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Representations of Black Middle Class Women in Literature, Film, and Television, 1915-1990

By

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ABSTRACT

Representations of Black Middle Class Women in Literature, Film, and Television, 1915-1990

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In my dissertation, "Representations of Black Middle Class Women in Literature, Film, and Television, 1915-1990" I analyze how social, political, and economic pressures during the Harlem Renaissance, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Reagan Era influenced depictions of black middle class women who, I argue, come to stand for all American Blacks. This is largely the case, despite the fact that the representations of black urban males figure more prominently in social and literary discussions. Significantly, my examination traces the production of the image of the black middle class woman by the black middle class as they actively worked to suture middle class respectability to a public performance of the New Negro identity--an identity which served to promote the status of the southern migrant to that of the sophisticated northerner with full rights and American citizenship.

Four different figures of black middle class women achieve prominence: the clubwoman, the socialite, the decadent woman, and the distant sophisticate. I analyze how these figures, which come to represent the New Negro, are constructed and deployed by the black middle class in

Harlem Renaissance literature and race film, and how they are later appropriated by Hollywood to manage dissent during periods of social unrest. The emergence of these figures is examined in black women's magazine fiction of the Half-Century and the Harlem Renaissance novels of Jessie Redmon Fauset and W.E.B. Du Bois, and selected race films of Oscar Micheaux. As the reception of these figures by the black spectator is central to this investigation, I examine how one film exhibitor in Detroit used the figure of the New Negro in his marketing strategy to appeal to an increasingly stratified and class-conscious black audience. The reconstitution of the black middle class woman on television is examined in Julia, the first situation comedy to feature a black family and a black female lead, and which aired during the Civil Rights Movement. I conclude with an examination of Clair Huxtable in The Cosby Show.

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In loving memory of my grandmother Mrs. Eunice Brown whose life inspired me to write.

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I would also like to thank my grandmother, Eunice Brown, for her stories about life and gentle pushes to finish this project. Kenneth, my younger brother, deserves my deepest gratitude for lending a listening ear and a clear perspective, and for housing me on my numerous visits to California. For their constant encouragement my dear friends John Wess Grant, Thomas Kohl, Lamia Ben Youssef, and Maya Hernandez. This work would not have been complete without the assistance of dedicated employees at the Detroit Public Library, the Wisconsin Historical Society, and the Virginia Historical Society.

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Chapter 1

IN THEIR OWN IMAGE: BLACK MIDDLE CLASS WOMEN IN BLACK MAGAZINE FICTION, 1915-1935

Certain absences are so stressed, so ornate, so planned, they call attention to themselves.

Toni Morrison, Playing in the Dark

Despite the noisier and more spectacular advance of my brothers, I instinctively know that it is the five million women of my race who really count.

W.E.B. Du Bois, Darkwater

Figures of black middle class women have been largely undifferentiated in studies of African American literature, film, and television. This is principally the case although my analysis of African American literature published between 1915 and 1933 reveals four figures of black womanhood: the homemaker, the decadent woman, the artiste, and the clubwoman that were used by African American writers to explore and critique social mores, and transform social relations. This chapter traces the emergence of these four types in black magazine fiction and novels, and examines how black women editors and writers used figures of black middle class women to destabilize racial and gendered power relations and empower black readers. This study also examines how black male magazine editors and writers unwittingly reinforced dominant white

hegemony and consolidated patriarchal authority by creating fictional narratives that emphasized racial inequalities while subordinating gender inequities. As black people have decreasingly become the makers of black images that stand before the masses of black people, these depictions act as sites of visual and physical resistance to white hegemony and are organic to the African American community. As types that are central to the production and dissemination of values, roles, and concerns in African American women's writing, these figures restore plentitude to the African American female literary tradition, and promise the recovery and legitimization of black women's literary endeavors across genres.[1]

A careful study of black magazine fiction reveals highly differentiated images of black middle class women, all of which function to reinforce the value of the home, except in the case of the artiste single woman. The Half-Century Magazine, a Chicago monthly published by Anthony Overton from 1916 to 1925 and targeting "The Business Man and The Home Maker," fosters depictions of black middle class single and married women who have nonromantic pursuits and strive to define themselves as individuals rather than as girlfriends, wives, or mothers.[2] Conversely, the Crisis, a New York monthly published by the

[1] Stuart Hall writes that the history of slavery, migration, and transportation function as texts that "restore an imaginary fullness or plentitude, to set against the broken rubric of our [Caribbean] past. They are resources of resistance and identity, with which to confront the fragmented and pathological ways in which that experience has been re-constructed within the dominant regimes of cinematic and visual representation of the West" ("Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation," Framework 36 (1989): 68-81. I use plentitude to highlight how the social and political needs of the black community during the 1910s and 1920s called into existence these figures. In this regard, Clubwomen were the response to a call issued from the black community.

[2] This remained the magazine's by-line until September 1921 when it became "A Colored Magazine for the Home and the Home Maker."

N.A.A.C.P. from 1910 to the present, fosters depictions of black middle class women trapped by the triumvates of race, gender, and class. Images created by Jessie Fauset mediate images from both magazines and highlight how the Crisis's literary model frustrated the development of images of empowered black middle class women.

This dissertation will provide a thematic analysis that will examine images of black middle class women as cultural productions, which become contested sites through which debates on race, class, and gender are reflected and refracted. This analysis highlights the dialogic relationship between Harlem Renaissance literature, the African American press, and race film as each struggled to define and represent the black middle class (also known as the 'best of the race' and the 'Talented Tenth') to an increasingly stratified African American community. In this respect, this work disturbs the idea of a monolithic black community by illuminating the polyphony of voices marked not only by caste but class and gender that comprise this populace. Most significantly, it reveals the complexity of discourses surrounding the power of the image and strategies of representation deployed through figures of black middle class women. These discourses reflect class tensions emerging from the historical struggle for political and social ascendancy between race leaders, the black press, black writers, and Race filmmakers as each attempted to (re)present (literally and figuratively) the black community to itself and to the nation.

Ideological Function of Figures of Black Middle Class Women

The notion of representation as a reconstructive practice directed at self, community, and Other is fundamental to this examination. Noting the social constructedness of black images cultural workers-race leaders, writers, and filmmakers traversed the divide between formalism and realism, appropriating elements of each to "transfer the usual reception of an object into the sphere of a new perception."[3] Stereotypes of Blacks emerging from society's racial myths have been historically circulated in sectional literature, minstrel shows, Hollywood film, and television.[4] By using the arbitrariness of the sign to interrupt the meaning assigned to Blacks through stereotypes,[5] which rationalized slavery, lynching, rape, and continued discrimination against Blacks by constructing them as highly sexualized, violent, predatory, and infantile beings, cultural workers were able to free the black image from its negative cultural moorings.[6] However,

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[3] Victor Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," Modern Criticism and Theory, ed. David Lodge (New York: Longman, 1988) 27.

[4]Ralph Ellison writes that: "To direct an attack upon Hollywood would indeed be to confuse portrayal with actions, image with reality...Actually, the anti Negro images of the films were (and are) acceptable because of the existence throughout the United states of an audience obsessed with an inner psychological need to view Negroes as less than men. Thus, psychologically and ethnically, these negative images constitute justifications for all those acts, legal, emotional and political...the anti-Negro image is thus a ritual object of which Hollywood is not the creator, but the manipulator. Its role has been that of justifying the widely held myth of Negro unhumanness and inferiority by offering entertaining rituals through which that myth would be affirmed." Shadow and Act (New York: Random House, 1953) 276-77.

[5]Walter Lippman, a journalist who coined the term, describes stereotypes as: "Not merely a way of substituting order for the great blooming, buzzing, confusion of reality. It is not merely a shortcut. It is all these things and something more. It is the guarantee of our self-respect; it is the projection upon the world of our own sense of our own value, our own position, and our own rights. The stereotypes are, therefore, highly charged with the feelings that are attached to them. They are the fortress of our tradition, and behind its defenses we can continue to feel ourselves safe in the position we occupy." Public Opinion (New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1997) 63-64.

[6]The buck, jezebel, tom, coon, and mammy stereotypes also functioned to assuage white guilt.

as Stam and Shohat note, "Stereotypes of some communities merely make the target group uncomfortable, but the community has the social power to combat them; stereotypes of other communities participate in a continuum of prejudicial social policy and actual violence against disempowered people, placing the very body of the accused in jeopardy."[7] Stereotypes are not neutral; they authenticate racial myths and encourage black and white subjects to accept negative depictions as fact. With ramifications to the black subject both on screen and off, narratives featuring Blacks as icons of success, sophistication, and beauty seek to reconstitute and rehabilitate the black image for multiple audiences.

The ongoing contestation of space and power between Blacks (subaltern) and Whites (status quo) described by Gramsci is manifested both on screen and off through the image of the black middle class woman. Traditionally, black women have been stereotyped as the least threatening of black figures. The mammy, who is defined by nurturing and an absence of sexuality, and the mulatto, who is defined by a hyper sexuality, facilitate white identity by alleviating white guilt over the exploitation of black female labor and rape. Both images reinforce the position of the heterosexual, bourgeois, white male by naturalizing nurturing and sexuality with the image of the black woman. The lack of further differentiation of images of black women is a function of sexism, which continues to constitute black women outside historical texts.[8] Black middle class women

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[7] Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, Unthinking Eurocentrism (London: Routledge, 1997) 183.

[8]Claire Johnson writes: "the fact that there is a far greater differentation of men's roles than women's roles in the history of cinema relates to sexist ideology itself, and the basic opposition which places man inside history, and women as ahistoric and eternal." "Women's Cinema As

fall between conventional types and, as a result, are alternately neglected and treated tendentiously in literature and film. They are often figured as "bad" women, those who repudiate the four cardinal virtues of piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity (hearth and home). In fact, Carby notes that the cult of true womanhood was constructed around black women; that is, black women functioned as the antithesis of (white) womanhood. As such, they are overtly or covertly undermined and their rise and fall function to reinforce dominant societal values of woman and place.

This point is especially noteworthy when one considers the persistence of these practices in twentieth century literature and film, for although American culture celebrates the modern career woman; it simultaneously punishes those who deviate from established gendered roles. In many cases the literary and cinematic images appear to validate independent and intelligent black women while actually keeping them in check by portraying the negative consequences of feminist experiences characterized by despondency, divorce, and death. Work and education are used as plot devices through which the heroine rises in class, yet is degraded by other male and female characters. This is consistent with the 1920s Hollywood "fallen woman" film in which the "bad" female character is contrasted with the "good" woman who is conceived as the ideal of domesticity.[9]

Counter-Cinema" Movies and Methods, ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) 209.

[9]Lea Jacobs, The Wages of Sin: Censorship and the Fallen Woman Film 1928-1942 (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991) 52-84.

As early as 1910, black magazines functioned as counter hegemonic apparatuses by creating a subjectivity that privileged race, as described by Louis Althusser. By hailing black men and women as racialized subjects, and linking the performance of this privileged racial identity to the active support of race theaters, race magazines, and race products, black magazines combated such norms of white society as high consumption and passive viewing practices. Critically, black magazines introduced their images, editorials, and products into the process of ideological creation, thereby making it more difficult for a black man or woman to maintain a white subjectivity. Images of black middle class women in black magazines interrupt the socializing work of dominant ideology.

At the heart of the black family, the black middle class woman was integral to the maintenance of values in the African American community. As the purchasing agent of goods for the family home and as a model of progressive black female womanhood to the black working class, the African American middle class woman was a figure of material, cultural, and aesthetic interest to other African American women and to manufacturers interested in targeting the African American consumer. As a bridge between the larger white community and smaller black community, the black middle class woman mediated social relations between races and classes.

Images of the homemaker, decadent woman, artiste, and clubwoman deployed by writers, filmmakers, and race leaders regulated gender relations during a moment of movement and rupture, which threatened to transform gender relations. Although black women remained largely concentrated in

occupations such as domestic service, a fact determined by racism, their shared participation in urban and often northern life was a result of a conscious determination to improve their life condition; migration represented an active step toward self-definition.[10] This act of self-empowerment is consonant with an assertion of a new Negro womanhood that consolidated black female agency and fostered an awareness of black female needs and a shared black female consciousness. While a physical manifestation of this female community was the highly organized black clubwoman movement, informal grassroots female collectives across the nation worked to improve the living conditions of migrant single women and mothers and to increase literacy. These efforts derive from an emergent group consciousness marked by agency rather than effacement.

Kathryn Johnson, who criss-crossed the Midwest selling books from the backseat of her car, epitomizes the spirit of this movement. Recognizing a need for increased access and distribution of black literature, Johnson became the agent through which many African American readers obtained African American texts. Johnson's focus on bringing African American literature to African American readers would culminate in her position as associate editor of the Half-Century Magazine, which was described as a "colored monthly for the businessman and homemaker."[11] She served in this capacity for the magazine's nine-year history.[12] From this vantage Johnson not only facilitated the distribution

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[10]Carole Boyce Davies, Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject (New York: Routledge, 1994) 1-14.

[11] This description appears on the cover of the magazine until 1920.

[12] "We are pleased to announce that Miss Kathryn M. Johnson has joined our force in the capacity of Associate Editor. Miss Johnson has had a wide experience in the field of journalism

of African American literature, but also was instrumental in its very production. At the center of this literary production were African American women writers who, unlike African American male writers, had been historically unable to "cash in" on literacy.[13] Magazine fiction became an opportunity for black women writers to enter the commercial marketplace as producers of images, and to introduce their depictions of African American middle class women to the literary marketplace and influence media productions.

During her years as bookseller Johnson stressed that she was "not first selling books" but "first of all creating a desire for reading." Similarly, as associate editor she was not simply selling magazines but fostering a desire for stories that delineated types of African American womanhood that would educate-"to help the Negro to understand his honorable place in the United States."[14] Johnson also fostered images that were reflective of the lives of some African American women.[15] Through the Half-Century Johnson could appeal to a heterogeneous black readership with a variety of needs. While some readers demanded stories about black people that were not simply "stories" but "reality,"

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and is no stranger to our readers, having been a field agent for the Crisis for the past four years," editorial, Half-Century Magazine, November 1916: 1.

[13] For example, Harriet Wilson hoped to use the profits of her autobiographical narrative *Our Nig* to support her ailing son. The death of her son less than one year after the novel's publication reveals that the popular reception of the novel was insufficient to its cause. Linda Brent's narrative reveals the burden of social expectation and the struggle to control authorship.

[14] Elizabeth McHenry, Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African-American Literary Societies (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002) 11.

[15] Johnson's life serves as an example of a woman who reinvented her career rather than be constrained by it or racism. A former teacher, independent bookseller, and the first field agent of the NAACP, her purpose was matched only by her mobility, both of which illuminate the indomitable spirit of black women of magazine fiction in the Half-Century. She received her BA from Wilberforce in 1900.

others sought literature to complement and extend the rigorous programs of study adopted in independent literary societies.[16] This mass of black women workers, readers, and thinkers empowered by their intellectual, economic, and social participation in the American economy was primed readers of black magazine fiction.

Figures of black middle class women

In the critical years between 1915-1933 when black migration from rural to urban centers and the South to the North was at its peak and black women moved to cities in record numbers, the figure of the homemaker became the first in a series of images of black women circulated for mass consumption and targeted to the black female population. Designed to regulate gender relations during a moment of geographic and psychic displacement and flux marked by the heavy migration and rupture, caused by the persistence of economic and social inequities in the urban north, the image of the homemaker in race film and the Crisis and Messenger magazines reinforced hierarchal relations by naturalizing black female subordination to black male authority.

Additionally, by constituting unpaid homemaking rather than paid labor

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[16]Black females created literary societies which adopted courses of study with the dual purpose of acquiring knowledge and "disciplining the mind itself, strengthening and enlarging its powers, forming habits of close and accurate thinking, and acquiring a facility of classifying and arranging, analyzing and comparing our ideas on different subjects" McHenry 51. The longevity of these clubs underscores the existence of a population of black female readers, thinkers, and doers whose interests ranged from Italian Renaissance literature to social reform movements in the United States. Members of these clubs organized literary programs and committees which presented on various topics, which were approved a year in advance to give presenters time to prepare their essays and papers, and members the opportunity to read books appearing on the booklist. See the Minutes of the Saturday Afternoon Club, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond.

inside or outside the domestic sphere as the location of female self-fulfillment, this image performed the critical function of linking female subordination with pleasure, and female pleasure with homemaking, with an emphasis on other needs above one's own.

The professional homemaker is distinguished by her location in the home and her singular focus on homemaking, which is her primary task. She expends considerable energy caring for the home, which is described by vigilant rounds of cleaning to maintain a sterile, well-ordered household. Parallel to the washing of floors and windows is the laundering of textiles such as linen and the cleaning of drapes. The maintenance of the home also includes waxing and polishing heavy furniture and floors. The decoration of the home and the arrangement of furniture and objects for a pleasant effect is also a significant activity. Cooking and baking are important activities of the professional homemaker. These activities, which constitute homemaking reinforce the homemaker's function of using her labor for the exclusive support of her husband and, where relevant, their children. This gendered and class inflected image of black womanhood as caregiver and nurturer offers a complement to the image of black manhood as financial provider. The professional homemaker derives meaning and sustenance from her role as caretaker of the home and family. Because she is cheerful, easy-going, verbally communicative, generous, sacrificial, and tireless in her efforts on behalf of family and home, her "work" is rendered invisible to family members and reader alike. The image of the professional homemaker is organic to the idea of home; her unpaid labor and cheerful self-sacrifice are

prerequisites to the creation and maintenance of a space where others' needs can be asserted and fulfilled without guilt or reciprocation.

In contrast, the decadent homemaker is isolated by her location within the home and wearied rather than energized by domestic chores. Husbands, mothers-in-laws, children, and other family members become the source of displeasure as each vocalizes their needs, which overwhelm the unacknowledged and oftentimes unconscious needs of this homemaker. The decadent homemaker is depressed, fatigued, and silent. Most stories that feature her make use of internal dialog, which demonstrates a keen and introspective mind that may manifest plans of escape that are never activated. Pensive and deliberately silent, these characters are separated from a world they find alienating and uncontrollable. As a result, they usually retreat to a private world that they have constructed where they can be in communion with themselves. Decadent homemakers often experience a profound sense of alienation from self, which is identified as a "lack."[17] They also suffer from low self-esteem, which is exacerbated by spouses.

The decadent single woman is immoral, selfish, materialistic, self consumed, pleasure seeking, aimless, and/or lazy. Many single decadent women lack purpose, motivation, or direction and as a result are pliable and easily given to fads, entertainments, and moods. She is often irresponsible and child-like although she can be vicious and calculating. In film she appears as sapphire or the fallen woman.

To black women writers the socially idealized professional homemaker is an unobtainable reality. The decadent homemaker functions as a warning to black women and black men; that is, the overwhelming pressure to become the perfect homemaker could result in an unhomely homemaker, one who deliberately creates a hostile home. Through the decadent woman the work that women perform in the home is rendered visible. These women find homemaking overwhelming and unfulfilling labor from which they desire release; however, they are unable to recognize the legitimacy of their feelings because they are not self-aware. Instead, the decadent homemaker redoubles her efforts in homemaking and motherhood, which invariably increases her burdens, fatigue, and despair. In the hands of some black female writers, the decadent woman becomes a figure of independence precisely because she is liberated from a fascination with and consumption by household tasks, and the reader's expectations of her attention to these tasks. The decadent woman denaturalizes marriage, homemaking, and motherhood.

To black male writers the decadent homemaker functions to assuage male guilt by depicting women who do not happily perform domestic chores as unnatural. By refusing to acknowledge the importance of women's work, male characters escape shared responsibility in homemaking for which they also do not pay. Black male writers are able to define black women as decadent (or the antithesis of woman) if they do not perform household tasks or seek opportunities

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[17] Helga Crane in Nella Larsen's Quicksand experiences a "lack," which she attempts to fill by becoming a wife and later a mother. However, this emptiness is not filled by either role that, ironically, causes her death.

to mother or comfort others. In so doing, these writers influence readers' expectations of women and the significance of homemaking. The decadent single woman absolves men from culpability for infidelity, gambling, alcoholism, and/or materialism, which were targeted by religious, temperance, and social reform movements. Because she remains outside domesticity, the decadent single woman poses a threat to patriarchy. Efforts to subordinate her to male authority manifest in the highly sexualized manner in which she is depicted in film and in literature.

Although the decadent homemaker outnumbered every other type of black homemaker, there was keen competition from the artiste. The artiste homemaker is driven by her need for vocation, which is more than a pastime: it is her "calling." No longer is homemaking or activity associated with rendering the house a home for spouse or family considered sufficiently gratifying, and neither is this lack considered problematic. Rather, the artiste homemaker is an empowered figure of black womanhood who creates opportunities to realize her ambitions through labor outside the domestic realm which complements, extends, and revises her position and social expectations of her position both inside and outside the household. She expresses her aesthetic and professional needs through a cultivation of beauty or a desire to write, paint, or sculpt. For black women writers, the artiste homemaker is a model of personal, professional, and domestic success. Her struggle to redefine her role(s) and personal expectation(s) is reinforcing to readers who are encouraged to question *their* roles and self-expectations. Ultimately, the artiste homemaker legitimizes

readers' personal concerns about their ability to reconstruct their domestic reality, often without, initially, the support of spouses, especially as stories conclude by demonstrating how spouses are happier and marriages stronger from independent, actualized artiste wives.

The companion to the artiste homemaker is the artiste single woman. Whereas the professional homemaker is ambitious about homemaking, the artiste single woman is driven by her desire to succeed in her chosen profession. Jessie Redmon Fauset, whose characters Joanna Marshall and Marise are defined by their ambition to become performers, pioneers this type. Although lacking the "greatness" of social or intellectual leaders, the artiste illustrates the importance of perseverance and a steadfast and dignified refusal to be overcome by racism or sexism. The artiste single woman type has obtained academic or practical training and includes teachers, administrators, clubwomen, performers, and business owners.

The artiste single woman is one of the most complex types of black middle class womanhood. Her experimental nature makes her the most likely to move between types, selectively adopting and rejecting features of each to suit her needs. As a figure of transgression, appropriation, and experimentation, the artiste single woman threatens patriarchy, which uses the threat of expulsion from the social order to compel women to adopt the professional homemaker as model.[18] The greatest threat to patriarchy of all types due to her professional competency, and emotional and financial independence, the artiste single

[18] Decadent or "bad" women quickly become pariahs. Professional homemakers or "good" women are socially rewarded for their maintenance of the home and hegemony.

woman is often conflated in literature with the decadent woman to produce a woman who is cold, unmotherly, calculating, and ambitious. This conflation frees the artiste-decadent woman from expectation of homemaking and mothering in the mind of the reader and gives the writer creative space from which to explore new socially differentiated representations of black middle class women. While black women writers use this figure to explore and challenge social convention, this figure almost always meets with a tragic or unhappy end, thus reinforcing traditional values of women, home, and work. The reason for these almost universal tragic conclusions may have as much to do with the pressure to produce literature that is easily commodifiable as with black women writers' inability to conceive black artistes as achieving balance in their private and professional lives.

The final figure of black middle class women is the clubwoman who is distinguished by her focus on clubwork. She most often appears as a single or married woman who performs service work such as raising money for the construction of black schools, mentoring young black women, or educating others on the subject of racial uplift programs. Clubwomen like Olivia Blanchard in Jessie Fauset's Comedy: American Style, use clubwork to secure their position in the middle class, while still others such as Irene Redfield in Nella Larsen's Passing (1928), use clubwork to curtail familial demands on her time. Black female novelists use figures of clubwomen to critique domestic and social roles, while race filmmakers use this figure to encourage race pride expressed through support of race establishments.

Mary Church Terrell and Mary McLeod Bethune, clubwomen and founders of the National Association of Clubwomen (NACW), which was formed in 1896, constructed the image of the clubwoman to represent the ideal of black womanhood. As race leaders and wives, most clubwomen balanced domestic responsibilities with a public responsibility to "uplift" the race. This image of the black woman as a professional and cultural worker was organic to the black female community, and provides a critical context and model for black womanhood today.[19] However, it is this very type, which promises to recover the tradition of black female leadership and normalize the presence of the Lani Guiniers and Anita Hills, who are currently conceived as aberrations; they are elided by the dialectics of the mammy and the mulatto in literary, cultural, and reception studies. I contend that Hollywood, cognizant of the power of black

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[19]"What is it that woman wants? What is it that she hopes to attain? What is it she lacks that men are not willing to give? It is no wonderful thing, nothing preposterous or presumptuous. She simply wants to be a human being, not a slave, not a toy, not a queen. She wants the equal personal liberty that every man demands in order to become a fully developed well-balanced, happy and useful being. Only this and nothing more." On the subject of one-sided partnership, she says: "The male portion of the race already feel as though fatherhood were a mere incident in their lives, and would be insulted were you to intimate that fatherhood should be the "crowning glory" of their lives. They know that they possess powers and capabilities that the world needs and appreciates, and that fatherhood, blessed thought [*sic*] it be, is not the fullest and best manifestation of their existence. The idea is in every way as applicable to woman as to man. Why should all the faculties and energies of woman be turned to the fulfillment of this one function of her being?" A woman becomes morbid who simply retires within herself to brood over her fitness or unfitness for her 'crowning glory.' Let the woman live for herself, not for her unborn children. Let her fill her life to the brim with happiness, knowledge, mental and physical activity; let lofty emotions and vigorous thoughts fill her being; let her whole existence expand to the fullest extent; let her forget her motherhood; she will be a better mother for first being a woman, and to be this, she must first be free." "There is no reason why woman should devote more of her time and energies to motherhood than man does to fatherhood. Work, activity, interest in other things, both while carrying and nourishing children, are better than idleness. No special training, no particular occupation or exercise of one's faculties, or the cessation of activity are necessary as a preparation for motherhood. The life which makes a woman all she is capable of being, as a human being is the only one essential to the rearing of good children". "Untitled Editorial," National Association Notes, 4 September 1898: 2, N.A.C.W., microfilm, part 1, reel 23, frames 261-268.

images, appropriated the figure of the clubwoman from race film transforming it in the process from a culturally informed agent to a benign figure popularized in Julia. Further, I maintain that the reappearance of this figure during periods of social unrest such as the turbulent 60's has been calculated to mollify black audiences and direct them toward models of black middle class respectability which are individualistic and have been emptied of their historic communal programs of "uplift."

The Origin of the Artiste: The Clubwoman

As the paragon of new Negro womanhood from 1895-1935, and as incontrovertible proof of the height to which the race could aspire, the clubwoman was central to the production and dissemination of cultural values in the black community. As discourses of respectability and domesticity permeated the ideology of race leaders, this figure became the next in a series of critical approaches designed to negotiate the status of Blacks in America. The black press, race and club leaders, Harlem Renaissance writers, and race filmmakers participated in this project, which sought to ameliorate the condition of the black population through the careful manufacture and deployment of this gender and class marked type. As a pivot between the larger white and smaller black communities, this figure was foremost a site of contention as race leaders attempted to define it in their own image. To Booker T. Washington and Margaret Murray Washington, she was a figure of domesticity and quiet

subordination eschewing politics and black female suffrage.[20] To W.E.B. Du Bois, on the other hand, the she was a figure of progressive, militant, suffragette black womanhood tempered by Victorian ideals.[21]

At the center of these two vectors were black clubwomen, who continuously attempted to realign images of clubwomen to reflect the original objectives of the clubwoman movement: "racial uplift through self help." Created to wrest control of black social reform from black males whose "Innumerable conventions, councils and conferences during the last twenty-five years have all begun with talk and ended with talk,"[22] the National Association of Colored Women focused on the elderly, orphans, and single mothers; those marginalized by economic, racial, and social policy. Believing that "empowerment began with mothers" and that "the plight of black people could be solved by an 'informed and

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[20] Ms. Fannie Smith married Booker T. Washington in 1880 and died 1884. From Washington's hometown of Malden, West Virginia, Mrs. Smith Washington attended Hampton with the help of Washington who was the first black president of the all-black college. After joining the faculty at Tuskegee, she created a home economics program for girls and bore Washington one child, Portia Marshall. Ms. Olivia Davidson married Washington in 1886 and died in 1889. She bore two sons Booker Jr., and Davidson Ernest. Ms. Olivia Washington's New England contacts were vital to development of Tuskegee-she introduced her husband to philanthropic reformers who later funded the institute. Following birth of their sons, extensive travel, teaching and administration, her health failed and she died in 1889. Margaret James Murray married Washington in 1892 and died in 1925. She was director of the Tuskegee Girl's Institute, and president of the Tuskegee Women's Club, the National Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, vice president of the National Federation of Afro-American Women, and president of the Alabama Association of Women's Clubs. She also immediately became mother to Washington's three young children. Improving black homes and education were the focus of racial uplift efforts, and not black female suffrage. Jacqueline Anne Rouse, "Out of the Shadows of Tuskegee," The Journal of Negro History 18.25 (1996) 32-33.

[21] Despite his philosophical support of black female independence, DuBois eliminated the most prominent and outspoken black woman of the time, Ida B Wells-Barnett, from membership on the Committee of Forty of the newly inaugurated National Committee for the Advancement of the Negro. David Levering Lewis, W.E.B. DuBois: Biography of a Race, 1868-1919 (New York: Holt) 396. DuBois's 1909 Efforts for Social Betterment among Negro Americans cataloged information on the African American women's club movement, Levering 378.

[22] Deborah Gray-White, Too Heavy a Load (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999) 36-7.

careful motherhood,"[23] local clubs formed kindergartens and mother's clubs, and created scholarships for youth. Clubwomen also used their economic strength to empower black businesses and the black community. The Harlem Housewives League and the Detroit Housewives League "created a demand for the products made and sold by Negroes. At the same time they asked merchants to place in their stores goods made by Negroes."[24]

Numbering 5, 000 in 1896, 50, 000 in 1915 and 250, 000 in 1927,[25] the increase in membership signaled greater occupational, educational, religious, and political differentiation within the organization. Whereas early members were primarily educators, "by 1920 the NACW included artists, writers, musicians, stenographers, hairdressers, bookkeepers, modistes, insurance agents, doctors, lawyers, and businesswomen."[26] However, within this new differentiated membership conflicts arose over the identity and direction of the organization.

Therefore, the redefinition of images of clubwomen by clubwomen addressed two simultaneous encroachments-one from outside the organization as the overwhelmingly male-led N.A.A.C.P. and the National Urban League began to solicit the panoply of black female intellectual and cultural workers. These organizations sought to appropriate the labor and the image of the

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[23] Davis, Lifting as We Climb xxiii.

[24] Davis 329.

[25] Davis xvii.

[26] Davis xxiii.

clubwoman to consolidate their male control of the racial uplift movement, and to assert their male authority to represent the black female Other.[27]

At the same time that the NACW faced co-optation by external organizations, it also struggled to resolve internal conflicts over its identity that had grown more complex.[28] Deborah Grey-White concludes that "Images of black clubwomen in Harlem Renaissance literature "could have reiterated or redefined the NACW,"[29] thus preventing the decline of the organization. However, figures of clubwomen, which are transmogrified in literature into the artiste provide such figures of redefined black womanhood. This dissertation examines how figures of black middle class women reveal new cultural identities

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[27] The struggle between race and gender service splintered the finite pool of clubwomen. Fundamentally, as the focus on improving the status of the African American evolved, the strategy of moral uplift of the black race through the black woman shifted to a pan diasporic strategy of uplift through appeal to the darker races of the world. This new emphasis stressed the similarity of the struggles of Blacks throughout the African Diaspora and displaced discourses that stressed the particularity of gender uplift. Although this focused approach was intended to redress the depressed, denigrated position of the African American woman and through her, African Americans, within this new international perspective, the rights and conditions of black women appeared minuscule and programs serving black women appeared antithetical to the spirit of pan African unity.

[28]Deborah Gray-White finds that African-American clubwomen were a heterogeneous group: "Race and gender united them as often as class, religion, sexuality, and ideology pitted them against each other," Too Heavy a Load, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999) 16. These differences shaped class-based alliances as, "Poor, working-class, middle-class women all organized nationally but mostly within their own groups," 17. Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, one of the founding members of the NACW, focused on training children and the moral education of the race, whereas Mary Church Terrell, president, stressed industrial retraining as Whites encroached upon service occupations formerly filled by Blacks. Terrell also more generally focused on "temperance, morality, the higher education, hygienic and domestic questions" (See Ruffin's "Address of Josephine St. P. Ruffin," The Woman's Era, 2:5 August 1895: 13-15. Also see Terrell's "First Presidential Address to the National Association of Colored Women" Nashville, Tennessee, 15 September 1897, Mary Church Terrell Papers, Library of Congress, Microfilm, reel 20, frames 511-22.

[29] Deborah Gray-White120.

that resist the totalizing force of racial and gendered classification, and restore fullness to African American women's literature and history.

The Black Middle Class

The effort to shape the image of black middle class women was especially strong among the black middle class who were a heterogeneous group devolving from sundry occupations, geographic locations, and backgrounds. Through this figure, members of this group sought to create a class image that reflected their particular training and/experience. This endeavor gained greater significance as racism continued to erode the correspondence between education and/training and employment opportunities. Fundamentally, many Blacks found themselves highly educated but without employment. Others found themselves distinguished by birth into families of free Blacks generations old yet penniless and unable to compete with the new wealth of caterers and barbers who also considered themselves middle class. However, middle class remains a contentious concept in the black community due to the effects of racism, which continue to impact the relationship between education and/training and employment opportunities. Between 1880-1900, occupations open to Blacks and in which Blacks had an opportunity to excel were primarily in the service industry. Catering, barbering, tailoring, and service conferred upon the individual the status of middle class. However by 1910 as educational opportunities became available to those in a position to take advantage of them, the medical, teaching, and legal professions

became defined as occupations of the new black middle class (as opposed to the older, shrinking black upper class).

Between 1915 and 1937, social conditions combined to produce the Great Migration, wherein Gunnar Myrdal writes, "the subjective desirability" of the North "in spite of considerable discrimination-offered [the Black] more economic opportunities, more security as a citizen, and a greater freedom as a human being." Within this period, social and economic differentiation between Blacks grew as education and access to resources complemented old bourgeois indicators of group status such as family background, religious affiliation, and deportment. The result of these changes was an increasing stratification of Blacks who although similarly positioned as propertyless in the Marxist sense, received benefits based on the value of their labor or their market situation. While the value of unskilled labor placed the southern migrant near the bottom of the economic ladder, the value of skilled labor possessed by the middle class increased especially as black economic bases or communities in the North expanded with the Migration and industrialization.

Though poised for entry into the American middle class through gains in education and business, members of the black middle class continued to be frustrated by discrimination and segregation. The black middle class, however, unlike the older bourgeoisie, redoubled their efforts to combat racism through militancy, professional excellence, and a program of social uplift. Though deriving their class status largely from the black community rather than from the larger white community, the black middle class did not experience the

insecurities and uprootedness characterized by Franklin in his seminal study The Black Bourgeoisie (1957).[30] Rather, it developed a "universe of discourse" through the black press, which allowed this group (and implicitly, though indirectly, the race as a whole), to debate the burning issues of the day, to protest and to encourage artistic and literary expression. In the pages of the black press, the sociopolitical movements headed by W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington, and the separatist program of Marcus Garvey were critiqued as the middle class bias of the press [31] agitated for inclusion into the larger white community, chronicled the advancement and failures of the race, and shaped artistic productions of the period in their image.

