

The late-nineteenth century beauty influencer and the optimizable subject

**by
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Abstract

Subjectivity in wellness culture contains a central paradox: self-optimization, framed as the means to self-fulfillment, holistic health, and optimal well-being, presupposes an imperative to discipline the self. The subject of wellness culture is thus created and maintained through (the right kind of) consumption along a personal quest towards self-optimization. To foreground the process of subjectification and the operation of power in contemporary wellness culture, this thesis turns towards the archive to examine the late-nineteenth century media forms of beauty culture, namely London women's domestic and fashion magazines and a "beauty culturist" (Clark, 2020) named Anna Ruppert. I argue that the beauty culturist/influencer was a vector of discipline and control, constructing idealized bourgeois beauty and womanhood from within a form of biopolitics that conceived of the self-regulated, white, abled, and wealthy individual woman as a central element to 'civilizing' the British empire. This historical case study of beauty's governance of the subject serves to illuminate how the construction of idealized white femininity was and still is a site for individual discipline and the overall functioning of biopower. Ultimately, I show that, like late-nineteenth century London beauty culture's magazines, advertisements, and culturists like Ruppert, wellness culture's influencers and brands like Gwyneth Paltrow and goop position the malleable and optimizable subject, also often understood as the white, abled, and wealthy woman, as a central lever for 'optimizing' the contemporary capitalist empire.

Keywords: nineteenth century; beauty; wellness; influencer; subjectivity; biopower

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. The trouble with wellness culture

In the opening sequence of *The Goop Lab*'s first episode, Gwyneth Paltrow outlines the purpose of her Netflix series: "it's all [sic] laddering up to one thing, which is optimization of self" ("The Healing Trip," 2020). Gwyneth Paltrow, an actor-turned-entrepreneur who founded a wellness lifestyle brand and company called goop in 2008, promises that goop and its products, endorsements, and partnerships are meant to provide women who feel ignored or mistreated by the mainstream medical establishment with alternative ways of healing and options for harnessing and optimizing their own health, sexuality, and selves to promote autonomy and self-empowerment (Schulson, 2020). Paltrow and goop's branding often emphasizes their 'authenticity' and ostensibly feminist beliefs and practices as an antidote to the perceived anonymous, straightforwardly oppressive, and sexist medical establishment. Paltrow thus equates the pursuit of optimized wellness with autonomy, self-empowerment, and freedom. What does it mean to not only position self-optimization as the means to freedom, but to purport that autonomy and self-empowerment can only be achieved with the right information, the right products, and the right guidance?

Paltrow and goop's curation of products and partnerships promising to guide women on their wellness and self-optimization journeys range from 100 US\$ candles inscribed with the phrase "This Smells Like My Vagina" (Segal, 2022) to a partnership with Celebrity Cruises to launch 'goop at Sea' in September 2022, a luxury cruise "through the Italian Riviera and France" that promises exclusive "holistic wellness programming and products" curated by Paltrow, who will serve as the "Well-Being Advisor" on the ship (*Goop + Celebrity Cruises*, n.d.). However, the problem, according to goop and Paltrow's numerous critics, is that much of goop's recommendations, guidance, information, and products are pseudoscientific and harmful to the same women they claim to help. Indeed, Paltrow and goop are well-known for having promoted and sold countless products and services that have been ridiculed, debunked, and generally challenged by many. Possibly one of the most controversial and talked about products sold by goop was their Yoni egg, which is a jade or rose quartz egg designed to be inserted in the vagina and promises to regulate hormones, increase

bladder control, and regulate menstrual cycles. Jennifer Gunter, a gynaecologist who now writes a women's health column for *The New York Times*, gained US national fame for her blog posts debunking goop products like the Yoni egg (Oatman, 2019). The claims related to the eggs were the subject of a California Food, Drug, and Medical Device Task Force investigation, resulting in a \$145,000 settlement paid out by goop in 2018. Controversies around goop and Paltrow's promotion and sale of harmful products and services did not begin or end with the investigation and criticism of the Yoni egg. Paltrow and goop have been the topic of numerous books, articles, and blogs questioning whether their brand, products, and general perspective on wellness and health are empowering to women or extremely harmful (Agnihotri & Bhattacharya, 2021; Basu, 2019; Caulfield, 2016).

Instead of arguing whether the products, information, and guidance Paltrow and goop sell their followers and consumers are empowering or harmful, this thesis focusses on the process of subjectification to foreground how the interpellation of the white, abled, and wealthy woman to self-regulate for her own sake and the sake of feminist 'progress' of society is nothing new. This thesis examines the paradox central to goop and Paltrow's interpellation of optimizable subjects, namely the idea that the very means to the optimization of the self, or to the achievement of autonomy, healing, and empowerment, require the subject's submission to influence, instruction, and guidance and their self-regulation through consumption. Instead of taking goop and Paltrow as a case study, however, this thesis turns to the archive, namely the emerging media of late-nineteenth century London beauty culture. This thesis thus examines late-nineteenth century London women's domestic and fashion magazines, beauty advice columns and books, and one specific beauty 'influencer' named Anna Ruppert to outline the construction of idealized bourgeois beauty and white womanhood from within a form of biopolitics that conceived of the self-regulated, white, abled, and wealthy individual woman as a central element to 'civilizing' the British empire.

1.2. Late-nineteenth century London beauty culture and idealized British womanhood

Anna Ruppert was a beauty entrepreneur working in London's beauty business scene in the late-nineteenth century. Specifically, she was part of a cohort of female beauty product traders who operated shops in London's West End, advertised

extensively in British women's periodicals, wrote and self-published beauty manuals, and gave lectures on the topics of women's health and beauty in the 1880s.¹ I will outline how Anna Ruppert, one of the most prolific writers and advertisers among these "beauty culturists," as Jessica P. Clark (2020) terms them, took on the role of mediator who, along with her peers, worked to delineate which practices and products she considered 'harmful' and to outline the contours of idealized 'natural beauty' through her self-promotional beauty books as well as her regular beauty advice column in the women's magazine *Hearth and Home*. 'Natural beauty,' according to Ruppert, included, among other characteristics, firm, white skin, and a 'refined' sentimentality, invoking self-control and emotional regulation as important aspects to preserving and creating beauty from within.

Ruppert is frequently mentioned in histories of the British beauty industry because an important controversy surrounding her Face Tonic took place in 1893: it was revealed to contain bichloride of mercury and Ruppert was charged with selling poisons as a non-qualified individual by Ireland's Pharmaceutical Board (Clark, 2020; Peiss, 1998; Smith, 2019). Ironically, most of Ruppert's writing, lectures, and advertising insisted on the importance of avoiding harmful chemicals and implementing a hygienic regimen of light exercise, bathing, and sleep to promote 'natural beauty.' She framed her Skin Tonic as a harmless preparation that purified the skin, and she folded its use into her advice for constructing and maintaining a beauty and health regimen.

Anna Ruppert and Gwyneth Paltrow could both be characterized as, on the one hand, influencers selling aspirational versions of empowered, beautiful, and white womanhood, and, on the other hand, hucksters selling bogus cures to purely aesthetic or made-up health woes. This thesis analyzes the historical case of Anna Ruppert to position beauty culturists/influencers as vectors of discipline and control. Through a close examination of Ruppert's work, including her beauty books, weekly health and beauty column, advertisements, and lectures, this thesis will outline the characteristics and implications of the ideal subject of late-nineteenth century beauty culture. I will argue that this subject, who was understood to be white, British, and usually wealthy, was

¹ For more information about Ruppert's competitors, specifically Mrs. Pomeroy (Jeanette Scalé), one of Ruppert's most successful peers, see Clark (2020) *The Business of Beauty*, Chapter 5, pp. 135-163 and Clark (2013) "Pomeroy v. Pomeroy: beauty, modernity, and the female entrepreneur in fin-de-siècle London"

expected to consistently improve herself through control of her body to produce and maintain idealized white bourgeois femininity. Ultimately, I will show how this ideal feminine subject was constituted from within a form of biopolitics that conceived of the white, abled, and wealthy woman as a central element to 'civilizing' the empire. The concluding chapter will begin to outline how a similar process may be at work in the contemporary interconnected roles of wellness culture and white feminism, as observed in a brief case study of goop, that position the optimizable subject, or the white, abled, and wealthy woman, as the locus for producing, maintaining, and optimizing contemporary white supremacist, imperial capitalism.

When researching women's magazines and their fashion and beauty columns to situate Ruppert in an empirical, historical context, it became clear that I was looking at the London beauty industry at a time when British bourgeois women's health, beautifying practices, and commercial consumption were problematized and tied up in questions of what it means to be a British woman. These problematizations of women's health, beautification, and commercial consumption collided especially in women's magazines, specifically the fashion and domestic magazines aimed at bourgeois women that flourished between 1880 and 1900 (Beetham, 1996, pp. 113–115). This framed the archive as a place to begin thinking about how these repeatedly and insistently discussed concerns around what bourgeois, white British women were doing, thinking, and feeling at a particular time, the 1880s and 1890s, and place, London, worked to form an ideal of white British womanhood. In the context of an increasingly complex and rapidly growing beauty and fashion retail market in London's West End (Rappaport, 2000; Walkowitz, 1998) as well as intensifying expectations for British women's health and femininity and imperial anxieties around "race degeneration" (Briggs, 2000; Davin, 1978; Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 2010), Ruppert's beauty advice worked alongside discourses delineating appropriate bourgeois white femininity in women's fashion and domestic magazines to construct a subject who shopped responsibly and rationally, who was "beautiful, but naturally so" (Ruppert, 1892b), and who embodied an ideal of the 'civilized' British woman.

This ideal modern feminine subject seemingly solved all the contradictions plaguing the 'angel of the home' as she left the domestic sphere and ventured outside of the home. As Clark states, "[r]ecent sociocultural shifts gave rise to women's enhanced public role, evidenced by their independent movement through urban space" (2020, p.

144). Late-nineteenth century commentators and editorials in women's fashion and domestic magazines implored her to maintain bourgeois respectability as she ventured out onto the streets of London's West End, shopped in the fashionable dress boutiques, and consulted the 'complexion specialists' or other beautifying services advertised in the same pages. She was thus a subject in pursuit of proper guidance and correct information to care for herself and her body to protect her white British femininity from the dangers allegedly lurking in the city streets and contaminating the beauty products sold by potentially duplicitous beauty merchants. As for Ruppert, the main case study of this thesis, it becomes clear that selling hegemonic ideals of respectable white bourgeois femininity alongside beauty products, cures, and services was at its core a contradictory venture, and thus the ideal subject of these discourses was inherently an unstable one. Put differently, the subject examined in this thesis was entangled in the interplay between the imperative to 'go public' and its implied demands to protect herself, her respectability, and her body from the racialized and class threats of 'degeneration.'

This ideal bourgeois British woman was thus in large part tied to the nineteenth century construction the female sex as burdened by the body and "the pathology intrinsic to it" (Foucault, 1978, p. 104). Indeed, Margaret Beetham (1996) highlights that nineteenth century magazines aimed at women were characterized by "the pervasive identification of femininity with the body, a body both potentially pathological and in need of regulation" (p. 142). The imperative for the ideal bourgeois female subject to 'go public' thus hinged on her capacity to take control of her own body: to overcome its impulses and to regulate her sensations, emotions, and behaviours. In the late-nineteenth century women's magazines examined in this thesis, as well as in Ruppert's work, the British woman was encouraged to maintain her femininity and respectability through this form of self-control. She was interpellated as an economic subject who, through her own actions, could ensure her safety in London's dangerous streets and the duplicitous marketplace that attempts to trick women into purchasing unnecessarily expensive and potentially poisonous products (Rappaport, 2000; Walkowitz, 1998). Further, especially in Ruppert's work, the bourgeois British woman was encouraged to avoid the morally corrupting and physically harmful potential of cosmetics and instead look after her body in the pursuit of idealized white British beauty. The self-control expected of the subject in these texts was framed as only possible and achievable with the right information, and the individual was responsible for obtaining this information

through the correct sources. Put simply, individually consuming the right information provided the key to inoculating the bourgeois white British woman from the 'degenerative' influences threatening to her 'purity', respectability, and refinement.

This thesis concludes by revisiting the contemporary figure of the 'influencer' and the neoliberal imperative to self-optimize in response to deepening capitalist crises. In the concluding chapter, I will argue that the figure of the influencer can be expressed historically through mediators such as Ruppert, late-nineteenth century women's magazines, and their interpellation of bourgeois British women as 'public,' consuming subjects who dutifully consult the right 'specialists,' consume the right information, and regulate themselves and their bodies accordingly, if not for themselves, then for the sake of the British empire. Today, the influencer and the demands they serve to mediate are undoubtedly different in countless ways from those working in late-nineteenth century Britain. Gwyneth Paltrow and her brand operate from an American context; she conducts business at a far larger scale than Ruppert ever could have; and the media Paltrow and goop use to brand themselves and promote information, products, and collaborations with health practitioners did not exist in their current forms in the nineteenth century. The line of continuity I demonstrate in this thesis instead points to the process of subjectification. After analyzing the case of Anna Ruppert's beauty advice, I hope to show that the study of contemporary neoliberal imperatives on the individual subject also illuminates a similar process of subjectification despite obvious differences in economic, technological, political, and societal contexts between the 2020s and the 1890s. Crucially, the interpellation of the individual woman as an empowered subject desiring fulfillment, agency, and holistic health in today's wellness culture is also contingent on consuming the right information and the right products, and regulating oneself and one's body appropriately.

Therefore, in Ruppert's case, this thesis will outline a subject that was responsible for her own self and body as a means of protecting idealized British white femininity from 'degenerative' influences. This subject was assigned the task of upholding the 'refined' qualities of the British empire and thus its claims to racial superiority. Indeed, through her self-management and beautification, the British woman cultivated a 'delicate,' white body and face, a 'refined' capacity for feeling, and was positioned as a civilizing force by late-nineteenth century commentators and beauty culturists such as Ruppert. Paltrow represents a less explicitly imperial project, but

similarities in the feminine subject's interpellation by contemporary wellness culture demonstrate how the optimized woman is placed at the center of the maintenance and reproduction of white supremacist capitalism. Representing a white feminist biopolitics, Paltrow and goop, as well as other similar wellness influencers and companies, sell "lifestyle feminism" (hooks, 2015b) to (often white) wealthy woman by offering alternative health and beauty information and treatments, all while invoking a notion of individual agency as resistance to the patriarchal medical establishment. Importantly, this version of feminism prioritizes investment in oneself, in one's body, career, and family, and contains of fantasy of wealthy white women as the leaders who will "validate the brutally exploitative economic system that underpinned their success" (Schuller, 2021, p. 231). Similarly to the nineteenth century beauty culture's interpellation of individual British women to civilize the empire through their cultivation of delicate beauty and grace, contemporary wellness asks individual women to "always be optimizing" (Tolentino, 2019) and climb existing hierarchies to self-fulfillment and economic success. Both the civilizing and optimizing projects emerge from within biopower and its technologies of race, class, gender, and ability, which together serve to reproduce white supremacist, capitalist empire.

1.3. Chapter outline

The remainder of Chapter 1 will explain the methodological approach employed throughout this thesis. More specifically, this chapter will outline the primary sources I researched, as well as the theoretical lens of governmentality and how I studied the archive to examine structures of possibility for the self in modernity. Following Ian Hacking (2004), I situate this thesis within a set of studies that could be gathered under the umbrella term of "historical ontology."

Chapter 2 presents Anna Ruppert in more detail and outlines the events of the controversy surrounding her Face Tonic in late 1893 and the beginning of 1894. This story serves to introduce the call upon the bourgeois female subject, who was framed as being new to commercial consumption at the time, to exercise control over her own impulses and exercise rational decision-making when making beauty product purchases. I examine articles from the *British Medical Journal* to demonstrate how they framed the health of British bourgeois women as needing protection from 'quacks' selling poisonous beauty products promising youthful and beautiful appearances, and how they positioned

transparency from beauty product traders and rational consumer decision-making as a possible solution.

Chapter 3 ventures away from Ruppert alone and introduces context about late-nineteenth century women's magazines, highlighting the role of media in producing, circulating, and interpellating idealized British woman subjects. Drawing from primary source research on *Hearth and Home*, a magazine that ran Ruppert's Skin Tonic advertisements and hosted Ruppert's regular beauty column, as well as primary and secondary source research on the influential nineteenth century cultural critic Eliza Lynn Linton, this chapter illustrates how discourses prevalent within *Hearth and Home* attempted to (re)assert binary sex-difference as anxiety mounted among British policy-makers, cultural critics like Linton, journalists, and medical circles about physical deterioration and degeneration of the Anglo-Saxon/white race. This chapter also argues that binary sex-difference is asserted or reasserted onto the body of the white 'civilized' individual through targeted regulation of bourgeois white women's bodies. Through a brief exploration of the history of sex and gynecological sciences and the late-nineteenth century science of hysteria, this chapter will conclude that the assertion of sex-difference was always about race as well as sex, and the regulation and optimization of white women's bodies had devastating material implications for poor women and black women.

Chapter 4 examines attempts to regulate bourgeois women's shopping and consumption behaviours in late-nineteenth century London by illustrating the context of cosmetics, popular attitudes towards bourgeois women's use of them, and the effort of beauty culturists, notably Ruppert, to attempt to solve the contradiction between overt beautifying practices and bourgeois respectability. This leads into a discussion about London's West End and, specifically, Regent Street, where Ruppert and other beauty entrepreneurs as well as fashion designers and perfumers operated shops and catered to bourgeois women. This chapter will outline attempts in British women's magazines such as *Hearth and Home* and the *Queen* to regulate bourgeois women's behaviour, impulses, and desires in London's shopping streets to ensure that they maintain respectability while at the same time advertising and selling the products that could potentially threaten it.

Chapter 5 dives into Ruppert's work and beauty advice to illustrate her notion of the beauty regimen which pinpoints self-regulation as the main tool for preserving a youthful appearance and firm, white skin. Ruppert's conception of self-regulation demanded that the individual become conscious of habitual body movements, with special attention to habitual facial expressions and their underlying emotional experiences. Ruppert thus posited regulation of sensation and sentiment as key to preserving beauty. This leads into a discussion of 'physiognomical transformations,' or how Ruppert argued that a well-regulated sentimentality necessarily gave way to a beautiful appearance. This chapter concludes by outlining how this conception of self-regulation, alongside all the notions of consumer self-regulation outlined previously, understood the individual bourgeois Anglo-Saxon woman as malleable and optimizable, and thus a vector for the 'progress' of 'civilization' and the empire.

Finally, Chapter 6 brings us back to the present to demonstrate how Paltrow and Ruppert could both be positioned as vectors of discipline that locate the self-managed individual as a tool for the optimization of the population. This chapter argues that goop's brand of individual empowerment and self-optimization emerges from within existing hierarchical structures and leverages whiteness to prioritize class mobility and the optimization of capitalism. For example, Paltrow and goop see self-optimization and alternative wellness as keys to destabilizing the patriarchal medical establishment and optimizing women's health and agency. By illuminating the process of subjectification central to both late-nineteenth century beauty culture in imperial Britain and today's wellness culture in neoliberal capitalism, I argue that the optimized white woman entrenches white supremacist patriarchal capitalism.

1.4. Methodology

This thesis mainly employs archival research. Jessica P. Clark, one of the few scholars studying London's beauty business scene in the late-nineteenth century, importantly notes that beautifying practices, although ubiquitous, were also in large part concealed due to popular attitudes towards the use of cosmetics at the time, as we will see in later chapters. Therefore, Clark states, "[n]o single archive offers a uniform picture of commercial beauty in the nineteenth [century] [...] Rather, consumers and traders provide glimpses of their activities and interactions across a range of sources: periodical press articles, beauty manuals, trade journals, business directories" (2020, p. 21).

Thanks to Clark's crucial work of locating, piecing together, and writing about these sources, I was able to gain a clearer understanding of the times and places Anna Ruppert published her beauty advice and advertisements. Clark's work also pointed me in the direction of a collection of women's magazines, including the home of Ruppert's beauty advice column, that together constitute a specific genre of fashion, beauty, and domestic writing and advertisements, a genre considered to be new in the 1880s and 1890s, which I will explore in more depth in Chapter 3. As Margaret Beetham notes, "[r]ecent scholarship on the press and the digitizing of vast swathes of periodical literature previously available only in specialist libraries are together revolutionizing our understanding of Victorian women's writing" (Beetham, 2015, p. 221). This rings true in the context of this thesis, which would not have been possible without the work of other scholars such as Jessica P. Clark and Margaret Beetham, and without the digitized and searchable archives of nineteenth century British periodicals available online.

1.4.1. Historical primary sources

For this thesis, I conducted research primarily in the Gale Nineteenth Century UK Periodicals digitized collection made available to me through the Simon Fraser University Library. I also used the *British Medical Journal* archive as well as the free online database of digitized British periodicals available through the Wellcome Library, London to locate articles about Anna Ruppert and the Skin Tonic controversy.

