July 2013 edition of *Black Hair* for example, natural hair appears twelve times: eight women wear “curly-hairdos,” two wear short Afros, and a black man with short dreadlocks, alongside a woman wearing tight braids appears on the last page of the magazine in an ad for a UK-based black hair and cosmetics firm. While I only reviewed a few magazines published in 2013, these findings still echo Judy Foster Davis’ analysis of ads in *Ebony* and *Essence* magazine between 1990 and 1999. At that time, Davis found that portrayals of natural textured hair in hair product advertisements were limited to seven percent of the total sample, while the diversity and numerical representations of natural hairstyles on adult women for brands outside of the hair care product category appeared to accelerate toward the end of the decade.<sup>16</sup> In her examination of the decade as a whole natural textured hair was portrayed as undesirable.<sup>17</sup> As black women have increasingly entered the mainstream beauty culture they have also entered mainstream advertising. A future project would entail doing a comparative analysis of the depiction of natural hair on women in the hair care product category versus brands in the non-hair care product category. If natural hair is still represented as undesirable in American women’s and African American magazines, can the same be said about Canadian magazines?

As of 2013 magazines such as *Essence* are also inundated with ads (featuring black models) from mainstream beauty firms like Maybelline, MAC, L’Oréal, CoverGirl, Mary Kay, and Garnier. Most notably, L’Oréal’s True Match makeup with the slogan “Whatever your skin’s story, we have your match” appears regularly. In one representative ad three skin types: Irish, Austrian and Italian (Aimee Mullins), Ethiopian (Liya Kebede), and Puerto Rican (Jennifer

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<sup>16</sup> Judy Foster Davis, “New Hair Freedom? 1990s Hair Care Marketing and the African-American Woman,” in *Milestones in Marketing History*, ed. Terrance H. Witkowski (Long Beach, California: Association for Historical Research in Marketing, 2001), 37; 38.

<sup>17</sup> Davis, “New Hair Freedom,” 38.

Lopez) are show.<sup>18</sup> The accompanying “true match” makeup has names like Nude Beige (for the white women of mixed European heritage), Cocoa (for the black woman), and Sun Beige (for the Latina woman). The language of this ad not only exoticizes the difference of blackness, it also equates black women with food and consumption, while white and Latina women are constructed as different sides of the same coin. Margaret Hunter poignantly observes that “light-skinned Latina women of various nationalities are presented in media outlets as the most beautiful.”<sup>19</sup> As hair and skin politics exist in Latin America – wealthy Latina women who are light-skinned, blonde haired with light-coloured eyes are overwhelming depicted as beautiful, while poor, working-class dark-skinned Latinas are often cast as ugly – colorism and beauty are as embedded within Hispanic communities as they are in black communities. The whitening of Latina women in the contemporary beauty advertising is an underexplored area of study.

In Canada, the short-lived lifestyle magazine *Sway* aimed primarily at African and Caribbean Canadians made some attempt to show a diversity of black hairstyles. Launched in 2005 (its last issue was July 2012), at one point the Star Media Group publication had a circulation of fifty thousand across the GTA.<sup>20</sup> Ads from natural hair studios, along with features on black women with dreadlocks and other natural hairstyle appeared throughout the magazine but in the end, it might have been the magazine’s inability to garner advertising from mainstream beauty firms that led to its demise. At the same time, the demise of a glossy black Canadian magazine was more proof that it is still very difficult for black beauty culture to attract the interest of American advertisers who, a generation before, relied on Canada’s black press to promote their products. Even in the pages of *Share*, there are fewer and fewer ads from

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<sup>18</sup> L’Oréal True Match Advertisement, *Essence*, August 2013, 24-5.

<sup>19</sup> Margaret Hunter, *Race, Gender and the Politics of Skin Tone* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 85.

<sup>20</sup> Alicia Androich, “Sway Magazine Ceases Publication Amidst Weak Ad Revenues,” *Marketing Advertising, Media and PR in Canada*, 7 August 2012, <http://www.marketingmag.ca/news/media-news/sway-magazine-ceases-publication-amidst-weak-ad-revenues-58883> (date of last access 31 January 2014).



companies like Revlon, Softsheen-Carson, and Pro-Line. Why did American beauty firms stop advertising in black Canadian newspapers? What has changed? What role are retailers now playing in the sale of black beauty products?

In the summer of 2013 in New York City's Union Square, Antonia Opiah, founder of the website *Un'ruly.com*, extended an open invitation to all curious passers-by (i.e. whites) for an exhibition she called "You Can Touch My Hair." According to a feature in the *Huffington Post*, Opiah sought to explore the "tactile fascination" with black women's hair by gathering a trio of women with different hair textures and styles (dreadlocks, chemically straightened, weaves, naturally curly, and Afro), allowing strangers the opportunity to fondle their hair without fear.<sup>21</sup> The accompanying short video and twenty two-page photographic slide show of the event revealed that each of the black women who participated wore signs that read "you can touch my hair" and while a few black men were curious, overwhelmingly, white men and women touched each women's hair while posing for photographs.

While these types of occurrences appear, on the surface, to depoliticize the issue of hair – since black women are the one's inviting the touch and the gaze – it points to the disturbing contemporary trend of trivializing a deeply personal and collective issue. It is also a reflection of how black women are now imbricated in a postfeminist media culture where, as Rosalind Gill observes, "[there] is the almost total evacuation of notions of politics or cultural influence.... Notions of choice, of 'being oneself' and 'pleasing oneself,' are central to the postfeminist sensibility that suffuses contemporary western media culture."<sup>22</sup> While the literature on postfeminism, contemporary media and neoliberalism has privileged white women's bodies and

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<sup>21</sup> Julee Wilson, "'You Can Touch My Hair' Explores Fascination with Black Hair, Sparks Debate," *Huffington Post*, 7 June 2013, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/07/you-can-touch-my-hair-exhibit-black-women-hair\\_n\\_3401692.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=hair-beauty](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/07/you-can-touch-my-hair-exhibit-black-women-hair_n_3401692.html?utm_hp_ref=hair-beauty) (date of last access 8 June 2013).

<sup>22</sup> Rosalind Gill, "Postfeminist Media Culture: Elements of Sensibility," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 10.2 (2007): 153.

the representation of white womanhood in television, film, advertising, and makeover shows, a further future project would involve examining how neoliberalism and the socio-political milieu which increasingly constructs individuals as rational, calculating, self-regulating individuals who bare full responsibility for their life biographies,<sup>23</sup> has affected black women and their conceptions of beauty and their bodies.

For example, in September 2013, *O, the Oprah Magazine* was dedicated to women's hair. While Winfrey appears on the cover wearing an Afro wig so large that it engulfs nearly the entire top half of the page, the sixteen-page feature, titled "Hair Extravaganza!" begins with a few general statistics on the hair care market: "Every year American women fork over more than \$22 billion for haircuts, \$30 billion for haircolor, and most of the \$7 billion spent on shampoo, conditioner, and styling products. (That's nearly \$59 billion – more than three times the annual budget of NASA.)"<sup>24</sup> From thereon celebrity and "average" white women share their hair stories: the longing for the "right" hairdo, the big hair 1980s, difficulties finding the right hair coloring, what to do when you lose all your hair, and what to do about graying hair. The only depiction of black hair is through the story of Bridgett Davis, a woman for which "going natural meant losing a lifelong hairstyle – and finding her true self."<sup>25</sup> Black hair in the context of *O* is removed from any politics (that would be associated with natural hair) and framed in the context of choice and self-exploration. On one page, titled "The Natural," a brown-skinned woman with straightened hair gazes into a mirror of her reflection with a curly hairdo. On the other page, photographs of Davis (who is dark-skinned) capture her in "transition" from relaxed to natural hair. The mirror imagery parallel's Carrie Mae Weems' 1987 satirical photo-text, "Mirror, Mirror," from her *Ain't Jokin'* series (1987-88). In the piece, a white spectral female appears in a

<sup>23</sup> Gill, "Postfeminist Media Culture," 163.