Black Magazines: the Half-Century and Crisis

A key part of this study is the recovery of the Half-Century, a black magazine that contains images of black women that have not until now encountered sustained analysis, its content long having been dismissed as bourgeois, or reflecting accommodated perspectives. Unfortunately, this labeling circumscribes analysis of this periodical and marginalizes emergent related scholarship. Secondly, this labeling undermines the coherence and structure of the African American literary tradition as it is currently conceived,

[30]See August Meier, "Negro Class Structure and Ideology in the Age of Booker T. Washington." Phylon 23:3 (1962): 258-266, Bart Landry, "A Reinterpretation of the Writings of Franklin Frazier on the Black Middle Class." Social Problems 26:2 (1978): 211-222, Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma (New York: Harper, 1944) 191, Bart Landry, "The Social and Economic Adequacy of the Black Middle Class" in Dilemmas of the New Black Middle Class. ed. Joseph Washington (Berkeley: 1980) 1.

[31]E. Franklin Frazier, The Black Bourgeoisie. (New York: Macmillan 1957) 27.

studied, and taught. The unwitting complicity in the maintenance of a narrowed literary tradition is particularly troubling when one considers the struggle of black peoples to penetrate similarly constructed images of Blacks circulating in mainstream Hollywood media. It is the province of this study to recover magazine images of black middle class women, which will necessitate a reconsideration of the African American literary tradition for, as Cornel West concludes, "the mere addition of African American texts to the present canon without any explicit and persuasive account of how this addition leads us to see the canon anew reveals the worst of academic pluralist ideology. Serious African American literary canon formation cannot take place without a wholesome reconsideration of the canon already in place."[32]

Likewise, we can reconstruct prevailing themes in the Crisis, finding in its short stories meaningful examinations of urban domestic situations and solutions which revise our understanding of the African American literary tradition and African Americans' responses to their environment. For instance, as the Crisis is currently positioned as a journal of the mulatto middle class, the short stories of Marita Bonner, grim urban tales of unhappy female marriage and domesticity, seem out of place. This displacement is pivotal because the Crisis was the preeminent journal of the race and remains one of the most significant and influential literary centers of Harlem Renaissance studies. Therefore, if Bonner's pieces have been treated as atypical of the Crisis in literary scholarship, they have also been treated as atypical of the Harlem Renaissance. This is oddly the

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[32] Cornel West, "Minority Discourse and the Pitfalls of Canon Formation," Keeping the Faith: Philosophy and Race in America (New York: Routledge, 1993) 38.

case although they received literary prizes and Bonner adulation for her work from none less than Crisis editor, W.E.B. Du Bois. Finally, by combining Bonner's images of black women imprisoned in domestic spaces with images presented in the Half-Century, we can begin to recognize how black women writers used figures of black middle class women to revise idealizations of self, home, career, marriage, and motherhood. This reconstituted milieu of black middle class female figures encourages multiple, active, empowered spectatorial reading practices rather than the passive reading practices encouraged by conventional understandings of the Crisis.[33]

This distortion of the African American literary tradition becomes even more unfortunate when one considers the multiple functions of African American literature for African Americans. Literature has been a means through which African Americans convey strategies of how to survive and flourish in an often hostile American landscape. Magazines constitute a vital part of a black civil society that Patricia Hill Collins defines as involving "institutions, communication networks, and practices that facilitate responses to economic and political challenges confronting black people."[34] By limiting the literary canon, these strategies of empowerment and survival that are offered through fictional and

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[33] The thematics of alienation, the search for identity, the tragic mulatto, and double consciousness were the contributions of the black middle class publication Crisis. Muraskin finds alienation and the search for identity as prevailing themes which link stories in the Crisis 1910-1950. "An Alienated Elite: Short Stories in The Crisis, 1910-1950," Journal of Black Studies, 1.3 (Mar., 1971): 282-305.

[34] Patricia Hill Collins, Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998) 23.

editorial content are lost to the people for whom literature has traditionally meant more than entertainment.

However, images of black middle class women appearing in the pages of the Crisis and Messenger magazines, and circulated by male race leaders and race filmmakers do not reflect the changing attitudes of the black female readership. These figures of black womanhood reflect the unhappiness of middle class domesticity, or alternately, convey the images of an erotic supine femininity. Neither magazine offers practical strategies for negotiating adverse life circumstances as a black woman. Rather, fiction and illustrations of women appease a male desire, or work only in the service of the race by foregrounding racism while eliding gender inequalities. Fundamentally, the substantially undifferentiated images of black womanhood featured in these magazines reinforced the value of subordination by targeting racial injustice rather than gender inequalities. This model of racial subordination is embedded in representations of black middle class women. The circulation and repetition of these classed, gendered images throughout various media not only established a façade of variety and consensus about the positive value of this variety, but also offered little in the way of strategies of resistance to all forms of cultural hegemony. In fact, the media saturation of these images of subordinated middle class women created the impression of Black success. Ultimately, Blacks could relax because they had already attained material comfort and the promises of American democracy and citizenship.

Like black theaters, black magazines had the difficult task of appealing to all potential black customers. Unlike white magazines and advertisers that could afford to "disenfranchise" between thirty percent and two-thirds of the American population in their pursuit of the ideal consumer, [35] black magazines had to perform the difficult task of appealing to a black middle class clientele while also attracting the support of the black masses. It achieved this specific and general market coverage by appealing to race, which effectively conflated, however fleetingly, class distinctions. The Half-Century's publisher and primary advertiser, Anthony Overton[36] of the Overton-Hygienic Mfg. Company, appealed to Blacks using the confidential "side-by-side" approach which described the benefits of a product to a specific consumer group, which fostered a sense of exclusivity based on race rather than class. The company advertisement, "We are also manufacturers of the Original High-Brown Face Powder, the first and only face powder made especially for the complexion of our people," [37] associated the manufacturer with its clientele, which heightened consumer identification with Overton products, and established a personal tone. The intimate nature of Overton's 1916 advertisements predates white advertising

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[35]Roland Marchand, Advertising the American Dream: Making a Way for Modernity, 1920-1940. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) 64.

[36]Published by Anthony Overton, a former municipal judge in Kansas and business merchant in Oklahoma, the Half-Century Magazine was a part of a series of business ventures, which included the successful Overton Hygienic Co., a cosmetics firm begun in 1898. Overton's High-Brown toiletries were sold nationally and internationally to countries as disparate as Liberia, Japan, and Egypt. Overton's influence as a cosmetics manufacturer cannot be underestimated. Ads for Overton beauty and cooking products ran in each issue of the magazine. The "High Brown" line of cosmetics included soap, hair-grower, face powder, and talcum powders." Overton's ads coupled with the ads of other black manufacturers were important in treating race pride as a commodifiable product much like American nationalism.

practices of the 1920s.[38]In the case of black magazines especially, the magazine publisher was no longer a "dealer in editorial wares" but a "dealer in consumer groups as well." [39]

It is precisely because Blacks were an untargeted and undesired minority in mainstream magazines, and because white advertisers did not advertise in black magazines,[40] that the Half-Century was able to offer a unique repository of black female images. Black readers hungry for race specific news and images were forced to choose from among available black magazines. Considered by at least one reader as a "composite of the Saturday Evening Post and Ladies' Home Journal"[41] in its appeal and style the Half-Century posited as its objective, in "commonsense language,"[42] the good of "chronicl[ing] the doings of the race as may be of interest to a majority of our readers." Considering itself "A Home Builder," it sought to provide information and advice to both men and women.[43]

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[37] Half-Century Magazine, August, 1916: 11.

[38] White magazines relied on brand name recognition or "announcements" until the 1920s. After the 1920, most white magazines sought reader engagement. Marchand 14.

[39] Theodore Peterson, Magazines in the Twentieth Century (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964) 18.

[40] Theodore Peterson 18.

[41] "Live and Let Live," editorial, Half-Century Magazine, February 1917: 1.

[42] "It will not be our sole ambition to make this magazine a 'literary gem' either for our own gratification or to suit the fancy of the "high brows," but to present facts in plain, commonsense language, so that the masses may read and understand; or, in the words of Brother Taylor, we propose to call a "spade a spade" and not an "excavating instrument for manual manipulation," editorial, Half-Century Magazine, August, 1916: 1.

[43] "If you want to do some real good send the Half-Century to some bride for a year...Or perhaps you know some Sammy who would appreciate a copy...We can't afford to be selfish with the Sammies when they are doing so much for us." "Purposes of the Half Century," editorial, Half-Century Magazine May 1918: 1.

"Look around you, reader and discover if you may, how many of the household articles of general use are made by our people. This is one of the ends and aims of The Half-Century Magazine. We are trying to arouse our people from the throes of our almost criminal lack of alertness."[44] To break this lack of awareness, the magazine carried columns on investing, obtaining business and real estate loans, and developing a business plan as well as profiles of successful businessmen and women.

The Half-Century was explicit in its call for writing: We do not want philosophy, eloquence, science, or weird, fantastic stories of mystery. Instead they advised: "Let [the stories] be full of action, romance, love, sentiment. Let your characters be live, full of wit,-give us a bit of pathos, the glamour of money, and let the whole be easy for the understanding."[45] Advising potential writers that readers were "tired at the end of the day, and would therefore appreciate the diversion and recreation" of the "light, airy and refreshing," [46] political and religious subjects were reserved for editorials alone.

Although the Half-Century placed itself in the company of other nationally circulated black journals, newspapers, and magazines like the Crisis and Chicago Defender, it early distinguished itself from its contemporaries. Editorials emphasized the democratic nature of the periodical by positioning it as organ "by the people, for the people"[47] seeking to be "easy for the understanding."[48] It also

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[44] "The Home Magazine A Home Builder," Half-Century, September-October, 1918: 1.

[45] "How Do You Write?" Half-Century, January 1919: 8.

[46] "How Do You Write?" Half-Century January 1919: 8.

[47] Editorial, Half-Century April 1917: 1.

advertised itself as "the true voice of the black American," and linguistically it set itself apart from other black media by selecting the name "Libranian," derived from the Latin "Liber," meaning free which would be the name used to refer to black Americans. Through the name the editors sought to identify with the progressive, African-centered, independence of black African movements while (re)locating the site of struggle and resistance to the American landscape and the descendants of slaves in a post- Reconstruction nation.[49] The Half-Century recreated the black American in its own image, which was an image of blackness defined by an ability to create sustainable black businesses and generate black wealth, legitimize and consolidate linkages between members of the black community, and to use religion and education as the foundation for action, resistance, and a reclamation of black civil and social rights. The literature is designed to empower the weak while affirming the strong by providing models of black diligence and black achievement.[50]

Whereas the Half-Century had Overton Hygienic as a major national advertiser from its beginning, the Crisis struggled to obtain advertisers that were

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[48] Editorial, Half-Century Jan 1919: 8.

[49] After rejecting Negro, African, Afro-American, and Colored, the following appears: "Both names, [Liberia and Librania], being derived from the same word, are a constant reminder to us and to the Liberians that we are by blood closely related. At the same time the difference in ending serves to distinguish our race in America, the Libraniana, from the citizens of Liberia, who are known as Liberians," "By What Name Shall the Race Be Known," editorial, Half-Century Magazine, November, 1919: 1.

[50] "The Half-Century Magazine occupies a unique and enviable place in the moral and intellectual life of the American Negro. Its tone and quality are unmistakable. Its high souled purposes are beginning to show indelible traces of a nobler principle, in the hearts of our young people, who will foster the swift and determined spirit of an aggressive humanity." "Purposes of the Half-Century," editorial, Half-Century Magazine May, 1918: 1.

not regional, but as national as the magazine. In one year, from 1918 to 1919, revenue from advertisements rose from $6, 000 to almost $12, 000. The high point of the magazine's circulation was reached in the same year. Advertisers included the Dunbar Company, vendor of typewriters, stationary, and books; Columbia which sold records and record playing machines, college and fraternity pins, jewelry, cigars, and sheet music;[51] and Madame C.J. Walker's hair ointments and skin creams.[52] Other advertisers included those of dubious distinction and unfortunately compromised a magazine designed for the progress of the black race, a fact that was ridiculed in the Half-Century.[53]

Without national or local white advertisers to influence content, the Half-Century reflects the unmediated editorial opinion of its black publishers and editors, rather than an assortment of advertisers. Few brand names assaulted the black reader, whose attention therefore remained fixed by the magazine's content. Unlike white magazines which encouraged a culture of consumption,[54] black magazines cautioned women against frivolous spending, extravagant gift giving, and social striving which required costly upkeep. Instead, they featured columns that praised thriftiness with women sharing their economical ways of

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[51] Half-Century Magazine December 1912: 93.

[52] Crisis Vol 14, No 6, October, 1917.

[53] See "That Bleaching Imposition," an editorial that accused an unnamed prominent journal of the race of meeting the race "half way" by carrying advertisements for bleaching creams in its pages. April, 1919: 1. The August 1919 Half-Century notes an improvement in the "wholesomeness" of advertisements appearing unnamed race journals, "A Glance Backward," editorial, Half-Century Magazine August 1919: 1.

[54] By 1908 advertisements consumed 54% of white magazines' pages. Theodore Peterson Magazines in the Twentieth Century (Urbana: University of Illinois Press) 23. Also see Mary Ellen Zuckerman, A History of Popular Women's Magazine's in the United States, 1792-1995 (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1998) 70.

creating inexpensive floor wax and extending the life of clothing through bleaching solutions brewed from overlooked and inexpensive items in the home, to inexpensively fortifying a meal. Black manufacturers of essential goods like hair oils and baking supplies thrived in this environment, as did those who manufactured small items that could be used as inexpensive but race proud gifts. The Half-Century attempted to influence women's behavior as consumers, by targeting the black single and married middle class woman.[55] It used its pages to demonstrate and instruct women in the appropriate and inappropriate objects of desire. While kitchen gadgetry and devices intended to free the homemaker from laborious work were touted in white women's magazines of the day, the precarious economic position of the black family necessitated an ever-vigilant eye toward finances. The Half-Century observed the peculiar vagaries of Blacks' economic condition due to the persistence of racism. It acknowledged the financial imperatives of black families and transformed the careful, private thrift of black women into public even fashionable activities that could be discussed without discomfort, embarrassment, or loss of face.

The magazine also acknowledged and transformed the pressures of running a household into a modern, cosmopolitan activity, and addressed these needs through articles, editorials, columns, and short stories that offered practical advice. It also acknowledged the hitherto unacknowledged agency of black women, which validated and rendered visible the work black women had

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[55] Magazines directed at women emerged at the same time that women were recognized as consumers Mary Ellen Zuckerman, A History of Popular Women's Magazine's in the United States, 1792-1995 (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1998) xii.

traditionally exercised in preserving their families. This practical approach increased the usefulness, appeal, and marketability of the magazine. By addressing the economic and practical concerns of black women, the magazine gave readers a sense of community, modernity, and importance while also meeting their needs for news and up to the minute fashion and adornment.[56] In its advertisements, editorials, and fiction, the magazine helped to set their priorities, patterns of consumption, and public behavior.

The Half-Century was published from 1916-1925 and had a circulation of 47,000 in 1919, which compared favorably with the Crisis's (1910-present) circulation of 94, 000 under W.E.B. DuBois's editorialship[57] in the same year. Asa Philip Randolph's The Messenger, published 1917-1928 was the third largest black magazine in 1919 with circulation averaging between 21,000 and 26, 000.[58] In 1923 Charles Johnson and the National Urban League began publishing Opportunity magazine in New York and circulation steadily increased from 6, 000 to a modest but respectable 11, 000 copies in 1927-28.[59] By 1924 circulation of the Crisis had fallen to 35, 000 while circulation of the Messenger was less than 5, 000 copies. 1925 marked the final year of publication for the Half-Century, which became the weekly Chicago Bee, and the Messenger ceased publication in 1928. Meanwhile, the circulation of the Crisis fell to 30, 000 copies in the 1930s indicating a slump in the circulation of the press in

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[56] Monthly features included "Old Food Served in New Ways" and "What They are Wearing."

[57] W.E.B. DuBois was editor of the Crisis 1910-1940.

[58] Fultz, Michael. "The Morning Cometh" Journal of Negro History, 80.3 (Summer, 1995): 97-112.

[59] Fultz 101.

general, which also included white magazines (Peterson 59). The annual combined circulation of the Crisis, Half Century, and Messenger was 386, 000 in 1919 serving a black population in excess of ten million.[60] Nathan Huggins writes," Each of these magazines saw as part of its role the encouragement of Negroes' work in the arts and the publishing of their achievement for blacks and whites to see. The tone and the self-assurance of these magazines were the important thing. They gave a sense of importance to blacks who read them. They gave answers that had always failed the porter, the barber, the maid, the teacher, the handyman. They were the Negro's voice against the insult that America gave him."[61]

Black Magazine Covers

Magazine covers worked in conjunction with magazine content to influence readers. A survey of seventy-five magazine covers of the Half-Century 1916-1925 reveals thirty-nine cover photographs or sketches of black women. [62] There are nine covers of black men and eighteen covers of babies and children. However there are only two covers that contain black women with children. In one of these covers, a black woman is depicted holding a child while in the

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[60]Comparatively, in 1923 the combined per issue circulation of white magazines was 128, 621, 000 (Theodore Peterson, Magazines in the Twentieth Century (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964) 58-59. According to various estimates, there were 3, 500 white magazines in 1900 and 3, 415 white periodicals in 1920. By 1929 there were 365 white magazines. Theodore Peterson 58-59. Also Zuckerman 26.

[61] Nathan Irvin Huggins, Harlem Renaissance (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973) 30.

[62] Three covers are absent from the Negro Periodical Press archives on microfilm.

second a black woman is depicted standing among children. Similarly, there is a single cover of a black man holding two children. The separation of images of children and adults reflects a similar separation of the stages of matrimony reinforced through the fictional and non-fictional pieces of the magazine. While children are celebrated as objects worthy of desire, the magazine carefully delineates when babies should be introduced into a married couple's life. Matrimony and the purchase of a home necessarily predate parenthood while the establishment of an individual in a career is a necessary prerequisite to the marriage proposal. In some short stories, marriage is deferred until the betrothed couple has saved sufficient monies for the purchase of a home.[63] The stages of marital maturity and the responsibilities associated with each are also reflected in service departments, which offer advice in personal savings, law, etiquette, and cooking. [64]

When black women appear on these covers, they are depicted outdoors and in attire suggesting physical fitness and a modern lifestyle. Women are shown in tennis and golf attire, and displaying their fishing trophies. They are also shown in beachwear at beaches and swimming. Coinciding with the rise in all-black resorts, photographs of blacks at the ocean became increasingly popular from 1917 to 1922 and an increasingly popular way to indicate social status. Another cover depicts a black woman in a boat. While suggesting leisure, the photo implies access to the means by which to own or rent such a

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[63] See Edgar C. Young, "Defeating Stinginess," Half-Century, September, 1919:4.

[64] Other departments include fashion, humor, race news, and reader mail.

possession. When women are depicted indoors, they are placed near windows that overlook gardens, which suggests freedom rather than imprisonment. Likewise, other photographs of women indoors feature subjects who are graced by bridal attire or recital costumes, which signifies their vital connections to family, community, and work.

Upon America's entry into World War I, magazine covers immediately shifted to reflect an American patriotism, and black women are shown as active participants in the war effort. The September 1917 cover of the Half-Century titled "Merciful Radiance" shows a smiling black nurse holding a bottle of medicine. This cover promotes extensive editorial coverage of the war by Kathryn M. Johnson, who traveled to Europe with Black troops and co-authored the book Two Colored Women with the American Expeditionary Forces (1920).[65] The magazine also illustrates a range of activities black women could immerse themselves in which would aid the war effort. For example, the January 1918 cover shows a woman seated by a large window "knitting for the Sammies." [66] The window opens onto a garden, which suggests that although the woman is alone she has chosen to work in service of a similarly individualized soldier who has chosen to serve his country. Her solitary knitting suggests privation and pride, characteristics reflected in the soldier's selfless sacrifice of his life for his

[65] Kathryn Johnson and Addie Hunton were co-authors of the book.

[66] Between 1916 and 1925 there are six covers of men in military uniform, two of black men as Santa Claus, and one of black men playing baseball. There are four covers that depict black men and women as couples, and one of an adolescent boy and girl together. One cover was missing from microfilm.

country. Other means by which women could support the war were described in cooking columns and columns on coal preservation.

Titled "The Keystone of Progress and Prosperity," the April 1918 cover depicts a young lady posed as a statue below an arch upon which are engraved in bold the words "Money," "Economy," "Business," "Co-operation and Race Loyalty," "Courage," "Religion," and "Education." The young lady, "a bronze Athena," is draped in Roman robes and wears a headpiece. In one hand she holds a staff, which, is pointed, in the same direction as her index finger, to the word "Economy." To the right of the woman, at the base of her staff and the pillar on which is engraved the word "Money," is a coiled snake with an outstretched forked tongue. The snake, a traditional symbol of American independence and unity,[67] is transformed into a symbol of race unity and independence, which is reinforced in the April editorial.[68] The companion photo to this cover appears in August 1919 and depicts a black male dressed in nail and mesh armor. In one hand he holds an American flag while in the other, a shield upon which is embossed the words "Race Solidarity." Appearing at the end of the Red Summer of 1919, this cover reflects the racial tensions and demands for citizenship felt by

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[67]Chris Whitten,Gadsden.info. 15 May 2004 <http:// **www.gadsden.info**>.

[68] "In her [bronze Athena's] wisdom she realizes that the race must have money, for in this sordid world, "We bargain for the very graves we lie in," –nothing is given away, and money is indeed an essential. Economy and money go hand in hand, Without Economy, money is of little value, for he who know not Economy will soon part with his early possessions. We must have business enterprises to give employment to our people, since others rarely give us respectable employment, and when they do, they usually offer it to us at a reduced wage. This Goddess of Wisdom knows that we must have Education, that we must be conversant with the peoples and customs of yesterday, if we would profit by their wisdom, and at the same time avoid the snares and pitfalls that caused their downfall. We must keep pace with our contemporaries and be ready and able to make the most of every opportunity that presents itself....But Success and Prosperity will never be ours until we, as a race, learn the value of Co-operation and Race Loyalty. Half-Century Magazine, April, 1918:1.

American Blacks. The images on the cover, the American flag and an African American, also summarize the constituent parts of black identity in America. Magazine content for this issue includes an expose of the race riots and the role of the black press in recording and disseminating information about the riots and their outcomes.

The image of black women constructed by the Half-Century is one that locates the black middle class woman in the center of a well-planned, pleasant, modern life. She is not overwhelmed by her responsibilities, nor do they marginalize her; rather, she is poised in calm approval of her surroundings, which are the fruit of her decisions. Images of leisure connote the culmination of a life of good choices and middle class notions of success. The magazine fashions icons of success that complement stories of independence, agency, action, romance, engagement, and marriage.

The covers of the Half-Century may be contrasted with covers of the Messenger, a magazine that advertised itself as the most radical journal, and which featured covers that were overwhelmingly feature profiles of black women. These women are not depicted as engaging in activity such as swimming or golfing, nor are they depicted in gardens surrounded by flowers. Most frequently women are depicted gazing directly into the camera. The activity of posing for the camera is foregrounded and the act of being on display or the object of display is captured. Additionally, women on the Messenger covers range from white in appearance to beige or "tan," to use the terminology denoting Blacks with skin tone lighter than a paper bag. Even advertisements for Madame C.J. Walker's

hair products that ran in the Messenger contain images of women who are unidentifiably black. These Walker advertisements may be contrasted to Walker advertisements in the Half-Century that depicted discernibly black women. Also, advertisements for products as diverse as life insurance and foot crème in the Messenger feature women in seductive poses. In short, the Messenger that purportedly transcended race and advocated union between labor groups and sought to include women as equal partners in the struggle against capitalist exploitation, continued to perpetuate stereotypical images of black women as sexualized exotics. These images of black womanhood are not only located on the magazine cover but in advertisements and in feature stories which described fraternity and sorority cabarets, and the social activities of spotlighted young ladies. The Messenger's objective in advertising these black women was to extol the virtues of black women. Unfortunately, images of black women circulated in the Messenger reflected Eurocentric standards of beauty.

Comparatively, the National Urban League's Opportunity magazine which began publishing twelve years after the organization's founding, featured women on the cover seven times and men eight times from an abbreviated period from 1923 to 1926. I examined a larger run of the magazine which began publishing in 1923, and discovered that of eighty covers there are twenty covers of women and thirty-one of men. Nativity scenes, children, couples, buildings, and artwork rounded out the number.

Of the covers of women, three address the camera directly, while eight cast their gaze away from the viewer. Reproductions of notable sculpture and

paintings, African masks and artwork of black artists and writers such as Gwendolyn Bennett, Aaron Douglas, distinguish Opportunity from other magazines. The Crisis, on the other hand, featured women on roughly half, forty-five magazine covers out of total of ninety-eight.

An image of black middle class female accomplishment is represented on the cover of the inaugural issue of the Half-Century. Published in August 1916, this issue contains a profile of Mme. Florence Cole-Talbert. Described by both the Crisis[69] and Half-Century as a gifted singer and the "first of her race to take part on the commencement program at the Chicago Musical College in the Vocal Department," the Half-Century goes substantially beyond the Crisis in describing Mme Cole-Talbert's other notable accomplishments. The force of the piece is that she has redefined traditional roles and achieved equilibrium in the personal and professional aspects of her life. The Half-Century goes on to describe Mme. Talbert's scholastic accomplishments: graduation with the highest average in her class at the Chicago Musical College and the completion a four-year program in a single year. Neatly bisecting her scholastic achievements and professional awards is her parentage. The piece also describes the educational opportunities available to the young Ms. Cole as a consequence of her parents' decision to move to Los Angeles, California. Ms. Cole obtained the training and exposure that led to professional recitals throughout "larger cities in the United States and Canada." The article concludes with information about Mme. Cole-Talbert's

[69] The September 1916 Crisis carried an identical photo of Mrs. Cole-Talbert, "The Horizon," September 1916: 244. The accomplishments of Mrs. Cole-Talbert and Mme. E. Azalia Hackley are described in this issue of the Crisis, which appeared one month after the Half-Century's version.

husband, who "accompanies" her on her tours and is distinguished as the son of "ex-Secretary Talbert of Wilberforce, and is also well known as a musician."[70] Mme. Cole-Talbert's mobility, independence, and vocation coalesce on the magazine cover, which effectively ties editorials and fiction together to create a new visual means by which African American women's stories are represented reflecting "the struggle to make articulate a heretofore repressed and silenced African American female's story and voice."[71]

Major Themes in Black Magazine Fiction

Three major themes predominate in black twentieth century women's magazine short stories selected for examination: the negotiation of woman's voice within the domestic realm, a critique of over-consumption, materialism, and decadence (aimlessness or a lack of vocation); the incalculable correctness of hard work, integrity, proper deportment, and family planning. While the first theme applies to the married woman alone, the latter themes apply to both single and married women. Two stories illustrate the themes of finding one's voice, "Sermons in Stones" and "Navy Blue Velvet," which depict the artiste homemaker. The rewards of hard work, proper deportment and thrift are offered in "Honor" and "Little Gray House" which depict the artiste single woman, whereas the contention around women and career, especially when matrimony is involved, is resolved differently in "The Suffragette" and "The Deacon's

[70] The Half-Century August 1916: 9.

[71] Michael Awkward, Inspiriting Influences (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989) 1.

Awakening." "Jack Arrives" demonstrates how hard work and early childbearing impact a young couple, which underscores the importance of family planning.

A critique of aimlessness and materialism appears in the short stories "Prison Bound," "Her Mother's Birthday," and "The Prodigal," which depict the decadent homemaker. A critique of aimlessness and vice in the single decadent woman who transforms herself to an artiste single woman is found in "Who is Responsible?" Likewise, a young bride saves herself from decadence by becoming an artiste homemaker in "Rich Man, Poor Man." "And So Lucille Went to College" and "Rachel" use the black middle class single woman to effectively demonstrate the tragedy of racism, yet in so doing offer images of black women defeated by environment. "There Was a Time" offers a contrasting image of a black middle class single woman who negotiates racism to obtain employment, and personal and professional satisfaction. These stories do not represent all of the fictionalized themes in the Half Century or Crisis magazines from the 1915 to 1935, especially given the number of stories each magazine published.[72] However, these stories reflect how the image of the black middle class woman was shaped by writers and editors and how this image shaped, in turn, the readers' understanding of the life possibilities of black women. These stories conveyed the notion that women had desires that were not fulfilled by domestic homemaking, and encouraged them to pursue their interests. Each magazine featured fiction by various writers; however this examination focuses on several writers whose work appears repeatedly--Anita Scott Coleman, Maggie Shaw

[72] The Half-Century published approximately twenty-four stories per year. The Crisis published approximately fourteen stories per year.

Fullilove,[73] and Marita Bonner. These writers were popular with editors and/or readers for themes they are able to convey, which the editors of the Half-Century found sufficiently meaningful to return to again and again.[74] These authors are worthy of further examination. The stories in this study illuminate types of middle class womanhood over an eighteen-year period.

Beginning with magazine covers that link images of mobile, athletic, refined, and professional black women to personal profiles (and editorial material), which describe their professional accomplishments and marital status, the Half-Century furthers this objective with short stories. These stories describe a new standard of black womanhood that is described by a heightened consciousness in female protagonists, which encouraged a heightened consciousness in readers, or encouraged the use of self-reflexive reading practices. These stories describe characters' struggles to legitimize their personal desires, and chronicle the resistance they encounter as they make adjustments in their lives. Personal happiness is obtained only after they discover their voice and/or vocation and integrate it into their domestic lives. For instance, homemakers are depicted as achieving gratification when they are able to write and care for the home, or articulate their desires to husbands rather than

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[73] The daughter of ex-slaves who vowed that their five children would obtain a college education, Maggie followed her brother, who obtained his law degree from Boston University, and her sister, who completed a master's degree in Hebrew from the University of Chicago, by obtaining a bachelor in music (opera performance) from Shaw College. Unable to obtain professional employment as a classically trained singer, Fullilove offered instruction in piano and taught kindergarten after marrying her fiancé and fellow schoolmate, Robert Fullilove, a doctor and relocating to Yazoo City, Mississippi. In addition to teaching and raising their three children, Mrs. Fullilove became a short story contributor to Half-Century and wrote Who Was Responsible? (G. K. Hall & Company, 1996) xvi.

remain silently unhappy. The Half-Century informs women readers that silent sacrifice on behalf of matrimony is unhealthy and unwise. Ultimately, the magazine cautions, accommodation and subordination of needs will destroy the health of the marriage. Readers are asked to recognize their decision-making ability as well as moments when they surrender choice. If they are unhappy in their marriages, they are held partially responsible, as they have failed to communicate with their husbands and participate as equals in a marriage of equals. While the magazine contains stories that describe the deleterious effects of materialism on family, it is careful to distinguish necessary and prudent spending and sacrifice from needless emotional and spiritual sacrifice. The professional homemaker type does not appear in the Half-Century, which is not surprising given the function of this type, and the images of black women being produced by the magazine.

Magazine Fiction: The artiste and decadent woman

"Blue Navy Velvet," by Maggie Shaw Fullilove appeared in the February and March 1917 issues of the Half-Century. The story chronicles Margaret Harding's growth from a timid housewife to a self-aware woman. She belongs to the group of women who must learn to recognize the legitimacy of their desires rather than allowing themselves to be subsumed by their husbands' desires. Conversely, husbands are held accountable for treating their wives as equal life partners, rather than like children who are subject to their parents' strictures.

[74] Fullilove contributed six short stories to the Half-Century, a figure which was exceeded only by Anita Scott Coleman who contributed eight.

Fullilove describes Margaret who together with her husband lived meagerly not because they had no money, but from habit:

> Her young husband was one of those hardworking sort, economizing almost to the point of stinginess. He had been born in poverty, reared in poverty, and had struggled through his school life-strung to his last notch in order to meet his bills. This ceaseless struggle developed him into one of those men who will go almost naked in order to save money...this quality of his was, no doubt, a sort of virtue while he struggled through school, but now, it had become a sort of vice. Mrs. Harding had fallen in with all his plans-going shabby, scrimping, and saving every nickel. All through the term of child-bearing, Mrs. Harding had been most faithful to her duty. She never hired a maid for any of the five, but attended her babies all by herself in order to save the maid's wages. She managed by skillful economizing, to keep them decently clothed, going almost naked herself in order to accomplish it. She had proven her readiness to fall in with all his plans so well, that Mr. Harding had accepted the situation as a matter of course, and saw her meanly clad from day to day without compunction; with never a thought that underneath her shabby, out-of-style clothes, there beat a heart which longed for pretty things, hungered for dainty silks and soft muslins.
>
> To him-

Life was a meat and bread affair:

Stout clothes and heavy shoes to wear.

To her it meant that and more. She loved a little beauty

thrown in here and there.[75]

Mrs. Harding, Fullilove explains, has also lived a "pinched and self-denying" life that left her bereft of "pretty things which a young girl so loves." With similar economic backgrounds and a practical disposition that carries well into their marriage, Mrs. Harding is amenable to a state of financial economy. It is the devaluation of beauty that causes distress to the young mother, wife, and homemaker. Of her desire to plant flowers in the family garden, her husband exclaims, "I'd rather have cabbage than roses; an onion smells better to me than a violet." And although Mrs. Harding contends that she would "rather have roses sometimes" she "meekly puts down the spade." It is this assent and suppression of self that Fullilove cautions the reader against. This sacrifice is not required, and what's more, it is detrimental to the maturation of the marriage. Mr. Harding later explains that he possessed little knowledge of his wife's desires and so could not be aware of moments when he imposed his will upon hers. Put differently, by failing to articulate her desires Margaret gives the impression that she has none. It is this false transparency that Fullilove critiques.

In an attempt to work within the confines of an imperfect notion of marriage predicated on ongoing sacrifice, Mrs. Harding works day and night at

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[75] Half-Century Feb, 1917: 5.

an undescribed job and saves fifty dollars. Although she has earned this sum, her husband does not ask what she intends to with it; instead, he tells her that he plans to spend it on shoats or fruit bearing trees. She does not utter a word in disagreement, but makes her way to the bank. On the way to the bank, a funny thing happens-she sees *the* perfect "Navy Blue Velvet" suit. The story describes how Mrs. Harding has wanted a navy blue suit for years but despite years careful living she has been unable to afford one. With her children in school, she finally has the time to work for wages through which she has earned fifty dollars. The navy blue suit quickly becomes a symbol of her reward for years of sacrifice for it meets in color and fit the exacting taste of Mrs. Harding, and it also costs the precise sum she carries in her purse.

Mrs. Harding's sole faults are her "meekness" and "timidity," and her single act of resistance up to the purchase of the suit is expressed desire to plant flowers in the family garden. Critically, it is the navy blue suit and the accompanying glace kid shoes, white gloves, and tasteful hat that give Mrs. Harding the strength to stand up to her husband. Or rather, it is the self-validation wrought of her multiple shopping excursions through which she assembles her ensemble, tests her perceptions against salesclerks', and negotiates the marketplace that aid in her transformation. Subsequently, her well-received attendance at a "clean, wholesome moral play" encourages her to take a stand against her husband's vituperation.