I read and coded a sample of Ruppert's writing according to a set of themes (Gibbs, 2017; Vaughn & Turner, 2016) (see Appendix for List of Coded Themes). Through searching "Anna Ruppert" and related keywords, I narrowed this sample of texts down to those featuring Ruppert's advertisements, her writing, and important information about her and the Skin Tonic controversy. These texts include all issues of the women's magazine *Hearth and Home* between the first issue featuring Anna Ruppert's health and beauty column on January 19, 1893, and the last issue before she lost her column due to the Face Tonic controversy, which was on August 24, 1893. These issues are all digitized and available to consult and download in the Gale Nineteenth Century UK Periodicals collection. As I mentioned, Jessica P. Clark's work was fundamental to locating Anna Ruppert's writing, which importantly included not just her *Hearth and Home* column, but also two self-promotional beauty books, physical copies of which are located at the British Library. However, they are not publicly

available in any digitized form. I thus got in touch with Jessica Clark asking for advice on how to get access to these books, and she graciously provided me with pictures of every page of each book that she took at the British Library when visiting London to research her book, *Business of Beauty* (2020). I was thus able to include Ruppert's beauty books, *Dermatology: A book of beauty* (1890) and *Book of Beauty* (1892a) as well as a published transcript of Ruppert's lecture "Natural Beauty" (1892b) to the thematic analysis sample.

I also combed through earlier issues of *Hearth and Home*, including their first issue in 1890, to get a sense of the magazine's goals, assumed audience, and editorial positions. With the help of secondary sources such as Margaret Beetham's important work on nineteenth century women's magazines, I realized *Hearth and Home* and the types of editorials, columns, and articles that appeared in its pages were common among its competitors, especially the *Queen*, an expensive women's fashion magazine. I did not have access to any digitized archive of the *Queen*. I thus used *Hearth and Home* as a resource for thinking about women's magazines' role in delineating appropriate bourgeois femininity. The majority of the examples in this thesis are drawn from primary source research, therefore this thesis does not quote the *Queen* at length. *Hearth and Home* and the *Queen* are slightly different, but both occupied a similar place in the periodical press in terms of their similar audiences, levels of financial success and popularity, and their editorial positions on issues related to women, as will be outlined in more detail in Chapter 3.

Finally, the *British Medical Journal* (BMJ) digitized archive and the free online resource Wellcome Library allowed me to learn more about Ruppert's Skin Tonic controversy. In the very early phases of researching this thesis, before deciding to focus on late-nineteenth century beauty and Anna Ruppert, I researched instances of medical 'quackery' in the realms of beauty and wellness and found that the BMJ had multiple articles from the late-nineteenth century criticizing 'beauty quacks' and their use of advertising to sell potentially poisonous beauty products to unsuspecting female customers. Two of these articles directly mentioned Anna Ruppert ("Poison by Advertisement," 1893; "Selections: The Press, the Quacks, and the Public," 1894), and I returned to them later when I had narrowed my research topic down to Ruppert and late-nineteenth century beauty in London. Jessica Clark's work, especially her article "'Clever Ministrations": Regenerative beauty at the fin de siècle" (2017), pointed me in the

direction of the Wellcome Library and their digitized archive of the British pharmacy journal *The Chemist and Druggist*, which published court proceedings of civil lawsuits filed against Anna Ruppert related to her Skin Tonic, as well as a lengthy interview with her about the controversy (“A Fair Litigant’s Bower: Interview with Mrs. Anna Ruppert,” 1894; “Legal Reports: Ruppert’s Skin Tonic - Action in Dublin,” 1894).

1.4.2. Modernity, governmentality, and the remaking of the subject

The collections of texts I examine throughout this thesis “operated as sites of negotiation, where ideas about femininity and self-fashioning were contested and created by a community of engaged interlocutors,” as Jessica P. Clark explains (2017). I decided to conduct a thematic analysis of Ruppert’s own writing not because I want to get to the truth of what activities or behaviours beauty entrepreneurs were up to in the 1890s, but rather because thematic coding allows for an analysis of thought. As Michel Foucault states, “the proper task of a history of thought, as against a history of behaviors or representations: to define the conditions in which human beings “problematize” what they are, what they do, and the world in which they live” (Foucault, 1984, p. 13). Studying Ruppert’s writing provided a window into how she understood femininity, how she went about concerning herself with it, and how she attempted to police its boundaries. Furthermore, the articles in *Hearth and Home* and other publications also provide a way into the discussions that were being had on the topics of women’s beauty, health, and shopping habits by a specific set of journalists and cultural commentators. This ‘history of thought’ was crucial to understanding what kind of discursive work Ruppert and others employed to sell hegemonic ideals of white femininity alongside, and not unproblematically, as we will see, their beauty products, cures, and services.

In this thesis, I work through the texts outlined above with the theoretical lens of governmentality, or the Foucauldian notion of the intersection between technologies of power and technologies of the self (Foucault, 1988, p. 19). More specifically, I approach this collection of archival material as part of a larger assemblage of power and knowledge working to define a specific social role and to usher into existence an ideal female subject. Jonathan Crary’s crucial work on nineteenth century modernity and the transformation of the “observer” as one facet of the construction of the hegemonic modern subject reminds us to understand these texts not as “modes of representation,” but rather as “points of intersection where philosophical, scientific, and aesthetic

discourses overlap with mechanical techniques, institutional requirements, and socioeconomic forces” (1990, p. 8). Following Crary, this is not to say that I look towards history and the archive to uncover a “transcendental subject” that travels seamlessly from the Victorian era to the networked present (Foucault, 1980, p. 117, cited in Crary, 1990, p. 6), but rather to examine a process of modernization of the subject through the notion of governmentality. In this thesis, the term ‘modernization,’ as Crary explains, does not refer to processes of development or progress, but rather to “nonlinear transformations” and “reorganization[s]” of “knowledge, languages, networks of spaces and communications, and subjectivity itself,” (1990, p. 10) functioning as a “collective assemblage of disparate parts on a single social surface” (1990, p. 6). I posit that the emergence of a specific type of ideal subjectivity stems from this process of modernization, as the institutional, economic and commercial, socio-political, and urban changes that occurred in the late-nineteenth century, some of which I outline throughout this thesis, implicate and “remake” the subject (Crary, 1990, p. 17).

Examining beauty cultures and media to excavate ideals of white femininity in late-nineteenth century London is important for the work I do later, in the concluding Chapter 6, where I will discuss another instance of deployment of technologies of the self and production of the subject. Comparing Ruppert and Paltrow serves to highlight how the ideal white bourgeois female subject plays an important role in upholding the supremacy of the white, abled, wealthy, and malleable individual in contemporary biopower. In other words, I look back to a time when a particular type of white femininity was positioned by British media as crucial for upholding the empire, especially women’s magazines and the work of beauty culturists, to understand if today’s valuation of the optimized individual plays a similar role in naturalizing and upholding capitalism and the racialized, classed, and gendered hierarchies that serve it. Gwyneth Paltrow and goop may not be as explicitly imperial and white supremacist as some of the nineteenth century London periodicals, beauty culturists, or cultural commentators I will examine in this thesis. However, the comparison works to demonstrate how white femininity and the primacy of the ‘healthy,’ abled individual that is responsible for her own wellness and economic success thrive as tactics of biopower in the present. In the current “postfeminist” context (Gill & Scharff, 2013) where an individual white woman overcoming sexism from within racist, imperial, and capitalist structures is often

understood as a feminist act (hooks, 2015a), technologies of the self become a crucial site for analyzing contemporary instances of biopolitical thinking.

As mentioned, the notions of governmentality and the 'remaking' of the subject imply the Foucauldian concept of technologies of the self. Foucault argues that the period we refer to as 'modernity' saw a vast and important assertion of a "will to knowledge" and, in tandem, the development of dispersed technologies of power to govern and rationalize populations and/or individuals in the West (1978a, 1978b). For Foucault, knowledge and power always "imply one another," meaning that no form or corpus of knowledge, field of inquiry, or science exists outside of power relations, and, relatedly, power relations do not exist without "the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge" (1978a, p. 27). As Crary explains, Foucault's work demonstrates how the invention of the "technology of the individual" coincided with broader "historical processes," such as the industrial revolution, the transition away from monarchic regimes of power, and the development of "many other technologies – agronomical, industrial, economical" (Foucault, 1978, pp. 224-225 cited in Crary, 1990, p. 15). Further, as Crary states, "[t]he management of subjects depended above all on the accumulation of knowledge about them," and the disciplinary techniques of the individual necessarily needed to refer to "quantitative and statistical *norms* of behaviour" (Crary, 1990, p. 15). Foucault argues that the technology of the individual, rather than an exertion of power from a discernable source, stems from the knowledge constituting, and thus regulating, the individual body and soul (Foucault, 1978a, p. 30).

Technologies of the self refer to "certain modes of training and modification of individuals, not only in the sense of acquiring certain skills but also in the sense of acquiring certain attitudes" (Foucault, 1988, p. 18). The notion of 'technology of the self' specifies that these modifications are effected by individuals on themselves, "their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and a way of being" to "transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (Foucault, 1988, p. 18). In the nineteenth century context of London beauty culture, an important set of women's magazines singled out British bourgeois women's health, beautifying practices, and commercial consumption as matters of 'concern', or matters "for special attention" (Foucault, 1984, p. 249) and sought to define the modes and rules for proper conduct related to these matters. These texts thus elaborated on admissible forms of conduct and outlined frameworks for behaviour, forming a whole body of

“prescriptive texts,” a type of artifact Michel Foucault suggests is a place to begin analysing a historical “problematization” (1984, p. 15). These “prescriptive texts” have the main purpose of suggesting “practical” “rules of conduct,” and functioned “as devices that would enable individuals to question their own conduct, to watch over and give shape to it, and to shape themselves as ethical subjects” (Foucault, 1984, pp. 15–16). These texts were also, as Foucault notes, intended to be “objects of a “practice” in that they were designed to be read, learned, reflected upon, and tested out” (Foucault, 1984, p. 15). This thesis thus examines certain women’s magazines and Ruppert’s beauty advice to outline the frameworks for proper conduct expected of British women when it came to beautification and shopping. This work serves to demonstrate that, at its core, the “problematization” of white British women’s bodies and souls was constituted from within biopower, specifically the biopolitical management of the individual with the purpose of ensuring the maintenance and production of white British femininity and the ‘progress’ of the British empire.

1.4.3. Historical ontology

The analysis undertaken in this thesis turns to the “prescriptive texts” of nineteenth century British white femininity to engage with technologies of power that weigh on the present. As Kate Eichhorn (2013) notes, turning towards the archive, rather than providing a repository to “recover” the past, can present an opportunity to understand the current “terrain of politics,” power, and subjectivity (p. 4). Moreover, in *Politics out of History*, Wendy Brown highlights the necessity of challenging ideas of “purity of origins and attendant notions of progressive development” when doing historical and archival research (2001, p. 101). As Crary (1990) attests, historical studies of the subject and the functioning of power affect “the intelligibility of the contemporary functioning of power in which we ourselves are enmeshed” (p. 7). Indeed, ‘turning’ toward the archive can allow us to make “evident” the “historically fabricated and densely sedimented makeup” of the present (Crary, 1990, p. 7). In this thesis, I thus turn to late-nineteenth century beauty culture and its mediators such as Anna Ruppert to demonstrate how the individual white bourgeois woman subject of imperial Britain was imbued with agency and bestowed the role of ‘civilizer’ given that she comported herself within the bounds of appropriate white femininity. By doing so, I hope to begin to illuminate how the white bourgeois woman subject of neoliberal capitalism and wellness

culture is understood to play a similar role – one of agent of ‘progress,’ seemingly sanctifying and optimizing the exploitative capitalist empire.

Ian Hacking’s outline of a field of inquiry we could term “historical ontology” weaves together a set of scholarly works, especially in the history of science, that are concerned with “the coming into being of the very possibility of some objects,” the term “objects” referring to objects in general, not just material objects (2004, p. 2). Hacking states that historical ontology is concerned not just with “things,” but “whatever we individuate and allow ourselves to talk about” (2004, p. 2). Historical ontology is not the same as doing ontology – instead of developing or assessing ontological theories, the researcher studies “concepts as objects that evolve and mutate,” concepts that are not timeless or “free-standing,” but are, “often despite appearances, historical and “situated”” (Hacking, 2004, pp. 8–9). Historical ontology takes as its objects of study the philosophical problems that arise “when the space of possibilities in which we organize our thoughts has mutated” (Hacking, 2004, p. 14). Similarly, Leo Marx (2010) takes the emergence of a concept as a “sign-post” for “virtually unremarked, yet ultimately far-reaching changes in culture and society” (p. 563). Ultimately, as Hacking notes, historical ontology works to demonstrate how a historical understanding of a concept “figures in the constitution of selves” (2004, p. 19). I thus analyze idealized white bourgeois womanhood as a historical object within the emergence of conditions of possibility along the axes of commercialization and empire-building. In the process, this study considers the ontology of the body at work within late-nineteenth century British beauty culture and outlines how hierarchies of feeling (Schuller, 2018), operating along the lines of race and class, shaped ideal white British femininity. In the end, Leo Marx reminds us to “expose the hazards” contained in these historical objects (2010, p. 577), as their culturally operative meanings have important ramifications when it comes to the operation of power and the constitution of ourselves. This thesis thus works to highlight the troubling material and conceptual implications of investing the individual white woman subject with the power to act as an agent of societal change by bestowing her the ability to harness and optimize her own body.

Foucault theorizes that the constitution of the self occurs along three axes: knowledge, power, and ethics. Indeed, as he states, “the structure proper to individual experience finds a certain number of possible choices (and of excluded possibilities)” at any given moment and within any particular societal system, and, “inversely, at each of

their points of choice the social structures encounter a certain number of possible individuals (and others who are not)” (Foucault, 1970, p. 380). Although Ruppert’s work and nineteenth century women’s magazines do not, by themselves, work to govern a social body or population, they are part of a larger assemblage of power and knowledge working to define the social role of the white female subject, institutions that include beauty culture’s women’s magazines (Beetham, 1996), beauty culturists (Clark, 2020), and physical culturists (Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 2010), as well as imperial British administrators (Stoler, 2009; Topdar, 2017), and reformers and philanthropists (Schuller, 2018). Ann Stoler’s (2009) work on imperial archives is helpful to understand how we can study the archive to excavate how the subject was defined by colonial administrations. In *Along the Archival Grain* (2009), Stoler reads the “writerly forms” of colonial management to understand conditions of possibility for the self in the colonial regime (p. 1). Beauty culture’s positioning of the ideal female self as an economic subject (Foucault, 2008) is helpful for understanding how her role as a consumer that dutifully seeks out commercial products in order to care for herself in her own interest and for her own self-fulfillment are still in alignment with aspects of nineteenth century biopower that seek to ensure the continued progress of the “civilized”, British empire (Schuller, 2018, p. 36). In sum, the idealized white British bourgeois subject of late-nineteenth century beauty culture involves, in this study, the analysis of forms of media, specifically advertising, beauty books, and periodical articles, to understand her interpellation as both an economic subject as well as an imperial subject.

1.4.4. Subjectification

Subjectification thus becomes the central concept in this study, particularly when we consider the psychic operation of regulatory power exerted by, in the historical case examined, the structures of capitalism and imperial imperative of continued progress for the ‘civilized,’ as articulated through beauty culture’s media forms. As mentioned, Crary shows how modernization and the institutional, economic and commercial, socio-political, and urban changes that occurred in the late-nineteenth century, some of which I outline throughout this thesis, implicate and “remake” the subject (Crary, 1990, p. 17). Judith Butler (1997) explains that subjectification is essentially “the making of a subject, the principle of regulation according to which a subject is formulated or produced” (p. 84). Butler further highlights the paradoxical nature of subjectification: “the very

“conditions of existence,” the possibility of continuing as a recognizable social being, requires the formation and maintenance of the subject in subordination” (p. 27). Subjectification is thus “neither simply the domination of a subject nor its production but designates a certain kind of restriction in production” (p. 84). Crucially, Butler states, “the subject who is produced through subjection is not produced at an instant in its totality. Instead, it is in the process of being produced, it is repeatedly produced (which is not the same as being produced anew again and again)” (p. 93). This is crucial to the study of the idealized white bourgeois British subject in late-nineteenth century London beauty culture, as her repeated production entailed never ending work: the self-caring, beautiful, white, respectable bourgeois British subject was thus a perpetually insecure state. This signals to the operation of power in our contemporary context, especially related to the making of the optimizable subject in wellness culture and neoliberal capitalism in general. For instance, in *Aesthetic Labour* (2017), Ana Elias, Rosalind Gill, and Christina Scharff demonstrate the ways in which women’s bodies continue to be positioned as requiring constant attention and “to be critically assessed, to be available for modification, for fixing and fussing with, in short to be produced” (p. ix). They go on to state that “[a] sense of needing to be done to and then doing provides a form of ongoingness to a body that feels desperately unstable. Instability is the prompt to action” (p. ix). Similarly, in *Counterproductive* (2018), Melissa Gregg illustrates how productivity, which is “experienced as an archly personal, everyday concern,” implies pressure to “prove one’s ongoing value,” thus highlighting how the productive, optimizable subject is continually in the process of being produced (p. 3). Finally, Kaisa Tiisanen (2021) outlines how wellness culture, specifically wellness food blogs, put forward narratives of self-fulfillment through food by describing “a life-changing, near-spiritual and, most importantly, *never-ending* journey towards wholeness and wellness” (p. 1394). The pressure to participate in a continuous process of self-production is not simply exerted upon the subject, but rather, as mentioned, the desire to be recognized as optimizable, productive, or holistically healthy is the ultimate motivation towards normative disciplinary behaviour, consumption, and self-assessment patterns.

Chapter 2. The late-nineteenth century beauty influencer and the paradox of beautification

This chapter introduces Anna Ruppert and traces the controversy around Ruppert's Skin Tonic, a skin-cleansing beauty product advertised and sold in popular late-nineteenth century women's magazines that was eventually revealed to contain bichloride of mercury. The story of Ruppert's Skin Tonic controversy serves to outline a pervasive contradiction central to idealized femininity at the time, namely that consumption shaped the healthy, feminine, and respectable self, but desires and impulses in the face of seductive beauty product advertisements promising health and beauty were to be strictly regulated. Throughout this thesis, it becomes clear that beautification in late-nineteenth century London required the impossible negotiation between the poles of overt self-adornment and strict self-restraint. Anna Ruppert's attempted intervention into the seemingly impossible realm of respectable beautification came in the form of her Skin Tonic, which itself ended up fanning the flames of anxiety and fear around British women's consumption of beauty products.

2.1. Anna Ruppert's debut

American beauty entrepreneur Anna Ruppert arrived in London in 1891 and immediately began promoting herself as a 'celebrated skin specialist' in periodical advertisements and interviews, and through the circulation of her 1890 self-authored and self-published beauty book, *Dermatology: A book of beauty* (Clark, 2020, p. 142). She lectured to crowds in London's Princess Theatre on the importance of 'natural beauty' and how to achieve it without cosmetics. During her well-attended 1891 lecture entitled "Women Without Cosmetics," Ruppert insisted that cosmetics "give a false beauty for a time, but invariably do harm in the long run," according to a review featured in the women's fashion periodical *Myra's Journal* ("Mrs. Anna Ruppert's Lecture," 1892). This message was central to both Ruppert's *Dermatology: A book of beauty* (1890) and her later beauty book, also self-authored and self-published, *Natural Beauty* (1892). Both outlined similar advice on how to implement a beauty regimen of face washing, exercise, exposure to the sun and the outdoors, nutrition, and sleep which, together, in the right amount, order, and fashion, promoted "a pure complexion, firm flesh, mental delicacy and refinement and bodily grace" (Ruppert, 1892b). As Jessica P. Clark demonstrates in

her book *Business of Beauty* (2020), late-nineteenth century beauty entrepreneurs such as Ruppert used their beauty books as platforms for self-promotion in ways that previous beauty books did not (p. 143). Ruppert's and her peers' beauty books differed from their predecessors' because they included "a twist": the beauty regimens outlined in the books were supplemented with beautifying services and beauty products offered exclusively by the author, which were advertised throughout the books' pages (Clark, 2020, p. 143). For example, in its chapter on the beauty of the hands and nails, *Natural Beauty* offered recipes for treatment of ailments such as "brittle nails" and "red hands", but also suggested a visit to Ruppert's shop at 89 Regent Street to receive a manicure service from Ruppert herself or one of her employees (1892b). In January 1893, Ruppert began writing a regular correspondence column entitled "Health and Beauty" for the British weekly women's magazine, *Hearth and Home*. In it, she advised correspondents on how to achieve smooth, firm, and white complexions, and provided advice on healing all sorts of bodily issues, from oily noses, dry hair, and skin rashes to constipation and blood circulation problems, all while employing the same self-promotional methods as her books by peppering her advice with recommendations for her own beauty products and services.

2.2. Influencer on trial: Ruppert's poisonous Skin Tonic controversy

Ruppert's Skin Tonic, which was also sometimes referred to as Face Tonic, was undoubtedly Ruppert's most advertised product in women's periodicals and throughout her self-promotional beauty books as well as her *Hearth and Home* column. She folded the Skin Tonic's use into her advice for the ideal beauty regimen in her books, and frequently suggested it to correspondents as a potential cure for wrinkles, oily skin, rashes, and more in her *Hearth and Home* advice column. In addition to *Hearth and Home*, leading British women's magazines such as *Queen* frequently featured illustrated advertisements for Ruppert's Skin Tonic in the early 1890s (Clark, 2020, p. 142; Smith, 2019, p. 227). Throughout her self-promotion and advertisements, Ruppert emphasized that her Skin Tonic was a harmless preparation that could not cause any adverse health effects. However, in 1893, The Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland ran a chemical analysis of Ruppert's Skin Tonic which revealed it contained bichloride of mercury, and

Ruppert was charged with selling poison as a non-qualified person according to the Irish Pharmacy Act of 1875 (“Legal Reports: Ruppert’s Skin Tonic - Action in Dublin,” 1894).