<sup>24</sup> "Hair Extravaganza!," *O, the Oprah Magazine*, September 2013, 142.

<sup>25</sup> "Hair Extravaganza!," 147.

mirror and returns the gaze of a black women; the specter responds to the question, “Who’s the finest of them all?” with “Snow White, you black bitch, and don’t you forget it!”<sup>26</sup> As Janell Hobson posits, “the irony, of course, is that this ‘joke’ of seeking one’s image in the mirror, only to find it un-mirrored by the dominant Other, ‘ain’t no joke.”<sup>27</sup> The irony of a brown-skinned woman with straightened hair seeing an image of herself with loose curly hair speaks to how hair texture and skin colour, though made to appear as natural, everyday (universal) struggles are, in reality, “no joke” when it comes to black women’s lives.

This dissertation has sought to not only examine the history of beauty culture in Canada but also to demonstrate why beauty ideologies and practices are linked with histories of slavery and colonialism, race and racism, notions of whiteness and blackness, and the iconographic legacies of advertising, photography, film and television. Further, this project has shown how Canada’s beauty culture industry has been, and continues to be, a proxy for American products, services, and beauty imagery. For instance, while shopping in an American discount store in Toronto in 2011, I stumbled across a purchase order in the “black beauty” section of the store. The order had the words “ethnic hair care” across the top and specified the store number, district, and product volume. The products were exclusively American. Once women acknowledge that the same companies that market to American women are the same companies that market to Canadian women, and also to the rest of the world we can begin to have a real conversation about beauty. Until women of all racial and ethnic backgrounds in the West, Global South, Asia, and continental Africa (where hair weaves, chemical relaxers and skin bleaching crèmes continue to gain in popularity) collectively challenge the dominant beauty ideal that casts dark skin against light skin or excludes women on the basis of phenotype – nose shape, eyelid size or

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<sup>26</sup> See Janell Hobson, “Mirror, Mirror: Framing the Black Female Body for Still and Motion Pictures,” in *Venus in the Dark: Blackness and Beauty in Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 115.

<sup>27</sup> Hobson, “Mirror, Mirror,” 115-16.

lip size – the beauty culture industry will only continue to divide, not unite the very women companies likes L’Oréal insist are “worth it.”

## Illustrations



**Figure 1.1.** François Malépart de Beaucourt, *Portrait of a Haitian Woman*, 1786.

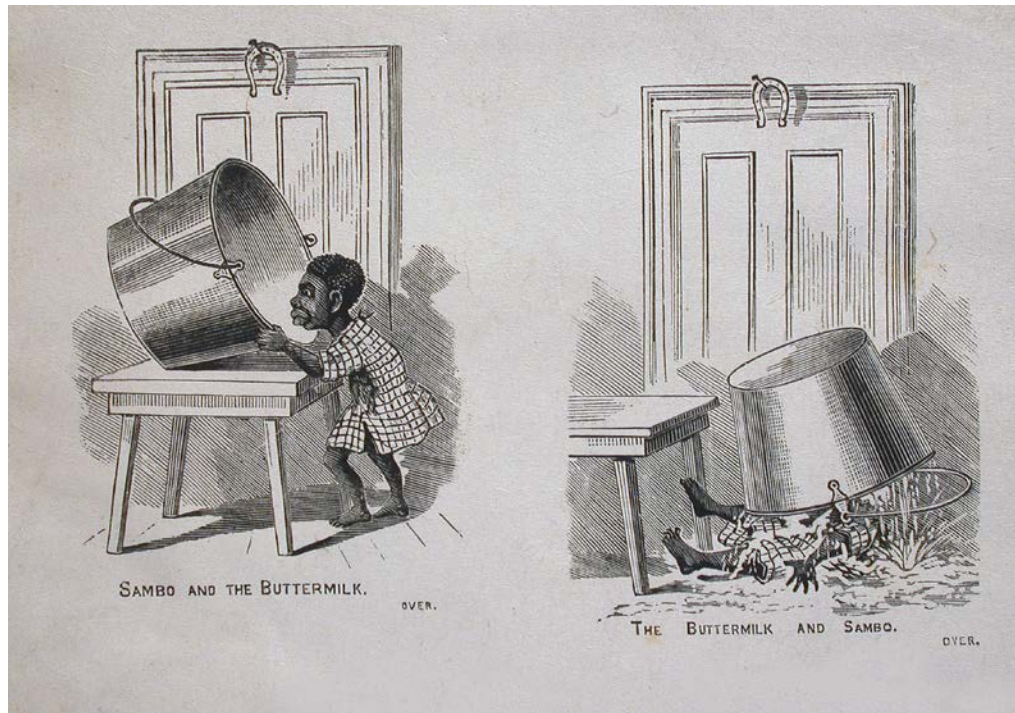




**Figure 1.2.** Fashion plate, “Four Fashionable Dresses,” *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, 1843.



**Figure 1.3.** Gold Dust Twins Washing Powder, *Daily Mail and Empire*, 1897.



**Figure 1.4.** John Henry Walker, *Sambo and the Buttermilk*, ca. 1850-1885.





**Figure 1.5.** Charles Williams, hand-coloured etching, *Love and Beauty, Sartjee the Hottentot Venus*, 1822.





**Figure 2.1.** First Parade of the New Woman's Society in Possumville, *Leslie's Weekly*, 1897.



Figure 2.2. Nathaniel Currier, *The Bloomer Costume*, 1851.

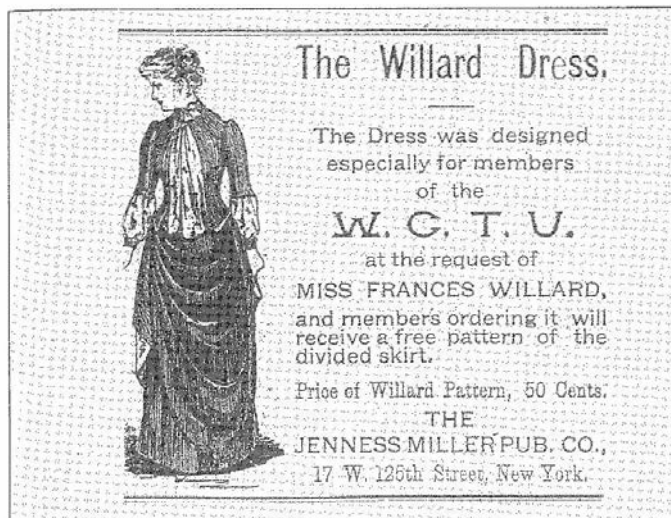


Figure 2.3. Frances E. Willard, Women's Christian Temperance Union, *The Willard Dress*, c. 1880.





**Figure 2.4.** White Studio, *Lyricist Noble Sissle and Cast Members from the Musical “Shuffle Along,”* c. 1921.



**Figure 2.5.** Unknown, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary*, c. 1845-1855.



**Figure 2.6.** H.B. Lindsley, *Harriet Tubman*, c. 1860-1875.



**Figure 2.7.** William Notman, *Emma Amelia Busby*, 1868.



**Figure 2.8.** Anonymous, *Nurse and baby*, copied for Mrs. Farquharson, 1868.



**Figure 2.9.** Hoop petticoat dress, 1845-1855.



**Figure 2.10.** William Notman, *Miss Galbraith*, 1868.



**Figure 2.11.** William Notman, *Mrs. Cowan's nurse*, 1871.



**Figure 2.12.** William Notman, *Mrs. Lindsay*, 1862.



**Figure 2.13.** William Notman, *A. McNab's children and nurse*, 1869.





**Figure 2.14.** Fashion print, *The Canadian Illustrated News*, 1871.



**Figure 2.15.** Photograph of the children of the Mission School of Canada, *The Mission to the Fugitive Slaves in Canada*, 1859.