> "Stop!" Mrs. Harding rose two inches in her gale kid shoes. She could stand the insult no longer.

"Stop!" she ordered again as he started once more to hurl invectives at her. Then the beautiful outraged woman stood up in her first finery, and gave Mr. Harding a word or two which he never forgot..."I am hungry for something beautiful. I've never had anything I wanted—I'm starved. But I shall hunger no longer—I'll go where I please, and wear what I please!" She turned on the Louise Cuban heels and swept from the room.[76]

The moral to the story is provided: "She should have used more tact in teaching him her desires. A man has little idea what a woman wants. He will provide the things she needs and so long as he seems satisfied, he is content."[77] One emphasis of "Navy Blue Velvet" is material consumption, which validates the black woman's mobility and economic power. Through the purchase of the material, Margaret gains entry into a new social stratum, one in which the patrons of the arts in her small community mingle. Fullilove's stories critique conventional ideas of marriage and beliefs about the necessity and degree of sacrifice that women make to sustain their relationships. It is the sacrifice that women make under the misapprehension that it will strengthen their marriages that Fullilove opposes in her stories.

It is significant that the stories in the Half-Century do not describe sewing as a function of homemaking; rather, the homemaker is depicted as a savvy consumer, prudently selecting and purchasing ready-made clothing and goods

[76] Half-Century, March, 1917: 4&8.

[77] Half-Century: 11.

for family and self. Once Mr. Harding is alerted to his "coarse" ways, he slips in Margaret's room and surreptitiously takes one of her catalogs. He recalls that "a few came before each season," but he has never given her *looking* any consideration. What he finds are hand-written captions beneath pictures of various outfits intended for their children. After selecting outfits for her children, there is only one picture under which Margaret has written "for me." It is a set of furs with a cost of eighteen dollars.[78] With a book of Dunbar's poems selling for $1.75 and a year's subscription to the Half-Century selling for $1.00,[79] Mr. Harding's purchase represents a considerable expenditure, which underscores the value of Mrs. Harding's happiness. The extreme expense of the furs is also used as a narrative detail to highlight Mrs. Harding's extreme sacrifice.

"Sermons in Stones" focuses on the life of the young black female homemaker and would-be journalist who realizes her ambition, which is symbolic of her acquisition of voice.[80] It also addresses the dissatisfaction of her husband who feels threatened by her career. Like Maggie of "Navy Blue Velvet," Evelyn is unsatisfied with her life. Although both women are married and love their husbands dearly, both have desires that find no outlet in their domestic lives.

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[78] Adjusted for inflation, in 2002 these furs would cost $243. Likewise, Margaret's suit would cost $676.

[79] Sept 1917:1.

[80] "In truth, the story with a few changes in characters and setting is but the exact record of Mrs. Fullilove's own experiences as a writer-Evelyn being none other than she herself; and Lionel, her long-suffering patient husband-poor Dr. Fullilove!-who is a successful practicing physician instead of a farmer. But notice how interestingly Mrs. Fullilove can write of something with which she is most intimately acquainted! Her story-which is nothing less than a story within a story-is a practical demonstration of the sermon she is trying to preach" "How Writest Thou?" Half-Century May 1917: 1.

While for Maggie it is a desire for beauty and the arts, for Evelyn it is a desire to write which has also propelled her through a degree in journalism. The problem, as the newly married Evelyn conceives it, is there is nothing inspired about the "one horse town" from which her husband Lionel has come and to which they have relocated. However, she is a woman of conscience, steadfast, and loyal, which is earlier proven by her refusal to marry another suitor whom, although wealthy and promising a life of excitement and travel, she does not love. Rather than give herself to a marriage of convenience, Maggie rejects his proposal and accepts one from Lionel who was also her college sweetheart. Afterwards, she returns with Lionel to his hometown where he will farm. While she does not regret her decision and thinks kindly of the gentle townspeople, she is dulled by the town's "humdrum way of living" and unable to write.[81] This inability causes Evelyn considerable distress for writing is her raison d'etre. Evelyn is compelled by an "inward craving told her that writing was her vocation."[82] While Maggie's suppressed desire for art and beauty is manifested in the navy blue suit, Evelyn's desire is manifested in the desire to introduce her ideas to the literary marketplace.

Significantly, Evelyn's stories are not meant for her personal consumption to be written and hidden in notebooks for her private perusal. Rather, she writes with the conviction that her stories have an audience and that seeing her stories in print to be read by others will reward her efforts. Fullilove describes Evelyn's

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[81] May 1917: 4.

[82] May 1917: 4.

heartwrenching attempts to write fanciful stories of travel and leisure of which she has no knowledge, and the consequent letters of rejection she receives from publishers. She first tries her hand at writing a sophisticated tale of romance in the city, but her tale lacks the authenticity of a cosmopolitan traveler. Discouraged from the repeated rejection of her manuscript, Evelyn begins to despair of her life and surroundings. Eventually she recognizes the inspirational quality of rural life.

Fullilove's story also engages the male response to a woman with needs that are not fulfilled by the home or homemaking. This depiction, like the realization of Mr. Harding, exposes the socially constructed myth that domesticity is inherently fulfilling to women. This short story offers equally useful depictions of conflicts by spouses such as Lionel. Despite their college romance and simultaneous graduation, and Lionel's initial attraction to Evelyn based on her dedication to her craft, there nevertheless "existed an under-current of foreboding and anxiety whenever he thought about her career. Somehow it seemed to come between them."[83] Shortly after they are married, she resumes writing, but he thinks, "He wanted her all to himself just a little bit longer."[84]

> Although Lionel is weary and impatient, he remains committed to Evelyn: Lionel, whose patience was nearly worn to a frazzle, went about the house like one distracted-fearing to breathe or cough lest he break into her thoughts and spoil the wonderful story. He, too, had caught the spirit of

[83] Half-Century: 4.

[84] Half-Century: 18.

> the thing...Late in the night when from sheer fatigue she did stop writing, they would build air-castles out of the money which the story would bring. They would go away to the city and live a grand life-have many servants to do the drudgery of house-keeping—and Evelyn would write, write, write—and the money would flow.[85]

In quick succession, several events transpire that cause Evelyn to become conscious of her neglect of her home. However it is not the rejection of her manuscript by another set of magazine editors, nor awakening the next morning to see a filthy stove that has not been cleaned in weeks or mounds of dirty dishes and laundry which Lionel has been too tired to wash after long days of farming. Evelyn simply circumvents these loads of dirty items. It is the breakfast of rice and gravy, biscuits, and bacon that Lionel has carefully prepared and left for her that causes Evelyn to perceive her home anew: "The sight of it, the thought of his big loving heart, the thought of her sad neglect of her young husband these many days smote her heart with remorse."[86] With his example before her "pride, self-reliance, and determination came trooping to her relief." She devises a method for cleaning their home and she is inspired by the sheer volume of work to share her housekeeping pointers with women who appreciate her energy and time efficient household hints. Her journal is syndicated and women are genuinely assisted by her methods. "Sermons in Stones" describes a young homemaker who realizes her ambition.

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[85] June 1917: 5.

[86] June 1917: 5.

While the "cult of domesticity" reinforces roles of unpaid female labor and female gratification from housework, African American short stories reinforced images of black female empowerment. "Sermons in Stones" stresses the importance of satisfying personal ambition even at the risk of initial domestic tension. Fundamentally, the stories reassure readers that husbands are concerned with their wives' welfare and would benefit from the kinds of changes depicted in "Sermons" and "Navy Blue Velvet." Lionel provides an example of a supportive spouse who also stands to benefit from the popularity of Evelyn's stories-he too dreams of a life of leisure and excitement. Lionel models behavior for a black male readership.

The negotiation of a women's voice within the domestic space of home is also depicted in Marita Bonner's short story, "Prison Bound." Marita Bonner (1899-1974) describes the woman at home without a life, friends or female community, or vocation, in her aptly titled short story "The Prison-Bound"(September, 1926). In this story Maggie improvises silent conversations with women passersby she sees through her greasy fourth floor tenement window. Although she has lived in the North for more than six years, her southern "countrified" ways, naïveté, and husband's frequent reminders that she "ain't never been higher than the fifth grade in Dexter County Schools," and "This ain't down home,"[87] undermine her already fragile self-confidence. Bonner describes the alienation of the "unhomely" tenements of the North in which blacks were forced to live, but which exacerbated isolation and alienation. These

[87] Half-Century: 5.

tenements were a product of the miasma of racism, which is symbolized by the grease that emanates from the walls of each tenement kitchen. Its female inhabitants engage in a Sisyphean cycle of daily cleaning, which nevertheless fails to eradicate the problem: their powerlessness. Maggie's solution is expressed by her desire to move: "she wished that they could get up. Move up"[88] rather than "squatting" in miserable, decaying surroundings with absentee landlords. Unfortunately, she does not have the financial resources to move or the emotional resources to make an argument for moving, and Charlie has grown accustomed to tolerating the indignities of this urban, Jim Crow life. Indifferent to his condition and her suffering, he is "blind like a mole" while she wished to be "a leaf greening, drinking in the sun. Shaking on a thread of stem."[89]

Describing an insular, fat, and greasy husband whose inattention borders on cruelty, much like Reverend Green of Nella Larsen's Quicksand to be published two years later in 1928, "The Prison-Bound" is a psychological sketch that describes the furtive thoughts of a black woman that are contrasted to the failure to act whether by word or action in her life. Maggie psychologically resists Charlie's efforts to completely isolate her from a female community by fashioning an imaginary community of black women to whom she responds through the expressions of their eyes: "But she looked and held silent talks with the women who passed. Watched each one as she passed. Talked gaily to her if her eyes were gay. Talked soothingly and peacefully if their eyes stared through

[88] Marita Bonner, "Prison-Bound," Crisis, Sept 1926, 32: 5, 225.

[89] Marita Bonner, 226.

everything and saw nothing. Told the women who passed below her things about herself too."[90] These one-sided conversations partially mitigate the deafening silence that characterizes her life. Bonner emphasizes the control Charlie exerts over Maggie's life and Maggie's acquiescence to this control to demonstrate Maggie's complicity in her own subordination. Maggie's failure to "talk" leaves her no talking cure, and no allies.[91] Bonner places literary emphasis on these moments of surrender, which are marked by internal dialogue. Maggie questions herself: "Why didn't she say something? If he asked a question she acted like she had to get her mind together to answer. And then she only said, 'Yeah-!'[92] Knowing her submission is destructive she thinks women were "supposed to be soft, but not so soft you could not a rock through them without their saying a word" (Bonner 226). Just as Maggie is complicit in her self-silencing,[93] she also allows her husband to intrude upon a potential alliance in the form of a black female neighbor, failing to recognize his derogatory comments as manifestations of his insecurities and jealousy at her potential female friendships.

The story concludes with Maggie drying her tears and resolving to wash the dishes and wipe up some of the grease, which is to say, re-immersing herself in futile activity that will not result in her liberation. While she hopes that

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[90] Bonner, 226.

[91] See Zora Neale Hurston's depiction of the female relationships in Their Eyes Were Watching God. Janie tells Phoebe "My tongue is in my friend's mouth," signifying the spoken and unspoken bond between black women, which acts as a support as well as a buffer against negative influences.

[92] Bonner 67.

tomorrow will be better, Bonner implies that it will not. Likewise, Larsen concludes Quicksand with Helga's fourth pregnancy in three years and the suggestion that she has surrendered her body and quite possibly her will to survive her unacceptable condition.

Bonner's story underscores the failure of black women to acknowledge or articulate their desires. While this story is similar to stories and sketches appearing in the Half-Century, which also emphasized the importance of communicating one's desires, the pessimism of Bonner's narrative intrudes upon the optimism of the Half-Century's. While the Half-Century magazine strove to emphasize the importance of vocation and for those who were homemakers the significance of creating a happy, pleasant home, the Crisis depicts the profound hopelessness and alienation of black middle class women in northern cities. Bonner's story is an important vehicle for the Crisis. It demonstrates the tangible effects of segregation and racism in the form of dirty tenements in which Blacks were forced to live should they desire to work in the urban North. The story also exposes the unhappy lives of those who attempted to achieve happiness through traditional means, or marriage. In the story's failure to romanticize married life or signal a change in the protagonist's consciousness concerning her condition, the reader is denied catharsis. Unlike the Half-Century, which demonstrates to the reader how individual women's lives have been improved through small changes in their lives, the stories in the Crisis hesitate to show optimistic, happy endings that could in any way misrepresent the impact of racism. For this reason, stories

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[93] In her essay "On Being Young-A Woman-and Colored" Bonner equates silence and waiting with woman: "So-being a woman-you can wait...Perhaps Buddha is a woman," she continues,

in the Crisis may be divided into two types: those which validate African culture and act as correctives to racist images, and those which depict the impact of racism in black people's lives.

The previous three stories depict two artiste homemakers and a decadent homemaker. While the Half-Century's "Navy Blue Velvet" and "Sermons and Stones" describe women who successfully define themselves outside the socially constructed roles of wife and mother and in the process successfully transform husbands, and achieve personal and marital happiness, the Crisis's "Prison Bound" describes a woman who fails to develop alternative models of companionship or an empowered self. While "Navy Blue Velvet" and "Sermons in Stones" encourage new definitions of black womanhood, "Prison Bound" does not. Taken together, images of black middle class women in the pages of the Half-Century and Crisis are literary representations of black women that encourage a range of reading positions.

The Half-Century also depicts decadent women; however, these short stories focus on how these women turn their lives around. The image of the artiste homemaker is described in Anita Scott Coleman's short story "Rich Man, Poor Man" in which a wealthy young lady transforms her position as daughter and potentially decadent homemaker into a new role of businesswoman. In so doing she actualizes a marriage based on equality and partnership rather than on inequality and economic dependence. Significantly, Coleman's story describes how black women can be essential to the progress of the race while simultaneously acknowledging how economic racism and trenchant gender

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since both are "motionless on the outside" Crisis, December 1925: 65.

pressures hold black men responsible for the economic insolvency of the black family. Drusilla Evans is the only child of the town's most prosperous black merchant whose wealth is accumulated through "shrewd industriousness." As the paragon of a race man, Daniel Evans's home is a salon of intellectual debate as his friends and their wives engage in debates pitting "race men" against "race women." In a particular conversation that influences Drusilla's perception of middle class women's work, one of the women accounts for the persistence of black women in the labor force as proof of black men's lack of effort and ambition. She comments, "Now men, you know...Our menfolk are slack about letting their wives work." In the men's reply are revealed the two prongs of racism: black men's labor is devalued in the marketplace, which renders their pay a "mere pittance," and black women receive work readily.

Influenced by the opinions of her father's friends who feel that she will marry an affluent man, Drusilla determines that when she marries, "my man is going to take care of me." However, Drusilla falls in love with a man who is not wealthy. Energized rather than depressed by their close economy, Drusilla finds ways to pare their living expenses even further, and negotiate many of their food and utility costs. With her newly developed business acumen, she recognizes an opportunity to purchase a small bakery and does so by selling her wardrobe of clothing purchased as a wedding gift from her parents. Although her parents' gifts are intended to envelop the young bride in a middle class material surrounding, Drusilla's ability to recognize the greater investment potential of real estate marks her business savvy. Drusilla's actions permit the couple to

supplement their income, and ultimately become independent business owners rather than work in the employ of others. Coleman demonstrates how Drusilla adopts but later rejects the model of middle class women as dependent homemakers. By challenging notions, in this case circulated by black women, Coleman critiques the complicity of black women in their continued subordination.

Magazine Fiction Themes: Family Planning and Education

In "Jack Arrives," Coleman emphasizes the importance of hard work, integrity, and faith in one's ability. She also depicts the vagaries of racism and the difficulties placed on a young couple by having a child before establishing themselves comfortably. Jack's position at the firm of Soars, Contractors and Builders is obtained after he successfully completes a course of study at the Maxwell Mechanical Arts School. Affable, proficient, and a hard worker, his marriage to Clarice Winston was just stronger confirmation to friends and workmates that "he was bound to be successful." When the young couple has a son their financial position becomes precarious because the paycheck which was "fair for the head of a newly made family of two...would not pay if the family increased." Increase it did, which disturbs the equilibrium of the family and causes marital distress and tension, and which culminates in the eventual loss of his job. The young family must separate while Jack searches for employment, but "his nut-brown face, his black friendly eyes and his big smiling mouth were

more potent than leprosy."[94] Eventually, Jack wins a contest for a new and original blueprint for a bungalow. The $10, 000 prize money permits him to return home and the family to be reunited. The story ends not with an overwhelming sense of this financial windfall, but with the opportunity it provides of allowing Jack to provide for his family. Coleman concludes: "Now and then he laughed-not the hearty, exultant laughter of him who wins, but the softened throaty laugh of one who loves and yearns, for memories both sweet and fragrant surged through him as his thoughts flashed back and away to where Clarice and Junior beckoned and called him."[95]

An often-repeated theme in the short magazine fiction is women's self-reliance and independence. In "Honor"[96] Caroline refuses the advances of Big Bill who is indolent and a bully. For her good deed of caring for her ailing grandmother and remaining largely to herself, she develops the reputation of being conceited. Nevertheless, she perseveres until her grandmother dies and a flood threatens her life. Rescued by Big Bill, Caroline offers him her life, which he refuses. Humbled by her sense of gratitude and realizing his mistake in judging her as conceited rather than private and chaste, he becomes her greatest supporter as she moves on to matriculate at college. Lillian Beverton Mason illustrates through Caroline that one should persevere through adversity, drawing from one's inner strength. Caroline is never depicted as questioning her ill fortune or accepting it as her lot; rather, she continues to care for her

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[94] Anita Scott Coleman "Jack Arrives," Half-Century Feb 1920: 5.

[95] Anita Scott Coleman "Jack Arrives."

grandmother. Upon her grandmother's death and though alone in the world, Caroline realizes her ambition by enrolling in college.

"And So Lucille Went to College" by Charles Carson depicts the nearly impossible feat of obtaining a college education exerted by Lucille, a young maid. Believing a college education a means to a better life, Lucille enrolls in evening classes. However, she finds herself ill prepared and the object of ridicule to her fellow white classmates for she, unlike previously enrolled Blacks, is female and underprepared. Despite hours of intensive study following her physically demanding job cleaning homes, she falls further and further behind in her academic work. Ultimately she succumbs to exhaustion in the indigent section of a charity hospital while her boyfriend, finally understanding her motivation, attempts to give her the distinction in death that she sought in life. "And So Lucille Went to College" is a poignant tale describing how racism irreparably alters the life opportunities of young Blacks, for although Lucille strives, she is too far behind her white classmates to catch up.

These two stories illustrate the value and cost of obtaining a college education. While an education is a means by which black women can rise in social and economic class, these stories also depict how each woman suffers ostracism from friends, family, and/or community as a result of her educational pursuit. In this respect, both narrators depict the double struggle of women who must negotiate direct racism in the form of adversarial white instructors and classmates as well as the indirect effects of racism, which manifest in the self-

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[96] July 1931, 40: 7, 229.

hatred of Blacks, and which polarizes family members, intimates, and socio economically similar Blacks.

Magazine Fiction: The Artiste

In a story which appeared in a November 1916 issue of the Half-Century, "The Suffragette," a young black woman, Janet West, a student at Fisk University returns home to Chicago and proceeds to "interest all her friends in the cause of suffrage" and convert "all the women in the Eureka Club and many others besides, but she was not content with that, she wanted every woman of her race in town, to be a suffragette."[97] She challenged "the men of the entire city to debate against the women of the Eureka Club. But for some cause or other, the challenge went unanswered." In a fit of frustration, her ex-fiancé, declares his willingness to debate his ex-fiancé, who will no longer marry him because the more she thinks about "woman's proper place in the world, the less [she] believe[s] in marriage." She continues, "Marriage is all right for some women, but I am not a parasite, and therefore cannot consent to let some man support me and boss me all my life."[98] In the end she wins the debate but decides that "Careers may be for some women" "but this [the home] is my proper place."[99]

In a comparable one act play, "The Deacon's Awakening" written by Willis Richardson, Eva and Ruth two twenty-two-year-olds and students at Howard

[97] Half-Century, November 1916: 6.

[98] Half-Century, November 1916: 6.

[99] This story was written by Bettie Mason.

University, a historically black university in Washington D.C., work for the pro-suffragist cause. The women of the Jones household are secretly allied in the pro-suffragist cause from the forty-five year old Martha, mother of Eva and wife of Dave who is endorsed by the playwright as "an intelligent colored woman...looking as neat as her surroundings," and "different from most housewives (whose work never ends), in that she always keeps ahead of her work, and for this reason has time to read between luncheon and dinner"[100] to her young daughter.

The play reveals Martha's intelligence and firm, reasoned control of her household as her husband Dave and the clergy plot to interrupt the meeting of the suffragists during which Ruth is scheduled to give a speech. Without Mr. Jones's knowledge, Mrs. Jones has politically and economically supported the suffragist cause. And though the men, finding their daughters' active participation in the suffragist cause, vociferously denounce women's suffrage and withdraw them from school, Mrs. Jones reprimands the men and explains women's concerns about which the men know little:

> You men seem to have the wrong idea about women. You think our minds never go further than cooking and darning socks; but you're very much mistaken. We think about other things the same as you do. The time has passed when women are willing to be considered merely as parts of the house, and you men might as well get your minds right on that point. ("Deacon's Awakening" 14)

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[100] Crisis Nov 1920:10.

When the men complain that it is not "right" for women to vote and obtain "positions of importance" she responds, "You cut a girl's opportunity off, then whine when a girl child is born instead of a boy."[101]

Whereas in the Half-Century the story ends with the capitulation of Jane West who abandons being a "career" woman to become a homemaker, "The Deacon's Awakening" concludes with the men's changed opinions concerning women's roles, and opportunities for women. On the other hand, written a full four years after "The Suffragette," "The Deacon's Awakening" is somewhat less courageous than the former, and the latter reflects a more unanimously accepted perspective on women's suffrage in 1920, coming on the heels of World War I, which witnessed the participation of women as nurses abroad and increased women's presence in the American workforce.

"The Deacon's Awakening" appears in the tenth anniversary issue of the Crisis, one which focuses on suffrage. It contains an opinion piece titled "Suffrage" which is followed by a piece titled "The Election," which reminds the reader of the importance of the black vote. On the page immediately preceding the play and following the election piece is a facsimile of a ballot for presidential and state election and instructions to familiarize the reader with completing their ballot.

Ownership of property is the theme behind "The Little Gray House," written by Anita Coleman. Like Jacobs who revises the slave narrative to expose the persistent hardships in the life of a single black mother with two children in

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[101] Crisis November 1920: 15.

the North and without a hearth, Coleman exposes the difficulties of life for single black women. Unlike Bonner's women who are single though saddled with children,[102] or married but without vocation,[103] Coleman depicts young black women who are employed and have ambition.

In "The Little Grey House," Opal is depicted as an industrious and thrifty young woman who is single and practical. After her father's death and careful planning, she is able build a little grey house with the intention of renting it until she is able to pay off the mortgage. Unfortunately and though no fault of hers, the house does not appeal to any renters and Opal, in an unforeseen turn of events, finds herself unemployed. She resolves to sell the house, which is purchased by the very same man who has gaily greeted her every evening. Unaccustomed to the attention of men and reclusive by habit due to the social isolation fostered by her father, she misreads his gaiety as ridicule. Surveying his new home, Timothy finds her quietly crying at the kitchen table due to the apparent loss of her dream: to own a home.

Coleman's story also conveys the importance of work to Opal. Although a judge and his family have employed her as a cook, she recalls the position as one in which she was treated with respect and as an equal. Ill-fortune greets her when her employers suddenly change their plans and decide to relocate after she has purchased the little grey house. The reader is prepared for Timothy and

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[102] See "The Whipping," Frye Street and Other Environs (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987) 185-195.

[103] See "Prison Bound" and "Hate is Nothing," Frye Street and Other Environs (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987) 158-176.

Opal to marry, since their values match.[104] Marriage is incidental to the plot, which is focused instead on a woman's dreams of property ownership and family.

The Decadent Woman

However, the bulk of the stories in the Half-Century caution the homemaker and the single woman against decadence, which includes the pursuit of pleasure, materialism, unscrupulousness, aimlessness, and/or the loss of equilibrium in her life. "Her Mother's Birthday" (1916) is typical of these short stories, which caution women against pursuing the chimerical pleasures of the fast life. Tired of eking out a meager existence as the wife of a newly minted though poor young doctor, Mrs. Harding encourages her husband to "run the road" as a railroad porter.[105] When he refuses, Mrs. Harding abandons him and her only child, Retta. Mr. Harding explains to Retta years later, "she was lonesome and pretty, and she didn't like children, so she went away."[106] Twenty years later Mrs. Harding returns to her home as a stranger seeking medical attention:

> She was handsome, too, yet she wore a look of weariness. Her clothes were cheap and gaudy; closer observation showed that some of her good

[104] The story describes how Timothy has wanted to purchase the home since he saw it under construction. He despairs when he sees that it is for rent and not for sale since, looking at it, he sees that it is perfect for the family he would one day like to have. As Anna is crying at the table, both compare their visions of what the family who owned the house should have been like. When Timothy reveals that he is the new homeowner, it is clear that their visions of matrimony, children, and work have coalesced in the grey house.

[105] Half-Century, January 1917: 4.

[106] Half-Century, January 1917: 4.

looks were artificial; underneath her make-up, the cruel light showed great blotches on her yellow skin, and if Retta had been better acquainted with the people of this world, she would have noticed the unmistakable stains from cigarettes on her fingers.[107]

Although Retta does not recognize her mother before her, she places roses on the table in silent memoriam of her mother's birthday, which has become a day of private remembrance for the family. When the stranger remarks that it is her very own birthday too, Retta thinks it a happy coincidence and encourages her to wait to see the doctor, who has been called away on business. Instead Mrs. Harding flees before she is detected and her shame remains concealed from her daughter. However, the reader apprehends the moral of the story that implies that the stranger has spent her youth chasing foolish dreams and is now older, impoverished, and alone.

The second story in this group is also a cautionary tale, but one that describes the vice that single and married black women may become subject to in the urban-Northeast. By portraying how the considerable tensions under which the black family labor are infinitely compounded by racism, the parents' efforts to earn a living while protecting their young daughters appears nothing short of heroic in "The Prodigal," which appeared in the Crisis.[108] Anna and Hal Brown understand the vulnerability of their young black daughters in the South, which prompts their flight North. Upon relocating, however, they encounter new

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[107] Half-Century: 4.

[108] "The Prodigal" by Laura D. Nichols, Crisis Sept, 1931: 302-303.

hardships in the form of discrimination in employment that prevents Hal from obtaining a teaching position.[109] As a husband and father, Hal makes the difficult decision to return to the South where he has been employed full time as a teacher and can support the family financially rather than remain in the North where he can only earn a menial and unpredictable wage as a railroad worker.[110] As a wife and mother, Anna, decides to face the financial hardship of life in the North preferring to "wash and iron and be free than to have [her] children grow up in the South."[111] Like Lutie Smith in Ann Petry's The Street, Anna determines that a move "home" is counterintuitive; home is a hostile location. And while both women make a choice that is in the best interest of their children, both only find themselves and their children endangered.[112]

Anna enters into a relationship with "rough" Lige Pierce believing that she can control the outcome of the relationship. However, when she sees him silently appraising Ester, her daughter, she realizes her folly: "Lige's hungry eyes rested, not on the familiar form of the woman, but on the slim, brown girl at her side. Esther, still unconscious of the charm of youth's first rounding out, felt his look, and flinched. Anna saw it with her smiling eyes, and the glint of steel veiled her smile."[113] Unlike Mrs. Harding who has been away from her husband for

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[109] He is offered low-paying jobs in manual labor.

[110]Nichols 303.

[111]Nichols 303.

[112] Also see Marita Bonner's "The Whipping," Frye Street and Environs (Boston: Beacon Press, c1987) 185.

[113] Nichols 302.

fifteen years, Anna has maintained contact with her husband during their three-year separation. On the day that she witnesses Lige's look, Anna sends a three-word telegram to her husband: "Home next Sunday." Until that day Anna has found no reason to return to the South, she is no more protected than her daughters and she cannot protect her daughters. The irony is that Anna has unwittingly brought danger into her own home. Against the undefined but nonetheless real threat of sexual exploitation by white men to her daughters and herself, Anna "decides" to return south. Laura Nichols reveals the limitations on choice for black women who must negotiate sexual and racial exploitation daily. Anna's return South signifies a reunion of the family, but against a larger backdrop of racial, sexual, and economic violence to both black women and black men. These two stories demonstrate the consequences of homemaker's personal choices, which function to warn readers of the long-term effects of their decisions, especially as mothers. Whereas "Navy Blue Velvet" and "Sermons in Stones" focus on the black homemaker as an individual and depict positive solutions to their problems, "Her Mother's Birthday" and "The Prodigal" focus on the black homemaker in her role as mother and depict the ramifications of mothers' actions on their children. These four stories reinforce the values of home and the black woman's centrality in the creation of a healthy and safe home environment.

"Geraldine's Bargains," the first story to critique overconsumption and materialism in the Half-Century, appears in the magazine's third issue in October of 1916. The short story describes the many purchases of a housewife who is

keeping up with the Joneses. Her consumption is so unreflective that she finds herself purchasing objects that she does not care for but that are "bargains." Whereas materialism is critiqued to illustrate the dangers of overspending in the Half-Century, it is not materialism but the inability to shop, as the consequence of racism, that is the purpose of the Crisis short story "The Bewitched Sword."[114] Mary has been a little frayed and shabby and consequently has stayed away from her friends when she discovers a five dollar bill in her purse. Thinking immediately of a fancy new hat that she has seen advertised at Marshall's that is exactly five dollars, she makes her way downtown. Finding the hat a perfect fit, she purchases it. Consumed by thoughts of the sensation it will make, she takes a seat on the train only to have a white woman refuse to sit next to her. Her reverie is interrupted as the occupants of the public transport silently hold her unworthy of the seat she occupies. She disembarks disturbed, her mood completely changed by this encounter. Morehead depicts a young lady who is preoccupied with the superficialities of dress and public perception. However, the story's main theme is to emphasize the light-heartedness of Mary who can dream inconsequential little dreams of fashion as she makes her way to the store thinking only of the purchase of a fancy new hat and the sensation it will cause among her set. "The Bewitched Sword" underscores the racism that interrupts this otherwise permissible girlish pleasure. Simultaneously, the author refers to

[114] Ola Calhoun Morehead, Crisis, Vol 29, No 4, Feb 1925: 166-7.

the necessary work that need be done to combat the discrimination of segregation in the North as well as Jim Crow in the South.[115]

The final three stories to be considered here depict how different choices impact the outcome of the single woman's life. In the first story of this group, a decadent protagonist recognizes the negative influence she has exerted on others. She uses this recognition to fashion a new life for herself that is founded on education and outreach. "Who was Responsible?" is ostensibly a story about the evils of alcohol, by Maggie Shaw Fullilove. Miss Grace King is a socialite who becomes a temperance leader after one of her male suitors becomes a drunkard and dies. Fullilove depicts Grace's responsibility in introducing Robert, who has been protected against these influences by his father, to alcohol during one of her soirees, and it is Fullilove's contention that it is in the hitherto sacred realm of the home that the drunkard is made:

> Miss Grace knew deep down in her heart that the disreputable rum-hole or saloon in the cheaper districts of the city is not the chief place which is responsible for the creation of the "drunken sot"; but it is at the so-called respectable bar, the fashionable rooms at these big hotels, the cafes at men's clubs, the harmless beverages always served at social gatherings in the homes of respectable

[115] The young, adventuresome spirit of youth is exemplified in Eric D. Walrond's "Cynthia Goes to the Prom" (Opportunity, November 1923: 342. In this tale, which confronts the color line from a new angle, Cynthia, a vivacious, precocious, gregarious high school student dares to attend her high school prom. Popular among Whites and Blacks, Cynthia has been until this event welcome in all circles winning even the most resolutely anti black whites into her favor.

> people-these are the places that are really responsible for the wrecks that are "drunken sots." They invariably get the beginning of their downfall at one or all of these high places before, in the end, they are seen frequenting the low saloons.[116]

Grace King is a socialite whose excesses influence Robert Andrew, causing him to drink and to eventually die. However, rewriting the responsibility of Eve for Adam's fall, Fullilove explores the shared responsibility for John Andrew's death, and chronicles the gradual realization of each person in his downfall. Foremost among these people are the saloonkeeper who sells Robert alcohol and prepares liquor laced drinks to nurse the ill young man.

Magazine Fiction: Decadent Woman and Artiste

Jessie Fauset and Angelina Grimke place figures of educated single black women at the center of the next two pieces of fiction, which reached the public within a year of each other. The protagonists in both stories negotiate similar circumstances yet the outcomes are vastly different, which reflects growing differences in literary objectives at the Crisis.

Moments before the twenty-two-year-old namesake of the play Rachel (1920) rejects her suitor by "falling" into a dementia, she utters the words: "You're too good to me."[117] Her verbal play contradicts her actions, highlighting her effort to perform and yet resist the identity she has been given by family and society.

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[116] Maggie Shaw Fullilove, Who was Responsible? (New York: G. K. Hall & Company, 1996) 132.

[117] Angelina Grimke, Rachel (College Park, Md.: McGrath, 1920) 6.

Set in "a northern city" during "the first decade of the Twentieth Century" playwright Angelina Grimke elaborates madness as the sole "choice" for black women in the urban north. A veiled satire, Grimke details the absence of opportunity in Rachel's life. Although graduating at the top of her class, the young woman is unable to find employment and watches with despair as her lesser-qualified white female classmates secure employment with ease. Fundamentally, Grimke's narrative turns on the black female's exclusion from the workplace, and elaborates the ramifications of this singular occurrence. Isolated by race and marginalized by gender, Rachel finds the notion of opportunity an outgrowth of an economic hierarchy through which benefits accrue to whiteness and maleness. Positioned at the bottom of this capitalist matrix, Rachel's "choice" consists of accepting a proposal of marriage. Rachel remarks: "It's lucky for me that I love to keep house, and cook, and sew. I'll never get anything else."[118] Yet beneath the apparent cheeriness of Rachel's acceptance is a silent desperation that cannot be betrayed by words.[119] Not only is Rachel disabled in the marketplace and in speech, but also in the domestic arena where, ironically, her oppression is compounded. As the wife of an economically devalued black male who can only find employment as a waiter, although he is college educated, and

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[118] Grimke 50.

[119] Rachel's visible lack of emotion (disappointment, frustration) is not a sign of her complacency; rather, it is a result of her mother's training. Whereas Tom, Rachel's brother, is permitted to express anger and disappointment, Mrs. Loving (Rachel's mother) directs Rachel to "wipe your eyes and smile. That's only an imitation smile, but it's better than none" (14). Rachel's words are frequently met by Mrs. Loving's responses which are typified by: "I wonder if you are ever going to grow up and be ladylike"(4), "don't be silly, Rachel", "What ridiculous language you do use, Rachel"(5); "Rachel, you do use such violent language"(18); "Oh hush! Little girl. Hush!" 28)

as mother of black children whose professional and educational training will be rewarded by economic marginalization, the safety promised by the marital union is exposed as fantastical.