Dublin Police Court proceedings from a private litigation against Ruppert related to her sale of her Skin Tonic were republished in *The Chemist and Druggist* on January 13, 1894. The proceedings explained that the plaintiff accused Ruppert of selling a grossly overpriced poisonous product, claiming the Skin Tonic’s ingredients were valued at about half a penny but the price of a bottle to the public was 10s 6d (“Legal Reports: Ruppert’s Skin Tonic - Action in Dublin,” 1894, p. 54). The plaintiff, a shop owner, claimed she suffered a loss in business and reputation due to her resale of Ruppert’s Skin Tonic. The court proceedings reported that Ruppert’s defense mainly relied on testimonies claiming her Skin Tonic was not harmful and, in fact, was beneficial to the complexion, and that any loss of business must have been a result of the plaintiff’s mishandling of the revelation. A writer from *Gentlewoman*, an expensive British weekly fashion journal, was called upon as a witness and admitted that the Skin Tonic was perhaps overpriced, but that she had used it herself and “the result of its application had been most beneficial to her” (“Legal Reports: Ruppert’s Skin Tonic - Action in Dublin,” 1894, p. 54). Further, a “dispensing chemist [...] gave it as his opinion that bichloride of mercury, if used in a proper manner, was most beneficial in almost all cases of affection of the skin” (“Legal Reports: Ruppert’s Skin Tonic - Action in Dublin,” 1894, p. 54). Ultimately, however, the presiding judge argued that it did not matter whether the product was harmful or not because the plaintiff was suing for recuperation of the costs related to her loss of business and reputation due to unknowingly selling a poisonous product. In the courtroom, Ruppert maintained that her Skin Tonic was not harmful and that every one of her 2,000 clients who regularly purchased the product remained satisfied. She even stated that her business had never been better, which pushed the judge to conclude that she would easily be able to pay the plaintiff.

The January 20, 1894, issue of *The Chemist and Druggist* featured a lengthy interview with Anna Ruppert, which promised to reveal “Beauty’s version of her contests with the Pharmaceutical Monster,” a week after the journal published the Dublin Court proceedings mentioned above (“A Fair Litigant’s Bower: Interview with Mrs. Anna Ruppert,” 1894, p. 75). In it, the interviewer recounted visiting Ruppert at her London shop at 89 Regent Street, commenting on the luxurious furnishings of her shop’s reception room and noting the freshly painted letters “Ltd” next to her name above the

entrance to the reception room, signalling that “the lady was in process of conversion into a limited company” (“A Fair Litigant’s Bower: Interview with Mrs. Anna Ruppert,” 1894, p. 75). The interviewer explained to Ruppert that they wanted to “learn as much as she would tell [them] of the methods and objects of her business, and of the causes and results of her frequent collisions with the Irish Pharmaceutical Society, and with private litigants” (“A Fair Litigant’s Bower: Interview with Mrs. Anna Ruppert,” 1894, p. 75).

Ruppert, with an accent “betraying her transatlantic origin,” stated that she “never thought that there might be a difference between English law and American” (“A Fair Litigant’s Bower: Interview with Mrs. Anna Ruppert,” 1894, p. 75). She cited her 16 years of business conducted in New York with no troubles from the New York State Board of Health, even after they conducted an analysis of the contents of her Skin Tonic (“A Fair Litigant’s Bower: Interview with Mrs. Anna Ruppert,” 1894, p. 75), which, according to both Kathy Peiss (1998) and Michelle J. Smith (2019), was marketed as Face Bleach when she was based in New York in the 1880s (Peiss, 1998, p. 85; M. J. Smith, 2019, p. 227). The Skin Tonic’s US marketing reveals in more clear terms the purpose of Ruppert’s product, which was to ‘improve’ the complexion by lightening the skin. Ruppert told *The Chemist and Druggist* that her Tonic was not only certified harmless according to the New York State Board of Health, but “positively beneficial,” and that after the New York chemical analysis she “was left in peace” to conduct business in the United States (“A Fair Litigant’s Bower: Interview with Mrs. Anna Ruppert,” 1894, p. 75). She stated that, after transferring her headquarters to London in 1891, the “what-d’ye-call-‘em Society” sent her a notice informing her that she was “infringing the Pharmacy Act by selling poisons without a qualification” (“A Fair Litigant’s Bower: Interview with Mrs. Anna Ruppert,” 1894, p. 75). Ruppert went on to explain that after having a talk with the “one in command” at the Society in question, she understood “the gravity of the offence” but asked whether it would be legal to “continue to send those remedies which contained poison out of England” (“A Fair Litigant’s Bower: Interview with Mrs. Anna Ruppert,” 1894, p. 75). Ruppert recounted that the man stated that it would be fine to send the product out of England. She thus stopped selling her Skin Tonic in London, but continued to do so through beauty product traders in Dublin, where it was also illegal to sell poisons as an unqualified person, an Irish law she stated she was unaware of. This resulted in private litigations, such as the case described earlier, from beauty shop-owners who were selling her Skin Tonic thinking they were allowed to do so, as well as

her charges under the Irish Pharmacy Act. She told *The Chemist and Druggist*, “the Irish authorities didn’t treat me anything like as fairly as the London ones. They might as least have given me notice. Not they! I am a lone, unprotected woman,” which prompted the interviewer to comment that she was speaking with “martyr-like resignation, like a youthful personification of Mrs. Gummidge,” the self-pitying widow in *David Copperfield* (“A Fair Litigant’s Bower: Interview with Mrs. Anna Ruppert,” 1894, p. 75). Earlier, as the interviewer waited for Ruppert to become available for the interview, they flipped through her books and noted the “Physiognomical Study of Mrs. Ruppert” that appeared in the first pages of *Natural Beauty* (“A Fair Litigant’s Bower: Interview with Mrs. Anna Ruppert,” 1894, p. 76). The interviewer now recalled one of the physiognomic descriptions of Ruppert in the study: “the tip of her nose indicated self-defensiveness [...] though she never attacks, yet, as regards her just rights, she can hold her own with anyone [...] [and] the length of Mrs. Ruppert’s throat marked great irritability when under restraint” (“A Fair Litigant’s Bower: Interview with Mrs. Anna Ruppert,” 1894, p. 76). The interviewer commented that “had the Dublin Solons been acquainted with these characteristics they might have hesitated before bringing down upon them the wrath of the tip of that pretty nose or the irritability of that throat” (“A Fair Litigant’s Bower: Interview with Mrs. Anna Ruppert,” 1894, p. 76). As the interview ended, Ruppert thanked the interviewer for letting her tell her side of the story, noting that despite all of her efforts to run a successful business, frequently working to the point of falling asleep at her shop “with pen in hand,” no “newspaper man” had ever contacted her to “get at the truth” (“A Fair Litigant’s Bower: Interview with Mrs. Anna Ruppert,” 1894, p. 77).

Controversy ensued after Ruppert was charged under the Irish Pharmacy Act, including in Berlin, where the newspapers “made a great row” about her Skin Tonic, criticizing that it was composed of “nothing but corrosive sublimate, tincture of benzoin, and rose-water” (“A Fair Litigant’s Bower: Interview with Mrs. Anna Ruppert,” 1894, p. 76). In her interview with *The Chemist and Druggist*, she asserted that never denied the composition of her Tonic, and she maintained that those ingredients were harmless and beneficial to the skin and that the sale of her products was still increasing regardless of any controversy (“A Fair Litigant’s Bower: Interview with Mrs. Anna Ruppert,” 1894, p. 76). According to Ruppert’s detailing of her experience with British pharmaceutical law and authorities, the definition of “poison” and popular understandings of how harmful “corrosive sublimate” or “bichloride of mercury” are unclear. “Poisons,” such as corrosive

sublimate, could still be sold to the public, but only by qualified pharmacists. Ruppert stated in her interview that she never denied the contents of her Tonic, but she also never overtly mentioned the contents of her Face Tonic in those terms when referring to the harmlessness of her product in her advertisements, column, and beauty books. Even her post-controversy defence advertisement, which ran in the pages of *Hearth and Home* and the *Queen* in 1893, did not mention the “corrosive sublimate” or “bichloride of mercury.” With the heading “Anna Ruppert on Poisons: Every lady should read this carefully,” the advertisement denied that the Face Tonic contained any “poisonous ingredients” and declared that “where directions are followed, it is absolutely impossible for any injurious results to follow” (“Multiple Display Advertisements,” 1893). She also added, “It is well-known that many of the best patent medicines and doctor’s prescriptions, for both external and internal use, contain poisonous ingredients in small quantities; but it does not in any way follow that these medicines are injurious,” which came close to an acknowledgment that her Face Tonic contained “poison” in harmless quantities, but she still did not mention the specific ingredient that caused the controversy, hinting that she may have assumed her audience would be alarmed by the words “bichloride of mercury” or “corrosive sublimate” (“Multiple Display Advertisements,” 1893). In any case, Ruppert seemed careful in her discussions of her products to avoid directly addressing their contents and instead leveraged the experience of her clients, whom she insisted found the product beneficial.

2.3. Seductive promises of beauty and the imperative of consumer self-regulation

The controversy around Ruppert’s poisonous Skin Tonic reinvigorated a wider debate in the popular and medical press about medicine “quacks” and the vulnerability of women in the face of seductive advertising campaigns promising beauty and youth to those who buy their “secret medicines” (“Selections: The Press, the Quacks, and the Public,” 1894). A similar case to Ruppert’s had already caused a sensation in the British press, namely the 1868 trial of Rachel Levenson². Levenson’s “controversial business practices” resulted “frequent court appearances” which “seemed to confirm doubts

² For more on Rachel Levenson, or “Madame Rachel,” see Whitlock, T. (1998). A “Taint Upon Them”: The Madame Rachel Case, Fraud, and Retail Trade in Nineteenth Century England. *Victorian Review*, 24(1), 29-52.

among critics of cosmetics [...]; backroom beauty was dangerous, duplicitous, and unbecoming of respectable traders and customers” (Clark, 2020, p. 58). In 1893 and for a few years afterwards, Ruppert’s name was mentioned in numerous articles and at least one book about medical ‘quacks’ as an example of the same reckless, profit-seeking, duplicitous merchant who cheated inexperienced female consumers ready to spend large amounts of money to be beautiful.

In this thesis, the Skin Tonic controversy can thus work to introduce a pervasive contradiction that defined the ideal British bourgeois woman: consumption formed the basis for the promise of a healthy, feminine, and respectable self, but desires and impulses in the face of seductive promises of health and beauty were to be strictly regulated. For example, *Exposures of Quackery* (1897), a book authored by ‘the editor of health news,’ criticized Ruppert for taking advantage of vulnerable women for her own gain. The book printed a written testimony from one of Ruppert’s clients who had consulted Ruppert and was given the Face Tonic to cure spots on her face. The testimony outlined a list of symptoms the client experienced, including hand tremors and sleeplessness (‘Editor of “Health News.”’ 1897, p. 69). The book’s author noted that “[h]ad she not, fortunately, consulted a medical man when she did, there is little doubt that, by continuing the use of this lotion, the lady might have died of mercurial poisoning” (p. 69). The client’s health was only one of the “poor victim[s]” of Ruppert’s business: the author also emphasized the high cost of the product she unwittingly poisoned herself with, money that the client “foolishly” handed over to Ruppert only to be poisoned (p. 70). The author proceeded to list several problematic aspects of Ruppert’s business and self-promotion practices, implying that not only was Ruppert a quack, but that she was not very good at hiding it and her marketing could successfully trick only foolish women (p. 69-70). Indeed, the author insisted that Ruppert’s self-promotion was not difficult to debunk. For example, the book argued Ruppert’s own advertisements that claimed she could be consulted at her different shops around Europe were evidence of her lies:

We have stated that Mrs. Anna Ruppert can be “consulted” at Regent Street, London, but in an advertisement taken from a ladies’ journal, no less than fourteen other addresses are given at Brighton, Edinburgh, Dublin, Manchester, and other large British towns, as well as at Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Calcutta, Sydney, etc. Sir Boyle Roche’s bird, which, according to the eccentric baronet, was so swift in its flight that it could be in two places at the same time, sinks into insignificance as compared with

a complexion specialist who can be “consulted” at no fewer than fifteen different places (p. 70).

The book also argued that Ruppert most likely never had a shop in Berlin because, after a visit to the city during which she lectured and advertised her services and products, the “President of Police for Berlin” issued a public notice warning people against purchasing her Skin Tonic because it was overpriced and contained corrosive sublimate (p. 71). The main criticism of Ruppert according to this book was not that her product may have harmed her clients, but that she allegedly made a great profit from selling “corrosive sublimate in water” to unsuspecting customers who believed they were paying for a luxury beauty product (p. 71).

Similar critiques of Ruppert’s business practices were featured in the *British Medical Journal* (BMJ) and the penny paper *The Woman’s Herald*. In 1893, an article entitled “Poison by Advertisement” in the BMJ employed a case of mercurial poisoning caused by Ruppert’s Face Tonic as an example to illustrate the “reckless ignorance” of advertisers who “puff or sell as panaceas preparations of poisonous drugs” to “unsuspecting” customers (“Poison by Advertisement,” 1893, p. 911). The article argued that such advertisements, increasingly featured in the “leading public newspapers and journals,” “gulled” customers “into believing that whether the case be severe or trivial a cure can be effected – out of the same bottle – safely, quickly, and pleasantly” (“Poison by Advertisement,” 1893, p. 911). In a later article, the BMJ argued that the British press had a responsibility to stop the “unrestricted publicity” of “monstrous, dangerous, and palpably false statements and delusive promises put forward by the exploiters of secret medicines” (“Selections: The Press, the Quacks, and the Public,” 1894). They highlighted the physical harm caused to clients, but “worse than this,” they argued, beauty advice columnists and product traders such as Ruppert “openly traded upon the weaknesses, the sins, and the fears” of their readers and sold them products at “preposterous prices” (“Selections: The Press, the Quacks, and the Public,” 1894). In *The Woman’s Herald*, a note under the heading “Puffed Poisons” mentioned the price of Ruppert’s Tonic in the first sentence, then stated,

it will be a good lesson to many who have spent their own or their husbands’ hard-earned money on any of the widely-advertised skin lotions, beautifiers, etc [sic], and who, if they have a grain of wisdom left, will be only too thankful if they have escaped actual injury [...] one scarcely knows

whether to pity or blame women who fondly fancy that every well-puffed nostrum is a sure and a short cut to beauty ("Occasional Notes," 1893).

The slew of critiques and lawsuits against Ruppert were in large part directed at her exploitation of trusting readers and clients. Avoiding further misdeeds committed by beauty product traders such as Ruppert depended on individual women's protection of their own health and finances through the exercise of caution and discipline when it came to seeking information, consulting 'specialists,' and purchasing products in the pursuit of self-beautification. The BMJ article "Poison by Advertisement," for example, highlighted the difficulties and legal roadblocks faced by those harmed by poisonous products who attempt to hold the beauty trader accountable or receive damages. Instead, the article suggested, the public should to be ensured "more complete protection" in the form of more transparency: "the nature and amount of the poisonous ingredients of such preparations should at least be distinctly stated upon their labels" ("Poison by Advertisement," 1893, p. 911). The purchaser of the beauty product could thus look out for poisonous ingredients and make sure to avoid harmful preparations, positioning the purchaser as responsible to know for themselves. In other words, the demand for transparency produced a specific kind of subject that made rational use of the information available. As Kathy Peiss notes, many critics of beautification at the turn of the century would ask, "[h]ow could a rational being eat arsenic to improve her complexion, spread hormones on her face, believe promises of a wrinkle-free future, and pay exorbitant prices for an ounce of prevention?" (1998, p. 6), implying that the irrational, naive woman who let her impulses and desires take control was ultimately responsible for harming herself and, as *The Woman's Herald* suggested, "one scarcely knows whether to pity or blame her" ("Occasional Notes," 1893).

As a result of the poisonous Face Tonic controversy, Ruppert lost her *Hearth and Home* column and never published another beauty book. She insisted business was better than ever in 1893, but by 1894 she was no longer advertising her services or products in women's periodicals and had closed her 89 Regent Street shop. She then attempted a career as an actor, producing and acting in her own plays at the Princess Theatre in London (Pierrot, 1894). Her acting career was a failure, however, and she died of tuberculosis before the turn of the century (Clark, 2017).

Recounting Ruppert's Skin Tonic controversy helps to illustrate the role of consumer self-regulation in the construction of the idealized British bourgeois woman

subject. The controversy also begins to illuminate the wider problematizations of women's health, beautification, and commercial consumption that circulated in the press, especially women's magazines, at the time. As we will see in the next chapter, women's magazines, specifically the fashion and domestic magazines aimed at bourgeois women that flourished between 1880 and 1900 (Beetham, 1996, pp. 113–115), constitute a crucial site where cultural critics, journalists, and domestic and beauty advice columnists produced and debated ideals of British femininity. In the context of rising imperial anxieties and fears around the 'degeneration' of the Anglo-Saxon race, discussions of ideal British womanhood implied, sometimes subtly but more often in stark terms, that wealthy white women should preserve their whiteness and 'refinement' as a moral act of good British citizenship that ensures the continued progress of the 'civilized' race.

Chapter 3. British ideals of white femininity and binary sex in late-nineteenth century women's magazines

This chapter will introduce a set of late-nineteenth century women's magazines and begin to outline how discussions of women's health, beauty, and consumption practices in these publications argued for the preservation of the white, refined British woman who embodied imperial ideals of femininity, thus setting up the backdrop for Anna Ruppert's advice for achieving 'natural beauty' as I will examine in subsequent chapters. The 1880s and 1890s mark a distinct period in the development of the woman's magazine, as detailed in Margaret Beetham's work: "It was in these decades that the 'woman's magazine' assumed the important place in publishing which it still has" (Beetham, 1996, p. 114). This chapter begins by describing two leading women's magazines from the 1890s, *Hearth and Home* and *Queen*, the first section will introduce empirical context around these publications to outline how they imagined their presumed audience, the bourgeois British woman.

The subsequent section will introduce the influential nineteenth century British cultural critic Eliza Linton, who contributed articles to both *Hearth and Home* and *Queen* in the 1890s, to illustrate how descriptions of ideal British womanhood prevalent throughout these publications and Linton's writing work to (re)assert binary sex-difference. This assertion or reassertion of binary sex occurred as anxieties mounted among British policymakers, cultural critics like Eliza Linton, journalists, and medical circles about physical degeneration of the Anglo-Saxon/white race and the deterioration of an empire. The notion of binary sex, which nineteenth century race and sex science deemed was the unique achievement of the 'civilized' races, was reasserted onto the body of the white 'civilized' individual through the regulation of bourgeois white women's bodies. This assertion of sex difference took place with material consequences for poor, disabled, and Black women as 'civilized' was always already defined in opposition to 'uncivilized;' 'refined' in opposition to 'savage;' and so on. The chapter concludes by highlighting how discussions of bourgeois women's beauty, health, and consumption practices in these publications ultimately ask their presumed readers to manage themselves to preserve imperial ideals of femininity and whiteness.

3.1. British women's magazines, their assumed audience, and the construction of idealized womanhood

Margaret Beetham's analysis of nineteenth century women's magazines demonstrates that "the meaning of femininity was and is radically unstable" and that femininity's "relationship to sexuality and the female body had to be constantly re-worked," producing and naturalizing the very concept and materiality of a female body in the process (1996, p. 4). Beetham reminds us that magazines occupy an important place in nineteenth century culture because they addressed anxieties around the unstable category of "woman," which constantly changed and reached moments of heightened crisis especially in the 1880s through the 1890s. Beetham argues that magazines repeatedly, on a weekly or monthly basis, discussed, debated, outlined, and insisted on what womanhood should mean precisely because the category of "woman" "was so slippery" (1996, p. 4). In the next sections, I will provide some examples to show how two women's magazines from the second half of the nineteenth century worked to outline their assumed audiences, carving out certain boundaries for the concept of femininity in the process. These examples are not 'representative' of all journalism at the time, but rather offer a place to begin thinking about the work the magazines I will be analyzing in my thesis sought out to do.

3.1.1. *Hearth and Home*: a domestic magazine for the modern woman

Ruppert published her beauty advice column in the women's magazine *Hearth and Home*. *Hearth and Home* was a weekly periodical priced at 3 pence. It was founded in 1890 and was published by Beeton, who also published other notable nineteenth century women's magazines, including the *Queen*. *Hearth and Home* was absorbed by *Vanity Fair* in 1914. It was understood to be a "middle-class domestic magazine," and the price of 3 pence meant it was not the most expensive magazine on the market, but it was still more expensive than penny-weeklies such as *Woman* (Beetham, 1996, p. 136). *Hearth and Home*'s intended audience was bourgeois women, not working women or suffragettes. The publication conceived of their audience as "angels of the home" who raised children but were also interested in fashion as well as political news (Beetham, 1996, p. 136).

The first issue of *Hearth and Home* included the first of many regular articles named “The World of Women.” “The World of Women” was a column included in weekly editions of *Hearth and Home* that declared an editorial position on issues related to ‘women’ as a group of people whom they acknowledged were not included enough in the masculinized public world. Many other women’s publications at the time published similar discussions, which Beetham terms “‘What Women Are Doing’” columns: the *Queen* had editorials beginning in 1860 that “dealt seriously with women’s position, not only in politics, but in higher education and employment” (1996, p. 91). *Hearth and Home* was sympathetic to demands for more social and political rights from women, but the “World of Women” articles often framed these demands as the domain of the extraordinary individual. In a 1891 *Hearth and Home* “World of Women” article, under the heading “Women Photographers,” the writer announced that a photography exhibition put on by “the talented Dutch lady amateur photographer,” Miss Elout, would take place on Regent Street. The article noted that the exhibition was an example of women overcoming restrictions related to their sex, as the photographer was to display images of a “famous herd of wild cattle,” removing “the reproach that the sex invariably retreats [sic] before any animal with horns!” (“The World of Women,” 1891).