**Figure 2.16.** William Notman, *Mrs. Elliott*, 1861.



**Figure 2.17.** Wm. Notman & Sons, *Miss Guilmartin*, 1885.



**Figure 2.18.** William Notman, *H. Evans and Lady*, 1871.



**Figure 2.19.** Wm. Notman & Sons, *Mrs. G.S. Davidson*, 1884.



**Figure 2.20.** William Notman, *Miss C. Lee*, 1871.



**Figure 2.21.** Photograph of Martha and Maria Black, Buxton, c. 1890.







**Figure 2.24.** Photograph of Dr. Mary Waring,, Windsor, c. 1890.



**Figure 2.25.** Wm. Notman & Son, *G. Conway and friends*, 1901.



**Figure 2.26.** Photograph of black woman holding a child, c. 1900-1920.



**Figure 2.27.** William H. Buckley, *Nanny with the children in her care*, Guysborough, NS, c. 1900.



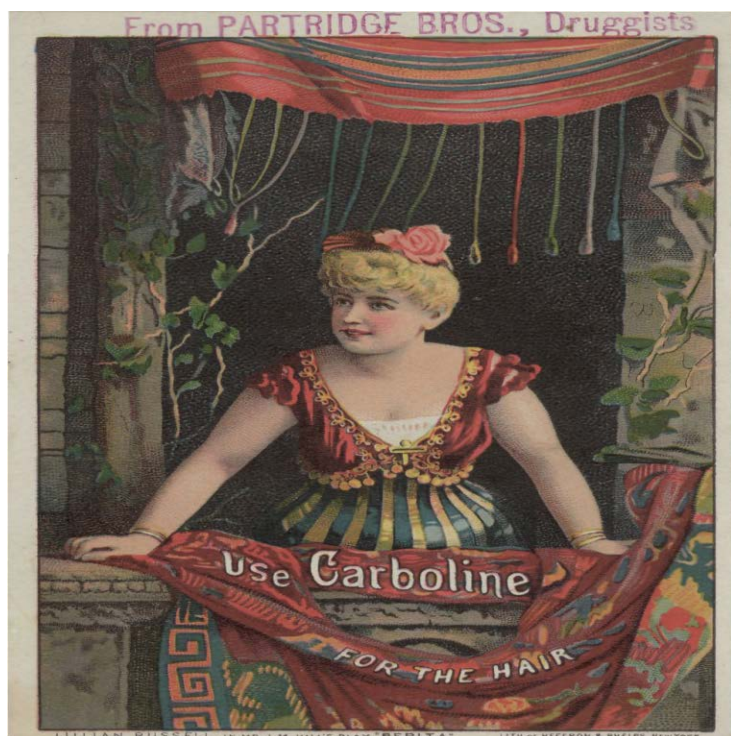


Figure 3.1. Carboline advertising card, Lillian Russell, c. 1870s.

# NO LADY



**Is Really BEAUTIFUL without a CLEAR, WHITE COMPLEXION.**

This Great American Lotion for Beautifying the Complexion and Healing the Skin, To a large extent conceals the evidence of age. A few applications will make the skin beautifully soft, smooth and white. It is not a paint or powder that will fill up the pores of the skin, and by so doing create disease of the skin, such as Pimples, etc., but is a perfectly clear liquid; a valuable discovery, that causes the cheek to glow with health and rival the lily in whiteness. It is impossible to detect in the beauty it confers. It cures Oily Skin, Pimples, Freckles, Blemishes, Face Grubs, Black Heads, Sunburn, Chapped Hands and Face, Barber's Itch, etc. It frees the pores, oil glands and tubes of the skin from the injurious effects of powders and cosmetic washes, containing pigment, while it beautifies the skin, giving it that healthy, natural and youthful appearance which it is impossible to obtain by any other means. It is conceded by cosmologists in the art to be the best and safest beautifier the world ever produced. Price 75 Cents.

For sale by Druggists and Fancy Goods Dealers.

**W. M. SCOTT & CO., Philadelphia, Pa.**

Figure 3.2. W.M. Scott & Co., advertisement, Scott's White Lily Toilet Wash, 1886.

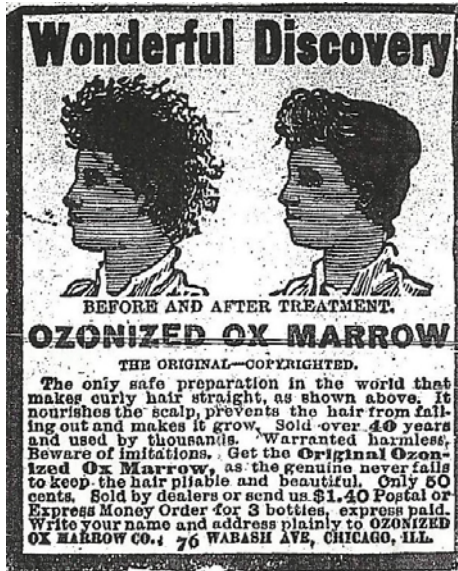


Figure 3.3. Ozonized Ox Marrow Company, advertisement, *Wonderful Discovery*, 1901.



Figure 3.4. Chatelaine illustration, *Beauty Culture Department*, 1935.







Figure 3.6. Time magazine publicity photograph, "Ten Types, One People" Pageant, Jamaica, 1955.

**The World's Lowest Prices On Best Grade Human Hair**

**PAGEBOY**  
Full size, Full Length. Complete with invisible elastic attachment. Gives your hair added glamour. **\$1.98** each

**CHIGNON**  
Can be worn easily on the top of your upsweep, or on the nape of your neck. Natural looking. **\$1.98** each

**CLUSTER CURLS**  
Gives added beauty to your hair dress. Can be worn high on the forehead or on the side of your head. Easy to attach. **\$1.98** each

\$1 EXTRA FOR GREY HAIR PIECES  
SEND MONEY ORDER OR ORDER C.O.D.  
Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded.

**Nu-Look Human Hair Company - Chicago 80, Illinois**  
Dept. C - Box 8453  
(Send sample of hair or state color.)

**HUMAN HAIR GLAMOUR**  
\$12.50

**Mixed Grey \$2.50 Extra**  
Extremely attractive. Starts with two rows of curls in front and flows back to smooth page boy. **Covers Entire Head**

**PAGEBOY**  
Luxurious attachment to give your hair-dress added Beauty. The last word in the Glamour of long hair. **\$2.75**  
Mixed Grey \$1.00 Extra

**FEATHER CURLS**  
\$7.50  
Mixed Grey \$2.00 Extra  
Soft halo of lovely curls in the popular feather edge style. Fit all sizes.

Send money order or order C. O. D.  
SATISFACTION guaranteed or money refunded.

**GLAMOUR HAIR CO.**  
BOX 3862 DEPT. CD-3 PHILA. 46, PA.  
PERFECTION IN HAND-MADE HAIR CREATIONS.

Figure 3.7. Nu-Look Hair Company and Glamour Hair Co., human hair advertisements, 1948.



**Figure 4.1.** Photograph of barbers Charles Duval and Fred Bolin, Toronto, c. 1895.

47 Collins St. 1946

# THE CLARION

Published in the Interest of Colored Nova Scotians

VOL. 1, NO. 1      NEW GLASGOW, N. S.      1946      DECEMBER.

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## Locals

### The Season's Greetings to All Our Readers

Mr. and Mrs. James MacPherson have moved into their new home on South A. Bert Street.

Calbert Best, student at King's College, Halifax, will spend the Christmas recess with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Best.

Congratulations are being extended to Rev. and Mrs. Thomas for their Christmas Calendar. It is a lovely job.

Miss Evelyn Williams, daughter of Mr. Norman Williams, stenographer with the Pay Roll Department at Ottawa, will be home on Dec. 20th to spend the Christmas holidays with her family.