The lynching of her father and brother that predates the action in the play accounts for the family's precarious emotional and financial condition. Rather than become as dependent on a husband as she and her mother have become on the lone male in their family, Rachel elects "madness" over marriage. Grimke creates a narrative space through which agency is perverted though possible, and in effect, editorializes the negligible choices available to black women in the hitherto celebrated North. Grimke's focus on black educated woman in the North is the precursor to Lorraine Hansberry's conception of Beneatha Younger of Raisin in the Sun (1951) and Toni Morrison's portrayal of Sula Mae Peace of Sula (1973). Similarly, Grimke extends Linda Brent's critique of domesticity and motherhood, which is continued by Ann Petry in her depiction of Lutie Johnson in The Street (1946) and Gwendolyn Bennett's portrayal of Maud Martha of in her slender lyric novel, Maud Martha (1953).

Performed at the Miner Normal School in Washington D.C. within the heart of the black community in April 1916[120] and published four years later, Rachel marks a critical juncture in the social, political, and artistic history of Black Americans. Sponsored by the NAACP, the play is distinguished as the first literary vehicle to put Du Bois's principle of protest through the arts into practice

[120] Crisis, 11:6(1916): 284.

[121] and as an instrument to counter D.W. Griffith's Birth of a Nation.[122] As the first extant non musical play written by an African American,[123] the description of the confluence of racism *and* sexism, which continues to constitute black women and to position them as the racial and gendered subordinates of white women, and white and black men, is ground-breaking. Firmly ensconced in the tradition of black women's writing typified by Frances Harper, Harriet Jacobs, and Harriet Wilson, Grimke performs a simultaneous critique; under an anatomy of racism which secures Du Bois's approval and support, is a critique of sexism which covertly destabilizes his male authority to speak for the black female Other.[124]

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[121] Crisis, April 1916: 284.

[122]David Levering Lewis, W.E.B. DuBois--Biography of a Race (New York: H. Holt, 1993) 252.

[123] Cambridge Companion to Women Playwrights, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 114.

[124]DuBois's reflections on women are clearly manifested in his 1920 collection of essays, Darkwater; Voices from Within the Veil published in the same year as Grimke's Rachel. Among the most strident essays appears the singular "The Damnation of Women," which anticipates the difficult choices women must make between life work and motherhood. He writes: "Only at the sacrifice of intelligence and the chance to do their best work can the majority of modern women bear children. This is the damnation of women." Though calling for a day when women will have "life work, economic independence...and the right of motherhood at their own discretion," DuBois notes the dissonance between the social ideal of the economically dependent domestic mother and the wage earner father, and the reality particularly along racial lines. Whereas the family unit upon which American society is culturally based remains intact so long as the male wage earner receives sufficient income to permit his wife to remain in the home, the wage paid the black male worker is less than his white male counterpart. Therefore, the black wife is driven by economic necessity to leave the domestic space and procure employment outside the home. DuBois details the social ramifications of economic racism: "On the whole, colored working women are paid as well as white working women for similar work, save in some higher grades, while colored men get from one-fourth to three-fourths less than white men. The result is curious and three-fold: the economic independence of black women is increased; the breaking up of Negro families must be more frequent."

The black wife cannot become economically dependent on her husband therefore the black male is displaced from his position of authority at the helm of the black household. Simultaneously, he is emasculated by the terms that imbricate masculinity with economic viability in America. Further exacerbating the stress on the black family unit is the labor market, which rewards gendered work in different geographic locales as DuBois writes, "toil holds the father and brother in country and town at low wages, the sisters and mothers are called to the city" for domestic work. "As a result" he continues, "the Negro women outnumber the men nine or ten to eight in many cities." The 1910 census recorded nearly five million black women of which two and

While Grimke places a black female experience at the center of a play that describes the effects of racism and is therefore celebrated by Du Bois, the Crisis, and the NAACP, images of black women remain static and frustrated. Though a "fine piece of work," Jessie Fauset writes from her position as Crisis literary editor, "as propaganda it leaves something to be desired. Undoubtedly a better effect would be gained by having the humiliation of the colored children *acted* rather than *related*. One lesson the play certainly teaches: Rachel, her mother and Tom have all let their troubles make them morbid." [125] Although the Crisis provided an opportunity for black women writers to publish, the images celebrated are ones that depict black women as defeated, which dramatize unmistakably the ravages of racism.

Tensions may have been building within the offices of the Crisis and not simply around matters of finance or editorial control, but around the issue of how African Americans in literature could most effectively be used as propaganda.[126] While DuBois favored literature that portrayed the accomplishments of the race,

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a half million were employed outside the home (versus a half million white women). DuBois concludes his essay by recognizing that these five million women "have the up-working of new revolutionary ideals, which must in time have vast influence on the thought and action of this land." Darkwater (New York: AMS Press, 1928), 164.

[125] "Three Books," Crisis, Vol 21: 62-62.

[126] A public version of this debate was published in the Crisis as "How Should the Negro Be Portrayed?," which ran from March 1926 through September 1926 and solicited responses from respected white and black writers and publishers. Zona Gale, Carl Van Vetchen, among others, supplied a variety of answers, however, there was agreement that with greater access to publishing, positive representations of Blacks would displace stereotypical black images. The October 1926 issue contained the text of W.E.B. DuBois's speech "Criteria of Negro Art," which was presented at the Chicago Conference of the NAACP. DuBois defended fiction as a legitimate means by which to advance the cause of the race in his now famous phrase "All art is propaganda and ever shall be, despite the wailing of the purists." Crisis Vol 32, No. 192, October 1926: 290.

he also supported literature that illuminated the effects of prejudice and discrimination against Blacks. Jessie Fauset's magazine fiction and novels depict the accomplishments of the race and in so doing highlight discrimination and racism. However, Fauset limbs out images of black women, depicting their accomplishments in spite of racism, which are elided or ignored in the Crisis. Ultimately, the literary parameters of the Crisis may have proven too narrow for Fauset.

Fauset's "There Was One Time" offers a solution different from Rachel for the single black artiste. Anna is a "the typical American girl done over in brown." Like Rachel, she is a recent high school graduate, but contrastingly, she is "not at all a shining star." When Anna is unable to obtain a position in any business firm suiting her training as a graduate of Business High School in Philadelphia, she realizes the "handicap of color."[127] With the odds against her-her father dies and her mother seeks "refuge in inapt quotations of Scriptures"[128]-- Anna must make her own way in the world, but she has a tool on her side: her attitude. Anna has "no fears for the future, no regrets for the past," which enables her to find work as a waitress although she and her mother lose their small house. Unable to find a job as a teacher due to racism in Philadelphia, a reality also shared by Fauset, Anna spends her evenings in night school studying subjects she did not take quite so seriously while in high school, so sure was she that a job would be waiting for her in her specialties -stenography and drawing. When waitressing,

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[127]Crisis, April 1917, 272-7 & May 1917: 11.

[128]Fauset, "'There Was One One Time,' A Story of Spring," Crisis 13 (April 1917): 273.

Anna meets a trustee of a new colored school who promises her a job as a drawing teacher. Fauset writes: "But Fate, with a malevolence, saw to it that she was appointed to teach History and French" instead of her favorite, mechanical drawing. "Taciturn" and "moody," the protagonist has been teaching French for six years when she, through a coincidence of events, meets a young engineer who shares the same interests as she. The final scene has them planning a future together in Europe where he will build bridges and she will draw the plans.

A "universe of discourse" created by black magazines, newspapers, and journals attempted to influence black attitudes toward a myriad of political, social, and economic events transpiring during the 1920s. As important as disseminating information about current events, print journalists served the important function of contextualizing historical, political, and social events and ultimately of culling from the vast array of information those items that were to be elevated and considered newsworthy. While national and international events that affected Blacks received prompt and thorough mention in editorials and feature stories, events with little direct bearing on the African American community were also considered newsworthy and achieved positions of prominence in black print media. Fundamentally, black newspapers, magazines, and journals were a significant means through which Blacks received national and international news, and a primary conduit through which Blacks received information about black communities throughout the nation and the world.

Editors of these newspapers, journals, and magazines did not limit themselves to appealing to their readership through editorials or features; rather

they also employed magazine covers, political cartoons, magazine fiction, advertisements and photographs to attract and shape a readership. The fictional and non-fictional content of black magazines interrogate hierarchies of power by presenting alternative images of black women that counter stereotypical depictions, and present new models of black womanhood. The popularity of magazines indicates that "Presumably the fiction in these stories reflected attitudes which their readers could accept."[129] While it is difficult to speculate what readers' responses were to short stories, the regularity with which they occurred coupled with their frequency within single issues of a same magazine suggests their popularity.

The stories in this study reveal the complexity of black women's lives in the 1910s through 1930s as black women explored self-expression and individual freedom. Magazine fiction reflects a tension in black female roles as black women adapted to a northern and urban life, changing familial structures, the pressures of marriage and domesticity, and practicing one's vocation. The fiction of the Half-Century reflects images of black women who seek self-actualization through labor and vocation rather than through romance or marriage. These black female images are sometimes accompanied by figures of black men who are equally progressive in their support and validation of wives, mothers, and daughters. As readers, Blacks sought representations of black middle class women, which reflected an empowered, redefined self. Like its magazine covers and editorial content, fiction of the Half-Century presented new images of black women such as the artiste homemaker who struggles with

[129] Ellen Hoeskstra, "The Pedestal Myth Reinforced: Women's Magazine Fiction, 1900-1920," 43.

warring demands of vocation and domesticity, eventually reconciling the two by using homemaking in service of vocation. While depictions of the artiste homemaker represent a new variety of African American women in literature, to what extent they represent change in roles of black middle class women is unclear. Depictions of the single artiste whose career, ambition, or vocation does not reinforce the values of hearth and home offer insight into the development of these empowered figures and their popular reception. The single artiste is the subject of Jessie Fauset's novels; There is Confusion, Plum Bun, and Comedy: American Style, which will be explored in chapter two.

Althusser examines the relationship of the individual to the media highlighting how media transform people into subjects. A fundamental part of an individual's interpellation by material culture is their continued belief that they are independent self-determined subjects when they are, in fact, shaped by ideology. Media, education, the judicial system, and religion are separate ideological apparatus that function together to reinforce the status quo. When subordinate classes adopt the ideology of the dominant classes a false consciousness is produced. This theoretical approach is useful in an analysis of the Crisis, which is progressive in its resistance to racism yet remains a magazine in support of patriarchy.

The Crisis, is the literary organ of the NAACP, which is an intraracial organization founded to educate Whites about racial inequalities in America, and to facilitate the struggle for civil rights for those Blacks choosing to assimilate

rather than to abandon life in America.[130] W.E.B. Du Bois, Crisis editor, organized the periodical into six departments: "Along the Color Line," "Opinion," "Editorial," "The N.A.A.C.P.," "The Burden," and "What to Read."[131] The parts of the magazine function to reinforce the magazine's by-line: "A Record of the Darker Races." With lynching persisting into the 1910s and 1920s, Black peonage, the forced labor and imprisonment of Blacks, and racism in employment and education, W.E.B. Du Bois's focus on racism was necessary. However, the magazine's primary commitment to eradicating racism while minimizing attention to gender hierarchies results in a narrative style that fails to challenge dominant ideology.

Stories in the Crisis focus on the heroism, nobility, and altruism of Black characters when confronted by racist practices or racist whites.[132] Defiance in the face of death is also a theme that achieves prominence.[133] These stories provide voice for Blacks as well as a supportive sense of community, which legitimize Black concerns. Stories which foreground gender do so to emphasize the variety

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[130] "The object of this publication is to set forth those facts and arguments which show the danger of race prejudice, particularly as manifested toward colored people. It takes its name from the fact that the editors believe that this is a critical time in the history of the advancement of men...The policy of Crisis will be simple and well defined: It will first and foremost be a newspaper: it will record important happenings and movements in the world which bear on the great problem of inter-racial relations and especially those which affect the Negro American. Secondly, it will be a review of opinion and literature, recording briefly books, articles and important expressions of opinion in the white and colored press on the race problem. Thirdly, it will publish a few short articles. Finally, its editorial page will stand for the rights of men, irrespective of color or race; for the highest ideals of American democracy; and for reasonable but earnest and persistent attempt to gain these rights and realize these ideals. The magazine will be the organ of no clique or party and will avoid personal rancor of all sorts." Crisis (November 1920): 5.

[131] From an initial sixteen pages in length, the magazine soon doubled in size to fifty pages.

[132] See "A Chance to Make Good" by John R. Harrison (August 1918): 168 or "A Christmas Happening" by Mary White Ovington (Dec ember 1923): 60. Both appear in the Crisis.

[133] N.B. Young, Jr., "Swamp Judgment," Crisis (June 1926).

of persons impacted by racism rather than to call attention to black female representation. While the magazine's focus on racism does not preclude attention to content or characterization that extend depictions of black middle class women, it does suggest that male control of black female images result in sexist production values. These values remain important because they are embedded in the Crisis, which, as one of the originary points of "new" Negro images, shaped reader perceptions of race and gender, and provided "positive" images of Blacks that were transferred to African American literary and cinematic productions.[134] These images, however, undermine the independence of black

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[134]DuBois was interested in bringing Lincoln's Dream, a play written by Elaine Sterne to the screen and used the Crisis to advertise the progress of the project: "In the N.A.A.C.P notes this month is the announcement of a new moving–picture play, Lincoln's Dream. Crisis readers will be interested to hear of the manner in which this pay came to be written. Miss Elaine Sterne, author of the play, while one of the youngest is one of the most brilliant of scenario writers. In two years fifty of her scenarios have been accepted. Last winter she went to see The Birth of a Nation and while appreciation the artistic value of the production she questioned seriously whether it truly depicted the Negro in the nation. With her to question was to act. She went to Washington and there met many prominent colored people who directed her in her study and investigation. The result was Lincoln's Dream, a scenario depicting the sorrows and cruelties of slavery, the bravery of the Negro in the Civil War, and his heroic efforts to educate himself for his new freedom during reconstruction. Of course, the play does not (cont) tell everything that we should like to have told. It would take a reel that would stretch from New York to California to do that. Moreover, much that The Crisis brings to the attention of its readers the general public will listen to. But just as New York audiences, in the fifties, breathlessly sympathetic with the Negro as they watched Eliza crossing the ice, so New York audiences as they watch Lincoln's Dream will find themselves-but that's telling the story.

There are many of us who wish that the past of slavery might be forgotten. But until North and South cease to apologize or excuse slavery, our younger generation needs to know it as it really was. So it is most fitting that after The Birth of a Nation which represents the Civil War as a meaningless "scrap" between two groups of states, we should have a moving picture that gives the true significance of the greatest revolution of the modern world." Lincoln's Dream , Vol 10, No 6, October, 1915, Whole No 60, 292. The film was never made. The Crisis informed its readers of race theaters, new race films, and contritely noted the failures of race film projects such as "Birth of a Race": "The "Birth of a Race" photoplay corporation, which has been promoting a film based on the life of the late Booker T. Washington, has gotten in trouble with the State of Illinois, by not complying with its law as to the sale of stock. They have issued a circular which makes a number of prominent people appear as officers and directors and have promised large returns. Julius Rosenwald has threatened suit unless his name is withdrawn from their circulars." "Music and Art," Vol 16, No 1, May 1918, Whole 91:31.

female characters by giving precedence to race. While the Crisis uses the subordinated position of black middle class women to demonstrate the pervasiveness of racism, it also reinforces patriarchy, which weakens critiques of dominant ideology. Likewise, these depictions invalidate the experience of black middle class women and discourage the creation of a black female subjectivity, which interrogates gender as well as race.

Chapter 2

ALL DRESSED UP AND NOWHERE TO GO: BLACK MIDDLE CLASS WOMEN IN HARLEM RENAISSANCE LITERATURE, 1917-1933

And like any artiste with no art form, she became dangerous

Toni Morrison[1]

Types of black middle class womanhood undergo transformation in Harlem Renaissance literature as black female novelists attempt to "speak" to white and black audiences in a language decreasing mediated by the communal discourse of racial uplift, and predicated instead on narratives of individual success. These narratives, which celebrated the ideal of individual personal accomplishment central to the American Dream, functioned to make African American novels marketable to the widest audience possible. However, these novels also continued to meet the cultural needs of black audiences by validating important institutions in the black community such as the church and family, while offering practical strategies for combating racism to this middle class, namely, tenacity and excellence.

Types of black middle class womanhood in the novels of Jessie Fauset are not the active empowered subjects of Half-Century magazine fiction; instead, they are figures that struggle unsuccessfully to reconcile individual desire and professional aspirations. Dedication to career and personal gratification become

[1] Toni Morrison, Sula (New York: Knopf) 121.

problematic when they displace matrimony and motherhood. Images of black middle class women become tendentious in the novels of W.E.B. Du Bois, as narratives which foreground racial discrimination and which depend on male characters as protagonists, do so precisely at the expense of representations of black females, which are depicted, in consequence, as obstacles which the protagonists must conquer or overcome much like the American frontier. Yet, both Fauset and Du Bois strove to depict the talented tenth who were race men and race women, whose aspirations, behavior, deportment, and dress were those of the New Negro- an active, modern citizen who demanded the benefits and protection of law.[2] Images of New Negro women who are middle class *by definition* were key to the rehabilitation of black images for they were "at the center of the New Negro's philosophy of self-respect."[3]

Fauset: <u>There is Confusion</u>

As the first novel produced during the Harlem Renaissance,[4] <u>There is Confusion</u> is evidence of literature of the New Negro and therefore promoted new models of African American womanhood for consumption and imitation. Written by the "midwife" of the Harlem Renaissance, a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and holder of a Master's degree in French who was

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[2] Henry Louis Gates writes, "Significantly, these New Negroes were to be recognized by their 'education, refinement, and money,' with property rights strongly implied as the hallmark of those who may demand their political rights." "The Trope of a New Negro and the Reconstruction of the Image of the Black." <u>Representations</u>, No. 24, (Autumn, 1988): 136.

[3] Gates 141.

[4]Thadious Davis, foreword, <u>There is Confusion</u>, by Jessie Redmond Fauset (New York: Northeastern, 1989) vi.

also literary editor of the Crisis magazine, Jessie Fauset was the most prolific author of the Harlem Renaissance.[5] As a former teacher of classical languages at Washington D.C.'s most celebrated black high school, M Street High School (later called Dunbar High School), and as an astute student of European, pan African, and American literature and a translator of French novels, Fauset's international education and training broadened the scope of items reviewed in the literary pages of the Crisis, and the content of her novels.[6]

Fauset's awareness of the intellectual and literary traditions of America and Europe was one aspect of her interests. She was also equally interested in fostering a climate for the production of African American literature and, as literary editor of the Crisis, Fauset, like Kathryn Johnson of the Half-Century magazine, selected writers for publication thereby participating in the shaping of a New Negro literary aesthetic.

Fauset was also a writer interested in creating popular novels. With a focus on producing literature that had the greatest commercial appeal, she "analyzed whole issues of The Saturday Evening Post to discover just what it is that makes for popular reading," doing so "in a candid effort to analyze and

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[5] Fauset (1882-1919) was also an active participant in black women's social, cultural, and political networks, and was chosen by Delta Sigma Theta to speak on African American women's successes at the second Pan-African Congress in London (1921).

[6] Fauset's review of pan African literature for the Crisis demonstrates her knowledge of and, most significantly, her validation of pan African literature for black Americans. In this respect Fauset not only facilitated the publication of Harlem Renaissance literature, but also likewise publicized the works of Africans. Fauset was not insular nor did she privilege African American literature; rather, she sought to increase knowledge of writers of the African Diaspora for the readers of the Crisis.

isolate the germ of popular writing."[7] Like Kathryn Johnson, Fauset was not content to sell literature but to create literature. Fauset, however, was distinguished by her desire to personally author literature that would sell. Her interest in capturing and reflecting popular tastes is reflected in the details of her novels, which describe fashionable clothes and include lyrics of popular songs and references to singers of the 1920s.[8] These colorful details added sophistication to her novels, which were in competition with tales of the African American as exotic primitive, which Du Bois conceded in 1926 "White readers..would buy nothing else."[9] These up-to-date details in Fauset's novels also focus on themes popularized in black women's magazine fiction of the Half-Century such as the validation of the pursuit of personal happiness for black middle class women, the pursuit of profession or "calling," and a critique of decadence (aimlessness and materialism).

As literary editor, writer, race woman who held salons for black writers and artists, Fauset was likely abreast of African American literary magazines and journals. Additionally, there was a cross-fertilization of ideas as writers interacted and published their own work through various literary networks. Opportunity, the literary organ of the National Urban League, featured the poetry of Gwendolyn Bennet. The Messenger, literary organ of The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car

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[7] Thadious M. Davis, preface, Chinaberry Tree, by Jessie Redmon Fauset (New York: Hall, 1995) xvi.

[8] Published two years after Fauset's Confusion, Carl Van Vetchen's Nigger Heaven has "songs and snatches of Blues sung by characters..written especially for Nigger Heaven by Mr. Langston Hughes," copyright page, Nigger Heaven by Carl Van Vechten (New York: Knopf, 1926).

[9] Quoted in Carolyn Sylvander, Jessie Redmon Fauset: Black American Writer (Troy, N.Y.: Whitston, 1981) 11.

Porters, featured a literary review from Nella Larsen, and responded to Crisis articles and positions adopted by W.E.B. Du Bois, its editor. The dialogue that existed between these publications is suggested by the well-known literary competitions which began in Opportunity but which were quickly followed by competitions in Crisis, which drove the Harlem Renaissance to greater heights. The magazine fiction of the Half-Century was within the "universe of discourse"[10] which influenced her "Great American Novel," There is Confusion (1924).[11]

Although earlier studies of Fauset attribute her motivations for writing There is Confusion to her reading of Stribling's Birthright (1922), a novel she reviewed in the Crisis as leaving the reader wondering of Stribling "which race

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[10] See chapter one

[11]Consider the similarities between the following two passages. The first is taken from Jessie Fauset's short story "The Sleeper Wakes," which appeared in Crisis, August 1920, p 165. The second is taken from "Navy Blue Velvet" by Maggie Shaw Fullilove, Half-Century Magazine, Feb 1917, p 5.

She had been standing in Marshall's store, her young, eager gaze intent on the lovely little sample dress which was not from Paris, but quite as dainty as anything that Paris could produce. It was not the lines or even the texture that fascinated Amy so much, it was the grouping of colors-of shades. She knew the combination was just right for her.

"Let me slip it on, Miss," said the saleswoman suddenly...

The saleswoman slipped the dress over the girl's pink blouse, and tucked the linen collar under so as to bring the edge of the dress next to her pretty neck...The saleswoman beamed as Amy, entranced, surveyed herself naively in the tall looking-glass Jessie Fauset, "The Sleeper Wakes,"

Navy Blue Velvet:

Suddenly she stepped before the gorgeous window and stared in unfeigned admiration at the beautiful creation encased there. It was a stunning suit, one of the smartest models of the season...

The saleslady remarks: "Navy blue-good color you know, just the shade for you.

"Let's try it on."

She followed the woman to the dressing-room in the back of the store, and stood like one in a dream, while deft fingers fitted the dress upon her...Mrs. Harding stared incredulously at the lovely little figure framed in the mirror "Navy Blue Velvet" by Maggie Shaw Fullilove, Half-Century Magazine, Feb 1917, 5.

appealed to him least,"[12] Fauset's ambition which she disclosed to Du Bois as early as 1906 was "to write the Great American Novel, something she called "There is Confusion" even then."[13] Under emphasized is Fauset's concern that Angelina Grimke's celebrated play Rachel (performed 1916 and published 1920) sponsored by the Crisis foregrounded "the daily humiliation of the colored children" in a descriptive rather than dramatic fashion which rendered its African American characters "dreary" and inert.[14] Although reflecting Du Bois's emphasis on depicting the ravages of racism, the play places the concerns of African American educated women in the background. As fellow teachers at M Street High School, peers, and literary contemporaries, the novel that Fauset produced might also be read as a response to Grimke's Rachel, an interpretation which extends the African American female's literary tradition rather than as an apologist text, which rebuts stereotypes of African American characters.

One of Fauset's strengths lay with her ability to translate new figures of black womanhood introduced in African American magazine fiction to the novel form, which provided her with an opportunity to pen a sustained examination of the role of professional ambition, career, personal desire, marriage, children, and homemaking in black women's lives. Fauset's four novels comprise the most comprehensive critique of the social and cultural position, and psychology of African American middle class women to emerge from the Harlem

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[12] Jessie Fauset, "As to Books," The Crisis Feb 1923: 66-67.

[13] Levering Lewis 464.

[14] Jessie Fauset, "As to Books," Crisis Feb 1923: 66-67.

Renaissance.[15] A feature common to all Fauset's heroines is the pursuit of individual ambition and excellence despite limited opportunities. Fauset celebrated the perseverance and character of African Americans such as Colonel Taylor[16] and Bert Williams in the pages of the Crisis and There is Confusion. These African Americans are distinguished as "making the most of [their] restricted opportunities," just as Fauset's characters are distinguished by their tenacity. Ultimately, Fauset links the fictive with the non-fictive rendering models of African American resilience that were practical, self-referential, and commodifiable.[17] However, Fauset's images of black women are ultimately governed by the tastes of the literary marketplace. Fauset's female protagonists mirror in their adventurous spirit the women of black women's magazine fiction of the Half Century, and yet they invariably accept conventional roles and fulfill social expectations of women. This end highlights the pressures of the marketplace as well as the difficulty of conceiving, even imaginatively, images black female middle class women who repeatedly triumph over adversity and racism, and successfully negotiate career, matrimony, and motherhood.

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[15] Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God would appear thirteen years after the publication of Fauset's There is Confusion, and four years after Fauset's Comedy: American Style.

[16]The first African American colonel in the United States military who, when discharged from the military on the grounds of ill-health rather than being sent to command white troops in Europe, rode his horse from Ohio to Washington D.C. to prove his fitness. Yet Taylor refused to be retired and was subsequently stationed in Africa away from battle and later died of malaria, and end that could not have been a surprise to his white superiors.

[17] Not only did Blacks derive a personal sense of satisfaction from reading of individual successes, but also the repetition of certain narratives such as the Col. Taylor story in The Crisis, Opportunity, Chicago Defender, and There is Confusion, reinforced the narrative's importance as well as the importance of the novel as news medium.

There is Confusion is a novel about the Bye family, which is composed of two branches: one white and one black. The novel measures each generation against the Biblical passage, "By their fruits ye shall know them" written in the white Bye family Bible by Aaron Bye, white patriarch, and progenitor of the black Byes. Its revision, "By *his* fruits shall ye know *me,*" is written by Isaiah, the unacknowledged grandson of Aaron, upon the birth of his son, Meriwether, who is Aaron's great grandson. The genealogy of the characters is significant as Fauset carefully delineates each succeeding generation to demonstrate that character is built rather than inherited.

Peter Bye, descendent of the black Byes is undisciplined and morose. He has inherited his father's defeatist perspective derived from the knowledge that the white Bye's reaped the benefits of the black Bye's slave labor. In counter distinction, is Joanna Marshall, youngest daughter of Joel Marshall.

The Professional Woman

Joanna is distinguished by her ambition, which reveals itself early in her life as a desire to be "great." Described as an inheritance from her father who sacrificed his dream of becoming a minister and race leader or someone "great," to become instead the owner of a catering establishment, Fauset problematizes Joanna's aspirations by attributing them to a paternal rather than maternal source. Mr. Marshall is prosperous, held in high esteem by the black community, and employs a staff, however the material and social capital that he has accrued

during his long enterprise in Philadelphia do not mitigate his earlier, deeper desire for a greater vocation.

Deriving inspiration from Lincoln, Napoleon, Toussaint L'Ouverture, and Frederick Douglass-all men of humble means but who "had risen to the highest possible state" through their own efforts,[18] as a child Mr. Marshall dreamed of becoming a "great man with a healing tongue."[19] His dream is not realized by his sons Alexander and Philip, but by his youngest daughter, Joanna who is distinguished from her siblings and schoolmates by her self articulated desire: "I'll be great too...I can't be like those wonderful women, Harriet and Sojourner, but at least I won't be ordinary."[20] Convinced, Joanna finds in her father an ally who is himself rejuvenated by her request, "Daddy, you'll help me to be a great woman, somebody you'll be proud of?"[21]

The females in the Marshall family are, in contrast, ordinary, and worse, stifle the higher objectives of Mr. Marshall. It is for Mrs. Marshall, his mother that Mr. Marshall chooses to sacrifice his education and training in order to provide an income while she is taken ill by a mysterious sickness. After ten years Mrs. Marshall's health improves, however her son's opportunity has passed. However when Mr. Marshall marries, he selects a schoolteacher because "her precision of language and exactitude in small matters made Joel think again of the education and subsequent greatness which were to have been his." Unfortunately, he finds

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[18] Fauset, There is Confusion (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1924) 10.

[19] Fauset, There is Confusion 10.

[20] Fauset, Confusion 14.

[21] Fauset, Confusion 14.

his wife "kind and sweet, but fundamentally unambitious," which to Joel and Joanna is a character flaw.

Joanna's early ambition and methodical application to study and practice allows her to achieve her objective: to become a performer. Her singular ambition is to be "the one colored person who sings best in these days, and I never, never, never mean to let color interfere with anything I really want to do." Joanna's creativity in sewing, singing, and her studiousness continue to distinguish her from her siblings and she matures into grave young adult whose disdain for artificiality extends to her refusal to straighten her hair.[22] It is Joanna's "obsession" with "success and distinction"[23] coupled with the absence of personal needs-of companionship, love, filial bonds that Fauset mines in this psychological coming of age novel of a young middle class black woman. Described as "holding herself aloof," and disinclined to "abandon"[24] or play, what Joanna lacks in emotional engagement with others she more than compensates for in personal ambition for professional success. Joanna is "Purpose" personified.

And yet it is because romance and love equal work rather than pleasure, and divert her from her demanding professional training that Joanna believes she can live without it. She states to Peter, a young man who has adored her since childhood, "Love is a wonderful, rare thing, very beautiful, very sweet, but you

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[22] The refusal to straighten her hair is also a clue to African American and white readers that Fauset has refused to use the mulatto, a racially ambiguous figure that functioned as a counter-stereotype to negative depictions of African American women. Confusion 20.

[23] Confusion 12.

[24] Confusion 18.

can do without it...You know perfectly well that for a woman love usually means a household of children, the getting of a thousand meals, picking up laundry, no time to herself for meditation, or reading or-."[25] Although Peter proposes a different kind of love and marriage, to "a man who understands you" who will "see that you have time for anything you want," Joanna refuses.[26]

Instead, Joanna pursues her career meeting and overcoming racism and prejudice. At the height of her career Joanna again meets Peter and this time accepts his marriage proposal even though it means that she will surrender her career.[27] Further, with tears in her eyes she begs Peter to consider her like her sister Sylvia, a housewife and mother.

Joanna's long aversion to domesticity makes her conversion to the ideals of domesticity within the space of two pages curious if not improbable. However, critics have pointed to the novel's end as proof of Fauset's bourgeoisie values. Yet, a more salient point is Fauset's narrative resolution adheres to the romantic formula of women's sentimental fiction-the separated lovers are reunited at the end of the novel, the woman is restored to her socially approved place within the home, which is enabled by her husband's economic power. That Joanna marries after she has achieved her career objectives is a theme that resonates

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[25] Confusion 95.

[26] Confusion 94.

[27] Joanna, in a moment of sadness, concedes to her father that professional singing was not the kind of greatness that she imagined.

throughout Fauset's works and life.[28] However through the marriage of Joanna to Peter, a doctor, Fauset also models the type of African American male desirable to the educated and professionally trained African American woman, which was the subject of at least one Crisis editorial.[29] Ultimately, Fauset transforms the sentimental formula into one which speaks to African American middle class women offering strategies for thriving in adverse circumstances, while employing popular themes of black women's magazine fiction, which carry the cross over potential to working class and white audiences. This approach renders There is Confusion, a novel that offers transgressive images of black middle class women, palatable to the widest audience possible.

Class

Fauset explores the process of class stratification within the black community in New York through the lives of a small coterie of friends. Fauset lists among her reasons for writing Confusion: "I was simply trying to show on how many strata the life [sic] of colored people in Joanna's class impinge."[30] Joanna Marshall's status derives from her two-parent home and her father's ownership of a profitable a catering business complete with wait staff. A further sign of their prosperity is that her mother remains at home. Contrastingly, Maggie Ellersley is depicted as working class due to the absence of her father, which places his wife

[28] Fauset taught French at Dunbar High School for fourteen years. Fauset married in 1929 at the age of 46. Although she had no children, she produced two of her four novels while married The Chinaberry Tree (1931) and Comedy: American Style (1933).

[29] See pages 1-2 of Conclusion.

[30] Sylvander 142.

and daughter in a precarious financial position, and leaves them, a family of women, without protection.

Maggie's mother is a laundress and a widow, and although distinguished from Mis' Sparrow by her positive attitude and morally upright demeanor, she continues to lack the resources that will provide Maggie with opportunities to improve her status. It is this material difference between the Ellersley and Marshall families that motivates Joanna, the "snob," to break the growing amour between her brother Philip and Maggie though later she comes to regret it and old lovers are reunited.[31] As Joanna elaborates, it is Maggie's lack of ambition rather than her class position that elicits Joanna's scorn. While Joanna sees in her brother the potential of becoming a "Garibaldi or Toussaint,"[32] she sees in Maggie the mundane desire to become a hairdresser. However, as a woman with first hand knowledge of poverty and without the leisure to consider a career with long expensive training that would not promise a certain financial reward, Maggie's selection of hairdressing is as reasonable as Joanna's selection of a career in the arts.

The increasing occupational differentiation of the black middle class, which caused tensions in the black clubwomen's movement and 1920's black Detroit, is reflected in each girl's outlook. Maggie epitomizes the class of Blacks who maintained a belief popularized by Booker T. Washington- that Black business ownership and labor in the service sector was the first step toward

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[31] Confusion 63 & 78.

[32] Confusion 78.

social equality. The small businesses of which Maggie dreams is based on the hairdressing techniques of Madame Harkness who is clearly modeled on Madame CJ Walker, the first black millionaire of whom Harold Cruse writes, "exemplified the emergence of a new economic class-the black bourgeoisie." But, he continues, "This class, of course, was never to achieve any substantial stake in American high finance, and was late, limited, and marginal..."[33]

Joanna epitomizes the class of Blacks who espoused Du Bois's belief that "if there's anything that will break down prejudice it will be equality or perhaps superiority on the part of colored people in the arts."[34] Faithful to her aims, Fauset depicts how the wealthier Marshall family through Joanna imposes their world-view on the poorer Maggie. Fauset highlights how ideological differences interrupt potential alliances within the African American female community. This critique of the superficiality of class divisions, also corrects the erroneous assumption that a working class status denotes a lack of ambition or a personal failure. Fauset depicts through Peter Bye that many members of the black middle class also lack these qualities and yet receive opportunities based on family networks or class privilege rather than merit.

Through Maggie Fauset also critiques the limited opportunities for black women. Maggie disavows her poverty vowing, "I will not always live like this...I'll get out of it some way" and she finds that "one avenue of escape lay through

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[33] Harold Cruse, The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual (New York: Morrow, 1967) 24-25.