As Beetham notes, although magazines such as *Hearth and Home* discussed women’s employment, education, and political rights, they were unsympathetic to women’s groups and women’s trade unions who demanded to have a voice in politics (1996, pp. 91–92). This is exemplified in another entry in the same “World of Women” article that mentioned the “lady photographer,” in which they oppose the formation of the British Nurses’ Association (1891). Furthermore, Beetham states, “none of these ladies’ papers openly advocated women’s suffrage” (1996, p. 92). An excerpt from the “World of Women” article in the first *Hearth and Home* issue in 1890 further demonstrates how they sought out to position themselves via women’s social and political rights:

“[T]he progress attained by women in any and every department [...] perhaps to point out what remains to be done. [...] We do not profess to desire what the ignorant term the “Emancipation” of our sex, but we do desire freedom, justice, and even generous consideration. For, do what we will, women will remain for many years, for many generations to come, sadly handicapped in the world’s race. [...] No doubt, in the far future, these ills will prove unnatural. While they remain, men will help us endure them; is it too much to suppose that they will gladly help to remove them?” (“The World of Women,” 1890).

The editorial clearly outlined *Hearth and Home*'s ambivalent position on women's "progress": they "desire freedom, justice, and even generous consideration" but they would never argue for "what the ignorant term the "Emancipation" of our sex." *Hearth and Home* promised to provide readers with information about progress in women's social rights, but they assured that progress would undoubtedly be attained as men increasingly became aware of the "ills" women "endure" and will eventually "gladly help to remove them." Suggesting women appeal to the moral sense of men – "men" as a broad social category, usually referring to husbands – to bring about progress and more respect for women was often how *Hearth and Home* ended these editorials.

According to Beetham, *Hearth and Home* was marked by an "insistence that only a few exceptional women could combine work with femininity," and the magazine argued in their opening issue that work may be necessary for some women, but that it should only be pursued if they do not sacrifice feminine qualities of beauty, grace, and ideals of motherhood (1996, p. 136). Beetham notes that in subsequent issues, *Hearth and Home* often used "[t]he techniques of illustrated biographies and interviews" to "represent women writers in terms of their womanly qualities rather than their competence or ability" (1996, p. 136). An 1893 issue of *Hearth and Home* that profiled a painter named Mrs. Amyot illustrates these techniques: the article opened by suggesting many of her friends must have been surprised by her success as a painter, because they know her as "a charming hostess, and the inestimable wife of a West-end doctor" ("In a Lady Artist's Studio (An Hour with Mrs. Amyot)," 1893).

Hearth and Home held negotiated views on women's roles in the public political sphere or in the worlds of employment and education. They acknowledged changing gender norms and the rise of women's movements for political emancipation and suffrage, but often argued that work outside the home or political engagement could threaten to erode a woman's femininity. The *Hearth and Home* reader was expected to want political information, but not to engage in political discussion or action with others in public. She was expected to want 'progress' for women when it came to access to work and education, but only within existing patriarchal structures that prioritized men's political leadership. In sum, *Hearth and Home*'s editorial positions on women's employment, education, and political involvement illustrate how the publication's interpellation of British bourgeois women involved the conservation of feminine ideals. This conservative effort occurred as *Hearth and Home* deemed these ideals as at risk of

eroding in the context of women's labour movements, movements for women's suffrage, and increased access for white wealthy women to education and work outside the home.

3.1.2. *Queen*: aspirational luxury for the 'angel of the home'

The *Queen*, a women's magazine that "gave up half of its pages to advertising by the mid-1880s," frequently featured Anna Ruppert's advertisements throughout 1891 and 1892 (M. J. Smith, 2019, p. 219). The *Queen*, priced at 6 pence, was more expensive than *Hearth and Home* as well as most women's magazines. It described itself as a "illustrated "class" weekly for ladies" (Rappaport, 2000, p. 112). The magazine was founded by Samuel Beeton in 1861, the publisher of *English Woman's Domestic Magazine* (1852–77) and the *Boy's Own Magazine* (1855–74) (Louttit, 2010). The *Queen* called itself a newspaper rather than a magazine and conceived of fashion journalism as news in its own right (Beetham, 1996, p. 88). Like its competitors, such as *Hearth and Home*, the *Queen* "glorified women's role in the domestic sphere by cultivating an elite version of the Angel in the House" and included reporting on international issues and politics (Rappaport, 2000, p. 113). Smith outlines the *Queen's* major preoccupations as "[f]ashion and luxurious living" and notes that "the magazine also included domestic advice such as gardening tips and recipes" (M. J. Smith, 2019, p. 220). Rappaport states that the *Queen* presented a shift from earlier women's magazines in that it represented the traditionally feminine ideal along with newly introduced notions of the unaccompanied woman going out to shop and attend events in public: "[i]f its famous fashion plates and advertisements illustrated a corseted and crinolined female body, the *Queen* also followed this woman as she voyaged abroad [and] visited countless public amusements" (2000, p. 113). The mix of domestic advice, fashion, and politics was not profitable at first and Beeton sold the magazine to Edward William, "who had already acquired more than a dozen "class" periodicals" and "went on to found and edit the Pall Mall Gazette" (Rappaport, 2000, p. 113). Ultimately, the *Queen* was never the most widely read magazine in Britain, but it was acknowledged as one of the most prestigious of women's periodicals, and it "stood out as one of the success stories in this competitive world of female periodical publishing" (Rappaport, 2000, p. 112).

The *Queen's* price, as well as its "lavish production values, including its broadsheet format and hand-coloured fashion plates" and "its print aesthetics and

editorial assumptions about reader income” signalled that its intended audience was wealthy (M. J. Smith, 2019, p. 220). Samuel Beeton, the founder, stated that the *Queen* would appeal to middle-to-upper class women. He stated it would be to “educated women what certain high-class journals are for men – recording and discussing from week to week whatever interests or amuses them” and it would include “a large number of original articles on the daily life of society...on books, music and the theatre...[on] amusements which ladies must pursue, at home and abroad...and on la mode” (Samuel Beeton cited in Rappaport, 2000, p. 112). Rappaport notes the gap between Beeton’s intention for the *Queen* and the actual readership: the price may have influenced the magazine’s readership, but people could still read handed down copies, and many men also read *Queen* (2000, p. 112). Smith also mentions that *Queen* “was likely also consumed by aspirant women who would not have the means to purchase many of the products advertised within it or the status to move within the social circles often discussed” (2019, p. 220).

The *Queen* thus worked in similar ways to *Hearth and Home* to establish negotiated, often contradictory ideals of femininity: the women who read the *Queen*, as we will see in more detail in Chapter 4, were assumed to be both ‘angels of the home’ in addition to shoppers strolling the streets. They were expected to read beauty product advertisements and flip through pages of lavishly produced images of fashionable clothing, but also exercise a great deal of restraint and discipline when it came to making purchases and self-fashioning. The *Queen*’s contradictory positions, of which we have only scratched the surface through a discussion of how the magazine imagined its audience, begin to demonstrate how women’s magazines like the *Queen* at the time constructed and monitored parameters within which readers were expected to form appropriate selves.

3.2. Enforcing binary sex in the late-nineteenth century paranoid empire

The unstable meanings of femininity, meanings that were reworked, asserted, or discarded in places like women’s magazines in the nineteenth century, worked to produce the very concept and materiality of a female body (Beetham, 1996, p. 4). Although gender and sex never existed as fixed and stable notions, late-nineteenth century Britain saw newly intensified struggles around the meanings of masculinity and

femininity (Beetham, 1996, p. 113). This period was also characterized by extensive anxiety among British policymakers, cultural critics, journalists, and medical circles about physical deterioration and degeneration of the Anglo-Saxon white race, anxiety that revolved especially around imperial competition, increased urbanization, and other perceived threats to the 'civilized' British nation (Topdar, 2017, p. 178; Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 2010, pp. 1–2).

These crises of gender, sex, and race were not necessarily coincidental: binary sex, the notion of two distinct, opposite sexes, was conceptualized in the nineteenth century as the unique achievement of the white race (Gill-Peterson, 2018; Schuller, 2018). From this point of view, these crises are intrinsic to one another. As Kyla Schuller notes in her book *Biopolitics of Feeling*, “binary sex does not exist in a parallel or intersecting dimension with race. Rather, the rhetoric of distinct sexes of male and female consolidated as a function of race” (2018, p. 17). Indeed, as Schuller and others demonstrate, nineteenth century evolutionary thought, which itself guided western medical, biological, and physiological sciences at the time, positioned racial groups along an evolutionary ladder: whiteness was equated with progress, capacity for change, and a fully-developed nervous system, whereas blackness and indigeneity were equated with obsolescence, stagnation, and were deemed insensate (Briggs, 2000; Russett, 1991; Schuller, 2018). This evolutionary ladder hierarchized racial populations based on the individual’s capacity to receive, absorb, respond to, and regulate bodily and emotional sensations, or impressions, a capacity termed “impressibility” (Schuller, 2018). Impressibility, which was both “cause and effect of civilization” (Schuller, 2018, p. 15), rendered the ‘civilized’ body potentially too vulnerable to sensory impressions that could overstimulate the nervous system, sending the individual and potentially the race down the path of “overcivilization” or “degeneration” (Briggs, 2000). Sex-difference was thus deployed as a tactic to “stabilize” the ‘civilized,’ impressible, and potentially volatile body by splitting it into two discrete categories: “the sentimental woman, who possessed both a heightened faculty of feeling and a more transparent animal nature, and the less susceptible and more rational man, thereby relieved from the burdens of embodiment” (Schuller, 2018, p. 16).

The following section will examine two case studies taken from nineteenth century British press that exemplify attempts to assert or reassert the notion of binary sex through the condemnation of inappropriate femininities that threaten to undo the

achievements of the 'civilized.' The two case studies, a famous and controversial 1868 article denouncing the deplorable 'girl of the period' by British cultural critic Eliza Lynn Linton and a set of 1893 *Hearth and Home* articles condemning gender deviants, demonstrate how these attempts to police gender boundaries emerge from within imperial and civilizational efforts to counteract alleged racial degeneration. These two cases position the regulation of bourgeois women's bodies as key axes along which the preservation of binary sex and the health and continued progress of the 'civilized' nation were thought to be ensured.

3.2.1. Eliza Lynn Linton and the threat of "The Girl of the Period"

Eliza Lynn Linton was a novelist and the first English woman to become a journalist with a fixed writing post at a newspaper. She moved to London and got hired at the *Morning Chronicle* in the late 1840s (Anderson, 1989, p. 134). Linton began her career "styling herself a freethinker and a socialist" as well as a women's rights advocate, but, in the late nineteenth century, she became increasingly known for her conservative and anti-feminist stances outlined in her many articles deploring various gender deviants, figures such as 'the girl of the period,' the 'girton girl,' and the 'new woman' in women's periodicals such as the *Queen* and *Hearth and Home* and other popular newspapers (Anderson, 1989, p. 134; Rappaport, 2000, p. 113). Linton was just one cultural critic in the vast realm of the late-nineteenth century British periodical press, but, in this thesis, her writing represents pervasive anxieties around the supposed erosion of white British femininity in the press at the time.

Linton's article "The Girl of the Period" originally appeared in 1868 in the *Saturday Review* and caused a storm of controversy: the article became the topic of conversation and debate among readers as well as in subsequent commentaries published in British newspapers (Beetham, 1996, p. 103). In "The Girl of the Period," Linton denounced a type of woman she alleged was morally-corrupted by her commitment to "extravagant" dress and fashion and her admiration and imitation of French "*demi-monde*" women advertised in the periodical press (Linton, 1883, p. 4). Linton warned 'English girls' against giving in to their desires to emulate the dress, hair, and complexion of fashionable ladies because she argued this would lead to the erosion of the "the old English ideal" (Linton, 1883, p. 9). Linton insisted that if women continued in this "manner of life" they would turn themselves into immoral and distasteful beings

(1883, p. 7). She stated, “it cannot be too plainly told to the modern English girl that the net result of her present manner of life is to assimilate her as nearly as possible to a class of women whom we must not call by their proper – or improper – name” (1883, p. 7). Linton did not simply argue that the ‘English girl’ became morally deplorable by being perceived as a sex worker. Rather, she asserted that fashion led to the moral corruption of ‘English girls,’ that attempting to imitate the *demi-monde* fashion led to “fastness” and impropriety: “She cannot be made to see that modesty of appearance and virtue indeed ought to be inseparable; and that no good girl can afford to appear bad, under pain of receiving the contempt awarded to the bad” (Linton, 1883, p. 4).

Linton argued that fashion threatened the ‘English girl’s’ chance of marriage because of her lack of respectability and masculine disposition caused by her use of makeup and hair dye as well as her use of slang and discussion of “doubtful subjects”:

“All men whose opinion is worth having prefer the simple and genuine girl of the past, with her tender little ways and pretty bashful modesties, to this loud and rampant modernization, with her false red hair and painted skin, talking slang as glibly as a man, and by preference leading the conversation to doubtful subjects” (Linton, 1883, p. 8).

Linton’s nostalgia for the “simple and genuine girl of the past” whose main characteristics revolved around notions of delicacy, modesty, and softness was starkly contrasted to the “loud and rampant modernization” caused by cosmetics and the masculinizing effects of “talking slang.” As Beetham states, Linton’s “argument rested on an understanding of dress not as a sign of inner quality but an agent which shaped it” (1996, p. 103). For Linton, indulgence in the luxuries of fashion advertised in magazines *lead to* selfishness, masculinity, and losing out on marriage. Adhering to fashion trends such as dying one’s hair *caused* the hair to fray and stick “out on end like certain savages in Africa” (Linton, 1883, p. 4). Put simply, to Linton, these beautifying practices, fashions, and trends threatened to morph the “simple and genuine girl of the past” into a racialized, masculinized, and sexualized other.

Linton’s insistence on reviving the “simple and genuine girl of the past” was thus as much about preserving the sanctity of marriage as it was about asserting Anglo-Saxon/white racial and imperial superiority. Indeed, much of Linton’s “The Girl of the Period” was spent elaborating on the idea that the “simple and genuine girl of the past” represented the peak of femininity not only in Britain, but in the whole world. Linton

argued that “the old English ideal” was “once the most beautiful, the most modest, the most essentially womanly woman in the world” (Linton, 1883, p. 9). Linton’s idea of the “most essentially womanly women” was English, white, and had a clearly defined and distinct female sex – these characteristics were not all explicitly said as such in her article, but the threatening opposites to the “most essentially womanly woman” were described at length and in detail. In sum, Linton’s conception of ideal womanhood, the “fair young English girl [...] of home birth and breeding,” (1883, p. 9) was repeatedly defined against the French ‘*dévergondée*,’ the less ‘refined’ American, and the ‘savage’ African. The overly sexual ‘*dévergondée*,’ the masculine, ‘unrefined,’ or ‘coarse,’ American, and the ‘savage’ African were racialized others from colonized or competing nations used by Linton to position the British woman, “the old English ideal,” as the whitest, most ‘refined’, and, of course, “most essentially womanly woman,” of them all.

Linton’s “The Girl of the Period” associated sex-difference and the existence of a clearly distinct and feminine female sex with British nationality and whiteness. As Beetham notes, the connection between femininity and British national identity “was central to Linton’s regular column in the *Queen* in the 1890s,” and it was also common in magazines like *Hearth and Home* (1996, p. 133). Her insistence on ‘true’ English womanhood and the influences that threaten it constitute an example of the “historically specific anxiety about the maintenance of [sex] difference” (Beetham, 1996, p. 103). This anxiety was addressed in “The Girl of the Period” through discipline of the individual white British bourgeois woman, insisting that she protect “her tender little ways and pretty bashful modesties” (Linton, 1883, p. 8) from racializing, sexualizing, and masculinizing habits, fashion, and cosmetics. For Linton, the individual white, abled, British bourgeois woman and her capacity for self-discipline were ultimately key to reviving and maintaining “the old English ideal” and upholding white racial superiority.

3.2.2. The impressible body: nervous men and smoking women in *Hearth and Home*

Hearth and Home often began issues with editorials on a range of issues around how women and men ought to act. Many of these articles were concerned with the supposedly eroding boundary between the male and female sexes among ‘civilized’ people. The erosion of sex-difference in these articles was often deemed a ‘modern’ phenomenon emerging in late-nineteenth century especially in urban areas such as

London, and they attributed it to, for example, women increasingly engaging in 'fast' behaviours that allegedly masculinized them ("Should Women Smoke?," 1893), or men newly indulging in fashion and intellectual ventures rather than cultivating their bodies and strength ("Effeminate Men," 1893; "Nervous Men," 1893).

The article "Nervous Men" (1893) began by calling back to a time when women were known for "delicate hysterics" and men were characterized by "natural brutality" (n.p.). The article stated that, "[t]he sexes were, in fact, more opposed to one another than they are now." Indeed, the author(s) made it clear that the "nervous man," a type of man whom they described as overly intellectual and physically "feeble," was a product of modern times. Veering away from masculine ideals of physical strength and vigor, the "nervous man" was "always ready to put aside action for the sake of thought" and believed "the existence led by the brain" was superior to the "existence led by the body." "Effeminate Men" (1893) similarly deplored men who deviated from masculine norms, but instead this article focused on fashionable men who allegedly began to "swarm in London society" in the 1890s. The article emphatically stated that the "effeminate man" was nothing like the feminine woman. Indeed, the feminine woman was "a woman who is natural, who is true to herself, the self that is implanted in her from birth." On the other hand, the "effeminate man," according to the article, was a disgraceful "monstrosity" and a "terrible creature." The "effeminate man" put on a "slight foreign accent," usually French, his hands were "perpetually manicured", he visited West End hairdressers, and he preferred afternoon tea and "chatting" to "athleticism and unrefined and dangerous sports such as cricket or football."

In sum, *Hearth and Home's* articles about "nervous" and "effeminate" men framed the blurring of sex-difference as part of a wider process of a late-century 'degeneration' of the race. Indeed, both articles made frequent mention of 'modernity' and the increased proliferation of these gender deviants on city streets. As explained by Sudipa Topdar (2017), the late-nineteenth century British bourgeoisie was marked by heightened anxiety about the "supposed degeneration and deterioration of the British race caused by industrialization [sic] and urbanisation" (p. 178). According to Topdar, racial degeneration sparked such intense fear among this class of British people because "it arrested society's march towards progress" and thus threatened Britain's status as imperial power (2017, p. 178). Further, as Topdar states, degeneration discourse "promoted the shift towards a preoccupation with the body" and "its

deformities" (2017, p. 178), a preoccupation evidenced in *Hearth and Home's* enumeration of the "effeminate" and "nervous" man's "diseased" physical appearance ("Nervous Men," 1893). The "nervous man" had "blanched cheeks," "faded eye[s]," and "trembling hands" ("Nervous Men," 1893). The "effeminate man" may have looked different from the "nervous man," but the *Hearth and Home* article also picked apart his physical 'deformities', describing his "rouged cheeks and darkened eyebrows" as well as his "thin, high-pitched voice," ultimately deeming his body an abomination and declaring him "a weak-kneed, miserable, vain specimen of humanity" ("Effeminate Men," 1893). These articles were addressed to the assumed readers of *Hearth and Home*, British bourgeois women. They therefore concluded by denouncing women's romantic attraction to these men and insisting that they should not be tolerated by women. This conclusion, like Linton's position on how to counter the threat of the "Girl of the Period," positioned individual British bourgeois women, through their rejection of deviant men, as upholders of the Anglo-Saxon/white race.

Hearth and Home addressed British bourgeois women and their own potentially deviant behaviours more directly in an article about women and smoking ("Should Women Smoke?," 1893). The article argued that smoking looked "out of place" amongst women, and that a "cigarette stuck between her rosy lips" made her look "less pleasing than usual." Most importantly, however, this article opposed a woman smoking because it entailed being around men, an environment that threatened to masculinize her:

...[S]moking certainly detracts from a woman's fascination. [...] And the practice of joining men in the smoking rooms at night, sipping brandy and soda at midnight, and listening to stories that are distinctly on the outside edge, we most strongly object to. If smoking leads to that sort of thing it cannot be too much discouraged. [...] Women can be too much with men. It seems hard to say it, but it is true. We have known, personally, instances of delightful girls who have obviously deteriorated from being too much with the opposite sex. There are times when men should be together, and times when women should be together. A girl is as much out of place at night in a smoking-room as a man would be sewing or knitting stockings in a boudoir at eleven o'clock in the morning. We declare against women smoking not because we think that smoking in itself is actually wrong, not because we are afraid of complexions vanishing, teeth decaying, and so forth; but because we think the practice might lead to harm of another sort, might tend to render girls harder, more mannish, less refined, less delicately charming.

