

THE MATERIAL CULTURE OF WOMEN'S ACCESSORIES:
MIDDLE-CLASS PERFORMANCE, RACE FORMATION AND FEMININE
DISPLAY, 1830-1920

by

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This dissertation investigates the cultural meaning ascribed to feminine fashionable objects such as gloves, fans, parasols and vanity sets. I pay particular attention to issues of middle-class formation, the performance of gender, and the materiality of race, empire and colonialism. While these issues lie at the heart of British historiography, this project is written from a unique perspective which privileges cultural artifacts through material culture analysis. While the emergence of the middle class is typically studied as a masculine/public phenomenon, this project corrects the overemphasis on male activity by showing that middle-class women created a distinctive 'look' for their class via the consumption of specific goods and through participation in daily beauty rituals. Adding to these ideas, I argue that Victorian women performed a distinct type of femininity represented as passivity, asexuality, innocence, and leisure. By studying the repetitive gestures, poses and consumption practices of middle-class women, I show that certain corporeal acts helped to create Victorian femininity. This work also suggests that women participated in the British colonial project by consuming objects that were represented in the Victorian imagination as imperial spoils. As such, I argue that imperialism penetrated the everyday lives of Britons through several everyday objects. Empire building also created anxieties surrounding questions of race. Women's accessories, such as gloves and parasols, helped British women to maintain their whiteness, an important way of distinguishing the 'civilized' Britons from the 'uncivilized' tanned colonial peoples.

Overall this project showed that within the everyday objects consumed by women we can identify the anxieties, hopes and dreams of Victorians.

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Introduction

In the Victorian period, a woman's accessories were much more than the incidental finishing touches to an elaborate dress. Accessories revealed the beliefs, values, attitudes and assumptions of the women who wore them and the Victorian society which created them. The colour and material makeup of a pair of gloves, for example, indicated a woman's class aspirations. Likewise the design on a fan could indicate a woman's affinity for the orient. The twirl of a parasol could be used to communicate to a potential lover. Even a woman's vanity set on her bedroom dresser helped to indicate a woman's marital status. In these ways accessories reflected ideas of gender, social class and race held by the Victorian populace.

This thesis will explore Victorian writings about and the significance of four women's accessories: the glove, the fan, the parasol or umbrella and the vanity set. I selected these accessories because they all are particularly Victorian, but did not last long thereafter due to changing concepts of leisure, gender and class in the post World War One period.¹ While each has been largely overlooked by previous scholars, all of these objects have connections to the hands, face and head—some of the most important sites of class and gender formation and differentiation.² Through the accentuation of the skin,

¹ Gloves were used into the 1950s but they were no longer worn constantly after 1920. Vanity sets lasted into the inter-war period. For more information on this see: Ariel Beaujot, "Coiffing Vanity: A Study of the Manufacture, Design, and Meaning of the Celluloid Hairbrush in America, 1900-1930," in *Producing Fashion*, ed. Reggie Balszczyk, *Hagley Perspectives on Business and Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).pp. 229-254

² There has been considerable work done on shoes and hats and bags. See for example: Georgine De Courtais, *Women's Headdress and Hairstyles: In England from Ad 600 to Present Day* (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1973), Vanda Foster, *Bags and Purses*, ed. Aileen Ribeiro, *The Costume Accessories Series*

the eyes and the hair, these accessories highlight the parts of the body that were all regarded as important markers of middle-class womanhood. A focus of this study will be to highlight the tensions between older eighteenth-century constructs of womanhood—that were dependent on internal character and the beauty of the soul—and newer Victorian models that focused on womanhood as a performance of gender, social class, and race.

Throughout the Victorian period many still believed that the moral character of a woman was communicated through her body and therefore could be read by those around her. To change her appearances for the better, according to this model, a woman must go through a moral re-education. The anonymous author of *The Ladies' Hand-Book of the Toilet* reassured women that they could improve their external beauty by simply cultivating a good character:

From this mode of reasoning, it results that the fair one, who would become really beautiful, must make the cultivation of her mind—of those intellectual and moral powers with which her Creator has endowed her—her first and principal care. Pure affections must be cherished; amiable dispositions encouraged; useful knowledge acquired, and a mild, even, and obliging temper assiduously cultivated; or all her endeavours, to obtain real beauty, will prove nugatory and vain. If, however, a due regard be paid to this “inward adorning,” her external appearance will be by no means neglected.³

Another author put it more plainly: “be nice and you will look nice.”⁴ The concept that the innermost character of a woman could be read in her ‘external appearance’ was a throwback from conduct manuals of the eighteenth-century which relied on the concept of inner character rather than external appearance as the marker of a person’s social

(London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1982). Anne Buck, *Victorian Costume and Costume Accessories*, second ed. (Carlton: Ruth Bean, 1984). Giorgio Riello and Peter McNeil, *Shoes: A History from Sandals to Sneakers* (London: Palgrave, 2006), Valerie Steele, *Shoes: A Lexicon of Style* (London: Scriptum Editions, 1998) and June Swann, *Shoes* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1982).

³ Anon, *The Ladies' Hand-Book of the Toilet: A Manual of Elegance and Fashion* (London: H. Gt. Clarke and Co., 1843) vii.

⁴ Mrs. Robert Noble, *Every Woman's Toilet Book* (London: George Newnes, Limited, 1908) 80.

class.⁵ The warnings that women must *be* nice to look nice abound in the introductions to Victorian etiquette manuals. Surprisingly, however, as readers flipped through the chapters they found practical advice on how to properly coif the hair, what creams to use to keep skin white, what colours of parasols to purchase to maintain the appearance of a youthful complexion, and which glove fabrics made hands appear small and dainty. Victorian advice manuals can be characterized by their practical suggestions for improving a lady's exterior, thus negating the introductory remarks which suggested that inner beauty will shine through. While emphasizing the importance of moral character on the one hand, on the other Victorians were constantly focused on exterior changes.

The practical advice one finds within the manuals is epitomized by Florence Jack and Rita Strauss's manual *The Woman's Book* which explains that a woman must maintain her hair in order to be seen as a proper lady:

No woman who values her appearance can afford to neglect her hair, for a fine, well-kept head of hair forms indeed a 'woman's crowning glory,' whereas dull-looking, ill-kept tresses tend to show more than anything else that she lacks that dainty and scrupulous care of her person which should prove one of the chief characteristics of her sex.⁶

Here the tables have been turned—no longer is it necessary to be nice to look nice, now looking nice was sufficient. In order to be seen as scrupulous, a woman must be coiffed correctly. The inner goodness of a woman did not miraculously generate her crowning glory, rather the hairdo had to be created and maintained for her inner beauty to shine through. Instead of revealing a lady's inner qualities, it was a woman's class and gender

⁵ Michael Curtin, *Propriety and Position: A Study of Victorian Manners* (New York: Garland, 1987), Nancy W. Ellenberger, "The Transformation of London "Society" at the End of Victoria's Reign: Evidence from the Court Presentation Records," *Albion* 22 (1990), Marjorie Morgan, *Manners, Morals and Class in England, 1774-1858* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1994).

⁶ Florence B. Jack and Rita Strauss, *The Woman's Book: Contains Everything a Woman Ought to Know* (London: T. C. & E. C. Jack, 1911) 456.

aspirations that were made evident by attaining physical beauty through coiffing and purchasing the correct accessories.

Accessories such as gloves, fans, parasols and vanity sets thus resonated in the Victorian mind because of the specific concerns of the time. Had there not been a push towards a leisured lifestyle for women, gloves would not have been employed to hide the labour done by ladies. Had there not been restrictions about approaching lovers, fans would not have been used as a way of communicating subtle messages to men. Had Britain not been an imperial nation, parasols would not have become symbols of British superiority. And, finally, had ivory not been a representation of the colonial spoils bought by the rich, the middle class would not have sought an imitation of this material. It is the historical context of these objects that makes them a particularly original and inviting study.

This project spans the period 1830-1920. It begins in a decade that marks the coalescence of various phenomena that were important for the development of middle-class women's fashion: the emergence of the social category of middle class, an increase in consumption, the democratization of luxury, and a proliferation of the press.

The emergence of the social category, middle class, is typically examined as a masculine/public phenomenon. Men of this social category became more visible in government and administration in the early Victorian period. This is evidenced in increased voting rights due to the Great Reform Act of 1832, and the mounting pressure that these men placed on the government to protect their money which resulted in the New Poor Laws of 1834 and the Repeal of the Corn Law in 1846. These challenges to aristocratic rule boosted the confidence of the middle class who were coming to see

themselves as an independent category which could influence national policy and reform the everyday lives of Britons. It is a central claim of this work that the middle class began to emerge in the 1830s due to the public work of men of the middling sort as well as the consumption practices of women who helped distinguish their class.

Class was not only about political power. It was also demonstrated in seemingly trivial decisions made on a day-to-day basis. The idea that the middle class was a group unto itself, rather than simply a subsection which emulated the rich, also affected women's fashion. Women, like their male counterparts, saw themselves as engaged in the act of class formation, but they did this not through governmental acts but through minute distinctions in consumption practices. Drawing on the work of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, I show that women of this social category used fashion as a form of cultural capital and as a way to distinguish themselves from other social categories.⁷ Following the larger trends of the class, fashion ceased to be emulative and became a way of exerting solidarity. Certain fabrics, colours, complexions and sizes became markedly middle-class. These distinctions of taste, understood and participated in by women on an everyday basis, were used to create and solidify their class status.

Women were able to contribute to their class formation and differentiation via consumption because of a number of financial and social trends that became obvious by mid-century. This social economic category forsook its earlier ideology of thrift and saving, which was evident in the middling sort at the beginning of the century, and replaced it with consumption. This was made possible because middle-class incomes rose by as much as 100 pounds per person between 1850 and 1870. To make this trend in

⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).

income growth even more pronounced, prices during this period increased slowly, by only 16%, a figure well below income growth.⁸ Economic expansion was coupled with a decrease in family size and later age of marriage which allowed couples to begin married life in a higher income bracket and sustain their lifestyle by having fewer children.⁹ Finally, in the 1850s there was a dramatic increase of white collar employment which led to an expansion of the lower-middle-class (those yearly incomes were 100-200 pounds).¹⁰ All of these trends—the changing ideology from saving to spending, the increase in disposable incomes, the decrease in children per household, and the expansion of the lower-middle-class—led to the new reputation of the middle class as the class of consumption. Though women tended not to make money, they were the ones who spent much of the household income. As part of their roles as conspicuous consumers, women bought clothing and accessories for themselves as a way of showing off their husbands' wealth.¹¹

Though dramatic changes in consumption became evident in the mid-nineteenth century, the shift in consumption patterns had begun in an earlier age. Scholars of the late sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries suggest that changes in production, retail practices, and attitudes towards consumption pre-dated the industrial revolution and introduced new attitudes towards consumption. Sumptuary legislation was done away

⁸ Lori Anne Loeb, *Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) 8.

⁹ Joseph Ambrose Banks, *Prosperity and Parenthood; a Study of Family Planning among the Victorian Middle Classes, International Library of Sociology and Social Reconstruction* (London: Routledge & Paul, 1954).

¹⁰ Gregory Anderson, *Victorian Clerks* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976). McBride confirms this but also argues that the middle class in general were increasing during this period. She states: “the number of people who fell into the middle income bracket of 200 to 500 pounds per year doubled between 1851 and 1871, while total population increased only 11.9 percent by 1861 and 13.2 percent by 1871.” Eeres M. McBride, *The Domestic Revolution: The Modernisation of Household Service in England and France 1820-1920* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc., 1976) 19.

¹¹ Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (New York; London: The Macmillan Company, 1899).

with in 1604 and by the 1690s contemporaries began to remark on the changing consumption patterns of the middling rank, evidenced by the rejection of dull woollen fabrics for brightly coloured cottons and calicos.¹² By the 1720s, scholars find a rise in objects of conspicuous consumption such as linen, china, books, clocks and furniture outside the ranks of the aristocracy.¹³ These items were available to a wider range of people because from the late sixteenth century through the eighteenth century tens of thousands of rural workshops made fashionable objects for the consuming public. At this time also, there was an increasing international trade in luxury goods.¹⁴ Agricultural workers and rural manufacturers were paid in wages so that they might buy these objects rather than making them or receiving them in kind. Retail practices also changed in ways that encouraged consumption. There was a proliferation of retail shops as opposed to outdoor markets in this period. The shops engaged in techniques of display that increased the desirability of goods. Also, the verb 'to shop' was coined in the eighteenth century demonstrating the importance of this new leisure activity.¹⁵ New attitudes towards consumption began to emerge in the middling and working ranks. They no longer wanted primitively made objects and clothing and sought out foodstuffs from beyond local markets. Objects such as cloth stockings, caps, buttons and cutlery were now made professionally in local workshops, and sugar, tobacco, and coffee and tea were imported from overseas. By the eighteenth century, servants had even rejected livery, ancient

¹² Beverly Lemire, "Second-Hand Beaux and 'Red-Armed Belles': Conflict and the Creation of Fashions in England, C. 1660-1800," *Continuity and Change [Great Britain]* 15, no. 3 (2000): 391 and 397.

¹³ Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping, and Business in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) 6, Carole Shammas, *The Pre-Industrial Consumer in England and America* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) 6.

¹⁴ Lemire, "Second-Hand Beaux and 'Red-Armed Belles': Conflict and the Creation of Fashions in England, C. 1660-1800," 393, Joan Thirsk, *Economic Policy and Projects: The Development of a Consumer Society in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

¹⁵ Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping, and Business in the Eighteenth Century* 6, Shammas, *The Pre-Industrial Consumer in England and America* 2-7.

uniforms of service, preferring to wear clothing that they bought themselves.¹⁶ All of these new consumption practices mark a transition in the values of early modern peoples. The increase in conspicuous consumption among the middling rank acted as a challenge to the hierarchical system which had once endorsed sumptuary laws. People increasingly sought to convey their individuality through the objects that they purchased, to create a sense of group solidarity via their consumption patterns, and to challenge the hierarchical status quo.¹⁷ Though the factory system, improved transport, and faster production of the nineteenth century accelerated the trends towards conspicuous consumption and spending based on class competition, these developments had begun in the early modern period.

Another trend evident in the early modern period was the changing attitudes towards opulent goods that became a source of heated debate during the eighteenth century. Maxine Berg, a leading scholar of luxury, suggests that before the eighteenth century this term 'luxury' took on negative connotations: it was associated with the sin of excess and the debauchery of the very rich.¹⁸ Discussions of lavishness in this earlier period often reflected fears about the staying power of social hierarchies. By the eighteenth century, sumptuous objects such as silk, porcelain, mahogany, sugar, tea, and chocolate, which were once considered luxuries of the rich, began to be available to the

¹⁶ Beverly Lemire, *Dress, Culture and Commerce: The English Clothing Trade before the Factory, 1660-1800* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1997) 7. See also: Beverly Lemire, *Fashion's Favorite: The Cotton Trade and the Consumer in Britain, 1660-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

¹⁷ Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping, and Business in the Eighteenth Century*, 5-6, Lemire, "Second-Hand Beaux and 'Red-Armed Belles': Conflict and the Creation of Fashions in England, C. 1660-1800," 392-393.

¹⁸ Elizabeth Edger Maxine Berg, ed., *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debate, Dires and Delectable Goods* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) 1. Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford, ed., *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe 1650-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999). For other works on luxury see: Carolyn Brucken, "In the Public Eye: Women and the American Luxury Hotel," *Winterthur Portfolio* 31, no. 4 (1996), Christopher J. Berry, *The Idea of Luxury: A Conceptual and Historical Investigation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), John Sekora, *Luxury: The Concept in Western Thought, Eden to Smollett* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).

middling classes. “The appearance of these goods,” Berg suggests, “coincides with a new civility in middling and upper class society which was conveyed in new ways of eating and socializing”.¹⁹ As a result of the increased availability of opulent goods and the new trend towards civility, moralists, economists, and novelists debated whether luxury goods were signs of extravagance and self indulgence that would corrupt the populace, or if they were an improving force, which acted as an instrument and indication of progress in Britain. Adam Smith’s *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776) was the first to put forward the argument that extravagant consumption was not a question of morality; rather increased consumption would benefit all classes by providing jobs for workers, and a reason for people to save so that they might be able to afford extra comforts.²⁰ It was not until the later 1820s, however, that Smith’s ideas were taken up by a larger intellectual community. British political economists such as Archibald Alison, J. R. McCulloch and Nassau Senior suggested that the intensifying global exchange of goods, increased availability of luxuries to all classes, increases in wages, and the decrease in family size were all signs of the evolution and progress of the British peoples that would benefit the nation as a whole.²¹ Beginning in the later 1820s, then, and progressively more throughout the century, the intellectual elite believed themselves to be part of a mass market economy that incorporated an abundance of goods available to all classes rather than an economy based on scarcity and hierarchy. This shift in thinking about opulence as social and economic benefits helped spur nineteenth century middle-class consumption of luxury goods that originated in far off

¹⁹ Maxine Berg, ed., *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debate, Desires and Delectable Goods* 1.

²⁰ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. A. S. Skinner and W. B. Todd R. H. Campbell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967 [1776]) 869-870.

²¹ M. J. D. Roberts, "The Concept of Luxury in British Political Economy: Adam Smith to Alfred Marshall," *History of the Human Sciences* 11, no. 1 (1998): 30-35.

places such as the parasol from Japan, the fan from China or the ivory from India or Africa which came to make vanity sets.

The 1830s was also a revolutionary moment for the press. Between 1800 and 1830 the number of newspaper stamps, a duty paid by publishers upon any widely distributed print material, doubled from sixteen to thirty million. This trend continued into the nineteenth century; between 1868 and 1900 provincial dailies increased from 43 to 171. At the same time, printing became less expensive because of steam power and the mechanization of paper making.²² These changes allowed the women's press, which began at the end of the eighteenth century, to proliferate and provide fashion advice in weekly and monthly periodicals.²³ Examples include: *The Ladies' Monthly Museum* (1798-1828), *The Queen: The Lady's Newspaper* (1861-today), *The Ladies' Monthly Magazine* (1852-1891), *Myra's Journal of Dress and Fashion* (1875-1912). Further, by the 1880s advertisements had become visually and textually persuasive. This new advertising was directed specifically at middle-class women.²⁴

All of these phenomena—the creation of a middle-class consciousness, the expansion of consumerism, the changing concepts of luxury, and the greater availability of fashion news—produced an environment where advertisers, authors and women wrote and thought about the meaning of newly available women's accessories. The middle class used the well-fitted kid glove, the painted silk fan, the delicate cotton umbrella, and the faux- ivory vanity set as markers of their class, race and gender identity.

²² Geoffrey Alan Cranfield, *The Press and Society: From Caxton to Northcliff* (London: Longman, 1978) 119, T. R. Nevett, *Advertising in Britain: A History* (London: Heinemann, 1982) 40.

²³ Margaret Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Women's Magazine, 1800-1914* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996). Aled Jones, "The Press and the Printed Word," In *A Companion to Nineteenth Century Britain* ed. Chris Williams (London: Blackwell, 2006) 376.

²⁴ Loeb, *Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women* 7-9.

While the study begins in the 1830s, it ends in 1918. This end date is not simply chronologically convenient; it also reflects the profound changes in women's behaviour and fashion brought on by the First World War. The war occasioned a shortage of various materials due to trading stoppages. For example, camphor, a key ingredient of celluloid plastic, could no longer be imported from Japan.²⁵ Germany, the premier manufacturer of fabric gloves and Britain's major continental enemy, refused to trade with the United Kingdom, and the manufacture of silk fans in France was temporarily put on hold in preparation for the war effort.²⁶ Not only did these accessories suffer owing to the war economy, they also waned in the postwar period because modern women broke from the ideologies of their Victorian mothers. In the 1920s the indicator of leisure, earlier represented by white skin, was replaced with tanned skin which denoted an ability to afford expensive sunny vacations.²⁷ This new trend in skin colouration created a drop in the consumption of protective coverings such as gloves and parasols. The fan, which fluttered to cool overheated and overdressed Victorian women, was not necessary to refresh interwar women because their clothing was cooler, shorter, and less layered. Furthermore, women marching for the vote sought to represent themselves as respectable citizens rather than flirtatious coquettes and this meant women had to do away with frivolous accessories such as fans. Finally, the vanity set, once used to perfect long

²⁵ Camphor is a substance extracted from the bark of the camphor laurel tree; this key solvent was originally imported from China, Japan and Formosa. At the time that early celluloid experimentation was underway, camphor was at risk because of deforestation; by 1900 it was available only in Formosa. As a scarce commodity, camphor was jealously protected by the Japanese government, which at that time controlled Formosa. The government fixed the prices of camphor at an unusually high rate. Camphor sold for 43.5 cents per pound in Aug 1899, 51 cents in Jan 1899 and 55-60 cents in 1903. Keith and Julie Robinson Lauer, *Celluloid: Collector's Reference and Value Guide* (Paducah: Collector Books, 1999) 266, Jeffrey L. Meikle, *American Plastic: A Cultural History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995) 20-21.

²⁶ Arthur Robinson Wright, "Gloves," in *A Collection of Newspaper Cuttings on Walking Sticks, Umbrellas, Parasols, Fans and Gloves* (London: Author, 1932).

²⁷ Max Von Boehn, *Modes and Manners Ornaments: Lace Fans Gloves Walking-Sticks Parasols Jewelry and Trinkets* (London & Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1929).

Victorian tresses, was replaced by a single comb for the new bob-haired woman on the go.²⁸ As these new cultural and social phenomena increased, Victorian accessories were no longer necessary; in fact their very existence came to represent times past.

In their prime, gloves, fans, parasols, and vanity sets were used by women on an everyday basis, but perhaps more importantly for our purposes, they purchased them, learned how best to use them, and obsessively wrote about them. As such these accessories reflect the daily choices of the average woman and unconsciously suggest their values, ideals and aspirations. Thus, through a sustained analysis of a selection of women's material objects, this thesis illuminates a wide array of issues that were prevalent in Victorian culture. This work analyses issues of gender performance, addresses anxieties over class differentiation, and discusses how women's accessories became representations of British imperial rule.

Gender was not only dictated by etiquette books, fashion plates, and moral dictates, it was also performed and re-enacted in the everyday actions of men and women. The feminist scholar Judith Butler suggests that femininity is an identity constructed through a series of gestures and movements that come to represent 'womanhood.'²⁹ In Butler's work the female body "becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised and consolidated through time."³⁰ The advice and imagery to which Victorian women were exposed encouraged middle-class women to engage in gender

²⁸ Beaujot, "Coiffing Vanity: A Study of the Manufacture, Design, and Meaning of the Celluloid Hairbrush in America, 1900-1930," In *Producing Fashion*, edited by Reggie Balszczyk, 229-254. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007.

²⁹ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993), Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," in *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*, ed. Sue Ellen Case (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

³⁰ Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," 274.

performance. Accessories were used as props that helped women perform passivity, asexuality, innocence, coyness and leisure. The repetitive gestures and poses that women were supposed to display constitute the corporeal acts which made up middle-class femininity.

Before turning to issues of class differentiation, it is important to define exactly what is meant by ‘middle class.’ The middle class was a very diverse grouping in the nineteenth century. It was both an economic and an imagined social category incorporating people ranging from the ill-paid spinsters, who made a meager salary designing fashionable objects, to rich factory owners. The category of middle class also incorporated sales clerks, bankers, office workers, physicians, lawyers, engineers, teachers, shop owners, factory managers, civil servants, artists, doctors, authors, clergymen, housewives and many more. It is generally agreed that middle-class households lived on the moderately wealthy income of 150 to 1000 pounds a year,³¹ but because the social category was both real and imagined, individuals continued to consider themselves middle class even if they fell below this income bracket.³²

To define a class by occupation or income is intrinsically problematic as it does not always include all those who understand themselves to be part of a particular class. Instead, this project will examine middle-class women in the context of their social and cultural life rather than their wealth-based identities. This approach is influenced by Pierre Bourdieu whose study of 1960s France shows that different classes ‘make real’

³¹ Loeb, *Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women* 3.

³² In their definition of the English middle classes Roy Lewis and Angus Maude argue that the family is the basis for social class. Any individual who technically falls out of the class, could still consider themselves as middle-class due to their family background. The problem of ‘redundant’ women is a case in point. Many women formerly of the middle class could not find husbands and therefore fell below middle-class income levels. However, Victorians concerned with “The Woman Question” continued to consider these women as middle-class. Roy Lewis and Angus Maude, *The English Middle Classes* (London: Phoenix House, 1949) 15.

their position by creating distinctions between themselves and other groups. Bourdieu posits that lifestyle, the cultivation of certain tastes, and the consumption of goods were means by which different social groups objectified their status.³³ This concept describes perfectly the struggle that middle-class English women engaged in on a daily basis as a way to objectify their class status.

Despite its economic and professional diversity, people of the middle class shared certain values which were often predicated on the difference between themselves and the other classes. The men of the family worked in professional jobs devoid of manual labour. This separated them from the aristocrats who supposedly led a leisured lifestyle, and the working class who laboured with their hands. Ideally middle-class women were leisured household managers who employed servants to do the manual labour around the house. Victorians themselves believed that keeping a domestic servant marked the division between the middle and working classes.³⁴ Although, after the mid-nineteenth-century women began to do more work in the public sphere—they broke into the professions, became clerks, and were encouraged to design fashionable objects—any sanctioned middle-class work for women had to be respectable and therefore separate

³³ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).

³⁴ Pamela Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1975) 17. There is some controversy as to whether or not the lower rungs of the middle class would have been able to afford to employ a full time domestic servant, or a maid of all work. Hobsbawm, Harrison and McBride believe that the middle class employed manual labour in the form of servants to define themselves as non-labouring and middle-class. However, Branca states that “there is no guarantee that every household in [the middle class] afforded a servant at all.” Banks demonstrates that it was only at the end of the century that authors began tentatively to suggest to middle-class housewives that they could do without a maid of all work. But what all of these authors indicate is that *most* middle-class families could at least afford and most likely did employ at least one servant. John Fletcher Clews Harrison, *Early Victorians 1832-1851* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971) 110, Eric Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire: From 1750 to the Present Day* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999) 63, James Amrose Banks, *Prosperity and Parenthood* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Limited, 1954) 71, Patricia Branca, *Silent Sisterhood: Middle-Class Women in the Victorian Home* (London: Croom Helm, 1977) 55, McBride, *The Domestic Revolution: The Modernisation of Household Service in England and France 1820-1920* 18.

from manual tasks engaged in by the working class.³⁵ The general division of labour described here, men in the public sphere and women in the domestic sphere, was one of the basic identifiers of middle-class households.³⁶

The middle class was also distinguished from the other socioeconomic categories via more abstract values. They thought of themselves as the moral center of society—a group separate from the drunken lazy working class, and the debauched womanizing aristocracy.³⁷ To some historians, who see this class as emerging from the evangelical revival of the late 1700s, they are understood as particularly Christian.³⁸ As the Christian center, this social category was seen as the segment of society that could bring morality to the wider British public. As the century wore on, the middle class shed its evangelical roots and became the major power behind initiatives such as public museums, art galleries, schools and parks. They believed that these institutions could act as an example of respectability for the working class and would reorganize the national landscape allowing their particular values to suffuse the representative institutions of the nation.³⁹

³⁵ For a discussion of middle class women as low status clerks see: Anderson, *Victorian Clerks*. For a discussion of women entering more prestigious middle-class professions see: Joyce Senders Pedersen, "Schoolmistresses and Headmistresses: Elites and Education in Nineteenth-Century England," *The Journal of British Studies* 15, no. 1 (1975), Christine Thompson, "Disruptive Desire: Medical Careers for Victorian Women in Fact and Fiction," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 15, no. 2 (1991).

³⁶ For a discussion of the formation of the separate sphere model see: Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), G. R. Searle, *Morality and the Market in Victorian Britain* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press, 1998).

³⁷ Dror Wahrman argues that the middle class was an idiom before it was a grouping of people. He states that revolutionary threats between 1790 and 1840 necessitated the emergence of a 'middle-class idiom' which was a repository for all the virtues of society and was thought to be the class which held the rest of society together. Wahrman believes that the idiom then became attached to the middling-sort who became increasingly larger in numbers throughout the nineteenth century. Wahrman states that a "middle-class idiom" emerged around the 1790s because of revolutionary threats at home and broad. The idea of the middle-class emerged as the solution to these threats and as a repository for all virtues with the language of holding society together. Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class : The Political Representation of Class in Britain, C. 1780-1840* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

³⁸ Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes : Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850*.

³⁹ Dianne Sachko Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class : Money and the Making of Cultural Identity* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Alan Kidd and David Nicholls, ed.,

Historians argue that another abstract concept that separates the middle class from the other classes is their belief in merit-based employment and the idea of the self-made man. This social category believed that once the nation rid itself of the unfair advantages put in place by aristocrats—the test acts, commissioned positions in the army, favoritism for civil servant positions—anyone could achieve respectable employment if only they worked hard enough. The ideal of the self made man, most famously articulated by Samuel Smiles in his 1859 book *Self-help*, suggested that those who worked hard, practiced thrift and had a good moral outlook would become prosperous.⁴⁰ By the 1880s, however, the ideal of thrift was replaced by consumption. The acquisition of showy material goods, such as pianos, oriental carpets, expensive clothing, and beautiful accessories was a more immediate way of demonstrating one's class than abstract values which only became apparent through a person's character. The transition from thrift to consumption became particularly evident with the women of the middle class who adorned their bodies in beautiful, expensive looking clothing and accessories which acted as a symbol of their status and that of their family.

The middle class was a diverse category which included households from a wide variety of economic and social circumstances that had little contact with one another. What distinguished this class from others in this period were its ideals: the concept of the separate spheres, the idea that they were the moral center of society, and the understanding that anyone could achieve greatness if only they pulled themselves up by their boot straps. For my purposes those who shared these values, whether they were

Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism: Middle-Class Identity in Britain 1800-1940 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

⁴⁰ Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help; with Illustrations of Character, Conduct, and Perseverance* (New York: Allison, 1859).

struggling clerks or well off army generals, are considered middle class and used accessories as a form of class differentiation and to reinforce their status.

Though women did not generate the capital that accounted for the rise of the middle class it was through women that the class came to be best represented. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall's foundational study demonstrated that an ideal middle-class household had a working husband and a leisured wife.⁴¹ Thus, women were supposed to establish their family's status via the conspicuous consumption of dress and fashion accessories as well as through maintaining a leisured lifestyle. However, necessity dictated that many middle-class women had to do housework and gardening to keep up the appearance of another marker of middle-classness—the home. The bind in which women found themselves—acting leisured while participating in unpaid work—created a huge amount of anxiety which became evident in etiquette manuals and fashion plates, but was also played out across the bodies of women. Accessories such as gloves and parasols helped to hide the effects of women's labour by protecting their skin—the primary surface where labour becomes evident in the form of chapping, tanning, and dirt. Etiquette manuals, fashion plates and short stories warned women that an overexposure to sun and dirt would transform their bodies from that of a middle-class lady to a working-class labourer. The anxieties expressed in these written sources both helped to create and were a response to women's anxieties surrounding issues of class. Women knew that their class was not automatically evident, but that it had to be constantly maintained, manipulated and proven through the coiffing of their outer appearances. In other words, middle-classness was not a self-evident status; rather it was something that had to be performed on a daily basis.

⁴¹ Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes : Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850*.

Particular groups were desperately in need of accessories to maintain status. By the end of the century the reality for many lower-middle-class households was that they were generating less income than their unionized working-class counterparts, especially since working-class women were economic contributors to the household. The strain on lower-middle-class women to perform unpaid household labour was enormous, and yet they had to keep up appearances by emulating their social betters in fashion and maintain the semblance of a leisured lifestyle. Women who could not find husbands were in a similar situation to lower-middle-class housewives. These women were forced to find some small wage for themselves, but were restricted to work such as designing fans that were suited to their gender and class. Being part of the middle class required secrecy when it came to household labour and performance when it came to fashion and leisure.⁴² The disjuncture between the ideal middle-class lifestyle and the reality of hiding one's work for the sake of appearances created social anxiety within the middle class. This becomes evident through the study of women's accessories.

The fear of appearing to be of the working class was exaggerated because there was more at stake than a simple fall in social rank. Throughout the nineteenth century

⁴² The anxieties surrounding women's work and leisure is examined in Chapter One of this dissertation: "The Beauty of Her Hands: The Glove and the Making of Middle-Class Womanhood." For information on how middle class women felt pressure to present themselves as leisured women see: Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (New York: New American Library, 1953), Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes : Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850*. Looking at the question of women's housework, historians Anne McClintock and Patricia Branca suggest that women did not cease to work once the domestic ideology took hold, instead their work was denied by the culture at large. Ann McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in Colonial Conquest* (New York: Routledge, 1995) 216, John Tosh, "New Men? Bourgeois Cult of Home," in *Victorian Values: Personalities and Perspectives in Nineteenth-Century Society*, ed. Gordon Marsden (London: Longman, 1998), 80, Patricia Branca, "Image and Reality: The Myth of the Ideal Victorian Woman," in *Clio's Consciousness Raised: New Perspectives on the History of Women*, ed. Mary S. Hartman (New York: Octagon Books, 1976), 179-190. This situation—the need to show that one is leisured while still participating in manual labour—meant that women needed to perform their status as leisured.

there was a conflation of race and class fears.⁴³ Social workers who entered London's poor East End often imagined that they were headed into Africa or some other unexplored colonial territory. The people in these areas, though they were British citizens, were seen as a race apart; their habits were studied and judged as if they were part of an anthropological study. Upper and middle class men and women such as Henry Mayhew, Jack London, Andrew Mearns, Beatrice Webb and Olive Christina Malvery published investigative reports of their travels into 'Unknown England' often likening the metropolitan poor to savages.⁴⁴ The most famous example of this depiction was Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851-1852) where the term 'vagabond savage' first appeared.⁴⁵ The axiom combines class and race to describe the poorest of the poor in the colonial capital. To Mayhew the roguish element of the vagabond was comparable to those of foreign nomads. Along the same lines, London's *The People of the Abyss* depicts the East End as a social pit. He believed that Anglo Saxons had become separated into two white races due to industrialization: the ghetto race and the master race. "If this is the best that civilization can do for the human," he lamented, "then give us howling and naked savagery. Far better to be a people of the wilderness

⁴³ For secondary sources that explain how race and class were conflated categories see: Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London, Women in Culture and Society*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), Alastair Bonnett, "How the British Working Class Became White: The Symbolic (Re)Formation of Racialized Capitalism," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 11, no. 3 (1998), McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in Colonial Conquest* 132-180.

⁴⁴ Class takes on a racial component in various nineteenth century journalistic reports. See for examples: Jack London, *The People of the Abyss* (London: Pluto Press, 1998 [1903]), Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (New York: Dover Publications, 1968 [1851]), Andrew Mearns, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* (New York: Humanities Press, 1970 [1883]), Judith R. Walkowitz, "The Indian Women, the Flower Girl, and the Jew: Photojournalism in Edwardian London," *Victorian Studies* 42, no. 1 (1998), Beatrice Webb, "The Diary of Beatrice Webb: 1873-1892," ed. Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie, Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Belknap, 1982).

⁴⁵ Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* 348.

and desert, of cave and squatting place than to be of the machine and the Abyss.”⁴⁶ Due to depictions such as these, the working class were linked in the popular imagination with the colonized other. This conflation of race and class helped solidify the more tenuous distinctions between the social classes. However, given the economic and social circumstances of some middle-class families a fall in social rank was never far off. Victorians assured themselves that they could detect class differences with a close look at fans, umbrellas, or gloves, but in reality these differences were not as evident as they insisted. The reason why middle-class anxieties over social ranking ran so deep was that if they failed to represent their class correctly, they would not only be seen as working class, they would be seen as a different race.

Anxieties over race stem from the status of Britain as a colonial world power. However, the men and women who were directly involved in empire building and maintenance represented a small fraction of the British population. India, Britain’s most prized colony, is an example of the small number of Anglo Saxons in the colonies at end of the century. By the time of the 1891 *Census of India* the European community (mostly English) in India was little more than 165,000, in comparison to 81,000 Eurasians. The occupational breakdown was dominated by the military which exceeded 85,000 (including 67,800 troops, 5,080 officers, and over 11,000 wives and children), civil state employees and their families totaled about 10,500, while the railway community was approximately 6,100, leaving well over 65,000 men, women and children supported by the professions, trade, commerce, planting, missionary work, and many other non-official

⁴⁶ London, *The People of the Abyss*, Chapter 24.

positions.⁴⁷ These men and women came from all levels of the British social strata: colonial officers and the upper echelons of the Indian government tended to be the younger sons of aristocrats, other state employees, professionals, and those involved in trade and commerce were typically of the upper middle class, some government officials were solidly middle class, missionaries were typically of the lower-middle-class and soldiers and sailors from the working class.⁴⁸ Despite the fact that all classes of Britons participated in Empire building, a relatively small fraction of Britons ever left the metropole. The population of Britain in 1891 was 37,880,764 which meant that there was one Briton in India for every three hundred in Britain.⁴⁹ In order for imperialism to be acceptable in the United Kingdom, the British people as a whole had to buy in to the concept. It is a central claim of this thesis that ordinary British citizens, who would never visit the empire, were interested in colonialism. Victorians expressed their connections with the empire through the consumption of colonial objects, and the preoccupation with racial distinctions.

The imperial identity of the nation was imbedded into the objects studied in this thesis in two distinct ways—first as objects that assist with the maintenance of white skin, and second as objects that originated in the non-white empire. The parasol and the glove were involved in maintaining white skin. According to the narratives of scientific racism that abounded in the period, whiteness represented a racially superior complexion.

⁴⁷ Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire Families: Britons and Late Imperial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 8.

⁴⁸ For information on the social status of missionaries see: Catherine Hall, "William Knibb and the Constitution of the New Black Subject," in *Empire and Others: British Encounters with Indigenous Peoples, 1600-1850*, ed. Martin Daunton and Rick Halpern (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000). For information on the working class in the Empire see: Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World, 1600-1850* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2002) 241-268.

⁴⁹ John Hitchcock, "GenDocs: Geneological History of England and Wales," <http://homepage.ntlworld.com/hitch/gendocs/pop.html> (accessed 25 October, 2007).

In the age of Darwin there was a scientific justification for imperial rule which was dependent on the skin colour and the 'civilized' practices of different colonies. It was imperative that women, especially, maintained this white complexion because they were highlighted as representatives of the British race.⁵⁰ The whiteness of English women's complexion represented not only their leisured class status, distancing them from the working-class other, but also the superior racial status of their nation on the world stage. The protective cover of the glove and the parasol helped women to maintain these stark distinctions between the white races and other conquered races.

The second way in which imperial identity was represented was through the objects themselves. The fan, the umbrella, and the ivory that created the vanity set were all objects and materials which originated in the colonies. They were brought as imperial spoils to the metropole as symbols of British power over subjugated nations. As such, these accessories were a physical manifestation of middle-class women's connections with the empire. Though women were not imperial masters, in the way that plantation owners, army generals, hunters, and government officials were, they were nonetheless intimately involved in the imperial project via their white skin and the objects that they consumed.

A sustained analysis of women's accessories shows that they were embroiled in many of the controversies of the day. Accessories acted as a lightning rod for issues of gender performance, anxieties over class differentiation, and British imperial rule. The

⁵⁰ For nineteenth century examples of British middle-class women as representatives of the nation see: El Lynn Linton, *The Girl of the Period and Other Social Essays*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1883) 1-9. Noble, *Every Woman's Toilet Book* 63. For a discussion of fashionable women as representatives of the nation see: Kristin Hoganson, "The Fashionable World: Imagined Communities of Dress," in *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and through the Nation*, ed. Antoinette Burton (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2003) 216, McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in Colonial Conquest*.

type of analysis which puts accessories into their historical context and views them as an entrée into the beliefs, dreams and anxieties of Victorians is a relatively new form of analysis within fashion history which has been encouraged by the advent of material culture studies.

Most early fashion histories, written from the 1950s until the mid-1980s, followed a stylistic method of analysis which lacked an engagement with the historical period that produced the objects. These traditional histories were descriptive rather than analytical, breaking down different fashion trends by decades.⁵¹ However, the early histories of fashion are important foundations for later historians because they establish the basic silhouette of the clothing in each decade and describe the material makeup and changing construction of accessories over time. Two authors of this early movement stand out as authorities on women's accessories: Georgine De Courtais' *Women's Headdress and Hairstyles* (1973) examines the long history of women's hats and hairdos with close

⁵¹ See for example: Marybelle S. Bigelow, *Fashion in History: Apparel in the Western World* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Burgess Publishing Company, 1970), Patricia E. Bovey, *Bustles and Rosepetals Fashion Is Art: 1882-1910* (Winnipeg: The Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1980), Nancy Bradfield, *Costume in Detail: Women's Dress 1730-1930* (London, Toronto, Wellington, Sidney: George G. Harrap and Co. Ltd, 1986), Carolyn G. Bradley, *Western World Costume: An Outline History* (New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, Inc., 1954), C. Willett Cunningham, *English Women's Clothing in the Nineteenth Century*, 2nd ed. (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1990), C. Willett and Phillis Cunningham Cunningham, *Handbook of English Costume in the Nineteenth Century*, 3rd ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1970), Vanda Foster, *A Visual History of Costume the Nineteenth Century* (London: B T Batsford Ltd., 1984), Madeleine Ginsburg, *Victorian Dress in Photographs* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers Inc., 1983), Margot and Peter A. Bucknell Hamilton Hill, *The Evolution of Fashion: Pattern and Cut from 1066-1930* (London: BT Batsford Ltd, 1967), Anthea Jarvis, *Liverpool Fashion Its Makers and Wearers the Dressmaking Trade in Liverpool 1830-1940* (Liverpool: Saints and Co. Ltd., 1981), Olga Herbenova, Kybalova Ludmila, and Milena Lamarova, *The Pictorial Encyclopedia of Fashion*, trans. Claudia Rosoux (London, New York, Sidney, Toronto: Paul Hamlyn, 1970), Avril Lansdell, *Fashion a La Carte 1860-1900: A Study of Fashion through Cartes-De-Visite* (Aylesbury: Shire Publications Ltd., 1985), Sarah Levitt, *Victorians Unbuttoned: Registered Designs for Clothing, Their Makers and Wearers, 1839-1900* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986), Margot Lister, *Costume: An Illustrated Survey from Ancient Times to the Twentieth Century* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1968), Janet Winter and Carolyn Savoy, *Victorian Costuming Volume I: 1840 to 1865* (Oakland, California: Other Times Publications, 1980), Naomi A. E. Tarrant, *Great Grandmother's Clothes: Women's Fashion in the 1880s* (Edinburgh: The National Museums of Scotland Edinburgh, 1986), Jane and Sarah Levitt Tozer, *Fabric of Society: A Century of People and Their Clothes 1770-1870* (Manchester: Laura Ashley, 1983), Doreen Yarwood, *English Costume from the Second Century B. C. To 1967* (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1967), Doreen Yarwood, *Fashion in the Western World 1500-1990* (New York: Drama book Publishers, 1992).

attention to detail,⁵² and Anne Buck who has written the most comprehensive overview on the subject of women's accessories in *Victorian Costume and Costume Accessories* (1984). Buck details the history of gloves and mittens, bags and purses, fans, handkerchiefs, parasols and other accessories.⁵³ These texts provide some interesting factual information, and help to establish a timeline for changes in nineteenth-century fashion.

Early fashion histories focus on how clothing changed over time rather than looking at fashion as a product of the culture that produced it. Between 1960 and 1980 a new way of studying historical objects emerged which came to be called material culture.⁵⁴ One of the movement's founding members, Jules Prown, defines material culture as "the study through artifacts of the beliefs—values, ideas, attitudes and assumptions—of a particular community or society at a given time."⁵⁵ By the 1980s

⁵² De Courtais, *Women's Headdress and Hairstyles: In England from Ad 600 to Present Day*.

⁵³ Buck, *Victorian Costume and Costume Accessories*.

⁵⁴ Early scholars of material culture included Beckow, Glassie, and Washburn who saw objects as important markers of the social environment that created them. The first discussions were heavily influenced by questions of written versus object centered history. See for example: Steven M. Beckow, "Culture, History and Artifact," in *Material Culture Studies in America*, ed. T. J. Schlereth (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1982), Henry Glassie, "Folk Art," in *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction*, ed. Richard Dorson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), William B. Hesseltine, "The Challenge of the Artifact," in *The Present World of History*, ed. James H. Rodabaugh (Madison: 1959), J. T. Schlebecker, "The Use of Objects in Historical Research," *Agricultural History* 51 (1977). D. Reidel Kouwenhoven, "American Studies: Words or Things?," in *American Studies in Transition*, ed. William Marshall Finshwick (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1964), Wilcomb E Washburn, "Manuscripts and Manufacts", *American Archivist* 27, no. 2 (1964).

⁵⁵ Jules Prown, "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method," *Winterthur Portfolio* 17 (1982): 1. By the 1980s the emerging field of material culture began to define the methodology of its discipline which would become useful for future scholars in the area. See for example: Jean Claude Dupont, "The Meaning of Objects: The Poker," in *Living in a Material World: Canadian and American Approaches to Material Culture*, ed. Gerald L. Pocius (St. John's, Newfoundland: Institute of Social and Economic Research Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1991), Gregg Finley, "The Gothic Revival and the Victorian Church in New Brunswick: Toward a Strategy of Material Culture Research," *Material Culture Bulletin* 32 (1990), Prown, "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method." Betsy Cullan-Swan, and Peter K. Manning, "What Is a T-Shirt? Codes, Chorontypes, and Everyday Objects," in *The Socialness of Things: Essays on the Social-Semiotics of Objects*, ed. Stephen Harold Riggins (New York: Nouton de Gruyer, 1994), E. McClung Fleming, "Artifact Study: A Proposed Model," *Winterthur Portfolio* 9 (1974), Charles F. Montgomery, "The Connoisseurship of Artifacts," in *Material Culture Studies in America*, ed. Thomas J. Schlereth (Nashville: American Association for State

historians of fashion began to incorporate the ideas of material culture by taking into account the role that clothing played in the society which produced it. Grant McCracken, for example, suggested that clothing allowed cultural categories and principles to be encoded upon the body thereby making the society's ideals manifest.⁵⁶ Dick Hebdige, in his study of the working-class subcultures in post World War II Britain entitled *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1979), took up the idea that clothing can 'mark off' cultural categories.⁵⁷ In Hebdige's analysis the connection between clothing and the historical moment in which it is created becomes very important. He demonstrates how punk fashion (which incorporated ripped clothing, duct tape, safety pins, and clothes pins used in unconventional ways) was worn to dramatize, mock, and celebrate the decline of Britain. Similarly, Valerie Steele documents the meaning of fashion for Victorians. In her book, *Fashion and Eroticism* (1985), Steele looks at fashion in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Britain to determine how ideals of beauty, respectability and class

and Local History, 1982). Craig Gilbon, "Pop Pedagogy: Looking at the Coke Bottle," in *Material Culture Studies in America*, ed. Thomas J. Schlereth (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1982), John Dixon Hunt, "The Sign of the Object," in *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture*, ed. Steven Lubar and Kingery W. David (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), Perce F. Lewis, "Axioms of Reading the Landscape: Some Guides to the American Scene," in *Material Culture Studies in America*, ed. Thomas J. Schlereth (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1982), Ronald T. Marchese, "Material Culture and Artifact Classification," in *American Material Culture: The Shape of Things Around Us*, ed. Edith Mayo (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1984), Jacques Marquet, "Objects as Instruments, Objects as Signs," in *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture*, ed. Steven Lubar and Kingery W. David (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993).

⁵⁶ Grant McCracken, *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990) 60. See also: Severa and Horswill who suggest a material culture methodology to follow when interpreting clothing. For a discussion of the problems of decoding fashion and an overview of the work of Veblen, Simmel, Barthes, Mead and Bourdieu in terms of consumption and clothing decoding, see: Campbell. Joan and Merrill Horswill Severa, "Costume as Material Culture," *Dress* 15 (1989), Colin Campbell, "The Meaning of Objects and the Meaning of Actions: A Critical Note on the Sociology of Consumption and Theories of Clothing," *Journal of Material Culture* 1, no. 1 (1996).

⁵⁷ Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London and New York: Routledge, 1979).

became manifest at any given moment through clothing.⁵⁸ She finds that wealth, age and occasion were what dictated proper dress; those who dressed outside the proper boundaries could be considered improper, uncouth, or class impersonators. Thus by incorporating the cultural context in which clothing was made, purchased and worn, fashion historians began to study the meaning of clothing rather than simply its physical change over time.