[34] Confusion 97.

men."[35] In her "yearning for respectability and comfort"[36] she reasons, "They were stronger than women, they made money."[37] The Ellersey fortunes do improve when Mrs. Ellersey's kindness to a sick male boarder are returned with a loan which allows them to purchase a rooming house in a better neighborhood. A similar situation occurs in Comedy: American Style when a white male professor at Harvard takes Janet under his wife and provides necessary security on a loan that will allow her to purchase a rooming home. In Confusion, this new location brings with it an improved school district and the occasion for the young Maggie to meet the Marshall family and later marry Philip, one of the Marshall sons, thereby finally rising in class.[38] Fauset thus reveals that even with the hard work of Maggie who conceives the idea of the rooming house and works diligently to bring it to fruition against her mother's trepidation, it is still the financial capital of a chance male benefactor followed by the marriage to a Marshall son that allows Maggie to obtain a measure of security. Maggie's hard work and dedication to her accounting job would not have altered her social position or economic condition.[39] Through Maggie, Fauset implicates the inequities in a social system in which rewards accrue to men.

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[35] Confusion 58.

[36] Confusion 69.

[37] Confusion 58.

[38] Fauset emphasizes that Maggie must relinquish her single-minded focus on improving her social status just as Joanna must relinquish her single-minded focus on career at the exclusion of all else. It is only after Maggie surrenders her obsession with class and decides to become a nurse that she is reunited with Philip.

Du Bois's Professional Woman: Sara Andrews

Although Fauset uses Joanna's coldness and emotional distance to demonstrate the force of her discipline to her profession, Du Bois uses the cold, unemotional professional woman to critique black professional women in Dark Princess (1928).

Ostensibly a *bildungsroman* that traces Matthews Townes's increasing maturity as he encounters and overcomes moral and physical obstacles including racism, vice, and nihilism, Dark Princess is also a manifesto of the liberation of "the darker races of the world." Part detective story, mystery, and romance, the novel transforms the Afrocentrism of Du Bois's pageant, The Star of Ethiopia, through which he sought to "teach on the one hand the colored people themselves the meaning of their history..."[40] into a multicultural pageant which instructs Asian, Indian, American blacks in their common destiny. Du Bois's "favorite" book,[41] it shares with Confusion a male protagonist who becomes disillusioned by American racism, and dissimilarly, western imperialism. Matthew's interactions with three women-Sara Andrews, Princess Kautilya, and his mother influence his maturation.

Sara Andrews, Du Bois explains in a chapter entitled "Chicago Politician," is "self-made and independent." Abandoned by her German father and orphaned by her black mother, Sara's life is described by the obstacles she successfully

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[39] Although Maggie refuses a loan from Mr. Marshall and requests instead a job, her limited skills and earning power enforce her position of dependency, Confusion 68.

[40] Levering Lewis 461.

overcomes. Like Joanna Marshall who does not succumb to racism or sexism, Sara "fought her way through school" and "forced herself into the local business college," behavior extolled by Du Bois as a feature of the New Negro and Talented Tenth in the pages of the Crisis. However laudatory the descriptions of Sara's educational and professional successes, they are subverted by descriptions of her as threatening to men. Du Bois explained "she fought off men with a fierceness and determination that scared them."[42] And as the novel unfolds, it is Sara's personality and clothing rather than her professional competency that come to epitomize her.

Sara's ambiguous racial appearance and fastidious clothing are juxtaposed to her true black identity and lack of scruples to create the impression of a woman characterized by contradiction. Racially ambiguous, a fact that Sammy, Chicago's foremost African American political leader and her boss, uses to his advantage, Sammy soon recognizes that Sara is at "the real center" of his rise to power. She is a "real stenographer" who could compose a letter with a minimum of dictation and yet "she could put a lie through the typewriter in so adroit a way that it sounded better than the truth and was legally fireproof."[43]

Sara's clothes, which have been interpreted as a sign of the "mundane minutiae of urban" Chicago and contrasted to the "elusive, mysterious India"[44] embodied by Princess Kautilya, also speak to Du Bois's desire to court a female

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[41] Claudia Tate, introduction, Dark Princess (1928; Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1995) 9.

[42] DuBois, Dark Princess 110.

[43] Fauset, Confusion 112.

readership. Taking a hint from the flourishes of color and fashion that brighten Fauset's novel, Du Bois's detailed description of women's clothing reveals an attempt to secure an audience particularly at a moment when the publishing industry was suffering major setbacks. As editor of the Crisis Du Bois could not have been unaware of its steadily decreasing circulation from a high of 94, 000 to a low of 30,000 in 1928, the year of Dark Princess's publication. 1928 also marked the final year of publication for the Messenger.

The Clubwoman: Fauset's Olivia

Like Angelina Grimke, Fauset creates counter narratives that critique socially prescribed roles and opportunities for black women through the figure of the black middle class woman. Consistent with Harper who wrote Iola Leroy in "lasting service to the race," these authors appropriate convention with specific attention to the literary parameters of popular desire, and with the goal of ameliorating the conditions of Blacks. Both trope on the stereotype of black women as sexually promiscuous, immoral, and lazy through inversion; that is, they consistently portray characters correct in all matters of deportment. However, Fauset like Nella Larsen does not confine her narratives to contending with negative images; rather, they move forward to pen radically feminist narratives by using the figure of black middle class women to challenge the norms of the larger white society. Replacing the vulgar, uneducated, and

[44] Dohra Ahmad, "More than Romance: Genre and Geography in Dark Princess," English Literary History 69:3 (Autumn, 2002): 776.

promiscuous stereotype, they present the cultivated and prim middle class woman in their novels Quicksand (1928), Passing (1929), Comedy: American Style(1933), Plum Bun(1928), and There is Confusion(1924).

Secondly, these writers use depictions of black middle class women to challenge the norms of the smaller black community that also prove confining. In place of the maternal image of the black woman whose desires are depicted as fulfilled by hearth and home, we have the creation of another kind of woman who seeks fulfillment outside the home.[45]

Ultimately, Fauset denaturalizes the image of black women as the quintessential 'mother'; an image constructed by white male and white female desire, and maintained by black male desire. Barbara Christian notes that the notion of mothering and motherhood is fundamental to Africans throughout the Diaspora. But, as Collins elaborates:

> Black male scholars in particular glorify black motherhood by refusing to acknowledge the issues faced by black mothers...by claiming that black women are richly endowed with devotion, self-sacrifice, and unconditional love-the attributes associated with archetypal motherhood...Black men inadvertently foster a different controlling image for black women, that of the "superstrong black mother."[46]

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[45] In this tradition are Morrison's Sula and Dash's Yellow Mary (Daughters of the Dust)-the girls say "She's another kind of woman, a scary woman" as they struggle with this new model of female independence.

[46] Patricia Hill Collins 451.

Fauset questions marriage, motherhood, and societal expectation revealing that their novels of manners are far more complex and subversive than imagined. Both Fauset and Larsen deconstruct notions of "woman" in the examination of two female characters, Irene Redfield and Olivia Cary neither of whom derive satisfaction from the role of wife or mother.

Fauset undoes the principles of the cult of true womanhood by parodying them as valuable only as a means of obtaining a goal: to pass as white. Similar to Irene in Larsen's novel Passing, Olivia of Comedy: American Style does not conform to expectations of African American mothers. She is cold, indifferent, manipulative, selfish, and single-minded. Her home, children, and husband are significant only as the means by which she hopes to obtain her goal.

Motive is clear as Fauset writes:

> Olivia with very little love for her husband, Dr. Cary, with no enthusiasm, as such, for the institution of matrimony and with absolutely no urge for the maternal life, had nonetheless gone cheerfully into marriage and motherhood because she believed that through her children she might obtain her heart's desire.[47]

Of course her "heart's desire" is to pass as white. Her children are no more than the "incontestable proof of her white womanhood."[48]

Fauset's critique of whiteness in Comedy: American Style (1933) also illuminates the shortcomings of Stahl's film Imitation of Life (1934) which prefers

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[47] Fauset, Comedy: American Style (New York: Frederick Stokes Co., 1933) 37.

[48] Fauset Comedy: American Style 37.

to represent the primary struggle in Peola's life as a desire to be white rather than to acquire the social and economic opportunities that accrue to Whites.

Thirdly, both women writers critique the Du Boisian and Washingtonian aesthetics of militancy and subordination through their black middle class female characters. The novelists reveal that beneath the rhetoric of liberation, uplift, and opportunity, the role of woman continued to be static;[49] after all, neither movement called for the liberation of black women, middle class or otherwise. This stasis is suggested by the almost universally tragic demise of black middle class female characters-for although many are described as having demanding and promising careers; they are invariably depicted as isolated and unhappy by novel's end. These plot resolutions reinforce social convention and therefore appeased the broadest audience base, while the exploration of new types of

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[49] In a critique of black classes rivaling Johnson in his Autobiography of An Ex-Colored Man (1912), filmmaker and novelist Oscar Micheaux presents two diametrically opposed images of black middle class women in his novels and films. Refining portrayals from his first novel, The Conquest (1913) in his second novel The Homesteader (University of Nebraska,1917 complete source to come), Micheaux contrasts Chicago Clubwomen of industry such as Irene Grey who follow the Washingtonian model of land and business ownership, to Decadent Chicago society women such as Orlean, ex-wife of the protagonist (who many assume is based on Micheaux himself). Orlean is weak-willed, pleasure seeking, visionless, morally bankrupt, and socially and politically uninformed which may also be a lampoon of DuBois's talented tenth. Her inability to negotiate the role of wife and daughter serves as a cautionary tale to the overwhelmingly female audience. Similarly, the complicity of Orlean's Reverend father in the financial destruction of her husband, Jean Baptiste, and the spectacular dissolution of their marriage is repeated in the film Body and Soul, Micheaux Productions, 1925 as Micheaux, one might infer, attempts to exorcize his personal demons while performing a bold critique of the black Church.

The tension between the two types is also played out in Lincoln Motion Pictures' The Law of Nature(1917), the Colored Players' Scar of Shame(1927), and Micheaux Productions' The House Behind the Cedars(1924) based on the novel of Charles Chesnutt in the character of Rena who triumphs over her middle class apprehensions to marry a darker skinned businessman rather than a fairer skinned fop.

These portrayals of the craven black middle class woman appear flat when compared to the complex figures in Jessie Fauset and Nella Larsen's novels. One might argue that Micheaux's narratives exploit the "animus against gentility"[49] for commercial profit as his class caricature appealed to the sensibilities of his largely working class black audience. In effect, his films perform an external critique of the black middle class for a working class audience whereas Fauset and Larsen's novels perform an internal critique of the black middle class for an audience of the black middle class.

black middle class womanhood courted a black middle class female readership all while allowing black female authors to become published.

CHAPTER 3

THE DETROIT MOVIE SCENE: VISUAL PLEASURE AND THE BLACK SPECTATOR, 1915-1933

Spectorial relations

Laura Mulvey offers an analysis of visual pleasure obtained by spectators in traditional narrative film in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." Mulvey's analysis provides a useful comparative analysis through which the position of black spectator can be differentiated from the spectator of mainstream Hollywood film. The differentiated viewing position of black spectators is first identified in the film exhibition practices of race theatre owner E.B. Dudley, who hailed the black spectator as a racialized and classed subject. These conditions of exhibition promoted a sense of fraternity and community rather than alienation and separation, which Mulvey identifies as conditions of Hollywood cinema and movie going. Mulvey writes that the cinema is a:

> hermetically sealed world which unwinds magically, indifferent to the presence of the audience, producing for them a sense of separation and playing on their voyeuristic fantasy. Moreover the extreme contrast between the darkness in the auditorium (which also isolates the spectators from one another) and the brilliance of the shifting patterns of light and shad on the screen helps to promote the illusion of voyeuristic separation. Although the film is really being shown, is there to be seen, conditions of

screening and narrative conventions give the spectator an illusion of looking in on a private world.[1]

Whereas Hollywood film and mainstream conditions of exhibition promote passive viewing practices, race film and race theatres promoted active viewing practices. Like black magazines which interpellated black readers as active, progressive, modern, race men and women and American citizens (rather than passive and accepting of inequalities in their personal lives), race theaters hailed black movie goers as active, urbane, discriminating patrons. The position of the black spectator offers new interpretations for viewing relationships and structures of obtaining visual pleasure for all audiences.

This analysis seeks to historically situate the conditions of reception and exhibition in an urban metropolis paying particular attention to how race and class became a marketing strategy for filmmakers and exhibitors in the black community. Part and parcel of this analysis is an interrogation of pleasure as produced by looking relations described by Mulvey. However, this process of identification was far more complicated for the non-white viewer particularly in the period under examination. At this historical moment, distinctions between whiteness and blackness were exacerbated rather than elided by the Race Riots of 1919 in which thousands of Blacks in the north were killed, while northern discrimination in employment and housing was pervasive, and southern lynching continued. The process of identification was also complicated by discourses on race pride that circulated in the black press and were debated by the

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[1] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure," Visual and Other Pleasures (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989) 17.

distinguished black leaders of the day, W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington. For the black spectator, then, it was the New Negro, and not the bourgeois white male that became a focal point and the preferred ideal hero in the consumption and management of images.

From 1915 to 1933, *astute* film exhibitors and race filmmakers hailed the black spectator as a racialized, gendered, and classed subject by appealing to the concept the "new Negro" which was a seductive and increasingly class-laden image as well as an effective marketing tool. Consequentially, an important part of this narrative belongs to the black middle class who appropriated this image and actively worked to create symmetry between middle class respectability and a public performance of this New Negro identity. The New Negro as defined by the black middle class through the black press became *the* exclusive means by which the southern migrant could "join" and hence become the sophisticated urban northerner with full rights and American citizenship. And though this appears a curiously controlling move on the part of this middle class, the pleasure afforded to the Black through the adoption of this new Negro identity represented for many the only opportunity to reach for the American Dream and to imagine oneself as a full American citizen without the threat of humiliation or the pain of death.

The process of spectatorship begins not with film but with the range of interactions between the spectator and conditions of reception, which include location of theaters, promotional strategies, programming formats, the opinions of the black press about movies and theaters, the films themselves, and the psychic

state of the black movie-goer. This discussion of black spectatorship suggests new models for understanding how audiences interact with cinema that takes into consideration film exhibition as well as black cinematic images.

The black spectator is an active rather than passive viewer, reading the film text against notions of class, gender, and race to construct meaning. In this process of identification he/she assumes shifting and often contradictory viewing positions in order to obtain visual pleasure. Informed by feminist approaches that consider looking relations, I explore how the clubwoman, professional woman, and decadent woman are produced by three looks (one that emerges from the apparatus of the camera, a second which emerges from the spectator, and a third which is exchanged between the characters of the diegesis), which is produced when race film is subjected to the principles of classical Hollywood cinema. I examine how the positive and reaffirming image of the black clubwoman of race film becomes a tendentious image, which undergoes splitting and transformation into the contemporary figure of the black professional woman, which is examined in chapter four. The reading of race films is heavily influenced by Mulvey's "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' inspired by King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun* (1946)."[2]

Through newspaper advertisements and news articles, E.B. Dudley, owner and manager of the Vaudette, sought to participate in the conversation about appropriate use of leisure time by positioning his theatre as part and parcel

[2] Laura Mulvey, "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' Inspired by King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun* (1946)" Visual and Other Pleasures (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989) 29-38.

of proper colored society and explicitly catering to "polite" colored society. The theatre emerged at a socioeconomic moment in the black community when the discourse on public behavior had increasingly become a commentary on class performance. New migrants to the city were encouraged to imitate the social codes of respectability that Blacks who had resided in the city for a longer period shared. The conversation on Race pride became an effective vehicle for disseminating the rhetoric of the black middle class as appeals to patronize race film, theatres, and businesses also called for a specific kind of public performance of race pride that reflected the social mores of the black middle class. The New Negro, a term intended to reflect the masses rather than the elites, was appropriated by the black middle class as the discourse surrounding class became increasingly multilayered and the class structure in the black community increasingly bifurcated. The effort to shape the contours of the middle class and its opposite the lower class was self-conscious and filled with tensions between competing interests in the black community as different groups sought to reconstitute the New Negro in their image.

Evolution of Theaters: Entertainment and the Black Population

In 1910 there were forty-three theatres in Detroit, five that catered to a black audience: the Bijou, Castle, Jewel, Liberty, and Vaudette. By 1915 the number more than tripled to 160 theatres with eleven serving the black population: the Beechwood, Bijou, Castle, Catherine, Gratiot, Hippodrome,

Jewel, Liberty, Rosebud, Warfield, and Vaudette. City records do not begin to distinguish movie theatres from vaudeville or theatrical venues until 1916, before then listing all entertainment including parks under the general rubric of "places of amusement."[3] However, after 1916 moving picture theatres were distinguished from all other forms of entertainment, and business directories grew to reflect the expanding film commerce under the new headings: moving picture supplies and repairs, movie posters, movie distributors and film exchanges, and film producers.[4]

In the same year that moving picture theatres obtained a separate heading from other amusements, the black population in Detroit exploded. Or put differently, the same year the black population exploded, moving picture theatres obtained a separate heading, betraying the economic importance of the black community. In 1910 the black population was 5, 700. In 1920 it was 41,000. In 1930 it was 220,000. The expansion of the black community marks a dramatic change in market conditions. It also highlights in the number of movie theatres, the impact of public taste as attention shifted from vaudeville to the increasingly acceptable medium of the motion picture.

Simultaneously, discourses surrounding the appropriate use of leisure time assumed new meaning and urgency in the black community as the

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[3]Detroit City Directory (Detroit, MI: R.L. Polk and Co.) 1909-1934.

[4]Detroit City Directory (Detroit: R.L. Polk and Co.) 1917 forward.

established black middle class (also known as "old Detroiters") attempted to encode the idea of the New Negro circulating in the national black consciousness with middle class mores. This strategic move on the part of the black middle class was intended to restore the social status and privilege formerly accorded the old Detroiter by the white community, before unprecedented numbers of Blacks surged into the city peaking in 1916 and the late 1920s.

Professions of old Detroiters were barbering and catering, which had historically provided Blacks the opportunity for entrepreneurship and from which fortunes were made and wealth transmitted intergenerationally.[5] By 1900 "one quarter of the barbershops in Detroit were Negro-owned."[6] Similarly there were numerous well-established black catering establishments in the city. Blacks flourished in these occupations and provided the necessary business infrastructure for the maintenance of a small but vibrant black community. In addition to the prosperous service class of barbers and caterers were the educated and politically minded aspirants from within Michigan and adjoining states who moved to Detroit, the largest city in Michigan, seeking more varied opportunities in employment and politics.[7]

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[5] David Katzman, Before the Ghetto: Black Detroit in the Nineteenth Century (Urbana: U of Illinois Press, 1975) 116-124.

[6] Katzman117.

[7] Katzman 66.

Prior to 1910 the small black community prospered by catering and barbering to Whites, and enjoyed parks and other public places of amusement. After 1910, however, white Detroiters began to withdraw social privileges such as access to parks and other public areas. Affluent Blacks also experienced white mob violence as they attempted to purchase homes in exclusive, previously all-white neighborhoods.[8] Likewise, employment opportunities in occupations such as catering, barbering, and service, which had been the mainstay of the vibrant black economic community, began to be absorbed by white women and European immigrants who would work more cheaply. Washington also concludes that the shift from black service workers to White appealed to the sensibilities of white Detroiters who followed the cultural lead of Europeans who employed white butlers etc. Likewise, white women whom, railroad officials stated would "boost trade in dining cars" replaced black waiters on the Michigan Central Railway, causing great consternation in the black community.[9]

Unfortunately, the erosion of social privilege became a permanent feature of black-white relations as the white community refigured the black population as a threat. During the period from 1910 to 1930 Detroit, like New York and Chicago was marked by change. Long populated by French immigrants, the black resident population was established in the 1830s as Blacks settled in Detroit, which was a primary stop along the Underground Railroad. On one hand, the

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[8] Dr. Henry Sweet and his family were attacked after taking residence of their home in a previously all-white suburb of Detroit. Dr. A.L. Turner, Chicago Defender, 24 Oct 1925: 4.

[9] "White Girls on Dining Cars; Men Waiters Anxious...Race Most Concerned," Chicago Defender, 9 Jan. 1915: 1.

industrial requirements of the newly developing automotive industry required skilled and unskilled laborers willing to work long hours. Detroit produced four of five automobiles in the world during this period. At the same time, racial divisions became more acute as successive waves of European immigrants were replaced by waves of black migrants. Though numerically smaller, the black migration met with resistance in the form of a loss of social privilege, an opening of some industrial and automotive positions but also a simultaneous decline in employment opportunities in catering, barbering, and service.

Class distinctions in Detroit were particularly acute but were based on subjective provincial attitudes of Blacks residing in the city for at least twenty years. Forrester Washington defines the "feeling of superiority and resulting aloofness that have rapidly increased since the beginning of the war-borne migration from the South" as a product of:

> the provincialism resulting from the isolation of the Detroit Negro from the Negro of the other parts of the country. Detroit not being a railroad center, consequently enjoyed but rarely the visits of "foreign" Negroes nor were there many Negroes passing through for the same reason. Because of the long distance of Detroit from any other city having a large Negro group, Detroit was rarely the seat of conventions of fraternal organizations, business associations etc-so that the Detroit Negro who had a small competence, actually believed that he was the richest Negro in the country because he has never seen or heard of any Negro richer. And, likewise, the local musicians believed they were the most talented

Negro artists in the country because they had rarely heard outside Negro talent.[10]

The "antipathy" of Old Detroiters to "outlanders" or migrants rendered migrants class-conscious.[11] Black migrants found employment in factories, the auto industry, foundries, and service.

The Bottom and Paradise Valley

Although numerically smaller than waves of German, French, and Polish immigrants who were absorbed without similar losses of social privilege, were free to obtain housing where the prices were best, and went on to form neighborhoods such as Dutchtown, Polacktown, and Kentucky, Blacks were concentrated in the near east side due to discrimination in housing. There obtaining adequate housing became increasingly difficult if not impossible. Soon cellars and garages without heating or ventilation were rented as apartments, simple houses were divided into multiple residences, and shacks were constructed in alleyways behind proper housing, and hence Negroes

[10] Forrester Washington, "The Negro in Detroit: A Survey of the Conditions of a Negro Group in a Northern Industrial Center During the War Prosperity Period" (Detroit: Associated Charities of Detroit, 1920) 117-118.

[11] "On the other hand, the migrants themselves are somewhat class-conscious. This is chiefly a reaction to the antipathy against them of the 'old Detroiters.'" These immigrants have come to Detroit to get away from the harsh treatment of the South and to their chagrin instead of finding, as they expected, a royal welcome from the members of their race in their northern haven of refuge, they receive at the best a cold attitude of tolerance," Washington 118.

became known as "alley dwellers."[12] Housing became so difficult to obtain that Forrester Washington in his 1920 survey of Detroit wrote that "pool rooms and gambling clubs are beginning to charge for the privilege of sleeping on pool room tables over night."[13]

Blacks were forced to live in two segregated areas: the Black Bottom and the ironically named Paradise Valley. Blacks were for all intends and purposes a "captive" audience due to the effects of segregation. Within walking range of these two communities were the eleven theatres previously noted: The Beechwood, Bijou, Castle, Catherine, Gratiot, Hippodrome, Jewel, Liberty, Rosebud, Warfield, and Vaudette. Located primarily along Gratiot Avenue and Hastings Street that bordered the Black Bottom and Paradise Valley, the most densely populated black areas in Detroit, these theatres comprised a 'stroll' of amusements rivaling those found in Chicago or New York of the same period. From 1910-1930 Gratiot Avenue was home to The Gratiot, Jewel, Koppin, Rosebud, and Vaudette (also named the Dudley). Along Hastings Street were the Arcade, Castle, Dunbar, Warfield and Willis. Russell Street housed the Holbrook while on Chene the Echo and the Catherine rounded out the black movie district.

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[12] Detroit Tribune, 4 June 1911: 2; June Baber Woodson, A Century with the Negroes of Detroit, 1830-1930, diss., Wayne State U, 1949.

[13] Forrester Washington, The Negro in Detroit: A Survey of the Conditions of a Negro Group in a Northern Industrial Center During the War Prosperity Period (Detroit: Associated Charities of Detroit, 1920).

The economic value of the black community can be traced in Detroit City Records as several theatres are shown as migrating from outlying areas in other ethnic neighborhoods to be nearer to the Bottom and Valley. For instance, the Arcade owned by Harry Oppenheim and later David Oppenheim moved from Library to Hastings and it changed format from billiards to movies, and quite possibly audience too. Likewise, its owner Bernard Wetsman moved the Castle from Grand River to Hastings in 1915. Later owned by Joseph Wetsman and subsequently David Oppenheim, early proprietorship of theatres indicates a consolidation of wealth and influence as theatres were run by successive generations of a single family. Likewise, servicing the black community became a cottage industry as other family members, frequently the wives and daughters of theatre owners, opened Bakeries and Confectionaries adjacent to the theatres to supply treats for the increasingly targeted, coveted, and profitable black movie-going audience.

The Black Press & Race Pride: The Koppin and the Vaudette

Recognizing their economic worth, Blacks organized to resist and boycott unfair and subservient treatment in theatres that supplied the Black Bottom and Paradise Valley. From as far away as Chicago, Tony Langston wrote in the Chicago Defender of the struggle Blacks were waging with the white theatre proprietor Koppin who owned the Koppin theatre from 1909-1930 and the Rosebud 1915-1930 which adjoined the black community and who comprised its

clientele. Yet Koppin refused to hire Blacks in his theatres or to rent row houses to them. Langston wrote:

> "Koppin": That's the name of a money grabber who 'fattens' in Detroit. The people of Detroit, Michigan are confronted with a problem out of the ordinary, but one which has its solution in their own actions. There they have a man who is at the head of two large theaters, both situated on Gratiot avenue in the heart of what might be called the "belt," and both playing to any shekels every day....When H.S. Koppin opened his theater, "The Koppin," he selected a small group of Race men-musicians-and placed them in his orchestra pit; that was fine, as far as it went, but it didn't go any farther, for since the opening day, something over a year ago, he hasn't employed a member of the Race in any capacity. He has refused absolutely to use one of our girls in his box office and every employee, from the front to the rear, is something or other besides one of us. He has even reused to use one of us as a fireguard or doorman, so it has settled down to a place where we have to fiddle and fiddle only for representation. He hasn't even done as well at the "Rosebud" as he has at the "Koppin," "Rosebud" being the name of his other well-paying venture... It is a fact that 90% of his trade is made up of our people. But it won't be for much longer, as the general character of this individual has become known, and the Race people of Detroit are sure to think twice before spending money with a fellow of this description.[14]

[14] Chicago Defender, March 25, 1920: 8.

The black press contrasted E.B. Dudley, owner and manager of the Vaudette, to H.S. Koppin. Dudley was described as the consummate Race man- an industrious, self-made entrepreneur and savvy businessman providing quality service and goods to the black community. He was, in short, the epitome of industry and self-reliance extolled by Booker T. Washington. A former claim agent,[15] a job he held until two years after the Vaudette opened, Dudley's successes were refigured successes of the race in the local Detroit black press as well as the Chicago Defender.

In 1919 the Half-Century Magazine, a black Chicago-based periodical marketed toward the black homemaker and businessman named the Vaudette the only theatre in Detroit, Michigan owned by a Colored man.[16] It further distinguished Detroit and the Vaudette from Chicago's Second Ward: "the heart of the Colored population" in which, it self-critically notes to its readers, "not a single theater is owned by Colored men."[17] The black press had long noted the absence of black owned theaters in cities with large black populations,[18] and communicated to its readers the precarious position this placed black performers, especially of the "refined colored act" with which "white managers has little

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[15] Detroit City Directory 1916: 1028.

[16] April 1919: 9.

[17] Half-Century April 1919: 9.

[18] "The Commercial Instinct," by Lester A. Walton, "Music and the Stage," The New York Age, Thursday, April 4, 1912: 6.

tolerance."[19] The Half-Century's endorsement announced the Vaudette to the middle class readers of the Half-Century, and likened Dudley's race conscious values to the values of both the Half-Century editors and its readers. Because movies were regarded as questionable in content and movie theaters as dens of iniquity, this endorsement serves to distinguish the Vaudette from other white owned Detroit theatres, and legitimized the Vaudette's brand of entertainment as entertainment meeting both the needs and standards of the race. This was especially important to increasing the patronage of the theater to including women and children. Indeed, students and teachers attended as many as nine shows a week,[20] and comprised a valuable segment of the movie-going audience.

At the same time, the black press indicted demeaning filmic images of Blacks in the continued discrimination against Blacks by banks, real estate agents, and others.[21] Writing in 1930, Theophilis Lewis of the New York Amsterdam News concluded:

> The best-known Negro in America is not the industrious, thrifty wage earner or the sober, able business or professional man. When the average white American thinks of a Negro he unconsciously forms a

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[19] "Theatrical Comment," Lester A. Walton, Music and the Stage, The New York Age, Thursday, March 21, 1912: 6.

[20] "And the number of movie fans is on the increase. The fact that the program is changed nightly in most theaters causes many of the patrons to attend several shows a week. Indeed a canvass of the schools in one of the large cities brought out the fact that some of the students as well as the teachers attended as many as nine shows a week." Half-Century Magazine, "Our Need for More Films" by Jean Voltaire Smith, April, 1922: 9.

mental picture of Jazzlips Richardson in makeup. The reason is because that type of Negro, which is practically non-existent, had been continually projected before the public until he has become a stereotype for all Negroes. Hence when Mr. Sober-and-Able Colored Business Man goes to see Mr. White Man about a mortgage or retail credit, Mr. White Man does not see his caller as he actually is. He sees Jazzlips Richardson.[22]

Cognizant of the power of images, the black press as well as spectator scrutinized black images identifying with and celebrating the positive while resisting the negative.

Dudley's concern with bringing films made by the race, which depicted Blacks in a positive light, and exhibiting them in a safe and tasteful theater in Detroit was the subject of numerous stories in the Chicago Defender.[23] Not only was the Vaudette touted for its owner's racial background, but also because it provided relief from the increasingly tawdry vaudeville show and bawdy audiences,[24] and quieted questions concerning the social value of moving pictures. One editorialist opined:

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[21] Theophilis Lewis decried caricatures of Blacks, which unlike stereotypes of other groups were likely to be believed and acted upon by those in a position to discriminate, New York Amsterdam News, March 19, 1930: 8.

[22] New York Amsterdam News, March 19, 1930: 8.

[23] "The Vaudette Theater at Detroit Michigan, is sure setting a hot pace in the booking of films of vital racial interest. Manager E.B. Dudley, known as the "Live Wire of the West," has secured the great six reeler, "Loyal Hearts" for all of next week...That Mr. Dudley does not allow expense, time and trouble to interfere with his "best for his patrons" idea is testified to by the fact that he traveled all the way to New York City to sign contracts for the engagement. It is also understood that he will take over the booking for the picture in this territory." Chicago Defender, Sat, April 3, 1920, 7.

[24] "Miss Wallace is the actress I criticized last week. She excused herself from the immoral features of her dance, but it will be up to the manager to see that she really cuts it out...Woe unto the World's Fair of the past for the limit will not be reached until the mayor of the city goes and takes a seat in the gallery of the Folly Theater and listens attentively to the expressions of the 14-

> Would it not be better then, to encourage more of our people to produce pictures-films of the clean, helpful sort, that will uplift; urge them to build first class moving picture theatres, rather than discourage them from attending picture shows? This would help to keep within the race at least a portion of the millions spent each year by Colored movie fans.[25]

The black press reported objectionable shows and motion pictures to its readers and named theaters where images derogatory to the race were shown.[26] It also acted as an intermediary between outraged viewers seeking redress,[27] movie theater owners, and Defender readers who were always kept abreast of the emerging story. Furthermore, the black press evaluated movies targeted to black moviegoers and warned viewers away from films it considered outrageous in terms of the race, and linked the decision to refrain from seeing these movies

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year-old degenerates who attend the performances. Now what is the use of people turning out in several thousand strong against saloons when their children can sit in certain theaters and look openly at the worst immoral crime of civilization? And the answer is that Chicago is still a living city of the dark age," Musical and Dramatic by Sylvester Russell, Feb 1910 (newspaper fragment, page number unavailable). Also see "Decorum in Our Theaters" by Lester A. Walton, Music and the Stage, The New York Age, December 28, 1911: 6.

[25] Half-Century Magazine, April 1922: 8.

[26] "Here is a letter of protest..."Mr. Langston: I consider it my duty, as a member of the respectable class of theater patrons, to protest against a certain class of pictures which have been and are being shown at the theaters in this district. I refer to pictures being exploited by the Ebony Film Company, according to the advertisements and which make an exaggerated display of the disgraceful actions of the lowest element of the race. It was with abject humiliation that myself and my friends sat through the scenes of degradation shown on the screen, and if they were meant for comedy, the meaning certainly miscarried. When the beastly actions of the degraded of our people are haunted before our eyes in the places of amusement it is high time to protest in the name of common decency... Mrs. D.H."-, Ebony Films, "Theatrical Review," Tony Langston, Chicago Defender, July 1, 1916: 4.

[27] "Another Theatre Manager Fined," Lester A. Walton, "Music and the Stage" New York Age, Thursday, November 23, 1911: 6.

to the preservation of one's "self respect."[28] By admonishing its readers that "someday we will have race dramas that uplift" the race press performed the important function of shaping the black reader's perception that films that were derogatory to the race and films that were coarse and vulgar by middle class standards, were equally an insult to the race. Similarly it proudly encouraged readers to support tasteful race films and theaters owned by members of the race.

Dudley owned and operated a vaudeville house; however, he was able to expand his exhibition format in several years to offer both vaudeville and motion pictures at the same Gratiot Avenue location. What remained constant between his earlier vaudeville house and his later motion picture theatre was Dudley's focus on respectability. The Dudley Theater with Dudley as manager was listed as "polite colored vaudeville" as early as 1919.[29]

Two Audiences: One Approach

E.B. Dudley became a bridge through which movie-going as an appropriate leisure time activity was legitimized. Together with the Chicago Defender, Half -Century, and Crisis, Dudley participated in the evolution of a race consciousness predicated on black middle class values, which shaped notions of

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[28] "I want to advise members of the race to watch the booking advertised by the theaters in the "belt," and when you see one of these so-called "all-colored comedies" advertised, keep your money in your pocket and save that dime as well as your self-respect." Chicago Defender, July 1, 1916: 4.

[29] Detroit City Directory 1919: 862 & 863.

appropriate and inappropriate uses of leisure time. The Vaudette was marketed to maximize its target: a race theater with up-to-the-minute, wholesome entertainment beneficial to the race.

As if acknowledging the truth of the black press's assertion that "Whites have recognized the profit to be made from colored audiences, the race should own its theatres,"[30] Dudley's theatre, later called the Vaudette, immediately ensconced itself in the image of the New Negro, which E.B. Dudley used as an effective marketing tool. Through careful placement of newspaper advertisements among church and fraternity news, careful wording, and selection of films for exhibition, Dudley targeted two black audiences: those who believed themselves to be among the select "polite" strata, and those who desired to join this imaginary community. In 1919, Dudley advertised the Dudley Theatre (the second name under which the theater was listed) as the place of amusement for "polite colored" society.[31] This approach recognized the complaint of the black middle class while courting their patronage, for as a writer of the Chicago Defender wisely noted: "A theatre and especially a Colored theatre must have the patronage of all classes to remain open."[32]

The competition for the black consumer was particularly acute, as different venues appeared from 1915 onward, catering to the tastes of the increasingly

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[30] Chicago Defender, July 1, 1916:4.