Friends will be interested to know that Miss Thelma Harris, formerly of this town, has become an American citizen. She is making her home in Cambridge, where her mother, Mrs. Douglas Gordon, resides.

The Ladies' Auxiliary of Second Baptist Church held a successful sale and tea in the Church hall on Dec. 10th. A lovely display of fancy work was sold.

Mr. and Mrs. Lemuel Mills left Saturday, Dec. 14, for Boston, where they will spend Christmas with their daughters, Mrs. Thomas Harper and Mrs. Essie Shepherd.

Johnnie Mills met a deer—DEER, that is, recently, while driving his mother to Halifax. The deer darted out on the highway near Elmfield and hit the side of the car. Not seriously injured, the deer soon scampered off, leaving the worse of the incident.

Word has been received that Miss Irma Halfonery will be a participant in the St. John's Music Festival in May. A student at Mount Allison School of Music, Miss Halfonery is a soprano of promise, and that she will make a creditable showing goes without saying.

The Senior B. V. P. U. of Second Baptist Church chartered a bus and motored to Riverton where they held a service for the inmates of the Prince County House. Among those who took part were Rev. H. D. Thomas, Howard Lawrence, Miss Althea Lawrence and Mrs. Gordon Clark. About twenty-five persons made the trip.

The Ladies' Auxiliary of the Second Baptist Church had a surprise party early in December for Rev. and Mrs. Thomas at the Parsonage, Washington St. The gifts included china, linen, etc., and each gift was accompanied by an original verse. Typical of the verses was the one accompanying the embroidered dolls gift of Pious Mrs. L. Mills.

"I may be small, but my mission is great, I'm here to decorate your cake plate. Your cakes I know are a treat to eat, So use me when next your guests you treat."

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MRS. VIOLA DESMOND

## Takes Action

Mrs. Viola Desmond, 32-year-old Negro Halifax housewife, arrested and fined \$20 and costs for Magistrate Rod G. MacKay, of this town, for sitting downstairs in the Roseward Theatre while holding an upstairs ticket.

Mrs. Desmond was fined for defrauding the Federal Government of one cent, the difference in the Amusement tax on an upstairs ticket of two cents and a downstairs ticket of three cents.

Counsel for Mrs. Desmond, F. W. Bisset of Halifax, has served a writ against Henry MacNeil, manager of the theatre, charging false arrest, false imprisonment, assault and malicious prosecution.

E. M. Macdonald, K.C. of New Glasgow, is acting for Mr. MacNeil.

Mrs. Desmond, the former Viola Davis, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Davis, of Halifax, is well known throughout the Province. She is a graduate of the Halifax High School, and is also a graduate in Beauty Culture from a leading Beauty College in New York. She is a niece of John Davis, Civil Service employee (Post Office Division), Halifax.

## Viola Desmond's Appeal

Just as we go to press we are in receipt of a letter from Miss Bernice Williams, Sec'y N. S. A. A. C. P., informing us that an appeal trial of the Viola Desmond case will be held in Halifax on Dec. 27th, also a Viola Desmond Court Fund has been established by the Association soliciting contributions. A public meeting will be held by the Association on Dec. 22nd in Halifax, asking everyone to attend and give their donation.

The N. S. A. A. C. P. is the Ladies' Aid Association. STEP ON IT! JOHN TO-DAY!

## Did You Know?

- (a) That Adult education in rural communities is being sponsored by the N. S. A. A. C. P.
- (b) That the Educational Department of the Province of Nova Scotia is supporting the movement.
- (c) That a class has already started in Hammond Plains and is progressing favorably.
- (d) That the C. G. I. T. group of Cornwallis Street Baptist Church, Halifax, raised the sum of \$23.96 of their Christmas Sale. Mrs. Oliver is leader and all girls are under 16 years.
- (e) That the money will be used for the work of the Summer Camp at Fall River.
- (f) That Mr. Horburn, of Fall River, gave the use of an island near the Cornwallis Street Church camp site for the promotion of the Young People's work of that Church.
- (g) That two Colored girls are co-editors of student notes in two Halifax hospitals. They are Miss Jeremiah Barton of Halifax and Miss Ruth Bailey of Toronto.
- (h) That J. Calbert Best of King's College, Halifax, who writes for the Afro-American, one of the largest weekly Negro newspapers in the U. S. A., Mr. Best has been asked to prepare a 700-word article on Canada. The weekly circulation of the Afro is 200,000.

## The N. S. A. A. C. P.

The Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of the Colored People was organized in 1945.

- (a) To improve and further the interest of the Colored people of the Province.
- (b) To provide an organization to encourage and promote a spirit of fraternity among its members.
- (c) To co-operate with Governmental and private agencies for the promotion of the interest and the welfare of the Province or any community therein, wherein Colored People are residents, and particularly in reference to said Colored people.
- (d) To improve the educational opportunities of Colored youth and to raise the standard of the Colored people of the Province or any community therein.

The following people comprise the charter members of the Association:

Arnold F. Smith, Richard Reynolds, William Carter, Bernice A. Williams, Carl W. Oliver, Walter Johnson, Pearlman Oliver, William P. Oliver and Ernest Gonne.

Join the N. S. A. A. C. P.  
With BERNICE A. WILLIAMS, Sec'y  
106 Maynard Street  
Halifax, N. S.

Figure 4.2. Image of Viola Desmond on cover of *The Clarion*, 1946.

Does she...or doesn't she?



**Hair color so natural only her hairdresser knows for sure!**

She radiates freshness and charm and a quiet belief in herself that's very refreshing. It all began with a cheerful conviction that *first gray hairs are premature at any age*. This led her to try Miss Clairol. Well, she loved it! Seems she'd never realized how flattering clear, young hair color can be. Now she relies on Miss Clairol—but *always*. It looks so natural. Leaves her hair in beautiful condition.

That's why hairdressers all over the world recommend Miss Clairol, use it every time to add lasting *young* color to fading hair, and to cover gray. They like the way it silken the hair, gives it lovely, lively body—and you will too. So if you're just a hair shade away from looking younger, prettier, try Miss Clairol yourself. Today! Takes only minutes! In new Creme Formula or Regular.

**MISS CLAIROL® HAIR COLOR BATH** MORE WOMEN USE MISS CLAIROL THAN ALL OTHER HAIRCOLORING COMBINED

\*Trade Mark Registered for Clairol Inc. of Canada, Montreal, Quebec. All Rights Reserved.



Figure 5.1. Miss Clairol “Does She... Or Doesn’t She,” advertisement, *Chatelaine*, 1960.



Figure 5.2. Barbara Jones-Hogu, *Unite (AfriCOBRA)*, 1971.



# DASHING DASHIKIS FROM ELEGANZA!

**SOLD BY MAIL ONLY**

World's largest collection of dramatically styled apparel and imported footwear, sold by mail only.



Everything about this authentic Dashiki is designed to make you look your best—from the handsome square neck, to the enormous diagonal patch pockets, to the huge flowing sleeves that taper down to the rich fabric of 50% fine cotton, 50% Avril rayon. S493 Turquoise Blue; S494 Cherry Red. Sizes S,M,L,XL, \$14.95 each. Two for \$28.90.



Admiring glances will come your way as you step out in this brilliantly colored, boldly patterned African print, 100% fine cotton, with an authentic African design, in many bright colors as shown, GUARANTEED color-fast. Extra long, with richly decorated, full sleeves. Order by S373. Sizes S,M,L, \$52.95.



Feet proud as a peacock in this brilliantly colored Dashiki, with tremendous flowing sleeves that stretch a full thirty-six inches! Beautifully glowing pattern GUARANTEED color-fast. Choose it in Black or Cream background for a garment SURE to catch every eye. S452 Black background, S453 Cream background. Sizes S,M,L, \$34.95 each. Two for \$69.90.

Imported footwear  
Slack suits  
Sport shirts  
Dress shirts  
Slacks  
Jackets  
Vests  
And many others.