“Should Women Smoke?” argued that “delightful girls” can ‘deteriorate’ in improper surroundings. As the article stated in its conclusion, “the surroundings of smokers are often such that might cause the ethereal beauty of sweet flowers to droop, if not to fade away.” The article thus posited that being around the opposite sex, in “smoking rooms at night,” could impress masculine traits upon women, ‘hardening’ their once ‘delicate’ bodies and minds. Like Linton stated about cosmetics and fashion trends, a woman habitually spending time alongside men and engaging in ‘masculine’ activities such as smoking and drinking in smoking-rooms at night, as opposed to “sewing or knitting stockings in a boudoir at eleven o’clock in the morning,” *caused* her to become “mannish.” I argue that this article drew upon the discourse of impressibility to posit that smoking, and thus spending time in ‘masculine’ environments, affected “the body’s physiological and psychological properties” (Schuller, 2012, p. 281). The article’s positioning of women with “mannish” qualities as “less refined” and less delicate also suggested that the erosion of sex difference was part of a wider process of racial deterioration and a reversal to a ‘primitive’ state characterized by ‘hardness’ and ‘coarseness’ as opposed to delicacy. Once again, *Hearth and Home* addressed the supposed erosion of sex difference by calling upon the individual British bourgeois woman, the ‘sentimental woman,’ to manage her own body, or, more specifically, her environments and bodily impressions, to maintain the delicacy, refinement, and feminine charm characteristic of the ideal British distinct female sex.

3.2.3. Race and binary sex: the ‘civilized’ hysterical woman and hierarchies of sensitivity

The belief that white bourgeois women’s susceptibility and vulnerability could constitute a threat to binary sex, a notion used to differentiate Western ‘civilization’ from the rest of the world and assert imperial dominance, implied regulation of their bodies in order to maintain their sex difference and uphold an empire. Regulation of the individual white woman’s body as locus for populational and racial ‘progress’ also calls back to the history of hysteria. As Laura Briggs demonstrates in “The Race of Hysteria,” the nineteenth century science of hysteria implied confining women to the home and away from causes of “nervous illness” such as professional work, education, or political action, because of the racial threat hysteria posed on the health and progress of the white race (2000, p. 250). Through an analysis of 1880s issues of *American Journal of Obstetrics*, Briggs shows that hysteria, and the similar diagnosis of neurasthenia, which were

understood as diseases of “overcivilization” and thus the “exclusive” provenance of white bourgeois women, constituted a degenerative threat to the ‘healthy’ reproduction of the white bourgeoisie (2000, pp. 246, 250). Indeed, Briggs shows that nineteenth century physicians that contributed to the *Journal of Obstetrics* argued that hysteria “afflicted the sexuality and reproductive abilities particularly of “civilized” women” because, as they insisted, “comfortable living, combined with worry, was making white women of the middle and upper classes soft and decadent” (2000, p. 254). As Cynthia Russet states, hysteria and neurasthenia were understood as nerve exhaustion caused by modern life that made too many demands on one’s attention and body, and, although it was “induced by tensions of modernity,” hysteria “did not strike at random,” its “victims tended to come from the urban middle class, to be slight of frame, delicate, and soft-haired” (Russet, 1991, p. 115).³

The hysterical white woman, according to Briggs, was always constructed against the figure of the “savage” in these texts: “The medical and scientific literature contained not only a portrait of the white, upper-class neurasthenic woman, but also a fully articulated counter-account of the impossibility of hysteria in rural, immigrant, non-white, and “savage” women” (2000, pp. 256–257). Contributors to the *Journal of Obstetrics* argued white women were “weak, frail, and nervous while non-white women and poor people were described as strong, hardy, and prolifically fertile” (Briggs, 2000, p. 247). For the *Journal of Obstetrics* contributors, categorizing racial and class groups into “taxonomies of feeling” (Schuller, 2018), from highly susceptible and sentimental bourgeois white women to enslaved black women understood to be insensate and ‘hard’, justified repeated, invasive, excruciatingly painful, and often failed surgical experimentation on black women: “the frailty and nervousness of one group provided the *raison d’être* of obstetrics and gynecology, while the insensate hardness of the other offered the grounds on which they became the experimental “material” that defined its progress” (Briggs, 2000, p. 247) Indeed, as Briggs states, the constitution of and innovation within the fields of gynecology and obstetrics in the nineteenth century

³ For more information about the medical diagnosis of neurasthenia and late-Victorian understandings of nervous illnesses, see Oppenheim, Janet. (1991). “Nerve Force and Neurasthenia” in *Shattered Nerves: doctors, patients, and depression in Victorian England* pp. 79-110.

“depended on the belief in black and poor women’s “underdeveloped” nervous systems, with a resulting inability to feel pain” (2000, p. 262).⁴

Briggs’ work on the history of hysteria shows how sex and gender are always already “constructed in relation to race, class, and imperialism” (Briggs, 2000, p. 267). This is essential to an analysis of late-nineteenth century assertions of binary sex difference in women’s magazines such as *Hearth and Home* and by cultural critics like Eliza Lynn Linton. These case studies demonstrate that preserving the symbolic and material differentiation of bourgeois white male and female bodies was fundamental to constructing and maintaining the conceptualization of Britain as an imperial power and that whiteness was superior to blackness. Crucially, Eliza Linton and the *Hearth and Home* articles call upon the individual British bourgeois woman to manage and effect changes upon their own bodies as well as their surroundings in order to rehabilitate a ‘degenerating’ white population and a declining empire.

⁴ For a detailed account of the invention of the surgical cure for vesicovaginal fistula (VVF) by James Marion Sims that demonstrates how captive black women’s bodies functioned “as malleable matter for mediating and remaking sex and gender as matters of human categorization and personal definition” (p. 20) in the beginnings of the formation of the field of gynecology in the nineteenth century, see Snorton, C. Riley. (2017). “Anatomically Speaking: Ungendered Flesh and the Science of Sex” in *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity* pp. 17-53.

Chapter 4. Cosmetics, London's West End, and the British woman shopper

Cosmetics and British bourgeois women's shopping constituted crucial sites for negotiating and debating meanings of British white femininity at the end of the nineteenth century. Indeed, beautifying practices and the use of cosmetics as well as shopping in London's West End, activities that British bourgeois women were increasingly participating in at the end of the nineteenth century, were all simultaneously treated as threats to and constitutive of white femininity in women's magazines and in Ruppert's work. Like Eliza Lynn Linton's condemnation of new fashion trends and cosmetics in "The Girl of the Period" (1883), late-nineteenth century women's magazines such as *Hearth and Home* and the *Queen* warned their readers of the disreputable implications of overt beautifying practices and cosmetics as well as the 'corrupting' dangers of London's city streets. Linton herself regularly wrote leading articles criticizing fashion and beautifying practices for the *Queen* starting in 1890 (Beetham, 1996, p. 108). However, at the same time, the pages of these magazines were filled with advertisements for cosmetics as well as the West End shops that sold them. As Kimberly Poitevin notes, in early modern Britain, "[r]eferences to cosmetics [...] denigrated "painted faces" even as they idealized the red and white complexions that women who used cosmetics tried to imitate" (2011, p. 61). In late-nineteenth century Britain, little seemed to have changed in terms of popular views around cosmetics, but it was clear that more and more women were engaging in beautifying practices (Clark, 2020, pp. 2–3). Indeed, Jessica P. Clark states that "Victorian consumers condemned artifice yet actively participated in processes of beautification" (2020, p. 3).

The first part of this chapter will examine the ambivalent interpellation of British bourgeois women to uphold and preserve ideals of respectable bourgeois white femininity through an analysis of Anna Ruppert's self-branding and promotional activities, including her lectures, advertisements, and beauty books, that condemn the use of cosmetics while positioning the pursuit of beauty as virtuous and dutiful. Ruppert negotiates the ideals of white British femininity put forward by Eliza Lynn Linton and *Hearth and Home's* articles examined previously, a process that ultimately helps to illustrate a convergence of commercial and self-branding techniques in Ruppert's advertising and writing, such as the construction of authenticity, personalized and

intimate guidance, and aspirational luxury. This section will then move on to examine the dichotomy between 'painted faces' and 'natural, clear complexions' leveraged by Ruppert in her branding of her Skin Tonic, demonstrating how Ruppert strategically attempted to foreclose accusations of 'corrupting' women with the sale of her beauty products. Ruppert thus sought to uphold and preserve ideals of respectable bourgeois white femininity by branding her Skin Tonic as an antidote to racialized and classed 'corruption' and 'contamination' through cosmetics.

The second half of this chapter begins with a visit to Ruppert's shop on Regent St in London's West End to examine the call upon British bourgeois women to leave their homes and stroll the streets of the West End, constructing an idealized British woman shopper who demonstrated restraint and bodily and emotional management against racialized and classed imaginaries of women who consistently transgressed norms of respectability and decorum. The bourgeois white feminine subject was thus once again entangled between the imperative to 'go public' and its implied demands to protect herself, her respectability, and her body from the racialized and class threats of 'degeneration.'

4.1. "Women Without Cosmetics"

In her account of beauty product advertising and beauty editorial content in popular nineteenth-century women's magazines, Michelle J. Smith argues that late Victorian women's publications, including the *Queen*, framed "the key to true beauty" as "the acquisition of health and a daily regimen of cleanliness," adding that much of the "prescriptions and limits related to women's beauty" remained consistent across British periodicals aimed at women in the 1890s (2019, pp. 220–221). Further, Smith notes that the advice and editorial content in these publications as well as in many beauty advice manuals at the time emphasized the importance of health in the cultivation of beauty and espoused a "nutritious diet, regularly seeking out fresh air and exercise, taking baths, and keeping the face and body clean" as "acceptable methods for the maintenance of health and therefore the production of beauty" (2019, pp. 221–222). This advice was often paired with heavy scepticism around cosmetics and "artificial" techniques for concealing wrinkles or blemishes, which itself "fed into the selling of the daily beauty routine" (M. J. Smith, 2019, p. 222). Indeed, Clark notes that the purchase of cosmetics and other beautifying goods, such as perfumes, hair colour, rouge, powders, and

creams, “was not always a respectable pursuit for British consumers, and especially women” (2020, p. 2). Cosmetics were associated with a host of harmful implications, and readers of periodicals and beauty advice manuals aimed at women in the 1890s were often faced with warnings about the potentially dangerous ingredients in cosmetics.

On a rainy Tuesday afternoon in December, 1892, Anna Ruppert delivered her “famous” lecture, “Women Without Cosmetics,” in London’s Princess Theatre, which was “crowded in every part,” according to reports in the *Queen*, *The Standard*, *The Lady*, *Gentlewomen*, and the *Daily Telegraph*, all reprinted in one of the later editions of Ruppert’s *Book of Beauty* (1892a).⁵ Before the lecture started, the audience members, filling every nook and cranny of the stalls, boxes, circles and pit, listened to an orchestra play selections from “Cleopatra,” an overture composed by Ethel Smyth, an English lesbian composer who later became an influential campaigner for the British women’s suffrage (Fuller, 2008). The *Queen*’s writer underlined the music choice, dubbing it “appropriate” considering the content of the afternoon’s lecture, which would focus on how women can achieve beauty without succumbing to the use of “paints and powders” simply to please men at the cost of one’s health. The curtains rose a little after three p.m. to reveal a stage “occupied by a long Louis XVI table loaded with flowers,” and a “graceful, smiling” Ruppert in a “magnificent” peach-coloured evening gown with a long train “which showed off to good advantage her own exquisite complexion.” The crowd, composed of majority women but with men present “in sufficient numbers”, listened “with breathless attention” to Ruppert lecture on her disapproval of cosmetics and give advice on how to achieve a beautiful complexion without them. On the use of cosmetics, Ruppert delivered her argument with fervour: they were “injurious,” guaranteeing to leave one’s skin worse-off than before any attempt to cover blemishes or fill wrinkles with “paint.”

The lecture concluded with a question-and-answer period, during which Ruppert initially responded to audience members with “wit” and “fun”. She seemingly amused many of the reporters present, one writing that Ruppert exhibited “a vein of characteristically dry American humour [sic].” For example, when asked for a cure for “obesity”, she prescribed “[a] fit of jealousy, or walk six miles before breakfast.” But

⁵ The following account of Ruppert’s lecture is based on the reports reprinted in Ruppert, 1892a, n.p.

towards the end, she began getting some “seriously earnest” questions from audience members, to which she responded with “touching remarks on the mental and moral qualities which adorn the true “womanly woman””. The audience members listened “with that profound silence which marks profound interest” to her expand on the topics of bodily grace, posture, and “dignity of carriage,” which she outlined were as important to beauty as a clear complexion. Cosmetics, in other words, are a last resort and they come at the cost of one’s health: Ruppert, in this lecture and in virtually all her writing, argued that beautification should instead consist primarily of “enhancement of Nature’s aesthetic gifts,” which could and should be achieved through regular hygiene practices such as face washing, use of harmless beauty preparations that serve to preserve or heal, rather than cover up, the “natural” complexion, and a careful evaluation and regulation of one’s eating, movement, and emotions.

Beauty lectures, like the beauty book and the beauty advice magazine column, were branding tools for beauty culturists such as Ruppert to promote “new messages about respectable feminized beauty consumption” (Clark, 2020, p. 142). In “Women Without Cosmetics” Ruppert echoed popular disapproving views on cosmetics, but the *raison d’être* of the lecture itself contradicted its purported message. Audience members filled the Princess Theatre to learn how to achieve a complexion like Ruppert’s, or how to lose weight, or how to get rid of wrinkles, as evidenced by many of the questions asked at the end of the December 1892 lecture (Ruppert, 1892a). Although Ruppert may have spent some time at the beginning of her lectures moralizing her audience about the disreputable potential of cosmetics, the majority of her time on stage was spent explaining how to address blemishes, dry skin, redness, and wrinkles, as well as outlining step-by-step instructions for washing one’s face and brushing one’s hair (Ruppert, 1892b). In a transcript of one of Ruppert’s lectures entitled “Natural Beauty,” also delivered at the Princess Theatre in London in 1892, Ruppert explained why she gave these lectures in the first place: “I do not give the lectures simply because I love to come out and talk to women, because I can always talk to them at my office; but I like to get ladies together and to convince them that I understand something about the profession I have adopted for my livelihood” (Ruppert, 1892b, p. 9). Ruppert’s lectures, rather than simply a regurgitation of widely accepted attitudes around cosmetics serving to moralize her audience, were a self-promotional means of reaching potential clients and establishing a public persona as a ‘complexion specialist’ within a context where

British bourgeois women were expected to be beautiful but not engage in overt beautifying practices or use cosmetics. By positioning herself as uniquely qualified to help women navigate the complex and contradictory terrain of beautification, Ruppert acted as an important mediator of ideals of white femininity and bourgeois respectability.

Scholars such as Crystal Abidin and Mart Ots have examined the role of the 'influencer' in negotiating norms of credibility in relation to commercial practices, highlighting the intricate balancing act many influencers attempt when faced with the "dilemma" of constructing a brand characterized by intimacy and expertise while at the same time promoting and selling consumer products (Abidin & Ots, 2015). This context around current-day 'influencers' provides a useful comparison to understand the social status of the nineteenth century beauty culturist. As Clark states, "[a]cross the Anglo world, nineteenth-century shoppers and retailers struggled with the perceived incompatibility of monetary gain and personal virtue" (2020, p. 17). Sensational articles in the nineteenth century British periodical press abound 'beauty quacks,' "backroom beauty dealings," and "alleged widespread deceit in the course of daily commercial dealings," especially during and after the 1868 trials of "Madame Rachel" (Sarah Levenson), generated anxieties and raised questions around the respectability of beauty traders and their intentions when it came to selling products related to the "sensitive issues of health and the body" (Clark, 2020, pp. 16-17). Individual beauty culturists such as Ruppert thus made considerable efforts in their self-promotion and branding to build trust with current and potential clients.

Ruppert, throughout her *Hearth and Home* column, books, and lectures, would consistently declare her earnest will to help women and reassure that the commercial purpose of her work did not interfere with the truthfulness of her advice, which she assured was always to the best of her knowledge. Further, she saw her relationship with her clients as one of intimacy and mutual love. For example, towards the end her "Natural Beauty" lecture, Ruppert asked that clients only come to her for advice if they truly trusted her:

I am here, of course, in my own interest, as well as in the interest of the general public, but I am here to create in your hearts that admiration which one woman gives to another true woman, because she is a true woman, and not because is on the stage or in public life. I want you to love me. That is saying a great deal, isn't it? Because [sic] women seldom love each other particularly well, however well they may love the opposite sex. [...] I like to

know that, when a woman comes to my establishment, she feels that I am speaking frankly and truthfully to her. If she does not feel so, I would rather she did not come until she really did have a feeling of trust and confidence. As I speak to you it is with the happy consciousness that I am true in what I say, and that I have a right to ask you for the love I wish to inspire in your hearts (Ruppert, 1892c, p. 10).

Building a feeling of intimacy between Ruppert and her clients entailed building a public self-image as a “true woman,” thus leveraging an ideal of authenticity that required Ruppert exhibit vulnerability to her clients who often came to her with personal and sensitive issues around their health and appearance. Brooke Erin Duffy’s work on women’s magazines and the current-day ‘influencer’ provides insight into how authenticity functions as a productive myth serving to produce intimacy and, ultimately, work to distance the influencer from their commercial purpose (Duffy, 2013, pp. 105–106). Duffy’s interviews with fashion, lifestyle, and beauty influencers highlight how the appeal of the blog and the individual influencer lies in “the uniquely personal advice they provide to audiences—as well as the authenticity that goes along with it” (2013, p. 105). Jessica Clark further elaborates on the position of late-nineteenth century beauty culturists like Ruppert as alternatives to the “impersonal nature of “modern” retailing” (2020, p. 161). As Clark states, beauty culturists identified “new needs being unmet by professionalized beauty businesses” and “challenged the anonymity of the expanding urban scene by catering to the individual female consumer” and crafting individualized personal brands that foregrounded authenticity and intimacy (2020, p. 162).

For Ruppert, constructing authenticity within her personal brand meant sharing sensitive details about her own struggle with her appearance: she sometimes told a story about having a large birthmark on her face when she was young in her column, lectures, and books, a birthmark that she considered to be a “great disfigurement” (1892c, p. 11). She told this story during her “Natural Beauty” (1892c) lecture right after explaining the importance of her clients seeing her as a “true woman.” She explained that she was self-conscious of the mark growing up and it caused her “a great deal of annoyance,” but that she was not able to go to a specialist because her “people were poor” (1892c, p. 11). Then, when she turned 14, she “saw an announcement in a small country paper” about the “arrival of a great French skin specialist in St. Louis,” and begged her mother to take her to see him (1892c, p. 11). He told her he could remove the mark, but the cost was too high for Ruppert. She thus asked if there was any way she could work for him and that “in return he might remove the mark” (1892c, p. 11). The

specialist agreed to the proposal, suggesting she help with “the mixing of chemicals” (1892, p. 11). She worked there for months as he treated her mark, which had almost disappeared by the time the specialist suddenly died, leaving her in charge of his business. Ruppert stated that she did not have sufficient knowledge of chemicals at this point, but “began with experimental work” and eventually figured out how to completely remove the mark on her face (1892c, p. 11). She then “began doing business with no money and no experience” and “[s]uccess followed” (1892c, p. 11). She moved from St. Louis to Chicago, and then New York, where she began to do her “most notable work” and took a “course of medicine” in the “field of Dermatology,” which gave her the “professional treatment” knowledge to create her Skin Tonic (1892c, p.11).

Ruppert’s story of overcoming personal struggles, whether true or not, was intended to facilitate intimacy and closeness with her audience. Indeed, she was prompted to tell this story by a member of the audience after she asked if anyone had questions for her, stating, “We are all here, women together, without restraint. There is no reason to be afraid” (1892c, p. 10). Someone asked how she came to adopt her “present profession” (1892c, p. 10). Her answer, which emphasized her own struggles, thus worked as a productive ‘origin’ myth, narrativizing her overall brand as a “true woman,” or ‘real woman,’ who advised from experience, love, and an earnest will to see fellow ‘true women’ look and feel beautiful. However, her brand remained aspirational because her narrativization positioned herself as an extraordinarily hard worker who overcame struggles of poverty and low self-esteem through her own sheer will and boldness. We can thus begin to see how late-nineteenth century beauty culturists like Ruppert employed a range of techniques, such as the construction of authenticity, offering personalized guidance, and the production of an aspirational brand, that today we understand as embedded within the figure of the influencer.

4.1.1. Knowing beauty’s enemies: Ruppert’s self-branding, advertisements, and personalized guidance

In her beauty books, Ruppert argued ‘complexion specialists’ like herself played an essential role in helping women make informed decisions on how to go about beautification and figure out which products to buy. For example, in her first beauty book, she suggested that girls who try to make themselves “attractive” may end up using harmful cosmetics from lack of information and guidance: “[e]very schoolgirl [sic] tried to

make herself as attractive as possible with the use of the pencil and rouge, and sometimes use thoughtlessly harmful preparations because they are not instructed properly" (1890, p. 5). Indeed, Ruppert urged her readers not to "try all the trash advertised" because, she insisted, many beauty products on the market "do more harm than good" (1890, p. 6). She concluded that her readers, including "every mother" who allowed her daughter to use beauty products, should "consult someone who has the knowledge of the skin and its treatment" before purchasing and using any cosmetic or beauty preparation (1890, p. 6). Similarly, in her second beauty book, Ruppert stated, "Do not try unadvised the trashy balms and lotions advertised by "patent medicine" firms, but work to preserve and increase your children's beauty under the advice of some skilled Specialist" (Ruppert, 1892a, n.p.). In both these cases and in many other instances of Ruppert suggesting readers refer to a 'complexion specialist,' Ruppert ultimately invited readers to her shop on 89 Regent St or to write her a letter describing any ailments or blemishes they wished to cure so she could advise them appropriately and guide them away from cosmetics that threatened respectability and physical health.