[31] Detroit City Directory 1919: 862.

[32] Chicago Defender, Sat, June 3, 1922: 7.

bifurcated black community. Increasingly, attendance at vaudeville performances became a class marker as the truly affluent began to enjoy other forms of leisure, which were not as easily accessible to the unskilled laborer.

One of these locations, Idlewild located 75 miles north of Grand Rapids, gained national recognition and was praised in black periodicals such as The Crisis which called attention to the "flourishing colored colony" as early as 1916 citing its "club house, golf course, and tennis courts" as major attractions and foregrounding the sophisticated clientele it hoped to attract. Created in 1915, Idlewild became the haven of the well-to-do and near-do-well that purchased cottages with the expressed purpose of "vacationing." Instrumental were black sales agents and most significantly, black reverends from Detroit who, from their positions of prominence and social standing, legitimized Idlewild as an acceptable site of leisure. As the appropriate use of leisure time became an increasingly contested issue within the black community, Idlewild emerged as the perfect proprietary haven that simultaneously celebrated black race pride through collective ownership and control of a self-contained black community at a moment when legalized segregation signaled the entrenchment of discriminatory social, economic, and political policies.[33]

The movie "A Pictorial View of Idlewild" (1927) was produced and exhibited in black movie houses to publicize Idlewild as a resort for the "best

[33] Created during an era of segregation by Wilbur Lemon who developed resorts for whites, Idlewild exceeded his expectations with luminaries such as DuBois, Charles Chesnutt, Madame CJ Walker, Joe Louis and wife, Marva purchasing plots in the 2700 acre expanse which hosted crowds up to 24, 000 on major holidays, Detroit Independent, Sep 16, 1927: 5.

classes of people from all over the country" while bus tours were arranged from Chicago, Detroit, and other cities to Idlewild to promote the vacation spot and encourage purchase of the $35 lots.[34] 17,000 lots had been purchased and homes built which ranged in price from $500 to $10,000. Idlewild thrived for five decades until, ironically segregation was outlawed and Blacks were able to vacation wherever they desired. Other Michigan resorts included Benton Harbor.

Located at 244 Gratiot Avenue at the intersection of three major roads--Gratiot Avenue, Catherine, and Hastings--the Vaudette was within the tiny area doubly ensconced in both Paradise Valley and the "blackbottom,"[35] making it within easy walking distance of the city's Blacks.[36] In fact, with rooming houses located on both sides of Gratiot Avenue, as well as clubs, furniture stores, and bathhouses, the theater benefited from heavy foot traffic in its vicinity. On either side of the Vaudette were stores-fourteen to the left and twelve to the right. At the corner of Hastings and Gratiot was a cigar factory while two doors down, at 240 Gratiot, was a photo studio and a second hand furniture store. While the stores averaged between twenty-four and thirty-seven feet in length, the Vaudette was large at sixty-eight feet with a stage of forty feet. Comparatively, other theaters serving the black population had stages of twenty-six feet.[37]

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[34] Detroit Independent ,Sep 16, 1927:5.

[35] The Black Bottom is affectionately regarded as "blackbottom in The Detroit Independent, Sept 23, 1927: 9.

[36] Federal Map of Detroit and Environs, by Federal Lithograph Company, Detroit, MI [c. 1929].

[37] Theaters serving the white population were located in the Grand Circus, southwest of the Bottom. Detroit was the home of the fifth largest theater in the world. Henry Belden Aldridge, Live

In contrast, the Koppin was located in front of the Wayne County Jail, an imposing brick building with stone veneer three times the size of the theatre. Although located on Clinton Avenue, the close proximity of inmates, coupled the policemen permanently stationed at the jail's sheriff's station, cast a negative pall on the Koppin. The deadly hostility of the police toward Blacks was the subject of editorials and might have given Blacks pause when venturing near the Koppin.[38]

Opened in 1913 as the Vaudette,[39] the theater remained open until 1924. In 1925-1926 E. B. Dudley became manager of the Koppin, a position that he held from 1922-3 and again from 1928-29, and manager of the Rosebud, a second property owned by George F. Koppin Amusement Company at 429 Gratiot from 1925-26.[40] In 1925-6 Dudley is listed as the owner of Dudley Real Estate and manager of Koppin and Rosebud Theatres.[41] Dudley's new business,

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Musical and Theatrical Presentations in Detroit Moving Picture Theatres: 1896-1930, diss. U of Michigan, 1973, 3.

[38] "More colored people have been murdered by the police department than in any other two cities in the country during the same period. More colored men have been shot down in the streets without a reasonable excuse than have been lynched in the entire south in the last two years. Many of the killings by the police were less justifiable than the lynchings of Dixie. The Detroit Independent, September 30, 1921: 4.

[39] The theatre was known as the Vaudette 1913-1915, Dudley's 1916-1920, and the Vaudette 1920.

[40] Detroit City Directories 1922-1928.

[41] Detroit City Directory 1925-26:856.

which reflects his entrepreneurial spirit and status as race man is also given coverage in the Chicago Defender.[42]

Edward B. Dudley (not to be confused with S.H. Dudley, President of the United Vaudeville Circuit and booking manager of the circuit's eastern office)[43]also provided employment for Blacks and retired black performers.[44] He featured Willie Tyler, a violinist and Tyler's Orchestra, a five-piece group, and Clarence Lee's Orchestra. He also independently booked acts and solicited acts.[45] Other acts were a part of a larger theatrical circuit that included black theatres in Chicago, Cleveland, Washington D.C., Richmond, and Atlanta.[46]

Seating 650 people[47] and showing three shows a night, The Vaudette, it was claimed, turned patrons away "at every performance."[48] The Vaudette

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[42] "E. B. Dudley, operating manager of the Koppin Theater, Detroit, Mich., has opened a palatial real estate office at 614 Gratiot Ave., just one block east of the theater. Mr. Dudley, who has prospered greatly in the past 10 years, has secured options on some of the finest improved real estate and some of the most modern flat and home buildings in the town. He not only sells, but buys, exchanges and rents, and he states in a recent letter to the writer that he is in position to handle some of the best property in sections of the city in which our people have not yet located. He features handling prospects in advance of their coming to Detroit, as he realizes that hundreds of folks will leave the South this spring for the great industrial center and that no doubt many of them will want to find their places of residence, etc., ready for them when they arrive. He states that a letter will bring a response and data that will prove more than interesting will be forwarded by him on request." Chicago Defender, Feb 14, 1924: 6.

[43] See, for instance, listings for S.H. Dudley in the Chicago Defender, Sat, June 12, 1920, 7.

[44] ""Original Rags" Woolidge has been appointed publicity manager by E.B. Dudley of the Vaudette Theater...Mr. Woolidge is the famous extemporaneous songster who was well known in the theatrical world up to a couple of years ago. Mail will reach him if addressed to 244 Gratiot Avenue, above town and theater." Chicago Defender, Sat, Mar 12, 1921: 4.

[45] Chicago Defender, Sat, Sept 18, 1920: 5.

[46] Other cities include Houston, Baltimore, Birmingham, Chattanooga, Shreveport, Pittsburgh, Kansas City, San Antonio, Louisville, and Tulsa.

[47] Henry Sampson lists theaters and their seating capacities catering to Blacks in Detroit, 1910-1950. Theaters and seating capacity follow: Detroit Arcade 460, Castle 951, Catherine 398, Dunbar 658, Echo 689, Russell 1,046, Warfield 1, 400, and Willis 480 for a total seating capacity

featured vaudeville, "four acts each week" and "changed pictures each day,"[49] which showed from 1-11 p.m. With a stage spanning forty feet, the Vaudette could and frequently did feature a cast of more than thirty performers. In contrast, the Koppin's stage was a mere twenty-six feet, and other theatres that served black populations had stages of eighteen feet.[50]

Dudley extended his advertisement in the local press to the Chicago Defender in 1920. The local black press encouraged Dudley and followed Dudley's entrepreneurship with headlines such as the following: "Dudley Takes the Vaudette Back."

> E.B. Dudley, who sold the Vaudette Theatre two weeks ago, has again come into possession of this popular house, and had plans on foot to make it the most popular playhouse in Detroit. Mr. Dudley says he just can't stay out of the show business and he is never better pleased than when he is furnishing entertainment for the people of Detroit. He had booked one of the finest shows on the circuit for next week and he expects to do capacity business. Hurrah for Dudley![51]

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of 6, 082. The Vaudette does not appear in Sampson's list, which was compiled by the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America. Blacks in Black and White: A Source Book on Black Films. 2nd ed. (Lanham, NJ: Scarecrow, 1995) 636-37.

[48] Chicago Defender, 1920: 10.

[49] Chicago Defender, 1920: 10.

[50] Sanford Fire Insurance map 12/10, 1921.

[51] The Detroit Contender, Sat, May 7, 1921: 1.

The comings and goings of E.B. Dudley and his wife to Chicago were also noted in the Chicago Defender[52] in much the same manner as the comings and goings of Oscar Micheaux.

The press also helped to distinguish Dudley's as not only a race theatre but also a place of high-class entertainment. The price of producing quality entertainment is given as sufficient reason for the increase in price:

> The high cost of living is making itself felt in every line of work and profession. Mr. Dudley, of the Vaudette Theater, had found it necessary, much to his displeasure, to increase the price of admission to 15 cents. Dudley's Vaudette, as the opera house is familiarly known, is and always has been a high class vaudeville house, and in keeping it up to the standard already set made the increase in admission absolutely necessary. Mr. Dudley is one of the foremost opera house managers in the country of color, and he deserves great credit for managing to keep the price to the low level to which it is held.[53]

Koppin did not advertise his prices, choosing instead to advertise the general "Popular Prices."[54] The black press promoted race pride in supporting

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[52] Chicago Defender, Mar 20, 1920: 6 and Sat, Apr 24, 1920: 6.

[53] The Detroit Herald, Thurs, Nov 30, 1916: 2.

[54] The Detroit Contender, Sat, May 7, 1921: 2.

race theatres and encouraged Blacks to patronize Dudley's as a show of support to the race, and as a protest to Jim Crow white theatres or theatres owned by whites.

Dudley's careful deployment of advertisements among the society pages of "polite" colored society coupled with conservative wording, and carefully selected films for exhibition, highlights a deliberate marketing strategy to appeal to the black middle class while also appealing to the masses of unskilled and skilled workers of Detroit's automotive and steel industries. While Koppin advertised "Red Hot Shows" Dudley advertised "Always the Best." To Koppin's "Jazz Stories of Dixie' featuring "Mississippi Flood Scenes that will Amaze and Astonish, " Dudley featured "Man's Duty," a sober account of man's responsibility to the Race. Dudley also secured the appearance of Clarence Brooks, the star of the movie[55] and co-founder of the Lincoln Motion Picture Company,[56] which provided cultural legitimacy to Dudley and the Vaudette, and attracted black patrons.

The Vaudette featured black vaudeville performers. Acts included "The Record breakers" written and staged by Billy King and featuring Gertie Sanders and Theresa Brooks,[57] "Mabel Whitman and Her Dixie Boys,"[58] "Bombay Girls,"[59]

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[55] "A Real Colored Movie Soon at Dudley's "Man's Duty" with Clarence Brooks in Person" The Detroit Contender, Sat, Nov 13, 1920: 4.

[56] Sampson, "Noble Johnson, Dr. J. T. Smith, and Clarence Brooks organize the Lincoln Motion Picture Company in Los Angeles, California" 14.

[57] Chicago Defender, Sat, Feb 21, 1920:7.

[58] Chicago Defender, Sat, June 5, 1920: 7.

Plays included Irvin C. Miller's "Broadway Rastus."[60] He also employed black musicians bridging the social distance among black urban entertainments. With shows running continuously from 1-11 p.m. daily, the Vaudette could accommodate black patrons who worked various shifts in factories as well as other service workers with differing shifts.[61] In contrast, Koppin offered shows, which opened promptly at 11:30 p.m.,[62] as well as a Saturday midnight show.[63]

While Koppin offered Chicago fight pictures such as Dempsey vs. Tunney followed by a midnight revue of the Modern Cocktails "So hot it will burn holes in the curtain,"[64] Dudley included as a part of his weekly advertisements a subtle reminder of America's war status with the phrase "Don't Forget" Liberty every Friday" which suggested a participation in the war effort through patronage of his establishment. As earlier suggested, these opportunities to perform this American identity were scant, and through the consistency of these ads one might surmise their success in increasing Dudley's audience.[65]

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[59] Chicago Defender, Sat, December 11, 1920: 4.

[60] Chicago Defender, Sat, October 22, 1920: 4.

[61] Detroit Contender, Sat, May 7, 1921: 4.

[62] Detroit Independent, June 10, 1927: 2.

[63] Detroit Independent, Oct 7, 1927, General Sport and Amusement: 6.

[64] Detroit Independent, Oct 7, 1927: 6.

[65] "Americanism" was an idea circulated in the black press. See, for instance, the Madame CJ Walker Mfg. Company offer of $250 for the best articles on "The Americanism of the Negro." The Chicago Defender, January 17, 1920: 4. The prize winning essays were printed in their entirety in the Defender Mar 27, 1920, 10. Using film to instruct moviegoers in citizenship was a practice in industry by 1919. See "Americanization Helped by Films-Moving Pictures Taken to Industrial Workers Teach Citizenship," The Detroit Free Press, Tuesday, November 11, 1919: 6.

Exhibition Format

Promotional notices in the black press provide a glimpse of the Vaudette's exhibition format. The Vaudette offered three kinds of entertainment: plays, vaudeville, and motion pictures. Motion pictures were not combined with other forms of entertainment. Vaudeville and plays, on the other hand, were offered on the same program. Advertisements appearing in the Chicago Defender show that by 1921 Dudley restricted Vaudette offerings to vaudeville, which suggests several possibilities including the increasing difficulty of obtaining film, and/or the increasing popularity of vaudeville to patrons. Arthur Benjamin and William Patterson, both black, purchased the Liberty Theater and offered vaudeville exclusively. Additionally, entertainment at the Koppin was also "straight vaudeville with five acts"[66] "fitting every description"[67] by 1923.

Films

Dudley also included among his fare the films of Oscar Micheaux. The Symbol of the Unconquered (1920) had its premiere at the Vaudette Nov 29, 1920.[68] Within our Gates (1920) and The Brute (1920) played in 1920, and

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[66] Chicago Defender, Sat, June 15, 1923: 7.

[67] Chicago Defender, Sat, September 15, 1923: 7.

[68] "Detroit, Mich., Nov 19-Pursuant to his usual policy of giving his patrons the biggest and best while they are new, E.B. Dudley announces that for the week beginning Nov. 29th the latest Micheaux production, "The Symbol of the Unconquered," will be presented and for the first time on any screen. This feature is an eight reeler and is said to be the best of the Micheaux releases.

Dudley also had first run of the Maurice Film Company's six reeler Nobody's Children.[69] Dudley actively supported local Detroit film production by debuting the Maurice Company's Nobody's Children and booking it for a full week. Dudley also took the unusual step of listing booking contact information for the Maurice Film Company in his advertisement, and offering the following endorsement: [70]

> Richard Maurice should be congratulated upon the wonderful skill he used in selecting and training the cast for "Nobody's Children." I am unhesitatingly recommending this wonderful production to be a tremendous record breaker. Any theater owner or manager wishing a strong drama, which stands out upon its merits, with an all-star Colored cast, one that will, make you stand in your theater lobby and face your patronage with a broad smile and a clear conscience and feel as though you have given them their money's worth when they leave, should communicate with the Maurice Film company, 184 East High street, Detroit, Mich."-E.B. Dudley, 224 Gratiot Ave., Detroit, Mich.[71]

Dudley's testimonial which appeared in the Chicago Defender two weeks after the film's Detroit premiere highlights Dudley's understanding of cultivating market and creating a buzz around a film. It also demonstrates the relationship

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Mr. Dudley has also arranged to show the great picture, "In the Depths of Our Hearts," made by the Royal Gardens Film Co., early in December. These are the highest priced bookings ever made by our people, and Mr. Dudley deserves a world of credit for his foresightedness as well as the undivided support of all local Race loving people."

[69] Chicago Defender, Sat, Sept 18, 1920: 4.

[70] Chicago Defender, Sat, Sept 26, 1920: 5.

[71] Chicago Defender, Sat, Oct 15, 1920: 4.

between race filmmakers and race film exhibitors as each worked together to produce, market, distribute, and exhibit race film to the largest black audience possible. Dudley also booked race films such as Royal Gardens Film Company's "In the Depths of Our Hearts."[72]

[72] Chicago Defender, January 1920: 4.

CHAPTER 4

Race Film: Reception of Black Images

While Blacks negotiated the race and class politics of selecting movie-going as an acceptable leisure time activity and selecting an appropriate venue for receiving this entertainment, they also faced a third task of negotiating cinematic images of Blacks. Black viewers were primed by the conditions of exhibition and reception to be active viewers of black images. Therefore, in their roles as black spectators they actively reconstructed images of Blacks.
One site of negotiation of black images in spectorial process is the oral or spoken. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam note that "The very term "image studies" symptomatically elides the oral and the "voiced," and an "alternative to the mimetic 'stereotypes-and-distortions" approach...is to speak less of 'images' than of 'voices' and 'discourses.'" This approach "in the cinema would emphasize less a one-to-one mimetic adequacy to sociological or historical truth than the interplay of voices, discourses, perspectives, including those operative within the image itself."[73] Black images in film and later television can be read as polyphonic signs, which effectively move the discourse away from theorizations of classical Hollywood cinema, which have framed (or confined) analysis of black images.

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[73] Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media (London: Routledge, 1994): 214.

However, it is the ambivalence that Bhabha describes as a feature of stereotype that calls attention to the play or process of image construction that cannot be overlooked. By examining the auditory aspect of black images coupled with images, this analysis highlights the range of interpretations available to black viewers –a range which resists the rigidity or "'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness."[74]

Furthermore, the universe of discourse described by magazine covers, editorials, and magazine fiction in chapter one, the function of the black press in disseminating news and shaping attitudes toward deportment, the requisite behavior and practice of race consciousness, films, and the conditions of exhibition at a race theater participate in the process of black spectator formation. These processes over determine the black spectator as an active spectator rather than as a passive spectator. This active position is predicated on race rather than gender; therefore, the black female spectator who has been interpellated by race theaters and the black press as an (active) race woman is not the passive "Andromeda [who] stays tied to the rock, a victim, in danger, until Perseus slays the monster and saves her."[75] The active, empowered black woman was celebrated in the black press. As a result, the black female spectator does not need to identify with the white (active) male on-screen hero to experience pleasure because structures in the black community permit,

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[74] Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture (New York: Routledge, 1994): 66.

[75] "The 'convention' cited by Freud (active/masculine) structures most popular narratives, whether film, folk-tale or myth (as I argued in 'Visual Pleasure'), where his metaphoric usage is acted out literally in the story," Laura Mulvey, "Afterthoughts" 32.

encourage, and demand that she be (an) active (race woman) already. Therefore, the black middle class woman is already constituted in a pleasurable spectorial position.

Images of black middle class women became tendentious when race filmmakers incorporated emerging Hollywood genres such as the melodrama, which reflected a "grammar" of active/male, passive/female that was not the *habit* of black people.[76] These race films, therefore, oscillate between two points: one, which reinforced an active (black) participant, another predicated on the passivity of the (black) female. The resultant tension between these two points reconstitutes images of black middle class women.

The independent black woman of magazine fiction, literature, and early race film (films created under production values different from the emergent classical Hollywood cinema) undergoes splitting into two types. One, the clubwoman functions to reinforce the value of racial uplift activities and responsibility to the race, the other, the decadent woman, functions to repudiate social commitments, marriage, and domesticity. The clubwoman, who is not subject to the look (she is not sexualized/does not become the subject of male erotic desire) is reconfigured by the conventions of classical Hollywood cinema as threatening castration of males (economic, emotional equals and refusing to be subject/subordinated/objectified by the male gaze), and overturns narrative closure by repudiating marriage.[77] Because marriage "plays the same part in

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[76] I am using *habit* in the sense that Mulvey uses it in "Afterthoughts" 33.

[77] Mulvey writes that the Western hero is "split" by two attractions, one "celebrating integration into society though marriage, the other celebrating resistance to social demands and

creating narrative resolution, but is even more important in that 'marriage' is an integral attribute of the upholder of the law,"[78] the black middle class woman's ability to determine her desires and aspirations disrupts male identity. She is not "caught between two men"; therefore she denies them meaning since "their alternative attributes acquire meaning from her."[79]

As a result, the figure of the clubwoman becomes ambivalent in race film adhering to principles of classical Hollywood cinema. The tension that surrounds the character in film is resolved by a merging of the clubwoman with the decadent woman to produce the professional black woman-a sophisticated, professionally competent, emotionally distant, sexually threatening black woman.

Micheaux's depictions of black middle class women are tendentious as he presents genteel bourgeois characters to reconstitute pejorative images of Blacks circulating with renewed vigor after Birth of a Nation (1915), and also to reaffirm the high communal standard set for the black community by the black press, religious and professional organizations, fraternities and sororities. At the same time, however, he stages an "animus against gentility"[80] by caricaturing the black bourgeoisie for the amusement of his largely working class, migrant audience. Therefore, because "external" social and historical events influenced

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responsibilities, above all those of marriage and the family, the sphere represented by woman." "Afterthoughts" 34.

[78] Mulvey "Afterthoughts" 34.

[79] Mulvey "Afterthoughts" 35.

[80] Benjamin DeMott, The Imperial Middle (New York: Morrow, 1990) 59.

the "internal" functioning of race film images, Micheaux's images of black middle class women underwent the pressure to rehabilitate images of Blacks in general, and black women in particular. However, to maintain his largely working class audience he borrows the representational procedures of narrative film codified by Griffith and other early creators of narrative cinema.[81] These cinematic procedures (montage, camera movements such as tracking shot and pan, close-up) "perfected in the wake of the narrative endeavor" necessarily privilege narrative film over other kinds of film.[82] These narrative procedures also create a "syntax," which constrains the subversive, multiple meanings of cinema: "the filmic space is subversive in allowing an almost polymorphically perverse oscillation between possible roles, creating a radically broadened freedom of identification."[83] Ultimately, the binary codes of white/black, good/evil—or, in this case, good/bad woman used to structure narrative cinema replace the multiple and competing versions of clubwomen and professional black women available in black magazine fiction of the Half-Century magazine and the Harlem Renaissance novels of Jessie Fauset and Nella Larsen. The experimental probing of black images may have influenced the codification of narrative film

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[81] "Historians of the cinema generally agree in dating the beginnings of the "cinema" as we know it in the period 1910-1915. Films *like Enoch Arden, Life of the Czar, Quo Vadis?, Fantomas, Cabira, The Golem, The Battle of Gettysburg*, and above all *Birth of a Nation* were among the first films, in the acceptation we now give this word when we use it without a determinant: Narration of a certain magnitude based on procedures that are supposed to be specifically cinematographic." Christian Metz, from "Film Language" rpt in Film Theory and Criticism. Eds. Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford UP, 1979): 171-72.

[82] Metz 172.

[83] James Snead, White Screens, Black Images: Hollywood from the Dark Side. Eds. Colin MacCabe and Cornell West (New York: Routledge, 1994) 23.

and the creation of a new "cinematographic language" which did not subject the image to the conditions of storytelling (such as documentary film).[84]

The following analysis of Girl from Chicago (1932) and The Scar of Shame (1927) explores the clubwoman, the professional woman, and the decadent woman. The professional woman, who is suggested by Norma Shepherd of Girl from Chicago, is the binary opposite of the decadent woman, Liza Washington. Norma, although cast in the mold of the clubwoman, is transformed in the course of the film into an acceptable black middle class woman, which is a figure that invites the erotic male gaze and stabilizes male identity through marriage.

Depiction of black middle class women in race film

Two distinct types represent black middle class women in race film: the clubwoman and the decadent woman. The clubwoman is the epitome of New Negro womanhood. Educated, professionally trained, self-directed in service of the race, God-fearing though not overtly so, and above moral reproach, these women are depicted as dedicating their lives to the 'uplift' of the black community. In early race film, which positions the black spectator as active, the clubwoman is the ideal of black womanhood.

[84] "Film aestheticians have often remarked that filmic effects must not be "gratuitous," but must remain "subordinate to the plot." This is another way of saying that the significate of connotation can establish itself only when the corresponding signifier brings into play *both* the signifier and the significate of denotation" Metz 174.

Clubwoman

In race film these types are constructed as "good" women, because they embody the characteristics of the Race woman. Although their attentions are focused outside the home, the work they perform reinforces family values and female subordination to male authority, making women's clubwork, as Molly Haskell intimates, an extension of the domestic arena. Clubwomen are also celebrated in the popular press as paragons of virtue and appropriate models of black female respectability.[85] Their work is acknowledged and they are called upon in the press and in race film to assist the race by policing the morality and public behavior of black women. Headlines read: "Women Need Correction: City Clubs Must Help" and "Club Women to Start Reform on Movie Actresses":

> Los Angeles, CA. "After careful investigation, clubwomen will seek out any actress whose disgraceful actions have become the subject of street comment and attempt to show her how she is injuring the reputation of her Race.

The article goes on to say that the clubwomen only regret that they did not attempt to reason with Nina Mae McKinney whose behavior resulted in the loss of her contract with MGM.[86]

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[85] "Mrs. E.B. Dudley, wife of the managing owner of the famous Koppin Theater, Detroit, Mich., accompanied by her son and her mother, Dr. Bledsoe, are in Chicago attending the convention of the Federation of Women's Clubs." Chicago Defender, Sat, Aug 9, 1924, Chart 1, 8.

[86] Chicago Defender, Nov 22: 1930.

In the following clip taken from Micheaux's Girl from Chicago, Mrs. Morris in a somewhat motherly fashion admonishes the young Norma to seriously consider her future.

The intertitle reads: "While somewhere in dear old Virginia, Norma Shepherd, a recent graduate of the local high school-"

Mrs. Morris: Now that you've finished school Norma dear, just what are your plans for the future?

Norma: Oh Mrs. Warren, I'm glad to see you have such an interest in me. Now as to my plans for the future...

Mrs. Morris: Why Norma dear, don't tell me that you haven't any plans

Norma: Oh yes, I have some plans made. But they're not very definite I haven't quite decided just what I shall do.

Mrs. Morris: I see, like most young girls you want to play around a while before you settle down to business. That's all right, dearie, I'm not going to scold you but I want you to be different, Norma. You see I've taken an interest in you. By the way, I have a letter from a friend of mine in Batesburg. Only today and they want a teacher and I think you're just the girl for that position. Now I have the letter with me-I'll let you read it.

Norma: I'm certainly grateful to you Mrs. Warren for giving me this opportunity...

Mrs. Warren: Very well Norma, be a sweet girl...And I hope to see you soon.

The young lady is gently directed toward a vocation and cautioned against inappropriate leisure. Marriage is not presented as an option; rather it is clear that Norma is expected to assume roles of responsibility, conform to conventional standards of decorum, and to become a credit to the race. Teaching is a professional occupation and would place Norma among the top 5% of black female Detroiters.[87]

The audience would have understood Mrs. Morris to be a fairy godmother figure intervening on the behalf of Norma, who appears well reared and protected yet without mother or father. The protection of home is represented in the garden in which the women meet and exchange pleasantries. It becomes a protected domestic location and extension of the home, which permits members of the social class to mingle and exchange social advantage. These connections foster the extension of the middle class.

Norma is depicted in the company of other, older black women who act as surrogate mothers or mentors. Norma listens to the pianist with polite pleasure. While the scene provides musical entertainment for the black viewer, it also suggests an evening routine imagined commonplace in the homes of the black middle class. The audience composed of Norma and Mrs. Austin, the rooming house owner, and the singer are depicted as enclosed in the domestic warmth of a house. The shot also reveals the community of black women who enjoy each other's company and importantly reproduce their values in the young Norma.

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[87] Using the US Thirteenth Decennial Census 1910, IV, 554-555, 4.6% or 40 Black women are listed as having professional occupations (teaching, nursing, clerical, public singers) in Detroit. In contrast, 9.9% or 157 black men were listed as professionally employed, 553-554.

Norma is clothed in a floor length pale colored dress made of a lace. The fabric and cut of the dress suggest Norma's delicacy. The bow at the collar and coordinated belt in the same color at her waist suggest balance and order. In contrast, Jeff Ballinger's woman, which is also the title of the book from which the movie is based, is depicted in a "masculine" confrontational stance, arms akimbo and hands on hips.

The following dialog ensues:

Jeff Ballinger: Oh cut the arguing...After all you'll be well taken care of. What are you crying about?

Liza: "Oh, I'm not crying Jeff Ballinger I'm just trying to tell you that I'm leaving you do ya hear, I'm leaving ya..."

Jeff Ballinger: "Leave and be damned I don't care. You'll be leaving for years.

Liza Hatfield: "Well I mean what I say JB and unless you give me what I'm asking for I'm liable to forget and begin to talk, do you get that?"

"So you're thinking of talking are you? I think you won't be doing so much talking after all, damn you! (shoots her)

In a two-toned dress marked by a triangle that neatly bisects her torso obscuring the feminine contours of her body, Liza is masculinized. Unlike Norma whose arms are visible through sheer fabric and demi tasse sleeves, Liza's arms are completely obscured by pendulous sleeves which taper into dark fabric that binds her wrists and elongates her arms. The threat of castration symbolized by her arms is intensified by her voice, which is low, hard, and unflinchingly street-

wise. Unlike Norma who speaks in an unnaturally high and childish voice which matches the benign nature of her utterances, and who therefore provides a "feminine" contrast to the "masculine" voice of Alonzo and Jeff, Liza speaks in a the voice of a mature woman. Not only is her voice low like her lover's, but also her rate of speech is as slow and deliberate as his. She is his equal. As they square-off- a dark vest over her dress and cloche covering her hair when paired with her stance (arms slightly akimbo) mimics the stance, attire, and attitude of a cowboy. After a brief stand-off in which they partly circle each other, she metaphorically draws by telling him that she is leaving. When he attempts to call her bluff by saying, "Leave and be damned I don't care. You'll be leaving for years," she shoots him by repeating her threat but with a key signifying difference- she demands something in exchange for her silence. Before this moment, the power relationship between Liza and Jeff is one of equality, which threatens patriarchy. The narrative neutralizes this threat by positioning Liza as the "bad" woman, a fact that is related by none other than Norma, who shares the rumor of Liza's infidelous past with Alonzo-thereby consolidating her own position within the social order, and Liza's position outside of it. Cast out of the bourgeois milieu, Liza's presence can no longer destabilize the social institution of marriage and the rules governing the behavior of women, from which male authority and identity is predicated. At the moment that Liza becomes active and demanding, she penetrates the social construct of masculinity cinematically represented by the binary of active/male passive/female, and must be dealt with.

Liza, who is married to Wade Washington, is discovered wounded and bleeding. When Wade realizes that Jeff Ballinger has shot her, he reveals that he has known all along that she is Jeff's woman—the whole town knows. Then, in an interesting turn of events, she, in quick succession contemptuously calls her husband a coward, mournfully refers to herself as a "wicked woman," then plaintively states, "but I can only seem to love you and feel it when you beat me. Wade why don't you take your fist and smack me in the mouth. Go ahead Wade, smack me in the mouth so I can love you." In this drama, Liza's oscillation replaces Micheaux's habitual staging of conflict between the North and South. Instead, the tension between the active, independent black woman (of early race film) that is signified by Liza's kinetic and spoken language, and the passive, dependent (white) woman (of classical Hollywood cinema) is manifested in the figure of the black middle class woman. Liza's ambivalence produced by conflicting narrative objectives motivates the action of the diegesis.

Ultimately, narrative is structured around Norma who occupies the passive/feminine position in the film. Her demeanor-poised and reserved as well as her child-like voice characterize her as innocent, virtuous, and non-threatening. Narrative resolution is enabled by the marriage of Alonzo and Norma; Jeff Ballinger and Alonzo White come to know themselves through her.

The decadent woman is also depicted in the Colored Players' film Scar of Shame released in 1927. Rather than casting the fallen female protagonist as inherently evil or "bad" the Colored Players offer the corruptive influence of environment as an explanation to the demise of Louise Howard. She is

repeatedly depicted as fighting against the onslaught of exploitation and manipulation by various male characters.

Characteristics of the decadent woman are extended from Micheaux's Conquest, Homesteader, and Girl from Chicago to include women who smoke, drink, and inhabit social spaces conventionally regarded as masculinized such as dance clubs. Firm contrasts are provided by 'good' or virtuous women who occupy the feminized spaces of the home which undergo a subtle revaluation so that proper young lades like Sylvia Landry and Alma Pritchard of Within Our Gates are depicted as engaged in certain social activities in the semi-private semi-public space of the parlor, while Louise Howard of Scar of Shame is depicted as socially isolated and without a circle of friends in the formerly privileged, secluded space of the bedroom. Although she is married, her lack of purpose implies a corresponding lack of seriousness, which is underscored by her childish preoccupation with a black baby doll that she plays with, interrupting her husband as he attempts to fulfill his duty to the race by becoming a leading musical composer.

It is equally their vice *and* their lack of ambition or purpose that consigns women to this type. As race films were didactic, providing clear examples of behavior and their ramifications, decadent women provided the contrast to good women. Absent from the film is the mother, a socialite whose class pretensions clearly motivate her son, whose agency, of course cannot be overlooked.

The delicacy of her position is repeatedly depicted through the encroachment of several males into her private domain. As a poor but attractive

young woman without the protection of father or husband, she is subject to the desire of numerous makes Others. The tragedy the Players depicts occurs as the father-figure, Spike fails to offer Louise any measure of security, and ironically becomes the means through which Louise is eventually associated with the criminal element represented/embodied in the film by Jeff.

A social commentary film that critiques alcoholism during the height of Prohibition, Scar of Shame progressively traces the precarious position of black women within the black community. Louise's vulnerability emerges from a culture of poverty that places her within a public sphere. The patriarchal middle class family unit upon which the American family is modeled is absent. Spike is unemployed. Without his labor he cannot effectively assume the mantle of patriarch which structures the black family as Frazier describes in The Negro Family. As a result, the family is fragmented, a fact which is suggested by the absence of the mother, and the daughter venturing outside the home to sell her labor.

The economic failure of Spike has far reaching implications, as the family unit represented by the father-daughter dyad must coexist in a multifamily apartment tenement. Louise, then, is visible rather than invisible within the unprotected space of the common living area. Without a parlor or a separate working space, she must negotiate the male gaze on his terms. The power of the gaze is depicted in one key scene as the camera focuses a bird's-eye-view of Norma laboring under the hot sun. Perspiring exhausted, and with the

appearance of despair, Norma wipes sweat from her brow repeatedly as she scrubs laundry on a washboard.

The film establishes boundaries between men and women as virtuous or 'good' women are depicted as occupying the feminized space of the parlor. Sylvia Landry and Alma Pritchard of Within Our Gates and Mrs. Green of Scar of Shame are shown engaging in certain social activities within this semi private, semi public space. Louise, as the narrative of domesticity unfolds, is depicted as occupying the socially isolated space of the marital bedroom, and without a female community for support. It is the absence of these gendered, racial and economic communities that contributes to Louise's downfall. The intertitles melodramatically conclude: "if we are unfortunate and do not have a knowing, loving hand. We will fall victim to shame."