Though there are very few histories of accessories in comparison to those of fashion, material culture also had an impact on the study of these objects. All of the following studies deal both with the objects themselves and their changing construction over time, but they also consider the meaning of the accessory within the culture of the day. For example, Valerie Steele's *The Corset: A Cultural History* (2001) shows the meaning of stays for different social classes at various historical moments. She demonstrates that the corset became such an important cultural symbol that it was implicated in political, medical and sexual vocabularies of the nineteenth century.⁵⁹

Along the same lines, Kathy Peiss' *Hope in a Jar* (1998) looks at the use of makeup in

⁵⁸ Valerie Steele, *Fashion and Eroticism: Ideals of Feminine Beauty from the Victorian Era to the Jazz Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). For a thorough discussion of clothing as culturally defined see also: Valerie Steele, "Appearance and Identity," in *Men and Women: Dressing the Part*, ed. Claudia Brush Kindwell and Valerie Steele (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989). I was also influenced by other material culture studies of the Victorian period, especially Kenneth Ames' study of hall furnishings in Victorian America. Ames studies the hall stand to understand the values shared by the middle class during the period. He discusses these objects as status symbols and explains the social ceremonies that surround these objects. Katherine Grier's work on parlors in nineteenth century American was similarly helpful. Among other things Grier's book examines the changing meaning of the parlor over time and shows how cultural ideals became translated into objects. Kenneth L Ames, "Meaning in Artifacts: Hall Furnishings in Victorian America," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 9, no. 1 (1978), Katherine C. Grier, *Culture and Comfort: People, Parlors, and Upholstery 1850-1930* (Rochester: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988).

⁵⁹ Valerie Steele, *The Corset: A Cultural History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001). For another cultural history of corsets see: Jill Fields, "'Fighting the Corsetless Evil': Shaping Corsets and Culture, 1900-1930," in *Beauty and Business: Commerce, Gender and Culture in Modern America*, ed. Philip Scranton (New York: Routledge, 2001). For a discussion of the historical meaning of shoes see also: Steele, *Shoes: A Lexicon of Style*. For a discussion of the place of the handkerchief in Victorian America see: Hannah Carlson, "Vulgar Things: James Fenimore Cooper's 'Clairvoyant' Pocket Handkerchief," *Common-Place* 7, no. 2 (2007). For a discussion of lingerie see: Jill Fields, *An Intimate Affair: Women, Lingerie, and Sexuality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

nineteenth- and twentieth-century America. She demonstrates how social changes and issues of women's rights were often discussed in terms of women's beautifying techniques. In terms of men's accessories, detachable collars were the subject of Carole Turbin's article "Collars and Consumers: Changing Images of American Manliness and Business" (2001).⁶⁰ Turbin demonstrates how the emerging middle class used detachable collars as part of their performance of manly posture, cleanliness, restraint and social class. These histories look at individual items—corsets, makeup, collars, handkerchiefs—as important cultural symbols in their own right. Because they are human-made objects these accessories unconsciously reflect the ideals of the individuals who manufactured and consumed them, and by extension they reveal the concerns and beliefs of the culture at large.

The sources used for this project were widely available at the time and helped me to capture a culturally cohesive understanding of the objects under study. I have looked at a broad selection of images and documents, all of which generate different perspectives on the accessories which helps to broaden their cultural meaning. In order to decipher how women interacted with their accessories on a day-to-day basis, prescriptive literature and direct observation of the objects were particularly useful. Etiquette manuals,⁶¹

⁶⁰ Carole Turbin, "Collars and Consumers: Changing Images of American Manliness and Business," in *Beauty and Business: Commerce, Gender, and Culture in Modern America*, ed. Philip Scranton (New York; London: Routledge, 2001). For a similar study of male accessories focused on the formation of middle class masculinity see: G. Bruce Rettallack, "Razors, Shaving and Gender Construction: An Inquiry into the Material Culture of Shaving," *Material Culture Review*, no. Spring (1999).

⁶¹ For examples of etiquette manuals see: Anon, *Complete Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen: A Guide to the Rules and Observances of Good Society*. (London: Ward, Lock and Co., Limited, 1900), Anon, *Etiquette for All; or Rules of Conduct for Every Circumstance in Life: With the Laws, Rules, Precepts, and Practices of Good Society* (Glasgow: George Watson, 1861), Anon, *Etiquette for Ladies and Gentleman* (London: Frederick, Warne and Co., 1876), Anon, *Etiquette for the Ladies: Eighty Maxims on Dress, Manners, and Accomplishments*, Fourth ed. (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1837), Anon, *The Ladies' Hand-Book of the Toilet: A Manual of Elegance and Fashion*, Anon, *The Science of Dress for Ladies and Gentlemen* (London: Groombridge and Sons, 1857), Anon, *The Woman of the Future* (London: J. G. Berger, 1869), Ada S. Ballin, *The Science of Dress in Theory and Practice* (London: Sampson Low,

women's magazines,⁶² and fashion plates⁶³ give historians a sense of the way women were ideally supposed to relate with their accessories and when and how they wore them. Etiquette manuals often provide step-by-step details about how to make the hair shiny and smooth, for example women's magazines explained what type of parasol to take on a promenade as opposed to a carriage ride, and fashion plates helped women see an entire ensemble so that they might understand what accessories were needed with which outfits. To complete my understanding of women's day-to-day interactions with their accessories I visited various museums to view the accessories first-hand. Explorations of the collections at The Museum of London, Axminster Museum, The Fan Museum and The Museum of Costume at Bath allowed me to observe and handle the accessories as a Victorian woman might have done. At these museums I observed, for example, the minute sizes of kid gloves which gave me a sense of the proportions of the ideal hand. I handled plastic and ivory vanity sets to get a sense of the different weight and feel of the two. I observed the way that the sun shone through brightly coloured parasols thus casting different coloured light onto those who held them, and I fluttered fans of various constructions to find out which were used for cooling and which were only for show.

Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1885), Lady Colin Campbell, *Etiquette of Good Society* (London: Cassell and Company Limited, 1893), Maud Cooke, *Twentieth Century Hand-Book of Etiquette* (Philadelphia: Co-Operative Publishing, 1899), Maud C. Cooke, *Social Etiquette, or, Manners and Customs of Polite Society: Containing Rules of Etiquette for All Occasions* (London: McDermid & Logan, 1896), Noble, *Every Woman's Toilet Book*, Florence B. Jack and Rita Strauss, *The Woman's Book Contains Everything a Woman ought to Know* (London: T. C. & E. C. Jack, 1911), Sylvia, *How to Dress Well on a Shilling a Day: Ladies' Guide to Home Dressmaking and Millinery* (London: Ward, Lock & Tyler, 1876).

⁶² Women's magazines used for this project include: *The Illustrated London News*, *The Ladies' Monthly Museum*, *Myra's Journal of Dress and Fashion*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Beauty and Fashion: A Weekly Illustrated Journal for Women*, *Household Words: A Weekly Journal*, *Woman's Art Journal*, *Ladies' Magazine of Fashion*, and *Beauty and Fashion: A Weekly Illustrated Journal for Women*.

⁶³ Fashion plates were seen at the John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera as well as in the following women's magazines: *The Queen: The Lady's Newspaper*, *The London and Paris Ladies' Magazine*, *Townsend's Monthly Selection of Paris Costumes*, *The Ladies Cabinet of Fashion*, *Music and Romance*, *Ladies Magazine of Fashion* and *Le Journal des Demoiselles*.

This type of interaction with Victorian accessories was important for confirming or thwarting claims expounded by prescriptive literature.

For background on the manufacture and promotion of accessories, I examined trade journals, company records, union records, and government reports. These types of sources helped me to see the early stages of the fashion system as they indicate the meanings that manufacturers, unions and governments placed onto objects before they entered the consumer market. These sources make evident the behind the scenes trends in procuring materials, manufacturing products, and they expound on issues of consumption such as seasonal buying patterns. For example, *The Brush Journal*, the trade journal that covered the bristle, brush and comb trades, reported consistently on the price and volume of ivory and boar's bristle coming into British ports.⁶⁴ *The Bag, Portmanteau and Umbrella Trader* bemoaned the fact that fewer parasols were sold when fashionable hats became larger and better able to protect the complexion.⁶⁵ The United Society of Brushmakers controlled issues of manufacture and professionalization such as which master brushmakers were able to work for, how long boys must apprentice, and what tasks required greater payment.⁶⁶ Government reports such as "The Select Committee on Celluloid", or "The Case of the Fann-Makers Who Have Petitioned the Honorable House of Commons, against the Importation of Fanns from the East-Indies

⁶⁴ *The Brush Journal* 1-5 (1895-1899).

⁶⁵ *The Bag, Portmanteau and Umbrella Trader* (1907-1910).

⁶⁶ For information on the United Society of Brushmakers see: United Society of Brushmakers, *Balance Sheets and Report with Names and Amounts Paid to Receivers to End of March 1894* (London: F. W. Worthy, Trade Union Printer, 1894), United Society of Brushmakers, *List of Fair Employers* (London: issued by the Society, 1892, 1893), Hohn Birchall James Greenwood, Walter Marshaman, Eli Norton, Thomas Stonehouse, George Stonehouse, Henry Earnshaw, George Hulme, "A Collection of Leaflets Etc., Issued by the Society," (Manchester: 1894?), Thomas Elliott John K. Boyd, Joseph Willis and A. J. Cockburn, "United Society of Brushmakers, 43 Stanhope Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne," (Newcastle-on-Tyne: United Society of Brushmakers, 1894), William Kiddier, *The Brushmaker and the Secrets of His Craft: His Romance* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, Ltd., 1928), United Society of Brush Makers, *General Trade Rules of the United Society of Brush Makers* (London: London Printed By F. W. Worthy, Trade Union Printer, 1894).

[sic]” show the government’s concern for individuals when it came to potentially flammable plastics, and issues of free trade when it came to the deluge of inexpensive fans flooding the British market from the East-Indies.⁶⁷ Finally, company records such as the Xylonite Company Archives, housed at the Science Museum and Library, delineate the early history and financial standing of the first plastic manufacturer in England.⁶⁸ All of these developments from union rulings to manufacturer concerns to government interference helped to create the circumstances under which the accessories were consumed and understood in the wider world.

During the Victorian period, accessories had broad cultural resonance. They were important as manufactured items and as beauty props which appeared in specialist texts such as etiquette manuals and fashion plates. They also came to the fore in more generalized popular sources. Fictional representations in plays, novels, songs, and short stories helped to tap into the subconscious meanings these objects carried for the culture at large. In short stories such as “A Study About the Umbrella-Mender,” umbrellas were used as metaphors for the personalities of various characters.⁶⁹ Stage directions and lyrics in musical plays such as *The Mikado* delineate the movements and the coy looks

⁶⁷Celluloid Committee, *Report of the Departmental Committee on Celluloid Presented Both House of Parliament by Command of His Majesty* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office by Eyre and Spottiswoode Ltd., 1913), Fann-makers, "The Case of the Fann-Makers Who Have Petitioned the Honorable House of Commons, against the Importation of Fanns from the East-Indies," in *Early English Books, 1641-1700; 1664: 5* (1695).

⁶⁸ British Xylonite Co., *Catalogue of Articles Manufactured from Xylonite and Other Plastics* (Hasell: Watson and Viney Ltd., 1936), British Xylonite Co., *Halex 1950* (London: The British Xylonite Company, 1950), British Xylonite Co., *Halex Catalogue* (London: The British Xylonite Company, c1950), British Xylonite Co., *Halex Catalogue* (London: The Company British Xylonite, 1954), British Xylonite Co., *Halex: Export Price List* (London: Haleford Press, 1949), British Xylonite Company Limited, *Catalogue of Xylonite Articles* (London: Gale and Polden Ltd., 1931), Halex Limited, *Catalogue of Articles Manufactured from Plastics and Other Materials by Halex Limited* (London: Halex Limited ?, 1939), The British Xylonite Company Ltd., *Catalogue of Xylonite Articles* (London: Gale and Polden Ltd., 1931).

⁶⁹ B. Harraden, "A Study About the Umbrella-Mender," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 146 (1889).

that made fans devices of flirtation.⁷⁰ Songs such as “Rotten Cotton Glove” satirically drew the line between the middle-class lady’s kid glove and working-class women’s cotton glove.⁷¹ Finally, novels such as *The Little Green Glove* show the intimate connections between women and their accessories.⁷² In this story a spurned lover keeps his girlfriend’s glove and uses it to trigger memories of their time together. Popular fiction tapped into various areas that other sources could not—they allowed class and character to come to the forefront, they made visible the specific (if exaggerated) ways that women flirted, and they drew out the intimate connections between women and their accessories. In these ways, writers of popular fiction both created and developed the collective unconscious which surrounded accessories.

Victorians also displayed concepts of their own culture through the imagined histories of women’s accessories. Articles in periodicals and newspapers as well as small books dedicated to specific accessories gave the purported history of the objects. In the case of the history of the fan and the umbrella, writers used the opportunity to denigrate ‘the orient’, where the accessories originated, and praise the British for their innovation and perfection of the items.⁷³ In the case of the glove, the history was concentrated in

⁷⁰ W. S. Gilbert, *The Mikado or, the Town of Titipu* (Studio City: Players Press, Inc., 1997).

⁷¹ Harry Gifford and Fred E. Cliffe George Arthurs, “Rotten Cotton Gloves,” (London: Montgomery & Company, 1928).

⁷² Mary Hoskin, “The Little Green Glove,” in *The Little Green Glove and Other Stories*, ed. Mary Hoskin (Toronto: Extension Print, 1920).

⁷³ For examples of the history of the fan see: Anon, “Fans in Past and Present Times,” *The Queen* 72 (1882), Boehn, *Modes and Manners Ornaments: Lace Fans Gloves Walking-Sticks Parasols Jewelry and Trinkets*, Liberty & Co., *Fans: A Brief Sketch of Their Origin and Use* (London: Liberty & Co., 1896), M. A. Flory, *A Book About Fans: The History of Fans and Fan-Painting* (New York and London: Macmillan and Co., 1895), Arthur Robinson Wright, “Fans,” in *A Collection of Newspaper Cuttings on Walking Sticks, Umbrellas, Parasols, Fans and Gloves* (London: Author, 1932). For examples of the history of the umbrella see: Anon, “The Evolution of the Umbrella,” *Chamber’s Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Arts* 67 (1890), Anon, “Pagodas, Auriols, and Umbrellas: Umbrellas, Ancient and Modern Part II,” *The English Illustrated Magazine* 5 (1888), Anon, “The Religious Character of Umbrellas,” *The Saturday Review* 55 (1883), Anon, “The Story of the Umbrella,” *Person’s Magazine* 6 (1898), Anon, “Umbrella Evolution: The Umbrella and Parasol in History,” *The Bag, Portmanteau and Umbrella Trader* 2, no. 35

England's past. The history of the glove went back to the days of knightly chivalry when ladies lent their gloves to soldiers in battle to ensure their safety, and courtly rule when gloves were thrown down in front of new kings to demonstrate support for their rule.⁷⁴

While the histories are not always accurate, they are useful in helping to understand the way that Victorians saw themselves and their past, and the way that they viewed their role in the wider world.

Finally, there was a great amount of ephemera surrounding these objects. For research in this area I visited the John Johnson Collection at the Bodleian Library which included in its collection advertisements, pamphlets, song sheets, fashion plates, department store catalogues, a collection of paper fans, and exhibition catalogues. These sources create a sense of the deluge of imagery available on these accessories at a moment that they became widely available objects of consumption. The varied selection of primary sources used for this project helped form an understanding of the meaning these objects had at different moments of their life cycle from manufacture, to consumption, to daily use, to the object as a referent with grand cultural implications.

All of the primary sources examined document women's engagement with issues of class, empire, and a particular brand of British femininity. In terms of class my work follows post-Marxist scholarship which considers social class not as a given, but as a

(1909), Anon, "Umbrellas in the East," *The Penny Magazine of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge* 4, no. 235 (1835), Clyde and Black, *Umbrellas and Their History* (New York: Riverside Press, 1864), Octave Uzanne, *The Sunshade, the Glove, the Muff* (London: J. C. Nimmo and Bain, 1883).

⁷⁴ For examples of the history of the glove see: Anon, "The Romance of Gloves: Hand-Coverings in the Past and Present," *New York Times* (1882), William Beck, "The Romance of Gloves," *Cosmopolitan* XIII (1892), Boehn, *Modes and Manners Ornaments: Lace Fans Gloves Walking-Sticks Parasols Jewelry and Trinkets*, Allcroft & Co. Dent, *A Brief Description of the Manufacture, History and Associations of Gloves: With Illustrations from Dent, Allcroft & Co.'S Manufactory, Worcester* (Worcester: Baylis, Lewis & Co., 189-), James William Norton-Kyshe, *The Law and Customs Relating to Gloves, Being an Exposition Historically Viewed of Ancient Laws, Customs, and Uses in Respect of Gloves, and of the Symbolism of the Hand and Glove in Judicial Proceedings* (London: Stevens and Haynes, 1901), William M. Smith, *Gloves Past and Present* (New York: The Sherwood Press, Inc., 1917).

social position that must be “made real” through actions and relationships.⁷⁵ Many British historians, including Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, consider the middle class to be a privileged analytical category to be studied for its particular characteristics.⁷⁶ They argue that between 1780 and 1850 the middle class became a distinct group which was based on a specific set of moral, family, and gender values. Studying the same time period, Dror Wahrman suggests that the middle class was an imagined category established by politicians to diffuse moments of potential revolution in Britain brought on by the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, the Peterloo Massacre, and the Great Reform Act.⁷⁷ I argue a middle ground between these two historians. While I agree with Davidoff and Hall that the middle class took ownership of a distinct set of values, I do not see the class as a natural category. Here I look to Wahrman’s concept of the middle class as an imagined grouping that the middling sort sought to embody. I contend that class should be conceived of as an ongoing accomplishment. My argument, then, is that Victorians performed their social class roles on a daily basis according to the values that were imagined as middle class, aristocratic or working class. My work looks at accessories as consumables which help to differentiate the middle class from other classes. As such, I argue that middle-class women took symbols originally associated with the aristocracy and modified them to help ‘make real’ their class via consumption. This is essentially Veblen’s ‘trickle down’ argument with a twist.⁷⁸ The middle class appropriated aristocratic symbols of refinement such as the made to order kid glove, the silk parasol, and the ivory vanity set. However, the middle class could not afford to have

⁷⁵ Wai Chee Dimock and Michael T. Gilmore, *Rethinking Class: Literary Studies and Social Formations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) 2-3.

⁷⁶ Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes : Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850*.

⁷⁷ Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class : The Political Representation of Class in Britain, C. 1780-1840*.

⁷⁸ Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions*.

their kid gloves made to fit their particular hands, so they bought gloves ready made, middle class parasols were typically made of cotton rather than silk, and vanity sets were made to look like ivory even though they were made of plastic. However, these middle-class adjustments to aristocratic style were not seen as shams or imitation, but as modifications which allowed the middle class to see themselves as a class apart; distinct from the aristocracy while still appropriating their symbols of refinement.

The political aspects of class formation and differentiation have been overemphasized in the historical literature. A number of historians, such as Dianne Macleod Sachko, Harold Perkin, and G. R. Searle, have studied men's public struggles to differentiate the middle class through extending suffrage, establishing middle-class professions, and creating moralizing influences in cities through public institutions such as museums, art, galleries and parks.⁷⁹ My work explores issues beyond the masculine public/political realm by placing an emphasis on women and feminine objects. I show that women exemplify their class via the shape and posture of their bodies and the colour of their skin rather than through professional accomplishments. It was upon women's physical bodies that class was manifested and became real.

The accessories that I look at were understood to have strong colonial connections. These feminine objects helped determine the effect that imperialism had on women who would likely never leave the metropole. Here I argue that women

⁷⁹Macleod argues that the middle class took hold of the national institutions of art in order to help create the social category 'middle class' by infusing morals into narrative painting and doing away with the aristocratic concept of the connoisseur of art. Perkin explores the rise of the middle class through the new professions of the nineteenth century and Searle explores how Victorians tried to reconcile their economic convictions with their ethical principles. Partly they did this by identifying the boundaries of what is right and wrong (slavery, addictive drugs, and pornography), partly by protecting certain occupations from the pressures of market competition (doctors, lawyers) and partly by separating the market from family which is based on mutual love, home as a caring sphere. Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class : Money and the Making of Cultural Identity*, Harold James Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society : England since 1880* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1989), Searle, *Morality and the Market in Victorian Britain*.

participated in the British colonial project by consuming objects that were represented in the Victorian imagination as imperial spoils. I write in response to Bernard Porter's work which deemphasizes the place of imperialism in Victorian society. Porter argues that many Britons were unaware of their imperial stature in the nineteenth century, and only a small number of citizens were committed to it in any way. Porter asks: "In what ways can [Britain] be said to have been an imperial *society*, as well as an imperial nation?"⁸⁰ There are many imperial historians that take up this question, suggesting that novels, architecture and the education system all brought imperialism home to Victorians.⁸¹ I show that imperialism penetrated into the everyday lives of Britons not only in their public lives but also in the mundane objects that they used within the home. Via women's accessories we see that in the smallest ways empire infused the everyday lives of Victorian women. Objects sourced in the colonies were incorporated into women's lives in catalogues that emphasized the imperial origin of ivory brushes, popular magazines that featured articles about the oriental history of umbrellas, and fans that were painted in Japanese patterns. Contrary to Porter's thesis, Britain was an

⁸⁰Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) vii.

⁸¹ Edward Said, for example, argues that there was a culture of imperialism in the West dating back to the late eighteenth century and that cultural forms such as the novel, produced, mediated, and interpreted imperialism for the West. John MacKenzie shows that from the 1880s onward ideas of empire were expressed in the education system, in youth movements such as the boy scouts, and in public entertainments such as music halls and exhibitions. And Felix Driver and David Gilbert's edited volume shows that European cities were shaped by imperialism. Public buildings such as the Bank of England, for example, was reconstructed using Roman architecture to demonstrate the ancient routes of English imperialism, exhibitions like the Crystal Palace helped to bring the empire into the metropolis, and suburban gardens were filled with exotic plants providing the scenery of the far off places of the world. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993), John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984) 3, Felix Driver and David Gilbert, ed., *Imperial Cities: Landscape, Display and Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999). For other sources on European metropolises and colonial styles see: Patrick Conner, *Oriental Architecture in the West* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979), Raymond Head, *The Indian Style* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1986).

imperial society that incorporated physical reminders of the empire even in simple household objects.

This thesis also contributes to the debate about women's role in imperialism. According to Antoinette Burton, nineteenth and early twentieth century feminists, such as Josephine Butler, Millicent Garrett Fawcett, and Mary Carpenter Burton, blindly accepted British imperial thinking.⁸² These authors suggest that oriental womanhood represented sexual difference, primitive society and colonial backwardness. My research shows that these tropes extended beyond feminist debates. They became part of the narrative of average women's lives in the form of accessories. In terms of sexual difference, the fan in the hands of a Japanese belle represented innocence and submissiveness while in the hands of a British woman it represented emancipation from the domestic sphere in the form of paid employment and a device that allowed women to actively participate in the marriage market. Furthermore, the umbrella became a symbol of colonial backwardness. In the colonial context the umbrella was used mainly by royalty. The British interpreted this as a sign of despotism and therefore politically backward in comparison to their own tradition of democratizing the umbrella and the people of their nation. Via the use of accessories women entered the debate about Britain's geopolitical supremacy over its colonies. In their everyday use of objects, they subdued the great beasts of Africa into dainty ivory combs. They used fans to emphasize the difference between the emancipated woman of the west and the submissive women of the East. And they read about the umbrella as a sign of despotism of the non-Western nations.

⁸² Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

In sum, my work makes important contributions to the questions of class, empire, and femininity. As a post-Marxist scholar I show how class was performed by women on a daily basis. What is new here is that I focus on women's part in class formation, offsetting the overemphasis on masculine/public forms. I also contribute to the debate about whether or not Britons thought about and participated in the imperialism of their nation. Here I show that commonplace articles of women's fashion were part of the colonial discourse. This demonstrates that even women were involved in creating and maintaining the idea of the empire in the British imagination.

The thesis begins with a chapter about the glove and its place in the creation of the perfect hand. According to phrenology experts, who had great influence at the beginning of the nineteenth century, hands were manifestations of class and gender written on the body. As such white delicate hands were an indication of fine breeding and could be looked at as a sign of class. The kid glove acted as a protector of class identity. Middle-class ladies filled their gloves with creams at night to erase any manual labour they may have engaged in during the day; they wore light coloured gloves when outside to hide stains or chapping; they bought gloves that fit extra tightly to maintain the semblance that they were engaged in a life of leisure as labour was thought to increase the breadth of the hand. All of these practices are an indication of the cultural anxiety experienced by middle-class women who aspired to a higher status and tried to establish their proper place in the class hierarchy. The story of the glove points to the ways in which women performed their class and gender roles. Chapter Two examines the way that the folding fan became embroiled in one of the most important social problems of the mid-century: 'The Woman Question'. This question, which revolved around what to do

with middle-class women who were unable to find husbands, was resolved by the fan in two ways: fan design was offered as a respectable employment for middle-class spinsters; or, alternatively, the fan, if wielded with sufficient expertise, could be a weapon of coquetry which attracted potential husbands. Either way—as a form of employment, or as a form of seduction—the fan brought the role of women out of the home into the public sphere. This transfer of feminine influence created anxiety within the British population and generated nostalgia for simpler times when women remained in the domestic sphere.

Chapter Three looks at how the umbrella helped to define the place of Britons both in the wider world and within England itself. As an accessory which originated in the East, the umbrella became an indication of the disjuncture between Eastern and Western practices. The Eastern association of the object with royalty allowed the British to see these countries as traditional and backward, while the popular use of the umbrella in England allowed the British to celebrate their own country as progressive and democratic. This argument is partly derived from the progressive discussions about luxury in the eighteenth century which suggested that a wide consumption of luxury goods, such as umbrellas and parasols, within the population was an indication of progress and the evolution of a nation. Within England itself minor differences in the material makeup of the umbrella helped define one class from the other. The differences of Eastern and Western umbrella use helped create an orientalist ethic which acted as justification for British Imperial rule. The minute differentiation of class based on umbrellas demonstrates the ongoing anxiety the British experienced when it came to differentiating class and character in an anonymous urban environment that encouraged

the democratic purchasing of luxury goods. Chapter Four then turns to the faux-ivory vanity set which had important implications for women's respectable status and their identities as British citizens. The ritual of preparing an acceptable coif was complex in this period. Long loose tresses could either indicate innocence, in the case of a young girl, or promiscuity in the case of an older woman. As such the creation of a proper up-do was an important act which indicated a woman's class and marital status. The objects themselves were also embroiled in questions of national identity. The most popular celluloid plastic sets were made to appear like ivory—an object that was hunted at great expense in the British colonies. Faux-ivory vanity sets, then, acted as imitative pieces of empire held in the palm of women's hands. As such, the vanity set helped middle-class women show their support for the empire building practices of their nation.

The study of accessories helps to demonstrate how the larger interests of the Victorian culture became reflected in common household objects. When studied in their context, women's accessories open up lines of inquiry that lead to questions of how the category 'middle class' became manifest through consumption, how whiteness, leisure, and femininity were performed on an everyday basis, and how concepts of empire and British superiority became incorporated into women's dress. The study of everyday objects used by Victorians can help us to understand the subconscious ideals of the culture which created them. These cultural artifacts help to objectify concerns as diverse as the political aspirations of the nation and the formation of class consciousness.

British historians have not studied women's accessories for what they reveal about the Victorians in terms of race, class and gender. My work is unique because it opens a window into the minute practices of everyday life. It asks such questions as: how

did women brush their hair, what did they put on their hands, why were parasols popular? The Victorian interaction with gloves, fans, parasols and vanity sets reveals a rich cultural nexus. Analyzing the way middle-class women used these objects shows very clearly the intimate entanglements between race, class and gender. Anne McClintock's *Imperial Leather* argues that "race, gender and class are not distinct realms of experience, existing in splendid isolation from each other; nor can they be simply yoked together retrospectively. ... Rather, they come into existence *in and through* relations to each other."⁸³ I re-examine McClintock's claims in relation to seemingly innocuous aspects of daily life; in doing this, the dissertation re-interprets and expands her analysis. The dissertation sketches a loose arc from the early Victorian period to the Edwardian, demonstrating the entanglements between race, class and gender across different materials and artifacts.

The work traces the de-stabilizing of the meaning of women's accessories in Victorian Britain. Discussion of the use of the glove and the fan will show that their meaning for middle-class women and the rest of society was stable. Gloves and fans were loaded with rules about how to act and how to conform to particular roles in society. Women were thought to own certain fashionable objects not only because they represented their social status but because they reflected their inner character -- in other words, people appeared to be what they actually were. The use of fans, parasols, and ivory products towards the end of the century was conditioned by changes in production methods, the development of a consumer society and the expansion of the British Empire. As this dissertation will show, during the late Victorian and Edwardian periods, these broad historical processes helped to destabilize the meaning of these objects. Knowledge

⁸³ McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in Colonial Conquest* 5.

of the different uses of the fan and parasol in Asia challenged British certainties about the meanings of these objects in relation to women's identity. The destabilization of meaning in this period was most evident in the history of ivory products because of the development of celluloid, which was used to imitate ivory. Discussion of celluloid further leads into a corporate story of American advertising. In this context a stable set of values was undermined by corporate tastemakers who constructed women's identities and consumer habits.

In this work we will follow an arc. We will move from the idea that there is some kind of center in the world—there are rules to be followed that allow women to fit in—to the idea that there is no center and there is no respite from the anxieties that have overcome the average woman. Over the course of this work we will chart a shift from a set of inner values to a set of values that are centered upon corporate tastemakers that decide what women are and what they want.

Chapter One

‘The Beauty of her Hands’: The Glove and the Making of Middle-Class Womanhood

In her 1908 etiquette guide, *Every Woman's Toilet Book*, Mrs. Noble offered her commentary on the place of hands in the overall perception of a woman:

One of woman's greatest charms is in the beauty of her hands, members which are truly adorable when their smallness is combined with other indications of fine breeding; but even if they are large they may still be beautiful if they are shapely, finely made, and white, with blue veins, taper fingers, and rosy nails, slightly arched.⁸⁴

Here Noble indicates the physical manifestations of the perfect hand—it is small with tapered fingers and white with blue veins. Thus perfect hands are about more than just physical traits; hands are a manifestation of class and gender and race written on the body. Noble's ideal hand was thought to be particular to the middle class and was often cited in opposition to working-class hands which were “large and strong and coarse”⁸⁵ and aristocratic hands which were “long and sometimes too thin.”⁸⁶ Throughout the nineteenth century white delicate hands were considered a primary indicator of women's “fine breeding” as well as a physical manifestation of their detachment from physical labour. Mrs. Noble's observations, then, were a reflection and a reaffirmation of the physical identity that came to distinguish the middle-class women's body from other social classes.

⁸⁴ Noble, *Every Woman's Toilet Book* 56.

⁸⁵ Arthur Munby, “Munby Diary,” in *Munby, Man of Two Worlds: The Life and Diaries of Arthur J. Munby, 1812-1910*, ed. Derek Hudson (Cambridge: Gambit, 1974), 72.

⁸⁶ Noble, *Every Woman's Toilet Book* 56.

Hands were an essential prop in the performance of middle-class womanhood. Their soft white appearance was not natural but had to be maintained on a daily basis as an indication of women's leisured status. Furthermore, hands were regarded as a form of class differentiation. Throughout the Victorian period it was thought that class was manifested physically on the body and that middle and working class women could be identified by their skin colour and the size of their hands. Using mainly prescriptive literature such as etiquette manuals, fashion plates and women's magazines I map the story that was sold to women and what reaction they were likely to produce. In this chapter I will be examining how middle-class identity was exemplified, constructed and physically manifested through hands.

During the period under study, Britain was at the height of its empire. Imperialism encouraged middle and upper class Britons to invent racial categories, placing themselves at the top of the racial hierarchy. The discussion of middle-class whiteness, thus, implicitly engaged women in the colonial discourses of the day; women were encouraged to maintain their skin as white which was the standard skin colour that all other races were measured against. As we will see, whiteness became central not only to the self-definition of middle-class women but it also helped define the working class as the racial 'Other' within English borders.

The dissertation begins with this chapter about gloves because it shows the slow transition between the eighteenth-century concept of self—in which inner character is always represented upon the physical body—to the early Victorian idea that the body can be altered to give certain impressions of character. This is an important starting point for

the work because it pinpoints the beginning of the destabilization of concrete conceptions of class and gender and begins to show them as performance.

Mrs. Noble's guide was among the last of the Victorian manuals that claimed white skin as an indication of a leisured lifestyle. This soon would be replaced by sunny vacations and tanned skin in the later 1920s. While our story ends with the Edwardian period, it begins in the 1830s when various phenomena coalesce to provide the pressure and the means to compel middle-class women to consider their hands as an indication of their class status. At this time etiquette manuals made a transition from conduct oriented to consumption oriented, women's magazines began to proliferate, and the glove industry began to standardize their wears, increasing production and ensuring a snug fit. I will consider how all of these factors worked together to create a considerable cultural anxiety surrounding the small, soft, white middle-class hand.

The chapter begins with an outline of the academic studies that have informed my work. The historiography section looks at a variety of areas including theories of consumption, performative studies, and race and class formation. In the second section on the creation and maintenance of the middle-class body, I show how a combination of skin creams, washes and glove wearing created the soft white skin coveted by middle-class women. In this section I also consider diet, exercises and posture as reflective and constitutive of the middle-class hands and body. Once the specific mechanisms used to create and maintain the perfect hand have been considered, I look at the hand as a visual representation of class differentiation. Hands were a site that teetered on the boundary between beauty and utility. While middle-class women participated in some housework, they maintained a public identity as leisured. This caused considerable anxiety for

women who were led to believe that labour could permanently affect the shape of their hands and the colour and roughness of their skin. The third section considers hands as a site of class differentiation where large red hands were thought to be working-class and small white hands were considered middle-class.

Historiographical Background

A simple article of clothing can make concrete various issues and anxieties. The glove, for example, speaks to matters of social differentiation, has implications for the idea of the separate spheres, and is involved in the performance of race, gender and class. Even contemporaries noted that the glove had meaning beyond its designated functional purpose. Historians interested in broader questions of cultural experience have, through their methodologies, provided invaluable tools to the historian of material culture. This project, while grounded in the study of objects, is informed by a much broader historiography.

In this chapter I argue that the consumer good resonates far beyond the moment of purchase. This type of argumentation has a very long history and often includes an implicit critique of consumer society and its mechanisms. The foundational work of Thorstein Veblen, for example, tracks the emergence of a leisure class at the end of the nineteenth century. Middle class men and women, he suggests, demonstrate their class status through the conspicuous display of goods.⁸⁷ Veblen critiques consumer society for

⁸⁷ Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions*. Veblen was critiquing his contemporaries as being taken in by the consumer society which made them complacent. While his argument is over 100 years old it has been taken up by theorists of consumer culture particularly of the Marxist school such as: Georg Simmel, "Fashion," *International Quarterly* X (1904), Quentin Bell, *On Human Finery* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1947), H Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man* (London: Ark, 1986).

its displacement of individual identities into the world of goods. This work was followed almost a century later by Jean Baudrillard who posits that advertising, consumer research, and general commodity promotion have joined together to create a “self-referential system of cultural meaning.”⁸⁸ Baudrillard believes that this system is so all encompassing that consumers are unable to attribute their own meanings to commodities, or to recognize that they are part of a system that both creates and fulfills their wants and needs. Baudrillard was followed by scholars such as Stuart Ewen and Grant McCracken who elaborate the theory in the American context and Thomas Richards who writes in the British context.⁸⁹ My intention here is not to offer a critique of consumer society; rather I am interested in these scholars because they analyze the way in which goods make “stable and visible the categories of culture.”⁹⁰ The glove in the nineteenth century was a real object that was reflective and constitutive of middle class identity.

Traditionally historians of gloves focused on their proliferation through the social ranks rather than reflecting on the cultural meaning of the object.⁹¹ The monographs and articles that make up the historiography of the glove follow a distinct narrative regarding

⁸⁸ Quote is from: Martyn J. Lee, "Introduction," in *The Consumer Society Reader*, ed. Martyn J. Lee (Malden Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 2000), xiii. Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (St Louis: Telos, 1981).

⁸⁹ S Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976), H. Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man* (London: Ark, 1986), McCracken, *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities*, Grant David McCracken, "Meaning Manufacture and Movement in the World of Goods," in *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

⁹⁰ Mary Douglas, *The World of Goods* (New York: Basic Books, 1979) 59.

⁹¹ Anon, "The Romance of Gloves: Hand-Coverings in the Past and Present.", Beck, "The Romance of Gloves.", Boehn, *Modes and Manners Ornaments: Lace Fans Gloves Walking-Sticks Parasols Jewelry and Trinkets*, Dent, *A Brief Description of the Manufacture, History and Associations of Gloves: With Illustrations from Dent, Allcroft & Co.'s Manufactory, Worcester*, B. Eldred Ellis, *Gloves and the Glove Trade* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, Ltd., 1921), Marie Mossoba, "Old Romance of the Glove: The Gay Hues of Today Recall the Bright Hand-Coverings Worn in a Glamorous Past," *New York Times* (1936), Norton-Kyshe, *The Law and Customs Relating to Gloves, Being an Exposition Historically Viewed of Ancient Laws, Customs, and Uses in Respect of Gloves, and of the Symbolism of the Hand and Glove in Judicial Proceedings*, Smith, *Gloves Past and Present*, Uzanne, *The Sunshade, the Glove, the Muff*.

the elite acceptance and later proliferation of the glove in Western society. The stories begin with examples of the early use of the glove by royalty. Gloves were then worn by the high clergy and military men. Eventually, feudal overlords used them to assert their authority. And slowly the general aristocracy began to wear gloves as well. After women took up the accessory during the Reformation, gentlemen followed suit and the glove soon moved down the social scale until men and women of all classes were included in the gentility of glove wearing. Implicit in these narratives is the argument that the glove is a democratizing agent. One author goes so far as to claim the glove was a forerunner of democracy:

[The glove] spreads in proportion as liberty and culture are diffused among the people. Follow the progress of the glove, and you trace the growth in enlightenment and refinement of the nations. One of the true forerunners of democracy means the elevating, not the leveling of mankind—the glove takes its place among the civilizing forces of the world.⁹²

Here an article of clothing acts as a stabilizing agent for a wider cultural phenomenon. The dissemination of the glove through the social ranks becomes a physical representation of the spread of “liberty and culture” which led the way to a wider democracy. Democracy is not a catalyst for working class glove consumption as one might suspect. Rather consumption was the forerunner of democracy—the proliferation of the glove acted as visual representation of equality so that democracy could be considered. However, the suggestion that the dissemination of an article of clothing through the social ranks is a marker of “enlightenment and refinement” masks the fact that not all gloves (or the people who wore them) were created equal.

The claim that the glove was a democratizing agent, “elevating” the lower classes of mankind, hides the fact that the glove was first and foremost an article of class

⁹² Smith, *Gloves Past and Present* 7.

differentiation. In this chapter I follow the work of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu whose study of 1960s France shows that different classes ‘make real’ their position by creating distinctions between themselves and other groups. Bourdieu posits that lifestyle, the cultivation of certain tastes, and the consumption of goods were means by which different social groups objectified their status.⁹³ This concept of the distinction of classes through consumption describes perfectly the way in which gloves were employed by middle-class women as a marker of class differentiation. In a country known for its social mobility, people found ways to maintain divisions, “as class distinctions grow hazier, their trappings re-emerge as style.”⁹⁴ In the nineteenth century the type of glove fabric continued to differentiate the aspiring middle class from the labouring classes. The working class tended to wear knit and cotton gloves while others wore more expensive fabrics such as kid or suede.⁹⁵ The particularities of glove consumption acted as a visual clue that highlighted the social standing of middle-class women and distinguished them from their working-class sisters.

Another way that the middle classes separated themselves from the working classes was by maintaining separate spheres for men and women. According to a foundational study by historians Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, the middle class had come into their own by the 1830s and 1840s because they shared a belief in the separate sphere doctrine.⁹⁶ This ideology suggested that men and women had naturally

⁹³ Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*.

⁹⁴ J. Mordaunt Crook, *The Rise of the Nouveaux Riches: Style and Status in Victorian and Edwardian Architecture* (London: John Murray, 1999) 5.

⁹⁵ Valerie Cumming, *Gloves*, ed. Aileen Ribeiro, *The Costume Accessories Series* (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1982) 57-58.

⁹⁶ Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes : Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* 180-192. Since this publication early modern historians have taken issue with the time frame presented in the book arguing that there is evidence of a separate sphere ideology in the earlier period. For further information

opposing gender characteristics: men were active and women passive; men were rational and women moral; men were practical and women ornamental. As a result of these opposing gender characteristics, Victorian men and women were thought by the general population to be best suited to life in separate spheres. Men, with their aggressive and rational sensibilities, were more suited to the world of work and politics. Conversely, women, with their passive and moral outlook, should be protected from the public male world by staying in the home.⁹⁷ Because of the domestic woman's dissociation from the world of work she was not supposed to do any manual labour, including housework or gardening. In this manifestation a woman's position was to be leisured and ornamental.

By the turn of the nineteenth century, middle class denial of women's work was perceived to be so all encompassing that the American Victorian social critic Thorstein Veblen wrote a book condemning the ornamental lives of middle-class women.⁹⁸ In his work, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, Veblen outlines the extent women would go to maintain the semblance of leisure. He critiques middle class women's clothing, stating that its purpose was to "impress upon the beholder the fact (often indeed a fiction) that the wearer does not and cannot habitually engage in useful work."⁹⁹ Veblen condemns the separate sphere ideology because it gave women one single purpose; to demonstrate the financial stability of the male head of household by sporting extravagant dress which

see: Amanda Vickery, "Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History," *The Historical Journal* 36, no. 2 (1993): 394-395, 397-398 n.348.

⁹⁷ Loeb, *Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women* 19.

⁹⁸ Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* 180. Veblen's critique is thought to be relevant to both America and Britain. The British context often provided even more exaggerated performance of leisure and conspicuous consumption than was evident in the American context. Furthermore, his work was published in both America and England. Finally, British historians often cite Veblen as an important theorist in their work. See for example: Lemire, "Second-Hand Beaux and 'Red-Armed Belles': Conflict and the Creation of Fashions in England, C. 1660-1800.", Loeb, *Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women*.

⁹⁹ Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* 179.

restricted their mobility to the point of enforced leisure.¹⁰⁰ By suggesting that middle class women's abstinence from work was a "fiction," Veblen implies that the separate sphere ideology was difficult to maintain on a day-to-day basis. It is the study of these "fictions" and how they are created and maintained that is of interest for this chapter. I argue that extravagant dress was not the only way women created the fiction of middle classness; class was also grafted onto the physical body through the daily maintenance of delicate, white hands.

Since the publication of Davidoff and Hall's *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class* (1987) historians have returned to the question of whether or not the separate sphere ideology was indeed a fiction. Over the last twenty years historians have looked at consumerism, feminism, philanthropy, and women's housework as sites in which the domestic ideology was manipulated and contested. These revisionist historians have criticized Davidoff and Hall and by extension Veblen for their exclusive use of prescriptive sources suggesting that personal manuscripts, autobiographies and women's writing might have revealed ways in which the doctrine was manipulated in real life. Historians of consumerism such as Erika Rappaport, Thomas Richards, and Bill Lancaster have challenged the separate sphere doctrine by demonstrating how department store managers, women shoppers and advertisements created a home away from home in nineteenth-century shopping centers. The department store effectively turned the separate sphere doctrine onto itself granting women a place in the public sphere by equipping it with domestic necessities.¹⁰¹ Historians of feminism such as Lisa Tickner,

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 170-172, 179-182.

¹⁰¹ William Lancaster, *The Department Store: A Social History* (London: Leicester University Press, 1995), Erika Diane Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End* (Princeton:

Barbara Caine and Linda Colley show how women manipulated the domestic ideology to gain access to the public sphere by presenting themselves as respectable women who were concerned with issues that were traditionally part of the woman's sphere of influence.¹⁰² Historians have also shown how female philanthropists accessed the public sphere by negotiating the boundaries of public and private to their own ends.¹⁰³ Looking at the question of women's housework, historians Anne McClintock and Patricia Branca suggest that women did not cease to work once the domestic ideology took hold, instead their work was denied by the culture at large.¹⁰⁴ Despite these many criticisms the separate sphere model has continued to play a major role in writing about middle-class Victorian women. Recently, historians, including those named above, have begun to think of the separate sphere model primarily as an ideology that Victorians employed or discarded at their leisure.

Following the current trend, I read etiquette manuals for evidence of how women manipulated the domestic ideology to their own ends. Therein I find evidence that the average middle-class woman struggled to preserve the semblance of ornamental leisure while coping with housework. Above all, women's domestic status was represented in their soft white hands. They avoided dirty, suntanned, burned, or freckled hands because these were associated with work and racial stigma. When middle-class women wore

Princeton University Press, 2000), Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914*.

¹⁰² Barbara Caine, *Victorian Feminists* (Oxford [England] ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), Linda Colley, *Britons : Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven, CT, USA: Yale University Press, 1992), Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women : Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign, 1907-14* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1987).

¹⁰³ Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship between Classes in Victorian Society* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, 52-58.

¹⁰⁴ McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in Colonial Conquest* 216, Tosh, "New Men? Bourgeois Cult of Home," 80, Branca, "Image and Reality: The Myth of the Ideal Victorian Woman," 179-190.

gloves while doing housework, protected their hands from the sun while gardening, and washed their hands and applied whitening creams in the evenings they were guarding their middle-class status. The association of white hands with leisure and dark hands with the colonial or working class 'Other' creates a link between the domestic ideology and whiteness studies.

The study of whiteness as a racial category is a relatively recent endeavour. Whiteness studies began twenty years ago with a cluster of British and American works such as Richard Dyer's "White" (1988), Marilyn Frye's "On Being White" (1983) and the Center for Cultural Studies' *The Empire Strikes Back* (1982).¹⁰⁵ These texts are founded on the assumption that race is something possessed by non-white and white people alike.¹⁰⁶ Such scholars seek to "denaturalize race" by unpacking the details of its formation in order to demonstrate that whiteness is a "cultural construct."¹⁰⁷ Since the initial call for scholarship, whiteness studies have clustered around four different questions: 1) what special circumstances help form and perpetuate white supremacy?¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Richard Dyer, "White," *Screen* 29, no. 4 (1988), Marilyn Frye, "On Being White: Thinking toward a Feminist Understanding of Race and Race Supremacy," in *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory*, ed. Marilyn Frye (Trumansburg, N.Y.: Crossing Press, 1983), Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, *The Empire Strikes Back* (London: Hutchinson, 1982).

¹⁰⁶ For articles that delineate the field of whiteness studies see: David W. Stowe, "Uncolored People: The Rise of Whiteness Studies," *Lingua Franca* 6, no. 6 (1996), John T. Warren, "Whiteness and Cultural Theory: Perspectives on Research and Education," *The Urban Review* 31, no. 2 (1999). See also a special issue devoted to whiteness studies: "Scholarly Controversy: Whiteness and the Historians' Imagination," *International Labour and Working-Class History* 60, no. Fall (2001).

¹⁰⁷ James R. Barrett, "Whiteness Studies: Anything Here for Historians of the Working Class?," *International Labour and Working-Class History* 60, no. Fall (2001): 32, Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998) 2.

¹⁰⁸ In the British context see: Antoinette Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late-Victorian Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (London: Hutchinson, 1987), Studies, *The Empire Strikes Back*. By looking at three emigrants from India Burton discusses the way in which the colonies and the colonial mission became part of the formation of Englishness even for those who did not leave the metropole. Gilroy examines the culture of Black Britain post World War II. He argues that British nationalism was predicated upon racial images of difference which made Britishness and Blackness mutually exclusive categories. The Center presents an image of an oppressive and racist Britain in the 1970s which has been

- 2) How are immigrant groups included and excluded from the category of whiteness?¹⁰⁹
- 3) What are the links between gender and whiteness?¹¹⁰ 4) How is whiteness enacted or performed on a daily basis?¹¹¹ This final area has received less attention but for British historians proves vital for understanding conceptions of whiteness.

created by the state as a reaction to the loss of international status, loss of empire, economic problems and the movement away from a state welfare system. In the American context see: Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998), Alexander Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (London: Verso, 1990). Hale argues that the racial categories of black and white arose in the aftermath of the Civil War. Black citizenship forced a new identity for Americans which became tied up with whiteness. Saxton argues that white supremacy was maintained in nineteenth century America through a justification of the slave system and the refusal to grant loans and lucrative land to black Americans that continued into the twentieth century.

¹⁰⁹ In the British context see for example: Bonnett, "How the British Working Class Became White: The Symbolic (Re)Formation of Racialized Capitalism." G. Allen, "Are We Englishmen?," in *Images of Race*, ed. M. Biddiss (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1979), M. Pickering, "White Skin Black Masks: 'Nigger' Minstrelsy in Victorian Britain," in *Music Hall: Performance and Style*, ed. J. Bratton (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986). In the American context see: N. Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995), David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1992), Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*, Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998). This line of historical enquiry suggests that not all whites were always considered white. Poor white southerners, the British working class, Irishmen in both Britain and America, and new immigrants in America particularly from Eastern Europe had to gain access to the category of whiteness through various means such as excluding non-whites from unions, participating in minstrel shows, and moving to the suburbs.