**WRITE FOR FREE CATALOG**

**HOW TO ORDER**  
To order, simply pick your styles and mail check or money order for the amount—we pay the postage. For C.O.D. shipment, send \$2.00 deposit like EASY now—you pay the postage. Your satisfaction is GUARANTEED...any item may be returned unused for full refund. No C.O.D. to APO, FPO.

## Eleganza

200 Mantle Street, Brockton, Mass. 02403



Fit for an emperor is this handsome Dashiki, rich and royal in the imperial purple! PLUS—the luxurious touch of 1½" fancy silver braid at waist, sleeves and neck. Made of 100% rayon, with blend of 38% metallic and 70% rayon. Wide ½ sleeves, 23 inches across. S495 Purple; S496 Chocolate Brown. Sizes S,M,L, \$12.95 each. Two for \$24.90.

Figure 5.3. Eleganza dashikis advertisement, c. 1970s.



Figure 5.4. Johnson Products, advertisement for Wantu Wazuri (Beautiful People) Afro Sheen, c. 1970s.

**WIGS OF ALL SIZES AVAILABLE**

**100,000 TOP LINE**

**WIG**

**CLEARANCE**

**SALE**

Regular \$29<sup>95</sup> to \$39<sup>95</sup>

**NOW \$10.95**

**AFROS \$29.95**

ALL MADE OF "DYNEL"  
BY UNION CARBIDE  
AVAILABLE IN ALL  
POPULAR STYLES AND  
COLOURS INCLUDING  
FROSTEDS

ON SALE AT  
OUR WAREHOUSE ONLY

**925-7292**

*Introducing*

**POSNER**

**natural**

**HAIR CARE KIT**

PRICE

**\$7.00**

EACH SET INCLUDES

Stunning gift set for natural  
hairstyles

POSNER NATURAL HAIR SHEEN SPRAY  
POSNER NATURAL CONCENTRATED SHAMPOO  
POSNER NATURAL LIQUID GROOMING CONDIT  
PLUS NATURAL COMB  
ALL IN HANDSOME GIFT BOX

Must Clear  
By Christmas

OPEN FROM 10 to 7 p.m. MONDAY TO FRIDAY  
8 a.m. to 12 NOON SATURDAYS

**925-7013**

**124 DAVENPORT RD**



**Figure 5.5.** Afro wig and natural hair care kit, advertisement, *Contrast*, 1970.



**Figure 5.6.** *Chatelaine* illustration, “Black Women in White Canada,” 1973.



*Wake up, Mom!*  
*Dad's fixin'*  
**Sunday "BRUNCH"**

Lucky, lucky Mom!  
 It's Sunday morning  
 and Dad's making  
 "Brunch" for the whole  
 family! Stacks of tempt-  
 ing, tender Aunt  
 Jemima Pancakes...  
 hot from the griddle  
 and glistening with  
 butter and syrup.  
 Mmmmmmm. What a  
 way to start the day!

*Shake up a batch  
 this weekend!*

1. Put 1 cup milk, 1 egg  
 and 1 tablespoon liquid  
 shortening in shaker.
2. Add 1 cup AUNT JEMIMA  
 PANCAKE MIX.
3. Now the fun!  
 Shake vigorously ten times.
4. Pour batter onto griddle.  
 Perfect pancakes  
 every time!

**Aunt  
 Jemima  
 PANCAKES**

**NEW**  
 Buttermilk  
 PANCAKE  
 MIX  
 for waffles, too!

FOR SUNDAY "BRUNCH" SERVE AUNT JEMIMAS—REGULAR, BUCKWHEAT OR BUTTERMILK

Figure 5.7. Aunt Jemima advertisement, *Chatelaine*, c. 1959.



**Figure 5.8.** Eveleen Dollery fashion feature, first black model, *Chatelaine*, 1970.



**Figure 5.9.** Eveleen Dollery fashion feature, second black model, *Chatelaine*, 1971.





Figure 5.10. Eaton's Fall/Winter Catalogue, black model wearing Afro, 1971.



**D**  
10.98

**E**  
10.98

**F**  
Jeans  
9.98

**the torso shirts**

**D and E** Now there's a really nifty answer to shirts that blouse at the waist, shirt-tails that stick out. If you'd rather switch than fight it, make the change to the torso shirts! You get a sleek look and fit that stays that way—under all your pants and skirts. In silky Anel triacetate jersey knit, with comfortable elasticized legs domed crotch. Easy-care too—just machine wash, drip dry. Requires little or no ironing.

(D) Print torso shirt in all-over pattern of browns and reds. Has pointed collar with pearlized toning button at neck, button front closing, button cuffs. Colours as shown.  
46-H-1513A—Misses 10 to 18. Each 10.98

(E) Solid colour torso shirt figures nicely with long pointed collar, frontier-style yoke with pearlized toning buttons. Two buttons at neck, button front, button cuffs.  
Colours: order by number: name 59—purple 23—yellow 46—navy 46-H-1514B—Misses 10 to 18. Each 10.98

**the stretch jeans**

**F** More that's geared for a slim trim look—jean-style pants of viscose and stretch nylon knit. Flare-leg style with two front pockets, zip front closing with double dome fasteners, belt loops. Accented with contrast top-stitch detail. Inseam about 32 inches. Hand wash or dry clean. Black only.  
46-H-6665A—Misses 10 to 18. Each 9.98

Measure and be sure before ordering  
See page 481 for details

EATON'S 10\*

**Figure 5.11.** Eaton's Fall/Winter Catalogue, black model wearing Greek boy hairstyle, 1971.



Figure 5.12. Bad Hair Day Poster, featuring Whoopi Goldberg, outside Toronto hair salon, 2010.



(bottom), *Share*, 2011.



**Introducing  
Melanin  
by Flori Roberts**

**the Make-up  
to Flatter  
Dark Skin**

At last a make-up scientifically formulated to match the amount of Melanin or dark pigment in your skin. The look is natural, the style is yours and these shades won't change color.

Discover everything from foundations to powders, from eye make-up to lipsticks, plus total treatment for all types of skin. It's here and now for you... so come see how really beautiful black can be.

From the Flori Roberts collection...

Make-Up Base — \$5.95	Anti-Oil Lotion — \$6.00
Face Powder — \$5.95	Op/Tints Eyeshadow — \$2.95
Radiance Blusher — \$5.95	Moisturizer — \$3.95
Lipstick — \$2.95	

**NOW AVAILABLE AT**

**EATON'S**



**Figure 6.1.** Flori Roberts Melanin Makeup at Eaton's, advertisement, *Contrast*, 1971.



**IT'S A NATURAL  
THE SOFTEST, SILKIEST  
AFRO STRETCH WIG EVER..  
FROM FLORI ROBERTS**

This is the LOOK that says it . . . . NOW!!

Made of Dynel Modacrylic . . . .

It's wash and wearable. . . . So Easy Careable. . . .

See it styled full and long  
or short and shaggy by our Wig Experts. . . .

Available in Black, Off / Black,  
Dark Brown, and Shades of Auburn. . . .

Complete with its own  
Afro Combing Pick . . . . \$30.00 each.

All Part of the Flori Roberts' Way  
to be BLACK, BEAUTIFUL AND TOGETHER!!!

AVAILABLE AT

**EATON'S**

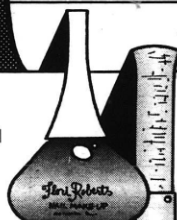
**Figure 6.2.** Flori Roberts natural wigs at Eaton's, advertisement, *Contrast*, 1971.

Come to Eaton's Beauty Fair  
and see what Flori Roberts has  
for beautiful black skins!

A whole collection of beauty tricks. That's what Flori Roberts has for you in her Melanin Make-up Collection. It starts with cleansing and protection and doesn't stop until cheeks glow and eyes gleam with special highlights. It's made just for you—to make the most and the best of your natural skin tone. Come see it at Eaton's. Or phone for yours.  
Flori Roberts Bonus This Week at Eaton's.