Ruppert's beauty books and advertising campaigns for her Face Tonic, in which she constantly worked to delineate cosmetics from acceptable 'natural' beautifying practices, illuminate the contradictory demands upon British bourgeois women to work on themselves to maintain civilizational ideals of white femininity without engaging in any overt beautifying practices or using cosmetics. British bourgeois women were thus expected to be aware of the contours of respectable, white femininity with the help of a trusted specialist. Ruppert often emphasized in her books that her readers had the duty to care for their appearances and those of their children: "The most noble beauty, if unattended, will soon lose its charm. The care of the complexion is a duty which every mother owes to her daughters, for their happiness in life depends to a vast extent on the development of their beauty" (1892a). The awareness of the contours of respectable, white femininity entailed recognizing one's obligation to parse through often contradictory information and prescriptive sets of rules as well as moralizing discourses around the limits of respectable beautification, all while navigating advertisements, beauty product information, and promotion in women's magazines for the purpose of making appropriate purchases and consumer decisions. As Smith notes,

"In the late Victorian period, the work of femininity, as it was constructed in many illustrated women's magazines, became increasingly tied to

knowledge about, purchase of, and correct usage of a variety of consumer goods that might be broadly termed beauty products” (2019, p. 219)

Recognizing one’s obligation to the pursuit of beauty as a white woman of a certain class in late-nineteenth century Britain “mandated continual labour” and demanded the “keen attention to practices and products that conformed to and transgressed the ‘natural,’ healthy ideal” (M. J. Smith, 2019, p. 222). Women’s magazines such as the *Queen* and *Hearth and Home* advertised beauty products extensively alongside lengthy articles and columns that debated women’s use of cosmetics and judged which beauty practices were acceptable, healthy, and respectable “in complex and confusing ways” (M. J. Smith, 2019, p. 222). Ruppert’s ads in the *Queen*, according to Smith, “reproduced the accepted rhetoric surrounding beauty typical of women’s magazines, encouraging women to ‘Be beautiful not with artificial means, but naturally so’” (2019, pp. 227–228). An important contradiction underlay this rhetoric: on the one hand, advertising and editorial content in late-nineteenth century women’s magazines “often maintained traditional views about the subjects of beauty, cosmetics, and women’s dress, frequently advocating ‘natural’ beauty and home-made cosmetics” and on the other, they “relied upon promotion of an extensive variety of beauty commodities and introduced the notion of the beauty regimen” (M. J. Smith, 2019, p. 219).

The line between acceptable, harmless beauty preparations and beautifying practices and morally and physically harmful cosmetics was thin and, making the distinction more complex, it was constantly shifting. Throughout Ruppert’s writing, her discussions around which beauty products were considered morally questionable, physically harmful, or poisonous and what was considered a harmless and healthy beautifier was rife with contradiction and overlap. According to Ruppert, cosmetics were “[a]rtificial agents, used to beautify the complexion and to improve the appearance and effect facial changes” (1892a). While she sometimes seemed to broadly condemn the use of all cosmetics, she elaborated on the distinction between cosmetics and harmless beauty product or healthy beautifying practices in her books and throughout her *Hearth and Home* column articles. For example, in her first *Hearth and Home* column article in January 1893, Ruppert explained her understanding of “natural beauty,” introducing her perspective on beauty to her potential new readers and setting the groundwork for her advice columns to come. Ruppert explained that “natural beauty” depended on two conditions: that one cared for the skin and body, and that one did not damage it using

cosmetics, highlighting that damage using cosmetics was worse than doing nothing at all to care for one's appearance. To illustrate this, she employed an analogy between a woman's beauty and a flower:

we see a flower growing, we nourish it, tend it carefully, to see it blossom forth in all its glory. But what aid to we give it? Nothing, save nourishment and proper training. But there is also the wild flower, with no cultivation, rich in its odour, delicate in its appearance, beautiful to the eye, because of its being as nature ordained; but even in its uncultivated state it is natural. Then, if we do not cultivate our beauty, at least we should not damage. Ladies ruin their complexions and the texture of their skin by the use of poisonous applications; it is therefore wise to be very careful to use only the best quality of toilet preparations (Ruppert, 1893a).

Ruppert's advice on cultivating "natural beauty" and healthy beautification almost never failed to land the reader squarely within the nebulous territory of attempting to determine what counted as harmless, natural, and healthy. The difference between "poisonous applications" and "the best quality of toilet preparations" was a question Ruppert constantly returned to throughout her writing as well as her advertisements, and in her attempts to communicate a clear separation between the two, she emphasized her own role as a 'complexion specialist' who could help guide consumers away from the products that threatened to harm the physical body and morality.

4.1.2. Pore-clogging paints and cleansing tonics

Ruppert suggested that those purchasing and using beauty products should look out for signs of poisonous ingredients because they did not necessarily have the knowledge of these products' contents or access to clear lists of ingredients. Beauty product consumers were instead expected to look for clues that could indicate that the product was appropriate and harmless. Ruppert argued that 'clear' or 'invisible' beauty preparations and solutions had less risk of being harmful, directly linking the notion of 'painting' and cosmetics to physical harm to the skin as well as moral harm to respectability. For example, the transparency or opaqueness, texture, and colour were indicators of whether the product would show on the skin, if it was intended to cover blemishes or eliminate them, and if the product was a 'paint' or a cure. Further, as Michelle Smith notes, beauty products "were not as readily browsed in stores given that creams and elixirs were encased in glass jars and tins" (2019, p. 220). Therefore, advertising, advertorials, and beauty advice columns in the periodical press as well as

beauty manuals played an essential role in informing consumers of which products should be avoided and which could be trusted to be harmless to one's body and respectability. This again positioned beauty traders and writers like Ruppert crucial to the process of knowing what counted as a healthy beautifying practice and beauty product.

In her 1893 *Hearth and Home* article on "natural beauty", Ruppert outlined some clues that could communicate a beauty product was harmless: "Nothing promotes ruddy, healthy skin more than [...] a liberal use of good soap. It is rather more preferable to use always clear soap, as it is more likely to be pure; if coloured it can be more easily adulterated" (1893a). The next week's column reiterated the same: "It is impossible to be too particular about the quality of the soap used [to wash the face] [...] The more transparent and unscented it is the better" (Ruppert, 1893b). The "good soap" here referred to one that was clear and transparent and not "coloured", which indicated that it was most likely "pure" and not contaminated with potentially poisonous ingredients. Nowhere was the focus on the safety and health benefits of a clear and transparent solution more evident, however, than throughout Ruppert's extensive advertising for her Skin Tonic. "Mrs. Ruppert's Skin Tonic," as she termed it, was advertised throughout 1891, 1892, and 1893 in publications such as *Hearth and Home*, as well as *Queen*, *The Australasian*, *The Licensed Victuallers' Mirror*, and *The Illustrated London News* as well as in her beauty books.

A HANDSOME
NEW YEARS' PRESENT

Mrs. RUPPERT tells the Gentlemen who are puzzling their
minds
What to GIVE FOR THE NEW YEAR.



MRS ANNA RUPPERT, the Celebrated American Complexion Specialist says: Nothing can be more appreciated than a beautiful complexion and gentlemen can make their wives happy by allowing them an extra 20s., to look fresh and girlish. This is accomplished by the use of Mrs. RUPPERT'S Celebrated SKIN TONIC.

SKIN TONIC is a Cleanser—purifies, tones, and invigorates the skin, removes all the impurities thrown out by the blood's cleansing process, which has settled on the surface of the skin, unable to exude because the pores of the skin are clogged. SKIN TONIC cleanses this clogged matter, and leaves the skin healthy.

As good bracing air is to the system, so is SKIN TONIC to the complexion.

SKIN TONIC is a Cure for Eczema, Salt Rheum, Acne, Eruptions and Discolourations of any nature. It is not a Whitewash, nor a Cover, positively harmless—even for children. No lead, arsenic, or bismuth. Patients are to be seen at Mrs. RUPPERT'S Office having half the face treated, showing a startling difference. No other remedy has ever given such positive proof.

SKIN TONIC (guaranteed) sent all over the world. Read about Mrs. RUPPERT'S famous Lectures—loudly applauded, houses packed, and the Press very enthusiastic over her wonderful remedies.

SKIN TONIC sent anywhere. Price, per bottle, 10s.; three bottles—a Cure—£1 4s. Does not require constant use. Send STAMPED ENVELOPE for further valuable particulars to

89, REGENT STREET,
LONDON, W.

Figure 1 Ruppert's Skin Tonic advertisement

"Advertisements." (1891) *Hearth and Home*, 2(33), p. 189. Retrieved from Nineteenth Century UK Periodicals.

Ruppert's Skin Tonic ads contained a large amount of detail and copy, most of which elaborated for numerous paragraphs on the harmless and beneficial qualities of the product. In one advertisement in the *Queen*, Ruppert's Skin Tonic was described as harmless because it was invisible and transparent: "It is not a cosmetic as it does not show on the face after application" (cited in Smith, 2019, p. 227) In Ruppert's 1892 *Book of Beauty*, she repeated this exact statement, adding, "It is guaranteed harmless, containing no arsenic, lead, bismuth, sulphur, lime, or anything injurious to the skin. Its

effects are always beneficial” (1892a). The importance of advertising in creating an understanding of a beauty product is brought to the fore here. As we know, Ruppert’s Skin Tonic was later revealed to contain corrosive sublimate (bichloride of mercury). Smith (2019) notes that “the authority of a women’s magazine like the *Queen* and the adoption of the features of editorial content could convey an air of legitimacy for beauty products and services,” even beauty products like the Skin Tonic which turned out to be exactly as harmful as Ruppert’s claims to the contrary (p. 227-228). Ruppert, through her advertising campaigns especially, thus did a considerable amount of discursive work to differentiate the Skin Tonic from cosmetics, and the most significant symbol for its differentiation was its invisibility, which directly opposed it to any notion of ‘painting.’

Differentiating the Skin Tonic from cosmetics therefore entailed invoking negative connotations around the practice of ‘painting’ because the Skin Tonic’s ‘invisibility’ was only meaningful when contrasted to the image of the heavy, pore-filling, and opaque coverage of ‘paint.’ Ruppert often highlighted that her Skin Tonic contributed to beautifying the complexion by cleansing the skin and “removing impurities” to produce a “fresh”-looking complexion (Ruppert, 1892a). As Ruppert argued in her second beauty book, her Skin Tonic “cannot fail to clear any complexion and bring back to it the natural freshness of youth, for it draws the impure colouring [sic] matter of any nature, which has accumulated for years, from beneath the outer skin” and “clears thoroughly the pores” (Ruppert, 1892a). As for paint or other cosmetics with heavy, penetrating qualities, she argued that they “fill, clog up the skin so nature cannot do her work” (Ruppert, 1893a). By opposing images of ‘fresh’ and ‘clear’ complexions to heavy ‘impure colouring matter’ that threatened to interfere with the skin’s ‘natural’ state, Ruppert invoked an important late-nineteenth century British beauty norm, “a “non-look,” allegedly natural, fresh, unadulterated, and white” complexion, as Clark states (2020, p. 153). Ruppert’s discussion of heavy, penetrating, and possibly harmful cosmetics was thus imbricated with producing and protecting white femininity from the menacing ‘colouring’ potential of these products. Most importantly, this British beauty norm was always positioned against the raced and classed ‘other,’ in this case, through the opposition of ‘unadulterated’ whiteness and the skin ‘tainted’ by ‘foreign’ cosmetics or the duplicitous potential of whitening ‘paints.’

Kimberly Poitevin's (2011) work on early modern use of cosmetics in Britain points to how whiteness itself as a visible, differentiating "English trait" was in large part constructed by "women's [cosmetically] whitened faces" (p. 62). Poitevin states,

Whatever the reason a woman may have chosen to use make-up, the choice to do so had larger implications with regard to race. In the early modern period, skin color had become an increasingly important signifier, not just of beauty, but of class, nation, and race. [...] In domestic manuals and "how-to" books for manufacturing cosmetics, the artificial red-and-white complexions of English women were often set in contrast with those of darker-skinned peoples (2011, p. 70)

Cosmetics use in early modern Britain produced and solidified the ideal of whiteness in Britain and, consequently, cosmetics eventually began to stand in for a range of anxieties related to 'foreign' threats to imperial racial superiority. Early modern British physicians who criticized cosmetics agreed that British women's skin was more "spongelike and softer than a man's," almost always mentioning the skin's porousness and the possibility of "women's bodies soaking up the materials applied to the surface of the skin" in their critiques (Poitevin, 2011, p. 79). Many cosmetics as well as cosmetic ingredients were imported from "nearly every corner of the world," (2011, p. 75), and, according to Poitevin, cosmetics' "foreign origins" played an important role in many British physicians' concerns about their use among British women (2011, p. 79). One physician, Ambroise Paré, stated that "women who painted their natural skins [...] would gradually find their natural skins permanently blackened" and Poitevin highlights that by invoking images of "unwanted blackness seeping through the skin," (2011, p. 79) these remarks encoded racial anxieties around "race-mingling and cross-cultural contact on [British women's] skins" (2011, p. 63). Popular writing against the use of cosmetics in the early modern period also argued that cosmetics enabled women "of any rank or race to appear fairer-skinned or bluer-blooded," which "inhibited men's abilities to properly distinguish ladies from laundresses, white from black, good from evil, and natural beauty from artifice" (Poitevin, 2011, p. 82). Women's use of cosmetics sparked anxieties among these writers about the unstable visual markers of race, class, and inner moral truth, to which they responded with "anti-cosmetic rhetoric" that "attempted to preserve the illusion of a pure, unadulterated whiteness and to foreclose the possibility of racial and class impersonation" (Poitevin, 2011, p. 82). Therefore, cosmetics were positioned as 'foreign' as well as raced and classed threats to the whiteness they were employed to create in the first place.

This look into the early modern construction of whiteness by cosmetics and the racial and class 'contamination' anxieties they came to symbolize provides important historical context to Ruppert's late-nineteenth century career of giving advice and guidance to women who sought to emulate the British ideal of a 'fresh,' 'youthful,' white complexion without the use of cosmetics. In fact, Ruppert's mentions of cosmetics' potential for penetrability and interference with 'nature' points to both ideas prevalent among early modern anti-cosmetic physicians and writers: that a woman's femininity and respectability, and thus whiteness, can be affected and altered by the penetration of cosmetics, and that these cosmetics could also prevent 'nature' itself, the unaltered outer face of inner morality, from being seen and read by others. In sum, Ruppert's *raison d'être* as 'complexion specialist' promising to help readers and clients differentiate the harmful from the beneficial and the respectable from the disreputable depends on a fear that cosmetics could 'taint' idealized British 'unadulterated' white skin.

Further, Ruppert emphasized the penetrating and 'colouring' dangers of cosmetics while at the same time fetishizing the 'foreign' nature of some ingredients in her beauty products. In her second beauty book, Ruppert discussed the rouge she sold in her 89 Regent St shop as less harmful, less morally problematic, and more 'natural' than others on the market because the ingredients, specifically cochineal, were sourced from Mexico (Ruppert, 1892a, n.p.). In the book, she explained that rouge, if one considered it essential to their toilet, must at least be carefully prepared by "an experienced Dermatologist," because the rouge sold by "druggists and other dealers" was often made cheaply and fabricated from "minerals destructive to the skin" (Ruppert, 1892a, n.p.). According to Ruppert, good quality rouge was not harmful so long as it was made from the cochineal insect sourced from Mexico. She assured that her rouge, sold for 2 shillings and 6 pence according to the price list at the end of the book, was of "the finest quality known to the world," and that the ingredients were "harmless" because of their 'natural' rather than artificial state (Ruppert, 1892a, n.p.). As Ruppert elevated white skin as the only possible and uniquely British beauty ideal, she leveraged a colonial imaginary of places like Mexico as an 'untainted' place to source and extract the best quality ingredients for her luxury, non-threatening beauty products. As Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska states, this combination of "notions of British superiority with an interest in non-Western practices" was typical of physical and beauty in late-nineteenth century Britain (2010, p. 7). For Ruppert, exoticizing Mexico allowed her to source ingredients

that could not be extracted in Britain, such as cochineal (Poitevin, 2011, p. 76), and attempt to shape her product into a non-threatening version of rouge that could be sold to and used by respectable, white British bourgeois women without the potential moral or physical 'harm' of being associated to or overtaken by the racialized and lower-class 'other'.

Finally, it is impossible to discuss how cosmetics are an important site for constructing meanings of Britishness regarding race and class without mentioning Ruppert's Skin Tonic's US branding and its intended uses. As mentioned briefly in Chapter 2, Ruppert's Skin Tonic was marketed as Face Bleach when she was based in New York in the 1880s (Peiss, 1998, p. 85; M. J. Smith, 2019, p. 227). Although its branding changed when Ruppert arrived in London in the early 1890s, she still emphasized its skin-lightening properties in her books and *Hearth and Home* beauty advice column, especially when she suggested it as a treatment to remove moles, freckles, dark spots, and sun tan on the face and body (1892a, n.p.). She also often claimed her Skin Tonic could rid the skin of "coarseness" and "roughness" accumulated through, for example, exposure to strong winds (1892a, n.p.). The terms "coarseness" and "roughness" were almost always opposed to notions of "refinement" and "softness" in Ruppert's writing (Ruppert, 1892a, n.p.). Further, Ruppert explained in her second book that the Skin Tonic "gently remov[ed] the dead surface of the cuticle that covers the pores" and "cleans[ed] the latter of all poisonous fillings," arguing that the product literally removed the most surface layer of the skin and any 'foreign' elements that had penetrated its pores to uncover a "clear, smooth and fine" complexion from underneath its 'coarse,' freckled, or tanned surface (1892a, n.p.) This emphasizes how the uses and effects of Ruppert's Skin Tonic were imagined and described in terms of race. The idea of removing the most surface layer of the skin to expose 'natural' beauty of the skin underneath is evocative of other nineteenth century images of 'cleansing' the body of racializing signifiers. For example, Pears soap famously imbued their product with powers to renew, rejuvenate, and whiten the body in their nineteenth century advertisements (Heath, 2009, p. 181). Ruppert's Skin Tonic's branding as an 'invisible,' harmless beautifier implied more than differentiating it from cosmetics, and not just because of its explicit branding as "Face Bleach" in the US. The Skin Tonic as Ruppert discussed it throughout her books, advertisements, and columns was intended for British bourgeois women to use in their quest to emulate an idealized white British beauty.

Ruppert's self-promotion as a 'complexion specialist' promised to guide women through the complex territory of health and beauty information and away from the threats of cosmetics and towards the cleansing properties of her tonic, maintaining the ideal of allegedly 'unadultered,' 'natural' white complexion as a defining trait of 'true' British women.

4.2. "A glimpse of fairyland": shopping on Regent St in the 1890s

Anti-cosmetics rhetoric and the advertising of non-cosmetic, 'harmless' beautifiers such as Ruppert's Skin Tonic served as important sites for the construction of an idealized 'unadultered' white British beauty, and this ideal was always articulated, whether implicitly or explicitly, in opposition to a racialized and classed 'other.' In the following section, the idealized white bourgeois British woman is further examined through her interpellation as a shopper. Specifically, in the late-nineteenth century, bourgeois British women were increasingly leaving their homes to stroll the streets of London's West End and visit shops and department stores. Beginning with a description of Ruppert's shop at 89 Regent St, this section outlines the context in which bourgeois British women began to shop in public. The section will then analyze a *Hearth and Home* article that drew upon the discourse of sensibility to establish the contours of the respectable woman shopper, who was characterized by restraint and self-control. The empirical context about the bourgeois British women shopping in the West End and the *Hearth and Home* article will demonstrate that the regulation of white women's bodies depended on race and class hierarchies, ultimately serving the civilizational purpose of upholding and maintaining an empire.

An anonymous "press extract" included in Ruppert's second book details a visit to Anna Ruppert's London head office and "reception rooms" at 89 Regent Street, a visit the writer describes as "a glimpse of fairyland" (Ruppert, 1892b, p. 30). The writer details their exploration of the office's various rooms, all "thronged with visitors" and "alive" with "girl attendants [...] with beautiful complexions" busy with clients or bottling the "immense tanks of Skin Tonic" for distribution (1892b, p. 30). Anyone who visited Ruppert to be "courteously and gratuitously given" advice, according to the writer, would be invited into a "palatial" property of "extreme elegance and beauty" complete with "electric light, palms, and tapestry" as well as "exquisite pictures, handsome books, and

delicious perfumes” (1892b, p. 30). Ruppert’s private consultation rooms were “decorated in pink, cream, and gold” and featured “an abundance of flowers and elegant articles of all descriptions,” and the tea-room had “pianos, guitars, and banjos” at the disposal of clients for entertainment (1892b, p. 30). The writer emphasizes how well business seems to be going for Ruppert, stating,

Mrs. Ruppert’s private secretary is writing as if for dear life; the cashier is so busily engaged with invoices, accounts, and cheques, that he hardly notices my presence; [...] from which I infer that Mrs. Ruppert is one of the busiest ladies in London [...] I can vouch for it that Mrs. Ruppert is a very clever lady, and her establishment is one of the greatest successes of modern days (1892b, p. 30).

The descriptions of Ruppert’s 89 Regent Street shop illustrate a thriving business run by a positively entrepreneurial woman where bourgeois clients could spend an afternoon receiving beautifying services such as manicures and relaxing in the reception rooms with tea and music or speak to Ruppert in a private consultation room to get advice on treating a particular bodily ailment. The press extract also signals a form of aspirational bourgeois luxury that straddled the line between respectable English aesthetics and over-the-top French exuberance, seemingly directly toying with the fears of ‘foreignness’ evidenced in Eliza Lynn Linton’s writing. Ruppert’s shop, and Regent Street, were both indeed associated with fantasies of ‘foreignness’ and luxury that served to position them as sites of pleasure and consumption that bourgeois women were expected to enjoy with caution. Again, the imperative to consume was paired with the demand to exhibit restraint: consumption was positioned as the means to achieving idealized, ‘refined,’ white bourgeois femininity, but it also contained an inherent threat to the respectability and purity of the white bourgeois British woman subject.