¹¹⁰ Louise Michele Newman, *White Women's Rights: The Radical Origins of Feminism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History* (London: Verso, 1996). Hazel Carby, "White Women Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood," in *The Empire Strikes Back*, ed. Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (London: Hutchinson, 1982). This area of analysis is concentrated around the history of feminism. All of these texts discuss the segregation of white and non-white women within the American and British feminist movement of the nineteenth century. Middle-class white women compared their status under a patriarchal system to slavery while also emphasizing white women's racial superiority to immigrant men. White feminists thereby defined their status using the terms set out by the patriarchal system and excluded the voice of working class and non-white women.

¹¹¹ For a discussion of how whiteness is performed through the daily ritual of skin cleansing and makeup see: Amina Mire, "Skin-Bleaching: Poison, Beauty, Power and the Politics of the Colour Line," *New Feminist Research* 28, no. 3&4 (2001), Kathy Peiss, "Hope in a Jar: The Making of American's Beauty Culture," (1999). For a discussion of how whiteness is enacted through the body see: Walkowitz, "The Indian Women, the Flower Girl, and the Jew: Photojournalism in Edwardian London," Vron Ware, "Island Racism: Gender, Place, and White Power," in *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*, ed. Ruth Frankenberg (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), David Wellman, "Minstrel Shows, Affirmative Action, and Angry White Men: Marking Racial Otherness in the 1990s," in *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*, ed. Ruth Frankenberg (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in Colonial Conquest* 132-180.

The abundance of studies focused on the American context has overshadowed the question of how whiteness is perceived in a country that did not have a large population of non-whites. In the American context race relations are understood in terms of binaries and questions of race take priority over other distinctions of class and ethnicity. In the British context, however, class is the primary foundation for understandings of whiteness.¹¹² The British people perform race in terms of clean versus dirty, respectable versus disorderly, leisured versus working. In other words, in the British context class is racialized.¹¹³ In nineteenth-century Britain whiteness was a source of class anxiety and not simply a manifestation of awareness of the black 'Other'. This type of research further complicates the way that racial distinctions are imagined and practiced on a day-to-day basis. Throughout this chapter I demonstrate how whiteness is physically represented and maintained on British women's bodies through the use of gloves, whitening creams and washes.

Moving away from race towards questions of gender performance, Judith Butler suggests that femininity is an identity constructed through a series of gestures and movements that come to represent 'womanhood.'¹¹⁴ In Butler's work the female body "becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised and consolidated

¹¹² Bonnett, "How the British Working Class Became White: The Symbolic (Re)Formation of Racialized Capitalism," 317-318.

¹¹³ Class takes on a racial component in various nineteenth century novels and journalistic reports. See for examples: London, *The People of the Abyss*, Mearns, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*, George Orwell, *Down and out in Paris and London* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974).

¹¹⁴ Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Women's Magazine, 1800-1914* ix, Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." For a sociological perspective on gender performance see: Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman, "Doing Gender," *Gender and Society* 1, no. 2 (1987).

through time.”¹¹⁵ However, at any given historical period femininity may be performed in different ways. This chapter is a response to Butler’s call for scholars to “describe the mundane manner in which [gender] constructs are produced, reproduced, and maintained within the field of bodies.”¹¹⁶ Through a study of hand gestures represented in fashion plates and instructions given in etiquette manuals, I study the corporeal acts which constituted middle-class femininity in the Victorian period.

Along the same lines, scholars have begun to think of class as performed. Wai Chee Dimock and Michael T. Gilmore, for example, suggest that post-Marxist scholarship must consider class not as a “privileged analytic category” but a social position that must be “made real” by human actions and relationships.¹¹⁷ Coming from a sociology background, Candace West and Sarah Fenstermaker contend that class should be conceived of as “ongoing, methodical, and situated accomplishments.”¹¹⁸ American historians in particular have responded to this new conception of class by delineating specific instances and historical moments in which class is performed. For example, Andrea Volpe uses *cartes de visite* to pinpoint a moment in 1860s America when a set of conventional poses came to distinguish the respectable, middle-class body from other social groups.¹¹⁹ Laura Wexler demonstrates how women who took family photographs in the United States at the turn of the century were propagating and shaping the tropes of white supremacy.¹²⁰ And Richard L. Bushman demonstrates how the genteel body

¹¹⁵ Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," 274.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 276.

¹¹⁷ Gilmore, *Rethinking Class: Literary Studies and Social Formations* 2-3.

¹¹⁸ Candace West and Sarah Fenstermaker, "Doing Difference," *Gender and Society* 9, no. 1 (1995): 30.

¹¹⁹ Andrea Volpe, *The Middling Sorts: Explorations in the History of the American Middle Class* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

¹²⁰ Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

becomes constructed through paintings, advice literature and constrictive clothing in 18th century America.¹²¹ Following upon this research, I show that the middle-class white female body is constructed through a combination of corporeal acts and the maintenance of the perfect delicate white hand. Through a series of poses and gestures along with diet, exercises, creams and glove wearing, anxieties of class, gender, and race collide to create the white middle-class woman.

All of these historians speak to broad cultural trends and ideologies. I explore how these concepts translate into a material object; show how ideas can translate into lived realities. I draw on such a diverse range of historiographies because historical actors did not simply live in a world where they experienced gender at one moment and class at another; as we will see, this entanglement of ideas and ideologies becomes apparent through the study of the glove.

Creating the Middle-Class Body: Maintaining the Perfect Hand

Middle-class women of the Victorian period would have the public believe that within their gloves lay hands that were never subjected to labour; however, real women did not always have the luxury of complete indolence and they worked hard at creating the illusion of pristine hands. Fortunately for the historian, prescriptive literature outlines the time and energy that was spent on the creation and maintenance of delicate white hands. Ladies' advice manuals, encyclopedias for household duties, and fashion magazines were primarily written for a middle-class audience ranging from the lower-

¹²¹ Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Random House Inc., 1993) 63-74, Grier, *Culture and Comfort: People, Parlors, and Upholstery 1850-1930*.

middle-class wife to the upper-middle-class woman.¹²² This literature encouraged women to present a standardized body that came to be understood as specifically middle class. Consider, for example, a quotation from *The Woman's Book* which suggested that women's work could be hidden by cleaning their hands: "with little care the busy housewife can keep her hands in as good condition as the lady of leisure."¹²³ Here we see that the 'look' of the middle-class leisured wife was not natural but took constant "care." In other words, ideal hands had to be cultivated and maintained. This quotation is a perfect example of Michel Foucault's assertion that "one of the primordial forms of class consciousness is the affirmation of the body." In this instance, it is a specific part of the body—the hands—that affirm the woman's status as part of the 'leisured' middle class. Following upon Foucault's insight, Wai Chee Dimock and Michael T. Gilmore suggest that classes "become 'real'—become solid, integral, and perhaps even acquirable—to the point where they appear entirely objective and self-evident" once they are inscribed on the body. Middle-class women performed their class and in so doing they helped produce a collective middle-class body. Prescriptive literature must be read against this framework to find instances of the middle-class body 'made-real' through use of creams, posture, diet, exercises, and the wearing of gloves.

Various skin-improving recipes were extolled in fashion magazines, advice manuals, and encyclopedias as both preventative measures and remedies for freckled, tanned or burnt skin. Twice a day or before bed women were encouraged to soak their hands, arms and face in skin baths of their own making. These creams were concocted from ingredients readily available in the household, and were typically some combination

¹²²Peiss, "Hope in a Jar: The Making of American's Beauty Culture," 14.

¹²³ Strauss, *The Woman's Book: Contains Everything a Woman Ought to Know* 461.

of soap, buttermilk, lemon juice, vinegar, rainwater, rosewater, glycerin, horseradish, and oatmeal.¹²⁴ As well as domestic remedies, commercially made beauty recipes were also advertised in women's magazines. One such complexion bath was "Bridal Bouquet Bloom," advertised as a "lovely milky and hygienic liquid." The healthy quality of commercial cosmetics and creams was an integral part of advertising techniques as they often in reality contained chemicals that were unsafe.¹²⁵ This particular cosmetic claimed that it "imparts exquisite Beauty to the Face, Neck, Arms and Hands. ...It never fails to remove Freckles, Sunburn, and prevents all Roughness and Wrinkles."¹²⁶ This cure-all medicine was advertised both as a way to maintain the exquisite beauty of the white skin, and as a remedy for women whose skin was rough or sun damaged. These skin creams were designed to maintain "a white, soft hand...without marring its usefulness."¹²⁷

While advice literature did not pretend that middle-class women could live their lives devoid of housework and gardening, they still provided skin-care advice that helped hide this work distinguishing them from the tanned and freckled hands of the working class. Such concoctions were all crafted to hide middle-class women's labour.

Though most articles in etiquette manuals suggested that freckles and redness were due to the sun, some argued that the complexion was connected to the humors.¹²⁸ This was an ancient perception that a person must retain a balance between the four basic humors contained within the body: yellow bile, blood, black bile and phlegm. Each

¹²⁴ Noble, *Every Woman's Toilet Book* 52, 53, 58, 61, Strauss, *The Woman's Book: Contains Everything a Woman Ought to Know* 450, .

¹²⁵ Steele, *Fashion and Eroticism: Ideals of Feminine Beauty from the Victorian Era to the Jazz Age* 126.

¹²⁶ Bridal Bouquet Bloom, "Bridal Bouquet Bloom," in *Beauty Parlour Box 1, Advertisements Beauty Parlour-Hair-dressers' Advertisements*, ed. John Johnson Collection (1892).

¹²⁷ Anon, *Etiquette for Ladies and Gentleman* 11.

¹²⁸ Joan Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 15-21, Peiss, "Hope in a Jar: The Making of American's Beauty Culture.," 15-17, Owsei Temkin, *"On Second Thought" and Other Essays in the History of Medicine and Science* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002) 168-169.

humor represented a different temperature and moisture makeup which affected the emotions and outer appearance of a person with unbalanced humors. Although humoral theory was largely replaced with modern medical understandings of the body, one can still find aspects of humoralism in some nineteenth-century recipes for the skin.

Consider, for example, this quotation which suggests that diet can affect the blood and therefore the complexion:

The virtues of buttermilk as a summer beverage for cooling and purifying the blood are well known. It is also a famed country remedy for removing sunburn and freckles. The face is simply bathed with it at night, and it is allowed to dry in. ... This not only removes the sunburn, but clears and beautifies the complexion.¹²⁹

The blood, which is the humor associated with heat and moisture, has become over-represented in the woman's body, appearing on the skin as sunburn. In order to obtain a 'good complexion,' the humors must be rebalanced by removing a portion of the heat from the blood through the ingestion of cooling buttermilk.

The Ladies' Hand-Book of the Toilet, written in 1843, gives similar dietary suggestions for the complexion, but suggests instead that external remedies are only effective in the case of minor humoral imbalances: "If these means do not prove effectual, it is plain that the blood or bile is in a state of disorder, and recourse must be had to internal and more active remedies."¹³⁰ A woman's complexion was often thought to be an indication of her inner character. This idea was very important for the middle class who, while trying to produce and maintain a body that was distinctly middle class, did not like the idea that other classes might do the same. To avoid the problem of class passing, the etiquette manuals maintained the idea that a true lady would always become

¹²⁹ Anon, "The Toilet," *The Perruquier: A Monthly Trade Journal for Hairdressers, Perfumers, Brush and Comb Manufacturers* 2, no. 2 (1879).

¹³⁰ Anon, *The Ladies' Hand-Book of the Toilet: a Manual of Elegance and Fashion* 40.

apparent and her up-start counterpart would be recognized through some slip in her appearance—in this case her complexion.

Women were not only instructed to re-balance their humors through diet and protect their hands using skin creams; they were also advised to alter their posture in order to portray themselves as leisured women.¹³¹ The respectable upright pose of middle-class women had practical consequences for the middle class arm: by avoiding leaning women could circumvent rough elbows. For Victorians, the ideal arm was smooth with dimples in the place of the elbow.¹³² Women whose elbows were “coarse and scaly” were chastised in women’s magazines for “leaning the elbows upon desk or table.”¹³³ Instead, women were to keep their postures straight and their elbows free from contact. The upright posture suggested in the articles of women’s magazines and prescriptive literature was visually represented in popular fashion plates.

The primary purpose of fashion plates was to disseminate knowledge quickly about the latest couture in weekly and monthly periodicals.¹³⁴ However, these hand painted engravings also helped reaffirm didactic ideals about the female body.¹³⁵ The images generally depicted two or more women who were occasionally accompanied by

¹³¹ For a discussion of furniture, seating and the maintenance of genteel posture see: Katherine C. Grier, *Culture and Comfort: Parlor Making and the Middle-Class Identity, 1850-1930* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988) 117-142.

¹³² Noble, *Every Woman's Toilet Book* 49.

¹³³ Strauss, *The Woman's Book: Contains Everything a Woman Ought to Know* 450.

¹³⁴ Foster, *A Visual History of Costume the Nineteenth Century* 16, Vivian Holland, "On Collecting Fashion Plates," *The Book-Collector's Quarterly* 2 (1951): 13-18, Shanon Marcus, "Reflections on Victorian Fashion Plates," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 14, no. 3 (2005): 10-11, Doris Langley Moore, *Fashion through Fashion Plates, 1771-1970* (New York: Clarkson N. Pooter Inc., 1971) 13-19.

¹³⁵ Fashion plates came into existence with the advent of the women’s magazine at the end of the eighteenth century. In England there was a “golden age of fashion plates” between 1840 and 1880, but they were replaced with wash drawings and fashion photography by 1900. In the early years, the images found in the background were vague, but by the 1840s backdrops included detailed displays of parlours, gardens, operas, parks and seashores. The backgrounds indicated to the middle-class readership the appropriate locations in which to wear certain styles of dress.

servants, children or men. These drawings consistently showed stylized female bodies with extremely small waists, hands and feet. The bodies in fashion plates were models showing the ideal gestures, skin colour and female passivity which was meant to be emulated by the middle class woman. Though the dress and female silhouette of fashion plates was ever-changing, the hand gestures and arm movements of the women in these images remained remarkably constant.¹³⁶ The hands in fashion plates had a set amount of gestures, all of which were passive (figure 1.1).¹³⁷ Arms and hands were arrested in mid motion: gently reaching for objects, calmly gesturing towards items of interest, and holding accessories at the tips of fingers. As can be seen in the fashion plate entitled “Le Monde Elegant,” women’s small hands hold parasols, fans and books at the end of their tapered finger-tips (figure 1.2).¹³⁸ None of these objects are held firmly, in fact most accessories depicted in women’s hands are barely held at all. The fan is not being waved, nor is the parasol held directly over the head or leaned on for support. These items are not useful objects which helped maintain a white complexion—this was a ‘natural’ middle class trait—rather these objects accentuate the leisured life ideally led by women of the middle class. In his study of modern advertisements social scientist Erving Goffman observes a similar formula in which women are often in passive poses and postures. He suggests that this places women into a role of “ingratiation, submissiveness and appeasement.”¹³⁹ Fashion plates of the nineteenth century certainly follow this formula of the submissive wife which is pre-supposed by the domestic sphere ideology.

¹³⁶ The magazines that were consulted are *Townsend’s Monthly Selection of Paris Fashions* (1832-1852), *Ladies’ Cabinet* (1832-52), *Ladies’ Magazine* (1828-1869), *The Queen* (1847-1900), *Le Journal des Demoiselles* (1880-1890), *The Tailor and Cutter* (1870-1890).

¹³⁷ Though fashion plates had virtually disappeared by 1900, the hand gestures depicted in the plates continued to be used in glove advertisements well into the century.

¹³⁸ Fashion Plate from *The London and Paris Ladies’ Magazine*, July 1879.

¹³⁹ Erving Goffman, *Gender Advertisements* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1979) 44-46.

From the depictions in fashion plates women learned how to move their bodies in a performance of leisured women thereby helping to create a formalized middle-class body.¹⁴⁰ A study of middle-class portraiture shows that the conventional poses of fashion plates were reproduced in live photographs of men and women (figure 1.3).¹⁴¹ The semi-bent arm of the wife holding gloves, and little girls with lax hands holding baskets of flowers are reproduced over and over again in professional photographs. This demonstrates, at least in a formalized setting, that average women emulated the poses and gestures of fashion plates. The constant and consistent repetition of movements depicted in fashion plates, photographs and written about in etiquette manuals worked in unison to create the conventional poses that helped to produce a collective middle-class body.¹⁴²

The middle-class body was not only cultivated by a series of postures and gestures but also by eating habits. Plump, well-fed women tended to exhibit dimpled elbows; the layer of fat under a lady's skin helped to generate the perfect arm.¹⁴³ Throughout history there has been a strong association between wealth and weight. The dimpled elbow is a direct reflection of the foods that women eat, as well as the wealth of

¹⁴⁰ Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Women's Magazine, 1800-1914* 39. Beetham suggests that women's magazines depicted womanhood in two different ways: the written word reinforced women's domestic role as wife and mother, whereas fashion plates depict women as 'beauty.' While I agree that plates illustrate luxury, leisure, and surface beauty, there remains some evidence of domesticity within fashion plates. Though women are shown in many circumstances, they are most often in domestic settings. When women are out of doors the family home is often pictured in the background. At the seaside women are far from the beach surrounded by curtains and sitting on plush parlor chairs. Furthermore, women are occasionally depicted with children and servants, pointing to their role as mother and household manager, and accessories such as books, letters show women fulfilling their duty as correspondent and informed wife. Beetham is correct to argue that most written material depicts women as domestic but there is also a substantial amount of information about fashion, hair, hands and posture in the written components of magazines and etiquette manuals.

¹⁴¹ Lansdell, *Fashion a La Carte 1860-1900: A Study of Fashion through Cartes-De-Visite*.

¹⁴² For a similar interpretation of pose, see: Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* 63-69, Volpe, *The Middling Sorts: Explorations in the History of the American Middle Class* 159.

¹⁴³ Anne Hollander, *Seeing through Clothes* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), John Crowley, *The Invention of Comfort: Sensibilities and Design in Early Modern Britain and Early America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

her husband's household. Plump women with dimpled elbows were viewed as child-bearing women who could uphold the tenets of domestic motherhood. Victorians often placed these women in opposition to the emaciated infertile working-class spinster. Dimpled elbows, therefore, were not only associated with middle-class leisure, but also with the role of the woman as mother prescribed by the separate sphere doctrine.

Although elbows were thought to be important indicators of wealth and leisure it is clear that hands were the primary site of Victorians obsession. The preoccupation with perfect hands drove women to extreme lengths. Advice manuals suggested that fingers could be actively shaped into forms that they did not take on naturally. This type of physical reorientation of the body was more of an option in an age that endorsed corsets. Mrs. Noble explains that when women's fingers did not meet the right standards, they could be coaxed into the resemblance of a point with a few simple exercises:

In addition to capping the fingers at bedtime, the woman whose bump of vanity is abnormally developed can materially improve the appearance of her hands when a dinner or bridge-party is contained in the evening's program, by wearing her black velvet "strait-jackets" for a couple of hours previously, and molded tips preserving their acquired shape in a satisfactory manner throughout the evening.¹⁴⁴

Here we see that middle-class women born with the unfortunate defect of dull fingers, or alternatively having dulled their pointy fingers through housework, could still shape their appendages so that they fit the standards of the day. Though it was preferable to have naturally pointed finger tips, women whose "bump of vanity is abnormally developed" could cap their fingers at night, and prepare for a night out by placing their fingers in "strait-jackets" so that the fingers did not lose their pointiness. Here we see, once

¹⁴⁴ Noble, *Every Woman's Toilet Book* 65.

again, that the middle-class body must be coaxed into culturally ordained shapes in order to maintain the appearance of leisure.

Gloves were another tool employed in maintaining the perfectly shaped, tiny hand of the middle-class woman. Kid gloves were considered the best for hiding imperfect hands. Cotton and silk conformed to a woman's hand too readily, making them a real "test of shapely knuckles and tapering finger tips."¹⁴⁵ Kid was more likely to preserve its shape than cotton or silk, and fingertips could be forced into the semblance of a point using glove stretchers. Furthermore, women were advised to change their gloves numerous times a day in order to maintain the well-shaped appearance of their hands.¹⁴⁶ Women purchased gloves that were too small to create the appearance of tiny hands.¹⁴⁷ This practice rendered women's hands non-useful which further demonstrated that they did not participate in labour. Here Veblen's argument that corsets and crinolines were used to incapacitate women deliberately is extended to gloves.

Glove fabric was another important aspect of class; fabric was thought to distinguish the true middle-class lady from the working-class up-start. Ladies were instructed to only buy leather gloves as "silk or cotton gloves are very vulgar."¹⁴⁸ Kid was considered to be the only appropriate material worn by ladies. In fact, Queen Victoria banned suede gloves from her court because she considered them improper.¹⁴⁹

Women were warned that they must wear clean, well fitted, kid gloves if they were to be considered middle class. This view is reflected in a quotation from *Etiquette*

¹⁴⁵ Smith, *Gloves Past and Present* 106.

¹⁴⁶ Anon, *The Ladies' Hand-Book of the Toilet: A Manual of Elegance and Fashion* 34.

¹⁴⁷ Cumming, *Gloves* 60.

¹⁴⁸ Anon, *Etiquette for Ladies and Gentleman* 14.

¹⁴⁹ Cumming, *Gloves* 71.

for Ladies and Gentlemen which warns against wearing “soiled or ripped gloves” when attending a public event:

With regard to dress itself, the first things a lady ought to think about are her gloves and shoes; for soiled or ripped gloves, or shabby boots, will destroy the effect of the most elegant gown ever worn.¹⁵⁰

Here class is made visible not only by “the most elegant gown” which indicates wealth, but also through the accessories worn with the dress. The trappings of class are made visible not only by a woman’s primary covering but also in the details such as her gloves and shoes. This advice suggests that if a woman was unaware of, or could not afford, the right accessories she would not be considered a proper lady.

Middle-class women were assured that working-class women could be recognized through the inappropriate and inconsistent details of their attire such as their gloves. Fabrics other than kid were considered vulgar and could be used as a way to recognize the lower classes. Knitted gloves were inexpensive and inappropriate accessories for public wear,¹⁵¹ and cotton gloves were considered to be “conspicuous for their ugliness and cheapness.”¹⁵² Even if maids received second-hand kid gloves from their mistresses, their hand sizes could be different, thereby forsaking one of the primary tenets of middle-class glove wearing—skin tight fit. In the comedic song “Rotten Cotton Gloves,” a would-be-lady sports a pair of cotton gloves which are described as misshapen, dirty, old, torn, and seam-stripped (Appendix 1):¹⁵³

Gloves always add a finish
And they make you look a don
I think these gloves were finished
Long before I put them on,

¹⁵⁰ Anon, *Etiquette for Ladies and Gentleman* 12.

¹⁵¹ Cumming, *Gloves* 19.

¹⁵² Smith, *Gloves Past and Present* 108.

¹⁵³ George Arthurs, “Rotten Cotton Gloves.”

There's an openwork arrangement
 Round the finger tips,
 It comes in ve'ry handy
 When you're eating fish and chips...

I'm wearing rotten cotton gloves;
 Can't afford fur ones got no quids,
 Can't afford a pair of 'kids.'

Though they were worn in the hopes of passing as a 'don', the cotton gloves become an indication of the poverty the woman experiences. The seam-stripped fingers of her cotton gloves were a far cry from the 'fur' and 'kid' she would have worn had she the 'quids.' The glove, in this song, is an object of mockery as it so clearly shows the owner as a working class up-start. Songs such as this one suggest that when working-class women attempt to 'put on' white middle-class womanhood, they fail due to economic restraints and the lack of the proper accessories. But even for the middle class, who can afford the proper accessories, kid gloves acted more as a mechanism to hide imperfections than to show off their ability to purchase an entire matching wardrobe.

Gloves themselves were often a stand-in for the hands that middle-class women coveted. Good quality white kid gloves were desirable because they made hands appear small and soft while hiding any imperfections or stains that may have been acquired while doing housework.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, the backs of gloves were generally decorated with three lines of 'pointing' which is a technique of stitching creating a raised design on the back of the hand. The pointing may have acted as a reminder of the ideal hand underneath emphasizing the blue veins that were essential for the ideal Victorian hand.¹⁵⁵ Even though the working class could not afford the fabrics that were necessary to pass as

¹⁵⁴ Philippe Perrot, *Fashioning the Bourgeoisie*, trans. Richard Bienvenu (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981) 120.

¹⁵⁵ For a description of the perfect hand emphasizing blue veins see: Noble, *Every Woman's Toilet Book* 56.

middle class, the gloves themselves were used by the middle class to mask their stained, freckled hands and blunt fingertips.

Sometimes kid gloves were used to hide the hand from scrutiny but they could also be used to maintain the soft white skin underneath the glove. Kid gloves that had become too shabby to be worn in public were often used as a way to protect and rejuvenate the hands. Women who engaged in housework or gardening which was likely to stain, roughen or redden hands wore loose gloves with the tips of the fingers cut off.¹⁵⁶ Women also used old gloves at night; gloves were filled with cream and worn while sleeping in order to ensure that hands remained pristine.¹⁵⁷ Though it was likely that middle class Victorian women were anxious about the state of their naked hands, gloves were presented as a way for women to circumvent these anxieties.

Throughout the nineteenth century the glove industry began to mechanize, ensuring middle-class women that their hands would be hidden in gloves that acted like a second, more perfect, skin. Various inventions of the early and mid-nineteenth century helped improve the fit of gloves. Before the mechanization of the glove industry, kid gloves were either made-to-order for wealthy women or the sizing was decided at random by the glove-cutters working on ready-made gloves for the middle class. The inventor that had the most influence upon the glove's snug fit was Xavier Jouvin. Jouvin was a French medical student, who determined that hands could be classified into 320 shapes and sizes.¹⁵⁸ In the 1830s he patented a series of tempered steel blades in the shape of

¹⁵⁶ Anon, *Etiquette for Ladies and Gentleman* 11.

¹⁵⁷ Noble, *Every Woman's Toilet Book* 60.

¹⁵⁸ Xavier Jouvin won medals at French, English and American exhibitions for his invention. Ellis, *Gloves and the Glove Trade* 66, Jouvin's Glove Manufactory, "Jouvin's Glove Manufactory," in *Women's Clothes and Millinery Box 3; Advertisements-gloves*, ed. John Johnson Collection (Paris: Jouvin's Glove Manufactory, 1862), Smith, *Gloves Past and Present* 72, Cumming, *Gloves* 17.

each possible hand size. This allowed glove cutters to punch gloves with more precision so that they could fit a variety of different hand shapes. Other inventions that improved the snugness of gloves included elasticized wrists, glove fasteners, and the ‘looper’ machine which ensured that the entire glove was machine-stitched including the finger tips.¹⁵⁹ The mechanization of the glove industry standardized the shape of gloves making them one of the first ready-made clothing items for middle-class women. Mechanization made kid gloves more affordable for those less likely to buy gloves made-to-order. Product innovations such as these both stimulated and quelled middle-class anxieties about the perfect hand. Once it became possible for women to wear fitted gloves, they became a necessary accessory tool for the construction of the middle class body.

This section has explored the ways that the middle class woman’s hands—and by extension the middle class women’s body—has been created, enacted and maintained. Using whitening creams women erased the dirt and roughness after a day’s toils, by keeping an upright posture they maintained the perfectly dimpled elbows proving they did not hunch or lean in labour, by maintaining a proper diet they ensured that their arms and hands were plump enough to generate the coveted dimpled elbows and knuckles, by pinching their fingers they created the semblance of a point and by wearing well-fitted kid gloves the hands were immobilized into their perfect state. Now that we have seen how the middle class hand came into being, let us discuss the attributes of the body that were thought to differentiate one class from another.

Differentiating the Middle-Class Body: The ‘Unlovely Limbs’ of the Working Class

¹⁵⁹ Cumming, *Gloves* 62, Ada Heather-Bigg., "Women and the Glove Trade," *Nineteenth Century* XXX, no. 178 (1891): 941, Smith, *Gloves Past and Present* 77.

Thus far we have considered the actions women took to maintain their body in a certain condition so that they could be considered middle class. Women used creams, postures, and clothing to represent their class status to the wider world. We have also observed the way in which middle-class women were taught to maintain the illusion of leisured idleness and how working-class women sometimes tried to ‘pass’ as middle class, but did so unsuccessfully due to their inability to maintain certain consumption practices.

However, class boundaries were not as steadfast as etiquette manuals and popular songs would have us believe. Working-class maids who dressed like middle-class women on Sundays or to shop at markets were warned that they must ‘dress their station’ and were sometimes fired for their cross-dressing.¹⁶⁰ The middle-class lady’s anxiety surrounding the appearance of her social inferiors reveals that at some level they understood that class was a performance and the boundaries of class were permeable. Middle-class women found themselves in a bind: they insisted that their “snowy white” complexion was natural but revealed that their anxieties were well founded by insisting their servants not attempt to maintain white skin themselves. Middle-class women’s primary concern was that they could be visually differentiated from working-class servants, factory workers, and shop girls not only through different consumption practices but also through a series of clues on their physical bodies. In the Victorian period people were taught to look for actual changes in the body such as skin colour and hand size as indications of who was middle class and who was working class. Advice

¹⁶⁰ The phrase “cross-dressing” is used by Anne McClintock to specify the substitution of one woman’s garments for another woman’s garments across class lines. Although typically cross-dressing refers to transgressing gender barriers, here it is not about gender so much as it is about class.

literature was aware of the anxieties surrounding the question of class differentiation and was dedicated to trying to reaffirm these differences.

Even though etiquette manuals were written for the purpose of social climbing, they had a vested interest in maintaining the illusion that social classes were closed, impenetrable systems.¹⁶¹ These volumes took on the function of protecting class boundaries because they had originated as conduct manuals used by aristocratic men and women to distinguish their class from all others based on minute distinctions in taste, appearance, and movements. In the nineteenth century, the cousin of the conduct manual, the etiquette manual, sought to cultivate the perfect middle-class lady. But this endeavour would be fruitless if just anyone could become part of the class. For this reason, manuals contained a mixture of advice. Often advice was simply recommending consumption adjustments such as buying the correct accessories, creams and foods. Other advice was more sinister, claiming that if women did not maintain a leisured lifestyle, evidence of this would appear on their hands. While the first type of advice encouraged anyone with the financial means to augment her class position, the second type of advice acted as a warning that physical attributes could betray a person's class status. The latter form of advice was an attempt on the part of advice writers to set up class boundaries by focusing on certain attributes of the body that could be used to pinpoint the differences between classes. In this section we will observe how the trappings of class were thought to become apparent through the skin and the size of the hands.

¹⁶¹ Michael Curtin, *Propriety and Position: A Study of Victorian Manners* (New York: Garland, 1987), Nancy W. Ellenberger, "The Transformation of London "Society" at the End of Victoria's Reign: Evidence from the Court Presentation Records," *Albion* 22 (1990), Marjorie Morgan, *Manners, Morals and Class in England, 1774-1858* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1994).

In 1932 *Punch* published a poem in which the author mourned the Victorian past when pale skinned women were the height of beauty and fashion (Appendix 2).¹⁶² In the poem the modern tanned woman is compared to the colonial ‘Other’:

As followers of the negroid art
That governs modern whims
They thus exposed the major part
Of their unlovely limbs.¹⁶³

Here women who succumb to the “modern whims” of fashion follow the “negroid art” of sun-tanning. In the author’s opinion the white skin of the Victorian woman is preferable to the “unlovely limbs” of tanned white women and black women. A direct comparison of white and black, as seen in this poem, was rare in the Victorian context. However, often a shift in culture—such as a movement from white skin to tanned skin—brings to the forefront the issues that had been hidden by the well-established norm.

In Victorian etiquette manuals race was not explicitly discussed. However, recent racial theorists such as bell hooks, Amina Mire, and Theodore Allen have challenged academics to consider the role of whiteness in the production of racial discourses.¹⁶⁴ During the period under study, Britain was at the height of its empire. Imperialism encouraged middle and upper class Britons to invent racial categories, placing themselves at the top of the racial hierarchy. The discussion of middle-class whiteness, thus, implicitly engaged women in the colonial discourses of the day; women were encouraged to maintain their skin as white which was the standard skin colour that all other races were measured against. As we will see, whiteness became central not only to the self-

¹⁶² *Punch* was a satirical magazine aimed at the middle class. Cartoons on the subject of whiteness and complexion emerged time and again in the magazine demonstrating that whiteness was generally highly valued. See for examples: August 18 1855, October 20 1883, September 2 1936.

¹⁶³ Anon, "At Pauville by the Norman Coast," *Punch* (1932).

¹⁶⁴ Theodore Allen, *The Invention of the White Race: Volume One: Racial Oppression and Social Control* (London: Verso, 1994), bell hooks, "Travelling Theories: Traveling Theorists," *Inscriptions* 5 (1989), Mire, "Skin-Bleaching: Poison, Beauty, Power and the Politics of the Colour Line."

definition of middle-class women but it also helped defined the working class as the racial 'Other' within English borders.

Whiteness was profoundly implicated in the differentiation of the middle and working classes. White collars and cuffs were worn by middle-class men to demonstrate their lack of contact with the industrial processes.¹⁶⁵ Maintaining white apparel was not feasible for working-class men who tended to have only one white shirt to be worn on Sundays. Women of the middle class also wore white garments, but had the added responsibility of maintaining white hands. A middle-class woman's hands were not to show signs of sun damage or work. Working-class women, however, had a difficult time achieving delicate white skin due to their participation in labour. When working class women laboured outside, hands became tanned, burned, and freckled; when they laboured without gloves hands became rough and chapped. The pristine state of middle-class hands demonstrated women's leisured status while the tanned and rough hands of working women indicated that they worked. In these instances class is the foundation for questions of whiteness.¹⁶⁶ Race was entangled with questions of class and is expressed in terms of clean versus dirty, and leisured versus working. In nineteenth-century Britain, whiteness acted as a means of class differentiation rather than a direct question of race.

Since classes were not formally differentiated, whiteness became a symbol of the absence of physical labour which in turn indicated women's class status. Etiquette manuals acknowledged that most middle-class women had to do some form of physical

¹⁶⁵ For information on the white collar shirt as a symbol of the middle class professional see: Quentin Bell, *On Human Finery* (London: Hogarth, 1976) 141, Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* 71, Turbin, "Collars and Consumers: Changing Images of American Manliness and Business," 87-92, Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* 170, F. Willis, *101 Jubilee Road: A Book of London Yesterdays* (London: Phoenix House, 1948) 70, 127.

¹⁶⁶ Bonnett, "How the British Working Class Became White: The Symbolic (Re)Formation of Racialized Capitalism," 317-318.

labour that would damage their hands. *Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen*, for example, suggests that the white hand can also be a useful hand: “A white, soft hand may be gained by a little care without marring its usefulness.”¹⁶⁷ Despite the acknowledgement of women’s work, manuals insisted that hands remain “white” and “soft”. In other words, manuals implied that class could and should be indicated on women’s bodies in the form of white skin.

Other advice blatantly suggested that women cease their toil so that they did not need to cover up their labour; such advice admonished a woman to preserve her class status by maintaining her white body. Mrs. Robert Noble, for example, insists that women must protect their white shapely arms despite toils that render them rough and red:

Many fair arms have been roughened and reddened by exposure to sun and wind. The hands and arms have lost their original whiteness and softness, and through exposure to the air, have now become red and coarse, and less shapely.

Before anything can be done to remedy this state of affairs, cover the arms up. Shut them away from air and light, and Nature will struggle hard to undo the cruel harm she has been allowed to wreak on young and old.¹⁶⁸

Noble was suggesting that women should be entirely leisured, in fact that they should not even venture out of doors lest they jeopardize the physical evidence of their class status. Such advice ignored the necessities that drove women to work.

Warnings that women must remain indoors covered up and “shut away from air and light” made hands and arms a site of anxiety for women. Hands were a place upon which labour was recorded in the form of chapping, tanning and redness; they represented an unstable surface that divided leisure from work and were a place where a

¹⁶⁷ Anon, *Etiquette for Ladies and Gentleman* 11.

¹⁶⁸ Noble, *Every Woman's Toilet Book* 54.

day's toils became evident. For middle-class women, hands were indicators of leisured idleness and therefore of middle-class status. While the middle-class gentleman wore whiteness as part of his apparel, the status of the middle-class lady was grafted onto her physical body, becoming apparent through her skin colour. When etiquette manuals suggested that work made hands red, tanned, or freckled they were essentially claiming that labour (and therefore class) became written onto the body in the form of skin colour.

The hand was in fact such an important site for the production of class identity that the labourer was referred as the 'hand'.¹⁶⁹ In the Victorian vocabulary the word 'hand' was synonymous with the word worker; and the worker was identified by their hands. In the nineteenth century class was defined by its proximity to labour. If a person worked with his/her hands in a factory, farm or domestic service they were considered working class; if a person owned or managed a business or home they worked with their minds and were considered to be middle class. In this context the hand, or the worker, does the will of the mind, or the middle class.¹⁷⁰ Here the worker is reduced to a body part to be controlled and directed by middle-class men and women. Since the connections between labour and hands were made so readily in the Victorian imagination, the hand was an important site for the production and definition of class identities.

The Victorian vocabulary which equated workers and hands had a visual component which equated large hands and labouring hands. The best and most elaborate examples of this type of thinking are contained within the diaries of an eccentric

¹⁶⁹For a popular Victorian novel plays upon the connection between hands and workers see: Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2004).

¹⁷⁰ Leonore Davidoff, "Class and Gender in Victorian England: The Diaries of Arthur J. Munby and Hannah Cullwick," *Feminist Studies* 5, no. 1 (1979): 89.

Victorian gentleman named Arthur Munby. Munby was a minor poet and civil servant who had an obsession with working-class women. His diaries reveal the secret life of a voyeur who got a sexual thrill out of watching women get dirty and do physical work.¹⁷¹ Though this aspect of his life is atypical, Munby's obsessions with women's hands spoke to prevalent concerns of the era. Munby's diaries are littered with descriptions equating women's large, red, raw hands with their working-class status. To get a sense of the extraordinary strength of Munby's obsession with women's hands, I will quote an entry from August 21st 1860 at length:

I passed a tallish young woman, evidently a servant, who was noticeable for the size of her gloveless hands. ... I looked at her hands, and spoke my opinion of them. "How can you like them?" she says, like Margaret in the garden; "they are so large and red, I'm ashamed of them." "They are just the hands for a servant," say I: "They show you are hardworking, and you ought to be proud of them. You wouldn't wish them to be like a lady's?" "Yes I should!" said she, bitterly: "and I should like to be a lady, and I wish my hands were like yours!" And she looked enviously at my hand, which was quite white and small by the side of hers. I could not then understand her vehemence: but remembering the difference between my fist and those small taper lady hands one sees in drawing rooms, it did seem pathetic that this poor wench should envy my hands, and fancy that if her own were like them, she would have reached a ladylike pitch of refinement.¹⁷²

Munby clearly equates large red hands with the physical labour required of domestic servants and small white hands with the leisured life of drawing rooms. The discourse that equated different hand sizes with different classes was also present in etiquette manuals. It is claimed, for example, by Mrs. Noble that "the hands of Englishwomen of

¹⁷¹ For further information on Arthur Munby's life see: Diane Atkinson, *Love and Dirt: The Marriage of Arthur Munby and Hannah Cullwick* (London: Macmillan, 2003), Davidoff, "Class and Gender in Victorian England: The Diaries of Arthur J. Munby and Hannah Cullwick," Derek Hudson, *Munby Man of Two Worlds: The Life and Diaries of Arthur J. Munby 1828-1910* (London: William Clowes & Sons, Ltd., 1972), McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in Colonial Conquest*, Barry Reay, *Watching Hannah: Sexuality, Horror and Bodily De-Formation in Victorian England* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2002).

¹⁷² Munby, "Munby Diary," 71.

rank are aristocratically shaped, but they are long and sometimes too thin.”¹⁷³ Here the shape of the hand indicates the class to which a woman belongs. If a large thick hand was working class and a long thin hand was aristocratic, then the middle-class hand must be some shape in between. The idea that physical attributes could betray a person’s class generated a considerable amount of anxiety for middle-class women who were led to believe that their class status was in constant danger of lapsing as evidenced in their hands.

Etiquette manuals warned that if a lady neglected to maintain the appearance of her hands, they would physically change—eventually becoming red, raw and enlarged to the point where they looked like the hands of a labourer rather than the hands of a proper lady. Manuals such as *Every Woman’s Toilet Book* suggested that hands could become enlarged with too much physical labour:

You may lead an active, energetic life, or rather, you should lead such a life, and yet not enlarge your hand; but even in domestic duties or exercise you can take certain care. For instance, try never to stretch wide your hand by carrying more than you conveniently can, or doing man’s carpenting, or lifting heavy weights. Of course, often we are powerless to avoid such work, but when possible think of your hands. Our grandmothers would not row, golf was unheard of, and fine ladies would not even carry their prayer-books to church for fear of ruining their hands. In the eighteenth century pages were employed to open doors and handbooks, etc., to save their mistresses’ fine delicate hands.¹⁷⁴

This manual suggests that an active middle-class lifestyle could change the size of women’s hands. Carrying too much weight, stretching the fingers, cleaning too vigorously, participating in sport, and doing men’s work all had the potential of enlarging the hands. The idea that one’s daily routines became physically apparent was part of nineteenth century understanding of the self. It was believed that a woman’s character—

¹⁷³ Noble, *Every Woman’s Toilet Book* 56.

¹⁷⁴ Anon, *The Ladies’ Hand-Book of the Toilet: A Manual of Elegance and Fashion* 18, Noble, *Every Woman’s Toilet Book* 59.

her inner thoughts, her private daily routines, even her soul—was manifested physically upon her body. In other words, the inner self was publicly represented to be read by those who knew how.

Both etiquette manuals and practitioners of phrenology believed that a person's inner self "is depicted in legible characters upon the external countenance."¹⁷⁵

Phrenology was the theory of how the brain influenced the physical body. In scientific circles phrenology was largely replaced with Darwinism by the middle of the nineteenth century; however, phrenological assumptions continued to have cultural resonance until the turn of the century.¹⁷⁶ Prominent phrenologists such as J. C. Lavater posited that the head, and secondly the hands, could be studied to understand a person's intellectual and moral character.¹⁷⁷ Using the same vocabulary as phrenology, etiquette books suggest that a woman's character became apparent through her hands:

Character, again, is largely to be determined by the hands. You hear people say she is neat-handed, or has such strong, kind capable hands, or the sensitive hand of an artist. ... No woman should ever allow hands to get rough, even in the coldest and most severe weather, it is always a sign of carelessness.¹⁷⁸

This quotation reads as a phrenological explanation of women's characters: artistic women have sensitive hands and careless women have rough hands. There are obvious class biases in this statement. As we have seen, rough hands tended to be working-class

¹⁷⁵ Anon, *The Ladies' Hand-Book of the Toilet: A Manual of Elegance and Fashion* vii.

¹⁷⁶ Roger Cooter, *The Cultural Meaning of Popular Science: Phrenology and the Organization of Consent in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), Cynthia Eagle Russett, *Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989) 22-24. See also: Roger Cooter's work on *The Cultural Meaning of Popular Science* which demonstrates how phrenology became important for reforms in prisons, schools, and insane asylums throughout the nineteenth century.

¹⁷⁷ Joanne Finkelstein, *The Fashioned Self* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991) 18, John Casper Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy: Designed to Promote the Knowledge and the Love of Mankind*, trans. Thomas Holcroft, 12th ed. (London: William Tegg, 1862) 180, Paolo Mantegazza, *Physiognomy and Expression* (London: Walter Scott, 1890) 257.

¹⁷⁸ Noble, *Every Woman's Toilet Book*.

hands; and the quotation ignores the necessity of work and instead suggests that working-class women are careless.

The use of phrenology in etiquette manuals helped women to identify the class of those around them according to the physical appearance of women's hands. However, such advice also reaffirmed that middle-class women must uphold the tenets of the domestic sphere—they must remain kind and sensitive in order to appear as such. Alternatively, if a woman acted inappropriately for her station—if she worked, exercised, or carried too much—this would be represented physically through the increased breadth of her hands. The discourse of phrenology was used by etiquette manuals as a scare tactic to ensure that middle-class women remained idle.

The connections between class and labour were clear in the Victorian period; those who were involved in physical labour were working class, those who were involved in the labour of the mind were middle class and those who leisured were aristocratic. However, the middle-class lady existed in a liminal space between all of these categories. Ideally, middle-class women were supposed to maintain a leisured life which helped to indicate the success of the husband. However, this leisured life was often a fiction; most middle-class women engaged in manual labour such as housework and gardening on a regular basis. Since class status was so firmly entangled with labour—which women adamantly indicated that they had no part in—women found new ways of indicating their class differences. As we have seen new manners of class differentiation were manifest on the physical body in the form of hand size and skin colour.

From the 1830s until just after the turn of the nineteenth century, women took great pains to preserve their hands in a state of small, soft whiteness. A collective consciousness was created in middle-class women's minds regarding the importance of the perfect hand by fashion plates and etiquette manuals and made possible through consumer objects such as gloves, creams and washes. Together, these elements constitute what Butler has identified as "the mundane way in which social agents *constitute* social reality through language, gesture, and all manner of symbolic social sign." The hand gestures depicted in fashion plates, the erect posture encouraged by etiquette manuals and the exercises used to maintain tapered finger tips can all be considered mundane everyday practices. Put together with the maintenance of the skin through the use of creams and gloves, one can see that the obsession with perfect hands created a regimented daily routine focused on the management of the body. Through these daily rituals women styled their bodies into a femininity that was particular to the middle class. Once this performance was accomplished, white middle-class women used their constructed identity as the norm against which to judge all other classes and femininities. Aristocratic women's over-indulgent leisure, for example, was represented in their fingers which considered "too thin" presumably because of their total lack of engagement with the physical environment. At the other end of the spectrum working class women's need to labour was considered unwomanly reflected in hands that had "nothing feminine about [them] in form or texture."¹⁷⁹ The literature, images, and corrective devices used to differentiate the middle-class hand helped to produce a particular kind of body associated with middle-class identity in the nineteenth century.

¹⁷⁹ Munby, "Munby Diary," 72.

Chapter Two, about the fan, will continue to answer the question of how middle-class womanhood was constructed, but it will also expand understandings of Victorian accessories past the realms of class and gender into imperialism. The history of the fan reveals Victorian anxieties about ‘the woman question’, orientalism, and changing gender norms. The fan offered two solutions to what Victorians called ‘the woman question’—the problem of middle-class women’s inability to fulfill their domestic roles as wives and mothers due to an overpopulated marriage market. First, for those who could not attract a husband, the fan offered one of the few options of respectable employment. That is, staying within the home, they could work at designing fans. And second the fan acted as a tool used by middle-class flirts to attract a husband and thereby escape the social stigma of spinsterhood. However, these two solutions increased women’s roles within the public sphere as money makers and as husband seekers. This worried some Victorians who became nostalgic for a mythical past when British women stayed in the home as submissive wives, and attentive mothers. Many looked to East Asia, the birthplace of the fan, as the idealized British past in which gender roles were well defined. Confronted with real women at home who flirted with fans but also marched for the vote, the coy Japanese woman was an appealing image of a submissive wife that did not meddle in public affairs.

Chapter Two

‘The Language of the Fan’: Pushing the Boundaries of Middle-Class Womanhood

In 1709 an anonymous author for *The Tatler* wrote a fictitious story that would resonate for the Victorians and be republished in the nineteenth century time and again. “Delmira resigns her fan” is the story of a beautiful, confident, fashionable young lady who, upon choosing a husband, was asked by a close friend to divulge the secret of her success. Delmira’s response was that:

All she had above the rest of her sex and contemporary beauties was wholly owing to a fan, (that was left her by her mother, and had been long in the family) which, whoever had it in possession, and used with skill, would command the hearts of all her beholders; and since, she said smiling, I have no more to do with extending my conquests or triumphs, I will make you a present of this inestimable rarity...I wish you heartily as much success in the management of it as I have had.¹⁸⁰

This tale indicates the important place the fan played in attracting lovers who would eventually become husbands. It is obvious that the fan did not function simply as a beautiful accessory that garnered attention through its fashionable charms, but rather was an irresistible weapon of female coquetry that attracted many a suitor. Moving into the nineteenth century the flirtatious language of the fan became all the more important to women trying to find husbands in an overpopulated marriage market.

¹⁸⁰ Anon, "Delmira Resigns Her Fan," *The Tatler* 3, no. 52 (1814): 312-313. *The Tatler* was reproduced at least five times in the nineteenth century, in 1803, 1814, 1832, and 1898-99. The story of Delmira’s fan was also reproduced in other popular sources such as: Ernest Hart, *Fan Exhibition, 1894* (London: Liberty & Co., 1894) 10-11.

The history of the fan reveals responses to questions of British taste, female redundancy, orientalism, and changing gender norms. Drawing on the women's press, fashion plates, professional periodicals, department store catalogues, novels, plays, dance hall songs, exhibition catalogues, select committees and government petitions, this chapter shows that the fan was embroiled in various Victorian concerns, controversies and anxieties. The fan spoke to concerns over England's place in relation to other European powers when it came to taste, fashion and design, highlighted controversies about the position of women in Victorian society, extended the social types of Victorian womanhood beyond the well documented domestic woman, and was involved in orientalist discourses which fetishized Japanese women and spoke to English anxieties about the modern British women.