Meet Mr. Donald Bell, Flori Roberts International Make-up Artist. He will be at Eaton's Queen Street Store to give you personal beauty advice and help you make your selection.



#### BONUS

The Beauty Go-Togethers for Lips and Nails. At no extra charge with your 6.00 or more Flori Roberts purchase.

1. 104 Melana Souffle make-up—10 shades. 8.95

2. 104 Blemish Touch—covers and soothes. 5.25

3. 104 Lipsticks in muted brown-tones. each 2.95

4. 104 Blue Indigo Moisturizer—use at night or under make-up. 2 oz. 3.95

5. 104 Anti-Oil Lotion removes oil as it cleanses. 4-oz. 6.00

6. 104 Eye Dears—4 shades in kit. Shades of blue, shades of brown, shades of green, shades of grape. 5.95




PHONE 861-5111. Eaton's Queen Street—Main Floor (312).

EATON'S

Figure 6.3. Flori Roberts full-page advertisement for Eaton's, *Contrast*, 1972.

**SOULMATES**  
**BLACK BEAUTY & BLACK PRIDE**



**BLACK BEAUTY**  
 ULTRA SHEEN FACIAL FASHIONS  
 WERE CREATED TO MAKE THE BLACK  
 WOMAN EVEN MORE BEAUTIFUL

**BLACK PRIDE**  
 PROUD TO BE THE LEADING  
 MANUFACTURER OF BLACK BEAUTY  
 PRODUCTS.  
 THE ONLY BLACK COSMETIC COMPANY  
 WITH PRODUCTS AVAILABLE IN  
 CANADA

**ULTRA SHEEN**  
**FACIAL FASHIONS COSMETICS**  
**HIGHEST QUALITY-SENSIBLY PRICED**

For you FREE make-up session by our  
 consultant, ask your beautician, or contact

BEVERLY MASCOLL LIMITED  
 P.O. BOX 202 - TORONTO 18  
**621-8675**

**Figure 6.4.** Beverly Mascoll advertisement for Johnson Products' Ultra Sheen Fashion Fashions Cosmetics, *Contrast*, 1971.

EATON'S

It's the difference  
that delights.

*Fashion  
Fair*

cosmetics from EATON'S can help  
bring out *your* individual beauty.

Fashion Fair is a welcome new beauty preparation created especially for Black, Oriental or brunette complexions. It's rich in the colours needed to make the most of your skin; yet it is not overpowering. The look is healthy and radiant, but most of all, natural. We do it with a versatile collection that includes blushes, shadows, lipsticks as well as cleansers, toners and moisturizers. The range is wide enough so that you can select a personal

treatment suited to your particular needs. Why put on a face that isn't yours? Fashion Fair lets you be beautiful by being yourself!

Here's a beautiful BONUS from Fashion Fair: What better time to explore the possibilities of Fashion Fair than right now? Well, your chance has arrived! With any Fashion Fair purchase of 7.50 or more, you will receive 1-oz. Deep Cleansing Lotion, .35-oz. Beauty Blush (blusher), 5/16-oz. Noir Cologne and Lipstick at no extra charge. Consultants will be available during the promotion to assist you with your questions on skin care and make-up.

Phone 861-5111  
Eaton's Queen Street  
(main floor)—216;  
Yorkdale, Hamilton.

Figure 6.5. John H. Johnson's Fashion Fair Cosmetics at Eaton's, advertisement, *Contrast*, 1975.



Figure 6.6. Cliff's Hair Place's use of the Afro, advertisement, *Contrast*, 1973.

The Fond  
Touch of  
'Flori Roberts'  
-available at  
Eaton's

The fond touch.  
A whisper of affection.  
For you. For your  
skin. Cosmetics subtle,  
sublime and some how  
sensual. 'Flori Roberts'  
offers you care and  
feeling... flair and freedom.  
With just a touch.  
A fond touch.



- (1) 104: Anti-Oil Lotion, 4-ozs. .... 6.00
- (2) 104: Derma Pure Facial, 2-ozs. .... 6.50
- (3) 104: Lip Polish. .... Each 2.95
- (4) 104: Melana Souffle Make-up, 1-oz. .... 8.95
- (5) 104: Melanin Moisturizer, 3-ozs. .... 6.50
- (6) 104: Touché Mela Make-up. .... Each 7.25

ONE-WEEK BONUS OFFER! With every 10.00 or more purchase of any 'Flori Roberts' products, you will receive at no extra charge a gift of a colour-of-gold zodiac pendant, eyelashes or lip-stick. Offer good until July 27th only. Supply is limited.

PHONE 861-5111.  
Eaton's Queen Street (main floor)—216.

EATON'S

Figure 6.7. Flori Roberts Melanin makeup collection at Eaton's, advertisement, *Contrast*, 1974.



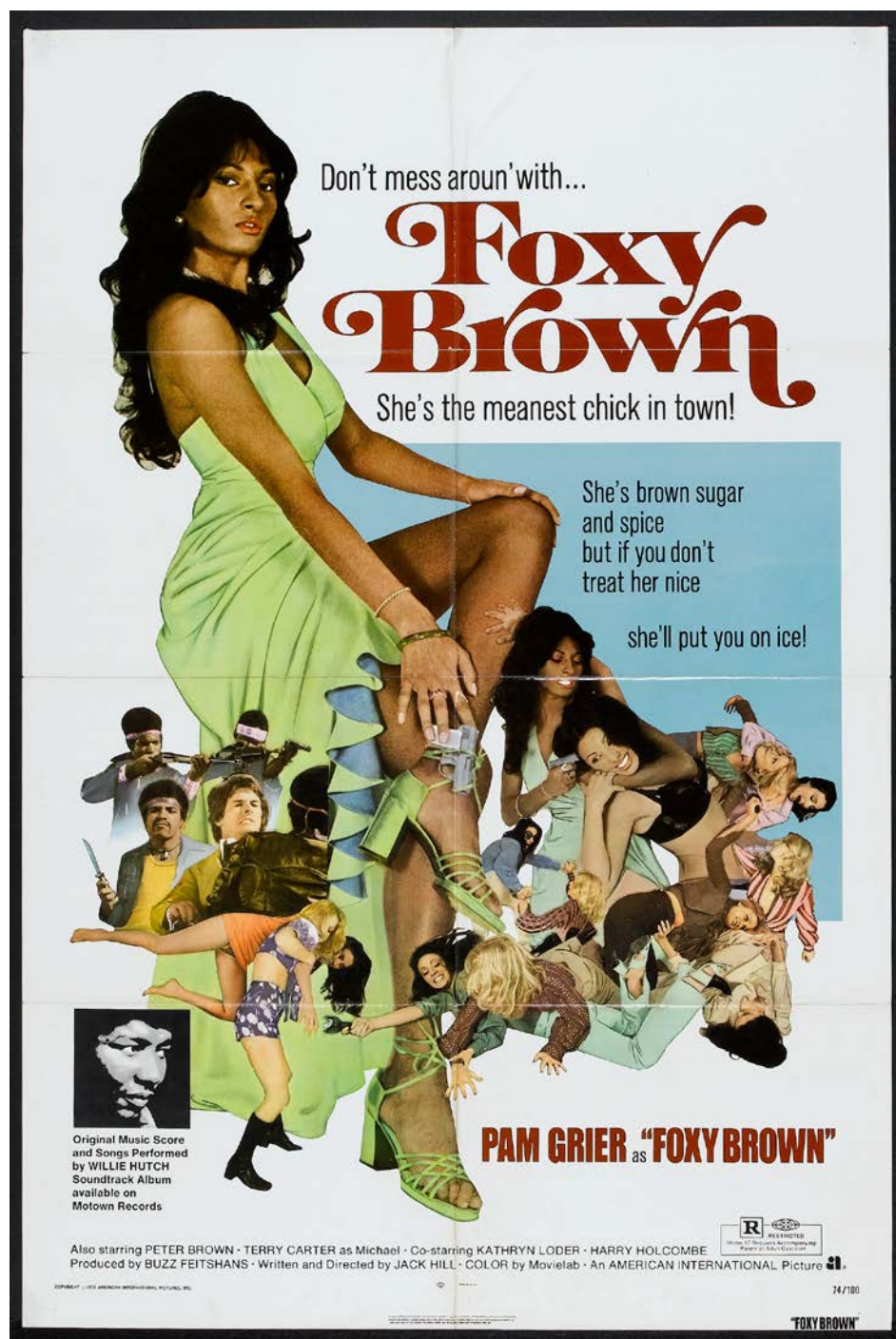


Figure 6.8. Theatrical poster for *Foxy Brown*, featuring Pam Grier, 1974.