Regent Street, and Ruppert’s shop, were situated in the West End, a part of London’s urban centre that was increasingly referred to as the “pleasure capital” of late Victorian England by many journalists and commentators at the time, as outlined by Judith Walkowitz in her study of the bourgeois Victorian woman who were “going public” at the end of the century (Walkowitz, 1998, p. 3). Indeed, historian James Stark states that beauty culturists like Ruppert “established London” and the West End in particular “as the centre of British cosmetic fashion and style” (2020, p. 173). The West End was also understood through its long term occupiers: in the sixteenth century, the aristocracy began moving into its squares, and, by the early nineteenth century, “the West End

came to stand for Society” (Walkowitz, 1998, p. 22). In the mid-nineteenth century, however, the West End began undergoing significant transformations. While it continued to be associated with wealth, the region also became “a site of mass consumption, a shopping and entertainment center” (Rappaport, 2000, p. 4). Before the nineteenth century, the buying and selling of goods more often took place in London’s city centre, but by the mid-nineteenth century, the city centre became more of a financial district and “came to be perceived more or less as a masculine and serious preserve” while retail shopping increasingly moved to the West End: “By the 1860s, “ladies” shopped in the West End, especially Regent Street, Oxford Street, Old and New Bond Streets, the Strand, Piccadilly, the Burlington Arcade, Leicester Square, and Tottenham Court road” (Rappaport, 2000, p. 8). According to Rappaport, the West End soon “became famous for having some of the most sumptuous boutiques, innovative stores, and pleasurable amusements in Europe” (2000, p. 8).

In her study of the late-nineteenth century female shopper in London’s West End, Erika Rappaport analyzes “the production and consumption of a set of discourses that constituted the city as a pleasurable arena” for bourgeois women, and argues that the West End was in more ways than one an “imagined territory” constructed with the wealthy woman consumer in mind (2000, p. 4). Rappaport emphasizes that “there is no single West End,” and multiple imaginaries of the space, its purpose, and associated gendered expectations overlaid each other and influenced the construction of physical infrastructure and vice-versa (2000, p. 9). As for Regent Street, the area seemingly preserved its association with the region’s historic ties to aristocracy and wealth. Regent Street was synonymous with “royal power and prestige,” according to Walkowitz, and it “housed a public form of aristocratic consumption and display” (1998, p. 9). Walkowitz notes that “the emporia of Bond Street and Regent Street retained their small scale and aristocratic tone” and “shopkeepers actively cultivated a Parisian impression to attract female custom” (1998, pp. 9, 3). Cafes, small perfumeries, and beauty service providers such as Ruppert who crafted unique, personal experiences for their bourgeois clients proliferated along with many other urban amenities reminiscent of Paris, a way to “bring the boulevards to London” (Walkowitz, 1998, p. 3). This Parisian imaginary overlaying the area also had negative connotations, however, and Regent Street, a “fairylane” of consumer pleasures, was also associated to danger and sex. As Lynne Walker demonstrates in her work on women’s consumption of urban space during the second

half of the nineteenth-century, public discussions of women's presence London streets were dominated by concerns about "respectable" middle-class women being mistaken for sex workers. Regent Street was "by day one of the most elegant shopping streets in the world" and by night, the street also became a well-known location for purchasing sex services (Walker, 1995, p. 75). Furthermore, according to Jessica P. Clark, the West End was understood in opposition to the East End, a working-class neighbourhood: "In the Victorian period, popular understandings of London's social geographies included an imaginative rupture dividing an allegedly civilized West End from its squalid neighbor to the East" (2020, p. 13). Walkowitz notes that the physical presence of the very people who built the West End's "fairyland" of lights, shops, and window displays was obscured as they were segregated to the East End of London, but this did not eliminate anxiety around potential disruption of this privileged space of consumption:

This segregation may have erased the most notorious local signs of economic exploitation and social unease [but] it could not obscure the fact that the metropolis, besides being a city of consumption and display, was also a city of production, service, and exchange [that] was dependent on immigrants and large masses of working people whose very proximity to the core posed real and imagined threats (1998, p. 4).

The "glamorous and dangerous" sides of Regent Street and the West End created contradictory but mutually constitutive expectations for bourgeois women (Rappaport, 2000, p. 10). Rappaport argues that female readers of fashion magazines and feminist journals encountered "dauntless heroines who safely and fashionably traveled alone in the city" as well as stories of a city that "devour[ed] daughters" (2000, p. 109). These contradictory narratives worked to create specific prescriptions for "rationalizing consumption" among bourgeois women according to Rappaport, and women's magazines such as *Hearth and Home* outlined how women could safely enjoy a day out shopping on Regent Street, a place known for its sumptuous pleasures, without "making a spectacle of themselves" and escaping the bounds of respectability (Rappaport, 2000, p. 110).

Media, in this case the late-nineteenth century women's magazines that Beetham argues outlined the bounds of the idealized British femininity against "various deviant femininities" (1996, pp. 114–115), played a role in guiding, informing, and resourcing their assumed bourgeois audience for creating and fashioning an appropriate self-as-shopper, advice that attempted to smooth out the contradictions of a city

beckoning British bourgeois women to come enjoy its pleasures on the one hand, and, on the other, threatening to render them 'fallen women.' According to Beetham, "the definition of women as 'shoppers' became central to the magazines' advice columns" during the 1880s and 1890s (1996, p. 8). It serves as an important reminder to mention here that in the 1890s, chaperones no longer accompanied bourgeois women to the city (Walker, 1995, p. 79) and women's magazines sought "to prepare female readers for their urban adventure as consumers of visual display, while condemning some female peripatetic for their excessive display and appetite" (Walkowitz, 1998, p. 6). Idealized bourgeois British women shoppers described in these magazines were thus "level-headed" women, as one *Hearth and Home* column termed them: a shopper that "looks on life with a calculating eye" and can "pla[y] a great game of chess with unflushed cheeks" ("Extravagant Women," 1893). The "level-headed" woman "knows, with deep, unsparing knowledge, the exact value of money, and this knowledge enchains the minds of men of a certain calibre." Of course, the "level-headed" woman is described against her opposite, the "extravagant" woman:

"The extravagant woman, on the other hand, often sinks hers upon rocks which she actually sees but takes no trouble to avoid. Indeed, she positively seems to run the ship deliberately upon them in order to precipitate a catastrophe. [...] The extravagant woman finds she cannot pay one bill, and so, from a kind of uneasy fear of being slightly in debt, she often launches out recklessly, plunges into the river, and is sometimes almost unable to keep her head above the water. That head, by the way, has generally a good deal of the feather about it. The number of grossly extravagant women who carry the burden of their debts about London society is enormous. Many of them are very rich, but that fact does not prevent them from out-running the constable [...] Once beauty told us the other day that she owed her dressmaker two thousand five hundred pounds, and that she saw no more prospect of paying her than of paying the National Debt. [...] And so the snowball of debts rolls merrily on, gathering portentous size in its progress. Once a woman has got into debt she seems to lose her head. The plunger spirit seizes her. She does not care what she does. Her balance is lost. She lets herself be caught like a grain in the whirlwind, and danced over and into any number of pitfalls and abysses. A woman in debt is generally a reckless woman, not only in money matters but in the other affairs of life. [...] Extravagance, nowadays, is almost a disease with many women. They spend wantonly for lack of anything else to do, as it seems. [...] And so Bond Street is crowded in the morning. This may be good for trade - when the bills are eventually paid, if ever - but how bad it is for character?"

The "extravagant" woman was seemingly purposefully reckless, let herself be swept away by the "whirlwind" of spending and debt. She was rich but spent so much and so

mindlessly that she could not bring herself to pay off her debts. She was adorned with “a great deal of the feather,” and, importantly, her destructive money habits were directly linked to her character. Described in detail in the *Hearth and Home* article, the “extravagant” woman served to warn the reader against “los[ing] her head,” spending with mindless abandon, and racking up debts up and down Bond Street, lest she be perceived as inappropriate and of bad character, threatening not just her own respectability but the very order and success of business in the West End. Shopping on As mentioned, Regent Street was “associated with the unrestrained license and sensuous pleasures” (Walkowitz, 1998, p. 4), and *Hearth and Home* addressed this by demanding that their audience restrain themselves, control their spending, and avoid exhibiting “extravagant” behaviours that threatened their character.

Importantly, the restraint and the ‘level-headed,’ rational, and ethical consumption behaviours expected of bourgeois women depended on an imaginary of idealized ‘English’ behavior and decorum as opposed to irresponsible, reckless, as well as ‘painted’ and adorned ‘other.’ Like Eliza Lynn Linton’s “The Girl of the Period,” the ‘corruptive’ forces that threatened to taint a British bourgeois woman’s character in “Extravagant Women” are coded as non-British and ‘foreign,’ and, in both these cases, British bourgeois women, if not properly informed, guided, and protected, always risked falling into disreputable, poor, and ‘uncivilized’ circumstances.

“Extravagant Women” thus points once again to how idealized white Britishness was constituted by its relative position in race and class hierarchies. Scientific as well as wider cultural narratives at the time understood the Anglo-Saxon, white, and wealthy individual and population as the epitome of ‘civilization,’ and the “sentimental woman,” as Schuller (2012) explains, was characterized by her ‘delicacy’ and impressibility, and thus also by her vulnerability to sensations and ‘degenerative’ influences (p. 281). As we have seen, the threat of generalized susceptibility among ‘civilized’ populations posed by their capacity for impressibility was foreclosed by the concept of binary sex: by splitting the biological body into two distinct sexes, the ‘rational male’ could benefit fully from the epistemological functions of sensibility, or the combination of “physical sensation and moral sensitivity” (Riskin, 2002, p. 2), without the burden of embodied excess (Schuller,

2018, p. 16).⁶ Kyla Schuller demonstrates that these ideas of “embodied, sensory knowledge” provided a “discourse of sensibility” that was a “constitutive element of nineteenth-century science” (2012, p. 280), including race and sex science.

The discourse of sensibility, most importantly, contained “a fantasy of the ability of the civilized to master the biological body” (Schuller, 2012, p. 279), and I argue that “Extravagant Women” drew upon this discourse in its construction of the idealized British woman shopper. The delicate “sentimental woman” was safest at home and away from “degenerative influences,” but *Hearth and Home* negotiated this idea with its interpellation of British bourgeois women as consumers by invoking the ‘civilized’ British woman’s capacity for self-regulation. The rhetoric of restraint, asceticism, and self-control in “Extravagant Women” ultimately served as an attempt to protect the ‘civilized’ British white wealthy woman from the potentially ‘degenerative’ environment of West End streets. The “Parisian impression” (Walkowitz, 1998, p. 3) of Regent and Bond streets, the West End’s association with feminine consumer pleasure but also masculine sexual pleasure, as well as its proximity to working-class neighbourhoods were all implied when *Hearth and Home* insisted that their audience manage themselves to protect their ‘character.’ Therefore, the interpellation of bourgeois British women as shoppers in “Extravagant Women” demonstrates how the regulation of white women’s bodies depended on hierarchies of race and class. The call upon individual wealthy white women to restrain themselves in the land of sensuous pleasures was a call in the name of the ‘civilized refinement’ of Britain and the Anglo-Saxon/white race as a whole.

⁶ As Jessica Riskin’s (2002) work on sensibility and enlightenment science shows us, the notion of sensibility was constituted by the separate but similar ideas of sensation and sentiment. Beginning in the eighteenth century, John Locke’s theory of a “sensationist epistemology” (1690) posited that “the mind at birth was a blank slate, and that all its thoughts were inscribed upon it by the outside world, with the instruments of inscription being the body’s five senses” (2002, p. 2). The theory that knowledge was acquired through sensation, or physical impressibility, was expanded further by Diderot in the middle of the eighteenth century to include “emotions and moral sentiments,” transforming the meaning scientific empiricism into “knowledge that arose from physical sensation” and “equally in emotion” (2002, p. 2, 4). See Riskin, J. (2002). *Science in the age of sensibility: the sentimental empiricists of the French enlightenment*. University of Chicago Press.

Chapter 5. Late-nineteenth century beauty and physiognomy

This chapter will examine Ruppert's beauty advice in detail, especially her advice around the beauty regimen, to show how she positioned beauty as achievable through self-management, specifically through the control of and response to sensation and emotion. The focus of most of Ruppert's beauty advice was the face, with particular attention to treating the 'complexion' and its blemishes, ailments, and so on. The topic of wrinkles came back repeatedly throughout her books, advertisements, and her *Hearth and Home* column. Ruppert's advice on wrinkles demonstrates best how she understood self-management as the primary means for achieving beauty. This advice also shows how physical beauty of the face, for Ruppert as well as many other beauty culturists and writers at the time, consisted first and foremost of a well-regulated, beautiful soul.

The idea that the face reflected a person's character and inner constitution was central to the disciplines of physiognomy and phrenology. As Allan Sekula states, the related disciplines both depended on the "belief that the surface of the body, and especially the face and head, bore the outward signs of inner character" (1986, pp. 10–11). Physiognomic beliefs and ideas "achieved almost universal penetration into the Victorian consciousness," according to Sharrona Pearl (2010, p. 2). Physiognomic principles made their way into almost every aspect of nineteenth century vision, and practices of visually taxonomizing character traits had "broad appeal" for artists and the general British populace (Sekula, 1986, p. 12) who underwent "physiognomic training" to represent and communicate character traits through generally-accepted visual shorthands (Pearl, 2006). Indeed, physiognomy had "increasing prominence [...] as a way of seeing in nineteenth-century England" (Pearl, 2009, p. 300). Pearl demonstrates that physiognomy informed nineteenth century representational practices such as acting, lighting the stage, writing fiction, and painting (2006, 2010) as well as scientific approaches to, for example, psychiatry (2009).

Physiognomy as a way of seeing had fundamental implications with regard to the body's relation to "forms of institutional and discursive power" (Crary, 1990, p. 3). Indeed, physiognomy and phrenology as "comparative, taxonomic disciplines" served to legitimate on the visual and quantifiable grounds of bodily measurements the supremacy

of certain character traits and intellectual abilities and, by implication, attribute them to certain body/face-types (Sekula, 1986, p. 12). Roger Cooter notes that the fact that phrenology studied the head and no other body-parts, such as the heart, the genitals, or the hand, elevated “the seat of intellect” in “the body hierarchy” (1984, p. 110). Physiognomy and phrenology as visual systems for quantifying, taxonomizing, and hierarchizing human bodies along the lines of ‘inner character’ and ‘intellectual refinement’ did not achieve scientific status in the nineteenth century because efforts to institutionalize and legitimize phrenology within elite scientific associations failed for various reasons, including internal disagreements and because of the disciplines’ popularity among non-scientific circles (Cooter, 1984; Shapin, 1979), but phrenological and physiognomic practices and beliefs nonetheless “established in the public mind the notion that human behavior was capable of classification and measure” (Cooter, 1982, p. 271). Physiognomy and phrenology were flexible disciplines, and their exact principles, beliefs, or rules differ among their widespread and diverse applications throughout the nineteenth century. However, the ways of seeing established in part by physiognomy and phrenology set conditions of possibility for the subject and their relative place in a hierarchy that quantified ‘inner character’ and ‘intellectual capacities’ through facial and head types, which were always already racialized, gendered, and classed bodily categories. Put more specifically, the ideals placed at the top of the physiognomic and phrenological hierarchy, such as “genius, virtue, and strength,” were only ‘measurable’ when “charted [...] in relation to zones of idiocy, vice, and weakness,” as Sekula states (1986, p. 12). In keeping with the argument running through this thesis, the white bourgeois woman imagined as the epitome of idealized Britishness only existed against the threats of racial degeneration or moral corruption emerging from “the terrain of the *other*” (Sekula, 1986, p. 7), and physiognomy and phrenology were yet another set of tools and justifications for the preservation of this idealized Britishness from those threats.

5.1. Self-regulation and physiognomic transformations

Pearl notes the prevalence of “pocket physiognomy” on late-nineteenth century city streets as part of the deeply ingrained physiognomic way of seeing in Britain at the time. To see and be seen in crowded London streets took on increasing importance in the everyday lives of bourgeois Victorians at this time, and the doctrine of physiognomy

had a particular appeal among these classes as “a way to make sense of the city by providing a justification for visual judgment” (2010, pp. 2, 19). The appeal of practical and instructional lectures and paperback guides on physiognomy existed in the context of growing physiognomic literacy among Victorians, and physiognomy itself endured at the time not as a formal science, but rather as tacit knowledge, as “pocket physiognomy” (Pearl, 2010, p. 27). For nineteenth-century Londoners, “[p]hysiognomy offered a way to mediate the unprecedented volume of interactions” and reading faces was heralded as a practically ubiquitous tool for navigating everyday life in the crowded city streets and avoiding dangers which otherwise seemingly mixed imperceptibly into the crowd (Pearl, 2010, p. 19). As Pearl notes, physiognomic analysis was used to provide reassurance “in the context of human interaction by acting to turn visual observation into a source of information and power,” (2010, pp. 26–27) acting as a “physiognomic fantasy of visual dominance over the urban landscape” (2010, p. 32). The concept of physiognomy was also flexible enough to be used to gain knowledge of oneself and adjust one’s self-presentation according to the metonymical signs of physiognomy. Pearl explains that “[a]s Victorians became physiognomically literate, the purview of physiognomy shifted from a mechanism to get information to a means of self-consciously giving information” (2010, p. 7) through the careful adjustment, concealment, or addition of visual signs widely understood to project certain “character messages,” signs that included “clothing, accessories, posture, and, of course, facial features and expressions” (2010, p. 9).

Similarly, Sarah Lennox (Lennox, 2016) demonstrates that many mid-to-late-nineteenth century beauty books and guides invoked Lavaterian physiognomic principles in their beauty advice. In the late-eighteenth century book *Essays on Physiognomy*, John Caspar Lavater argued that “frequent repetitions of the same state of mind impress, upon every part of the countenance, durable traits of deformity or beauty” (cited in Lennox, p. 13). This principle was still and increasingly being invoked by many beauty writers almost one hundred years later, advising readers to cultivate their “character and beautify the soul” to beautify their physical appearance, and insisting that repeated “ill-natured” thoughts left permanent marks on the face (Lennox, 2016, pp. 9-10). The knowledge of physiognomic signs provided the key to beauty for these writers, positing the regulation of the soul as a means for preserving or cultivating idealized faces.

The idea that one could change their behaviour and thus the look of their face was central to Ruppert’s advice for preserving and achieving beauty ‘naturally.’ Indeed,

physical appearance for Ruppert reflected a well-regulated sentimentality, positioning the proper management of emotions and the capacity for moral thinking as keys beauty. Importantly, the idea of beautification through regulation of thoughts and emotion presupposed that the body itself was malleable, a notion that depended on the “fantasy of the ability of the civilized to master the biological body” (Schuller, 2012, p. 279). This conception of self-control drew upon epistemic fantasies of mind-body linkage (Valverde, 1998, p. 2), a capacity thought to be the sole achievement and property of white, wealthy, and thus ‘civilized’ people (Schuller, 2018, p. 15). The following section will examine Ruppert’s advice related to the beauty regimen, specifically the prevention and treatment of wrinkles. Ruppert’s beauty regimen advice reflected the physiognomic principle that the face reveals the truth about a person’s mental and moral constitution. Ruppert’s work can thus demonstrate that beauty in late-nineteenth century London depended on the categorizing and ranking of bodies along the lines of race, class, and gender, and positioned the white woman as the idealized, self-managed, and malleable individual responsible for protecting and ensuring the continued progress of the ‘civilized’ race and the empire.

5.1.1. The physiognomic dimensions of Anna Ruppert’s beauty regimen advice

As discussed, one of the key goals of Ruppert’s advice, beautifying techniques, and products was to preserve already present, “natural” beauty. Beautifying or creating beauty, especially with the use of cosmetics, was understood as secondary to preserving what was ‘naturally’ there. For Ruppert, preserving beauty meant to care for the complexion and the body in the right way and on a regular basis. Care of the self must become habitual, and the creation and maintenance of a suitable everyday beauty regimen helped to ensure the preservation of “natural” beauty and youthful appearance, which consisted primarily of a smooth, firm, and white complexion according to Ruppert. Ruppert’s idea of a proper beauty regimen depended on critical examination of the self and the implementation of corrections through disciplinary self-monitoring. An essential component of crafting the beauty regimen for Ruppert was thus becoming conscious of the body, its habitual movements and positions, however big or small, as well as its environment, including the quality of the air, the amount of sunlight, and the temperature of the water used to wash one’s face. Then, the individual was expected to undertake an informed critical evaluation of each of the previous elements and their effects on the

appearance of the face and body. For example, to avoid gaining weight, Ruppert advised women to pay attention to and correct if needed the surface on which they slept: “Luxurious care of the body adds to the flesh, so put your soft beds away and sleep on the hard mattresses without springs.” (1890, p. 28).