This chapter will show that as early as the 1830s Victorians began to identify a new social ill which they termed 'the woman question.'¹⁸¹ Initially this question centered around 'redundant women': middle-class ladies unable to find husbands and settle into their proper roles as wives and mothers. During the second half of the nineteenth century 'the woman question' would push up against the boundaries between the public and private spheres, leading women to demand places in professions and politics and to seek increased legal rights. I will show that the fan, which initially seems like a simple fashion accessory, was embroiled in two aspects of the woman question. First, it acted as a tool of the middle-class flirt who used it to attract a husband and thereby escape the social stigma of spinsterhood. And second, it offered respectable employment: fan

¹⁸¹ Lucy Bland, *Banishing the Beast: English Feminism and Sexual Morality, 1885-1914*, *Penguin Women's Studies*. (London: Penguin, 1995) 162, Penny Kane, *Victorian Families in Fact and Fiction* (London: MacMillan, 1995) 93, Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

design was an occupation acceptable for middle-class women. While Delmira's flirtatious fanning was one way of utilizing this accessory to escape the problems of redundancy, women's employment in fan design offered another.

The question of women's place in the world of work, as I shall show, was the English fear that France was becoming the fashionable capital of Europe. Grappling with these two issues, the British government came up with a plan to use the 'natural' fashion orientations of unmarried middle-class women to revive Britain's reputation as a fashion mecca. Once France had won the gold medal in fan making at the Great Exhibition of 1851, the government homed in on the fan as an accessory that could prove British abilities in design. During the second half of the century, the government established institutions such as schools of design, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Department of Practical Art, and national and international exhibitions to develop an English aesthetic. It is a central argument of this thesis that in many of these institutions fan design became a site upon which England's concept of itself as a fashionable nation depended. In particular, the schools of design and various national competitions brought the fan to the forefront of British fashion. Alongside this mandate to develop English taste in decorative objects, fan design was presented as a respectable site of middle-class women's employment.

The increased role of women within the public sphere, partially due to fan design, worried some Victorians who became nostalgic for a mythical past when British women stayed in the home as submissive wives and attentive mothers. I argue that many looked to East Asia, the birthplace of the fan, as the idealized British past in which gender roles

were well defined.¹⁸² During the last third of the nineteenth century, after first China and then Japan had been opened to the West, the British fetishized the innocent and submissive maid from Japan who forever hid her loveliness behind a fan.¹⁸³ In British writing about East Asia the role of the fan as a flirtatious toy was both augmented and downplayed. Origin myths of the fan point to the accessory's invention in China where the ladies of the court recognized its flirtatious potential. However, when Japanese women were fetishized by English authors for their submissive behaviors the fan's flirtatious potential was downplayed so that the East Asian woman appeared to be the idealized middle-class woman of the British past.

The majority of this chapter centers around the cultural meaning of the fan in England during the half century after the Great Exhibition of 1851. However, the chapter follows the natural bookends of the history of the fan which begins in the 1500s, when the fan was imported to Europe from Japan, and ends in the later 1920s when the fan was no longer used as an accessory. In this chapter I trace the history of the fan as it moved from East Asia into Europe. In order to explain the French ascendancy in fashion and the British reaction to this occurrence, I explore the accessory's development in France and England. I then consider the role the fan played in the prevailing gender norm of domestic womanhood and explore the ways in which the fan, as a product and consumer

¹⁸² Douglas Sladen, *Queer Things About Japan* (London: Anthony Treherne & Co., Ltd., 1904) 25, Sheila K. Johnson, *The Japanese Through American Eyes* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988) 77-79, Henry Norman, *The Real Japan: Studies of Contemporary Japanese Manners, Morals, Administrations, and Politics*, Fifth ed. (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1908) 178.

¹⁸³ For histories of Japan and China from the British point of view see: Olive Checkland, *Britain's Encounter with Meiji Japan, 1868-1912* (Houndmills: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1989), Olive Checkland, *Japan and Britian after 1859: Creating Cultural Bridges* (New York: Routledge, 2003), Colin Mackerras, *Western Images of China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), Toshio Yokoyama, *Japan in the Victorian Mind: A Study of Stereotyped Images of a Nation 1850-80* (Houndmills: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1987).

object, broadened and sometimes subverted this norm. Finally, I consider the place of the fan within British conceptions of East Asia.

Following upon the chapter about gloves where we discovered that class and gender had performative elements, this chapter about fans pushes the idea that gender was pushed into new realms. Women manipulated the fan to their own ends, using it to represent their inner selves in ways that may or may not have been true to their actual character. Public commentary about this phenomenon revealed anxiety about the authenticity about the feminine self. The public's recognition that women manipulated their fans made Victorians so nervous that they began to look to other cultures for models of true Victorian womanhood, and they found it in the belles of Japan. Moving the debate about true womanhood into the empire destabilized it even further.

Manufacturing the Fan: Implications for Fashion and 'The Woman Question'

By most accounts the folding fan made its way from Japan to England via Europe in the early 1500s.¹⁸⁴ Some historians credit the Italian-born French Queen Catherine De Medici for bringing the folding fan from her native country and making it a popular accessory in both France and England.¹⁸⁵ After De Medici's marriage to King Henry II

¹⁸⁴ Helene Alexander, *Fans* (Cromwell House: Shire Publications Ltd., 2002) 9, Anon, "The Exhibition of Fans," *Illustrated London News* LVII, no. 1602 (1870): 42, Cynthia Fendel, *Celluloid Hand Fans* (Dallas: Hand Fan Productions, 2001) 11, Flory, *A Book About Fans: The History of Fans and Fan-Painting*. The exact date and route of the fan from Asia migrating into Europe is under dispute by fan experts. Alexander argues, for example, that the folding fan first appeared in Venice and Ferrara around 1500 before it disseminated throughout Europe. An anonymous history of the fan presented in the *Illustrated London News* argues that the folding fan came through Portugal in the fifteenth century. Flory suggests that the folding fan must have come into England from Italy via France in the mid-1500s. Cynthia Fendel suggests that the folding fan arrived in Europe much later in the seventeenth century.

¹⁸⁵ Co., *Fans: A Brief Sketch of Their Origin and Use*, Flory, *A Book About Fans: The History of Fans and Fan-Painting* 20.

in 1533, France became the European center for the manufacture of fans.¹⁸⁶ By 1678 the use of folding fans in France had become so wide-reaching that a guild of fanmakers was established.¹⁸⁷ Extensive fanmaking was also taking place in England at this time; by 1695 the fanmakers had sufficient influence to bring a petition to the House of Commons asking to increase the duty on fans imported from the East-Indies.¹⁸⁸ The success of this petition allowed fanmakers to flourish, leading to the establishment of a society of fanmakers in London, called The Worshipful Company of Fanmakers, which was formed in 1709.¹⁸⁹ Though England was competitive with France for most of the eighteenth century, the French state took an active interest in promoting art industries thereby allowing fashionable French fan houses to become the avant guard of ornament and design.

Less than one hundred years after the establishment of the London Company, English fanmakers found their products being overshadowed by the more fashionable French fans. This led to a second petition in 1794 asking the government to prohibit the importation of French fans along with a “penalty of 200 pounds for the offence of selling any French fan embellished with gold, silver or other metal.”¹⁹⁰ The House of Commons refused the fanmakers’ request leading to a deluge of French fans into England and the slow deterioration of the fanmaking trade in London. By 1822 there were only nine small

¹⁸⁶ Eleanor Johnson, *Ladies' Dress Accessories* (Cromwell House: Shire Publications Ltd., 2004) 50.

¹⁸⁷ Alexander, *Fans* 10.

¹⁸⁸ There was a prior duty on fans which took effect under Charles II. This duty stipulated that 40s would be charged on every dozen fans from out of the country, however if the fans were painted their importation was strictly prohibited. Fann-makers, "The Case of the Fann-Makers Who Have Petitioned the Honorable House of Commons, against the Importation of Fanns from the East-Indies", Sam Redgrave, *Fans of All Countries: A Series of Twenty Photographs of Spanish, French, German, Italian and English Fans under the Sanction of the Science and Art Department, for the Use of Schools of Art and Amateurs*. (London: Arundel Society for Promoting the Knowledge of Art, 1871) 4.

¹⁸⁹ Anon, "Fans," *The Perruquier* 1, no. 3 (1878).

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

London fanmaking establishments and by 1839 the number had dwindled to two.¹⁹¹ By the mid-nineteenth century English fanmakers were on their last legs, and France was establishing the standards of taste for the fashionable accessory.

French fanmakers continued to be successful into the nineteenth century. In 1851 *The Art-Journal* wrote a small article suggesting that French fanmakers, such as the Maison Duvelleroy, had cornered the European market in fans:

This gentleman employs, it is said, upwards of two thousand hands in the manufacture of these elegant toys, and is at the present moment so entirely without a rival in his trade that no lady's corbeille de mariage is considered complete without one of M. Duvelleroy's fans. Some of them are indeed perfect bijoux, and are decorated with a profusion of the expensive ornament which render them objects of the greatest luxury. Besides being studded with precious stones, the most eminent artists of Paris do not scruple to make some of their most finished designs upon them.¹⁹²

The huge workforce, 2000 labourers strong, employed by Duvelleroy overshadowed any London fan manufacturers of the time. Furthermore, since the failed petition of 1794, Duvelleroy was free to import fans with expensive decorations and artistic paintings. At the Great Exhibition of 1851, the Maison Duvelleroy along with the fashionable fan house of Alexandre were awarded gold medals.¹⁹³ The fact that this prize was given to French manufacturers in the English capital helped to highlight French superiority in the area of fashion, and solidified the inferior position of English fanmakers on the European stage.

During the last half of the nineteenth century the English government attempted to revive standards of taste and design. One of the groups that benefited from this new vision was ornamental fanmakers. In addition to refining English taste, fanmaking was

¹⁹¹ Nancy Armstrong, *A Collector's History of Fans* (London: Cassell & Collier Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1974) 113.

¹⁹² Anon, "M. Duvelleroy's Fan Manufactory," *The Art-Journal* XIII (1851): 99.

¹⁹³ Alexander, *Fans* 26. The fan house of Alexandre was the fanmaker of the Empress Eugénie.

pursued by government departments as a possible solution to “the woman question.”

Unfortunately, due to the lack of a strong fan trade, increased schooling in the area of fanmaking would not revive the industry nor would it provide work for middle-class women in need of employment.

The government had taken measures to offset the French superiority in fashion even before the world fair of 1851. In the hopes of improving England’s presence on the international fashion scene, the Board of Trade set up a London School of Design in 1837 to instruct artisans in the areas of design and ornament.¹⁹⁴ Once trained, government officials thought that these artisans could bring their superior standards of taste to British factories where they would be employed as designers.¹⁹⁵ In 1842 a sister London institution, the Female School of Design, opened downstairs from the male school.¹⁹⁶ Students of these two schools became experts in wood carving, china and glass painting, designing calico patterns and ornamental painting (by the last quarter of the century this category would include fan painting).¹⁹⁷ Despite efforts of the Board of Trade, the schools of design did not make an impact at the Great Exhibition; France was given most of the fashion related awards including two in the area of fanmaking.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁴ F. Graeme Chalmers, "Fanny Mcian and London's Female School of Design, 1842-57: "My Lords and Gentlemen, Your Obedient and Humble Servant"?", *Woman's Art Journal* 16, no. 2 (1996): 3.

¹⁹⁵ Select Committee on the School of Design, "Report from the Select Committee on the School of Design: Together with Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence, Appendix and Index," (London: House of Commons, 1849), 2.

¹⁹⁶ This school went under many names. Though it started as London’s Female School of Design it later became the Metropolitan School of Ornament for Females and finally the Royal Female School of Art. Chalmers, "Fanny Mcian and London's Female School of Design, 1842-57: "My Lords and Gentlemen, Your Obedient and Humble Servant"?", 4.

¹⁹⁷ Design, "Report from the Select Committee on the School of Design: Together with Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence, Appendix and Index," 118, Laurel Lampela, "Women's Art Education Institutions in Nineteenth Century England," *Art Education* 46, no. 1 (1993): 66.

¹⁹⁸ Jeffrey A. Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851 : A Nation on Display* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999).

With the view that more of an effort had to be made in the area of artistic development, organizers put some of the proceeds of the 1851 exhibition directly towards improving England's standards of taste. In 1852 The Museum of Manufactures (now the Victoria and Albert Museum) was founded with a mandate to provide sample objects for the schools of design and to begin public education in fashion through a series of traveling exhibitions.¹⁹⁹ In that same year, the Department of Practical Art (later the Department of Science and Art) was established by the Board of Trade.²⁰⁰ From its foundation into the 1870s this Department organized minor exhibitions to display English designs. One of the objects that the Department of Science and Art enjoyed exhibiting most was the folding fan.²⁰¹ By the time of the 1862 World Exhibition, it was felt that there had been a tremendous advance in ornament and design in England; improvement was attributed to the work of the Museum of Manufactures, the Department of Science and Art, and the schools of design.²⁰²

The Female School of Design had a secondary mandate beyond the improvement of English taste; it also provided an answer to 'the woman question.' As of the mid-nineteenth century, the public became increasingly concerned about what to do with middle-class women who were unable to marry. These 'redundant women' became spinsters due to a combination of higher male to female death rates, higher male

¹⁹⁹ Clare Graham, "'a Noble Kind of Practice': The Society of Arts Art-Workmanship Competitions, 1863-71," *The Burlington Magazine* 135, no. 1083 (1993): 411. Walter Smith, *Art Education, Scholastic and Industrial* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1872) 133. This museum became the South Kensington Museum in 1857, and is now known as the Victoria and Albert Museum.

²⁰⁰ Margaret Gowing, "Science, Technology and Education: England in 1870," *Oxford Review of Education* 4, no. 1 (1978): 4.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² Graham, "'a Noble Kind of Practice': The Society of Arts Art-Workmanship Competitions, 1863-71," 411.

emigration, and later marriage within the middle-class populace.²⁰³ In 1881 at the height of concern about unmarried women there were 13,334,537 women and 12,639,902 men in England and Wales. This meant that there were almost 700,000 women for which marriage was not even an option.²⁰⁴ In the upper echelons of the middle class, unmarried women were provided for by their families; they took on the role of maternal aunt to their nieces and nephews and cared for ailing parents. However, for women in the middle to lower ranks of this class, the place of the spinster was much less certain. Families might be unable to support adult daughters, for example, and the death of a father could leave daughters practically destitute. These women needed marketable skills which still allowed them to stay within the confines of their gender and class. The Female School of Design was one of the educational initiatives which would provide a solution for women in this circumstance.

The Female School of Design was founded by men of the aristocracy and middle-class who saw an opportunity to provide education and eventually jobs for unmarried middle-class women in precarious life circumstances.²⁰⁵ During the first ten years of its existence the council of the schools of design encouraged 'redundant' women to apply to their institution by asking that a small tuition fee be paid. Unlike the male School of Design, which educated artisans for two shillings a month, the Female School of Design excluded working class women by charging a small fee appropriate for lower-middle-

²⁰³ In the case of emigration three men were said to emigrate for every one woman. In the case of late marriage in 1881 the average age of marriage for a professional man was 31. Bland, *Banishing the Beast: English Feminism and Sexual Morality, 1885-1914* 162. Kane, *Victorian Families in Fact and Fiction* 93.

²⁰⁴ Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920* 293.

²⁰⁵ Paula Gillett, *The Victorian Painter's World* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd., 1990) 141.

class ladies.²⁰⁶ The school was meant only for middle-class women in search of respectable alternatives to marriage to the exclusion of other groups such as working class women, and leisured women of the aristocracy and middle class. When the schools of design were under review by a Select Committee in 1849 the Female School's superintendent, Fanny McIan, was asked what type of pupils attended her school. She answered that the school accepted pupils of the middle-class who needed employment for one reason or another:

They are highly respectable, the whole of them; we have had most distressing and painful cases of the daughters of professional men, whose fathers have died prematurely; the young women have been brought up in great comfort, but from their fathers leaving no provisions for them they are entirely dependent upon their own exertions. There is one who is receiving a guinea and a half for lithography whose father has just died....but for the School she must have gone out as a servant in some other way.²⁰⁷

Clearly the ideal pupil of the Female School of Design was an unmarried middle-class woman who had fallen on hard times. With an education in design these women would be able to carve out a respectable living, however small, in lithography, or some other

²⁰⁶ Chalmers, "Fanny McIan and London's Female School of Design, 1842-57: "My Lords and Gentlemen, Your Obedient and Humble Servant"?", 3, Lampela, "Women's Art Education Institutions in Nineteenth Century England," 66.

²⁰⁷ Design, "Report from the Select Committee on the School of Design: Together with Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence, Appendix and Index," 119, Charles Dickens, "The Female School of Design in the Capital of the World," *Household Words. A Weekly Journal. Conducted by Charles Dickens* 2, no. 51 (1851). Ellen C. Clayton, *English Female Artists* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1876). After a visit to the Female School, Charles Dickens confirms Fanny McIan's statement by writing: "Many of these young persons, though I, are, no doubt, of highly respectable families, well educated, and who once had very different expectations; though now, for the purpose of making design, they are learning drawing, perhaps, to sell them." Ellen Clayton author of *English Female Artists* had a friend named Eliza Turck who was a former student of the Female School of Design. Clayton included some of Turck's story in her book which again confirms the idea that middle class women who had fallen on hard times were the main type of pupils at the school: "During the time spent here [Female School of Design] by Miss Turck occurred her father's failure in business, which naturally induced her to take an even more serious view than before of her favourite pursuit [art]. Although her family still continued somewhat to discountenance the idea of an artist's career for her, she herself never ceased from that period to regard painting as the occupation of her life."

practical form of art. In seeking an answer to ‘the woman question’ the school had to offer feminine job opportunities for graduating middle-class pupils.

Though one might see women’s education in design as a natural expansion of middle-class women’s participation in crafts such as embroidery and painting, middle-class education in these arts had no precedent.²⁰⁸ In fact, art was only emerging as a middle-class pursuit at the moment that the School of Design was being established. It was only in the 1840s that the idealized concept of the middle-class women included craft making; previously this was thought of by the general populace as an aristocratic pursuit. As the connection between middle-class women and art began to coalesce, women became particularly noted for their mastery of colour in painting and embroidery.²⁰⁹ Furthermore, in writing focused on middle-class ladies in industry, women were distinguished from men for their patience and the daintiness of their hand.²¹⁰ As these gendered characteristics became naturalized, government officials who established the schools of design thought that a formal education in design would provide ‘naturally’ artistic women with opportunities in industry.

Fanny McIan, the School of Design’s first superintendent, established formal connections between her school and industry to ensure a smooth transition for the women who graduated from her program. In 1845, for example, McIan acquainted herself with every porcelain manufacturer of note in England. She reported in *The Athenaeum* that women designers would be welcome in the industry:

²⁰⁸ As a middle-class oriented school established in 1842, The Female School of Design was a forerunner of educational reform for women that was set to begin in the late 1840s. Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920* 124.

²⁰⁹ Lampela, "Women's Art Education Institutions in Nineteenth Century England," 65.

²¹⁰ Thomas Purnell, "Women, and Art. The Female School of Design," *The Art-Journal* 23 (1861): 108, Smith, *Art Education, Scholastic and Industrial* 165-166.

I have been assured by the chief artists of one of the principal porcelain establishments in Staffordshire, that if, in the Female School of Somerset House, a class were formed for studying the art of painting porcelain in a superior manner, the more skilful pupils might readily obtain from the manufacturers transmissions of work to be executed *at home*; so that without any injurious interference with the uneducated female artists, or rather artisans, in the Potteries, a constant and beneficial employment might be procured.²¹¹

As we see here, not only would female designers be given constant work in the porcelain industry, they would also be able to execute their labour in the domestic sphere. This arrangement allowed middle-class women to distance themselves from “uneducated female artists”. These uneducated females were working-class women who worked in the factories copying pre-made designs by painting them onto fans. The separation of middle-class women from the factory allowed them to maintain their image as ladies of the domestic sphere. These women also would have the added bonus of making a salary. The school would go on to have other successes in connecting women and industry. By 1850, *The Art-Journal* reported that women from the Female School of Design had successfully sold designs for a variety of items including chintz, table-covers, muslin, paper hangings, mosaic-tables, carpets, and print dresses.²¹² From its inception in 1842 until about 1850, the Female School of Design fulfilled its original mandate of educating lower-middle-class women for gainful employment in areas of design. During the first decade of the school’s operation both the board and the superintendent made sure women graduating from this school had a change of employment in British industry.

In the early 1850s the policy of the school suddenly changed. Though journalists continued to speak about the Female School as a solution to ‘the women question,’ it began to admit leisured ladies who had no intention of seeking employment once they

²¹¹ Fanny McIan, "On Porcelain Painting," *The Athenaeum Journal of Literature, Science and the Fine Arts*, no. 906 (1845): 250.

²¹² Anon, "The Female School of Design," *The Art-Journal* X11 (1850): 130.

graduated. The policy change began in 1852 when Henry Cole became the civil servant in charge of the Department of Practical Art. He sought to make the school more profitable by increasing class sizes, cutting in half the number of staff per student and creating a graduated system of tuition in which leisured ladies would pay more than lower-middle-class women.²¹³ Because the school forsook its routes as a training institution for women in dire straits, in 1861 the Committee of Council on Education, which had formerly supported the school, withdrew its support of 500 pounds per year.²¹⁴ In an article appealing for financial support from the public, journalist Thomas Purnell continued to highlight the institution as an answer to 'the woman question' all the while admitting that of the one hundred and eighteen students only "twenty are studying with a view of ultimately maintaining themselves."²¹⁵

A school that underwent such a major alteration in its education policy would surely experience a change in focus as well. Perhaps because the school began to admit leisured ladies, new classes were taught that would not lead directly into well established English industries. It was at this time that fanmaking became a new focus of the Female School of Design.

Though fans were popular throughout the nineteenth century, there was a resurgence in middle-class interest in the fan around the 1860s.²¹⁶ The 1858 state Treaty of Edo, which opened various Japanese ports for trade, created a frenzied acquisition of

²¹³ Gillett, *The Victorian Painter's World* 141-142.

²¹⁴ Purnell, "Women, and Art: The Female School of Design," 108.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*: 107-108. Anon, "Fan Making: An Employment for Women," *The Queen, The Lady's Newspaper* 48 (1870). The idea that the schools of art for women will help women learn a craft with which they can maintain themselves is a continuous claim made by journalists.

²¹⁶ Buck, *Victorian Costume and Costume Accessories* 166.

all things Japanese including folding fans.²¹⁷ This revived interest in the fan was reflected in the women's press which advised women on how to paint proper Japanese flowers and birds upon their fans.²¹⁸ Since fan painting was an acceptable form of middle-class leisure, the genteel women at the Female School of Design would have been interested in perusing this art even though it would be of no use for their colleagues who attended the school in pursuit of employment. Fanmaking classes at the Female School, then, showed the influence that leisured pupils came to have on the school curriculum and marked a transition in the overall mandate of the institution.

The resurgence of the fan as an artistic accessory to be made by middle-class women marked a departure from previous fanmaking practices which were undertaken by working-class female labourers. Not surprisingly, for most of the history of the fan the managerial and artistic work was done by men, leaving the tedious, non-specialized labour to the women. Fashionable French fan houses were owned and operated by men such as J. Duvelleroy and Félix Alexandre. Male artists, such as Antoine Watteau, Julien Dupré, Charles Conder, and Cano de Arevalo, proudly displayed their signatures on fan leaves.²¹⁹ However, the fan paintings that were decorated by artists in studios were copied at a quick pace by women in factories.²²⁰ Working-class women were associated

²¹⁷ Anna Jackson, "Imagining Japan: The Victorian Perception and Acquisition of Japanese Culture," *Journal of Design History* 5, no. 4 (1992): 245, Linda Beard, "How to Make a Fan," in *How to Amuse Yourself and Others* (New York: American Girls Handbook, 1887), 177.

²¹⁸ See for example: Anon, "Description of Illustrations," *The Queen* 69 (1881): 100, Anon, "Design for Fan Painted on Silk," *Myra's Journal of Dress and Fashion*, no. 300 (1881): 582, Anon, "Fancies in Fans," *Beauty and Fashion: A weekly Illustrated Journal for Women* 1, no. 9 (1891), Anon, "Ornamentation of China, Glass and Fans," *The Queen* (1881), Anon, "The Queen Fan in Brussels Point Lace," *The Queen* 48 (1870): 390-391, Anon, "The Season's Prettiest Fans," *The Ladies' Home Journal* (1893): 15, Anon, "Suggestions for Fan Painting, Art Needlework," *Queen* 69 (1881): 617, Beard, "How to Make a Fan," 177-184, Henri Ostolle, *La Fleur Peinte Sur L'eventail* (Paris: Chez Duvelleroy, 1892).

²¹⁹ Anon, "M. Duvelleroy's Fan Manufactory," Anon, "A Master of the Fan: The Art of Charles Conder," *Illustrated London News--Supplement to the CXLII*, no. 3847 (1913): ii. Frederick Wedmore, "The Art of Conder," *The Connoisseur* VIII (1904): 219-224.

²²⁰ Armstrong, *A Collector's History of Fans* 187.

with fanmaking from a very early date. In fact, the main thrust of the 1695 petition was that a duty would revive the fanmaking business in which “great Numbers of Men, Women and Children, used to be constantly Employed.”²²¹ Unlike the case of the glove industry that excluded women from some aspects of the craft, there is no evidence that the fan trade ever barred women; women were engaged in all aspects of fanmaking from cutting and gluing the leaf, to shaping and shaving the stick and guards, and assembling and painting the final product.²²² Though fanmaking was considered a women’s craft since the seventeenth century, the women employed in the area were typically working-class unskilled labourers; however, in the final quarter of the nineteenth century fanmaking became an acceptable employment for middle-class women. This change in class emphasis was a reflection of leisured women’s interests rather than a serious pursuit made available to middle-class women who were in need of employment.

In the guise of providing work for redundant woman, the School of Design along with the Department of Art and Science attempted to revive the craft of fanmaking which had become practically non-existent as of the early nineteenth century. The Department of Art and Science hosted a series of fan exhibitions every year from 1868 to 1871.²²³ They encouraged entries from the female schools of design by establishing monetary prizes for women who would take up the craft as a form of employment. In order to

²²¹ Fann-makers, "The Case of the Fann-Makers Who Have Petitioned the Honorable House of Commons, against the Importation of Fanns from the East-Indies."

²²² Denis Diderot, "Evantailiste," in *A Diderot Pictorial Encyclopedia of Trades and Industry*, ed. Charles Coulston Gillispie (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1959 [1765]). This circumstance of allowing women to participate in all aspects of a trade was drastically different from most crafts of the period. The Brushmakers’ Union, for example, only allowed women to participate in the most unskilled of tasks until 1870. Women in the glove trade were only allowed to do the most tedious, outsourced work and were not admitted into the societies.

²²³ Anon, "The Exhibition of Fans," 42, Armstrong, *A Collector's History of Fans* 79, Redgrave, *Fans of All Countries: A Series of Twenty Photographs of Spanish, French, German, Italian and English Fans under the Sanction of the Science and Art Department, for the Use of Schools of Art and Amateurs*, 5.

encourage the fan industry, and to re-establish Britain's fashionable reputation, Queen Victoria offered a prize of 40 pounds "for the best fan exhibited in the International Exhibition of 1871, executed by a lady artist or artists."²²⁴ At this exhibition, it was hoped, England would gain the reputation for fashion and taste which had been undermined by France in the Exhibition of 1851. What better way to accomplish this feat than to encourage art in the most ornamental of accessories—the fan.

Once the Department of Art and Science had set a precedent, other fan exhibitions took place all over Britain. There were exhibitions, for example, in 1877 at the Liverpool Art Club, in 1878 put on by the Worshipful Company of Fanmakers, and in 1891 by the Grolier Club.²²⁵ The publicity for fanmaking encouraged some to envision a special school for middle-class women interested in designing fans exclusively. In 1878 Mr. E. Barrington Nash began to raise money for a school of artistic fan-painting. It was hoped that this institution would both revive the art of fanmaking in England and provide employment for redundant women:

The object of this school is to provide profitable employment for the gentlewomen of artistic ability, and to retain some portion of the 100 000 pounds, which enormous figure represents the value of the annual import of fans of an artistic character in England.²²⁶

It is important to note that Nash's vision along with that of the School of Design was to revive a lost art and to make England competitive on the world stage in the area of fashion. Here again we see that this movement to revive a lost craft marked a departure from the earlier mandate of schools for redundant women—to train them in areas that would lead to practical application in pre-established industries.

²²⁴ Anon, "Fan Making: An Employment for Women," 64.

²²⁵ Anon, "The Fanmakers' Company," *The Perruquier* II (1879): 93, Anon, "Ornamentation of China, Glass and Fans," 351, Armstrong, *A Collector's History of Fans* 81.

²²⁶ Armstrong, *A Collector's History of Fans* 81.

In 1870, a time when fan exhibitions were just getting underway, there were eight fanmaking firms in London, but only one was English (the rest were French).²²⁷ In the end, the classes and exhibitions encouraging women to enter the fan trade generated far more trained women than the British fan industry could absorb. The fan exhibitions represented a fleeting moment of British fanmaking. In 1878 it was reported that 100,000 pounds worth of artistic fans were imported into England annually.²²⁸ By the end of the century European fanmaking was centered in France, Germany and Spain but not England.²²⁹ The efforts of the Female School of Design and the Department of Science and Art had failed. Britain would never again have a thriving fan industry.

British fanmaking failed for various reasons. Only after the Great Exhibition did England try to pick up the slack in areas of fashion and design. This later emergence on the fashion scene meant the country had many rivals in the area, particularly France. Furthermore, by the later 1860s middle-class women were instructed on how to make their own fans thereby reducing the number of fans that could be bought from middle-class women who were attempting to use fanmaking as employment. Finally, English free trade agreements allowed the more fashionable French labels into the country thereby reducing the need for artistic fanmaking in England. French fanmaking, on the other hand, thrived because of the country's emphasis on art. This gave French fan houses a fashionable cachet within Europe and particularly England which was seen as rational and industrial rather than fashionable. Also, French fanmaking firms were well established long before the boom in the 1860s. Furthermore, French fanmakers took

²²⁷ Buck, *Victorian Costume and Costume Accessories* 165.

²²⁸ Anon, "Fans in Past and Present Times," 41.

²²⁹ Armstrong, *A Collector's History of Fans* 81.

advantage of the favorable trading laws with countries like England who could afford extravagant fans but did not have a thriving industry of their own in the area.

The practice of English fanmaking intersected with various cultural concerns; the unease with the French ascendancy in areas of fashion, art, and design; the fear of the loss of English industry to other nations; and the need to provide work for redundant middle-class women. Though, in the end, fanmaking was not a viable option for middle-class women seeking work in industry, it became part of the narrative of ‘the women question.’ Within this narrative, fanmaking represented a way for middle-class women, who were unable to find husbands, to have respectable employment while maintaining their gender and class status.

A second way in which the fan was implicated in ‘the woman question’ was through flirtation. Women trying to survive in an overpopulated marriage market had two main options: to find work so that they would not become destitute, or to attract a man to marry. During the second half of the nineteenth century, as ‘the woman question’ began to pick up steam, the fan became strongly associated with the husband hunting coquette.

Consuming the Fan: The Fan as an Accessory of the Coquette

Within writings about the fan and fan iconography, two parallel types of womanhood emerge: the domestic woman and the flirtatious coquette. As we have seen, Victorian women, though they were brought up to expect marriage, had a hard time finding a husband due to the unfavorable marriage market.²³⁰ In 1891, according to

²³⁰ Bland, *Banishing the Beast: English Feminism and Sexual Morality, 1885-1914* 162.

historian Martha Vicinus, there were 2,009,489 unmarried women between the ages of 20 and 44 in England and Wales and 342,072 unmarried women of 45 years and older.²³¹ Victorians themselves believed that the problem was even worse than modern historians have shown; in 1892 an article in *The Nineteenth Century* suggested that one in six women in England and Wales would likely become spinsters.²³² Though these claims were largely exaggerated, women of the period took them seriously and they looked for advantages that would help them attract a husband. As such, flirtatious middle-class women had to learn how to use fans to their advantage to attract lovers. However, to some, the flirt was a troubling social type as she was aware of the power she possessed through her sexuality. While flirtatious women were essentially ‘good women’ who had taken the search for a husband into their own hands, the move away from domestic womanhood created anxiety for some Victorians who saw women’s true nature as passive and domestic. This section speaks to middle-class anxieties over the ideal of domestic womanhood.

Advice writers in the nineteenth century insisted that the things with which women surrounded themselves—clothing, accessories, home decor—were reflections of their inner characters. Ideally, the fan presented no exception to the notion that a woman’s true nature was reflected in her interactions with her accessories. An article in the *Illustrated London News* suggested that women “not only” used fans to “move the air and cool themselves but also to express their sentiments.”²³³ Articles of this persuasion suggested that the very materiality of the fan, as a light object held in the hand near the face, created an almost inevitable transfer of a woman’s emotional state to her

²³¹ Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920* 294.

²³² Clara Collet, "Prospects of Marriage for Women," *The Nineteenth Century* 31 (1892): 540.

²³³ Anon, "The Exhibition of Fans," 42.

fashionable accessory. The fan was thus a direct reflection, or an ‘outering’ of the woman’s inner state. In 1711, Joseph Addison had written an article that attested to the idea that women’s emotions were transferred to their fans: “I have seen a Fan so very angry, that it would have been dangerous for the absent Lover who provoked it to have come within the Wind of it,” suggests Addison, “and at other Times so very languishing, that I have been glad for the Lady’s Sake the Lover was at a sufficient Distance from it. I need not add,” he went on to explain, “that a Fan is either a Prude or Coquet, according to the nature of the Person who bears it.”²³⁴ For Addison and the Victorians who constantly reproduced this article, the fan reflected the inner emotions of its bearer be she angry or sad, a proper Victorian lady or an insatiable flirt. However, this direct transfer of a woman’s emotional state to her fan could be tempered or even manipulated in the hands of a crafty coquette.

If a woman was made aware that her fan was an accessory which expressed her emotional state, it could be used to conceal unwanted thoughts or as a device to be manipulated into demonstrating feelings that the women wished she possessed. “Artful maneuverings are concealed behind those fluffy little tips,” suggests an article in *Beauty and Fashion*, “which are useful for so many purposes, and serve to hide...various awkward habits of nature, such as a vivid blush or a tear that we would fain conceal from

²³⁴ Addison, "I Do Not Know Whether to Call the Following a Letter," *The Spectator* 2 (1897): 79. This article was originally published Wednesday June 27, 1711. *The Spectator* was re-published at least twice in the nineteenth century in 1800 and 1897. This article is well known to Victorians and was quoted from extensively with and without reference to the original publication in the following articles: Anon, "Fan Making: An Employment for Women," 64, Co., *Fans: A Brief Sketch of Their Origin and Use*, Flory, *A Book About Fans: The History of Fans and Fan-Painting* 4, Redgrave, *Fans of All Countries: A Series of Twenty Photographs of Spanish, French, German, Italian and English Fans under the Sanction of the Science and Art Department, for the Use of Schools of Art and Amateurs*. 10-14. For a similar example see: Anon, "Delmira Resigns Her Fan," 313. *The Tatler* was originally published in 1709.

strangers' eyes."²³⁵ Here the fan is used to conceal the feminine nature of a true woman who would prefer her embarrassing emotionality represented in a blush or a tear to be hidden at public occasions. If, on the other hand, the vivid blush of innocence had been lost, the *Daily News* suggested ways in which women could feign innocence through the use of their fans: "It is the movement betwixt heart and lip which is so important. When a blush refuses to suffuse the snowy neck, then must be brought into play the modest flutter—a gentle wafting of a morsel of ivory and Watteau painted silk with a scarcely palpable trembling of the hand." And, to complete the illusion of innocence, "eyes must be cast downwards."²³⁶ The passive asexual woman of the middle class is not to be found in this later example which suggests instead the artful manipulation of the predominant gender norms of Victorian Britain.

The most explicit example of women using fans to communicate their emotional states was what contemporaries called 'the language of the fan.' Fans became explicit communicative devices in 1795 when a French craftsman invented a 'telegraph fan.' This fan allowed its female owners to use an alphabet printed on the inner side of the device to spell out words to onlookers. This form of communication became popular in Italy, Spain and England. In the eighteenth century a prominent London fan dealer, Robert Clarke, took out a patent which greatly improved on the language of the fan by attaching specific movements to certain communications.²³⁷ By the nineteenth century the language of the fan had become formalized and well known. The Maison Duvelleroy included instructions for fan flirtation in their fan boxes while similar directives appeared

²³⁵ Anon, "Fancies in Fans," 179.

²³⁶ Wright, "Fans." This clipping entitled "The Flutter of the Fan" is from *Daily News*: 11: 2: 1921.

²³⁷ Boehn, *Modes and Manners Ornaments: Lace Fans Gloves Walking-Sticks Parasols Jewelry and Trinkets* 62-63.

in advertisements for perfume and encyclopedias.²³⁸ In the Victorian period the motions of the fan were akin to verbalized language. Consider for example these instructions which appeared in a pamphlet in 1899:

Open and shut—you are cruel.
 Open wide—Wait for me.
 Closing—I wish to speak to you
 Shut—You have changed.
 Handle to lips—Kiss me.
 Dropping—We will be friends.
 Carrying in right Hand—I wish to be acquainted.
 Twirling in right hand—I love another.
 Twirling in left hand—I wish to get rid of you.
 Resting on right cheek—Yes.
 Resting on left cheek—No.
 Drawing across forehead—We are watched.
 Drawing across eyes—I am sorry.
 Drawing across cheek—I love you.²³⁹

While there was a slight variance in the meaning of movements depending on the source, the belabored spelling of each word needed for the telegraph fan had been replaced in the Victorian period by a formalized language. The type of conversations that the new fan language allowed was specifically organized to allow secret conversations between actual and potential lovers. The fan represented a reversal of predominant gender norms of the day, making the male observer a passive recipient of the woman's advances. Though the man could choose to respond or not to the women's advances, the female fan holder possessed the instrument of communication and therefore the power to converse with or ignore interested parties.

²³⁸ Armstrong, *A Collector's History of Fans* 183. Murray and Lanman, "Florida Water," in Beauty Parlour Box 2, Perfumes, eau de Cologne, Waters, John Johnson Collection (1899). Co., *Fans: A Brief Sketch of Their Origin and Use* 9.

²³⁹ Charles Coote Jr., "Bell of the Ball," in *Music Titles Box 9*, John Johnson Collection; Charles Westall, "The Flirt," *Music Titles 5*, John Johnson Collection; J. Duff and C. Hodgson, "The Language of the Eye," *Music Titles 5*, John Johnson Collection.

While the language of the fan gave women an indirectly active role in the process of finding a lover and potential husband, the iconography of the fan still dichotomized women along the lines of the good asexual woman and the flirtatious coquette. The ever conservative fashion plate reinforced the iconography of passive womanhood. The vast majority of folding fans in these images remained closed. The woman of the fashion plate was a proper British lady: asexual and passive. Therefore fans remained folded: hung from clasps on the waist, held nonchalantly at the side, or positioned to draw attention to tiny waists (figure 2.1).²⁴⁰ On the rare occasion that fashion plates incorporated unfolded fans, the posturing of the device and the passivity of the gaze negated any coquettish implications that the object might have conveyed. In the conservative fashion plate iconography, women only held unfolded fans below their face and neck with glances focused away from the viewer towards nothing in particular, rather than looking towards the man she intended to seduce (Figure 2.2).²⁴¹ In fashion plates, the potential for flirtation was negated because the gaze remained passive when the fan was open, or the fan was kept resolutely closed. In these cases the iconography of the fan reinforced the Victorian ideals of female passivity and asexuality which were all important for maintaining the separate sphere ideology explored in the previous chapter.²⁴²

²⁴⁰ Fashion Plates from *The Queen* July 2, 1881; July 2, 1895; July 3 1885.

²⁴¹ Fashion Plate from *Ladies' Magazine of Fashion*, December 1833.

²⁴² This ideology suggested that men and women had naturally opposing gender characteristics: men were active and women passive; men were rational and women moral; men were practical and women ornamental. As a result of these opposing gender characteristics, Victorian men and women were thought by the general populace to be best suited to life in separate spheres. Men, with their aggressive and rational sensibilities, were more suited to the world of work and politics. Conversely, women, with their passive and moral outlook, should be protected from the public male world by staying in the home.²⁴² Because of the domestic woman's dissociation from the world of work she was not supposed to do any manual labour including housework or gardening. In this manifestation a woman's position was to be leisured and

Images from song sheets tended to emphasize the second model of womanhood: the flirtatious female. These images almost exclusively illustrate fashionable middle-class women as flirtatious coquettes who used their fans to attract male attention. In these images the iconography is sexual and almost aggressive: women hold fans over their noses to emphasize “the language of the eye” which is directed towards potential lovers, “the flirt” holds her open fan at her breast allowing an ‘innocent’ blush to be seen on her cheeks while deliberately toying with three male suitors, and the “belle of the ball” is so practiced at fan flirtation that she need not open her weapon but rather holds it closed, up to her chin with a perceptive nod and half grin (Figure 2.3).²⁴³ In all of these images the women demonstrate knowledge of their powers as seductresses and they use their fans to turn a flirtatious bachelor hopefully into a devoted husband. Here the passive, unfocused gazes of fashion plates were replaced by fleeting purposeful glances over fan leaves: these women were aggressively hunting for husbands rather than passively waiting for a proposal. Fans allowed the women of song sheets to move from asexual and passive to calculating coquettes. In their glances that at once imply consent and refusal, these women employ the body language of practiced flirts.

The idea of a middle-class coquette was relatively new in the nineteenth century. The character type dates back to eighteenth century French salon culture in which the coquette was the Grande Dame known for her conversational talent and social performance. In the more conservative post-Napoleonic period, British and French

ornamental. Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes : Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* 180-192.

²⁴³ Charles Coote Jr., “Bell of the Ball,” in *Music Titles Box 9*, John Johnson Collection; Charles Westall, “The Flirt,” *Music Titles 5*, John Johnson Collection; J. Duff and C. Hodgson, “The Language of the Eye,” *Music Titles 5*, John Johnson Collection.

writers linked the aristocratic coquette with “wicked erotic gamesmanship.”²⁴⁴ By the nineteenth century the coquette began to figure as a middle-class type. In novels the coquette was a middle-class character who knowingly walked the line between sexual coquette and innocent flirt.²⁴⁵ The flirtatious socialite became a parallel to the passive domestic women. Both were acceptable forms of behavior for a middle-class woman. The game of the flirt was to entice a lover to become a husband without becoming sexual and therefore fallen. However, some saw the flirt as a dangerous type both because of her potential to become fallen, and because of the power that she held over men.

Although there remained a distinction between the sexual misconduct of the aristocratic coquette and the fleeting glances and ambiguous phrases of the flirt, the latter was not above reproach: “I do not say that she is actually guilty,” suggests Lord Bertie in the novel *Dangers of Coquetry*, “but the woman who is not startled at indulging the adultery of the mind, is not far removed from yielding to that of the body; and the former, I am sure, she is not far from.”²⁴⁶ The utterings of Lord Bertie suggest that the flirt is involved in a dangerous practice which may lead from thought to action. Here the flirt is only two steps away from prostitution.

The docile passive middle-class woman was easy to distinguish from her brazen fallen counterpart. However, the playful flirt was a more ambiguous character, flirting with sexual power while remaining essentially a tease. This ambiguous behavior caused anxiety for some Victorians who spent much time and ink defining the line between acceptable and unacceptable flirtation.

²⁴⁴ Richard A. Kaye, *The Flirt's Tragedy: Desire without End in Victorian and Edwardian Fiction* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2002) 52.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 53.

²⁴⁶ Amelia Alderson Opie, *Dangers of Coquetry* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2003 [1790]) 251.

Most middle-class Victorians were willing to ignore the occasional flirtation if only because its evidence consisted of glances and coded utterings behind a fan. After all, flirtation left no physical evidence and relied on conversational ambiguities creating a situation which could lend itself to subsequent denial.²⁴⁷ For this reason in some Victorian tales involving fans, the object represented the ephemeral feelings held by either the male or female participant.²⁴⁸ Sociologist Georg Simmel reinforced the Victorian perception that flirtation was somewhat ephemeral. He defined flirtation as “the alternation or simultaneity of accommodation and denial.” He goes on to propose that “In the behavior of the flirt, the man feels the proximity and interpenetration of the ability and the inability to acquire something.”²⁴⁹ For Simmel, flirtation existed in the nebula between consent and refusal—it was a game of hide and seek. In the Victorian period the fan was a known prop which helped to create and maintain the ambiguities of women’s sentiments.

As if foreshadowing Simmel’s work, Victorians noted that the fan “in turn discloses all that is apparently hidden, conceals all that is apparently exposed.”²⁵⁰

²⁴⁷ The idea of the language of the fan being ephemeral is reinforced by J. Mew, “The Fan,” *Pall Mall Magazine* IX, no. 40 (1896): 481-488, which states “Better the fan to write and speak/ Than the mouth, or the pen with its ink tear/ For it writes—and spelling is not to seek;/ And its speaks,—what none, save one, may hear.

²⁴⁸ See for example: Earnest Crampton, “An Old Fan Song,” (London: Cary & Co, 1900), Adrian Heard, *The Ivory Fan* (London: T. Fisher Unwin Ltd., 1920), Robert Hichens, *The Woman with the Fan* (London: Methuen & Co., 1904), George Barlow and Henry Pontet, “The Ivory Fan Humorous Song,” (London: Marshalls, 1889). Anon, “Flirts and Flirting,” *Beauty and Fashion: A weekly Illustrated Journal for Women* 1, no. 22 (1891): 430, Mew, “The Fan.”

²⁴⁹ Georg Simmel, *On Women, Sexuality and Love*, trans. Guy Oakes (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984) 134.

²⁵⁰ Charles Blanc, *Art in Ornament and Dress* (London: Campman and Hall, 1877) 194. For similar examples see: Flory, *A Book About Fans: The History of Fans and Fan-Painting* 54. Flory describes the fan as a device which “becomes the sceptre and shield of beauty.” Blanc, *Art in Ornament and Dress* 195-196. Blanc explains how fan maneuvering produces flirtation: “For a Spaniard, all the intrigues of love, all the maneuvers of flirtation, are hidden in the folds of her fan. The shy audacity of her looks her venturous words, her hazardous avowals, half uttered, half dying on the lips, all are hidden by the fan, which appears to forbid while it encourages, to intercept whilst it conveys.”

Women were known to use the fan to attract lovers by expressing their feelings in ambiguous ways. They hid their faces behind fans as a deliberate sign of respectability, innocence, and shyness all the while using sidelong glances to express their interest in potential suitors. The male narrator of the song *Lady of the Fan* suggests that though a woman hides her sentiments behind her fashionable accessory, they remain conspicuously obvious to a lover:

Lady of the fan, why try to hide
Your loveliness from me?
Let me see your eyes afire
With sweet desire and ecstasy.²⁵¹

In this song the semi-concealment afforded by the fan—hiding loveliness while relieving eyes filled with desire—successfully attracted the attention of a male suitor. This flirt was essentially harmless; she was flirting with a man in order to gain a husband, and not with the intent of engaging in a sexual encounter.

Occasionally, reluctant husbands resented the potential power of the flirt. As a result, the use of the fan was not always seen as an innocent device for attracting men. Some narratives portrayed fan-wielding women as practiced seductresses who ensnared men against their will. Some male writers envisioned the fan as a dangerous weapon of female seduction that captured the hearts of unwitting bachelors who happened to come within wind of it. In the Victorian period, many wrote about the fan not as a fashionable accessory, but as a “weapon in the armory of [women’s] charms.”²⁵² This conception of

²⁵¹ Harry Carlton and Horatio Nicholls, "Lady of the Fan," (London: Lawrence Wright Music Co., c1938). See also: Jeanne Burns and Al Brackman Cab Calloway, "Lady with the Fan," (New York: Exclusive Publications Inc, c1933) which depicts a stripper who plays with the fans ability to conceal and reveal as an erotic device.

²⁵² Wright, "Fans." This appeared in a clipping labeled West Gaz, Oct 14, 1922 "Fashion and the fan" By E. C Davies. For other examples of nineteenth century authors who describe the fan as a weapon see: Blanc, *Art in Ornament and Dress* 194, Hart Ernest, "The Fans of the Far East," *The Queen* (1893): 58, Flory, *A Book About Fans: The History of Fans and Fan-Painting* 4. In the early modern period, when this

the fan as a weapon was mentioned as early as 1711 with Addison's proclamation that, "women are armed with Fans as Men with Swords, and sometimes do more Execution with them."²⁵³ Tales of the dangerous seductive fan were written throughout the nineteenth century. Consider for example this poem, "The Fan" which appeared in *The Pall Mall Magazine* in 1896:

Men a many its victims are
 (Lords of creation as they surmise);
 It draws them near, and it drives them far
 Just like Japanese butterflies...