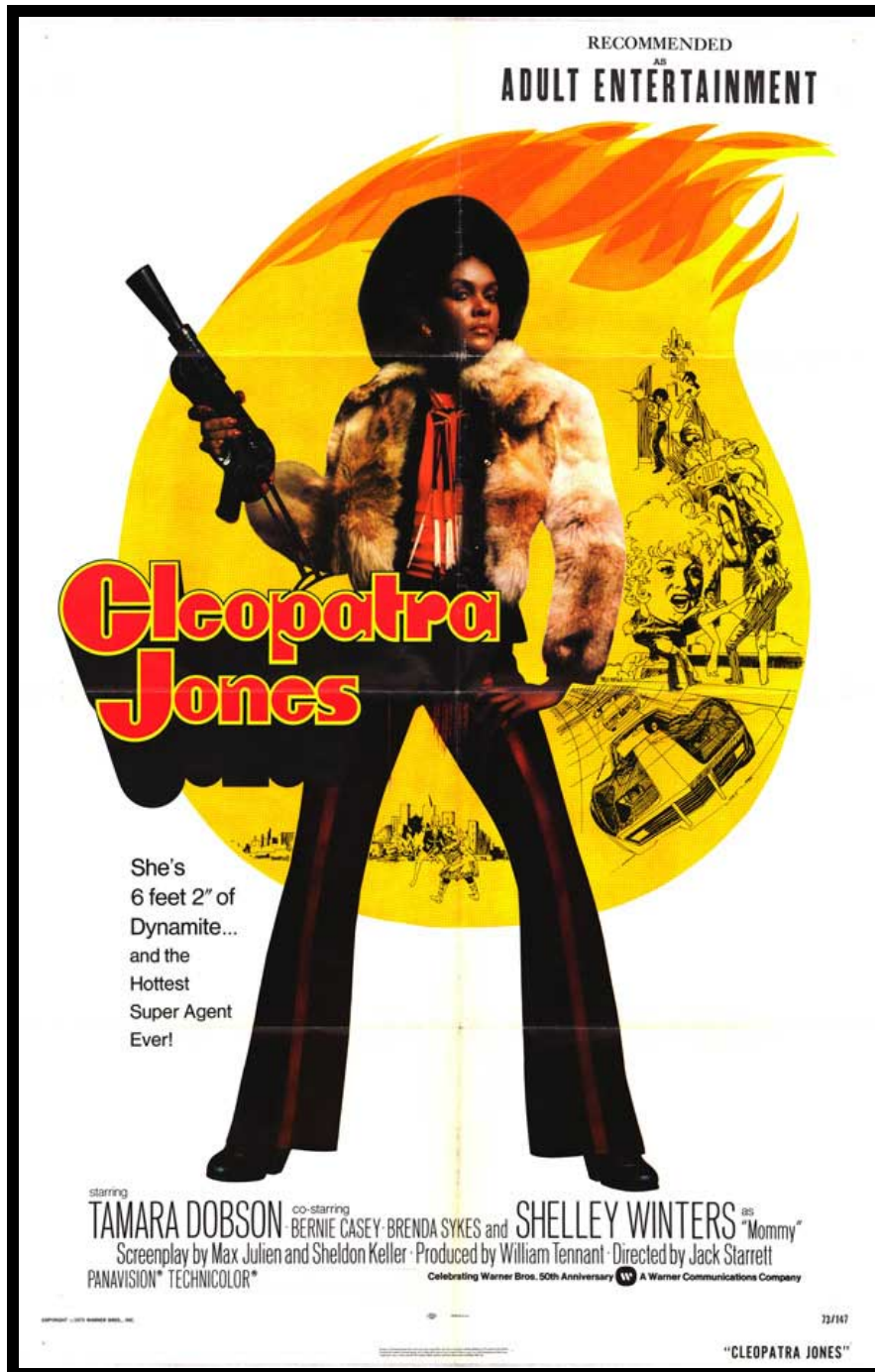


Figure 6.9.. Theatrical poster for *Cleopatra Jones*, featuring Tamara Dobson, 1973

## Sophisticated Lady – a bonus offer from Fashion Fair at Eaton's

That's you! Sophisticated Lady. A woman drawn to warm, spicy colours, fiery lights. A woman whose make-up reflects a sophisticated point of view. For you, Fashion Fair created the Sophisticated Lady bonus: Warm and Spicy Creme Rouge, Spicy Lady Lipstick, Perfect Polish (Georgia Brown), Gentle Facial Shampoo

(1-oz.), Fashion Fair Cologne Spray. It's all yours at no extra charge with a 7.50 or more purchase of Fashion Fair products at Eaton's.

Not shown:

(1A) 104-Moisture Lotion.  
4-ozs. 7.50

(1B) 104-Toning Lotion.  
8-ozs. 7.50

(1C) 104-Astringent for Oily Skin.  
8-ozs. 7.50

(1D) 104-Beauty Masque.  
2.1-oz. 7.50

Phone 861-5111. EATON'S—  
Toronto Eaton Centre (main  
floor)-216; Yorkdale (main floor).



Figure 6.10. John H. Johnson's Fashion Fair Cosmetics at Eaton's, advertisement, *Contrast* 1977.



**Figure 6.11.** Revlon Realistic Permanent Crème Hair Relaxer, advertisement, *Contrast*, 1978.

A beautiful way to care for your kind of hair.

**NEW! DARK & LOVELY**  
CARE FOR YOUR HAIR PRODUCTS








8 OZ. PROTEIN SHAMPOO

8 OZ. PROTEIN CONDITIONER

8 OZ. PROTEIN SETTING LOTION

4.25 OZ. PROTEIN HAIR DRESS & CONDITIONER

SHAMPOO IN HAIR COLOUR  
5 COLOURS  
JET BLACK  
BLACK  
DARK BROWN  
AUBURN  
BRIGHT AUBURN

**THE DARK & LOVELY PERMANENT CREME RELAXER STORY**

Black women who were interviewed at beauty counters, in homes and beauty salons said in plain language what they wanted and didn't want from a hair relaxer.

1. The product **must** work — it **must** relax the hair.
2. It should not irritate or burn the scalp.
3. It shouldn't break the hair or cause hair loss.
4. It should produce permanent results, the hair shouldn't revert.
5. It shouldn't have that caustic smell.

It's taken time to develop this fine product, but the majority of Black women who have used Dark & Lovely Permanent Creme Relaxer say it fulfills almost all their needs. We think you'll enjoy the few minutes it takes to relax your hair. Even more important, we believe you'll be delighted with the results.

If you've used a relaxer before, you'll find Dark & Lovely to be quite different. The most popular creme relaxers contain lye as the active ingredient, Dark & Lovely doesn't. Tests have shown that Dark & Lovely Permanent Creme Relaxer is less irritating to skin and scalp than relaxers that contain lye.

And Dark & Lovely Permanent Creme Relaxer helps hair resist reversion, even in warm, humid weather. Once relaxed the hair usually stays relaxed — except, of course, for that new growth when it appears.