Without these structures of support to mediate or cushion Louise from the corruptive environment, she must interact with them directly to the detriment of her character. Effectively depicting the original state of innocence and moral rectitude of young black women, the film depicts the young lady brooking hardship, physical intimidation, and the "easy" life of gambling, drink, and scams. The protection offered by Mrs. Greene, the proprietor of a rooming house, proves temporary as Jeff followed by Spike abrogates her authority by trespassing into her home. It is only the intervention of the male bourgeois figure Alvin, whose class and gender threaten the audacious pair that Jeff and Spike recognize their

defeat.[88] Similarly, absent a female mentor like Mrs. Morris of Micheaux's Girl from Chicago, Louise is not exposed to alternate models of black womanhood that would provide a sense of purpose and hope. Without social support, Louise has little to combat the encroachment of despair bred from an environment of vice.

Her formative environment is contrasted with Alvin's middle class background from which he derives models of male success suggested through his mother's letter.[89] The camera invites the spectator into the narrative by positioning the letter to be read. Through its contents the spectator finds information about Alvin's social class, their expectations, and activities. One also finds there described the manner of woman intended for Alvin.

Alvin will fulfill his duty to the race by becoming a leading musical composer. Meanwhile Louise is depicted as a girl-woman preoccupied with a black baby doll from her youth much as Lillian Gish is depicted as the childish Elsie Stoneman of Birth of a Nation. However, while Louise's childishness is portrayed as a negative consequence of environment and ultimately a hindrance

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[88] Their defeat is only temporary as Jeff conceives a plan that will use the class and gender of their adversary against him. Jeff conceives a story that will send the contentious middle class son home. While thus engaged, Jeff will seize Louise.

[89] The camera invites the spectator into the narrative by positioning the letter to be read. Through its contents the spectator discovers information about Alvin's social class, their expectations, and their social activities. One also finds there described the manner of woman intended for Alvin. With this information the audience is prepared to compare Louise to this absent but threatening middle class ideal.

to the progress of the race,[90] Elsie's childishness is depicted as an ideal state of white womanhood and one to be preserved at all costs.

Louise "oscillates" between different paths, which are symbolized by the two men. While her husband represents the "correct" path, which is depicted by education, training, and racial uplift, Jeff embodies the "outlaw" who is embodied by gambling and alcoholism. However, Louise is shaped in "their terms that make and finally break her."[91] Jeff and his desires effectively transform Louise at the very moment that she surrenders her naïveté. Her stance changes, her attire is transformed from fashionable to flapper, and her demeanor becomes hardened as she negotiates his "offer." They will run "scams" together, but she gamely states that she will not be his lover. Street smart and cocky her new demeanor does not signify a mastery of environment, but an empty shield against abuse and exploitation. Within the limited opportunities for female agency in the narrative, which juxtapose the enclosed space of the bedroom and the debilitating structure of enforced bourgeois domesticity (femininity/passive) with a life of play and illegal adventure (masculinity/active), Louise chooses the latter. However, because narrative closure depends on marriage and Louise has repudiated this social ritual, she must die.

In the final scene, the film didactically disturbs the glamour surrounding Louise and her luxurious boudoir furnishings, exposing the pathos of her

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[90] Louise hinders Alvin's expressed purpose of becoming a great composer of the race. Additionally, her life subsequent to her capitulation (ie. scamming patrons) contributes to the illicit life critiqued in the film.

[91] Mulvey "Afterthoughts" 36.

decadent life for the black spectator. Both Scar of Shame and Micheaux's God's Stepchildren (1938) underscore the consequence of decadence through the suicide of black female protagonists, Louise and Naomi, who fail to recognize their responsibility to the race and therefore their independence.

Conclusion

In the social and historical context marked by segregation, exploitation, and a visible 'deferment' of the American Dream, one Race Film Exhibitor, E. B. Dudley sought to create a protected space in which race films could be shown. The Vaudette became a social gathering place for the black community and featured a variety of entertainments, which pleased and satisfied the black Detroiters' appetite for current acts, which also connected him to his imaginary neighbors in other black cities like Chicago and Washington D.C.

Dudley's film exhibition strategy and the conditions of reception fostered in his theater create new structures for cultural agency and the production of alternative viewing strategies. These new structures-race consciousness, movie-going as a ritualized practice celebrating Americanness and a first class citizenship, and race theaters as protected social gathering spaces for African Americans highlight new opportunities for pleasure in the cinema that extends the pleasure described by looking relations in Mulvey's analysis.

The use of specialized lighting rumored in the black press to capture the nuances of black coloration,[92] as well as shots foregrounding black subjects, sound, and classical Hollywood narrative, in place by 1915, increased race film's bourgeois appeal while attempting to position the spectator into a passive acceptance of film values. However, as film in general and classical Hollywood cinema in particular serve the status quo, replicating structures of oppression that subjugate the disempowered, the effort to depict black subjects sensitively and as possessing agency in race film was threatened with erasure or cooptation by the very media that lent it expression.

The "grammar" of race discourse deconstructed the "active/masculine structure of most popular narrative" and placed the black middle class woman in a position of cinematic equality with men. While black authors of magazine fiction invented opportunities to "speak" of independent and active black women, race filmmakers failed to extend these images, or narrative context which would support the further differentiation and proliferation of black middle class female images. Instead, race filmmakers played an unwitting part in isolating the fictive images of black professional women and surrendering the structures of story-telling to white Hollywood filmmakers.

[92] Chicago Defender, Feb 17, 1934, 5; April 13, 1935: 11.

Chapter 5

PROFITS AND POLITICS: IMAGES OF BLACK MIDDLE CLASS WOMEN IN JULIA AND THE COSBY SHOW

By 1939 the three major radio networks, NBC, ABC, and CBS had made the transition to television, bringing with them the programmic formats that had proven instrumental to their success. Foremost among these formats was the comedy. By 1964 the situational comedy had proven the most successful television genre accounting for 43% of regularly scheduled programming"[1] and 50% of Nielsen's top 20 programs. While other television genres such as the talk show, game show, soap opera, police show, detective show, fantasy, docudrama, and television news attracted moderately sized audiences, the situational comedy was distinct in its degree of popularity. The situational comedy was so powerful that it altered the composition of the television schedule, driving other formats off the television schedule during the height of its popularity.[2]

The audience driven appeal of this format garnered the attention of manufacturers who, like television executives, sought the best marketing conditions for their products. The manufacturer sought to expose its product to the widest possible audience, and to target the segment of the population most likely to purchase its product. The television producer, on the other hand, sought

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[1] Lawrence Mintz, "The Situation Comedy," TV Genres (Westport: Greenwood P., 1985): 107.

to attract the widest possible audience for its visual product in order to attract sponsors who offset pre and post production costs, and salaries associated with the show, therefore increasing the networks' profitability. A successful television format, therefore, was integral to the television networks' business strategy. The needs of both parties converged in the situational comedy, which realized several objectives simultaneously. First, it drew the largest audience across the most diverse audience pool. Nielsen, who began indexing radio advertisers in 1942, made the transition to the lucrative television market tabulating audience composition by demography, race, gender, age, marital status, and economic status.[3] These numbers were translated into ratings that became the currency upon which television executives made programmic decisions, and costs of commercial airtime before, during, and after television shows were determined.

Although television exposed more consumers to products than radio, by 1968 the television advertiser/sponsors had reason to be concerned. Between 1964 and 1968 the number of commercials in prime time television increased by 50%[4] and yet, according to one survey, "75% of the viewers tested had no recollection of what products they had just seen demonstrated."[5] Therefore, the push to improve marketing intensified and the television show became a

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[2] Mintz 107.

[3] Nielsen. Nielsen Media Research. African-American Television Usage: Primetime. May 2, 2002.<http://nielsenmedia.com/ethnicmeasure/african-american/Aaweeklyusage.html>.

[4] "As We See It," TV Guide 24 January 1970: 4.

[5] Time, 12 July 1968: 56.

commodity that was sold to the sponsor as a distinctive advertising space promising carryover attention to the sponsor's product. Therefore, the "business of television comedy is not to make people laugh: it is to manage consumption."[6]

Television is a profit-driven industry with statistical and financial records that are acted upon by television executives and sponsors who are tied together in relationships that may be described as mutually dependent and semiotic. The nature of these relationships extends to television producers and scriptwriters who correctly interpret their responsibility as conceiving programs that will sell: "Writers and producers are acutely sensitive to formulas and conventions, and to 'track records'" and "adapt to their creative environments."[7] Ultimately, the "situation comedy depends largely upon the general approach you find on a given production lot."[8]

Secondly, by 1968 the television industry had been in place for nearly thirty years and required continued expansion to maintain its profitability. Entering this second phase of development, NBC, ABC, and CBS sought to improve their individual market shares through programming and increasing the numbers of television sets in each home. With disposable income at its highest level ever climbing 7% in 1968,[9] and consumer credit experiencing its largest one

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[6] Robert Lewis Shayton, "Julia": A Political Relevance?" Saturday Review, 20 July1968: 37.

[7] Mintz 117.

[8] Sheldon Leonare and Carl Reiner, "Comedy on Television: A Dialog," Television, the Creative Experience ed. A.W. Bluen (New York: Hastings House, 1967) 95.

[9] Time, October 11, 1968: 55.

month increase in 27 years-nearly one billion dollars[10]-- the television industry launched a strong marketing campaign for color television. Replacing the old black and white set became a recurring story in the popular television weekly TV Guide, as readers were apprised of the affordability, features, and reliability of the new color television set.[11] Additionally, TV Guide prominently delineated color programs and carried program advertisements that stressed color broadcasting.

Color became the marketable not only to television manufacturers but also to the television networks, as executives at one, NBC found a competitive edge by marketing the network as "The Full Color Network."[12] Using the multicolored peacock as its emblem, NBC identified itself with color in print and television. Carefully monitoring the numbers of color television sets,[13] it also provided glossy color photographs of its network stars to promote "department stores' advertising of color television sets."[14]

It is of critical importance to analyze how television shows are marketed, and how the economics of marketplace distinguish official narratives that "sell" the show and de-emphasize or sublimate unofficial narratives to further enhance the commodification of black images. In focusing on the economics of the

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[10] Time, October 11, 1968: 55.

[11] Shopping for a color set" is typical of these features "portable sets with longer warranties-and with prices about the same." David Lachenbruch, TV Guide, September 21, 1969: 6.

[12] John Scuoppo, letter to Hal Kanter, 12 June 1970, Hal Kanter Collection, Wisconsin Historical Society, U of Wisconsin, Madison.

[13] Hal Kanter, letter to John Scuppo. 17 June 1970, Hal Kanter Collection, Wisconsin Historical Society, U of Wisconsin, Madison.

entertainment marketplace, this study hopes to avoid the reinscription of dominant values endemic in Bogle's character based study Toms, Coons, Mammies, and Mulattos. The centrality of economics also decenters the sociopolitical criticism of J. Fred MacDonald, Robin Means Coleman, Robert Shayton and a host of others who effectively reproduce the marginalization of previously marginalized groups through their critique of black middle class women.

Thomas Cripps and Donald Bogle provide useful character-based studies of black images in Slow Fade to Black and Toms, Coons, Mulattos, Mammies, and Bucks. Likewise, K. Sue Jewell, J. Fred MacDonald, and Robin Means Coleman offer valuable sociological examinations of black images in their respective books, From Mammy to Miss America and Beyond, Blacks and White TV, and African American Viewers and the Black Situation Comedy. Interestingly, studies that consider the relationship between black images, commerce, and social reform are oddly absent. These omissions become more conspicuous when one considers the chief objective of television sponsors and executives is to sell entertainment products. This study considers how unofficial and official narratives were used to market the black image, and how the needs of the television producer and advertiser converged in the figure of the black middle class woman, who functioned as a socially approved model for black viewers. This image of black female success, which was derived from the historic presence of black women in the nursing profession, was emptied of its

[14]John Scuoppo, letter to Hal Kanter, 12 June 1970.

sociopolitical power in the black community, and was made to function ideologically in service of non threatening mainstream values.

Julia aired on NBC from September 17, 1968 to May 25, 1971. Featuring Diahann Carroll as Julia Baker, a widowed black nurse raising her six-year-old son, Corey, in an integrated apartment building, Julia was the first situation comedy to feature a black professional-female lead. Julia's social interactions with her white neighbors, professional encounters as a nurse at Astrospace Industries, and her transition from Indiana to Los Angeles were a centerpiece of the series that took an "uncomplicated" look at black middle class life. Called "trite, sugary and preposterous" by some, NBC statisticians reported that the show attracted the black middle class and an "up-scale-urban, wealthier, and better educated audience than the average."[15]

Television and entertainment magazines targeting the mass audience such as Good Housekeeping, Ladies Home Journal, TV Guide, Time, and Ebony, and magazines intended toward a scholarly audience such as The Saturday Review, printed stories that attributed the idea of the program to a speech given by Roy Wilkins, Executive Director of the N.A.A.C.P., on May 22, 1967. Among the audience of motion picture and television executives, sat Hal Kanter who remembered:

> Wilkins spoke with dignity and passion on the plight of the black man in the social, economic and cultural structure of American society...and

[15] "Programs: Wonderful World of Color,1968." George P. Johnson Negro Film Collection, Reel C, Diahann Carroll, UCLA.

urged us to consider more positive and meaningful ways to support the N.A.A.C.P.'s practical agenda.

"Leaving the luncheon," he "wondered how he could personally help realize the American Dream for all of us" and recognized the one weapon he knew most about was laughter.[16] He later went on the pen the thirty-five-page pilot for Julia under the working title, "Mama's Man."

Within this autobiographical narrative excerpted from his book So Far, So Funny, Mr. Kanter recalls his motivation: a speech given by a man. However, this speech was not given by any man, but by a black man-and not just any black man but the Executive Director of the N.A.A.C.P. Couched within this inspirational context, Wilkins's (black) speech becomes an authenticating document for Kanter's (white) visual document. In a reversal of the letters written by prominent Whites, which authenticated black-authored slave narratives and increased their marketability, Wilkins's black presence is used to authenticate and market Kanter's re-presentation of the black middle class in Julia.

Likewise, by positioning his narrative as a *response* to a *call*, the responsibility for the program, should it be poorly received, could not be assigned to one person but was dispersed among various players with different degrees of power in the marketplace. While Wilkins possessed cultural capital, he lacked the power to produce images, white or black. However, Kanter's narrative strategy effectively attributes these images to Wilkins, and therefore problematizes negative critiques emerging from a segment of the black population.

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[16] Hal Kanter, So Far, So Funny: My Life in Show Business (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 1999) 254.

Fundamentally, by placing the show within the N.A.A.C.P.'s call for black images, responses that challenged the veracity of Julia's racial and classed images were made to appear anti progressive and anti black.[17]

While Kanter publicly couched his program in terms that would sell the story, the press invoked a parallel strategy, which sought to suture Diahann Carroll, the actress, to Julia, the character, to answer questions surrounding her black authenticity.[18] Lead stories appeared in Life and TV Guide with headlines proclaiming, "Diahann Carroll Fits Julia Image" and "I'm a Black Woman with a White Image" which detailed an idyllic middle class childhood absent racial conflict, anger, hostility, or bitterness to whites, which lent legitimacy toward the "racelessness" of Julia.[19] However, after mitigating the import of racial difference in their descriptions of Carroll's middle class background, the white female writers re-exoticize her blackness by describing her as "erupting like lava hissing" and like "a beach of black sand."[20]

Likewise, the press produced a persona around Carroll that was described by her marriage to a white talent manager (rarely was it mentioned that it ended in divorce six years earlier) and bourgeois lifestyle that included

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[17] Unfavorable and favorable fan mail of "Julia" is contained in the Hal Kanter Collection housed in the Wisconsin Historical Society at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The Collection contains 21 boxes of material donated by Hal Kanter, 17 boxes pertain to "Julia."

[18] Initially, Kanter was "disappointed" with Leslie Uggams and Diahann Carroll, and considered Barbara McNair, Janet McLaughin, and Judy Pace for the role of Julia. Hal Kanter, letter to Mort Werner, 31 August 1967, Hal Kanter Collection, Wisconsin Historical Archives, U of Wisconsin, Madison.

[19] Joyce Haber, George Johnson Negro Film Collection, untitled copy dated 1969 and Carolyn See, TV Guide, March 14, 1970: 26.

[20] Joyce Haber, George Johnson Negro Film Collection, untitled copy dated 1969.

memberships in exclusive clubs, couture clothing, and a refrigerator filled with gallons of milk for her milk baths. Carroll admits in her autobiography Diahann! that she permitted these profiles of high consumption to influence her self perception to the extent that she began to believe in their veracity -much like Delacroix in Spike Lee's provocative film Bamboozled. Essentially, she lived lavishly because it was the lifestyle that Julia was supposed to lead.

Beneath the official narrative circulated in the press is a second sublimated narrative, which is marked by economics rather than good intentions. A month after completing the pilot script for "Mama's Man" and a year before the television series was to air under its revised title Julia; Kanter sent the following letter to an executive at NBC:

> You might find some interesting material for the swiftly approaching future in an article just called to my attention.
>
> "WHY THE NEGRO MARKET COUNTS" begins on page sixty-four of the magazine, BUSINESS WEEK, dated September 2, 1967. It has some rather impressive statements to make about the thirty billion dollars Negroes spend a year.[21]

"Why the Negro Market Counts" is the lead story in the marketing section of Business Week, September 2, 1967. The article subtitle, "Negroes spend thirty billion dollars a year and 'they want to live the life that TV says everybody lives'" summarizes the feature which details the disposable income possessed by this hitherto ignored consumer group, and focuses on the few but savvy

[21]Hal Kanter, letter to Mort Werner, 2 Oct 1967, Hal Kanter Collection, Wisconsin Historical Archives, U of Wisconsin, Madison.

businessmen who have made incursions into the black market. In addition to announcing the economic presence of this under-exploited group, the subtitle functions as a teaser that induces the business reader to perceive the Negro as a dependent consumer; that is, as a consumer who is dependent upon television for the fulfillment of basic needs. In "they want to live the life that TV says everybody lives," the article implies that the Negro derives something from television that exceeds pleasure, namely, sustenance. The uncritical acceptance of television values and the economic strength of this community is the article hook for the "business of television comedy is not to make people laugh: it is to manage consumption."[22]

The National Industrial Conference Board reported that Negroes formed 11.5% of the population yet spent a disproportionate "17.5% of the money going for portable and tabletop television sets" in 1966.[23] With Nielsen statistics which indicated higher television consumption in black households than white especially during prime time hours (8 p.m.-11 p.m.),[24] to advertisers desperate for alert viewers,[25] producers seeking to sell show-product to advertisers, and networks requiring the continuous expansion of markets, the Negro consumer was key to the financial efficacy of the television industry.

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[22] Robert Lewis Shayton, "Julia": A Political Relevance?" Saturday Review, July 20, 1968: 37.

[23] Business Week: 58.

[24] See www.nielsen.com, African-American Television Usage: Primetime.

[25] See description of CEBUS (Confirmed Exposure but Unconscious) in Time, July 12, 1968, 56.

A cursory review of Variety magazine reveals the increasing attention shown to the black consumer market 1968-71 as the entertainment industry recognized "the population has the coin and is willing to spend it."[26] Moreover, with the recognition that the black market "represents twice the potential of the capricious youth crowd,"[27] and that it could potentially counter the demise elsewhere of the sexploitation genre,[28] previously shelved projects with black actors and actresses suddenly became viable.[29]

Although the Negro population earned half as much as white families in 1968, the Negro youth market (those between the ages of 14 and 17) with disposable income "soared 40%" between 1960 and 1966, "making the 26% gain of white teenagers puny in comparison."[30] The higher birthrate among Negroes as compared to whites made the Negro a younger population comparatively, and younger populations tend to spend more on entertainment than their older counterparts.[31]

Equally significant are the overtures to businessmen to capitalize upon the Negro consumer as a means of relieving Negro frustration and preventing further social unrest. Following the article subtitle ("to live the life that TV says everybody lives") appears this commentary:

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[26] "Black Pix and White Market," Variety, Wed, Sept . 8, 1971, 25.

[27] "Black Pix and White Market," Variety, Wed, Sept . 8, 1971, 25.

[28] True Trend of Just Novelty?," Variety, Wed, Sept 8, 1971, 3.

[29] CBS News' DocuDr H.Morgan Rescuing Shelved "Affluent Negro" Variety, Oct 16,1968.

[30] Business Week, 64.

[31] Business Week, 64.

> These statements could stand as a primer for companies seeking a stake in the nearly $30 billion Negroes spend a year. They also come close to summing up what the long, hot summer of 1967 was all about.
>
> No businessman can afford to miss the jarring overtone, the bitterness and frustration. How effectively business gets the message will go far to determine how long and how hot next summer-and the years ahead-will be.[32]

Importantly, the article does not suggest relieving social tensions by providing summer or temporary job opportunities for Negro youth who were unemployed at twice the rate of white youth by 1968.[33] Although unemployment and riots are linked in an article sub point "Earn or Burn," the businessman is encouraged to manage social unrest through commerce whereby frustrations could be managed and social unrest recouped by the same capitalist system that created them. The television broadcaster was similarly admonished to mediate black social discontent through programming, especially after the assassination of Senator Kennedy.[34]

The bifurcation of the black population was noted and no sub unit neglected. Black militants, whom the press and entertainment industry initially shunned, were reconceived as consumers whose anger could be managed through access to commodity capitalism. Producers at MGM hired Negro press

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[32] Business Week, 64.

[33] "Employment," Time, July 19, 1968.

[34] Interdepartment Correspondence, NBC, June 14, 1968.

agents to organize special screenings for the Black Panthers, the Malcolm X Foundation, the Sons of Watts in 1968 to create discussion around films that featured anti-heroes such as Jim Brown in The Split that producers felt would appeal to black militants. They hoped to create a buzz throughout the black grapevine that would carry over into box office ticket sales.[35] Similarly, screenings were arranged for middle and upper class Blacks, oftentimes with black militants, for the express purpose of stimulating discussion, and quite possibly controversy that would feed publicity. This promotional strategy was employed in several cities and applauded for being "minimal in cost."[36]

Hal Kanter's pilot for Julia is dated September 1967 the same month as the Business Week article appeared in print. One month later, on October 31, 1967 Diahann Carroll signed to appear as Julia. The network lost no time advertising this fact although the show had yet to be formally picked up by NBC. Four months before the pilot went into production, NBC representative Charles Smith cited it as evidence of the network's diversity in response to an article critical of the television industry written by the black newspaper editor Art Peters, "What the Negro Wants from TV."[37] Peters suggested a more inclusive range of roles for Negro actors such as "judges, engineers, pilots, and bank executives."[38] In the following television season, Julia would feature Blacks in all

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[35] "The Split" starring Jim Brown, Variety Oct 16, 1968, 5.

[36] "Black Militants Become a Market; MGM Negro P.A.'s," Variety, Oct 16, 1968, 5.

[37] Art Peters, "What the Negro Wants from TV," TV Guide, January 27, 1968, 10.

[38] Art Peters, "What the Negro Wants from TV," TV Guide, January 27, 1968, 8.

four occupations.[39] Additionally, Hiawatha Harris, a black M.D., was hired as consultant to the show.[40]

As a situation comedy, Julia secured the sponsorship of General Foods, television's second largest advertiser responsible for $96 million dollars in commercial revenue.[41] This highly successful television format accounted for "43% of regularly scheduled programming"[42] and 50% of Nielsen's top twenty programs in 1964. While other television genres such as the talk show, game show, and soap opera attracted moderately sized audiences, the situation comedy was distinct in its degree of popularity. Ultimately, during the height of its celebrity it drove other television formats off the air.[43] Drawn to the audience-driven appeal of this format, General Foods,[44] Smith, Kline, & French, and Mattel completely sponsored Julia during its first year-a distinction for any program. Likewise, each sponsor emphasized the family-oriented theme and interracial cast, which appealed to the most diverse and largest segment of the prime time

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[39] Julia featured black males in these highly skilled/professional positions. Diahann Carroll alone depicted professional black women.

[40]Due to a "difference of opinion" between Diahann Carroll and Hal Kanter, the service Dr. Harris was hired to perform was unclear. Dr. Harris was "on call basis from Miss Carroll when there were some questions concerning the content of the script material," however he had the "understanding" that he "was not to act as a censor of the material in the scripts." Dr. Harris reviewed twelve Julia scripts between November 1968 and February 1969 at a total cost of twelve hundred dollars, or one hundred dollars per script. Hiawatha Harris, letter to Hal Kanter Productions, Hal Kanter Collection, Wisconsin Historical Society, U of Wisconsin, Madison.

[41] Broadcasting 1970 Yearbook, A-124.

[42] Lawrence Mintz, 107.

[43] Mintz 107.

[44] Each episode of Julia opened and closed with Jell-O and Maxwell House commercials featuring the cast of Julia. "General Foods Hit" Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith Inc., 1968, Hal Kanter Collection. Wisconsin Historical Archives. U of Wisconsin, Madison.

audience. As a new program, the sponsorship of General Foods, television's second largest advertiser, was key to the show's financial viability. Likewise, as manufacturer of consumables for the home from Maxwell coffee, Oscar Mayer lunchmeats, Nabisco cookies and crackers to Kraft macaroni, Koolaid, and cereal, Julia proved to be an advertising bonanza for the food megalopoly.

Julia premiered on 184 stations, from 8:30 pm to 9:00 pm Tuesday on NBC with a 49% share representing 17, 440 households.[45] Comparatively, looking at the Nielsen ratings[46] for all programs airing from September 16-22, 1968-Bonanza received a 45% share with 16, 000 households, Mission Impossible obtained a 23% share with 7,000 households, and the Beverly Hillbillies had a 32% share with 11, 400 households.[47] In the highly competitive first sweeps of the fall season, Julia garnered the highest ratings, which is all the more remarkable because it aired on fewer television stations than its competitors.[48]

Despite the high ratings of the show, its success was not guaranteed. In order to be picked up for additional shows that would be added to the 16 initially ordered the show had to do well through midseason when replacements were

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[45] "Weekly Evening Program Audience Estimates," Nielsen Television Index, Sept 16-22, 1968.

[46] "The terms rating and share are basic to the television industry. Both are percentages. A *rating* is a percent of the universe that is being measured, most commonly discussed as a percent of all television households. As such, a rating is always quantifiable, assuming you know the size of the universe (TV households, persons, women 18 – 34, and so forth). A *share* is the percent of households or persons using television at the time the program is airing and who are watching a particular program. Thus, a share does not immediately tie back to an actual number, because it is a percent of a constantly changing number – TV sets in use. Shares can be useful as a gauge of competitive standing" see www.nielsenmedia.com.

[47] "Weekly Evening Program Audience Estimates," Nielsen Television Index, Sept 16-22, 1968.

ordered for shows that failed to do consistently well. On October 22, 1968 10 additional segments were ordered which guaranteed a full airing season.[49]

At the same time, other programs that featured Blacks were Daktari,[50] and one year later, the Flip Wilson Show.[51] These shows continued the "mocking of Negro family life and mores" but eliminated the "ever present barbs at Whitey's ways" frequent in live comedic performances of Blacks.[52] With a per episode budget of $205, 000, The Flip Wilson Show replaced Julia.[53] Similarly, The Bill Cosby Show described as "frail and contrived"[54] focused on the life of Cosby, a public school athletic coach with a "good-natured way of accepting the intrusions in his life." Cosby's performance and the program's racial integration are panned; and most dangerously, the pilot episode evokes the racial tension of police harassment at the expense of the (black) viewer. Cosby is mistaken for a robber while out jogging and is subsequently arrested. However, the plot is resolved on

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[48] Bonanza aired on 211 stations and the Beverly Hillbillies 191while Julia aired on 184 stations.

[49] Variety, Wed, Oct 23, 1968, 27.

[50] 60 mins, Wed, 7:30 pm, CBS starring Marshall Thompson, Cheryl Miller, Hari Rhodes, Hedley Mattingly, Ross Hages, and Eric Moran. Began its 4th season in 1968.

[51] Starring Flip Wilson, produced-directed by Bob Henry, 60 mins, Mon 9 pm, NBC, Variety, Radio-Television, Wed, Sept 24, 1969, 40. Major sponsor: Pepsico.

[52] "The Flip Wilson Show," Radio-Television, Wed, Sept 24, 1969, p 40.

[53] "1971-72 Network Primetime Season At A Glance," Variety, Wed, Sept 15, 1971, 39.

[54] 30 mins, Sunday, 8:30 pm. Major sponsor Proctor & Gamble, Variety, Radio-Television, Wed, Sep 17, 1969, p 34. Executive Producer William Cosby Jr, estimated production cost per episode $130, 000 placing it in the company of the "Doris Day Show," "Here's Lucy," and "60 Minutes" but well below "Mission Impossible" (210k), or the "Ed Sullivan Show" (220k) its competition. Variety, "1970-71 Prime Time Season At A Glance," Wed, Sept 16, 1970, p 41. In the same season, the per episode budget of "Julia" was $95, 000 Variety, Wed, Sept 16, 1970, p 44.

the side of the police who apprehend a black robber who is indistinguishable from Cosby.[55]

An examination of the viewer mail both favorable and favorable reveals wide differences in opinion. While some Blacks were outraged that a black female was being depicted without her black husband, others wrote to the network with relief citing Julia as an example of black womanhood, which one could be proud. Responses from the white audience were just as varied with some viewers outraged to see yet another black face and this time in their living room,[56] while others wrote letters of thanks to the show's producer(s) for confirming their beliefs that in fact, everyone was the same-shared the same values regardless of race.

Many viewers who identified themselves as black decried televised images of black life that failed to resonate with an urban aesthetic many felt more typical of the experience of black people. And many felt that during the time of social unrest, that television ought to depict accurately the frustration, anger, and militancy of the black population. Of those viewers who identified themselves as white, many expressed discomfort with the image of a black woman luxuriating in the middle class. Many found Julia too proud, too comfortable, and therefore too

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[55] "A discourse has been defined by Fiske as, "a language or system of representation that had developed socially in order to make and circulate a coherent set of meanings about an important topic area. These meanings serve the interests of that section of society within which the discourse originates and which works ideologically to naturalize those meanings into common sense" Jeremy Butler, Television (Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002), 7.

[56]Grant, Dennis. Letter to Hal Kanter. 12 March 1970. Heston, Gary. Letter to Hal Kanter. 9 September 1968. Hal Kanter Collection, Wisconsin Historical Society, U of Wisconsin, Madison.

unpleasant to be in their living rooms.[57] However, the majority of (viewers) white and black wrote in approval of the television show, which they felt offered a hopeful model of integration and depicted the happy life of a (black) mother and child.

In 1968 Julia remained in the Top Ten for ten weeks, only dropping to the still highly competitive teens during the holiday season during which favorites such as Bob Hope, Elvis Presley, and Ann Margaret hosted television specials. Increasingly, though, NBC was losing a competitive edge to other networks. Executives at NBC speculated that ABC's Sunday Night, Monday Night, and Tuesday Night movies were enticing television audiences away from other networks.[58] Soon CBS began hosting its own Thursday Night and Friday Night Movies, and NBC followed suit with its Tuesday Night Movies.

NBC executives considered the uneven quality of the episodes as reason for the decline in the show's national ratings. Kanter himself wrote many of the episodes during the first season, while thirty-five other writers penned the remainder.[59] Although black writers were solicited for the program only five eventually wrote scripts that were accepted for production: Robert Goodwin, Gene Boland, Ferdinand Leon, Harry Dolan and Blanche Franklin.[60] Likewise,

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[57] Shepherd, Lucy. Letter to Hal Kanter. 20 Sept. 1968. Hal Kanter Collection, Wisconsin Historical Society, U of Wisconsin, Madison.

[58] Hal Kanter, letter to Charles C. Barry, 4 December 1969, Hal Kanter Collection, Wisconsin Historical Archives, U of W-Madison.

[59] "Writers & Directors: "Julia," Inter-office correspondence, 20th Century-Fox Television, 19 March 1968.

[60] "Julia : Diahann Carroll Stars in Family TV Series," Ebony, November 1968, 57.

the program accepted three female scriptwriters, one of whom was black.[61] The show's executives appealed to white males, and after public criticism concerning the absence of black creative support, black males for treatments on the black female on television. A final and perhaps most compelling reason given for the drop off in ratings was the declining interest in the civil rights movement.[62] The program was conceived to feed off urban disturbances and the controversy created by black social unrest. As the novelty faded and the nation grew tired, it turned its attention elsewhere. Likewise, Diahann Carroll, also tired from negotiating public and professional criticism, did not renew her contract and the show ended midseason.

The trailer for "Mama's Man" positions the key issues for the upcoming series. Within a six-page script Julia is introduced to the public and her prospective employer, Dr. Chegley at Astrospace Industries,[63] and her dilemma unfolds. She is applying for a job as a clinic nurse; however, she explicitly corrects the doctor and ultimately the viewing audience when he sardonically opines that she is present to "beg for a job." Rather, she graciously returns, she is not "begging" but "interviewing." Julia also adds that she is only present, "at the doctor's invitation."[64] This shift in orientation from supplicant to equal fosters

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[61] Blanche Franklin

[62] Hal Kanter, letter to Charles Barry, 4 December 1969, Hal Kanter Collection, Wisconsin Historical Archives. U of Wisconsin, Madison.

[63] Dr. Chegley is the "male authority" of the program. He is Julia's "White Knight, the Father Figure on whom she learns to depend." Hal Kanter, letter to Mort Werner, 31 August 1967, Hal Kanter Collection, Wisconsin Historical Archives, U of Wisconsin, Madison.

[64] "Mama's Man." Julia. writ. Hal Kanter, script p 3, Hal Kanter Collection. Wisconsin Historical Archives. U of Wisconsin, Madison.

an atmosphere of parity that operates throughout the show's eighty-six episodes. Julia is depicted as self-confident, professional, and affable. Her sense of humor and intelligence are central to her charm and the viewer aptly surmises that Julia may get into scrapes but will never lose her sense of optimism or her temper.

Her status as the widow of an Army Captain and pilot killed in Vietnam functions in at least three distinct ways. It establishes Julia's class position. As a widow, Julia was entitled to ten thousand dollars and a monthly pension of one hundred and eighty-two dollars, which permitted her to be "dressed in stylish good taste," and maintain a comfortable standard of living.[65] Her status also provides a political twist that engages the controversy of the war, yet continues to evoke sympathy for Julia and her young fatherless son, Corey. Secondly, it indirectly engages the political debate surrounding racial programs such as affirmative action intended to correct the historic preference for whites and males. The trailer draws to a close with Dr. Chegley's query: "So you think we should give you employment because you're the widow of a war hero?" to which Julia succinctly replies, "No, I think you should employ me because I'm a competent R.N."[66] Julia's refusal to accept preference as a war widow demonstrates her integrity of character and faith in the American system of meritocracy for which her husband has died. In a single gesture, Julia-as-widow reasserts the correctness of the American position in the escalating Vietnam War

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[65]Hal Kanter, letter to Mort Werner, Hal Kanter Collection, Wisconsin Historical Archives, U of Wisconsin, Madison.