Men by dozens, like moths by night
 Slaves of the lamp, in its glamour share;
 The stubbornest male in his own despite
 Moves when this magnet attracts his chair.²⁵⁴

Here the fan is an all-powerful female weapon which attracts men as easily as lamps attract moths. The seductive woman of the fan represents an alternative type of femininity to the passive, asexual woman of the domestic sphere. The dynamics between men and women within these two contrasting forms of femininity represent divergent relations of power. The passive domestic woman who used her fan only as a fashion accessory was not a threat to male power. The seductress on the hunt for a husband, however, was critiqued by unwilling bachelors who were uncomfortable and unfamiliar with the power of women's sexuality.

piece was written, women were considered to be disorderly forces ruled by their physical bodies, rather than their rational minds.²⁵² They were thought to have special powers as seductive temptresses who possessed charms that no man could resist. Within this construction of femininity, women and their sexualities were considered powerful and dangerous counterparts to the self-composed, sexually restrained man.

²⁵³ Addison, "I Do Not Know Whether to Call the Following a Letter," 76.

²⁵⁴ Mew, "The Fan." For other examples of women's power over men expressed by the fan see: Anon, "Delmira Resigns Her Fan," 312, Lew Brown B. G. DeSylva, Ray Henderson and George White, "Beware of a Girl with a Fan," (New York: Harms Inc., 1925), Louise De Lange and Billee Taylor, "The Legend of the Fan," (New York: M. Witmark & Sons, 1902).

Here we have seen that there were two types of womanhood displayed through the fan: one innocent and passive, the other flirtatious and aware of her sexual power. Both were acceptable within mainstream middle-class values. Neither woman crossed the line into action, but flirtatious women were demonstrably different from their passive domestic sisters. By displaying knowledge of their sexuality and power over men through flirtation, women gained leverage in a marriage market that was overpopulated due to the higher death rate of men, and the higher rate of male emigration.²⁵⁵ Furthermore, the social type of the flirt allows for a more complex and ambiguous notion of middle-class female behavior. In the middle-class Victorian context, the flirt opened possibilities for alternative sexual expressions of the respectable Victorian lady; demonstrating that the middle-class was not as rigidly ideological as some would have us believe. This modern flirtatious woman made some Britons nostalgic for a mythic past in which women were passive and asexual. In the next section we will see how these ideal features of the domestic British woman were displaced from the metropole and placed upon women of East Asia.

The Colonial Fan: The Domestic Woman of East Asia

In response to ‘the woman question,’ middle-class women in the metropole had become less domestic. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, for example, middle-class women demanded admittance into the professions, marched for woman’s suffrage, and undertook legal battles to widen their civil rights in the areas of marriage, property and a mother’s right to raise her children. Furthermore, because of the problem of redundant women, many had to take a more active role in attracting husbands which

²⁵⁵ Bland, *Banishing the Beast: English Feminism and Sexual Morality, 1885-1914* 162.

gave rise to a new social type: the middle-class flirt. Amidst all this change, some Victorians began to dream of a simpler time, a time in which middle-class women stayed in the domestic sphere and took on the role of the passive, yet supportive, wife and mother. This sense of loss led some to look towards East Asia, the birthplace of the fan, as a civilized region that remained untouched by the modernization that forced British women out of their passive roles as leisured domestic housewives. East Asian women were seen as innocent and simple maids who submissively kept house and entertained their husbands after a long day's work. In this section we will explore the emerging perception of Asian women as the ideal domestic women of England's past.

During the last half of the nineteenth century, China and Japan were seen as the civilized exotic places of the world. East Asia was associated with leisure, pleasure, and beautifully decorated objects. The association with leisure was solidified on British soil as porcelain, kimonos, and fans were all displayed and sold in spaces of leisure such as department stores, world exhibitions, public gardens and stately homes.²⁵⁶ This association with leisure portrayed Japan and China as ancient cultures, more civilized than other colonial nations which were understood as lacking in the areas of culture and civilization.

Even though China and Japan were often conflated within the popular British imagination, the quasi-imperial connections between these two countries and Britain were quite different.²⁵⁷ After a long period of protected trade with the West, China was

²⁵⁶ Sarah Cheang, "Women, Pets and Imperialism: The British Pekingese Dog and Nostalgia for Old China," *Journal of British Studies* 45, no. 2 (2006): 361, Jackson, "Imagining Japan: The Victorian Perception and Acquisition of Japanese Culture," 246. For further information see: Dawn Jacobson, *Chinoiserie* (London: Phaidon Press, 1993), Toshio Watanabe, *High Victorian Japonisme* (Bern: P. Lang, 1991).

²⁵⁷ For histories of Japan and China from the British point of view see: Checkland, *Britain's Encounter with Meiji Japan, 1868-1912*, Checkland, *Japan and Britain after 1859: Creating Cultural Bridges*, Mackerras,

forced to open fifteen ports to Western traders after losing the Opium Wars of 1839-1842 and 1856-1860. The failure of the 1900 Boxer Uprising, a state-sponsored popular uprising against Western invaders, only increased China's subjugation to European and American traders. Having observed the Chinese situation, the Japanese semi-voluntarily traded with the West in 1853 after two centuries of self-imposed isolation. The 1858 British Treaty of Edo further subjugated the Japanese to Western trade under circumstances that likened their situation to 'undeveloped' colonies. However, in the Meiji period (1868-1912) Japan pursued a vigorous modernizing program which included creating a westernized government, military, and legal system. By 1905, only five years after the failed Boxer Uprising, Japan won the Russo-Japanese War. With the defeat of imperial Russia, Japan had put itself on par with the other Western nations. Views in Britain reflected the changing power dynamics in East Asia at the end of the nineteenth century; Japan became known as the cultured and civilized nation with China lagging behind.

The civilization and culture of Japan were represented most clearly in the appearance, position and demeanor of the country's women. Japanese women were given a particularly high ranking in the hierarchy of women of the world. They were praised for their "wonderful goodness and gentleness."²⁵⁸ The purity and goodness of Japanese women were often emphasized in British writing about the country. In a volume first published in 1891 entitled *The Real Japan*, Japanese women were described as having all the essential female attributes known to Western women:

Western Images of China, Yokoyama, Japan in the Victorian Mind: A Study of Stereotyped Images of a Nation 1850-80.

²⁵⁸ Sladen, *Queer Things About Japan* 25. See also: Johnson, *The Japanese through American Eyes* 77-79.

If you could take the light from the eyes of a Sister of Mercy at her gracious task, the smile of a maiden looking over the seas for her love, and the heart of an unspoiled child, and materialize them into a winsome and healthy little body, crowned with a mass of jet-black hair and dressed in bright rustling silks, you would have the typical Japanese woman.²⁵⁹

While singular types of western women in the form of the devoted nun, faithful wife, and innocent maiden are referred to in this passage, the Japanese woman is depicted as embodying all three of these western types, seemingly making the Japanese woman the perfect Victorian lady.

Japanese women were also said to attend to domestic affairs in a way that rivaled middle-class English women. Writing in 1841, Dr. P. F. von Siebold, explains: “at home, the wife is mistress of the family...she is expected to please [her husband] by her accomplishments, and to cheer him with her lively conversations.”²⁶⁰ Another writer explains that Japanese women were also good housekeepers: “She is expected to wait on [her husband, and] brush and mend his clothes.”²⁶¹ The Japanese husband, on the other hand, dealt with business affairs outside the home. Even the pre-marital education of Japanese women was described in similar terms as that required by middle-class English women:

Her education consists of reading and writing, the polite accomplishments of dancing and playing on the *samisen* and *koto*, the reading of the polite literature of poetry, the tea-ceremonial, *cha-no-yu*, and the flower-ceremonial—all very civilizing studies.

Dancing, playing instruments, reading and having tea were all occupations in which a middle-class housewife was expected to take part. These sorts of descriptions of

²⁵⁹ Norman, *The Real Japan: Studies of Contemporary Japanese Manners, Morals, Administrations, and Politics* 178.

²⁶⁰ P. F. von Siebold, *Manners and Customs of the Japanese in the Nineteenth Century* (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1973) 123-124.

²⁶¹ Sladen, *Queer Things About Japan* 18.

Japanese women—attending to her husband, maintaining a clean household, and participating in genteel pastimes—echoed the separate sphere ideology that English middle-class families were struggling to uphold at the time.

However, as travel writers were quick to point out, this enviable domestication came at a cost to women. Japan was said to be “a man’s country”²⁶² and as such women were placed in a position of subservience and “treated rather as a toy for her husband’s amusement.”²⁶³ While women were supposed to be helpmates for their husbands, they “never suffered to share his more serious thoughts, or to relieve by participation his anxieties and cares. She is,” Dr. P. F von Siebold went on to say, “kept in profound ignorance of his business affairs.”²⁶⁴ Sir Henry Norman suggests an even darker side of the husband/wife relations in Japan, “in many respectable households there is a concubine—perhaps two or even three—in addition to the wife,” a practice which Norman considers “a miserable state of affairs, degrading, unhappy, and mediaeval.”²⁶⁵ Furthermore a woman was subservient to her husband, a wife was “only to speak when she is spoken to, and [she was expected to] always give *place aux hommes*.”²⁶⁶ When viewed through English eyes, Japanese marriages seemed unequal—women were the playthings of their husbands, kept in the dark about the family finances, and were forced to share their beds with other women. This state of affairs was a direct contradiction to the separate sphere ideology that preached the separate but equal status of men and women.²⁶⁷

²⁶² Ibid. 23.

²⁶³ Siebold, *Manners and Customs of the Japanese in the Nineteenth Century* 123.

²⁶⁴ Ibid. 124.

²⁶⁵ Norman, *The Real Japan: Studies of Contemporary Japanese Manners, Morals, Administrations, and Politics* 183.

²⁶⁶ Sladen, *Queer Things About Japan* 18.

²⁶⁷ One of the classic forms of Orientalism is to judge a country by their women.

While at first Japanese men and women seemed to embody perfectly domesticated women and public men, there were some inconsistencies that lay under the surface. The companionate marriage, which was the basic concept behind the separate sphere ideology, allowed the husband to find his deepest solace in the home. Within an ideal companionate marriage, a wife was a support to her husband as well as his confidant and intellectual equal. When one considers this against the writings about Japan, the gender relations between a husband and wife seem unequal and the wife overly submissive. When viewing the Japanese through Victorian eyes, one sees a hint of barbarism, of times past, of uncivilized practices. Japanese gender interactions were viewed as similar to those of middle-class Britons but slightly distorted. One gets the impression that the Japanese went too far in upholding the separate sphere ideology.

It is perhaps the very tension between the differences and similarities of English and Japanese women that attracted so many English writers to fetishize the pure gentle submissive Japanese woman. Japanese women were admired for their slight figures, small hands and feet, red lips, white skin, ebony hair, and simple gentle smiles.²⁶⁸ Against the backdrop of women lobbying for enfranchisement, breaking into the professions, and demanding increased legal rights, it is not surprising that British men might see the shy Japanese woman behind her fan as a simpler, quieter and more modest English woman. Stereotypical Japanese women were sometimes placed in opposition to British women, who, according to some, were far too concerned with fashions that altered their bodies. One author even went so far as to suggest that Japanese women treated their bodies in a more civilized manner than their English counterparts:

²⁶⁸ Edwin Arnold, "A Japanese Belle," *Punch* 98 (1890): 180, O Lange, "Japanese Fans," (London: W. Paxton & Co. Ltd., 1934), Gordon Balch Nevin, "Painted on a Fan Song," (Philadelphia: T. Presser Co., 1915).

The women of this country [Japan] never abbreviated the interval between themselves and savagery by boring holes in their ears to hang baubles there, by loading their fingers with rings, by encasing their breast in frames of steel and bone, by distorting their feet with high-heeled shoes...²⁶⁹

Here the western woman is criticized for taking up modern fashion while the Japanese woman is praised for maintaining her unchanging simple fashion sense. English writers, poets, and composers spilled much ink on the “belle in far Japan.”²⁷⁰ In the later half of the nineteenth century she became a fantasy girl perpetuated in cultural stereotypes of the meek and demure Japanese lady hiding behind her fan. Confronted with real women at home who flirted with fans but also marched for the vote, the image of the coy Japanese woman, who would be a submissive wife and not meddle in public affairs, was appealing.

Even though Asian women were admired for their passive natures, they too were sometimes seen as flirts. We will now move from the Japanese case to the Chinese. A number of English texts assume ladies from China were the original fan flirts, and it was only because of their example that English women took up the practice. One origin myth explains that the first fan was actually a mask worn by the daughter of a powerful mandarin named Lang-sin. During the Feast of Lanterns the beautiful daughter found herself overheated which prompted her to take off her mask and fan it in front of her face to cool herself.²⁷¹ This gesture was adopted by other beauties at the celebration who “recognized the flirtatious value of the movement.”²⁷² This origin myth links the fan with flirtation which, in turn, came to be associated with Chinese women.

²⁶⁹ Norman, *The Real Japan: Studies of Contemporary Japanese Manners, Morals, Administrations, and Politics* 190-191.

²⁷⁰ Arnold, "A Japanese Belle," 180.

²⁷¹ Flory, *A Book About Fans: The History of Fans and Fan-Painting* 5.

²⁷² Wright, "Fans." This clipping “The Charm of the Fan” is from the *Daily Chronicle* 29:1 1913.

The myth became so popular that it was featured in the 1901 London musical “A Chinese Honeymoon: Musical Comedy in Two Acts.” In this version of the story, a distressed princess found herself unable to attract a husband. Her Sage suggested she use a paper fan to make herself seem less accessible and more coy. A fan, he thought, would better attract the bachelors in her village. This plan worked and the princess was able to procure a husband. The musical’s feature song suggests that the secrets of Eastern coquetry were then spread to women in England and beyond:

And soon the news was spread with glee
To far off lands across the sea
And now today each maid on earth
Well knows their value and their worth
So all of you who fain would woo,
But can’t attract a man. You’ll still succeed,
And all you need is a little paper fan.²⁷³

The supposed Eastern origin of the fan as a tool of coquetry is significant because it partially displaces British women’s agency in the realm of flirtation. However, the sexual power of Asian women (as opposed to Indian and African women who were seen as having an overwhelming sexual libido) must not be overstated.²⁷⁴ This song puts Asian women in a parallel situation to English women, both of whom flirt with their fans to attract husbands and not to begin some illicit affair. But there is a slight difference between the flirt from East Asia and the flirt from England; while the English flirt engages in coquetry in a poor marriage market using her feminine wiles to catch herself a

²⁷³ Howard Talbot, “A Paper Fan,” (London: Hopwood & Crew, 1901).

²⁷⁴ For examples of Indian and African women with high sexual libidos see: Anne Fausto-Sterling, “Gender, Race, and Nation: The Comparative Anatomy of “Hottentot” Women in Europe, 1815-1817,” in *Deviant Bodies: Critical Perspectives on Difference in Science and Popular Culture*, ed. Jennifer Terry and Jacqueline Urla (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995), 19-43, Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda, eds., *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998) 15-18.

man, the Asian woman flirts innocently with the understanding that she would become a submissive wife.

The most famous example of Japanese fan-wielding women in British popular culture was, of course, Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado or, The Town of Titipu*. In this comedic musical set in Japan, the 'three little maids from school' make their first appearance flirting and giggling in ways that would soon attract husbands. The coy female flirtations continue when Yum Yum, one of the three maids, encounters her long lost sweetheart Nanki-Poo. Though "to flirt is illegal," the two thwart the law while singing about the impossibility of their flirtatious love affair:

Nank—If it were not for the law, we should now be sitting by side, like that. (*Sits by her.*)

Yum—Instead of being obliged to sit half a mile off, like that. (*Crosses and sits at the other side of stage.*)

Nank—We should be gazing into each other's eyes, like that. (*Approaching and gazing at her sentimentally.*)

Yum—Breathing vows of unutterable love—like that. (*Sighing and gazing lovingly at him.*)

Nank—With our arms round each other's waists, like that. (*Embracing her.*)

Yum—Yes, if it wasn't for the law.²⁷⁵

While embracing, Yum and Nank sing about the impossibility of their embrace; while gazing lovingly, they maintain physical separation. When acted on stage, this song perfectly embodies the fine line that couples tread between refusal and acceptance—a line that Simmel defined as the very essence of flirtation.

Though there is little mention of fans within the script, and no stage directions that incorporate fans within of *The Mikado*; there is no question that the fan was an essential prop for the flirtatious little maids. Every visual representation of women in

²⁷⁵ Gilbert, *The Mikado or, the Town of Titipu* 19.

The Mikado shows women posing meekly behind their fans (figure 2.4).²⁷⁶ On a song sheet cover the three little maids pose coyly behind their fans. In case the viewer misses this reference to Japan's most popular accessory, the maids themselves are displayed upon a fan. The *carte de visites* from the Berlin production of *The Mikado* picture European women with fans adorning their hair and hands. One woman demurely holds her pinkie finger to her lips; the other two lean over their fans as if to blow kisses at the onlooker. In all of these cases, the fan is an important prop for the flirtatious play of the characters. Furthermore, the cast members of the first London production of *The Mikado* gave autographs upon fans. Though fans did not figure in the stage directions of Gilbert and Sullivan's most popular play, these accessories were so strongly intertwined with the British perception of Japanese culture that they appeared as props over and over again in the play's production, promotional images, and as part of the audiences' interaction with the play.

Japanese flirtations were undertaken in a different marriage market from the one in England. In the *Mikado*, for example, Yum had a choice between two husbands. Furthermore, sources that equated Japanese women with flirtation did not take on the negative connotations of female power and male submission as it did in the English context. In other words, the displacement of the flirtatious attitude of British women onto Asian women did not bring with it any of the negative stereotypes of the flirt. Instead, Asian female flirts were viewed as participating in an innocent game that would result in their entrance into a submissive marital state. The contrasting reactions to East Asian and British flirts were probably due to the semi-imperial ranking of Japan and China. British

²⁷⁶ Gilbert and Sullivan, "The Mikado," in *Music Titles Box 5*, John Johnson Collection. The Berlin *cartes visite* were collected by Mrs. Alexander and are housed at The Fan Museum in Greenwich, London.

men had nothing to fear from Japanese and Chinese flirts both because they posed no immediate threat, being thousands of miles off in a leisured dreamland, and because Britons felt some amount of superiority over these ancient cultures that were yet to modernize in areas of government structure and gender relations.

In this section we have observed that the emergence of the modern British woman was a concern for some Victorians who became nostalgic for a mythical past when women stayed in the home as submissive wives, and attentive mothers. Many looked to East Asia, the birthplace of the fan, as the idealized British past in which gender roles were well defined. During the last third of the nineteenth century, after China and Japan had been opened to the West, the British fetishized the innocent and submissive maid from Japan who forever hid her loveliness behind a fan. In British writing about East Asia the role of the fan as a flirtatious toy was both augmented and downplayed. Origin myths of the fan point to the accessory's invention in China where the ladies of the court recognized its flirtatious potential. However, when Japanese women were fetishized for their submissive behaviors, the fan's flirtatious potential was downplayed so that the East Asian woman appeared to be the idealized middle-class woman of the British past.

The fan was at once a product and a consumer good. The fan as product was embroiled in questions of England's place in the wider world that were being played out at the international exhibitions that proliferated in the nineteenth century. Throughout the Victorian period British government officials asked themselves if a country known for being first to rationalize and industrialize could also maintain a stronghold in the realm of

fashion and design? It was also as a product that the fan weighed in on one of the major social concerns of the period: what to do about the great number of unmarried middle-class women. Here journalists and school directors scrambled to find areas in which redundant women could find employment while still maintaining their status as respectable ladies. As a consumer good, the fan intersected with social controversies about the overall position of middle-class women within the larger society. What rights to the public sphere would the middle-class woman be able to gain? Were there other types of women that could be acceptable counterparts to the domestic woman? Finally, the fan came to represent an escape for the controversial modern woman that emerged in part due to the industrial and colonial state that Britain had become. In the hands of an East Asian belle, the fan came to represent the innocent submissive lady of Britain's past. As both a product and a consumer good, the history of the fan reveals anxieties over questions of British taste, female redundancy, orientalism, and changing gender norms.

The Third Chapter, about umbrellas and parasols, begins on the theme of orientalism which ends this chapter. The next chapter speaks to questions of orientalism, western superiority, and the construction of Victorian womanhood. Victorians were bombarded by stories about how non-western kings had the exclusive right to bear umbrellas. From the British perspective, umbrellas in the East were symbols of despotism and tyrannical royalty. By contrast, Britons no longer had sumptuary laws regarding fashion, thus allowing all classes and genders to use umbrellas freely. This became a symbol of the democratic nature of Western countries. The dichotomy between Eastern and Western practices concerning umbrellas encouraged Victorians to see themselves as imperial masters who had a mission to civilize, enlighten, and liberate the

rest of the world from the tyranny of their traditional umbrella-bearing kings. While the history of the umbrella enabled Britons to feel superior in the world context, the items also played an important part in defining relations between men and women, and between classes within England itself. By the nineteenth century parasols were distinguished as a female accessory which were used as flirtatious props to attract husbands, and as an accessory which helped to maintain silky white skin when out of doors. As such the parasol became involved in courtship rituals and in the performance of leisured whiteness which was an important class signifier for married middle-class women. Men were also judged by the state of their umbrellas. The material makeup, general upkeep and the fold of umbrellas were indicators of social class and emblems of masculinity within the male population. Overall the umbrella and the parasol helped Britons to find their place within the world, and within their own nation.

Chapter Three

Umbrellas and Parasols: Symbols of Imperialism, Race, Youth and Flirtation

When the Prince of Wales undertook his famous 1877 voyage to India, he was warned not to appear in public without an umbrella over his head.²⁷⁷ The British press, which reported on the visit, explained that large umbrellas held over the sovereign and decorated with pearls, exotic feathers, and gold were the exclusive right of Sultans—a privilege that was protected by sumptuary laws. This ornate accessory was necessary because without it, natives would view Prince Edward as an unimportant Western visitor rather than the future emperor of their nation. Accordingly, the display of royal position via umbrellas was superimposed on the future British sovereign during his visit to India. Thus, by preserving the established rituals of the East, Prince Edward usurped the symbol of the umbrella and used it for his own ends. The use of traditional symbols of hierarchy helped to reinforce the imperial structure so that natives could understand the importance of their new ruler.

The imperial visit to India is one example of a more generalized Victorian trend that used umbrellas as the focal point in tales that differentiated the East from the West. Narratives about umbrellas proliferated in British popular sources between 1830 and

²⁷⁷ Anon, "The Evolution of the Umbrella," 394-396, Uzanne, *The Sunshade, the Glove, the Muff* 15, Walking Stick and Article tear away from *The Woman's World*, 1888, John Johnson Collection, Box: Umbrellas and Trunks, Bodleian Library, 150.

1900. These narratives depict parasols and umbrellas as symbols of imperial rule, British whiteness and feminine power. In a surprising array of primary documents, including articles from the popular press, etiquette manuals, popular history books, dictionaries, dance hall songs, short stories, advertising ephemera and trade journals, the umbrella appeared as a symbol of the larger interests of the British culture. Thus, this chapter addresses the meaning of the umbrella and the parasol for Britons within their own nation and as symbols of their power on the world stage.

The chapter begins with a discussion of umbrella narratives in the British periodical press which portrayed non-Western nations as despotic, quaint and traditional. In the press the umbrella became the focal point in a narrative that depicted Asian, Middle-Eastern, and African countries as unchanging and uncivilized in order to justify British imperial rule. The second section continues to explore the umbrella on the world stage, but focuses on how Western nations portrayed themselves as democratic, inventive, progressive and civilized counterparts to non-Western states. These two sections together argue that by the nineteenth century a “metanarrative” had been established that placed Victorian Britain at the pinnacle of all great civilizations. This idea was so pervasive that it was infused into narratives of simple household objects such as the umbrella. Theorist Margaret R. Somers explains that stories such as these were not simply interesting tidbits of information imparted to the British population for light reading, but rather they were examples of ideas that constitute Victorian social identities. Somers posits that “all of us come to *be* who we *are* (however ephemeral, multiple, and changing) by being located or locating ourselves (usually unconsciously) in social

narratives *rarely of our own making*.”²⁷⁸ Stories about umbrellas become part of what Somers identifies as metanarratives: legends that were encoded with the most important concepts of Victorian society. These included tales about progress, industrialization and enlightenment. The metanarrative also incorporated the epic dramas of the time such as barbarism/nature versus civility, the emergence of Western citizenship, and the triumph of liberty. Ideas such as these were so all pervasive that they even became incorporated into stories of the umbrella. Partially via umbrella narratives, then, Victorians were urged to see themselves as imperial masters who had a mission to civilize, enlighten, and liberate the rest of the world from the tyranny of their despotic, traditional kings. This is a perfect example of how imperialism encouraged Britons to invent ethnic categories, placing themselves at the top of the cultural hierarchy.

The history of the umbrella certainly enabled Britons to feel superior in the world context; however, these items also played an important part in defining the racial characteristics of Britons themselves. In the third part of this chapter I demonstrate how whiteness was physically represented and maintained on British women’s bodies partly through the use of parasols. The whiteness of British women was carefully constructed as a way to emphasize racial difference and thereby reinforce the hierarchies stressed by the metanarratives explained in the first half of the chapter. Women were encouraged to maintain their skin as white which was the standard skin colour that all other races were measured against. Here I follow the work of scholars such as James R. Barrett and Matthew Frye Jacobson who seek to “denaturalize race” by unpacking the details of its formation in order to demonstrate that whiteness is a “cultural construct.” In doing so I

²⁷⁸ Margaret R. Somers, "The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach," *Theory and Society* 23, no. 5 (1994): 606.

suggest that Britons were not only establishing false worldwide hierarchies of race, but they were also actively maintaining their status as a white race through middle-class women.²⁷⁹ The final section pushes the analysis established in the previous chapter even further in a discussion of flirtatious women. Overall the history of the umbrella reflected British concerns regarding empire, race and gender. The study of this accessory helps to demonstrate how the larger interests of a culture become reflected in simple household objects.

The previous chapter revealed that concern that British women were not representing themselves respectably caused Victorians to look for models of correct self-representation elsewhere. Intimate colonial relations were also important for the history of the meaning of parasols, but in different ways. Ideas about parasol use in the 'Orient' was denigrated by British commentators and used as evidence of the superiority of British culture and character. Reports of women's use of parasols, on the other hand, revealed racial and gender anxiety. Women's flirtatious use of parasols was considered contrary to idealized middle-class femininity, pointing to a tension in the meaning of the parasol as a respectable and non-respectable accessory. As a protection from the sun, parasols were tools for constructing white femininity, which suggested the necessity of maintaining British identity within established Victorian racial hierarchies. In this case it was not only the nature of British women that was at stake but the nature of Britain as a whole. As the frame of reference expanded, the meaning of accessories further destabilized and the perceived threat to British identity increased.

²⁷⁹ Barrett, "Whiteness Studies: Anything Here for Historians of the Working Class?," 32, Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* 2.

Despotic Kings and the need for British Rule: The Non-Western History of the Umbrella

In her article, “The Narrative Constitution of Identity,” Margaret R. Somers argues that narratives are a way for human beings of the past and present to understand their experiences and guide their actions. Somers shows that “social life is in itself *storied* and that narrative is an *ontological condition of social life*.”²⁸⁰ The idea that stories must be told to guide people’s actions and reactions describes perfectly the place of the umbrella narrative in Victorian society. The umbrella was historicized time and again using the same narrative techniques until men and women of the era came to see their umbrellas as symbols of Western progress, democracy and civility. By way of contrast, the non-Western parts of the world were portrayed as despotic, quaint and traditional. By taking on some of the metanarratives of British history—progress vs. tradition, civility vs. barbarism, democracy vs. despotic rule—umbrella narratives, became more than simple stories; they helped guide the actions and reactions of colonizers and framed British understandings of the empire.

An important metanarrative of Victorian society was the advent of democracy and constitutional government. The British people were well aware of the long process of tempered royal authority beginning with the Revolution of 1689 which ended the absolute power of English monarchs. The Bill of Rights (1689) increased the power of the parliament and limited the king’s control over taxation and his ability to declare war. In the nineteenth century, the three Reform Acts (1832, 1867, 1884-85) increased the electorate based on property ownership. According to this “Whig” view of history, the tempering of royal authority and the advent of democracy changed the English system of

²⁸⁰ Somers, “The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach,” 613-614.

government from despotic, where the parliament acted on the whims of the king, to representative government which served the wants and needs of the voting populace.²⁸¹

John Stuart Mill was one of the main advocates of democracy, proclaiming self rule as the highest form of government.²⁸² In his classic essays “On Liberty” and “On Representative Government,” Mill argued that societies must go through various phases of despotic rule before they might limit royal power and achieve self governance. As such, he believed that “rude people” were not yet civilized enough to rule themselves.²⁸³ Mill theorized that these non-Western peoples could benefit from colonial rule to bring them towards this higher form of government.²⁸⁴ In other words, the metanarrative of English democracy was dependent on the progressive view of history which was based on the assumption that all countries were headed towards the same destination, but that non-Western countries were in an earlier stage of development than that of the West which had achieved democracy. The idea that non-Western countries were on a conveyer belt traveling towards democracy was so all pervasive in Victorian society that it even entered popular histories of the umbrella.

The history of the umbrella helped to distinguish non-Western societies as a group of highly stratified states which granted rulers absolute power over their citizenry. In the non-Western context the umbrella was almost exclusively connected with royalty, acting

²⁸¹ For more information on the use of the term ‘Whig’ in British history see: H. Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc., 1965).

²⁸² John Stuart Mill, “On Liberty,” in *On Liberty; Considerations on Representative Government*, ed. C. H. Wilson and R. B McCallum (London: Blackwell, 1946), 1-5, John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government* (London: Blackwell, 1946) 114.

²⁸³ Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government* 112.

²⁸⁴ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000) 8.

as a symbol of the absolute power of the sovereign.²⁸⁵ In some stories the umbrella becomes a metaphor for the king's ability to decide which of his people might live and die—if a king wanted to take a life, he had only to cast the shade of his umbrella over a person and the deed would be done. The ability of the king to decide who could and could not use umbrellas represented the control that they had over their citizens. States that restricted the umbrella to a smaller number of people were considered more despotic, and those which allowed the general population to use the umbrella were thought to be moving towards a democratic form of governance. In other words, the dispersion, or lack of dispersion, of the umbrella in the general population, was highly symbolic of the state of the government within these countries.

According to British umbrella experts, in non-Western countries the umbrella represented the power held by the supreme ruler over both the sun and his people. The anonymous author of an 1879 article entitled "The Umbrella" argued that the power to convert sun into shade represented total authority on earth: "From time immemorial, the contrivance of warding off the sun's rays and casting an artificial shade has been symbolic of the supreme human authority that can convert light to darkness, and in a trice," he continued, "drive ordinary mortals from the brightness of life to the gloom of death. No fitter emblem of his awful power could be imagined for the potentate who, by a word or a nod, could extinguish towards any of his creatures the sun of earthly

²⁸⁵ Until they were brought into Europe in the 13th century, the umbrella was exclusively used as a protection from the sun. The word umbrella, in the non-European context, was synonymous with parasol, and sunshade (the rainy day use of the object was thought to be of British origin). Anon, "Pagodas, Auriolles, and Umbrellas: Umbrellas, Ancient and Modern Part II," 664, Anon, "Umbrellas in the East," 479, Sapna Reedy, "Be Sure to Get under Your *Ombra*: Ever Wonder About the Umbrella? A Glance at How People Down the Ages Used It," *The Hindu*, August 26 2005. This contemporary article contradicts the Victorian assumption that umbrellas were first used for rain in Britain, claiming that the Chinese were the first to make umbrellas waterproof. This contradiction solidifies the idea that Britons used umbrellas to highlight differences between the East and West that were not necessarily there.

happiness, and banish them suddenly to the abodes of gloom and despair..."²⁸⁶ The allegory here is not hard to interpret: while the sun is generally understood to be a symbol of life, any object that obscures the sun's light and casts a shadow is indicative of death.²⁸⁷ Since traditionally it was only kings and emperors who carried umbrellas, the umbrella under a monarch's control represented the authority he exerted over the life and death of his people. As John Stuart Mill indicated, absolute authority over a nation's people is a power only held by despots and it is one that often works against both the nation and its citizens.²⁸⁸

Indeed, the absolute rulers of umbrella-bearing countries had not only the authority to jail their citizens, as is suggested in the above quote, but also to kill their enemies. According to Octave Uzanne, author of *The Sunshade, the Glove and the Muff*, kings were presented with umbrellas at the end of battles. This umbrella, Uzanne proposed, "symbolized... the power of life and death, vested in the savage conqueror over the unfortunate conquered, delivered up wholly to his mercy."²⁸⁹ Here the supreme authority of despotic rulers is brought to its terrible conclusion; with a motion of their umbrellas these undemocratic rulers could jail and kill those around them.

But the allegory of the umbrella could also work against the despotic rulers of exotic states. In Morocco it is related that as the emperor "went out of the palace gate, the violence of the wind broke his parasol which was interpreted as an omen of the approaching end of his reign."²⁹⁰ Here not only is a literal umbrella broken but also broken is the symbolic power of the emperor over his citizens and enemies. The British

²⁸⁶ Anon, "The Umbrella," *The Perruquier* 2 (1879): 147.

²⁸⁷ Anon, "Umbrellas," *The Gentleman's Magazine* 266 (1889): 537-538.

²⁸⁸ Mill, "On Liberty," 1-5.

²⁸⁹ Uzanne, *The Sunshade, the Glove, the Muff* 12.

²⁹⁰ Anon, "Umbrellas in the East," 480.

reader would likely interpret that without the support of his people, the authority of the despot was tenuous and could be put into question based on simple occurrences such as a heavy wind and a turned out umbrella. To the British reader, who was well aware of the long process in England of tempering royal authority since 1688 and who had begun the long road towards democracy in 1832, these tales of all-powerful rulers and their never-changing traditions regarding umbrellas would seem undemocratic and barbaric. These stories, whether true or false, helped to solidify in the British mind the differences between the despotic, unchanging non-Western countries, and the progressive, democratic West.²⁹¹

The umbrella was so important as a marker of despotic rule that many non-Western countries used sumptuary laws to restrict the umbrella to royal use. In East Asia, nineteenth-century historians tell us the umbrella was “universally adopted as a sign of the highest distinction by Oriental peoples, to be displayed over the head of the king.”²⁹² In the Middle East the umbrella “was a mark of distinction.”²⁹³ This Arab mark was especially enjoyed by Persian kings who had white female slaves hold these heavy objects over their.²⁹⁴ In Africa, the umbrella figured as an important symbol of royalty for Moroccan, Ethiopian and Dahomey kings.²⁹⁵ Finally, the king of the Fiji islands jealously guarded his exclusive right to the shade of parasols, only granting the privilege

²⁹¹ This idea of the unchanging East was famously identified in: Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).

²⁹² Uzanne, *The Sunshade, the Glove, the Muff* 11. See also: Anon, "The Story of the Umbrella," 39, Anon, "Umbrellas," *Household Words: A Weekly Journal* 6, no. 138 (1852): 202.

²⁹³ Anon, "Umbrella Evolution: The Umbrella and Parasol in History," 36.

²⁹⁴ Uzanne, *The Sunshade, the Glove, the Muff* 12. See also: Walking Stick and Article tear away from *The Woman's World*, 1888, John Johnson Collection, Box: Umbrellas and Trunks, Bodleian Library, 150.

²⁹⁵ Anon, "The Story of the Umbrella," 41, Uzanne, *The Sunshade, the Glove, the Muff* 27. Reedy, "Be Sure to Get under Your *Ombra*: Ever Wonder About the Umbrella? A Glance at How People Down the Ages Used It." Walking Stick and Article tear away from *The Woman's World*, 1888, John Johnson Collection, Box: Umbrellas and Trunks, Bodleian Library, 151.

of umbrella use to others as a royal favour.²⁹⁶ The restriction of the umbrella to royal use was a sign of the despotic rule enjoyed by the sovereigns of non-Western nations.

Furthermore, the diffusion (or lack of diffusion) of the parasol throughout the ranks in Asia and the Middle East helped to demark the civilizing, democratizing nations from the exclusive and despotic. Persia and India fared the worst in these narratives of civilization. In 1835 the parasol was said to remain a “distinction confined to royalty” within Persia.²⁹⁷ British authors focused on the exclusivity of the parasol in order to demonstrate the backwardness of the Persian state. By contrast, the narrative about India demonstrated the promise of democratic leanings in some areas of the nation while acknowledging that it was held back by other parts of the state. In the early nineteenth century, the Mahratta state of India still employed the umbrella as a mark of honour; however the British press suggested that the Mahrattans did so out of tradition rather than because of an ill begotten faith in royal distinction. In the farther reaches of India, however, the umbrella remained “strictly confined to royalty itself.”²⁹⁸ The uneven diffusion of the umbrella throughout India indicated a lack of commitment to democracy. The preference of the kings for absolute power put the nation at a lower rung of the ladder of civilization, just above Persia but below Burma.

In the more advanced neighboring state of Burma, the king retained exclusive rights to white umbrellas; but, in acknowledgement of the advice of his court, those officially connected with him carried various colours of umbrellas according to their

²⁹⁶ Anon, "Pagodas, Aurioles, and Umbrellas: Umbrellas, Ancient and Modern Part II," 656.

²⁹⁷ Anon, "Umbrellas in the East," 479.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

status.²⁹⁹ The diffusion of the umbrella beyond royalty was perceived as a sign that the king had a democratic bent which allowed him to include official advisors in his decision making processes. Taking advice from trusted and high ranking citizens was one of the steps that J. S. Mill saw as part of the long process towards democracy.

Nineteenth-century China mirrored more similarly the British idea of civilized nations, as contrary to Persia, India and Burma, the diffusion of the umbrella was much wider spread. The anonymous author of "The Story of the Umbrella" explains that in China the object had been abandoned to the people:

No matter to what part of China one travels, umbrellas may be seen everywhere. They are born aloft by servants, over the viceroys and mandarins; students and tradesmen carry them, and every temple has a dozen umbrellas made of bright yellow silk surrounding the altar of the Joss.³⁰⁰

In China, the most civilized of states, the umbrella was disbursed to every corner of the nation, and it was used by every rank of the citizenry from mandarins to students.

However, China was distinguished from European umbrella use via restrictions placed on the fabric and colour of umbrellas which remained as markers of different statuses. For example, the funerals of mandarins were denoted by umbrellas of blue and white silk embroidered with yellow dragons. Minor government officials were allowed cloth umbrellas at these occasions, while the common people were distinguished by the use of stout paper parasols at their burial sites.³⁰¹ Thus China was seen as more civilized than India and Burma as use of the umbrella had reached all parts of the nation. However, the

²⁹⁹ Anon, "Pagodas, Aurioles, and Umbrellas: Umbrellas, Ancient and Modern Part II," 657, Anon, "The Religious Character of Umbrellas," 498, Anon, "The Story of the Umbrella," 39. Arthur Robinson Wright, "Umbrellas and Parasols," in *A Collection of Newspaper Cutting on Walking Sticks, Umbrellas, Parasols, Fans and Gloves* (London: The Author, 1932). This clipping was labeled West. Gaz. Jan 24, 1923 and was from an article entitled "Back to the Eleventh Century: Umbrellas that were State Symbols".

³⁰⁰ Anon, "The Story of the Umbrella," 38.

³⁰¹ Anon, "Umbrellas," 201.

British press suggested that China remained uncivilized in comparison to Britain where umbrella colours and fabrics were not subject to sumptuary laws.

Turkey, too, was considered an advanced nation; in fact, this is the only non-Western state which was said to use umbrellas practically—in sunny as well as rainy weather. One author, however, attributes this peculiarity to the Europeans who brought the innovation into Turkey when they established themselves in the suburbs of Pera. He argues that, “much opposition to innovation was not to be expected from the present reforming sultans.”³⁰² Here the connection between the ruler’s reform mandate and the general use of the umbrella are made obvious. Those countries which allowed their people, irrespective of rank, to use umbrellas were considered more democratic than those that restricted its use to royalty. In other words, through these narratives of the umbrella, the object comes to be seen as a marker of the democracy and progress of a nation.

The metanarrative about the lack of democracy and liberty in the non-Western world also offered a justification for British imperialism. All of the countries which were shown to be backward in their umbrella-bearing practices were to some extent under British influence. Each location acquired its subservient position in a somewhat unique way. Persia, formerly an imperial power in its own right, lost many of its colonies to Britain and had become economically dependent on Europe during the nineteenth century. India had been informally colonized by British investors since 1757 and became an official colony in 1857. Burma ceded some control of its coastal territories to the British in 1826 and 1851 and became a British colony in its entirety in 1885. China was forced to open fifteen ports to British traders after losing the Opium Wars of 1839-1842

³⁰² Anon, "Umbrellas in the East," 480.

and 1856-1860. And finally Turkey, which had been a strong imperial power in the sixteenth and seventeenth century but entered a decline just before the Victorian period, came to be under British influence. In order to maintain a balance of power in Europe, Britain was forced to protect a weak Ottoman Empire from Russian expansion which led to Turkey's economic and diplomatic dependence on Britain. The umbrella narratives which depicted Persia, India, Burma, China, and Turkey as backward countries in need of a civilizing influence helped to justify British imperial and economic expansion into these areas. The narrative portrayed the British civilizing mission which would help bring important governmental reforms, here represented through umbrella equality. However, these narratives were part of a larger rhetoric which justified expansion to the British public.

While the British considered exclusive umbrella use as an indication of despotic rule, they also understood it as a symbolic resistance to imperial control. The capture of umbrellas as imperial spoils, and the use of umbrellas in the colonial context both functioned as signs of British rule over non-Western states. In telegraphs announcing the defeat of Burmese forces in the Third Anglo-Burmese war (1885), it was reported that the British engaged in the ravaging of Burmese national identity through "the capture of their flags, and of sundry umbrellas!"³⁰³ Both of these objects, the flag and the umbrella, were understood by the British to be part of Burmese national heritage. The fact that a national symbol such as a flag is mentioned in unison with umbrellas illustrates that the British troops understood the meaning of this symbolic gesture: they had stolen part of the Burmese cultural identity as a symbolic first step in the creation and imposition of a new British colonial national identity.

³⁰³ Anon, "Pagodas, Aurioles, and Umbrellas: Umbrellas, Ancient and Modern Part II," 658.

British forces understood that the umbrella symbolized royalty to non-Western peoples. As such, they ensured royal umbrellas remained under British care rather than simply disposing of them when they captured a country. According to one author, England had become “the storehouse for so many old Royal Umbrellas.”³⁰⁴ As part of the capture of the Burmese palace of Mandalay, a royal umbrella was taken, and brought to England. A few years later, the royal umbrella of Burma was joined by the State Umbrella of King Prempeh, of Ghana.³⁰⁵ The act of taking royal umbrellas as spoils of war to be stored in England was one that both demonstrated the imperial power of the British and symbolized the lasting defeat of former kings.³⁰⁶ The umbrellas, which bestowed a regal power onto native kings, held a similar symbolic meaning when they were transferred to the metropole as symbols of British prowess.

Adding insult to injury, European colonialists, who often lived like royalty within the colonies, took up some aspects of the previous native royal decorum such as having servants hold umbrellas over their heads.³⁰⁷ Officials believed that they might better establish British control if they maintained some traditional rituals so that natives might understand the colonizers’ important position within the state. This practice solidified the perception of British control in colonial areas in a similar way that taking royal umbrellas as imperial spoils symbolized British control over the nation.

The stories of the umbrella took on aspects of the metanarrative that saw Victorian England as the pinnacle of civilization which had progressed from a despotic governmental style towards democracy. The British press took up civilizing tales to

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Anon, "The Story of the Umbrella," 41.

³⁰⁶ For a similar example of stealing imperial spoils as a sign of British superiority see: Cheang, "Women, Pets and Imperialism: The British Pekingese Dog and Nostalgia for Old China."

³⁰⁷ Anon, "Pagodas, Aurioles, and Umbrellas: Umbrellas, Ancient and Modern Part II," 661.

explain the peculiarities of umbrella usage in non-Western nations. The umbrella came to represent the absolute authority that the despot held over his country, its citizens and its enemies; the exclusive use of the umbrella by royalty was perceived as an indication of the despotic rule within the country; and, finally, the slow dispersion of the umbrella throughout the populace was seen as a sign that some countries were moving towards democracy. The fact that non-Western nations had not yet achieved the state of democracy, justified the imperial takeover of these nations in order for them to become more civilized. However, British imperialism did not do away with the umbrella as a symbol of hierarchy and power; it was used instead by colonizers as a symbol of British supremacy. The accounts that suggested that democracy was the highest form of government, therefore, were not extended to the British colonies, but rather the traditions of despotic rule were transferred onto the English colonizers partly through the symbolic use of umbrellas.³⁰⁸

A second type of metanarrative that British umbrella writers employed was the idea that the non-Westerners were quaint, simple people in comparison to Western peoples who had progressed past this stage of civilization to become rational, progressive and innovative. When viewing the world through a Western lens, practices such as using umbrellas only in sunny weather, worshiping umbrellas as gods and mistaking umbrellas as high Christian symbols seem quaint. In this section we will see how the metanarrative

³⁰⁸ For a discussion of nineteenth-century liberal assumptions about reason and historical progress and the contradictions of these ideals brought by the empire see: Unday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). For a similar discussion of concepts such as citizenship, the state, civil society, public sphere, human rights, equality before the law, the individual, the idea of the subject, democracy, popular sovereignty, social justice, scientific rationality and their origins as European epistemologies which has defined and colonial other and denied them the same rights as humans see: Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*.

of non-Western simplicity versus Western innovation becomes a narrative device that encourages the British reader to see Easterners as quaint people tied to their traditions.

One element of the quaint and strange practices of non-Western countries was their worship of non-human gods such as the god of the sun. The anonymous author of “Umbrellas” claimed that Eastern cultures practiced sun worship as a remnant of the religious festivals surrounding the Greek God Bacchus, patron god of agriculture.³⁰⁹ The author of “The Religious Character of Umbrellas” examines this idea in detail. He suggests that the umbrella took on an occult significance because it reminded religious observers not to stare directly at the sun, an act that was considered disrespectful to the deity:

In order to protect themselves against such thoughtlessness, and moreover to avoid the danger of unseemly actions and possibly disrespectful gestures in full view of the God of Day, the umbrella was invented. Consequently, when the article first came into use, it was most generally used in fine weather, when the sun was high in the heavens, and thus was most liable to be offended. In rainy weather the danger was not so serious, for the great luminary covered up his face in clouds as with a veil, and it was not so necessary to guard against being rude to him. As a natural consequence, whenever it rained the primeval sun-shade inventors put down their umbrellas and were happy. In later days skeptical people who did not scruple to speak disrespectfully of the sun... found the parasol—in the etymological sense—convenient for keeping off the rain; and, when the pious-minded were lowering their umbrellas, the heretical weaklings unfurled theirs to shelter their sorry bodies.³¹⁰

This article, written in an attempt to understand quaint native practices in their own right, is unusual because it illuminates the reasoned motive behind the primary function of the umbrella as a sunshade. It also explains reasons why non-Western cultures did not use the umbrella in the rain—because it was not necessary as a pious object when the Sun God covered its face. Other articles simply present non-Western practices as quaint

³⁰⁹ Anon, “Umbrellas,” 537.

³¹⁰ Anon, “The Religious Character of Umbrellas,” 498.

oddities which serve to separate the rational and progressive West from the traditional practices of the rest of the world.

Other articles seek to highlight the misconceptions of the non-Western world to demonstrate the unreasoned origins of their religious practice. For example, an article in *Person's Magazine* claims that the Santals Hill Tribe of India had possibly misconstrued the idea of the sun deity and “have actually raised the umbrella to the position of a god, and make it an object of adoration.” During the spring they worshiped the false god of the umbrella as demonstrated when they “place a rude umbrella upon a tall pole, adorn it with garlands of flowers and leaves, and pay divine honours to it, the men and women of the tribe performing a religious dance round the pole.”³¹¹ Here the natives of India had misconstrued Greek myth, transferring what was once sun worship to umbrella worship. These stories of misperceptions helped to highlight the irrational element of Eastern practices and demonstrate how tradition rules the lives of non-Western people.

In another story of misconstrued religiosity, the meaning of the word ‘cross’ was misinterpreted, and a newly converted Chinese Christian believed it to mean ‘umbrella’:

The people [of China]... look upon the umbrella very much in the light that Europeans look upon the cross. A Chinese convert, the missionary told me, in reading his New Testament, came to the passage: “Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.” But he was not clear as to the meaning of the phrase: “Take up his cross.” After pondering for a long time, the Chinaman arrived at the conclusion that the passage must refer to that which he regarded as most valuable and most highly esteemed. He, therefore, read the text thus: “Leave everything but your umbrella; take that and follow me.” The man accordingly set out from his own village to visit the nearest mission station... and in token of his subjection to the God of the Christians, took with him simply—an umbrella!³¹²

³¹¹ Anon, "The Story of the Umbrella," 40.