**No base formula - one strength beautifully relaxes all hair textures.**  
**Gentle enough for colour treated hair. (DO NOT USE ON BLEACHED HAIR)**  
**DOES NOT CONTAIN SODIUM HYDROXIDE (Caustic Soda - Lye)**

Professional products for beauty salons and barber shops are available through our local distributors.

**TORONTO - HAMILTON**  
EBONY ENTERPRISES  
(416) 535-7102

**EDMONTON - CALGARY**  
EBONY BEAUTY SUPPLY  
(403) 429-1203

Distributed in Canada by:  
ROYAL SHIELD  
(A DIVISION OF HARGELL LIMITED)

855 ALNESS ST., UNIT 19, DOWNSVIEW, ONTARIO, CANADA M3J 2X3 (416) 661-6415

Figure 6.12. Carson Products' Dark & Lovely Permanent Crème Relaxer Story, no-lye advertisement, *Contrast*, 1978.

ULTRA SHEEN

BECAUSE YOU'RE ULTRA SPECIAL.



*Distributed in Canada by Mascoll Corporation Limited*  
870 Bathurst St. Toronto, Canada M5R 3G3 Telephone 533-1176

Figure 6.13. Johnson Products' Ultra Sheen Permanent Crème Relaxer, advertisement, *Contrast*, 1980.

**NOW AVAILABLE!**

The First Patented Retail Relaxer that  
Conditions and Relaxes at the same time.

Johnson **Gentle-Treatment™**

**Conditioning  
creme relaxer**

**contains no sodium  
hydroxide (lye)**

**Patented Formula  
conditions hair  
as it relaxes**

**One strength  
relaxes all hair  
textures for longer  
looking hair**

Distributed in Canada by Mascoll Corporation Limited  
870 Bathurst St. Toronto, Canada M5S 1C3 Telephone 593-1176



**Figure 6.14.** Johnson Products Gentle-Treatment Conditioning Crème Relaxer, no-lye advertisement, *Contrast*, 1981.

Only your stylist can relax your hair with... *Motions*

A new line of products for salon stylists,  
utilizing Motions high technology!

From Motions:  
 Discount Beauty Supply TEL: 416-781-1820 FAX: 416-782-0207  
 P2 Multi-Style TEL: 416-221-1745 FAX: 416-221-5519  
 Pearlton Beauty Supply TEL: 505-670-1040 FAX: 505-670-4757  
 Discount Beauty Supply TEL: 416-679-4401 FAX: 416-679-5201  
 Martell Beauty Supply TEL: 416-666-2009 FAX: 416-666-2022  
 Hapich LTD. TEL: 416-641-6416 FAX: 416-641-5417  
 Lifetime Sales TEL: 416-441-1111 FAX: 416-441-5577  
 Images & Shades TEL: 416-353-1137 FAX: 416-353-5714  
 East End Beauty Supply TEL: 416-438-0600 FAX: 416-438-0600  
 Escompte Sara TEL: 514-731-7536 FAX: 514-731-7536  
 Cosmétique Multiethnique TEL: 514-725-7171 FAX: 514-725-7171

www.motionshair.com  
TEL: 214-631-4247 FAX: 214-620-2658

© Motions

Figure 6.15. Pro-Line Motions, advertisement with ghetto fabulous imagery, *Share*, 2002.



Only your stylist can relax your hair with... *Motions*  
Oil  
Moisturizer

A new line of products  
for salon stylists, utilizing  
high technology!

© Motions

Each one of the stylists  
at a Motions salon must have  
received specific training  
from Motions. This is why  
you can be sure that your  
stylist is qualified to use  
Motions products. For more  
information, call 1-800-855-  
MOTIONS.

Chicago, Illinois: 312-341-3413  
Dallas, Texas: 214-341-3413  
Denver, Colorado: 303-341-3413  
Detroit, Michigan: 313-341-3413  
Houston, Texas: 281-341-3413  
Los Angeles, California: 310-341-3413  
Miami, Florida: 305-341-3413  
Minneapolis, Minnesota: 612-341-3413  
New York, New York: 212-341-3413  
Phoenix, Arizona: 602-341-3413  
Portland, Oregon: 503-341-3413  
San Francisco, California: 415-341-3413  
Seattle, Washington: 206-341-3413  
Tampa, Florida: 813-341-3413  
Washington, D.C.: 202-341-3413  
Wichita, Kansas: 316-341-3413

**Figure 6.16.** Pro-Line Motions, advertisement with respectable lady imagery, *Share*, 2002.



**I AM  
SEXY  
SENSUAL**

**I AM  
DESIRED**

**I AM  
ALWAYS**  
*Soft & Beautiful*

Distributors:  
Hargill Inc.  
K2 Wholesale  
Whitman Sales  
Discount Beauty Supply  
Images & Chandel  
Excerpta Corp.

TEL: 616-691-6157 FAX: 616-691-6157  
TEL: 415-328-7677 FAX: 415-328-7677  
TEL: 616-419-1157 FAX: 616-419-1157  
TEL: 714-710-2212 FAX: 714-710-2212  
TEL: 720-424-3717 FAX: 720-424-3717  
TEL: 514-731-7000 FAX: 514-731-7000

© 2002 Pro-Line International  
TEL: 214-431-4247 FAX: 214-431-4247  
visit our website at [www.pro-line-hair.com](http://www.pro-line-hair.com)

**Figure 6.17.** Pro-Line Soft & Beautiful, advertisement with racial uplift imagery, *Share*, 2002.

[illegible]

**Figure 6.18.** Pro-Line TCB, advertisement with commodity spectacle, *Share*, 2002.



**Figure 7.1.** The Proud Lady Symbol, “black-owned” hair care products.



**Figure 7.2.** Black Hair Care Section, separate shelf U.S. Discount Store in Toronto, 2013.



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### Filmography

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- Black, Bold and Beautiful.* Directed by Nadine Valcin. 1999. Toronto, Canada: National Film Board of Canada.
- Claudine.* Directed by John Berry. 1974. Los Angeles, CA: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, 2003. DVD.
- Cleopatra Jones.* Directed by Jack Starrett. 1973. Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 1999. DVD.
- Cleopatra Jones and the Casino of Gold.* Directed by Charles Bail. 1975. Burbank, CA: Warner Bros., 2010. DVD.
- Coffy.* Directed by Jack Hill. 1973. Los Angeles, CA: American International Pictures, 2001. DVD.
- Coming to America.* Directed by John Landis, 1988. Los Angeles: Paramount Pictures, 1999.
- Dark Girls.* Directed by D. Channsin Berry and Bill Duke. 2011. USA: Duke Media. 2012. DVD.
- Daughters of the Dust.* Directed by Julie Dash. 1991. New York, NY: Kino International, 2000. DVD.
- Foxy Brown.* Directed by Jack Hill. 1974. Los Angeles, CA: American International Pictures, 2001. DVD.
- Friday Foster.* Directed by Arthur Marks. 1975. Los Angeles, CA: American International Pictures, 2001. DVD.
- Jungle Fever.* Directed by Spike Lee. 1991. Los Angeles: Universal Pictures, 1998. DVD.
- Lady Sings the Blues.* Directed by Sidney Furie. 1972. Los Angeles: Paramount Pictures, 2005. DVD.
- School Daze.* Directed by Spike Lee. 1988. Fort Greene, NY: 40 Acres and a Mule Filmworks, 2005. DVD.
- Shaft.* Directed by Gordon Parks. 1971. Los Angeles, CA: Metro-Goldwyn-May, 2000. DVD.
- Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song.* Directed by Melvin Van Peebles. 1971. Los Angeles: Cinemation Industries, 2003. DVD.
- Super Fly.* Directed by Gordon Parks. 1972. Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2004. DVD.
- The Colour of Beauty.* Directed by Elizabeth St. Philip. 2010. Toronto, Canada: National Film Board of Canada.
- Think Like a Man.* Directed by Tim Story. 2012. Culver City, CA: Sony Pictures, 2012. DVD.