[66] "Mama's Man," Julia. NBC. script page 5, Hal Kanter Collection. Wisconsin Historical Archives. U of Wisconsin, Madison. Date 1968

thereby obliquely countering increasingly virulent social critiques of America's involvement. Similarly, Julia-as-Black who demands that she be judged by the strength of her credentials alone confronts the efficacy of affirmative action programs. Couched within a nationalist framework, which defines American patriotism as a belief in hard work and success by one's own hand, Julia positions discourses that call attention to a militant black racial identity and the existence of racism as divisive, un-American, and without merit. Additionally, by polarizing black identity and Americanness the show restores the tension of a double consciousness theorized by Du Bois, hotly contested by Schuyler and Hughes, and resolved by Alain Locke.[67] Instead, the writers of the show offer the assimilation of American values and an adoption of the American Dream as epitomized by the black middle class figure of Julia as the only means by which this tension may be resolved, with the Black finally becoming an American. By replicating the transparency of white privilege, Julia ascribes the failure of Blacks to achieve to themselves and not to historic or social inequalities deriving from race in American society.

The trailer raises several timely issues that Julia, and by extension Blacks, were faced with in the ongoing Civil Rights Movement. Following the assassination of Martin Luther King two months before the show premiered, and Senator Kennedy two weeks before the show aired, the state of race relations was at a new critical juncture. Television executives and producers were

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[67] See George Schuyler, "The Negro Art Hokum" and Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," The Nation. Also see Alain Locke, "The New Negro" in The New Negro.

admonished by none less than President Johnson to yield their considerable influence to reform society through television. Julia presented an alternative to the passive black female character of the past and served as a complement to black male characters in film like Sidney Poitier and Bill Cosby. These "new" Negroes were proof that education, hard work, and a positive outlook would lead to success and prosperity.

The contrast between Julia and other "old" Negro types is apparent in the first episode, also titled "Mama's Man." Confirming that Julia is indeed headed in the correct direction for her job interview, a black window washer indirectly inquires for what position she has applied. He speculates out loud: "You're no cleaning woman." When Julia replies that she is a nurse the window washer sadly replies, "You were, baby. I was a draftsman in Milwaukee." The script notes indicate that Julia, now troubled, has gotten "The Word" from a black employee. The inference is that racism in the company has prevented the window washer from obtaining a position commensurate with his training. The specter of prejudice raised in the scene is resolved by two subsequent interactions. In a scene that parallels Julia's interaction with Dr. Chegley, the nameless window washer is seated before the doctor. The doctor's sardonic manner is the same. However, the window washer fails to perceive this and instead responds to the doctor's abrasive manner with self-deprecation. This fawning servility and ingratiating acquiescence is unnecessary and, what's more, out of place. As performed, it becomes a negative critique of the black window

washer rather than the white Dr. Chegley. Nor does the behavior receive a context, which would soften this criticism; rather, the window washer receives audience scorn because his behavior is inexplicable within the ahistorical context of the television show. Secondly, Julia's eventual hire proves the window washer in error; his oblique critique of systemic racism is turned on its head as we watch Julia, whose skills are verifiable, receive a job. The implication is that the window washer was not proficient in his training and therefore did not receive commensurate employment. His initial response to Julia appears little more than the bitterness of a man blaming his failure on the "man" or the "system."

A critique of black women is found in another first season episode, "Homework isn't Housework," which aired October 8, 1968. Written by Hal Kanter, this episode turns on Julia's effort to find a babysitter for Corey.[68] In a scene reminiscent of the fairy tale of Goldilocks and the three bears, Julia interviews four different black women, the final of whom is the perfect match. The others are by turns too stern, effusive, and sullen. Language is used as a marker of difference; while Julia's Standard English speech renders her knowable, and aligns her to the white middle class female viewer, the black female applicants are rendered unknowable through their use of African American English. Language becomes symbolic of the difference in values, intelligence, and ability as these visibly older applicants are depicted in a

[68] Black women also negatively motivate Julia's potential suitors. One romantic interest, a black engineer, is conceived of as "completely dominated by his demanding mother." Another, a black policeman, sketched out as "suspicious of all women because his own wife deserted him and the child." Hal Kanter, letter to Mort Werner, Hal Kanter Collection, Wisconsin Historical Archives, U of Wisconsin, Madison.

stereotypical manner. The stereotype of the black mother as dysfunctional and indifferent to her children popularized in the Moynihan Report is embodied by Mrs. Elvira Gibson who openly admits that she is seeking a live-in job to avoid her own children. Apparently too unintelligent to understand that this opinion might not recommend her to this childcare position, she states: (sniffing) "I want me a live-in job. I got four kids of my own I want to get away from. They frazzle my nerves."[69] Described as "stern-looking," and repeatedly "sniffing" before speaking, her haughty demeanor is undercut by her ungrammatical speech for comic effect. In "I want me" and "I got four kids," Mrs. Gibson is depicted as an unreflective and incompetent woman, who though married, does not mention a husband and inexplicably prefers to live away from her home. Her inability to control her children is yet another indication of her childishness and unsuitability for the position. Julia's language, on the other hand, is standard if not overtly formal as in her inquires to Mrs. Gibson: "Won't you sit down, please?" and "Aren't you well?"[70] Julia is further distinguished from the women by her careful attention to her son, as she wipes his glass before allowing him to drink and gently answers his questions.

The second female is described as "a large, smiling woman of middle years" who is "too effusive." Reminiscent of the mammy type, Grace Tatum immediately lavishes compliments onto Corey and admonishes him to give

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[69] "Homework isn't Housework," Julia. Hal Kanter Collection. Wisconsin Historical Archives. U of Wisconsin, Madison. script 10. air date Oct 8, 1968.

[70] "Homework isn't Housework," Julia. Hal Kanter Collection. Wisconsin Historical Archives. U of Wisconsin, Madison. script 10.

"Grace a great big hug and kiss." Referring to herself in the third person twice, as "Grace" and "Gracie," this black woman is neither referred to as "Mrs." nor "Ms." Tatum in the script notes; instead, she is referred to by her first name, which indicates her devalued status.[71]

The third black woman, Helen Parks, is described as "a sullen young lady" who is unemployed because she refused to work for a white woman. Their conversation provides insight:

Julia: Why'd you leave your last position, Helen?

Helen: Didn't like the lady.

Julia: Why not?

Helen: She was white.

Julia: Is that all?

Helen: Ain't that enough?

Helen's conduct is depicted as bizarre and offensive as the audience and Julia consider that she has neither a job nor a rational reason for quitting. Her prejudice is clear and unwarranted which is highlighted by Julia's implied question: "you knew she was white when you took the job." Helen, who like Grace, is identified by her first name in the script notes suggesting her similarly

[71] "Homework isn't Housework," 11.

low status, avoids the inquiry because, one might think, it is unanswerable. If Helen preferred not to work for whites, there was simply no reason for her to accept the offer of employment. In the way of explanation, Helen responds: "She wanted me to wear a uniform and I'm no Aunt Jane." The absurdity of the young black woman's behavior is immediately clear; however, this sense is heightened for the viewer when Julia explains that she wears a uniform as a nurse. In what initially appears to be a decision borne of racial militancy and unwillingness to assume a subservient position to whites, Helen's pose is ultimately exposed as nothing more than the undisciplined action of a sophomoric young lady. Blending into a critique of black militancy, the episode suggests a similar groundlessness to the social and political movement, which is coupled with an earlier critique of racial movements as anti nationalistic and anti American. The depiction of Helen resonates with that of the black window washer; both are characterized as indolent and responsible for their failures. Whereas the window washer is an example of the old accomodationist pose, Helen is typed as the new black militant. Not only is her character meant to contrast with Julia, but with the next and final applicant, Carol Deering.

Described as "warm and bouncy" with a "winning" personality, Carol is the antithesis of Helen. She is frank, fun, educated, and perfectly at ease with Julia, Corey, and Mr. McAdam, the owner of the employment agency to which Julia has gone to find a babysitter. Carol's ability to interact with Mr. McAdam and Julia indicates her capacity to function as an integrated member of the larger white and smaller black communities, and is contrasted with Helen and Mrs. Gibson's

insularity. Further, her appropriate appreciation of Corey and interest in Julia's profession, which does not devolve into envy or intimidation, distinguishes Carol as the most suitable applicant.

Not only is Carol distinguished as the most suitable candidate, but she is also represented as a model for the younger generation of politically conscious Blacks. She responds to Julia's inquiry about her college major with: "whatever I decide on, it's got to be something where I can make a contribution." This commitment to improving social and/political conditions through a socially approved institution such as college offers a positive model for other Blacks to emulate. Carol's relation to her environment is also signaled in her speech, which is standard though peppered with innocuous slang phrases such as "you swing." She is integrated into a white environment yet feels a commitment to a black community which is not antagonistic to the white community. As a model for black youth and as a contrast to the trite militant position, Julia depicts Carol as the true progressive force of the black community.

As Carol functions as a model for black youth, Julia functions as a model for black adults and for Carol, and ultimately, black youths. In a pivotal scene, which suggests the kinds of responses preferred should there be racial conflict and misunderstanding, Julia is mistaken for an applicant at the employment agency. A "white lady" accosts Julia, exclaiming, "that's the type I'm looking for!" and asks, "Can you cook, honey?" Julia's only reply is to Corey's words "Mama's a good cook." Although both are equals-each looking for household assistance, Julia does not respond with like rudeness to the woman's insult nor does she

address herself to the woman directly. Instead, with calm self-possessiveness she replies, "You just heard them...from the only person I cook for."[72] As Julia takes Corey's hand and "sweeps" past the woman, Carol Deering is described as "looking toward Julia with great admiration."[73]

Julia functions as a model for black viewers of all ages and genders.[74] As a figure of a professional black woman and a black nurse, Julia is a model of progressiveness and success. Nursing represented one of the professions available to black women: "The professional and semi-professional occupations most accessible to black women during the years between world wars included teaching, nursing, and social work on the one hand, and hairdressing or dressmaking on the other."[75] Black nurses shared status with physicians and ministers in the black community.[76] Although Kanter's motivations for

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[72] "Homework isn't Housework," 16.

[73] "Homework isn't Housework," 16.

[74] Corey also influenced children in "low income areas," especially their eating habits, which was "a field in which General Foods [was] carrying out a lot of research." When approached by a General Foods representative, a nutritionist employed by the Dairy Council of California remarked that "they are asking for the same breakfast as Corey, and their food likes and dislikes will change from week to week according to what Corey is eating." Al Coomes, letter to Miss. Lindsay Durand, 30 October 1968, Hal Kanter Collection, Wisconsin Historical Archives, U Wisconsin, Madison.

[75] Hine, Shining Thread of Hope (New York: Broadway Books). 221-22.

[76]"In the black community, nurses historically have enjoyed a level of respect and responsibility unusual in the larger society. Indeed, in some black communities nurses have been regarded much more favorably than physicians." Hine, Black Women in White: Racial Conflict and Cooperation in the Nursing Profession, 1890-1950 (New York: Carlson). xv. Also, "In some places the nurse's rank was equaled only by the minister's. Regardless of the high esteem they enjoyed within their communities as competent professionals, Black nurses frequently confronted unconcealed contempt from white nurses and from Black and white physicians. Thus, in addition to their advocacy roles, Black nurses had to create an intra-professional culture that allowed them the space to forge positive images of themselves as women and as nurses" Hine, Hine Sight (New York: Carlson). xxxiii.

designating Julia a nurse are unclear, the historical efficacy of this image resonated with some black and white viewers.

A second script also revolves around a critique of black female images. Whereas in "Mama's Man" four black women are, in turns, rejected in favor of a middle class, educated, young black young woman, in "Take My Hand, I'm a Stranger in the First Grade," a black middle class woman's mothering is critiqued. Written by Ben Gershman and Gene Boland and submitted June 21, 1968, Julia encounters a little black girl, Bedelia Sanford who is an ill-liked bully and who intimidates Cory's friends at his birthday party. Her mother Mrs. Estelle Sanford, "a fashionably dressed Negro woman about thirty-five"[77] is the focal point of this episode as it is her behavior which Bedelia's behavior is reflective.

Mrs. Sanford: ...Why must we always tear down our own? You're a nurse, Mrs. Baker, aren't you? That's what you all become. Nurses, teachers, retail store managers. That's what you mediocre Negroes do to attain the only status you'll ever have.

Julia: That's not a bad achievement for any mediocrity, regardless of color.

Mrs. Sanford: --You envy me, my success, my home, My position because you resent my being black and having all this. Do you think it was handed to me on a silver platter!

Julia: No, I don't. I'm sure you and your husband worked very hard for what

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[77] "Take My Hand, I'm a Stranger in the First Grade," Julia. Hal Kanter Collection. Wisconsin Historical Archives. U of Wisconsin, Madison. script 20.

you've got—but is the mountain of your insecurity so high you could possibly have forgotten that to a woman, a child is her greatest success...

Julia: Very, well, I leave you with all this...

(her gesture takes in the house, the art, the furnishings)

The "symbols" of <u>your</u> success...but that Gaughin print and that Botticelli and your <u>white maid</u> all rolled together isn't going to change the fact that you are a failure as a mother.

Mrs. Sanford: I've heard enough. Get out![78]

Julia: ---Your daughter's lost and afraid and unloved—and you're too busy building castles and fairy kingdoms to see it.

...Mrs. Sanford:...Your words still ring in my ears. Honest words and wise ones. Your son must be proud of you.

Mrs. Sanford: (into phone) Yes, Henry?----Forty thousand. Great! Well if you really need me there---we can take a four forty five flight this afternoon and tie up the deal. Can't take more than a week---Bedelia, oh, she's-----

(She looks at Bedelia)

All eyes are on her.

Mrs. Sanford: (pause)Henry, you can handle it this time. There's someone here who needs me more.

She hangs up. Smiles. Crosses to Bedelia.

Mrs. Sanford: (continuing) Come, Bedelia. We're going home.

Bedelia takes her mother's hand.

Through Julia's influence Mrs. Sanford recognizes her short-comings as a mother.

The Black Middle Class Women

Roundly criticized for its failure to represent the sometimes-gritty aspects of black life, the program highlights a continued trend in popular culture to represent the black middle class woman as the model minority. However, a contraction exists wherein the black middle class woman is celebrated and subverted simultaneously. In effect, she becomes profitable as the model and anti-model of black "authenticity" and femininity in the black community. This love-hate dynamic epitomized in the depiction of this figure continues in Carroll's role as Alexis in the 1980s prime time soap opera Dynasty. The figure of the black middle class woman also comes to symbolize the black population to the larger white community. The treatment of the figure in television and film becomes a means through which the threatening urban male presence of the 1960s and 1990s is neutralized. The pleasant black middle class woman is, in the tradition of the (black) mammy, knowable and comforting, hardworking, and dependable. Through the black woman, the white community can "know" the black community.

It is precisely because the figure of black middle class women is tendentious in the black and larger white community that it becomes

[78] A notation in the in script indicates this line was to be eliminated.

manipulable; that is, marginalized by both communities whose desires of black womanhood are in conflict. Images of black middle class women are in conflict to the larger white community for they are rendered knowable through a stereotyped figure, itself a construction, although they are marked by difference. The childish, nurturing qualities scripted onto the black female through the figure of the mammy are contradicted by the cold professional competency of the middle class black woman. Culturally, images of black middle class women have become the locus of power as racial-class groups attempt to renegotiate and consolidate power through her image.

Julia functioned as a feminine ideal that reinforced models of womanhood, motherhood, and femininity. This was of particular importance during the late 1960s and early 1970s when women's rights and subordinate roles were being challenged in public ways, and male ideals of womanhood were being threatened. Julia's entry into the workforce reflects the feminist ideal of a competent, self-assured professional workingwoman. In fact, Julia's proficiency is a focal point of the show and it is consistently foregrounded throughout the show's eighty-six episodes.

Although Julia participates in the workforce as a skilled laborer, and clearly demands professional respect from her peers, superiors, and patients, she also supports clearly defined gender roles, which is apparent in her interactions with her college age babysitter, Carol Deering. Carol is working her way through college by babysitting Corey, and often has the opportunity to study while Corey is asleep. While babysitting for Julia, Carol catches up on her

homework unfortunately neglecting the Baker laundry and dirty dishes accumulating in the sink. Rather than attend to them when Julia points them out, Carol confides: "All this domestic work—it's just not my bag. I mean, all her life my mother's been a domestic...and I'm working my way through school so I can be something more. You dig?"[79] To which Julia replies: "Yes. But no matter what else you become, you'll always be a woman. And domestic chores are a woman's bag...so you'd better get into it."[80]

Although Julia was vaunted as the answer to Roy Wilkins's call for an increased and improved depiction of Blacks in the television and film industry, it was an opportunity to reform black militancy while recouping profits from black unrest. Julia's classed, gendered, and racial images proved a cash cow to NBC as the family-oriented sitcom drew sponsors such as Mattel, which abandoned "Flipper" for the opportunity to place its products in the hands of Julia's son. Mattel's contract garnered NBC $790, 000. Meanwhile, foreign syndication of Julia netted NBC $15, 000 per negative which was estimated to increase to $23, 000 per negative.[81] With 26 episodes in the first season, multiplied by 30 countries NBC earned $11, 700, 000 dollars from the foreign market alone. Considering it cost NBC $100, 000 to produce each episode-that includes actors

[79] "Homework Isn't Housework," 23.

[80] "Homework Isn't Housework," 24.

[81] Maurice R. Morton, letter to Robert Coryell, 4 February 1969, Hal Kanter Collection, Wisconsin Historical Archives, U of Wisconsin, Madison.

salaries, and pre-and post production costs, the network walked away with a cool $9, 100, 000 annually from the foreign market alone.[82]

The Cosby Show

Images of black middle class women in television continue to narrow with Clair, Sondra, and Denise Huxtable of The Cosby Show. Like Julia who functions to reinforce socially approved definitions of gender, and whose work as a nurse supports rather than subverts notions of women as subordinates or helpmates, the women of the Huxtable family are constructed in service of patriarchy. Although intelligent, sophisticated, articulate, and professional black women whose image counters negative stereotypes of the nurturing mammy, highly sexualized sapphire, or embittered mulatto, images of black middle class women in The Cosby Show reinforce social constructions of a black middle class womanhood that do not draw on the tradition of the active female professional in the African American community. An examination of one episode, "Clair's Sister"[83] demonstrates how black middle class women occupy subordinate positions.

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[82] Other "Julia" merchandises included "The Money Walk" a reader in the Relevant Readers series featuring Corey and targeting "ghetto area children with reading matter...more meaningful to them than most regular school texts." Financed by General Foods Corp., the reader was used for fourth, fifth, and sixth graders reading at the third grade level in Los Angeles, Cleveland, Seattle, Chicago, Palo Alto, Portland, and Sarasota. "Relevant Reader: Julia Characters in Book" Los Angeles Times, 4 November 1969. Merchandise also included the Julia Tell-a-Tale book. Products under development were Julia cosmetics, German juvenile fictional books based on the series, story books.

[83] "Clair's Sister." The Cosby Show. Writer Elliot Shoenman and John Markus, director Jay Sandrich, Original air date 11/21/85.

Clair's Sister

In "Clair's Sister," Clair's only sibling, Sarah, becomes engaged. While one narrative line humorously depicts Cliff preparing for a chess re-match with his father in law, Al, a second portrays how the news of the engagement affects the Huxtable girls. Both Denise and her younger sister, Vanessa, are portrayed fantasizing about their respective weddings. While Denise describes her's as modest affair to be held in the Huxtable family living room, Vanessa imagines her wedding as an elaborate social event with twelve bridesmaids and guests. Vanessa and Denise's reminiscing is brought to an end with Vanessa's pronouncement that she will receive better gifts from her guests than Denise, which is met with the audience's laughter. This secondary line reinforces the central theme of this and other Cosby episodes, which is iterated by Anna, Cliff's mother: "When the Huxtables get married they stay married. It's a family tradition."[84]

The focus returns to Clair who reveals to Sarah that marital guidance cannot be found in marital books, even those written by individuals distinguished by having obtained a PhD-M.D.; rather, Clair explains, real life experience will steer marriage. Although citing the uniqueness of each marriage and the necessity for private resolutions of conflict, Clair and Carrie agree that men are "the real babies of the family." Clair observes and Carrie humorously seconds, that men are indeed the weaker sex, and that women can have a "cold,

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[84] "Golden Anniversary," The Cosby Show, writer Carmen Finestra, director Jay Sandrich, originally aired 10/9/1986.

pneumonia, influenza, and malaria at the same time and still keep going." Amid loud laughter that provokes the men's curiosity, Clair concludes that unlike women, "A man gets the sniffles and has to stay in bed for a week."

Clair, more than her mother, reveals the secrets of domestic equilibrium and marital happiness. It is critical that Clair, as a practicing attorney as well as a wife and mother of five, is the female figure that dispenses advice about men in general and husbands in particular. As the epitome of the modern black woman who is college educated and professionally trained and yet remains mild-mannered, attractive, and pleasantly disposed toward family, friends, and running a household, Clair represents the ideal black woman. Clair is a successful attorney and is shown practicing law in six of the show's two hundred episodes. More often, Clair is depicted entering the house from work, which highlights the show's emphasis on family and Clair's service role as mother and wife rather than as attorney.

Clair's indomitable cheer, which she maintains through aging,[85] menopause,[86] and weight gain,[87] is an attractive character trait, which renders her domestic labor on behalf of her family invisible. Humor is also a key element of the sitcom, which The Cosby Show reinvigorated.[88] While like the professional

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[85] "Birthday Blues," Cosby Show, writers Carmen Finestra and Gary Kott, director Jay Sandrich 3/30/1989.

[86] "Clair's Liberation," Cosby Show, writers Bernie Kukoff and Ehrich Van Lowe, director John Bowab, 12/6/1990.

[87] "If the Dress Fits, Wear It," Cosby Show, writers John Markus and Carmen Finestra director Jay Sandrich, 12/8/1988.

[88] Linda Fuller, The Cosby Show: Audiences, Impact, and Implications (Westport, CT.: Greenwood, 1992) 22.

homemaker whose merry spirit and silent sacrifice enable the creation and maintenance of the illusion of "home," Clair is also distinguished by her professional ambition,[89] which does not interfere with her multiple roles within the Huxtable household. Unlike the married artiste who is depicted as struggling to negotiate personal and professional desires, Clair moves seamlessly between arenas obtaining the best from each.

Clair models female service to her children, who are overwhelmingly female-Sondra, Denise, Vanessa, and Rudy, and also Theo. Denise is depicted preparing a tray of dainty appetizers for her mother and aunt, before consenting to drive Vanessa to Vanessa's friend's house. And ultimately, Sondra and Denise are depicted as stabilized by marriage and motherhood. Fundamentally, three generations of Huxtable women form a network of support, which encourages long, happy marriages and frowns on divorce. Positive attributes of women that are reinforced by females in the episode are cooperation and humor.

Meanwhile, Cliff is in the process of making himself impervious to his father-in-law's infamous taunts and psychological maneuvers, which have resulted in years of Cliff's losses at chess. In the midst of Cliff's preparations, Theo returns from purchasing a record using Cliff's money, yet he neglects to return the change to Cliff. A humorous exchange follows between Theo and Cliff in which Theo protests returning the money. The scene is resolved when Cliff,

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[89] Clair aspires to make partner, "Clair's Case," The Cosby Show, writer Winifred Hervey, director Jay Sandrich.

having finally received his money, asks Theo if he returns Clair's change. When Theo responds, "No, only if she asks," Cliff exclaims proudly "My son!" While the Huxtable women are assembled in the domestic space of the kitchen swapping the secrets of domestic success, which they impart to the Huxtable daughters, the men are assembled in the public space of the living room where they impart financial lessons thereby reinforcing economics as the male realm and the domestic as the female.[90]

By returning to images of African Americans grounded in the traditions and conventions of the African American community-(the voice/orality) jazz singers, the calls of fruit vendors, art, Cosby creates a space in which to script alternative political and cultural concerns that call into question the ideological structures of hegemony. However it is these very ideological structures – patriarchy especially as relate to the figure of the father, subordination of women, and individualism that the Cosby Show reinforces. The desire to create in the Cosby Show a black-cast show with culturally specific and affirming content verified by Dr. Alvin Poussant was the subject of much attention. Cosby's PhD in education

This examination of the economics of the entertainment marketplace surrounding Julia complements character-based and thematic studies of the

[90] One might also note that with the success of "Julia," Bill Cosby was given a contract to develop and star in a black family-oriented television show "Here Come the Grahams" TV Guide, October 12, 1968. Airing in 1969 "Here Come the Grahams" was cancelled midseason due to low audience share, however, Cosby was given the opportunity to try his revamped pilot again with The Cosby Show.

black image. However, by examining how black images are produced and commodified to manage social change, this study complicates these earlier examinations, which fail to situate black images in their proper social, political, and economic context. By recognizing the profitability of black images and the relationship between the production of black images, social reform, and profit, this study has sought to identify how narratives compete in the entertainment marketplace to further commodify and appropriate black images, and how these black images reinforce non threatening mainstream values. Without a socially nuanced subtext, these figures of black middle class womanhood are transformed from culturally informed agents to benign figures in service of dominant values. Ultimately, the reappearance of these figure during periods of social unrest such as the turbulent 60s or conservative 80s has been calculated to mollify black audiences and direct them toward models of black middle class respectability which are individualistic and have been emptied of their historic communal programs of 'uplift'.

These visually "black" images are not supported by contexts, which can depict the differentiation and proliferation of black middle class female images present in, for example, magazine fiction of the Half-Century. Absent this network of images, figures of black middle class women continue to be conceived and received along the binary axis of good/bad, male/female, and active/passive promoted by classical Hollywood cinema in place by 1915. These structures through which narrative is constructed function to frame the black image, which as a result can only signify within a closed system, and generate scholarship that

is similarly contained. In effect, the study of these cinematic images will not facilitate the creation of a critical language that will decodify images of black middle class females. It is only by returning to images of black women in early race film and magazine fiction that the "external" events which structure the African American community and personal relations can be used to create diverse images of African American women.

CONCLUSION

Characterizations of black women have been limited to the mammy, mulatto, sapphire, or a combination of these types. The mulatto has been employed as a sympathetic character with whom white readers could identify hence understand the injustices meted out upon the Black. Believing that social and physical abuses of Blacks emerged from a lack of awareness of the exploitation of Blacks, black authors employed this racially mixed figure to enlist the sympathies of white readers, which would, it was hoped, ameliorate the political and social condition of the race. From Johnson's Clotel, Wilson's Iola Leroy, Jacobs's Linda Brent, Wilson's Frado to Larsen's Helga Crane, this figure of refinement, delicacy, and virtue was an emissary for Blacks proving their worthiness to white audiences.

Images of black middle class women, on the other hand, are figures of black female womanhood shaped by black media, social leaders, and writers to ameliorate the condition of Blacks through a direct appeal to Blacks. Replacing the strategy of engagement with whites as large numbers of Blacks experienced the persistence of racism in Northern and urban areas, and connected white American oppression with colonization and exploitation of people of color worldwide, images of the black middle class woman became the next step in a series of strategies employed by black leaders to ameliorate the condition of black lives, but this time by focusing on black families within black communities.

The Half-Century re-created the black American in its own image, which was an image of blackness defined by empowerment and agency. Through its editorials and fiction it legitimized linkages between black families and members of the black community. It also considered religion and education institutional foundations from which political action could be consolidated and movements for the reclamation of black civil and social rights launched. Through magazine fiction, the Half-Century empowers the weak while affirming the strong by providing models of black nobility, competence, and tenacity.

The Half-Century contended that it was the first magazine that was independent of an organization such as the NAACP hence an unbiased representative voice of the black American. One of the early editorials reads, "Our policy calls for specialization, not "Along The Color Line," but along other and equally essential lines"... "different in principle and policy, yet complimentary in aim and purpose."[1]

Distancing itself from black leaders, whom it alternately lampooned and celebrated, the Half-Century advised its fictional writers to refrain from the political while itself engaging in a highly politicized discourse of respectability and racial uplift during the late 1910s and 1920s. Not only did the Half-Century seek to discourage its readers from voting for Democrats while covering the National Republican Convention in 1916, but it also regularly demanded that its readers scrutinize race leaders appointed by whites or connected to organizations or schools beholden to white interests: "One who is connected with a school or

[1] See editorials in August 1916 and September 1916 Half-Century.

other institution that is dependent upon white public contributions for support is handicapped by his constant fear of offending, directly or indirectly, some of those who contribute liberally to the support of the institution."[2]

As the Half-Century challenged its readers to scrutinize white and black leaders, it also challenged the black middle class homemaker to pursue her vocation (generally writing) and assert her voice rather silently capitulating to the will of overbearing husbands and the monotony of life, which function to compress their lives and opportunities for fulfillment. This challenge issued to black women is consonant with multi-layered expectations of black women historically, and the agency they historically assumed as caretakers and providers for their families.[3] The Half-Century attributed self-recognition and personal gratification to the modern race woman, who is able to successfully negotiate domestic and personal needs. The Half-Century also critiques women who are unconscious of their own needs and are therefore dependent on men or material goods for their self-worth.

The contrast between magazines is apparent in the October 1922 issue of the Crisis which is titled the "Children's number." It features "The Children," "Marriage," "Birth," "Infancy," "Childhood," "Education," and "The End of it all,"

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[2]See editorials in the August 1916 and September 1916 Half-Century.

[3] As Angela Davis in her analysis of black slave women notes: "the female slave frequently took care of family members, tending a plot of land and cooking for her family after a day of hard labor in the field." These acts of devotion represent moments of black female agency and evidence of the survival of familial bonds during slavery. These moments continued during Reconstruction as black women squared off against images of white womanhood predicated on gentility; a gentility which was generated by profits of exploited slave labor and under compensated black labor in the industrial north and agrarian south. During these moments Maria Stewart, Anna Julia Cooper, and Francis Harper fashioned the clubwoman as a model of black womanhood that would serve as a bulwark against racism and sexism" (New York: Random, 1989).

which commemorate the stages of men's and women's lives. In this Opinion piece by W.E.B. Du Bois, parents are scolded for overindulging their children and thereby producing young men who want cultured and dainty wives who are also inclined to cook, wash, clean, and market. Likewise, young women are criticized for their desire for young men for husbands who are financially secure, college educated, of sterling reputation, and popular.

The Crisis describes a change in the qualities men and women consider assets, and the conflict these changes produce. In addition to the traditional qualities expected of each gender--male, as provider and female as homemaker-- are the additional qualities of "being able to drive an automobile "and" talk on politics and literature."[4] Not to be overlooked are the increased scrutiny black females take of black males, who must be a "college graduate, a professional man, or at least a businessman; hardly a mechanic, and certainly never a menial servant."[5]

Not only were the assets of young men and women under scrutiny in the pages of the Crisis, but so too were the numbers children and their quality of life the children they bore which furthered the divide between the mass "who have endless children and the class who through long postponement of marriage have few or none."[6] The magazine is critical of the notion that a woman or man's life can be bound up in bearing children. The magazine notes, "Few women can

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[4] Crisis Oct 1922, 248.

[5] Crisis pg 248

[6] Crisis 248

bear more than two or three children and retain strength for the other interests of life. And there are other interests for women as for men and only reactionary barbarians deny this."[7]

At the same time that Crisis prevailed upon its readers to become New Negroes and raise children who would number among the Talented Tenth, it also recognized the practical difficulties arising from the spread of employment of colored women.[8] Dating, marriage, and motherhood were increasingly optional to the very black middle class women whom Du Bois felt through their education and training would lead the race to new heights. The unresolved tension between personal desires and public responsibilities to uplift the race manifests in depictions of the professional black middle class woman in the fiction of Crisis and Du Bois's novel, Dark Princess.

Partly cautionary tale, partly fantasy, Sara Andrews is a symbol of sterility and barrenness in the novel. From her association with Chicago, the frigid northern city, to her clothing, which conceals rather than invites the male gaze, Sara is contrasted to Princess Kautilya who symbolizes the warmth of India and the regenerative possibilities of the American South.[9]

The novels of Jessie Redmon Fauset provided entertainment, yet they also performed a didactic function by encouraging middle class aspirants in the

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[7] Crisis, 259.

[8] Crisis, Nov 1917, Vol 15: 1, 37.

[9] Zora of Quest of the Silver Fleece (1911) embodies the wildness of the earth and possesses an innate sensuality that is almost stereotypic of the black female. This sensuality is absent in Sara Andrews of Dark Princess (1928).

values of the middle class, and revealing the secrets of success: hard work and perseverance. All four of her novels are deeply involved in describing the hard work that precedes the artistic, social, and/economic success of various characters. Fauset's first novel, There is Confusion describes the hard work of Maggie Ellersly who through her business acumen and pluck manages to lift herself and her mother from a precarious existence on the fringes of the lower working class to the lower middle class. With this measure of financial security that is garnered from their investment in real estate with the help of a boarder who offers a down payment in return for medical assistance, they are able to purchase a humble home, which they use as a rooming house. With Pullman porters as boarders, the Ellerslys are able to build equity in their own home and gain a permanent roof over their head rather than paying rent in the poverty stricken and unhealthy neighborhood.

Types of black middle class womanhood enumerated in this study highlight the variety of characters until now submerged in image studies, and in studies of the Harlem Renaissance that take into account novels and poetry but fail to address magazine fiction. Though understudied, women's magazine fiction contains the work of black women writers such as Maggie Shaw Fullilove and Anita Scott Coleman who were prolific in the magazine story format alone. Therefore, a study of Harlem Renaissance literature that does not seek to include magazine fiction might create a false impression that black women wrote in small numbers, or that the only images they created appeared in novels and poetry.

Equally significant, images of black middle class women contained in novels such as those of Jessie Fauset or W.E.B. Du Bois only begin to hint at the variety of images found elsewhere, namely in the Half-Century magazine.

When these writings are included in scholarly examinations they effectively change the shape of the Harlem Renaissance and African American literature. A revaluation of the short stories of the Crisis and the Half-Century forces a reunderstanding of the audience, editorial intent, and concerns of the writers. If, as Murskin notes, the readership could look elsewhere for entertainment or information, one must seriously consider who was reading these "marginal" magazines especially since they ran from 1910 to the present, and from 1916 to 1926. A readership of the elite alone could not sustain these black magazines, which suggests that present day emphasis on novels misrepresents the popularity of the form and its images.

This analysis also historically situates the growth of race film production and conditions of reception and exhibition in Detroit, Michigan. Like Chicago and New York, Detroit experienced an influx of black migrants, which peaked in 1916 and the late 1920s. This population growth coincided with discourses on race pride and class performance circulating in the black press and nuanced by black leaders. I examine how race film hailed the spectator as a racialized, gendered, and classed subject supplied by the black middle class. I move forward to theorize the multiple viewing positions and strategies employed by the black spectator to derive pleasure from black images in Hollywood and race film.

This examination of race film exhibition and conditions of reception in Detroit, Michigan extends the body of research on black film exhibition and consumption in Chicago and New York.

This study concludes by considering how unofficial and official narratives were used to market the black image, and how the needs of the television producer and advertiser converged in the figure of the black middle class woman, who functioned as a socially approved model for black viewers in Julia and The Cosby Show. This image of black female success, which was derived from black clubwomen and nurses, was emptied of its sociopolitical power in the black community, and was made to function ideologically in service of non threatening mainstream values.

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