³¹² *Ibid.*: 39.

This story of a newly converted Christian in China is used to highlight the reverence that the Chinese had for their umbrellas as a highly esteemed object equivalent to the cross in the Christian West. This tale functioned as a joke on the people of China which was the most civilized of the umbrella-bearing nations and illustrated how their native practices would forever keep them from attaining the height of civilization exhibited by the Christian West. It also portrays the Chinese person as simple, quaint, and uneducated in comparison to British readers who understand the joke due to their Western upbringing.

The accounts of the umbrella, therefore, used various tactics in order to portray non-Western countries as backward. They highlighted the tradition of sumptuary laws which forbade anyone but royalty to use umbrellas; ranked East and Central Asian, Middle Eastern and African nations in terms of the staying power of their traditions suggesting that the guarded use of the umbrella indicated a reluctance to adopt democratic reform; and they told stories which characterized non-Western peoples as simple and quaint. The use of various writing tricks—the focus on despotism, the ranking of civilizations, and stories that suggested backwardness—were employed to show Britain in a favorable light. These rhetorical devices helped to drive home important concepts of Victorian society such as the superiority of democratic government over despotic rule, and the preference for progress and innovation over tradition and simple mindedness. Finally, the narratives served as a justification for British imperialism since these backward non-Western states clearly needed civilizing influences.

Democracy in Action: The Western History of the Umbrella

Thus far the umbrella has been primarily observed as an appendage of male rulers and high ranking state officials in non-Western countries. When women were associated with umbrellas they were usually carrying the object in order to shade others (such as the case of female slaves holding umbrellas over Persian kings). The European story of the umbrella introduces a class shift and gender shift in the use of the article. In fact, for most of Western history the umbrella was associated with women more often than with men. The umbrella also became smaller and lighter to accommodate individual use and promote democratization of the object, in opposition to the large heavy umbrella of non-Western origins that represented the ruler's power and the umbrella-bearer's subjection. Furthermore, in the rainier European climate, the utilization of the object split into parasols and umbrellas. From its singular origins as a sunshade the object became a protection from the sun and the rain respectively. This split came to signify the innovation and creativity of Western peoples who took an old invention and made it useful in varying weather. For most of the eighteenth century, umbrellas for the sun and rain were used by women and therefore were associated with femininity. By the 1800s, however, both genders were using the objects. At this time the parasol became especially associated with femininity and the umbrella with masculinity. Though some authors claimed a more 'exotic' origin for European umbrellas, most associated it with Roman and Greek origins where the gender and class trends of modern Europe began. This tactic helped to place the European umbrella (and therefore Europe in general) on an alternative ladder of civilization from the non-Western countries which, as we have seen, were stuck in traditional patterns which associated umbrellas with male royalty.

The use of the umbrella in ancient Greece and Rome became feminized and democratized in comparison to the non-Western societies described above. Even though the umbrella bearing practices of the ancients were dependent on master-servant relations, the democratization of the object helped to dislodge the umbrella from its association with despotic rule. The historiography of the Western and non-Western umbrella diverged in the ninth century when the article became used by various social classes and primarily by women in Rome. As in the non-Western context, those holding the umbrella over the heads of their charges tended to be female slaves;³¹³ but, unlike in the non-Western descriptions, those being shaded were mostly women of high rank.³¹⁴ In the Roman setting, female slaves who carried sunshades over their mistresses' heads were called 'umbrelliferae,'³¹⁵ while in Greece the umbrella was "born by her bondswoman over the head of the Athenian belle."³¹⁶ The history of the umbrella in the West was so firmly associated with femininity that the male use of the object was considered effeminate.³¹⁷ According to *The Gentlemen's Magazine*, Greek and Roman men were restricted from carrying sunshades because of its association with femininity:

To carry an umbrella on his own behalf was to blazon forth his effeminate nature, but classic mashers who desired to rank themselves among the slaves and their mistresses considered it was as much a point of honour to hold up the sunshade of the beloved object as do their modern successors...³¹⁸

Here we see that the umbrella was so closely associated with femininity in Greece and Rome that any man who considered himself masculine would not dare to hold one. A

³¹³ Uzanne, *The Sunshade, the Glove, the Muff* 9 and 17.

³¹⁴ Anon, "Pagodas, Aurioles, and Umbrellas: Umbrellas, Ancient and Modern Part II," 664.

³¹⁵ Anon, "The Umbrella," *Chamber's Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Arts* 49 (1896): 591.

³¹⁶ Anon, "Umbrellas," 538.

³¹⁷ Anon, "The Story of the Umbrella," 276.

³¹⁸ Anon, "Umbrellas," 538.

man holding an umbrella of his own accord became associated with the submission of female slavery. Finally, the Greeks and Romans also democratized the object beyond the nobility. According to one author, there were no sumptuary laws which restricted the use of umbrellas to any one class: “After the rise of the Roman power the umbrella seems to have lost its royal significance in Europe, and, although we know that the Romans carried it in the streets of their cities and to the arena to shade themselves from the hot Italian sun, its use was confined to no particular class.”³¹⁹ The Western historiography of the umbrella diverged from the non-Western context in two ways: it became associated with femininity and it was democratized. Only non-Western countries used the umbrella as a symbol of male despotism.

Victorian writings about the umbrella drew a progressive history beginning with the Greek and Roman empires, moving to the Anglo Saxons—who brought the umbrella back to the west after its disappearance—and then culminating in Early Modern Europe which displayed most of the umbrella bearing trends present in the earlier Western civilizations.³²⁰ This type of “Whiggish” historical progression is another metanarrative used by the Victorians to reassure themselves that their position as industrial, military, and colonial leaders was divine destiny.³²¹ By drawing the history of England back to the

³¹⁹ Anon, "The Story of the Umbrella," 37-38.

³²⁰ Thomas Babington Macaulay, the most famous historian of the Victorian period, wrote a four volume history of England that began with “Britain under the Romans.” The progressive history of England from the Romans until the modern empirical state was popularized by Macaulay becoming part of the general consciousness of Britons. Thomas Babington Macaulay, *The History of England from the Accession of James II* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1855). For information on how Victorians envisioned their empire and their history in general as a progression from ancient Rome see: David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 35,45-46. Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France C. 1500-C. 1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) 11-28.

³²¹ For information on the Whig interpretation of history and its treatment of English history as a progressive history see: H. Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company Inc., 1965). For information on how Victorians viewed their history as progressive see: Asa

Greek and Roman empires, historians of the Victorian period were able to create a sense of causality from one great empire to the next. Like most histories of the period, the history of the umbrella was part of the Whig narrative. The Western history of the umbrella offered two themes that connected ancient and modern civilizations: the feminization of the parasol, and the democratization of the umbrella. Drawing connections between the Greek and Roman empires and modern Europe helped the reader to internalize the idea that they, as Britons, existed at the pinnacle of Western civilization.

The first Early Modern European country to use the umbrella was Italy. There it was first seen as an appendage of horsemen in 1611.³²² Ten years later the umbrella had made its way from Italy to France. Here it was known as a large cumbersome object generally used by hunting parties.³²³ By 1675 the parasol had shifted from a masculine to a feminine accessory. It was sufficiently modified in size and weight that it became popular for French ladies of the court to carry of their own accord.³²⁴ The umbrella arrived in England around the same time as in France, but only became fashionable for ladies of the English court during the reign of Queen Anne.³²⁵ Not until the Victorian period did the parasol become an accessory of elegant display that a woman would spend a great deal of her budget upon. Before this time, though parasols were beautiful, they

Briggs, *The Making of Modern England: The Age of Improvement* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1965) 2-3.

³²² Anon, "The Umbrella," 591.

³²³ Anon, "Pagodas, Aurioles, and Umbrellas: Umbrellas, Ancient and Modern Part II," 665, Uzanne, *The Sunshade, the Glove, the Muff* 29.

³²⁴ Uzanne, *The Sunshade, the Glove, the Muff* 35.

³²⁵ Wright, "Umbrellas and Parasols." This clipping was labeled West. Gaz. Jan 24, 1923 and was from an article entitled "Back to the Eleventh Century: Umbrellas that were State Symbols".

were not matched to women's dresses and, instead, acted more as a functional object than an accessory which accentuated beauty.³²⁶

Mirroring the Greek and Roman origins of the Western umbrella, during the last quarter of the seventeenth century, the European umbrella was given up to women and became associated with femininity. By the early 1700s the umbrella was almost exclusively associated with women as is demonstrated by *Kersey's Dictionary* of 1708 and *Baily's Dictionary* of 1720 which describe the umbrella as a feminine protection from the rain and sun.³²⁷ The popular press of the time also associated the sunshade and the umbrella with women rather than men as is evidenced in this poem from a 1712 edition of *Trivia*:

Good housewives all the winter's rage despise,
 Defended by the riding hood's disguise;
 Or underneath th' umbrella's oily shed,
 Safe through the wet in clinking patens tread.
 Let Persian dames th' umbrella's ribs display
 To guard their beauties from the sunny ray;
 Or sweating slaves support their shady load,
 When Eastern monarchs show their state abroad;
 Britain in winter only knows its aid,
 To guard from chilling showers the walking maid.³²⁸

This poem demonstrates first that in 1712 the umbrella had not yet been split into two separate articles: the parasol for sun and the umbrella for rain. And secondly it shows that in all cases—whether they are housewives, Persian dames, or British maids—

³²⁶ Buck, *Victorian Costume and Costume Accessories* 180.

³²⁷ Anon, "Pagodas, Aurioles, and Umbrellas: Umbrellas, Ancient and Modern Part II," 666. Kersey's Dictionary states "Umbrellas, or umbrella; a kind of broad fan or screen commonly used by women to shelter them from rain." Baily's Dictionary defines the word umbrella as "A little shadow, which women bear in their hands to shade them," and the Parasol as "a sort of little canopy, or umbrella, which women carry to keep off the rain." It is interesting to note here that the differentiation of parasol and umbrella has not yet occurred in the early 1700s.

³²⁸ Anon, "Umbrellas," 202. See also: Reedy, "Be Sure to Get under Your *Ombra*: Ever Wonder About the Umbrella? A Glance at How People Down the Ages Used It."

umbrellas were used by women. The association of the umbrella with femininity became part of what distinguished the Western context, which allowed women protection from the sun and rain, and the non-Western context which protected only male royalty from the elements.

So strong was the association of umbrellas with femininity in Britain that Queen Victoria had difficulty understanding why Eastern royals considered them important. Max Von Boehn, author of *Modes and Manners Ornaments*, explains that “the sunshade was for a long time a purely feminine adjunct and it was a concession to the Oriental point of view when Queen Victoria presented the Sultan with one worth 3000 pounds.”³²⁹ The gender misconceptions surrounding the umbrella also worked the other way around. When wives of British merchants trading with the East had an audience with the King of Delhi, “the ladies who were of the company were ordered to dispense with their parasols, as being an infringement of the great Mongol’s prerogative.”³³⁰ The cultural disjuncture between the East and the West made it hard for British queens and merchant’s wives alike to see the umbrella as anything other than a fashionable female accessory. This fact played into the umbrella narrative which separated the civilizations of the East and West due to the divergent use of these articles.

A second element that connected the Greek and Roman past to modern Europe was the association of the umbrella with effeminacy when used by men. French industrial scientist and politician Jean Marie Roland De La Platière observed when living in Lyons in 1786 that sunshades had been adopted by both the men and women of the

³²⁹ Boehn, *Modes and Manners Ornaments: Lace Fans Gloves Walking-Sticks Parasols Jewelry and Trinkets* 147.

³³⁰ Anon, "Pagodas, Aurioles, and Umbrellas: Umbrellas, Ancient and Modern Part II," 657.

town.³³¹ Due partly to the precedent of Frenchmen using parasols, but also due to the association of the French with fashion, and the reputation of France as a weak and effeminate state, Englishmen who used umbrellas were harassed and labeled “Frenchman!”³³² The first man to endure public ridicule in London was a certain Jonas Hanway who famously walked down Pall Mall Street on a rainy day in 1756 sporting a silk umbrella.³³³ *Cassell's Family Magazine* describes Hanway as a slightly eccentric gentleman:

He was a highly respectable citizen, and took a great pride in his appearance. He had, moreover, traveled a great deal, and during his journeys in the East had derived great comfort from the use of a protection from the sun. He had also lived in Paris, and noted how the ‘machine’ had been adopted there... [According to his biographer] He accommodated himself to the prevailing fashion. He usually wore dress clothes, with a large French bad (wig)... He was in short, just the person who would be likely to adopt so sensible an idea as an umbrella.³³⁴

Hanway is described as a traveler and cultural observer, who saw the importance of the umbrella in the East for protection from the sun and in the West for protection from the rain. He was also seen as highly fashionable, a man who followed French trends, but Hanway was first and foremost a ‘sensible’ Englishman. He was able to see past the effeminate association of the umbrella to its utilitarian aspects. Nonetheless on this first rainy promenade, Hanway was mobbed by those who sought to “witness the shocking effeminacy into which man had fallen.”³³⁵ Twenty years later a footman named John Macdonald endured much the same ridicule when sporting a fine silk umbrella he had procured from Spain. In this case it was the coachman who protested by calling

³³¹ Ibid.: 664.

³³² Ibid.: 667.

³³³ Anon, "The Story of the Umbrella," 42. See also: Reedy, "Be Sure to Get under Your *Ombra*: Ever Wonder About the Umbrella? A Glance at How People Down the Ages Used It."

³³⁴ Alexis Krausse, "Something About Umbrellas," *Cassell's Family Magazine* XXV (1879): 278-279.

³³⁵ Anon, "Umbrellas," *The Penny Magazine of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge* 5 (1836): 7.

“Frenchman! Why don’t you get a coach?”³³⁶ This coachman tried to shame Macdonald by highlighting his actions as French, and therefore effeminate, but their derision came from concern that if all men used umbrellas they would be out of work. The association of the umbrella with effeminacy lasted until the turn of the century, which prompted nineteenth-century periodical writers to reassure men that umbrellas were now “fashionable for both sexes.”³³⁷

The time that it took to extend the umbrella to both genders was about equivalent to the time it took to democratize the object. In 1769 the French bourgeoisie had a taste of the sunshade when a company was formed in Paris that lent out parasols to those crossing the Pont Neuf.³³⁸ Perhaps because of this gimmick, the middle class became increasingly interested in having their own umbrellas. As a result of middle class demand, the object became smaller, lighter, and less expensive. Changes to the umbrella between the later 1600s and the 1800s took various forms. Rather than having innumerable ribs and being large enough to shade three people, the umbrella of the eighteenth century had eight ribs and was suitable only for a single person.³³⁹ In the nineteenth century the heavy whale-bone frame increasingly gave way to lighter and less expensive materials such as cane and hollow steel.³⁴⁰ Finally, the expensive silk coverings used by women of the court were replaced by cotton and alpaca, which were much more affordable materials for the middle and working classes. With the modifications of materials, shape and size, the prices of French umbrellas changed from

³³⁶ Anon, "Pagodas, Aurioles, and Umbrellas: Umbrellas, Ancient and Modern Part II," 667. See also: Anon, "Umbrella Evolution: The Umbrella and Parasol in History," 38.

³³⁷ Anon, "Umbrella Evolution: The Umbrella and Parasol in History," 38.

³³⁸ Walking Stick and Article tear away from *The Woman's World*, 1888, John Johnson Collection, Box: Umbrellas and Trunks, Bodleian Library, 152.

³³⁹ Anon, "Umbrellas," 203.

³⁴⁰ Anon, "The Evolution of the Umbrella," 396, Anon, "Umbrellas," 203.

15 to 22 livres in 1650 to less than 3 livres in 1776³⁴¹ and were sold in England by street-hawkers for a few pence in 1889.³⁴² Here we see that the actual article—specifically its size, price, and material makeup—was a reflection of its status as a democratized object in the West. In the non-Western context, umbrellas were very large, highly decorated with expensive materials, and held by servants rather than those being shaded. All of these aspects point to the umbrella's position as a status symbol in non-Western cultures. By contrast, because of its use as an everyday object by a variety of classes and genders, the Western umbrella was inexpensive, of modest size, and carried by the one who used it. The umbrella itself, therefore, was a reflection of the society in which it was made.

According to Peter N. Stearns, a historian of consumerism, the umbrella had, in fact, passed into general use by 1770.³⁴³ It was not until the nineteenth century, however, that British authors began to write the history of the umbrella. By the end of the nineteenth century Uzanne cast the device as a common object used by all Europeans:

The sunshade is found today in the hands of every one, as it should be in this practical and utilitarian age. There is not, at the present hour, any woman or girl of the people who has not her sunshade or her satin *en-tout-cas*—it seems to be the indispensable complement of the toilet of the promenade...it protects equally the girl dancing on the tight-rope and the respectable citizen's wife in her Sunday best.³⁴⁴

Here the parasol is shown to have permeated the ranks from courtly ladies, to respectable middle-class women, down to working class performers. As in the Greek and Roman context, the European umbrella had been democratized. Uzanne also highlights the object as 'practical' and 'utilitarian' which indicated to the reader that the European use

³⁴¹ Anon, "Pagodas, Auriolos, and Umbrellas: Umbrellas, Ancient and Modern Part II," 665.

³⁴² Anon, "Umbrellas," 541.

³⁴³ Peter N. Stearns, *Consumerism in World History: The Global Transformation of Desire* (London: Routledge, 2006) 22.

³⁴⁴ Uzanne, *The Sunshade, the Glove, the Muff* 61.

of umbrellas was progressive and modern in comparison to non-Western civilizations which limited the use of the object to royalty. By providing a separate historiography for the Western umbrella, the reader can easily distinguish the democratic, innovative nations of the West from the despotic, traditional nations of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. The narrative of the umbrella brings to the fore the democratic nature, inventiveness, and industrial prowess of the British nation by highlighting the use of the object by various classes and genders, and by describing the article's varying uses and material makeup.

Another way in which the European umbrella became increasingly utilitarian was the use of the object not only as a protection from the sun, but also from the rain. The narrative of the umbrella indicated that because of the hotter climate, religious beliefs, and a resistance to innovation, non-Western countries used the umbrella only as a sunshade. In the rainier British climate, however, we find the distinction between the umbrella and the parasol more marked. The author of "Umbrellas in the East" explains that only in the West is there a distinction between the umbrella, as a protection from the rain, and the parasol, as a protection from the sun:

Notwithstanding the more stately appearance of the umbrella, it is but the child of the parasol, or rather, the original and almost exclusive use of the umbrella is that to which the parasol is now appropriated—to afford shelter from the sun. The applicability of the same implement as a defense against rain was sufficiently obvious, but is scarcely known in the original countries of the umbrella except as introduced from Europe.³⁴⁵

The 'obvious' re-appropriation of the umbrella as a protection from the rain was apparently lost upon simple Eastern peoples. It was left to the Europeans to discover this secondary use and develop the implementation accordingly. This transition, however, did not occur until the 1700s; the Europeans used the umbrella only as a sunshade until this

³⁴⁵ Anon, "Umbrellas in the East," 479. See also: Anon, "Umbrellas," 201.

time.³⁴⁶ With the advent of the rain-umbrella, the Greek and Roman use of the umbrella as a sunshade was improved upon as it took on a secondary use as protection from the rain, indicating that the civilization of modern Europe was at the highest rung in the ladder of civilized progress.

When writing the history of the umbrella Victorian historians were not transparently relating the story of an object to the public. Imbedded in these histories were various metanarratives designed to help Britons understand their place in the world. Most of the historical background of the umbrella was imbedded into tales that compared and contrasted Western and non-Western practices in a way that favored Western traditions. Historians saw the use of large, ornate umbrellas which covered the heads of sultans as marks of despotic rule in comparison to the democratic use of the article in Britain which symbolized representative governments. They saw the singular use of the sunshade as a mark of tradition and simple mindedness in comparison to the innovative and progressive West who used the article as a protection from the sun and rain. They even claimed that Western umbrella traditions originated in the great empires of Greek and Rome in order to place themselves as the culmination of past empires. By taking on some of the metanarratives of British history, umbrella narratives became more than simple stories; they helped guide the actions and reactions of colonizers and framed British understandings of the empire.

Race, Complexion, Youth and Flirtation: The Parasol as a Feminine Accessory

While the history of the umbrella enabled Britons to feel superior in the world context, these items also played an important part in defining the status of white Britons

³⁴⁶ Stearns, *Consumerism in World History: The Global Transformation of Desire* 22.

within their own country. As we will see, parasols acted like the glove, as protective gear that would help women stay white in a culture which valued a white skin as a marker of their superiority over other nations. The emphasis on whiteness enacted and maintained within the metropole was an important reinforcement of the metanarratives that showed Britain at the top of the racial hierarchies. Also, in the nineteenth century, the sunshade became an accessory that helped emphasize youth, leisure, and feminine elegance and was used, like the fan, as an item that facilitated flirtations.

The parasol and its uses allow us to glimpse the importance Victorians placed upon a woman's whiteness, youth, and beauty.³⁴⁷ One aspect of beauty included a delicate complexion, an asset that could be protected – or simulated – by the parasol. The parasol helped signal to the male onlooker whether a lady was young, white, and lovely, or was an old spinster on the prowl.

The question of complexion and its link to a woman's age and beauty were great concerns for the Victorians. As we saw with gloves, the whiteness of a woman's skin in this era helped to distinguish the leisured woman from the working woman, and the British woman from the colonial other.³⁴⁸ The parasol, when used as protective gear, was another accessory which, along with the glove, helped middle-class women to maintain the semblance of leisure upon their bodies. A woman's complexion, and particularly the whiteness of her face, was seen as an indication of her race, class, and social status and by extension her husband's.³⁴⁹ The connection between complexion and status were parodied by a *Punch* cartoon entitled "How Pelham Jones gets into 'Society'" (figure

³⁴⁷ Buck, *Victorian Costume and Costume Accessories* 179, Johnson, *Ladies' Dress Accessories* 52.

³⁴⁸ Bonnett, "How the British Working Class Became White: The Symbolic (Re)Formation of Racialized Capitalism," Allen, "Are We Englishmen?," Pickering, "White Skin Black Masks: 'Nigger' Minstrelsy in Victorian Britain."

³⁴⁹ Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions*.

3.1).³⁵⁰ The image portrays a woman at a Society function who has mounted upon her head a gilt scone surrounded by candles in order to highlight the whiteness of her face to fascinated onlookers. The caption below justifies this ludicrous contraption due to the emphasis it placed on the delicate tints of the lady's complexion. It reads: "Next year [Mr. Jones] will unveil and illumine her neck and shoulders, which are equally resplendent—and so on, no doubt, till he reaches the highest rungs of the ladder."³⁵¹ The whiteness of Mrs. Jones' face, neck, shoulders and hands were an indication of her race and social status. The light hue testifies to Mrs. Jones' ability to keep herself white through costly gear such as gloves, hats, sunshades, and shawls. The whiteness of her skin also indicated that she spent most of her time in leisured activities inside the home, rather than participating in outdoor labour which would have made the skin red, freckled, and tanned. Furthermore, her white body was an indication, not only of her own status, but also that of her husband who could afford to keep his wife in leisured luxury.³⁵² Here also, race is constructed by Mrs. Jones and her husband by manipulating and emphasizing her whiteness. This process of constructing whiteness within the metropole had an important parallel to the metanarratives that argued that Britons were a white race at the top of the racial hierarchy. The whiteness of women in Britain, then helped to emphasize difference in a way that reinforced racial hierarchies and colonial difference.

³⁵⁰ Anon, "Sic Itur Ad Astra; or, How Pelham Jones Gets into "Society," *Punch, or the London Charivari* (1880): 203.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² For information on the idealization of white skin in the Victorian period see: Lois W. Banner, *American Beauty* (New York: Knopf, 1983) 4, Mire, "Skin-Bleaching: Poison, Beauty, Power and the Politics of the Colour Line", Peiss, "Hope in a Jar: The Making of American's Beauty Culture." For a discussion of how whiteness is enacted through the body see: Walkowitz, "The Indian Women, the Flower Girl, and the Jew: Photojournalism in Edwardian London", Ware, "Island Racism: Gender, Place, and White Power", Wellman, "Minstrel Shows, Affirmative Action, and Angry White Men: Marking Racial Otherness in the 1990s," McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in Colonial Conquest* 132-180.

Not only was a woman's race written upon her skin, but also her age. This was important within the nineteenth century because many young maids feared they would fall into spinsterhood due to the lack of marriageable aged men in Britain at the time.³⁵³ It was, therefore, important to maintain a youthful white complexion for as long as possible so that one might attract a suitable husband. Etiquette manuals which span the Victorian period from *The Ladies' Hand-book of the Toilet* written in 1843 to *Every Woman's Toilet Book* written in 1908 reinforced the idea that beauty and youth were categories that could be read upon the skin—these could have very little to do with the actual age of a woman.³⁵⁴ Etiquette writer Mrs. Robert Noble, for example, warned young maids that although their complexion was naturally healthy and white, it might not stay that way if they spent too much time in the sun:

The fairest and most delicate complexion can be shriveled, and, unless remedies are used, spoiled beyond hope of redemption...So many girls think it will all come right, it is only a temporary disfigurement of the skin. Now this is not so. If the skin be burnt up, tanned and scorched perpetually under fierce suns, it will harden and toughen, and crease and line. It will become prematurely coarse and old-looking.³⁵⁵

With too much exposure to the sun, the face would become coarse and wrinkled, making young ladies look older than they should. Here the skin was more of an indication of youth than the actual age of a woman. Mrs. Noble goes on to encourage women to use parasols when out in the mid-day sun to protect their complexion which was the ultimate marker of youth and beauty and race.³⁵⁶

³⁵³ For a discussion of the lack of marriage age men in the Victorian period see: Bland, *Banishing the Beast: English Feminism and Sexual Morality, 1885-1914* 162. Kane, *Victorian Families in Fact and Fiction* 93.

³⁵⁴ Noble, *Every Woman's Toilet Book* 122. See also: Anon, *The Ladies' Hand-Book of the Toilet: A Manual of Elegance and Fashion* 7.

³⁵⁵ Noble, *Every Woman's Toilet Book* 122.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

While parasols could be used as a protective shield for the complexion, the objects could also make women look older or younger depending on the colour of the accessory. In the Oxford periodical entitled *The Parasol*, a young woman at a boat race appeared to have the permanent blush of sunburn. When her male companion commented upon this he was assured that it was only the reflection of her red sunshade that created the unfortunate complexion.³⁵⁷ The correct tint of a parasol could also miraculously make an old maid look young again. Older women were known to use the colour of their parasols to mimic a youthful complexion. This is the situation described in the dance hall song *The Parasol Parade*:

At the seaside there's the girl that's rather haughty
 On the prom there she will roam,
 Well, when I say a GIRL, she's nearly forty,
 And she LOOKS it when at home;
 But see her strolling out beneath a sunshade,
 She looks charming—simply grand—
 Though REALLY her complexion
 Is the pink and white reflection
 Of the sunshade that she carries in her hand:--

And on the Parasol Parade,
 There you will see this charming maid,
 She smiles so sweetly
 Though most discreetly
 On the Parasol Parade;
 And underneath a smart sunshade—
 And though over thirty
 She's still young and flirty
 On Parasol Parade.³⁵⁸

Here the pinkish hue of a parasol turns a forty-year-old spinster into a young maid giving her a second chance at love and romance. The complexion was so intimately tied up with

³⁵⁷ Anon, "Editorial," *The Parasol* 1, no. 1 (1905): np.

³⁵⁸ Charles Heslop and K. L. Duffield Worton David, "The Parasol Parade," (London (USA): Shapiro, Von Tilzer Music Co., Ltd., 1908), 4.

the concept of age and beauty that the reflective glow of a parasol could become important for attracting husbands once women were past their youthful prime.

The parasol was not only used to help protect the youthful complexion of white womanhood, it was also a tool used for flirtation to attract husbands needed to perpetuate the white race. As was the case with the folding fan, an informal language of the parasol evolved in the nineteenth century to attract the attention of male suitors.³⁵⁹ The management of the parasol, though not as formalized as the manipulation of the fan, allowed women to communicate by tilting, twirling, hiding behind, or snapping shut their parasols.³⁶⁰ Furthermore, the bright colours of the accessory indicated that they were “designed more for show than for use.”³⁶¹ Though they functioned also as a protection from the sun, parasols were well known to be accessories that highlighted women’s beauty. In her book, *The Sunshade the Glove the Muff* Octave Uzanne suggests that the question of complexion was secondary to the charm women acquired through the correct use of this accessory:

Surely the sunshade adds new graces to women! It is her outside weapon, which she bears boldly as a volunteer, either at her side, or inclined over her shoulder. It protects her head-dress, in supporting her carriage it surrounds as with a halo the charms of her face.³⁶²

Here the parasol acts as a prop that improves women’s postures while it highlights the angelic beauty of their faces. The flexibility which allowed women to communicate through gestures that incorporate the sunshade, the bright colours of parasols which

³⁵⁹ For a sociological discussion of the way that flirtation functions see: Simmel, *On Women, Sexuality and Love*. For a discussion of flirtation in Victorian novels see: Kaye, *The Flirt's Tragedy: Desire without End in Victorian and Edwardian Fiction*. For information about the fan as a flirtatious object see the previous chapter: “‘The Language of the Fan’: Pushing the Boundaries of Middle-Class Womanhood.”

³⁶⁰ Uzanne, *The Sunshade, the Glove, the Muff* 40, Margaret Visser, *The Way We Are* (Toronto: Harper Collins Publishers Ltd., 1994) 90, Anon, “For Every Woman,” *Pall Mall Gazette* (1914): 8.

³⁶¹ Anon, “Editorial,” 1, Visser, *The Way We Are*.

³⁶² Uzanne, *The Sunshade, the Glove, the Muff* 61.

attract male attention, and the way that the accessory was used to heighten women's charms once potential suitors drew near, were all aspects of the parasol which indicate its potential as a tool for flirtation.

Once suitors were attracted by women wielding parasols, the accessory served as an object which brought young love to fruition. M. Cazal, a famous French manufacturer of parasols and author of *Umbrellas, Parasols, and Walking Sticks* (1884), suggests that the accessory was a great 'cover' for couples in love:

Under its rosy azure dome, sentiment buds, passion broods or blossoms; at a distance the Sunshade calls and rallies to its colours, near at hand it edifies the curious eye, and disconcerts and repels presumption. How many sweet smiles have played under its corolla! How many charming signs of the head, how many intoxicating and magic looks, has the Sunshade protected from jealousy and indiscretion! How many emotions, how many dramas, has it hidden with its cloud of silk!³⁶³

Here we see that the parasol, even more than the fan, functioned as an accessory for courtship first as a tool to attract male attention and then as an object that afforded privacy to the loving couple. The parasol acted as a flirtatious prop which drew men nearer so that they could observe their lover's 'sweet smiles', 'intoxicating looks' and 'signs of the head'. Once brought together, the couple could use the sunshade to protect from the appearance of indiscretion. The article's use during promenades, when couples were known to spend time together in relative privacy, and its ability to hide lovers from prying eyes functioned as the perfect accessory to allow for 'brooding passion'.

As an accessory for courtship, the parasol was also the subject, in the early twentieth century, of many songs which promised that love would blossom and perhaps come to fruition *Underneath a Parasol*:

³⁶³ As quoted in *Ibid.* 62.

You have seen a hundred lovers' s billing
 Cooing that their hearts are true,
 Honey-woney does you love your Billie
 Tootsey-wootsey course I do,
 There's nothing like a little girlie-wirlie,
 Not too short or not to tall,
 And the place to hear her say
 You may name the happy day,
 Is underneath a parasol.³⁶⁴

Here the protective silk of the parasol is not only a space for courtship but also for marriage proposals. Perhaps because the object afforded such close contact and facilitated verbal communication between men and women, the parasol was linked with the expression of sincere feelings, rather than ephemeral flirtations as was the case with the folding fan.

As we have seen, songs tell us that women who attracted their husbands by flirtatiously wielding their parasols achieved marriage rather than broken hearts. There is a secondary type of courtship tale told in the nineteenth century, but instead of involving sunny days and women's parasols, the stories center around men gallantly coming to the aid of women by offering them shelter under umbrellas. Consider for example, the true story of a banker who 'owed an excellent wife to the interposition of an umbrella:'

On returning home one day in a heavy shower of rain, he found a young lady standing in his doorway. Politeness induced him to invite her to take shelter under his roof, and eventually to offer her the loan of an Umbrella. Of course the gallant banker called for it the next day, and the acquaintance thus accidentally made, soon ripened into mutual affection.³⁶⁵

³⁶⁴ Lester Keith and John Kemble, "Underneath a Parasol," (New York: Harry Von Tilzer Music Pub. Co., 1906), 3-4. See also: Tom Mellor, Alf. J. Lawrance and Harry Gifford, "A Parasol for Two," (London: Monte Carlo Publishing Co., 1907), Harold and Ned Rayburn Orlob, "Underneath a Parasol," (New York: Hitchy Koo, 1918).

³⁶⁵ Black, *Umbrellas and Their History* 70. Stories of love brought about by umbrellas seem to have been a preoccupation for Victorian writers. In an etiquette manual by Mrs. Humphry men are told: "A young man once asked me if it would be etiquette to offer an unknown lady an umbrella in the street, supposing she stood in need of one. I replied "No *lady* would accept the offer from a stranger, and the other sort of person might never return the umbrella." In large towns women of breeding soon learn to view casual attentions

Fictional stories tell a similar tale of chance meetings between men and women due to sudden downpours. In a tale written by J. S. Lloyd, a neighborhood picnic was interrupted by a sudden downpour. The one man who brought an umbrella offered to share it with a young lady as they walked to safety. Neither of them knew the way home however, so they embarked on a misadventure which ended in the couple getting to know each other quite well. The tale ends with a marriage proposal: “My little queen,” whispered the man, “how fortunate it was that I brought my umbrella! Otherwise I might never have gained you for my wife.”³⁶⁶ Though the gender dynamics were reversed—men make the advances rather than women—the tales of the umbrella share with those of the parasol the same ending: the marriage proposal. The umbrella and the parasol, readers were encouraged to believe, were often objects that allowed for chance meetings that would end in mutual affection rather than ephemeral flirtations and possible abandonment.

The parasol had various important functions for women in the nineteenth century. It acted as an object that accentuated feminine movement and posture. The sunshade also attracted the attention of male suitors from a distance due to its colouring and large size in comparison to most accessories. And once the couple met, the parasol allowed a man and woman to get to know each other under its protective silk. As well as an object that

from well-dressed men with the deepest distrust. They would suffer any amount of inconvenience rather than accept a favour from a stranger, knowing that so many men make it their amusement to prowl about the streets, looking after pretty faces and graceful figures, and forcing their attentions on the owners...It cannot be denied, however, that there is a corresponding class of women and girls who make promiscuous male acquaintances in the streets and the young men learn to distinguish these from respectable members of the community.” According to Mrs. Humphrey, then, the banker’s wife might have been a young woman in search of a husband rather than a woman in distress caught in a rainstorm. Mrs. Humphrey, *Manners for Men* (London: James Bowden, 1897).

³⁶⁶ J. S. Lloyd, “Under an Umbrella,” *Tinsley's Magazine* 32 (1883): 329. See also: Anon, “Mr. Thompson's Umbrella,” *All the Year Round: A Weekly Journal* 15 (1866).

accentuated a woman's beauty and attracted male patronage, parasols could be used to maintain beauty, youth and whiteness through the complexion. As a protection from the sun, the parasol helped to cover the 'naturally' white British complexion, allowing middle-class women to maintain their youthful colouration and to emphasize the racial difference so important in the larger discourses of colonial rule. The sunshade could also be used deceptively by older women who mimicked the glow of the youthful complexion via the reflection of the sun upon their parasol. The delicate tints of the white skin were preferred by Victorian women because it highlighted not only their youthfulness but also their status as white middle-class women. Without the parasol the white complexion would approximate that of the working class or colonial other whose skin appeared in "shades of brown and yellow to a dirty white."³⁶⁷ Clearly the sunshade played a crucial role in maintaining the appearance of the white race as well as the youth and beauty of the middle-class.

Parasols and umbrellas had meaning for Victorians on various levels. On a grand scale they were part of the narrative that separated Western from non-Western civilizations. Stories about these objects helped to portray non-Western countries as despotic, quaint and traditional. Post-colonial theorist Edward Said identifies these narrative devices as comforting for Westerners who preferred to see non-Western civilizations as unchanging and exotic. In fact the stories of non-Western umbrellas were about the Western concepts of their own civilization rather than the actual practices in non-European cultures.

³⁶⁷ Noble, *Every Woman's Toilet Book* 123.

English authors indicated that non-Western nations had sumptuary laws which made umbrellas the exclusive objects of royalty. This practice was reassuring to Britons who saw themselves as a democratic nation which made umbrellas available to all classes and to men and women alike as a symbol that they had long ago thrown off the influence of despotic rulers and their sumptuary laws. Furthermore the narrative of the umbrella established separate origins for Western and non-Western umbrellas. A scale of nations was created by the press which extended from non-civilized to more civilized nations and helped to justify the imperial rule of the most barbaric and non-progressive of the nations. The West was differentiated from the East in the accounts about the origins of the umbrella in each continent which put Britain in a category with the most ancient civilizations such as Greece and Rome and distanced Britain from countries such as India and Burma which they ruled.

While the history of the umbrella enabled Britons to feel superior in the world context, these items also played an important part in defining relations between men and women, and between classes within England itself. For women who could use it with elegance, the parasol was an article that facilitated female flirtation and attracted male attention, for it was one of the larger and more colourful of the Victorian accessories. Once men were attracted by a woman's charming flirtations, the parasol could be used as a protective cover; behind it couples in love could flirt and perhaps even entertain marriage proposals. Eye catching beauty depended on the parasol as well. There was a very small window of opportunity for women to attract husbands (women over 28 years old were considered spinsters) and a shortage of eligible men due to higher male death

rates and higher male to female emigration within the Victorian period.³⁶⁸ Therefore it was important for a woman to maintain her beauty via the youthful glow of her complexion in order to attract a suitable husband. Here the parasol acted as a protective cover which maintained the white skin so important to middle-class women in the competition to attract a husband. As well as participating as an object in a narrative that placed Britain at the top of all world civilizations, the umbrella acted as a prop which brought marriageable men and women together. The umbrella and the parasol, then, helped Britons to find their place within the world, and within their own nation.

The fourth chapter, about faux ivory vanity sets, brings together themes of imperialism, feminine display, and class anxiety which have been studied throughout the thesis. The European scramble for Africa, which began in 1872, created increased trade between Africa and the West. At this time, tusk ivory became used for more domestic objects giving wealthy Westerners a sense of the exotic in their day-to-day lives. Celluloid that was made to look like ivory extended the reach of this exotic substance; it became a way for the middle classes to engage in the colonial discourse while never leaving their boudoirs. Though celluloid was important for the imperial program—allowing a greater number of citizens to participate in the imagined domination of exotic countries—mock ivory created anxieties about the place of imitative objects in the wider Victorian culture. The Arts and Crafts movement, in particular, had a strong aversion to imitation. Natural substances, they believed, could generate an understanding of geology or biology and gave observers a sense of the grandeur of nature. Imitative substances

³⁶⁸ Bland, *Banishing the Beast: English Feminism and Sexual Morality, 1885-1914* 162. Kane, *Victorian Families in Fact and Fiction* 93, Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920* 293.

negated this learning process and “falsely claimed a natural or cultural richness they did not possess.” By the turn of the century, Britons and Americans were torn between the play of imitation and the sober originality of authenticity. To make matters worse these concepts were also applied to people: those who ‘acted above their station’ by owning cheap imitations could be deemed imitations themselves. This put celluloid ivory producers in an awkward position as the anxiety surrounding authenticity had the potential of diminishing vanity set sales. In order to combat these prejudices the American DuPont de Nemours and Company used a marketing strategy which attempted to convince the consumer that mock ivory and the women who used them were authentic. Overall, this chapter traces the modernist debate about the real and the fake from the nineteenth century into the twentieth, and shows how celluloid vanity sets were affected and how companies reacted to this debate.

Chapter Four

‘The Real Thing’: The Celluloid Vanity Set and the Search for Authenticity

In 1917 E.I DuPont de Nemours and Company issued an advertisement promoting their new product, ‘Ivory Pyralin.’ This was in fact a form of the earliest plastic: celluloid. They claimed that Pyralin mimicked tusk ivory almost exactly, democratizing a substance that was once owned only by the wealthy:

Once upon a time only kings knew the luxury of ivory. Today the caste of ivory fashion still lives, greater than before. It is brought home to more of us, too, by the twentieth-century cousin of those gleaning tusks of old—Ivory Py-ra-lin. Exquisite graining and inexpressible mellowness like that of from some ancient elephant combine with the most charming present day style in Ivory Py-ra-lin. Milady who knows, indeed, will have naught else for her toilet requisites.³⁶⁹

This advertisement draws upon the reputation of ivory as a luxury product previously known only to kings. It suggests that celluloid is a relative of the ‘ancient elephant’ thereby imbuing Ivory Pyralin with the exoticism of far off continents and its people. The final sentence referring to ‘milady’ flatters the imagined female consumer, suggesting that those who own this product are of some ancient lineage which can be traced back to the royalty that were once the sole owners of ivory toilet ware. For middle-class housewives, these inexpensive objects symbolized upward mobility, and allowed them to imagine themselves as lavishly groomed aristocrats. Because celluloid

³⁶⁹ Ivory Py-Ra-Lin, August 1917, DuPont Archive, accession 1803, box 6, fol. 7, Hagley Museum and Library.

was most often produced in imitation of ivory, it also gave women a tangible—if false—connection to empire. At the height of imperial aspirations on both sides of the Atlantic, vanity sets became imitative pieces of empire held in the palm of the hand.

This chapter is an examination of celluloid vanity sets which mimicked the look of ivory. A type of personal grooming accessory kept on the bedroom dresser, vanity sets typically consisted of a comb, brush, and handheld mirror, with dozens of add-ons such as cuticle pushers, glove stretchers, and perfume bottles. What can be uncovered by an analysis of this constellation of goods, used by millions of women in their daily beauty routines from its invention in 1862 through to the inter-war period in England and America? Celluloid vanity sets had cultural resonance for diverse groups of people, including brushmakers, medical doctors, Arts and Crafts theorists and female consumers. For all of these, celluloid took on significant and divergent meanings and became a site for the production and contestation of social identities. Celluloid vanity sets had implications for the ways people viewed themselves as craftsmen, imperial masters and nouveaux riches.

Drawing on company records, government committees, trade journals, medical journals, advertisements, union records, hunting memoirs, and the writings of the Arts and Crafts Movement, this chapter traces the controversial history of celluloid. I argue that celluloid vanity sets reveal responses to colonialism, technological change, and class anxieties. The question of colonialism and the empire is prominent throughout the thesis and continues to be explored in this chapter. It begins with an exploration of the meaning assigned to goods made of ivory during the nineteenth century. Throughout the period, objects made of ivory were important reminders of colonial rule for rich citizens who

never left the metropole. The chapter goes on to discuss the invention of celluloid which by 1883 mimicked the look of ivory, allowing middle-class as well as aristocratic women to feel a connection with the empire. As can be seen in the above example, celluloid marketers drew on the reputation of ivory as an exotic luxury product in order to sell vanity sets. The third section of the chapter demonstrates how the imitative qualities of celluloid ivory sparked concerns within some Victorian circles about the cultural currency of inauthentic objects, and the intentions of the women who owned them. The Arts and Crafts movement, in particular, had a strong aversion to imitation. Natural substances, they believed, could generate an understanding of geology or biology and gave observers a sense of the grandeur of nature. Imitative substances negated this learning process and “falsely claimed a natural or cultural richness they did not possess.”³⁷⁰ One of the oldest societies in Britain, the United Society of Brushmakers, was also made nervous by celluloid because it was taking over more and more of their market as the nineteenth century wore on. The medical community and the British government also weighed in on the debate about celluloid, warning the public about the dangers of a material that shared the same explosive component as gunpowder. The chapter ends with the exploration of an American inter-war advertising campaign focused on Pyralin vanity sets. Here we will make a leap from Britain into America and from the nineteenth century into the twentieth. I do this because the Pyralin vanity set campaign deals with trans-national trends in middle-class identity and material culture. This campaign bring together concerns discussed throughout the chapter that are relevant in Britain and America: the meaning of ivory in a world that would soon favour decolonization, the place of celluloid ivory in an increasingly modernist world that

³⁷⁰Meikle, *American Plastic: A Cultural History* 13.

preferred real to fake, and the position of middle-class women who had carefully constructed a class identity that was dependent on the mass production of luxury goods. Through this advertising campaign I follow celluloid into the ‘new world’ where we can begin to see how the Victorian concept of leisured, white, middle-class womanhood was beginning to crack and a new ideal of womanhood based on consumerism began to emerge.

As this dissertation has shown, the meaning of middle-class women’s accessories was destabilized in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. The widening frame of reference created by engagement with ideas of the other and of empire was largely responsible for this. Ivory accessories were the most destabilized women’s fashionable object of the period under study. Ivory was largely replaced by the chemical imitation—celluloid—that evoked the connotations of empire and luxury at a price more women could afford. Celluloid products were supposed to externalize women’s identity as did gloves, fans and parasols. However, its imitative nature endangered the authenticity of its consumers. DuPont’s advertising campaign addressed this problem by fetishizing its celluloid products, suggesting identity resided in the vanity sets rather than in women. Representing its vanity sets as ladylike and cosmopolitan, DuPont hoped to convince women that purchasing these objects would buy them this identity. Hence at the opening of the twentieth century, Victorian certainties were unsupportable – the age of plastic had arrived.

Ivory and Colonialism

By the end of the nineteenth century it was generally understood that the elephant population was in serious crisis because of the ivory trade.³⁷¹ Between 1800 and 1850 ivory imports into the United Kingdom increased from 119 tons to 458 tons.³⁷² For the following sixty years (1850-1910), Britain imported an average of 500 tons of ivory annually.³⁷³ Between 1885 and 1919 ivory imports into the United States jumped from about 120 tons to 300 tons a year.³⁷⁴ Worldwide consumption of ivory in the later nineteenth century had reached 1,000 tons a year. According to contemporary approximations this meant that 65, 000 elephants were killed annually.³⁷⁵ Around the end of the century the British and American press began to bring this serious matter to the public's attention.³⁷⁶ Despite the subsequent uproar against the slaughter of elephants, wealthy Europeans and Americans continued to covet the material, consuming it as part of a great number of goods such as snuff boxes, umbrella handles and vanity sets.

Ivory had a reputation amongst producers and consumers as a beautiful and useful material. Ivory was seen as beautiful because of its exotic origins, its reputation as a romantic material (sensual and soft to the touch),³⁷⁷ and its resemblance to Caucasian

³⁷¹ R. F. Du Toit and S. N. Stuart and D. H. M Cumming, *African Elephants and Rhinos: Sattus Survey and Conservation Action Plan* (Gland, Switzerland: The Nature Conservation Bureau, 1990) 3.

³⁷² Abdul Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices & Ivory in Zanzibar: Integration of an East African Commercial Empire into the World Economy, 1770-1873* (London: James Currey, 1987) 257-258. See Sheriff also for a table that indicates the amount of tons of ivory imported into the United Kingdom from 1792 to 1875.

³⁷³ Martin Meredith, *Africa's Elephant: A Biography* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2001) 111.

³⁷⁴ Robert Friedel, *Pioneer Plastic: The Making and Selling of Celluloid* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983) 33.

³⁷⁵ Meredith, *Africa's Elephant: A Biography* 112.

³⁷⁶ See for example: Anon, "The Dying Fauna of an Empire," *The Saturday Review. Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, November 24 1906. Anon, "The Supply of Ivory," *The New York Times*, July 7 1867, 3. For other sources citing the inevitable extinction of elephants see: Anon, "Elephants and the Ivory Trade," *The Brush Journal* 11, no. 8 (1896), Anon, "The Ivory Trade," *Journal of the Society of the Arts* 12 (1864). The Wonderful World of Chemistry pamphlet, 1936, DuPont Archive, accession 228, box 37, fol. VC 49 Advertising department, Hagley Museum and Library.

³⁷⁷ Ramesh Bedi, *Elephant: Lord of the Jungle*, trans. J. P. Uniyal (New Delhi: National Book Trust, India, 1969) 91. For information on Ivory as a romantic material see: Meredith, *Africa's Elephant: A Biography* 111.

skin which was important to Victorians who believed a woman's 'ivory white' skin symbolized her class and status.³⁷⁸ The material was coveted by makers of fancy goods because it could be processed in so many ways: it could be sawed, cut, etched, carved, ground or worked on a lathe. Once finished it could be died or painted. Ivory could be either flexible or hard; it could be cut so thinly that it became malleable enough to create riding whips, or it could be left in a mass to be made into objects such as billiard balls.³⁷⁹

There were a growing number of consumer items that were made of ivory in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Until the early nineteenth century most imported ivory was used as cutlery handles. However, between the 1820s and 1840s, the material became popular for piano keys, billiard balls and combs.³⁸⁰ During the second half of the nineteenth century, ivory craft in Europe and America flourished as factories in Aberdeen, Scotland, Sheffield, England, Deep River, USA, Erbach, Germany, and Dieppe, France became famous for carved articles as diverse as bracelets, beads, napkin rings, door knobs, fans and teapot handles.³⁸¹ As ivory began to monopolize a great number of household objects, the increased visibility of the material gave concerned consumers the impression that this precious material would soon disappear. Despite the

³⁷⁸ Meredith, *Africa's Elephant: A Biography* 108.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 107.

³⁸⁰ John M. MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988) 148, Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices & Ivory in Zanzibar: Integration of an East African Commercial Empire into the World Economy, 1770-1873* 87.

³⁸¹ Meredith, *Africa's Elephant: A Biography* 108-110. There was a constant increase in the price of ivory throughout the nineteenth century because of the high demand. Fortunately for the consumer, however, the price of manufactured items remained steady, and sometimes even decreased, as a result of the capitalist competitions and innovations in the industrial process. Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices & Ivory in Zanzibar: Integration of an East African Commercial Empire into the World Economy, 1770-1873* 2, 77.

increased consumption of ivory worldwide, however, demand continued to be met because ivory hunting expanded from Asia into various parts of Africa.³⁸²

As each subcontinent found their elephant populations waning, either because of over-hunting or because the elephant population retreated from the coastal areas, independent (non-government sponsored) hunters, primarily from Britain but also from Europe and America, sought new ground for the hunting and export of ivory. The peak of ivory hunting in India occurred in the 1860s. Scarcity in India led hunters to move to Central Africa. Ivory hunting in Central Africa peaked in the early 1870s. And finally East Africa proved to be the greatest of all sources of ivory in the early 1880s.³⁸³ Until the British South African Company began its systematic invasion of the African subcontinent in 1890, 'great white hunters' from all over the world made their fortune in ivory by traveling from one region to another as elephants became scarce.

Ivory hunting and colonialism were inextricably linked. Though independent hunters who killed big game for profit preceded the European scramble for African colonies that took place after 1872, the work of independent hunters was understood as paving the way for colonialism. Via hunting narratives, written by independent hunters and disseminated throughout Britain, ordinary citizens got the impression that wild animals were obstacles to progress that had to be eliminated before India and Africa could begin the march towards civilization.³⁸⁴ Who better to kill the beasts and usher in

³⁸² Friedel, *Pioneer Plastic: The Making and Selling of Celluloid* 31-32, Meikle, *American Plastic: A Cultural History* 17.

³⁸³ MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism* 124, 148, 183.

³⁸⁴ For examples of such hunting narratives see: T. V. Bulpin, *The Hunter Is Death* (Cape Town: Cape and Transvaal Printers Ltd., 1962), Roualeyn Gordon-Cumming, *Five Years of a Hunter's Life in the Far Interior of South Africa: With Notices of the Native Tribes, and Anecdotes of the Chase of the Lion, Elephant, Hippopotamus, Giraffe, Rhinoceros* (New York: Harper, 1850), Frederick Courteney Selous, *A Hunter's Wanderings in Africa: Being a Narrative of Nine Years Spent Amongst the Game of the Far Interior of Africa, Containing Accounts of Explorations Beyond the Zambesi, on the River Chobe, and in*

civilization than white Westerners? These sentiments were re-enforced by tales of natives seeking out European hunters to help protect their crops and provide meat for their diet. To locals in this early period the white man's ability to shoot large game likened him to a powerful chief who could feed his people in abundance. Historian Harriet Ritvo suggests that these sorts of tales "reinforced the British sense of the fitness of the imperial structure and emphasized the physical and moral superiority of Europeans."³⁸⁵

Ivory hunters and colonialism were linked in other ways as well. Many independent hunters were sought by the British government to become official imperial employees once territories became British colonies. Such was the case for Frederick Lugard who, after making his fortune in ivory, worked for the British East Africa Company; Sir Alfred Sharpe, a famed adventurer, author and big game hunter, who subsequently accepted a position as the governor of Nyasaland; and Robert Coryndon who, after shooting and trading ivory throughout Africa, became the governor of Uganda and Kenya.³⁸⁶ The British government assumed that any man who had the physical rigor to subdue the great beasts of Africa, could also subdue the natives and thereby establish proper colonial rule.

So strong were the links between colonialism and hunting that the act of killing large beasts became a royal symbol of control over India. During a royal visit to India in

the Matabele and Mashuna Countires, with Full Notes Upon the Natural History and Present Distribution of All the Large Mammalia, 4 ed. (London: R. Bentley and Sons, 1895), Robert Briggs Struthers, *Hunting Journal: 1852-1856, in the Zulu Kingdom and the Tsonga Regions* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1991).

³⁸⁵ Harriet Ritvo, "Destroyers and Preservers: Big Game in the Victorian Empire," *History Today* 52, no. 1 (2002): 36.

³⁸⁶ MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism* 127.

1876, Edward Prince of Wales embodied the qualities of a true ruler due to his success in the hunt:

The impression [the hunt] made on people at a distance—an impression of manly vigor and power of endurance which pleased everyone, Europeans and natives alike... proved he possessed Royal qualities of courage, energy and physical power.³⁸⁷

Like the independent hunter who showed himself worthy of being a colonial ruler, Prince Edward ‘proved he possessed Royal qualities,’ via the hunt and therefore the qualities of a king. Significantly, only a year after this symbolic conquering of the Indian subcontinent by Prince Edward, Queen Victoria was crowned Empress of India.

The link between Western prowess and elephant hunting was very strong. The hunt inspired natives to see European hunters as the ultimate African chiefs making them seem capable of subduing an entire continent to white rule. The hunt also made Europeans so aware of the lay of the land that they could transition into positions that would help sustain colonial rule. Finally, the hunt helped to create a symbolic rule over India before royal rule was officially established. All of these were important factors in gaining control over African and Indian territories. There were, thus, strong links between elephant hunting, ivory trading, and imperialism.

In England, ivory and its association with imperial power was presented to the public through various media—international exhibitions, board games, popular novels—giving the substance a special cachet.³⁸⁸ International exhibitions in Europe and America featured the traditional craft of colonial peoples, one of the most popular of which was

³⁸⁷ Quoted in: Philip Magnus, *King Edward the Seventh* (London: William Clowes & Sons Ltd., 1964) 141.

³⁸⁸ For further sources on imperialism and popular culture see: Annie. E. Coombes, *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), John M. Mackenzie, ed., *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), Ruth B. Phillips and Christopher B. Steiner, ed., *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

carved ivory.³⁸⁹ In the Great Exhibition of 1851, the India court featured a live display of Bengali men carving ivory tusks.³⁹⁰ The 1904 St Louis World's Fair had a 'Mysterious Asia' exhibit which had a bazaar that sold crafts made of ivory.³⁹¹ These exhibitions, open to all classes of society, familiarized the general populace with the primary resources of Africa and India.

The interest in ivory extended beyond the grand spectacle of the exhibition and permeated the everyday lives of children and adults of the Western world. Board games, made in Germany and exported worldwide, demonstrate a concerted effort to remind children of the colonial origins of everyday domestic items. These included coffee, cocoa, tea, rubber, and ivory.³⁹² Literate adults were offered a plethora of heroic novels and memoirs about ivory hunters who sought riches and adventure in the exotic regions of the world.³⁹³ All levels of society, be they youths or adults, poor or wealthy, were subject to the idea that ivory was linked with imperialism.

Partly as a result of the associations of ivory with imperial power there was a growing demand in both America and Britain for domestic items made of ivory. Some desired objects were overtly masculine. Consider for example a page from *The Barrett Book of Beautiful Presents* which featured a cigar lighter and corkscrew only slightly altered from their natural state as tusks (figure 4.1).³⁹⁴ Consumer items featured on this

³⁸⁹ For a discussion of the representation of the Indian nation and its people through souvenirs see: Nicky Levell, "Reproducing India: International Exhibitions and Victorian Tourism," in *Souvenirs: The Material Culture of Tourism*, ed. Michael Hitchcock and Ken Teague (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).

³⁹⁰ Jeffrey Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999) 102.

³⁹¹ 1904 World's Fair Society, "1904 St Louis World's Fair, The Pike: Foreign Cultures," 1904 World's Fair Society, <http://ftp.apci.net/~truax/1904wf/Pike%20Foreign%20Cultures.htm>.

³⁹² Jeff Bowersox. Dissertation University of Toronto. forthcoming, "Colonizing the Youth: Exotic Education and Empire in Germany 1871-1914" (University of Toronto, Forthcoming).

³⁹³ MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism* 168, 136, 126.

³⁹⁴ *The Barrett Book of Beautiful Presents Catalogue*, May 1937, John Johnson Collection, Box: Beauty Parlour 4, Bodleian Library, 11.

page had clear associations with masculinity and western superiority, combining the exotic material of ivory with symbols of western progress such as clocks, inkstands, and thermometers. Carving the great beasts of Africa into objects for domestic use was the ultimate symbol of Western power.

Though there were some masculine products made of ivory, most African and Indian ivory was converted into feminine domestic items such as cutlery handles, piano keys, and vanity sets.³⁹⁵ However, highly processed ivory which was made into household objects retained the connections with power, exoticism and colonialism represented by the original material of elephant tusks. Advertisements and trade catalogues that featured feminine articles made of ivory reminded the consumer of the exoticism of ivory by stating their origins. Another page of *Barrett's Book of Beautiful Presents* features a woman's vanity set with a bold reminder of the imperial beginnings of the article: "Fine African Ivory Toilet Sets for Ladies" (figure 4.2).³⁹⁶ The image of an elephant head with a long trunk hanging vertically, ears extended as if ready to charge, valuable large tusks, and blank white eyes further reminds consumers of the great African beast from which their vanity set originated. Furthermore, the head of the elephant appears as if it is a trophy—stuffed and mounted. The rest of its body is absent. Though the elephant's extended ears indicate that it is a threat to humankind, the blank white eyes of the taxidermic specimen indicate the power that the hunter, and ultimately the consumer, holds over these grand exotic beasts. To bring the imagery full circle and solidify the colonial connection of Barrett's vanity sets, a British royal crown appears

³⁹⁵ MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism* 148, Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices & Ivory in Zanzibar: Integration of an East African Commercial Empire into the World Economy, 1770-1873* 87.

³⁹⁶ *The Barrett Book of Beautiful Presents Catalogue*, May 1937, John Johnson Collection, Box: Beauty Parlour 4, Bodleian Library.

above the images of the set and the elephant symbolizing the royal control over African elephants, and British household objects.

Though many objects made of ivory were ubiquitous and mundane, consumers were reminded of their colonial origins via international exhibitions, board games, advertisements and everyday sayings such as ‘tickling the ivories’ when playing the piano. By the later half of the nineteenth century, imperialism had permeated the public imagination to such an extent that any object made of ivory could conjure up ideas of the empire.³⁹⁷ By owning ivory objects, wealthy women, most of whom would never visit any distant part of the empire, implicitly became advocates of Western imperial superiority.

Celluloid and Colonialism

Because of the expense of ivory, women situated lower in the class hierarchy, middle-class women, needed a ‘proxy’ ivory. They became involved in this specific aspect of imperial ownership with the invention of celluloid, the first plastic which was a combination of nitric and sulphuric acid mixed with vegetable oils and camphor. After its invention in 1862, celluloid quickly became an inexpensive way to imitate the look of ivory. Manufacturers and marketers of celluloid celebrated it as a material that would help the average citizen bring this exotic substance into their homes. One such advertisement suggested:

³⁹⁷ For a discussion of the use of imperial imagery to sell domestic products see: Anne McClintock, "Soft-Soaping Empire: Commodity Racism and Imperial Advertising," in *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

Once upon a time only kings knew the luxury of ivory. Today the caste of ivory fashion still lives, greater than before. It is brought home to more of us, too, by the twentieth-century cousin of those gleaming tusks of old—Ivory Py-ra-lin.³⁹⁸

This advertisement drew upon the reputation of ivory as a fashionable luxury good made of elephant tusks. This type of rhetoric helped celluloid establish a connection with empire and allowed owners of the material to imagine themselves as part of the larger imperial structure of the Western world. Even though celluloid was a stand-in for the ‘real thing’ the acquisition of ivory-like substances became a representation of people’s status as citizens of imperial nations.

Celluloid’s connection with ivory dates back to its debut in London at the Great International Exhibition of 1862.³⁹⁹ In a leaflet accompanying the substance’s first appearance, the inventor, Alexander Parks of Birmingham, advertised that celluloid could be “hard as ivory.”⁴⁰⁰ One year later, in 1863, an American, John Wesley Hyatt experimented with versions of Parks’ formula.⁴⁰¹ Hyatt also saw a connection between his substance and ivory. In fact, Hyatt was responding to a challenge put out by the American firm Phelan and Collander who sought a substitute substance for ivory billiard balls. Almost simultaneously in both Britain and America, then, inventors were desperately seeking substitutes for tusk ivory.⁴⁰²

³⁹⁸ Ivory Py-Ra-Lin, August 1917, DuPont Archive, accession 1803, box 6, fol. 7, Hagley Museum and Library.

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⁴⁰⁰ Exhibit, “London Exhibition 1862,” in Spill v. Celluloid Mfg. Co.; this is reprinted in Friedel, *Pioneer Plastic: The Making and Selling of Celluloid* 44.

⁴⁰¹ At the world exhibition of 1862 celluloid received a bronze metal in recognition of quality. Sylvia Katz, *Early Plastics* (Buckingham: Shire Publications Ltd., 1986) 19.

⁴⁰² The early attempts to find an ivory substitute, on the part of Parks and Hyatt, were due to the increasing expense of tusk ivory because of over hunting. In 1862, the year that celluloid made its first public appearance, 556 tons of ivory were imported into the United Kingdom at a cost of 455 pounds per ton. Just over a decade later, in 1875, the amount of ivory imported into the country had increased to 813 tons, but the want of ivory was such that the price per ton had increased to 950 pounds per ton. By the end of the nineteenth century leading trade journals and popular newspapers all over the western world generated a virtual frenzy about the inevitable extinction of the elephant and disappearance of the material that “every

Despite early associations of celluloid with ivory, celluloid only appeared as a yellowy-white mass in the early stages of its development—a far cry from the beauty of the elephant tusk. However, by 1883 celluloid manufacturers developed a technique that imitated ivory graining.⁴⁰³ They achieved this look by stacking sheets of celluloid tinted in varying colours on top of one another and compressing them with heat to create a solid block. This block was then cut across the grain producing an ivory-like effect. Because of the imprecision of this technique, the celluloid graining took on imperfect lines mimicking the irregular grain of ivory. The substance even yellowed with age, just like real ivory. The only indications that celluloid was not real ivory were its expense, costing as little as one shilling per pound,⁴⁰⁴ and its lack of density which made celluloid weigh very little in comparison with ivory.

With ivory graining perfected, celluloid manufacturers in Britain and the United States began to develop ways to solidify the connections between celluloid and ivory. Product names such as ‘Ivorine,’ ‘Ivaleur,’ ‘French Ivory,’ ‘Parisian Ivory,’ ‘Grained Ivory’ and ‘Ivory Pyralin’ helped the consumer imagine that they were purchasing beautiful ivory tusks imported from Africa rather than a synthetic made in London, Toronto or New Jersey. The British Xylonite Company used a trade mark that featured an elephant and a tortoise walking upright arm in arm as if from some children’s tale about anthropomorphic animals (figure 4.3).⁴⁰⁵ This trick (also employed in the earlier example of a catalogue featuring a stuffed elephant head) diminished the elephant,

civilized country needs.” Anon, “The Supply of Ivory,” 3. Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices & Ivory in Zanzibar: Integration of an East African Commercial Empire into the World Economy, 1770-1873* 257-258.

⁴⁰³ Lauer, *Celluloid: Collector's Reference and Value Guide* 265.

⁴⁰⁴ Friedel, *Pioneer Plastic: The Making and Selling of Celluloid* 10.

⁴⁰⁵ Trade mark image of the British Xylonite Company British Xylonite Co., *Catalogue of Articles Manufactured from Xylonite and Other Plastics* (Hasell: Watson and Viney Ltd., 1936).

making it non-threatening: an obvious symbol of western control. The symbolic subjugation of this great African beast, as either a trophy or a harmless character from a children's book, was a first step in making their tusks into women's accessories. The elephant, and by extension the countries which they inhabited, had been conquered by the western hunter and subjugated to such an extent that elephant tusks were reduced to women's accessories.

In America a similar process of equating ivory and celluloid was underway. In 1919 *DuPont Magazine* published an article that suggested that tusk ivory had been totally replaced by its chemical substitute: Ivory Pyralin:

Many a swain of bygone centuries has risked life and limb to secure an ivory tusk from which to fashion a comb for the lady of his heart;... and many a doughty sea captain has risked his vessel in storm and gale in order to fetch from distant lands a cargo of precious ivory to be made into combs...The genuine ivory comb of centuries ago is no more, but in its place, today, upon the dressing table of the modern woman of refinement, rests its exact replica—a comb that reproduces to a nicety that beauty of color, the grain and the daintiness for which ivory is noted. The resources of science and the skill of man have overcome nature's parsimony in the production of ivory by bringing into being an exquisite "sister product" – Ivory Py-ra-lin.⁴⁰⁶

Here the mighty elephant, having been driven into extinction by western hunters, has been replaced by a scientific concoction. The West has outdistanced foreign lands so thoroughly that it has found a way to reproduce imperial spoils without even leaving home soil.

Domestic objects made out of ivory were part of the propaganda responsible for imperialism's successful hold on the public imagination; however, ivory itself was too expensive and rare to be a common feature in poor and rich houses alike. The invention of celluloid was the key to producing imitation ivory products on a mass scale. In 1883,

⁴⁰⁶ Anon, "The Career of the Comb," *DuPont Magazine*, August 1919, 10-11.

when it was found that celluloid could imitate the grain of tusks, objects in the likeness of ivory became available to a wider audience.⁴⁰⁷ Statistics from the United States in 1913 reveal that roughly 8.4 million pounds of celluloid was produced in the United States.⁴⁰⁸ Two years previously about 550, 000 pounds of ivory was imported into America.⁴⁰⁹ In other words, roughly sixteen times more celluloid-ivory was produced than tusk-ivory imported into the United States by the 1910s. On top of this increasing availability of celluloid, it is important to remember that celluloid was much less expensive than ivory; celluloid could be made for less than a third of the cost of hunting and shipping ivory, per pound.⁴¹⁰ In 1913 the standard price for celluloid ivory was 75 cents.⁴¹¹ In contrast in 1912 ivory cost roughly \$4.50 per pound on the New York market.⁴¹² A great proportion of the ivory-like items on the market by the turn of the century were made of celluloid. It stands to reason that more people were familiar with celluloid ivory than with tusk ivory.

Prejudices Against Celluloid

The fact that celluloid was a broadly used imitation of ivory created anxieties at various levels of society. Though overall, the nineteenth-century culture was delighted and fascinated by imitations, there were some segments of society that were made nervous by the possibilities of inauthentic objects and were concerned that celluloid was a dangerous substance. This section explores the overall perception of celluloid in the nineteenth century in both Britain and America. We will look at concerns expressed by

⁴⁰⁷ Lauer, *Celluloid: Collector's Reference and Value Guide* 265.

⁴⁰⁸ Meikle, *American Plastic: A Cultural History* 17.

⁴⁰⁹ Friedel, *Pioneer Plastic: The Making and Selling of Celluloid* 33.

⁴¹⁰ Meikle, *American Plastic: A Cultural History* 17. In 1912 there were 504, 421 total (dollars) pounds of ivory made by British Xylonite.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁴¹² Friedel, *Pioneer Plastic: The Making and Selling of Celluloid* 32.

the Arts and Crafts movements on both sides of the Atlantic about imitative objects, the British brushmakers' distress over losing their craft to factory-made celluloid, the British medical community's fear that celluloid was a flammable and explosive substance, and the British government's reaction to the public's apprehensions surrounding celluloid which resulted in a select committee on the subject.

In the nineteenth century the middle-class in both Britain and America found delight in inexpensive items that could mimic luxury objects. However, by the turn of the century these imitative items were increasingly rejected as inauthentic and cheap. American Studies scholar Miles Orvell shows that the nineteenth century was a 'culture of imitation.' Before the turn of the century, Orvell suggests, the art of imitation and allusion were celebrated.⁴¹³ This was the case in Britain as well where cast iron was commonly used on building faces to create the texture and outline of stone, papier-mâché was placed upon chairs to mimic intricately carved wood, and new chemical inventions called celluloid were made to imitate the look of ivory. On both sides of the Atlantic, then, these reproductions were understood as democratizing agents that allowed the general populace to enjoy the rare and expensive luxuries that in previous centuries had been available only to the wealthy.⁴¹⁴ In the nineteenth century middle-class men and women found it inspiring that machine manufactured items could mimic natural materials. Jeffrey Meikel suggests that "far from indicating shoddiness or dishonesty, imitation in the nineteenth century expressed a brash exuberance and offered provocative evidence of the extension of human artifice through new technologies."⁴¹⁵

⁴¹³Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940* (Chapel Hill; London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989) xv.

⁴¹⁴ Meikle, *American Plastic: A Cultural History* 14.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.* 12.

It was partly in reaction to the middle-class insistence that imitation was a positive development that the Arts and Crafts movement emerged. The Arts and Crafts movement represented a small but influential element in the middle and upper classes that feared the overabundance of factory-made imitative goods such as celluloid ivory. Beginning early in the Victorian period in Britain, the movement consisted of a number of privileged and educated male architects, theorists, designers and craftsmen who sought to integrate art and life.⁴¹⁶ They valued an “‘organic’ correspondence between design, materials, work process and use.”⁴¹⁷ For the craftsman/artist this meant the reintegration of the physical and mental labour that it took to create an object.⁴¹⁸ Theorists believed that this reintegration made the craftsman’s work pleasurable and this helped them to create beautiful, well thought out and well crafted pieces.⁴¹⁹ The joy of craftsmanship represented in the object would then be felt by the consumer. Modern production practices, usually centered on the factory, separated the designer from the craftsman, creating a division of labour which alienated workers from the objects they made. Products that resulted from the factory system were thought by the movement to be cheap, fake and shoddy because care of workmanship was not part of the process of creation.⁴²⁰

The British movement had a socialist agenda. English Arts and Craft founders believed that in supporting the work of designer/craftsmen they could challenge the

⁴¹⁶ Elizabeth Cummin and Wendy Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991) 9.

⁴¹⁷ Eileen Boris, *Art and Labor: Ruskin, Morris and the Craftsman Ideal in America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986) 14.

⁴¹⁸ Wendy Kaplan, “*The Art That Is Life*”: *The Arts and Crafts Movement in America, 1875-1920* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1987) viii.

⁴¹⁹ Boris, *Art and Labor: Ruskin, Morris and the Craftsman Ideal in America* 29.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*

existing factory system.⁴²¹ To this end architects, designers and craftsmen including C. R. Ashbee and Eric Gill went to the country to establish small working communities which integrated work, home and schooling. Along the same lines John Ruskin founded the Guild of St George which was based his idea of the Middle Ages in which work and life were fully integrated. And William Morris established the business Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co which integrated the work of painters, carvers, furniture makers, and metal workers into a single firm.⁴²² It was perhaps due to the company's overwhelming success that Morris realized it was impossible to reach his ideal of hand-crafted art for the masses. Morris later lamented that his products were too expensive to be bought by anyone but the very rich, leading him to ask "what business have we with art at all, unless all can share it?"⁴²³ Although the British Arts and Crafts movement was supposed to create beautiful art for all classes and to help craftsmen and designers leave the factory system and find joy in creating an entire piece from inception to completion, the cost of such a system of labour made the products unobtainable to anyone but the wealthy. Here again we return to the pre-nineteenth century problem of luxury goods being available only to the rich, the factory system, and the use of imitative processes were the only way to democratize objects of beauty.

In order to understand the trans-nationality of celluloid it is important to preface the discussion of the U.S. advertising campaign for pyralin with an exploration of the Arts and Crafts movement in America. The Arts and Crafts movement was established in America about 40 years after its inception in Britain. By 1875 America had begun to experience some of the social circumstances that British Arts and Crafts theorists were

⁴²¹ Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* 13-18.

⁴²² *Ibid.* 17.

⁴²³ Quoted by Kaplan, "*The Art That Is Life*": *The Arts and Crafts Movement in America, 1875-1920* 55.

working to subdue in their own country. The 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, for example, created a sense of American industrial productivity, its creativity, and its progressiveness. Also in the late nineteenth century many Americans moved from rural to urban settings. This precipitated factory production which incorporated divisions of labour and allowed for the production of inexpensive consumer goods in large quantities.⁴²⁴

As Americans established their Arts and Crafts movement in reaction to these new social developments, there was a healthy exchange between theorists/craftsmen in England and in the United States.⁴²⁵ Arts and Crafts books written by English authors were widely read in America (Ruskin and Morris being among the most popular). There was also a fair amount of exchange of goods and advice between the two countries. Though Morris never made the voyage to America, he fabricated wall coverings for American clientele; his daughter, May, went on a lecture tour in America disseminating some of her father's ideas; and Morris' work was given much attention in American periodicals. Another important point of exchange was established by Ashbee who stirred American Arts and Crafts societies with frequent lecture tours between 1895 and 1915, and whose ideas about rural workshops inspired the establishment of the Handicraft Shop of the Boston Society of Arts and Crafts. Ruskin was also indirectly involved in the American movement through his 45 year friendship with Charles Eliot Norton, Harvard's first professor of the fine arts. Norton became an influential taste-maker in the United States, promoting the ideals of art and life to Americans. Though many of the arts and

⁴²⁴ Ibid. viii.

⁴²⁵ Ibid. 55-57.

crafts ideas were imparted from Britain to the United States, the American movement had a flavor all its own.

Despite the Anglo-American exchange, some of the British Arts and Crafts ideals were not transferred into the American context. For example where socialism was an important factor in the British context, it was only a minor thread in the American milieu, rarely traveling outside of lectures and classes, and never playing a central role in the American socialist program.⁴²⁶ Along the same lines, though the American movement started out with a strong aversion to machines, some practitioners, such as Ernest Batchelder, saw machines as a blessing, arguing that they represented a way to alleviate the drudgery of repetitive work and the social abomination of sweatshops.⁴²⁷ By 1914 as the Arts and Crafts Movement began to wane in America, so did their original position on machine production. The emerging profession of industrial design favored the use of machinery but kept the Arts and Crafts ideal of bringing beauty into daily life.⁴²⁸ This was a central point around which the British and American movement differed; while the British were tied to the idea of reforming the social aspects of craftsmanship, the American movement believed more strongly in the democratization of luxury, even if it meant relying on factory production.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁶ Boris, *Art and Labor: Ruskin, Morris and the Craftsman Ideal in America* 28.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.* 29.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.* 28.

⁴²⁹ The American Arts and Crafts movement differed from the British movement in other ways as well. The Colonial Revival which favored American styles from the period before 1840 was an important aspect of the movement in the United States that did not exist in Britain. Nostalgia for the past led craftsmen in Deerfield Massachusetts, for example, to establish a society that specialized in eighteenth-century embroidery, in New England woodworkers made trestle tables, Windsor chairs and Hadley chests in seventeenth and eighteenth century styles, and in Boston silversmith's created serving dishes reminiscent of pre-1840 American designs. Native American crafts and designs were another aspect of the Arts and Crafts movement that was particular to the United States. The movement romanticized the Native way of life and prized its blankets, baskets, and pottery, sometimes incorporating its geometric designs into Arts and Crafts pieces. And finally, the American movement tried to preserve immigrant crafts by encouraging women to practice the embroidery and lace making that was particular to their native countries. The revival of

An important element of the Arts and Crafts theory that was prominent in both Britain and America was the idea that the craftsman should be true to whatever material was being used. Morris suggested that within the decorative arts all materials should take on a look that was specifically their own:

Try to get the most out of your material, but always in such a way as honours it most. Not only should it be obvious what your material is, but something should be done with it which is specially natural to it, something that could not be done with any other. This is the very *raison d'être* of decorative art: to make stone look like ironwork, or wood like silk, or pottery like stone is the last resource of the decrepitude of art.⁴³⁰

As we have seen, the Victorian culture in which Morris lived delighted in imitation. Morris and his fellow theorists believed that techniques of imitation represented 'the decrepitude of art'. Morris' message about the mimicry of natural substances was clear: it was false and dishonest, a thing to be avoided.

The Arts and Crafts strong stance against imitation came from the idea that every substance had a history that could be used as an educational tool.⁴³¹ Natural substances, they believed, could generate an understanding of geology or biology and give observers a sense of the grandeur of nature. Imitative substances negated this learning process and "falsely claimed a natural or cultural richness they did not possess"⁴³² To allow an inauthentic item into a culture, then, could potentially affect the wisdom and understanding of its citizens.

colonial styles, the integration of Native craft, and the preservation of immigrant styles were all aspects of the Arts and Crafts movement that were particular to the United States. The reason why the movement took these particular forms and appealed to Americans so strongly was that the movement helped to define American national identity at a critical juncture in American history. After the civil war Americans were desperate to redefine their place in the world and their understandings of themselves as a nation. Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* 150-154.

⁴³⁰ William Morris, "Art and the Beauty of the Earth," in *The Collected Works of William Morris* (London: Longmans Green, 1914), 169.

⁴³¹ John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, 3 vols., vol. 3 (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1880) 28-29.

⁴³² Meikle, *American Plastic: A Cultural History* 13.

In term of celluloid this argument had profound consequences. While manufacturers of faux-ivory drew on the cultural meaning of real tusk ivory in order to promote their products as imperial spoils, the Arts and Crafts movement disagreed with this assessment, arguing that only ‘the real thing’ could give consumers a true sense of its origins in the empire. In other words, it was the imitative aspect of celluloid that prevented the substance from giving owners an impression of the history and biology of the elephant. In the eyes of Arts and Crafts theorists, imitative substances such as celluloid had the potential of separating people from their sense of what was real, and this, in turn, had a negative effect on the intelligence of anyone who owned or even observed imitative copies such as faux-ivory.

In an attempt to educate consumers about the values of ‘the real thing,’ the Arts and Crafts movement encouraged craftsmen who worked with their ideals to take a stand against imitation. This stance caused problems in terms of the movement’s wider mandate of providing beauty through art to the masses. Especially in Britain, but also in pre-1910 America, the movement was concerned that machine-made imitative products would take over the market becoming, “so common and so cheap that a refined taste, sick of the vulgarity of the imitation, cares little even for the reality.”⁴³³ The movement feared that imitation was becoming so common that no one would be able to (or bother to) tell the real from the fake; the simulacrum would then become truth in its own right.⁴³⁴

Along the same lines founding Arts and Crafts member, A.W.N. Pugin, explains that cheap factory imitations were undesirable because they “assume a semblance of

⁴³³Mary E. Turner, "Of Modern Embroidery," in *Arts and Crafts Essays by Members of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society* (London; Bombay: Longmans Green and Co., 1903), 362.

⁴³⁴Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

decoration far beyond either their means or their station.”⁴³⁵ In this quote the privileged middle-class origins of the movement’s founders becomes apparent. As we have seen throughout this thesis the wealthy classes were concerned about people imitating the rich and thereby being mistaken as such. This drove the wealthy to yearn for simpler times when objects were hand made, and therefore too expensive for even the middling sorts to attain. This situation allowed citizens to know the social standing of those around them based simply on appearances. In etiquette books, arts and crafts manuals and other didactic literature the appearance of a person (or object) was thought to reflect their true station (or form). Within this type of understanding an imitative object was owned by a person who was putting on airs; just as their object was an imitation, so they were imitations themselves. However, the fear was that imitation was becoming so common that the general populace could not differentiate the real (person or object) from the fake.

There is a strong contradiction here with the overall mandate of the Arts and Crafts movement. The movement sought to create joy through hand-made art for all classes of society; but in fact they were fighting a losing battle. The movement was so concerned with creating handcrafted works of art that the cost of the objects made them unattainable to the general populace. Those who bought true Arts and Crafts products were the rich; others had to settle for imitations.

The Arts and Crafts movement took a stand against imitative objects in general. They were against factory made goods because they represented the alienation of the worker and created inexpensive, shoddy products which were often imitations of luxury objects. The movement called for a return to an old craft system of small workshops

⁴³⁵ A.W. N. Pugin, *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture: Set Forth in Two Lectures Delivered at St. Marie's, Oscott* London: Butler and Tanner Ltd., 1969 [1841].

which allowed designer/craftsmen to work on an object from inception to completion. They encouraged craftsmen working under their charge to be true to the material they worked with so that all observers could see the history of the material and become informed citizens simply by surveying the object. These changes to the system of manufacture, and the materials being worked with, were supposed to alter the structure of society for the better, allowing all social classes to benefit from the integration of art and life.

The Arts and Crafts movement's concern about imitative products, such as celluloid, offers a theoretical and often impractical solution to the onslaught of consumerism. However, this is not to say that some of their ideals were not shared by others. Traditional brushmakers, for example, who typically worked with bone and wood, were concerned about the onslaught of factories that made inexpensive brushes in high quantities which would eventually make their craft system obsolete. Celluloid was also actively attacked in Britain by the medical establishment which had concerns about the substance's inflammable and explosive tendencies, and the British government which considered implementing regulations that marked celluloid as an imitative substance. Here the fear of celluloid, though still partially motivated by questions of authenticity, was provoked by the problems of craftsmen losing their employment and the effects of this explosive material upon the consuming public.

In many ways brushmakers were the epitome of what the Arts and Crafts movement was attempting to preserve. Brushmakers were independent craftsmen, working in small workshops that understood and participated in all aspects of brush manufacture. Furthermore, brushmakers were protected by a society that provided for

their social welfare—a system that Arts and Crafts socialists wanted to establish for the society as a whole.

Brushmaking was one of the few crafts that continued to thrive at the end of the nineteenth century. In fact by 1895 the brushmaking trade of England and Wales included 16,000 craftsmen. Of these about 2,500 worked with bone, horn, ivory and tortoiseshell and were likely to produce hairbrushes and clothing brushes appropriate for vanity sets. The reason why the brushmaking craft was so well preserved was that it had a strong society. As early as the 1700s brushmakers began to form societies to establish regulations and protect their craft system. By 1810 the independent brushmaker societies that had been formed up to that point joined together to create the United Society of Brushmakers which successfully regulated their structure of apprentice, journeyman and master craftsmen throughout the nineteenth century.

The United Society of Brushmakers specified that a brushmaker's career would begin with a seven year apprenticeship with a master brushmaker.⁴³⁶ During this time the apprentice learned how to make every type of brush. This included items as simple as brooms and as complex as carved ivory hairbrushes. The typical brushmaker produced many different types of brushes in their workshop; in 1888, for instance, one brushmaker had nearly 5000 kinds of brushes in his price list.⁴³⁷ Before becoming a journeyman, apprentices learned how to work wood, separate and dress bristles, bore holes in the brush stock, and fasten bristles through various techniques such as wire drawing and pan

⁴³⁶ Thomas Elliott John K. Boyd, Joseph Willis and A. J. Cockburn, *United Society of Brushmakers*, 43 *Stanhope Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne* (Newcastle-on-Tyne: United Society of Brushmakers, 1894), British Library, Collection of Leaflets etc., 4, United Society of Brush Makers, *General Trade Rules of the United Society of Brush Makers* (London: F. W. Worthy, Trade Union Printer, 1894), British Library, Collection of Leaflets etc., 4.

⁴³⁷ M.G. Jones, *The Story of Brushmaking a Norfolk Craft* (Norwich: Briton Chadwick Limited, 1974) 4.

searing.⁴³⁸ After their apprenticeship, brushmakers who proved to the society that they were well trained, began paying society dues, and became journeymen. As a journeyman the brushmaker would seek work with masters who complied with society standards.⁴³⁹ The long-term training of apprentices, which included instruction in every aspect of brushmaking, was a perfect example of the Arts and Crafts ideal of incorporating design and work process. The United Society of Brushmakers also complied with Arts and Crafts ideals in terms of social welfare.

The system that the society set up was essentially socialist, providing for the brushmakers at times of low employment, sickness and retirement benefits. When work was scarce journeymen might travel between 20 and 30 miles a day to find work. They tramped a route including towns in both England and Wales.⁴⁴⁰ If the journeyman brushmaker tramped the entire route without finding work he became known as a 'receiver' and would be given 10 shillings a week from his home society. Brushmakers could also receive sick pay, pension benefits and grants to help them emigrate.⁴⁴¹ Some journeymen eventually became master brushmakers. These men continued to pay a nominal fee to the society in case they returned to the bench as a journeyman.⁴⁴² This system of labour was an effective way of ensuring the social welfare of brushmakers and

⁴³⁸ Ibid. 10-12, Michael R. Snow, *Brushmaking: Craft and Industry* (Oxford: Oxford Polytechnic Press, 1984) 67.

⁴³⁹ Brushmakers, *List of Fair Employers*, Kiddier, *The Brushmaker and the Secrets of His Craft: His Romance* 66-67, Makers, *General Trade Rules of the United Society of Brush Makers* 4. According to the rules of the United Society of Brushmakers, master brushmakers would be allowed only one apprentice. A second apprentice could only be taken on if the brushmaker had employed three journeymen for at least a year. Master brushmakers could not employ their wives or other female family members as to draw the bristles through the brush. Master brushmakers would be removed from the tramping list if they did not follow union rules.

⁴⁴⁰ Snow, *Brushmaking: Craft and Industry* 19.

⁴⁴¹ Kiddier, *The Brushmaker and the Secrets of His Craft: His Romance* 115-117, Snow, *Brushmaking: Craft and Industry* 19.

⁴⁴² Makers, *General Trade Rules of the United Society of Brush Makers* 8.

helped propagate a way of integrating life and work envisioned by Arts and Crafts theorists. However, just as Arts and Crafts theorists found that their products were unobtainable in comparison to factory made goods of similar appearance, so the brushmakers found that factory-made celluloid brushes were taking over their market.

The British celluloid business was slow to start. Though the first British company, Parkesine Company Limited, was set up as early as 1866,⁴⁴³ it went through two bankruptcies within its first ten years. Finally the Xylonite Company (later the British Xylonite Company Ltd.) was established in 1877.⁴⁴⁴ This last company was able to remain buoyant, however, it was not until World War I that the British Xylonite Company became a resounding success.⁴⁴⁵ Despite its slow start, celluloid brushmaking was underway as early as 1866. After 1877, the Xylonite Company entered the brushmaking trade in force when they established a Comb Department which produced vanity sets *en masse*.⁴⁴⁶ These developments made traditional brushmakers nervous. They did not want their craft system to be overrun by a deluge of factory-made celluloid brushes.

⁴⁴³ S. T. I. Mossman, "Parkesine and Celluloid," in *The Development of Plastics*, ed. S. T. I. Mossman and P. J. T. Morris (Cambridge: The Royal Society of Chemistry, 1994), 12.

⁴⁴⁴ Keith Lauer, and Julie Robinson., *Celluloid: Collector's Reference and Value Guide* (Paducah: Collector Books, 1999) 16.

⁴⁴⁵ Peter C. Ashlee, "Tusks and Tortoiseshell: The Early Development of the British Plastics Industry with Special Reference to the British Xylonite Company 1877-1920" (BA degree, University of Nottingham, 1982) 67-68, 102. *Catalogue of Articles Manufactured from Xylonite and Other Plastics by the British Xylonite Company Limited*. (Hasell: Watson and Viney Ltd., 1936), Science Museum and Library, Bakelite Xylonite Ltd. collection, 1. War encouraged a new range of markets for the Xylonite Company and expanded old markets. During the course of the war the Company provided eye pieces for gas masks, machine gun backsight plates, battery cases, aircraft camera plate holders, aircraft speed-gauge dials and aircraft bomb fuse holders. There were also large increases in the demand for the company's more traditional products; every soldier was issued, for example, a comb, toothbrush and hairbrush by the ministry of war, all made of Xylonite. During World War I the value of the British Xylonite Company doubled, the material became a household name, and the company developed subsidiary businesses in America, Canada and Australia, Germany, and Austria.

⁴⁴⁶ Exhibit, "London Exhibition 1862," in *Spill v. Celluloid Mfg. Co.*; this is reprinted in Friedel, *Pioneer Plastic: The Making and Selling of Celluloid* 44. Ashlee, "Tusks and Tortoiseshell: The Early Development of the British Plastics Industry with Special Reference to the British Xylonite Company 1877-1920" 63.

Once celluloid began to make inroads into the brushmaking business, traditional brushmakers began to fuel the prejudice against celluloid. There is some evidence that brushmakers were resistant to new technology in general, but this aversion became very obvious when it came to celluloid brush manufacturing.⁴⁴⁷ By the later 1880s *The Brush Journal*, whose audience was tradesmen and the general public, was engaged in an anti-celluloid campaign. On the grounds that celluloid was a dangerous substance brushmakers pleaded with the public not to use celluloid hair combs or toilet ware: “We are strongly of the opinion that such inflammable substances as celluloid are utterly unsuitable either for ornamental or useful purposes on the person, since they expose the wearer to such serious risks.”⁴⁴⁸ Though the journal shows concern for public safety, their ultimate goal was to protect their own interests. Brushmakers urged consumers to revisit traditional materials: “a return to the employment of the good old-fashioned substances, such as horn and other non-inflammable materials, in the manufacture of these articles intended for the toilette.”⁴⁴⁹ Going back to ‘good old-fashioned substances’ would also create a return to the craft system established and maintained by the Brushmakers’ Union. The prejudice against celluloid in England was backed not only by the brushmaking trade via *The Brush Journal*, but also by the medical community.

⁴⁴⁷ By the 1860s the brush trade was beginning to become mechanized. Between 1869 and 1871 two young Americans, J. Sheldon and E. F. Bradley, designed and patented a revolutionary machine for making solid-back brushes which included a boring and filling function. They found it difficult to sell their machine in Britain perhaps because the brushmaking craft at this time was made up of small workshops that could not accommodate larger machinery or perhaps the brushmakers themselves were resistant because such machines would reduce the amount of jobs in the craft or both. The anonymous author of the article “Brushmaking by Machinery” claimed that in the 1890s the British brushmaking trade was being overshadowed by its foreign competitors that had converted to machinery. The author calls on brushmakers to invent new ways of pursuing their craft: “It is high time that those who are chiefly interested in maintaining our manufacturing supremacy should turn their attention to devising the means by which it may be most efficiently maintained.” An aversion to machinery may have further prejudiced traditional brushmakers against celluloid. Anon, “Brush-Making by Machinery,” *The Brush Journal* 1, no. 11 (1896): 163.

⁴⁴⁸ Anon, “Celluloid Combs and Their Dangers,” *The Brush Journal* IV, no. 1 (1898): 1-2.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

Articles warning of the dangers of celluloid appeared in both the *Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal*. As early as 1892, the *Lancet* experimented with celluloid to determine its rate of combustion when exposed to heat.⁴⁵⁰ At this time an article was published that warned the public against buying this dangerous substance.⁴⁵¹ However, five years later the medical community found that these warnings had not been taken seriously. The *British Medical Journal* reported an incident where a hair comb ignited, causing a young girl to be badly burned, “the face, and eyes sharing in the injury.”⁴⁵² This led to further research by the medical experts at both journals. In 1898 the *Lancet* ran experiments in which they exposed celluloid hair combs to hot curling tongs. They found that celluloid items were “highly inflammable” and pleaded with manufactures to indicate this on their products, especially those which otherwise would be considered natural substances like ivory.⁴⁵³ The *British Medical Journal* went even further in its assessment of celluloid, claiming that it was not only inflammable but had the potential to explode spontaneously:

Very little is sufficient to cause them to burn with explosive violence; thus in the case of gun cotton, confinement with a canvas bag is sufficient for the purpose. It would therefore seem to be possible for a comb closely confined as it is in the hair to explode without any apparent cause.⁴⁵⁴

Here the journal made it known that celluloid shared the same basic compounds as gun cotton, a well known explosive. From this the author drew the conclusion that celluloid

⁴⁵⁰ Anon, "Experiments with Celluloid," *Lancet* 1 (1892): 708-709.

⁴⁵¹ Anon, "Inflammable Hair Combs: A Grave Danger," *Lancet* 1 (1898): 661.

⁴⁵² Anon, "Explosive Combs," *British Medical Journal* (1897): 1741.

⁴⁵³ Anon, "Inflammable Hair Combs: A Grave Danger," 661.

⁴⁵⁴ Anon, "Explosive Combs," 1741.

may “explode without any apparent cause.”⁴⁵⁵ These claims were conjecture and largely unfounded but they helped, nonetheless, to fuel the prejudice against celluloid.

By 1913 British concerns about celluloid proved to be so great that the government approved a committee on celluloid. This Celluloid Committee found that there were special risks involved in using celluloid combs in hair: hair protects the head from feeling the true heat of gas stoves and fireplaces—such heat was known to cause celluloid hair-combs to ignite without warning. The Committee discussed the necessity of marking celluloid items as such, so that the public would not mistake the substance for ivory, or tortoiseshell. In the end, however, the Committee was convinced that “the inflammable nature of celluloid is ... generally understood by the purchasing public.”⁴⁵⁶ This allowed celluloid manufacturing in Britain to continue unabated. However, it is important to note that the very existence of the Celluloid Committee demonstrates the public’s uncertainty about this new technology.

Celluloid was indeed a controversial substance. Some, like the Arts and Crafts movement, objected to it because of its potential to imitate authentic substances such as ivory. Others, like the United Society of Brushmakers, wanted to do away with the substance because it represented a move away from traditional craft systems which generated one of a kind objects towards mass-produced factory-made items. Still others, like the medical community and the British government, saw celluloid as a risk to public health, because of its potential to ignite at any moment injuring its unsuspecting owners.

⁴⁵⁵ My own experience with celluloid is that while it is an unstable product it is not explosive. When left in the sun, or in confined spaces celluloid sometimes sweats and melts taking on the form of objects that are laid upon it. Celluloid also acquires sun spots of a darker colour than the original light coloured ivory. It is easily melted with a hot pin, but does not ignite when in contact with heat. Hagley Museum and The Museum of London (Ontario) which have extensive celluloid collections store pieces in confined spaces but this has not led to explosions.

⁴⁵⁶ Committee, *Report of the Departmental Committee on Celluloid Presented Both House of Parliament by Command of His Majesty* 6.

All of these prejudices—the fear of imitation, the anxiety surrounding new systems of manufacture, the uncertainty surrounding objects that had the same basic components as explosives—created a prejudice about celluloid that marketers and advertisers of celluloid vanity sets had to work hard against.

The Culture of Authenticity and the Problem of Advertising Ivory Celluloid

In this chapter thus far we have observed the ways in which ivory was tied up with ideas of the empire, how celluloid inventors and marketers used these connections to create a cachet for the material, and how Arts and Crafts theorists, brushmakers, doctors and the British government were uncomfortable with celluloid's imitative qualities and its potential to explode. All of these issues—the connection of celluloid ivory with imperialism, the fear of the inauthentic item being mistaken for authentic, and the anxieties over the dangers of celluloid—had to be contended with by the marketers of celluloid.

The final section of this paper will begin with a look at nineteenth-century advertising techniques for celluloid in both Britain and America which consisted mainly of trade exhibitions and mail catalogues. We will then observe how World War I created a major boost for both British and American celluloid company sales. In America this was particularly true for the DuPont de Nemours Company which supplied ammunition to the Allies. After the war, DuPont expanded their celluloid marketing by targeting the consumer directly, launching a campaign that lasted from 1920-1928 to sell Ivory-Pyralin vanity sets. This campaign contended with the issues of authenticity, middle-class buying patterns, and the desires and expectations of consumers. Marketers attempted to

answer the questions like: What meaning do women derive from their vanity sets? Can celluloid ivory be thought of as genuine? How can the hopes and dreams of consumers be used to sell celluloid toilet ware? Can understandings of the true Victorian lady be harnessed to sell brushes and combs?

During the nineteenth century, advertising for celluloid vanity sets in both Britain and America was limited. The only public advertising done by the British Xylonite Company was at international exhibitions and smaller trade shows. While scholars often see these public gatherings as spectacles of luxury which helped to form certain conceptions of nation, race, and modernity, expositions were also an important aspect of Victorian and early twentieth-century commercial culture.⁴⁵⁷ Fairs were marketplaces in which new products competed for prizes, found financial backing and sought out wholesalers. As a consumer product, celluloid was wholly dependent on trade shows and international exhibits for its entrée into the market, financial backing and marketing. Celluloid made its debut, as mentioned, in London at the Great International Exhibition of 1862. There it received a bronze medal in recognition of its quality.⁴⁵⁸ The new invention caught the eye of a vendor named Daniel Spill who worked for a company that had manufactured rubberized cloth.⁴⁵⁹ Together, Spill and the inventor, Alexander Parkes, began Parkesine Company Limited in 1866.⁴⁶⁰ Once celluloid was established as a maker of vanity sets they rented display stands at trade exhibitions and displayed

⁴⁵⁷ Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851 : A Nation on Display*.

⁴⁵⁸ Katz, *Early Plastics* 19.

⁴⁵⁹ Celluloid's apparent flexibility and ability to withstand water caught the attention of Daniel Spill who was looking for a new substance for rain-proofing the company's fabric. Spill was intrigued by Parkesine, believing that it would make an excellent substitute for rubber which gave off a noxious smell.

⁴⁶⁰ Mossman, "Parkesine and Celluloid," 12.

catalogues with images, descriptions, prices and ordering information for retailers.⁴⁶¹

While the public was exposed to celluloid via international exhibitions their primary knowledge of the product came from mail-order catalogues sent out by larger retailers such as department stores.

In America, vanity set marketing started out in much the same way as in Britain: trade catalogues were used to sell toilet ware to retailers leaving advertising to the larger firms. Then in 1920 E. I. DuPont de Nemours and Company began a national advertising campaign that appeared in women's magazines such *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *Vanity Fair*, reaching a total readership of eight million.⁴⁶² What was so new about DuPont's campaign was that it addressed the consumer directly, rather than relying on intermediaries such as mail-order catalogues or chance introductions at international exhibits.

The British Xylonite Company did not engage in a national advertising campaign after World War I. The differing financial circumstances, and the existence of a wartime profits tax in America can help to explain why DuPont engaged in national advertising and Xylonite did not. Both companies profited from the war; however, while Xylonite had a boost in its sales because of the British government's commission of celluloid items such as combs and shaving equipment, DuPont made a fortune because of its involvement in explosives.⁴⁶³ After the war, Xylonite was finally in the clear financially,

⁴⁶¹ Ashlee, "Tusks and Tortoiseshell: The Early Development of the British Plastics Industry with Special Reference to the British Xylonite Company 1877-1920" 65.

⁴⁶² *Catalog of Dealer Advertisements and Electrotypes* (Wilmington, Del.: E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Company, Pyralin Division, 1921), TC-HML.

⁴⁶³ Peter C. Ashlee, "Tusks and Tortoiseshell: The Early Development of the British Plastics Industry with Special Reference to the British Xylonite Company 1877-1920" (BA degree, University of Nottingham, 1982), 67-68, 102. *Catalogue of Articles Manufactured from Xylonite and Other Plastics by the British Xylonite Company Limited*. (Hasell: Watson and Viney Ltd., 1936), Science Museum and Library, Bakelite Xylonite Ltd. collection, 1.

no longer fearing bankruptcy, but DuPont had made a substantial profit from the war that could be put towards perfecting and marketing consumer items, such as vanity sets. The different financial circumstances of British Xylonite and American DuPont helped to explain why DuPont could afford to engage in an expensive advertising campaign where Xylonite could not.

A second difference between the financial circumstances in Britain and America—the federal government’s excess profits tax—also had an impact on DuPont’s marketing strategy.⁴⁶⁴ In effect, from 1917 to 1921 this federal policy enabled American businesses to lower their taxable income by deducting advertising expenses—making advertising essentially free. This tax policy may have motivated DuPont managers to launch the first national advertising campaign for Pyralin in 1920.⁴⁶⁵ The Pyralin campaign coincided with a larger advertising boom in post-World War I America. Between 1916 and 1926 national magazine advertising increased by 600 percent. Full-page color advertisements appealed to customers’ hopes and dreams in a ways that had rarely been seen in prewar America. Ushered in by the benefits of the excess profits tax, the golden age of advertising had arrived in America.⁴⁶⁶ No such tax existed in Britain. With the lower profit from the war, then, British Xylonite may have seen it imprudent to place their money into consumer-directed advertising, and continued to rely on mail-order catalogues put out by large retailers to access the consumer market.

⁴⁶⁴ Beaujot, "Coiffing Vanity: A Study of the Manufacture, Design, and Meaning of the Celluloid Hairbrush in America, 1900-1930," 233.

⁴⁶⁵ Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley; Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1985) 6.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 5–7, Frank Presbrey, *The History and Development of Advertising* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 565–68, Martha L. Olney, *Buy Now Pay Later: Advertising, Credit, and Consumer Durables in the 1920s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 4.

While the British Xylonite Company did not engage in a national advertising campaign in the interwar period, the American campaign contended with issues that were also relevant to the British context. They both grappled with the problem of imitation and the issues of selling to a lower income market. Furthermore, as we will see, both cultures subscribed to a similar concept of beauty and self presentation. DuPont tried to harness these Victorian ideals of womanly charm and beauty to sell vanity sets but in doing so they altered the ideal as it was set out in Britain. In order to understand the kind of claims being made, I now move to examine the marketing campaign run by DuPont.

In both Britain and America celluloid vanity sets were often marketed using mail-order catalogs.⁴⁶⁷ In the Sears, Roebuck & Co. catalogue, for example, combs and hairbrushes were advertised in many different materials and prices. Between 1884 and 1918, celluloid appeared next to silver, ivory, ebony, and a few inferior woods.⁴⁶⁸ Imitation ivory was among the lower-priced items on the list, giving the impression that celluloid was inferior to most other materials. Displaying vanity sets in this ranked fashion created the impression that toilet ware had predetermined qualities and classes, much like the people who bought it.⁴⁶⁹ Such advertising eroded DuPont's hope to position Pyralin Toilet Ware as a quality product competitive with ivory and other precious materials.

⁴⁶⁷ The same analysis can be found in: Beaujot, "Coiffing Vanity: A Study of the Manufacture, Design, and Meaning of the Celluloid Hairbrush in America, 1900-1930."

⁴⁶⁸ As of 1918, pyralin was separated from other materials within the mail-order catalogs. By 1910, catalogs changed from using the generic name "celluloid" and began to use brand names such as "Parisian Ivory," this name was later replaced by "Pyralin Ivory".

⁴⁶⁹ "Celluloid Combs," *Sears, Roebuck & Co.* 106 (1897): 641; "Combs," 113 (1904): 961; "Combs, Curling Irons and Hair Brushes," 121 (1910/11): 914; "Combs, Pocket Cases and Infant Hair Brushes of Quality," 125 (1912/13): 614; "Combs and Pocket Necessities," 137 (1918): 773. For a similar analysis of mail-order catalogs, see: Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 43-45.

Mail-order catalogs in America and Britain conveyed the notion that celluloid was an inexpensive substitute for ivory, silver, and ebony, a lower-class imitation of the wealthy woman's "real thing." DuPont's Advertising Department challenged this bias by attempting to build a highbrow image for the celluloid vanity set. Borrowing the famous General Motors description of its ladder of automobiles, DuPont's national campaign for Pyralin offered vanity sets for "every taste and pocket book."⁴⁷⁰ These claims about imitation ivory encouraged consumers of modest means to imagine themselves owning an article once enjoyed only by the wealthy.

Despite the references to elite consumers, the principal audience for celluloid ivory in both Britain and America, as shown by promotional literature for Pyralin and Xylonite, consisted of "men and women of limited means."⁴⁷¹ In 1924 the Advertising Department may have taken advantage of the Revenue Act of 1918, which stipulated that names and addresses of U.S. residents who filed tax returns be made public record.⁴⁷² This federal mandate enabled advertising agencies, which were pioneering the new field of market research, to gather information on consumers. The Sales Department made good use of statistics on possible Pyralin consumers in every American city by 1924.⁴⁷³ In a trade catalog, *Selling Pyralin to Your Toilet Ware Market*, retailers were encouraged to "look in the following table and see the actual figures in *your own* city, and in the

⁴⁷⁰ *Pyralin Toiletware: The Leader in Popular Demand, Now Complete and Standardized in Every Price Class* (Wilmington, Del.: E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Company, Pyralin Division, 1925), Trade Catalogue Collection, Hagley Museum and Library.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷² Gerald Carson, *The Golden Egg: The Personal Income Tax—Where It Came from, How It Grew* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), 104–5.

⁴⁷³ Although the advertising agency for DuPont in the late 1920s was Frank Seaman it is unclear which agency the company was using for the 1924 pyralin campaign.

surrounding towns as well.”⁴⁷⁴ The family income bracket at which Pynalin vanity sets were aimed was the lowest taxable income bracket of \$2,000 per year. This was a lower-middle-class level. Men and women of this class considered themselves to be upwardly mobile, and consumer economists of the time believed that the class as a whole sought to emulate their social betters, leaving them susceptible to the advertising of goods that remained just beyond their reach.⁴⁷⁵

Further evidence that the Advertising Department imagined their consumers to be from households of modest lower-middle-class incomes is found in advertising pamphlets encouraging women to see vanity sets as affordable fancy goods. A 1923 leaflet, *Directing the Demand to You*, assured consumers that “exquisite” Shell Pynalin was “quite within your means.” The brochure encouraged women to “build up a complete set of perfectly matched articles” by starting with just a few pieces.”⁴⁷⁶ Pynalin retailers thus capitalized on the 1920s craze for installment buying, but with a twist.⁴⁷⁷ While there were some installment buying plans for Pynalin vanity sets, a more popular tactic was to suggest that women could buy their sets piece by piece as household money became available. Vanity sets were different from most consumer durables because they had many components, while a car or watch was purchased in its entirety. In other words, a vanity set could be purchased on an installment plan of the consumer’s own making.

⁴⁷⁴ *Selling Pynalin to Your Toiletware Market* (Wilmington, Del.: E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Company, Pynalin Division, 1924), 16, Trade Catalogue Collection, Hagley Museum and Library.

⁴⁷⁵ Daniel Horowitz, *The Morality of Spending: Attitudes Toward the Consumer Society in America, 1875–1940* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 138–39, Robert A. Wilson and David E. Jordan, *Personal Exemptions and Individual Income Tax Rates, 1913–2002*, bulletin prepared for the Internal Revenue Service, Publication 1136 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 2002), 219.

⁴⁷⁶ *Directing the Demand to You* (Wilmington, Del.: E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Company, Pynalin Division, 1923), Trade Catalogue Collection, Hagley Museum and Library.

⁴⁷⁷ The 1920s experienced what the economic historian Martha Olney called a Consumer Durables Revolution, evidenced by increased purchasing of major durable goods (cars, appliances, radios) and steady purchasing of minor durable goods (china and tableware, jewelry and watches). This revolution coincided with a burgeoning credit economy and a fundamental change in middle-class attitudes toward acquiring credit and accumulating debt.

British Xylonite catalogues also encouraged installment buying. Although the records of marketing executives for Xylonite no longer exist, historian Peter Ashlee suggests that Xylonite was also made for the lower end of the market.⁴⁷⁸ The British trade catalogues encouraged merchants to sell Xylonite vanity accessories as separate pieces so that less wealthy customers could afford to own a set. Consider this quotation which encourages merchants to sell Xylonite vanity accessories as separate pieces:

The first cost of a full range of first quality articles, such as will last the owner a lifetime, is sometimes sufficiently heavy to make some members of the public hesitate; then is the opportunity to suggest the gradual building up of a collection.⁴⁷⁹

Similar to American advertisements of the same period this sales catalogue considers the lower income earner who finds the cost of an entire set ‘sufficiently heavy’ that they might ‘hesitate’ to buy. Here we see that the Xylonite Company participated in similar marketing techniques and targeted the same income level as did DuPont.

The second strand of Pyralin advertising, which was not engaged in by the Xylonite Company, promoted celluloid as a desirable replacement for other household materials. One such advertisement claimed that “Ivory Pyralin does not tarnish like metal, . . . shrink and swell like wood, nor chip and break like fragile compositions.”⁴⁸⁰ These types of arguments could be interpreted as indirect answers to concerns about the explosive potential of celluloid—by stating that the substance is better than natural materials, celluloid’s less desirable qualities become hidden.

Occasionally these appeals stressed celluloid’s superiority to real ivory, claiming

⁴⁷⁸ Ashlee, “Tusks and Tortoiseshell: The Early Development of the British Plastics Industry with Special Reference to the British Xylonite Company 1877-1920” 106.

⁴⁷⁹ *Catalogue of Articles Manufactured from Xylonite and Other Plastics by the British Xylonite Company Limited*. (Hasell: Watson and Viney Ltd., 1936), Science Museum and Library, Bakelite Xylonite Ltd. collection, 6.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ivory Pyralin*, 1922, folder: Trade Catalogs, Pamphlets, 1917–1921, box 34, Advertising Department, E. I du Pont de Nemours & Company, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

“the man-made product proved definitely superior to ivory—it did not crack or discolor with age.”⁴⁸¹ Celluloid was described as an improvement because it retained its original color and was not likely to crack along the grain. This appeal strategy was directed toward practical consumers who wanted durable, long-lasting products rather than fragile fancy goods.

The third series of advertisements claimed that Pyralin was the “real thing,” an authentic form of ivory from elephant tusks. Advice to sales clerks clouded the distinction between tusk ivory and Ivory Pyralin.⁴⁸² Once a customer entered the store, the sales clerk might suggest that Pyralin was in fact genuine. In a 1917 pamphlet clerks were given a dubious definition of ivory: “‘ivory’ in the toilet goods trade means manufactured or artificial ivory.”⁴⁸³ This was an attempt to re-signify the meaning of the word ‘ivory’ from a natural substance to a chemical invention. If this strategy proved successful the customer might believe that Pyralin was real ivory—the same material wealthy women proudly displayed on their vanity tables.

Along the same lines, the 1920 booklet *Autobiography of an Ivory Pyralin Brush* pits “authentic” Pyralin against other brands of celluloid toilet ware. The hairbrush protagonist proclaims that only Ivory Pyralin is genuine, while all other celluloid products are false. “I was mighty pleased to discover that I was solid Ivory Pyralin through and through,” the hairbrush declared:

They might have used a wooden core for me and, after building it up with wax, have wrapped around it a thin veneer of Ivory Pyralin. I mention no names, but I

⁴⁸¹ “The Wonder World of Chemistry,” 1936, folder: VC 49 Advertising Department, box 37, Series H, acc. 228: Irénée du Pont Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington Del.

⁴⁸² *Points on Ivory Py-Ra-Lin for the Retail Clerk* (Wilmington, Del.: E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Company, Arlington Division, 1917), 3, TC-HML.

⁴⁸³ Anon, *Points on Ivory Py-Ra-Lin for the Retail Clerk* (Wilmington: E. I. Du Pont De Nemours and Company, Arlington Division, 1917) 3.

know some toilet brushes which put on great airs which are made in this fashion. But there is no sham about me, and although I say nothing, I know that these impostors will soon disappear from the face of the earth, while I am handed down from generation to generation.⁴⁸⁴

The Pyralin brush accuses his counterfeit rival of “putting on airs,” much like consumers who dressed above their station. The *Autobiography* implied that vanity sets, like people, came from different classes. In a world that could not distinguish tusk ivory from celluloid, Pyralin was upheld as genuine, allowing the owners of these vanity sets to imagine themselves as wealthy women enjoying the “real thing.” Here the Arts and Crafts fear that the difference between real and imitation would become indistinguishable was realized.

There were three distinct marketing strategies that emerged simultaneously in 1920-1928 DuPont campaign, all addressing the problem of imitation in some distinct way. The first involved a claim that wealthy consumers bought celluloid, insinuating that though celluloid was imitative it was a genuine imitation accepted by all. The second suggested that celluloid had advantages over natural substances such as silver and wood and therefore it was the preferred substance. The third re-signified the meaning of celluloid by implying that imitation ivory in toilet ware was in fact true ivory. These three wildly variant solutions to the marketing problem of advertising an imitative substance were an attempt to deal with a culture that was in a state of flux between accepting imitations and revering authenticity.⁴⁸⁵

The original trick of (in)authenticity—making plastic appear to be ivory—was common in both Britain and America. This blurring of authentic and inauthentic was

⁴⁸⁴ *Autobiography of an Ivory Pyralin Brush* (Wilmington, Del.: E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Company, Pyralin Division, 1920), 10–12, Trade Catalog Collection, Hagley Museum and Library.

⁴⁸⁵ Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940*.

indicative of a tendency in middle-class aspirations on both sides of the Atlantic. The middle classes used objects to demonstrate their status in an increasingly impersonal urban world.⁴⁸⁶ This trans-national commonality can be traced in the prescriptive literature of both countries which instructed readers how to represent themselves by whatever means possible as the ideal—passing the inauthentic object as authentic was an essential part of this process.

As we have seen in the case of the glove and the fan Victorians believed that the moral character of a woman became evident on her body and therefore could be read by those around her. To change their appearances for the better, according to this model, a moral re-education was required. Mrs. Noble author of *Every Woman's Toilet Book* reassured women that they could improve their external beauty by simply cultivating a good character:

Where do you see the most beautiful women as a rule, certainly after the first youth has gone, and with it what the French call the *beaute de jeunesse*? In a Quaker meeting-house, in a Sister's of Charity convent, in a home where the spiritual life and the domestic duties are the two important factors; not among the gay society butterflies, let every art of coiffeur and complexion, artist and

⁴⁸⁶ An increase in migration to great cities, such as London, Manchester, Birmingham, and Liverpool, left city dwellers feeling alienated and uneasy about the strangers they encountered on a day to day basis. These anxieties were new to Britons. Though industrialism and urbanization began to pick up in the mid-1700s these trends skyrocketed in the nineteenth century. In 1801 only London had a population over 100 000. By 1841 there were six British cities of over 100 000, by 1871 there were sixteen and by 1901 there were thirty cities of this size. It was challenging for Britons to become accustomed to the new urban living. In small scale cities and rural communities, people were intimately acquainted with one another. Even if small town folk encountered strangers, whose family and class background were not known to them, they would have been able to garner such information through close observation of their dialect, manners, and dress. A combination of tradition, sumptuary laws, small disposable incomes, and a lack of privacy confined smaller town dwellers to the social class to which they belonged. This situation was a stark contrast to the city where most day to day interactions were between strangers who had little hope of getting to know each other's backgrounds. The anonymity of the city brought with it a fear that people could disguise their social and economic statuses with impunity. In the urban environment there was widespread fear that strangers were not always what they appeared to be. For an excellent analysis of the anxieties generated by city dwelling see: James E. Côté, "Sociological Perspectives on Identity Formation: The Culture-Identity Link and Identity Capital," *Journal of Adolescence* 19 (1996), Marjorie Morgan, *Manners, Morals and Class in England, 1774-1858* (Houdmills: Macmillan, 1994) 42-51. Statistics on city dwelling were taken from: Walter L. Arnstein, *Britain Yesterday and Today: 1830 to the Present*, 8 ed., *A History of England* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001) 82.

dressmaker be cultivated to its most exotic perfection. No. If we want to keep back plainness, keep attractive, we must give our soul leisure to expand and feed our minds.⁴⁸⁷

Another author put it more plainly: “be nice and you will look nice.”⁴⁸⁸ The concept that the innermost character of a woman could be read in her external appearance was a throwback from conduct manuals of the eighteenth-century which relied on the concept of inner character rather than external appearance as the marker of a person’s social class. The warnings that women must *be* nice to look nice abound in the introductions to Victorian etiquette manuals. Surprisingly, however, as readers flipped through the chapters they found practical advice on how to properly coif the hair, for example. Victorian advice manuals can be characterized by their practical suggestions for improving a lady’s exterior, negating the introductory remarks which suggest that inner beauty will shine through. While emphasizing the importance of moral character on the one hand, on the other Victorians were constantly focused on exterior changes.

The practical advice one finds within the manuals is epitomized by Florence Jack and Rite Strauss’s manual *The Woman’s Book* which explains that a woman must maintain her hair in order to be seen as a proper lady:

No woman who values her appearance can afford to neglect her hair, for a fine, well-kept head of hair forms indeed a ‘woman’s crowning glory,’ whereas dull-looking, ill-kept tresses tend to show more than anything else that she lacks that dainty and scrupulous care of her person which should prove one of the chief characteristics of her sex.⁴⁸⁹

Here the tables have been turned. In order to be seen as scrupulous, a woman must be coiffed correctly. The inner goodness of a woman did not miraculously generate her

⁴⁸⁷ Noble, *Every Woman's Toilet Book* 11. A similar statement can be found in an American etiquette manual: “you cannot wear lies on your outside and not feel it in your soul.” Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Shape of Her Dress,” *Woman's Journal* (1904): 226.

⁴⁸⁸ Noble, *Every Woman's Toilet Book* 80.

⁴⁸⁹ Strauss, *The Woman's Book: Contains Everything a Woman Ought to Know* 456.

crowning glory, rather the hairdo had to be created and maintained for her inner beauty to shine through. Rather than revealing a lady's inner qualities, it was a woman's class and gender aspirations that were made evident by attaining physical beauty through coiffing and purchasing the correct accessories.

Along the same lines, etiquette manuals suggested that the objects that a woman owned—particularly those things worn on her person, such as clothes and makeup—were indicative of her inner character. A recurring example of this can be seen in the figure of the maid-of-all-work whose misguided attempts to reach the social rank of her mistress are made obvious by her misshapen crinoline (figure 4.4).⁴⁹⁰ This *Punch* cartoon reveals a cleaning lady dressed to the nines in her crinoline, apron and bonnet. However, the viewer can tell that this is an unnatural state for the maid as her crinoline shows its wiring, the skirt comes unflatteringly above the ankle, the sleeves are rolled indicating the woman's need to work and the hands are bare rather than gloved—an important accessory indicating middle-class leisured womanhood. To make the message even more obvious, the maid's adornment impedes her work; the crinoline hits a dainty table, breaking its contents while she dusts. The inner yearnings to achieve a higher social rank, then, become physically manifest in the maid's sham clothing. The message here is that if a woman purchased clothing that reflected her proper station, her clothing would fit correctly and could be referred to as an indication of her upstanding character.⁴⁹¹

Of course, this sort of argument is one upheld by the middle class who benefited from its circular logic. Women who had the time and money to create an appropriate

⁴⁹⁰ Anon, "Cause and Effect", *Punch, or the London Charivari* March 26, 1864.

⁴⁹¹ MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism* 68-69, Rob Schorman, *Selling Style: Clothing and Social Change at the Turn of the Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003) 68-69, Mariana Valverde, "The Love of Finery: Fashion and the Fallen Woman in Nineteenth Century Social Discourse," *Victorian Studies*, 32:2 (1989) 169-188.

physical impression were thought to be good domestic women. Those who did not, or could not, rise to the proper standard of loveliness were thought to have intentions of social climbing or a blemished soul. Because time and money were important factors in determining a woman's physical appearance, the lower classes were generally unable to rise to the middle-class ideal. If working-class women made attempts in this direction advice literature reassured their middle-class readership that mal-intentions would appear physically. Using this logic the middle class secured their position in an unstable social structure.

In 1896 Maud Cooke extended the consumable items associated with the inner character beyond clothing and makeup to include objects that were not worn on the body. This book became influential in both America and England and underwent numerous editions. Cooke suggested women should "suit all accessories to her own personality"⁴⁹² in order to avoid misrepresenting themselves in public. Following this logic, any object that was closely associated with women could potentially reveal their inner ambitions and social class.

British and American advice for women indicated a common cultural belief of both countries that a woman's inner personality became reflected in her outer appearance through her looks, clothing and accessories. As a product that was imitative and inauthentic celluloid had the potential of revealing women who used the substance as shams. Though this concept of womanly beauty would presumably have been a concern for both Xylonite and DuPont, it was only the latter company that addressed this issue in its advertising campaign.

⁴⁹² Cooke, *Social Etiquette, or, Manners and Customs of Polite Society: Containing Rules of Etiquette for All Occasions* 389. This book was republished in 1899 in the United States: Cooke, *Twentieth Century Hand-Book of Etiquette*.

To complete the discussion of celluloid and its implications for women's beauty we must segue into the American experience. Americans looked to Britain to set the standard for womanly beauty, relying on the idea that women could accentuate their inner selves through the objects they owned. However, American marketers asked: How can the hopes and dreams of consumers be used to sell celluloid toilet ware? Can understandings of the true Victorian lady be harnessed to sell brushes and combs? In finding the answers to these questions, the concept of women's inherent beauty began to be replaced by the idea that ideal womanhood could be bought.

In a national advertising campaign for ivory Pyralin toilet ware, DuPont attempted to harness the cultural assumption that a woman's inner beauty could be reflected in the objects she owned. Consider, for example, the following advertisement in which the woman and her toilet ware are both considered a beautiful ornament (figure 4.5):

Its grace and dignity makes Pyralin a fitting complement for a beautiful woman. With daily intimate use, it seems to become a part of herself. It has the simple beauty which never grows irksome and a mellow luster which richens as the years pass by.⁴⁹³

The phraseology of this ad is ambiguous, making it unclear whether it is the woman or the vanity set that is being described. The intimacy between a woman and her toilet ware allows the set to “become part of herself” creating a situation where the woman can be a reflection of the vanity set and visa versa. This advertising campaign took the Victorian notion that the woman's inner self becomes reflected in her personal items and skews the logic by imbuing the vanity set with “grace and dignity”—the qualities most sought after by middle-class women. Now it is not the woman who possesses the qualities that are reflected in the objects that she owns, but the objects that possess the qualities that

⁴⁹³ Anon, *Twenty Million* (Wilmington: E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Company, Pyralin Division, 1920) unpaginated.

women would like to represent. The vanity set's "simple beauty" can therefore be purchased by women desiring this reputation. Just as brushing one's hair could create the appearance of a beautiful and thus good woman; owning a Pyralin vanity set gave women a beauty that "richens as the years pass by".

In this American advertising campaign, Victorian ideas of women's beauty came full circle. In the eighteenth century it was believed that a women's inner character would shine through and becomes physically manifest in the form of beauty. Introductions of etiquette manuals, which began to appear in the 1830s, urged women to alter their appearances as an indication of the state of their souls.⁴⁹⁴ The ideal appearance was made manifest by purchasing well fitting clothing, brushing ones' hair and owning expensive (looking) accessories. The advice of the etiquette manuals allowed the beautiful appearance to become a stand-in for the good woman rather than the other way around. As we have seen, through the trans-national commonalities in etiquette manuals, these trends were apparent in both Britain and America. However, we must leave Britain and move to America, the ultimate consumer society, in order to complete this story. The more advanced American marketing that appeared in the first decades of the twentieth century perverted the British ideal of beauty by suggesting that commodities themselves were imbued with the ideals of 'the good woman.' This advertising technique was extreme, and reflected the differences between British and American consumer society. While British manufacturers might have aspired to such an advertising strategy, the fact that this campaign was conducted in the United States reflects the centrality of consumption to identity construction in the early twentieth century. A woman's hopes, dreams, and even her identity could now be satisfied by buying objects rather than by

⁴⁹⁴ Marjorie Morgan, *Manners, Morals and Class in England, 1774-1858* (Houdmills: Macmillan, 1994).

working towards an improved personality/sense of self. By the first decades of the twentieth century American concepts of authenticity had become sufficiently blurred that a commodity made of imitative materials could be substituted for a woman's inner character.

As we have seen, the DuPont campaign addressed many concerns that were shared by both British and American producers and consumers of vanity sets. The imitative aspect of celluloid was an issue in both American and Britain, this view became overrepresented in the British context through the writings of the Arts and Crafts theorists and publications in medical journals which suggested that celluloid should be distinguished from 'the real thing' for interests of safety. Despite these British concerns, it was the American DuPont campaign that attempted to quell anxieties surrounding imitation by arguing that celluloid was an improvement on natural materials such as silver, ebony and even ivory. Both cultures were also engaged with a specific understanding of womanly beauty which equated women's inner self with her outer appearance and the things she owned. However DuPont pushed this ideal beyond the British understanding of beauty by suggestion that when women bought a vanity set, they were buying their femininity.

This chapter was about questions of authenticity and trickery and what this meant for various different people at different times in the nineteenth century and how this culminated in an American advertising campaign in the early twentieth century. The chapter began by showing that ivory had a connection with empire. Best selling novels and memoirs of famous elephant hunters who procured ivory for profit suggested that

taming and killing the wild beasts of Africa was the first step towards complete Western mastery of the continent. Britons and Americans were well aware of ivory as a colonial spoil because it was displayed as such at various world expositions, in board games which encouraged Western children to conquer the world partially through the export of African ivory, and concern for the extinction of elephants which was emphasized in the press at the end of the century. Male objects made of ivory sometimes took on the shape of actual elephant tusks, and female objects made of ivory, though less obviously, were advertised as “African ivory” sometimes even featuring elephants as part of the backdrop. The average citizen understood that the ivory objects that adorned their homes was equivalent to having a small piece of empire embellishing their pianos in the form of ivory keys, their hall stands in the form of umbrella handles, or their bedrooms in the form of vanity sets.

Along came the first plastic, celluloid, which by 1883 could mimic the irregular grain of ivory and even yellowed with age as did ivory. The only indications that celluloid was not ‘the real thing’ was its expense, which was a fraction of the cost of ivory, and its lack of density which made it light in comparison to ivory. Manufacturers and marketers of celluloid celebrated the substance as a material that would save the African elephant from extinction and help the average citizen bring this luxurious and exotic material into their homes. Rhetoric about celluloid drew upon the reputation of ivory which helped the material establish a connection with empire and allowed owners of this material to imagine themselves as part of the larger imperial structure of their country.

However, not all segments of society believed that celluloid ivory was a great invention. The Arts and Crafts Movement, an elite group of craftsmen and philosophers, believed that using one material to mimic another, as celluloid did, was immoral because it stripped owners of the ability to appreciate the biological and historical background of the substance. For those who believed in this idea, celluloid sullied the reputation of ivory. It was crass, mass produced, and factory made, all things that Arts and Crafts followers sought to avoid in the name of beauty and uniqueness. Along with this movement, crafts people, medical doctors, and governmental committees argued that celluloid was a dangerous substance because it shared the basic components of gun powder and was thought to be explosive. At their core, however, these were defensive arguments that craftsmen of a diminishing area, and an elite aesthetic movement were making to protect materials that were once exclusive because of their price. The bottom line was that celluloid, despite (or perhaps because of) its connections to mimicry and fakery, was a highly consumed material used mainly in middle-class objects.

This chapter is a suitable conclusion to my dissertation because it shows how the ideas of Victorian womanhood come to a close in post-war America. The idea that a woman must 'be good to look good' was first encountered in Chapter 1 about gloves which argued that middle-class women's anxiety about presenting themselves according to the proper ideal of leisure and whiteness led them to use a series of poses and gestures along with exercises, creams and glove wearing to hide the labour that they engaged in on a daily basis. Women who engaged in this sort of body maintenance were concerned that they were not proper middle-class ladies so they forced their bodies into the semblance of the ideal. By doing so they reformulated the axiom 'be good to look good' into 'look

good to be good.’ Chapters 2 and 3, about the fan and the parasol, showed that middle-class women represented their characters through the objects they owned. However, these chapters demonstrated that not all objects were a simple reflection of a woman’s inner self. The fan and the parasol were both manipulated by women in order to express certain emotions and to make signals to potential lovers. Women’s thoughtful manipulation of these accessories demonstrated that fashionable objects were not a simple reflection of women’s inner-selves but were tools used by women to get what they wanted. Here the ‘be good to look good’ formula was eroded even further as it was first taken from the women’s outer appearance and placed upon her objects, and then manipulated by the woman to present herself as something she may not be. Now we move into the American context to see how the DuPont advertising campaign used the idea of women’s inner self in yet another way. The advertisements suggested that it was not the inner woman that was reflected in her objects, but the objects that could show the character of the woman. The DuPont advertising campaign was designed to convince women consumers that their products were best able to demonstrate women’s respectable class status. In the post Victorian America the axiom of ‘be good to look good’ was reformulated into ‘own good to be good’.

Conclusion

In 1929 Max Von Boehn lamented the disappearance of women's fashionable accessories of the 1800s and by extension the particularities of Victorian femininity. He mourned the disappearance of the delicate complexion of Victorian women's hands saying "a sunburned tint, formerly considered unbecoming, is thought beautiful to-day—or at least a guarantee of health. Since white hands are no longer fashionable, what is the use of gloves?"⁴⁹⁵ He went on to observe that modern women had no use for fans, "What does she want with a plaything?" he bemoans, when "she prefers a cigarette."⁴⁹⁶ The parasol was also missed by Von Boehn who observed that "by 1900 sunshades began to be rarer." He surmised that "a complexion of lilies and roses [became] less highly prized," instead "to be burnt coffee-brown had suddenly become cool."⁴⁹⁷ By the post-war period the domestic, dainty white woman of the Victorian period was being replaced by the independent, sporty woman of the jazz age—a woman who thought nothing of appearing in public with a cigarette between her tanned fingertips.

This study has been an investigation of the cultural meaning ascribed to feminine accessories during the Victorian and Edwardian periods. I paid particular attention to issues of middle-class formation, the performance of gender, and the materiality of race, empire and colonialism. While these issues lie at the heart of British historiography, this

⁴⁹⁵ Von Boehn, *Modes and Manners Ornaments: Lace Fans Gloves Walking-sticks parasols Jewellery and trinkets* 93.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid* 67.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid* 149.

project was written from a unique perspective which privileged cultural artifacts. Using a material culture methodology I studied the glove, fan, parasol and vanity set in order to reveal the values, attitudes, assumptions and ideas of the Victorians.

My work argues that middle-class women were involved in the representation and formation of their class. While the emergence of the middle class is typically studied as a masculine/public phenomenon, this project corrects the overemphasis on male activity by showing that middle-class women created a distinctive 'look' for their class via the consumption of specific goods and their participation in daily beauty rituals. Adding to these ideas, I argued that Victorian women performed a distinct type of femininity represented as passivity, asexuality, innocence, and leisure. By studying the repetitive gestures, poses and consumption practices of middle-class women, I showed that certain corporeal acts helped to create Victorian femininity. Finally this work suggested that women participated in the British colonial project by consuming objects that were represented in the Victorian imagination as imperial spoils. I argued that imperialism penetrated the everyday lives of Britons through mundane objects used within the home. Empire building also created anxieties surrounding questions of race. Women's accessories such as gloves and parasols helped British women to maintain their whiteness, an important way of distinguishing the 'civilized' Britons from the 'uncivilized' tanned colonial peoples. Overall this project showed that within the everyday objects consumed by women we can identify the anxieties, hopes and dreams of Victorians.

The work began with a chapter about the glove and its place in the creation and maintenance of the newly emerging middle class. I argued that the 'look' of middle-class

women helped to consolidate the class and was dependant on visible signs of domesticity and leisure such as the white colour of a woman's skin, signifying her lack of exposure to the elements, and supple, small hands, which demonstrated that a woman did not engage in manual labour. It was partly via their tiny, soft white hands that middle-class women defined themselves and became differentiated from other classes. Using etiquette manuals, fashion plates, printed ephemera, women's magazines, and dance hall songs this chapter showed how class became physically manifested on women's bodies not only in their fashion, but also in the shape, size and state of their hands.

The second chapter, about the fan, used sources such as the woman's press, fashion plates, professional periodicals, department store catalogues, novels, plays, select committees and government petitions. This chapter argued that the fan helped extend the traditional category of leisured domestic womanhood identified in the glove chapter. The chapter dealt with the problem of female redundancy in an overpopulated marriage market. The fan offered two solutions to this problem: fans created paid employment for women in their design and manufacture, or fans became flirtatious props that could attract a husband. In these ways middle-class women challenged their domestic boundaries and participated in the public sphere by taking up paid employment and actively seeking a husband. The chapter ends with a reaction to women's encroachment into the male sphere as Victorians began to view the Japanese belle who hid behind her fan, as a representative of the now vanishing ideal domestic British wife.

Building upon this understanding of the role of the fan in gender and racial formation, the third chapter, about parasols and umbrellas, began with a discussion of the place of these artifacts in non-western countries. Through a study of the popular press,

popular history books, and advertising ephemera, we came to see that Victorians believed there was a divergent use of the umbrella in the East and the West. This difference became a way of defining the political positions in these two areas of the world. The East was said to have sumptuary laws which restricted umbrella use to royalty, while the West made umbrellas available to every class and gender. Umbrella usage in the East became symbolic of despotic, tyrannical rule, and the usage in the West was representative of the democracy that European citizens generally enjoyed. From here, using sources such as etiquette manuals, dance hall songs and short stories, the chapter explored the meaning of the umbrella within Victorian culture by investigating two of the themes of the previous two chapters: the performance of white middle-class womanhood and the use of an accessory as a flirtatious toy to attract a husband.

The work is concluded with a chapter about faux ivory vanity sets, which could be seen as the last hurrah of the Victorian concept of womanhood explored throughout the thesis. This chapter uses sources as diverse as company records, government reports, medical journals, mail order catalogues, union records, and hunting journals. Returning to the question of colonialism and the empire, the chapter began with an exploration of the meaning assigned to goods made of ivory during the nineteenth century. Throughout the period, objects made of ivory were important reminders of colonial rule for rich citizens who never left the metropole. By 1883 the look of ivory was mimicked by celluloid, the first plastic, allowing middle-class as well as aristocratic women to hold small pieces of empire in the palm of their hands. However, the imitative qualities of celluloid ivory sparked concerns within some Victorian circles about the cultural currency of inauthentic objects, and the intentions of the women who owned them. The chapter ended with the

exploration of an American interwar advertising campaign which attempted to bring all of these issues together: the meaning of ivory in a world that would soon favour decolonization, the place of celluloid ivory in an increasingly modernist world that preferred real to fake, and the position of middle-class women who had carefully constructed a class identity that was dependant on the mass production of luxury goods. Through this advertising campaign we began to see how the Victorian concept of leisured, white, middle-class womanhood was beginning to crack.

By the interwar period accessories which had been so important for defining and reinforcing Victorian womanhood began to wane. Coming out of the First World War modern women broke from the ideologies of their Victorian mothers. In the 1920s the indicator of leisure, earlier represented by white skin, was replaced with tanned skin which denoted an ability to afford expensive sunny vacations. This new trend in skin colouration created a drop in the consumption of protective coverings such as gloves and parasols. The fan, which fluttered to cool overheated and overdressed Victorian women, was not necessary to refresh interwar women because their clothing was cooler, shorter, and less layered. Furthermore, women marching for the vote sought to represent themselves as respectable citizens rather than flirtatious coquettes and this meant women had to do away with frivolous accessories such as fans. Finally, the vanity set, once used to perfect long Victorian tresses, was replaced by a single comb for the new bob-haired woman on the go. As these new cultural and social phenomena increased, Victorian accessories were no longer necessary, in fact their very existence came to represent times past.

The work of this thesis has been threefold. First, the thesis sought to do original reporting from archives in Britain, Canada and America concerning material that has not yet been scrutinized, at least in this way. Longitudinal studies of vanity sets at the Science Museum and Library and Hagley Museum and Library, for example, allowed me to get a sense of the extent of the record on which I was to report. I found an enormous cache of material and my experiences researching this dissertation have shown me where I must continue this work. Next, the thesis does an in-depth examination of the relationship between different forms of material culture and their significance in their users' quotidian world. While different needs were served by the glove, fan, parasol and vanity set, all were part of a certain definition of female beauty and femininity. I have attempted to show some of the relationships between these quite different items. While these items appear to be different they often shared space on the same dresser. As such they can be seen as a constellation of goods which a marriageable woman relied upon for adornment so that she could attract a husband, and by default, a home. Finally, the thesis considered the ways in which articles associated with beauty were ineluctably connected to discourses of power. No item, despite its size or apparent frivolous use, was innocent of far-reaching political implications. Each item speaks of an empire that inscribes itself on the culture's smallest artifacts, forcibly defining not only gender and beauty, but also race and class, empire and colony. While there appears to be progress as women shed gloves and fans, this material culture continued to imprison women. The discussion of the rise of the pyralin vanity set demonstrates that new materials created in the "new world," were equally implicated in power narratives as their artifactual predecessors.

Figure 1.1:
Fashion Plates from *The Queen, The London and Paris Ladies' Magazine, Townsend's Monthly, The Ladies Cabinet* 1820s-1880s. Courtesy of The National Art Library.

Permission to use these images not granted. Please see examples at The National Art Library.

Figure 1.2:
Fashion Plate from *The London and Paris Ladies' Magazine*, July 1879. Courtesy of The National Art Library.

Permission to use this image not granted. Please see examples at The National Art Library.

Figure 1.3:
Family Photo, 1897. Courtesy of Mary Evans' Picture Library.



Figure 2.1:
Fashion Plates from *The Queen* July 2, 1881; July 2, 1895; July 3 1885. Courtesy of
Robarts Library.



Figure 2.2:
Fashion Plate from *Ladies' Magazine of Fashion*, December 1833. Courtesy of The National Art Library.

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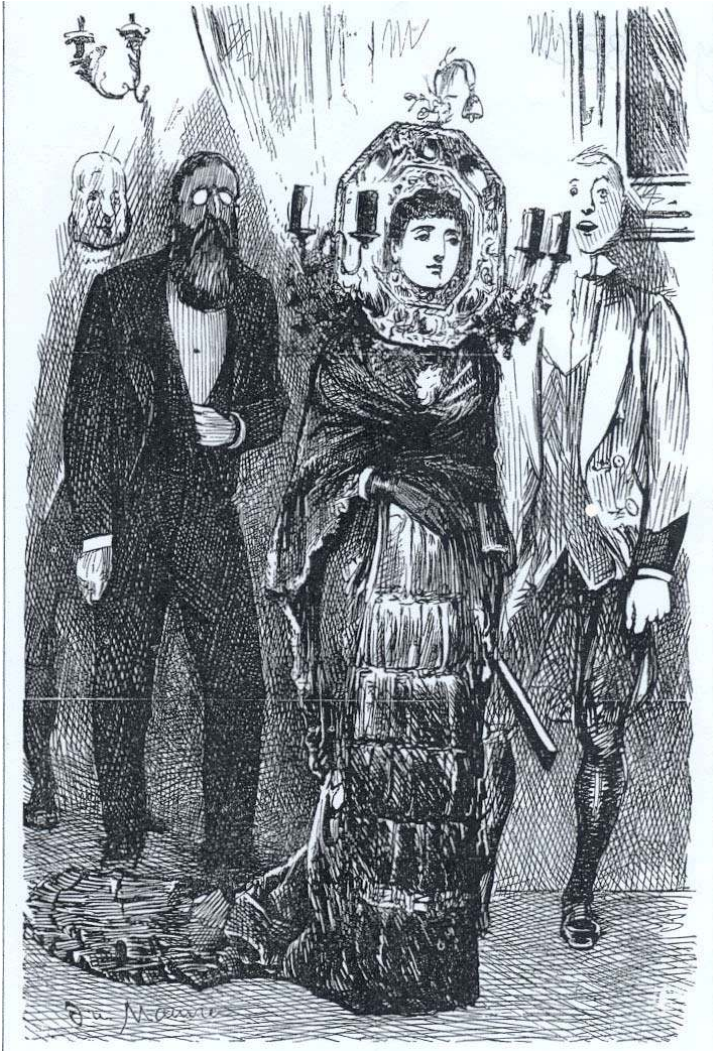
Figure 2.3:
 Song Sheets “Bell of the Ball,” “The Flirt,” “The Language of the Eye.” Courtesy of the
 John Johnson Collection, Bodleian Library.



Figure 2.4:
Song Sheet “The Mikado,” and two *Cartes de Visite*. Courtesy of the John Johnson Collection, Bodleian Library and Mrs. Alexander, The Fan Museum in Greenwich, London.



Figure 3.1:
Punch Cartoon entitled Courtesy of Robarts Library.



**SIC ITUR AD ASTRA;
OR, HOW PELHAM JONES GETS INTO "SOCIETY."**

HIS WIFE HAS A COMPLEXION OF DAZZLING BEAUTY, AND HE CONTRIVES FOR HER A HEAD-DRESS CONSISTING OF A GILT SCONCE WITH WAX-LIGHTS AND REFLECTORS TO LIGHT UP HER FACE, AND SURMOUNTED BY A SILVER BELL TO ATTRACT ATTENTION.

NEXT YEAR HE WILL UNVEIL AND ILLUMINE HER NECK AND SHOULDERS, WHICH ARE EQUALLY RESPLENDENT—AND SO ON, NO DOUBT, TILL HE REACHES THE HIGHEST RUNG OF THE LADDER.

Figure 4.1:

Image from *The Barrett book of Beautiful Presents catalogue*, May 1937. Courtesy of the John Johnson Collection, Bodleian Library.





Natural
Elephant
Tusks
make
Unique
Gifts.

PRICES.

No. 1 Cigarette Box
£18:10:0

No. 2 Inkstand with
Clock £13:10:0

No. 3 Thermometers
from £2:10:0

No. 4 Match Stands
from 12/6 to
£5:5:0

No. 5 Corkscrew
£1:1:0

No. 6 Matchstand
10/6 to £5:5:0

No. 7 Cigar Lighter
£6:15:0- £10:10:0

No. 8 Smokers Com-
panion £10:10:0

No. 9 Cigar Cutter
£3:15:0

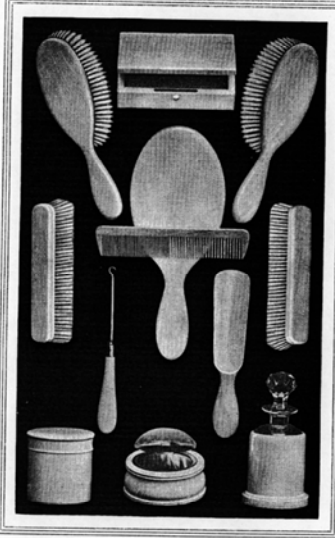
No. 10 Smokers Ash
Tray £1:15:0

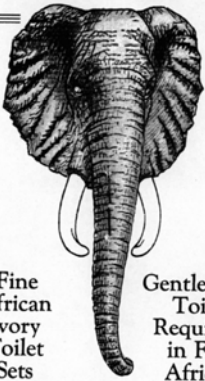
Sporting Trophies

such as Ivory Tusks, Hoofs, Horns, Claws, Tails, Feet, Skins, etc.,
made up in interesting and unique designs. Sketches on request.

BARRETT'S—THE IVORY HOUSE

Figure 4.2:
Image from *The Barrett book of Beautiful Presents catalogue*, May 1937. Courtesy of the John Johnson Collection, Bodleian Library.






Fine African Ivory Toilet Sets for Ladies.

Gentlemen's Toilet Requisites in Fine African Ivory.

Ivory and Tortoiseshell Brushes can be refilled with New Bristle and repolished in most cases EQUAL TO NEW.

Bristles. All our Brushes are filled with the finest Siberian Hog Bristle, carefully graduated so as to penetrate the hair easily.

Monograms, Crests, etc., can be Engraved, Carved or Inlaid in Gold or Silver in the most Modern Designs.



PRICES.

Hair Brushes 38/- 52/6 75/- 95/- each.	Bowes for Pins and Trinkets 58/- 90/-
Cloth Brushes 25/- 42/- 70/-	Powder Boxes 38/- 50/- 75/-
Silk Brushes 18/6 32/6 50/-	Pincushion with Trinket Box 45/- 75/-
Hand Mirrors 70/- 95/- 125/-	Scent Bottles in Ivory Cases 25/- 35/- 52/6
Dressing Combs 19/6 25/- 35/-	
Button Hooks 13/6 17/6 27/6	
Shoelifts 21/- 30/- 39/-	

PRICES.

Hair Brushes 39/- 63/- 95/- each.	Gillette Safety Razor (full size) 5 : 15 :
Trays for Toilet Brushes 5 : 18 : 0	Gillette Safety Razor (small size) 4 : 4 :
Combs 19/6 25/-	Mirror with magnifying and plain glass 8 : 15 :
Tooth Powder Boxes 32/6 50/- 84/-	Shaving Brushes 35/- 50/- 66/6
Clock (8 day movement) 4 : 10 : 0	Shaving Soap Case 4/2
Shoelifts and Button Hooks 19/6 22/6 30/-	Manicure Tray (Fittings extra) 5 : 15 :

See page 14 "How to purchase a complete Toilet Set PIECE BY PIECE."

Figure 4.3:
Trade mark image of the British Xylonite Company. Courtesy of the Science Museum
and Library.



Figure 4.4:
Punch cartoon of maid of all work, March 26, 1864. Courtesy of Robarts Library.



Figure 4.5:
 Pyralin advertisement from Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library.

*Ivory
 Pyralin*

ITS grace and dignity make Pyralin a fitting complement for a beautiful woman. With daily intimate use, it seems to become a part of herself. It has that simple beauty which never grows insipid and a mellow lustre which enriches as the years pass by.

E. I. DU PONT DE NEMOURS & CO., INC.
 Hair Department, Pyralin Division
 WILMINGTON, DEL.

THE illustration shows one of the beautiful designs in which the Ivory Pyralin is decorated. There are many others in different patterns and in Amber Pyralin and Shell Pyralin as well. All patterns and designs are rendered in blue, if desired, in all sizes to suit individual taste. The genuine Pyralin hairbrushes are made of ivory plates.

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Cosmopolitan
Townsend's Monthly Selection of Paris Fashions
Ladies' Cabinet
Ladies' Magazine
Le Journal des Demoiselles
The Tailor and Cutter
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