Ruppert’s recurring discussions around the development and presence of wrinkles on the face are particularly useful for understanding how self-monitoring took shape in Ruppert’s conception of the beauty regimen. Wrinkles, as Ruppert outlined in another one of her *Hearth and Home* articles, were caused by habitual movements. Thus, the only way to eliminate them was to prevent them in the first place:

Experience has taught me that wrinkles which are caused by a trick or habit, such as a way of constantly lifting the eyebrows, or of emphasizing [sic] one’s speech, or expressing emotion, by any muscular contraction of the facial muscles, are ineffaceable (1893c, p. 384).

Further, to prevent wrinkles, Ruppert suggested becoming conscious of habitual facial expressions as early as possible:

A lady who laughs much will find a little colony of crows’ feet nestling round her eyes; one who thinks closely will probably have a habit of knitting or wrinkling her brows, so that at eighteen or nineteen the indications of her mind are permanently fixed (1893c, p. 384).

To become conscious of habitual facial expressions that threaten to inscribe themselves on the face before the ages of eighteen or nineteen, Ruppert highlighted the role of the mother, who could keep an eye on her children’s habits and correct them if necessary. Ruppert’s illustration of the mother’s role in the preservation of beauty in their children foregrounded the disciplinary contours of the beauty regimen:

[Wrinkles] can be guarded against by watchful care in childhood and early youth, and any mother who cares for her daughter’s looks will do well to be constantly on the alert for little tricks of the countenance, which, if allowed to continue, will make an indelible mark. [...] If one has passed the age of tutelage it is well to be on one’s guard against tricks of the countenance, and never allow the face to remain too long in any set expression (1893c, p. 384).

Once equipped with the knowledge resulting from inquiry into and observation of the self, self-regulation could take up its role as primary safeguard to prevent the appearance of undesired wrinkles. In short, the notion of control lay at the heart of the beauty regimen for Ruppert. She pinpointed habitual facial expressions, and thus their

underlying emotional experiences, as one of the main culprits for wrinkles. This meant that the regulation necessary to prevent wrinkles necessarily entailed the regulation of emotion.

At the Princess Theatre in 1892, Ruppert apparently dedicated a large part of her lecture detailing how wrinkles posed a particular problem for “complexion specialists” such as herself. A cure for wrinkles, in the words of one *The Standard* reporter, was “frankly relegated” by Ruppert to “women more phenomenal than she.” (Ruppert, 1892a) *Myra’s Journal of Dress and Fashion*, a London women’s periodical published through the late-nineteenth century, ran a review of Ruppert’s lecture that stated,

On the subject of the cure of wrinkles, Mrs. Ruppert has no very hopeful views to impart, unless women are prepared to give up talking and laughing; wrinkles, she told her audience, were due to facial expression... (“Mrs. Anna Ruppert’s Lecture,” 1892).

Ruppert did, however, make a case for the necessity of at least some wrinkles on the face: they can be proof of a life enjoyed. A *Lady’s Pictorial* reporter present at the lecture summarized this facet of Ruppert’s argument, stating that “[i]t is the sunny-hearted, merry, and happy-natured women, who laugh and enjoy life, who wrinkle; the woman with the cold, self-contained temperament will probably retain her smooth skin to the very end.” (Ruppert, 1892a). In her *Hearth and Home* article on the topic of wrinkles, Ruppert doubled down on the idea that wrinkles could be beautiful by underlining how the lack of wrinkles is not necessarily “attractive”: “[a] smooth face is not always the most attractive, as it is sometimes indicative of a lack of mental power and emotional faculty” (1893c, p. 384). “Attractive” here thus referred to a specific set of physical features that denote something positive about an individual’s character. For Ruppert, wrinkles were better than no wrinkles, and not all wrinkles were created equal: contrary to crows-feet around the eyes resulting from frequent smiling or laughter,

The wrinkles caused by bad or fretful temper are the most hopeless of all, for, besides being fixed, they are invariably disfiguring. A habit of falling into long fits of “the blues,” or depression, should be valiantly resisted, as well as the settled expression denoting any form of discontent or bad temper (1893c, p. 384).

As noted by Kathy Peiss, idealized beauty in nineteenth-century Britain and U.S. was not characterized by “an opaque white surface, but a luminous complexion that disclosed thought and feeling” (1998, p. 24). It thus becomes clear that Ruppert’s advice when it

came to the prevention of undesired wrinkles, and the types of faces she understood as beautiful, depended on the conditions of possibility set out by nineteenth century physiognomic vision. The self-management Ruppert advised for the prevention of wrinkles and the preservation of beauty called on the subject to consider their own physiognomic signifiers and regulate themselves according to the abled, white British ideal and against the racialized and classed 'other.'

Lavater's contention that "frequent repetitions of the same state of mind impress, upon every part of the countenance, durable traits of deformity or beauty" (cited in Lennox, p. 13) was clearly an aspect of Ruppert's advice around the beauty regimen, especially related to wrinkles, making physiognomic principles of hierarchized physical traits of central importance to Ruppert's idea of beauty. But the idea that the physical body can undergo change based on emotional experiences also presupposed the malleability of the individual body, a malleability that depended on the body's relative impressibility, or ability to receive and retain physical impressions from its environment. The body's sensitivity to the environment depended on the refinement and delicacy of its tissues, and "by association the individual" (Schuller, 2012, p. 281). As mentioned, discourses of sentimentalism as well as nineteenth century race science positioned white wealthy women as the most delicate and sensitive individuals. They had allegedly developed the highest impressibility, and by extension acquired the ability regulate sensations with the capacity of sentiment. The notion of sentiment marked "an emotional response to a physical impression and connote[d] a refined rather than an impulsive quality" (Schuller, 2012, p. 281). A well-developed sentimentality was thus required of the subject asked to manage their own impressions in Ruppert's beauty advice.

The material characteristics of white skin also played an important role in the self-regulation Ruppert outlined in her regimen advice: its texture and relative firmness or looseness informed the subject on how to best care for it and regulate physical sensations resulting from the body's environment, ensuring to achieve the proper level of delicacy that was not too soft, or a level of firmness that was not too 'coarse.' For Ruppert, manipulating the body's environment was key to ensuring that the body did not advance into a state of heightened sensitivity and vulnerability or 'degenerate' into a 'coarse,' or 'primitive' state of hardness. An important environmental element Ruppert urged her readers to consider was the temperature of the water used to wash their faces. In a *Hearth and Home* article on the topic, Ruppert outlined her "philosophy"

about washing the face twice per day, and always with cold rather than hot water (1893b), advice that she had already mentioned multiple times throughout her books and lectures. In the article, Ruppert stated that she herself washed her face morning and night with soap and water, emphasizing that she has “laid down this precept as a *sine qua non* in the cultivation of natural beauty” for as long as she has “been advising on the subject” (1893b). She continued,

The more I study the science of the skin the more I am convinced that no skin will look really clear and pure unless it is cleansed by nature’s own remedy, fresh water, aided by wholesome soap. And I am equally convinced of the superiority of cold water over hot. (1893b)

Ruppert maintained that the face should be washed with cold water because hot water, in her opinion, softened the skin too much. Ruppert insisted that “skin require[d] hardening, not softening,” because skin that was softened by hot water risked becoming too delicate and sensitive. Ruppert explained that softened skin showed “every change in the weather, every alternation from heat to cold, every change in the health.” Firm skin which had been hardened just enough using cold water “retain[ed] its smooth appearance through all sorts of trials.” Ruppert reassured her readers that cold water would not cause one to “lose delicacy,” but would instead protect the skin just enough so as to not get “weather-beaten [sic].” Finally, she concluded with what she believed to be the strongest argument in favour of cold water: “hot water will bring on wrinkles sooner than anything.” This was due to the “loose” quality of softened skin, according to Ruppert. Wrinkles, as we have seen, were caused by repeated movements and expressions that impressed permanently on the face, and softened skin was much more likely to receive and retain those impressions according to Ruppert. Therefore, Ruppert contended that environmental elements could impress upon the skin and, in turn, render the body more (or less) impressible.

In sum, Ruppert’s beauty regimen entailed self-conscious knowledge of the body and its habitual movements as well as control of its environment with the idea that emotional and environmental regulation produced controlled bodily changes. Ruppert’s beauty advice was part of the wider late-nineteenth century ecosystem of instruction to women to take control of their own bodies for the sake of the continued reproduction and spread of ‘civilized’ Britishness. Specifically, I posit that Ruppert’s advice that white wealthy women regulate physical sensations and demonstrate a refined sentimentality

contained, at its core, a fantasy of 'civilized' human control over the material body. This fantasy was leveraged within nineteenth century biopower which sought to ensure the continued building, progress, and spread of the British nation and empire (Schuller, 2018, p. 36). The wealthy white woman, advised by beauty's best 'complexion specialists,' was expected to take control of her own body by regulating her emotions and environment to maintain her own 'civilized' refinement and beauty and, in turn, undertake the work of spreading 'delicate,' 'civilized' British womanhood wherever she went. As Ruppert put it, "[t]he silent power of a winning smile, a charming form, a beautiful face, is recognized, not only in our parlors, but on our streets, in a carriage, or in any position a woman may place herself" (1890, p. 3).

5.2. Biopower and the optimizable subject

Michel Foucault's concept of biopower, or power "situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of population" (1978b, p. 137), locates two poles, or two social bodies, through which power is organized: the individual and the population. According to Kyla Schuller,

"[t]he individual is the product of disciplinary personhood, of the orchestration of social space to manage the individual organism, while the population is understood to be a biological phenomenon in its own right, characterized by rates of birth, death, illness, and economic productivity that become the very tactics of its administration" (2016, p. 630).

In his discussions of biopower, Foucault argues that the creation and development of modern institutions as instruments of state power, such as the asylum and the prison, should not be reduced to the operation of a central negative logic of repressive power that serves to silence and do away with the criminal, the mentally ill, or the poor. Rather, Foucault argues that modern institutions operated according to productive logics of administration, management, and transformation, forming the techniques of power that are not only utilized within those institutions but are also "present at every level of the social body" (Foucault, 1978b, p. 141). Foucault argues that knowledge and power always "imply one another" (1978a, p. 27), and that the modern 'will to knowledge' positioned sex, for example, as a problem of truth, and set up apparatuses for its examination, interrogation, and analysis, which together produced scientific discourses of sexuality (Foucault, 1978b). The central purpose of these scientific discourses, such as the discourse of sexuality, which Foucault linked to one of the most important

technologies of power on the nineteenth century, was not to identify and exclude aberrant individuals, but rather to establish the “specification, the regional solidification of each” sexual perversion and deviance. More specifically, Foucault states the purpose of the discourse of sexuality was,

to give [sexuality] an analytical, visible, and permanent reality: it was implanted into bodies, slipped in beneath modes of conduct, made into a principle of classification an intelligibility, established as a *raison d’être* and a natural order of disorder” (1978b, p. 44).

In the nineteenth century, the will to knowledge Foucault discusses as constitutive of the new sciences was directed at the self: “the bourgeoisie began by considering that its own sex was something important” (Foucault, 1978b, pp. 120–121). For example, one subject of concern to nineteenth century doctors, who were themselves part of the rising professional class known as the bourgeoisie, was “the schoolboy who was in danger of compromising not so much his physical strength as his intellectual capacity, his moral fiber, and the obligation to preserve a healthy line of descent for his family and his social class” (Foucault, 1978b, p. 121). Medical science thus

set itself up as the supreme authority in matters of hygienic necessity, taking up the old fears of venereal affliction and combining them with the new themes of asepsis, and the great evolutionist myths with the recent institutions of public health; it claimed to ensure the physical vigor and the moral cleanliness of the social body; it promised to eliminate defective individuals, degenerate and bastardized populations (Foucault, 1978b, p. 54).

At the end of the nineteenth century, problematizing the health of the individual bourgeois subject increasingly meant the “medical control of perversions for the sake of the species” (Foucault, 1978b, p. 122), and the medical specification and control of perversions in the nineteenth century took place within modern institutions such as the asylum. The management of individuals in modern asylums took place through reform and self-discipline rather than violent punishment, a change that gave way to a famous historical narrative of the mentally ill being liberated from the physical restraints of past times. Foucault argues against this understanding of the modern asylum, positing that surveillance, moral training, and self-discipline instead constituted mechanisms of power that aimed to reform the individual, reform that took the shape of internalizing moral codes, engaging in perpetual self-judgment and remorse, which was believed to

ultimately “cure” or at least successfully contain madness deep within the individual’s soul (1965).

It is crucial to remember, however, that although violent punishment did not form the central technique of power employed in the asylum, it was still part of the overall operation of power in modernity. Not all patients were released from their physical restraints and subjected to disciplinary tactics of reform: some were deemed incorrigible and imprisoned in perpetuity (Foucault, 1965). In a similar vein, Foucault argues that, beginning in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, capital punishment could no longer be sustained as a feature of the modern operation of state power, “except by invoking less the enormity of the crime itself than the monstrosity of the criminal, his incorrigibility, and the safeguard to society” (Foucault, 1978b, p. 138). Thus, in both the asylum and the prison, the permanent imprisonment or the death of the individual was enlisted as a technique for the management of the life of the population. As Schuller notes, “The uneven distribution of death [...] is a key function of biopower’s efforts to maintain life” (2018, p. 15). Biopower manages the life of the population and one of its key axes of operation is the individual and their capacity (or incapacity) for transformation.

If we understood the function of power as simply repressive, we would miss how power “exerts a positive influence on life,” how it ensures the “right of [the] social body to ensure, maintain, develop its life” (Foucault, 1978b, p. 136). For example, Kyla Schuller and Jules Gill-Peterson demonstrate how understanding power as strictly repressive could lead us to believe that notions of individual and populational malleability and transformation are resources for destabilizing “social regulation, political subjectification, and medical normalization” (2020, pp. 1–2). They argue that notions of plasticity and the concept of the malleable body emerge instead from *within* biopower, and proceed to name a mode of governance that “seizes the malleable body as a means to engineer the individual and the population,” the “biopolitics of plasticity” (Schuller & Gill-Peterson, 2020, p. 2). Governance thus takes the form of “managing and optimizing the population” according to the logic of plasticity, which “transpires at the level of the individual body” (Schuller & Gill-Peterson, 2020, p. 2). Schuller and Gill-Peterson state that “[a] key feature of biopolitical plasticity is that it unevenly distributes the capacity of corporeal malleability” (2020, p. 2). We have seen through an examination of Ruppert’s beauty advice, particularly the beauty regimen and the prevention of wrinkles, that the

white British woman of a certain class was positioned as a malleable individual with 'civilized' capacities of feeling. Late-nineteenth century London beauty cultures positioned the individual malleable British woman as responsible for preserving and cultivating her white feminine beauty, her "pure complexion, firm flesh, mental delicacy and refinement and bodily grace" (Ruppert, 1892a, n.p.) and as a civilizing force for the wider British empire.

Chapter 6. Conclusion: From nineteenth century civilizing beauty to contemporary optimizing wellness

Anna Ruppert, as we have seen, negotiated and attempted to delineate appropriate white femininity at a moment when the white bourgeois British woman was positioned as a key site for the operation of civilizing biopower. As mentioned, in the nineteenth century, the white bourgeois British woman was enlisted as an idealized, malleable body whose regulation and self-management could ensure the protection, maintenance, and 'progress' of the British empire. This thesis analyzes media as well as one specific mediator of late-nineteenth century beauty culture because I sought to demonstrate how beauty culturists like Ruppert could be considered vectors of discipline and control.

In this thesis, I considered subjectification to be a process of continued 'remaking' of the subject (Butler, 1997; Crary, 1990) to demonstrate how the imperatives placed upon the white bourgeois British woman by late-nineteenth century London beauty culture contained a central paradox: the very means to self-fulfillment and recognition as a 'subject' become, or rather, are always already, the means of discipline and control. To consider beauty culturists of late-nineteenth century London to be vectors of power is to understand that white bourgeois British women 'going public,' or leaving the domestic sphere to shop alone in public and beautifying and fashioning themselves, entailed continuous anxious self-assessment and reassurance as well as infinite patterns of consumption of 'the right kind' of information and products to reach an inherently unreachable ideal. Ruppert negotiated her commercial *raison d'être* as a beauty trader, 'complexion specialist,' and advice writer from within wider imperatives for her assumed clientele to maintain respectability and protect themselves, and thus the race, from 'degenerative' influences. Specifically, Ruppert positioned the disciplined consumption of products and information, namely beauty products, magazines, advertisements, and advice, as a means for inoculating the 'delicate' white bourgeois British woman from those 'degenerative' threats.

The subject of late-nineteenth London beauty culture could evoke today's subject of wellness culture and their interpellation as self-optimizable individuals expected to

perform “entrepreneurial femininity” (Duffy & Hund, 2015) in our neoliberal era. Indeed, debates around the subject of wellness culture today often revolve around the ways in which neoliberal capitalism stretches the bounds of governance, increasingly “ordering life” in its most intimate aspects (Hearn, 2013, p. 26). However, this study could also illuminate how white femininity in particular was and still is a site for individual discipline and the overall functioning of biopower. Like late-nineteenth century London beauty culture’s magazines, advertisements, and culturists like Ruppert, wellness culture’s influencers and companies like Gwyneth Paltrow and goop position the malleable and optimizable subject, understood as the white, abled, and wealthy woman, as the locus for producing, maintaining, and optimizing contemporary white supremacist, imperial capitalism. In other words, demonstrating how white womanhood was positioned as at once fragile and vulnerable to ‘degeneration’ as well as a lever for ‘civilizing’ the empire in late-nineteenth century London can remind us to pay attention to how white womanhood today still acts as a site for the anxious protection of the ‘optimized’ body and ensuring the ‘health’ of the population and as well as the key to optimizing and maintaining ‘progress’ of the capitalist empire from within race, (dis)ability, and class hierarchies.

Wellness and beauty cultures are thus sites within which “we invent ourselves as individuals, with wants, needs, and desires to be known, categorized, and controlled for the sake of freedom” (Illouz, 2008, p. 3). Following Foucault, the individual in modernity is subjected to the operation of power through the imperative to look into oneself and compare oneself to aspirational ideals, the desire to be recognized as such ultimately working to govern the self. As we have seen with the interpellation of the individual white bourgeois British woman in Ruppert’s beauty advice and advertisements, and women’s domestic and fashion magazines, the management and regulation of the individual takes on a positive, rather than repressive, role in the life of the subject. The feminine, white, and bourgeois self is never quite done working on herself, her body is insufficient in and of itself but always has potential, and, by definition, she will never actually achieve idealized white femininity. The guidance, advice, advertisements, and consultation and information offered by Ruppert and women’s magazines ostensibly provide solace and freedom in the form of a cure to the overall anxiety, or at least cures to the body and face that are never quite ‘there’ yet, to the impossibility of maintaining appropriate bourgeois aesthetics and markers of wealth, and to the unachievable balancing acts of

maintaining respectability, domesticity, and whiteness while 'going public'. Of course, these 'cures' really only serve to reproduce the state that necessitated them in the first place, and so goes the "ballad of aspirational bourgeois existence" (Petersen, 2021, para. 17).

Turning towards informational networks of influencers, social media, online shopping, and the algorithmically targeted advertisements, content and product recommendations, and advice in the neoliberal era is thus not so dissimilar from the white bourgeois British woman's turn toward women's magazines and beauty culturists. Gwyneth Paltrow asserts that goop offers women "alternative ways of healing and having autonomy over their own health and their own selves and their own sexuality and their own relationships" (Schulson, 2020). The freedom and empowerment goop purports to offer women is coded in the language of "neoliberal feminism" (Rottenberg, 2018), calling upon individual women to self-optimize through the 'alternative,' 'empowering' logics of the market as opposed to subjecting themselves to the top-down oppression of state power, the straightforwardly sexist patriarchal medical establishment, or 'old fashioned' women's magazines instructing women to beautify for their husbands. For example, Elise Loehnen, goop's chief content officer, was asked about concerns around the health content and products promoted by the company in a *Times UK* interview, and she answered,

We're not Cosmo. We don't do stories about, like, how to give a great blow job. We're hippies, more or less, about women's right to pleasure, like how to have a better orgasm, not about men's pleasure or how we present ourselves. So it's interesting. Why is that so threatening to people? (Rumbelow, 2019)

A proponent of "women's right to pleasure," as well as women's autonomy, agency, and empowerment, goop sells self-optimization as something one does for oneself, in one's own interest. As Jia Tolentino states, the mediators of today's wellness culture "model skepticism toward top-down narratives about how we should look, who and when we should marry, how we should live" (Tolentino, 2019, para. 5), skepticism that ostensibly turns narratives of choice and empowerment into resistance. Indeed, Gwyneth Paltrow as well as other celebrity white women influencers such as Kim Kardashian (Petersen, 2020) and Sheryl Sandberg (Faludi, 2013; hooks, 2015a; Schuller, 2021) encourage women to unapologetically 'lean in' to achieve the benefits already afforded to privileged white men. "Women" is understood here as a "homogenous gendered identity" that

struggles “to be equal with men”, a simple category put forward as representative of a universal experience of womanhood but is in reality, as pointed out by multiple generations of black women and women of colour feminist thinkers, the encapsulation of experiences of privileged white women (hooks, 2015a, p. 226). Freedom and equality are understood by wellness culture as the achievement of enlightened self-fulfillment and holistic health through optimizing every aspect of one’s body and life (Tolentino, 2019) and as the investment in oneself in one’s own interest. Optimization itself, as we have seen, is inherently a never-ending process because an ‘optimized’ state is implicitly unachievable: even Paltrow, who represents the aspirational ideal her followers turn to for advice, information, reassurance, and guidance in their self-assessment-and-consumption loops, does not position herself as ‘having optimized’ or being ‘done’ optimizing. To be sure, Paltrow is allegedly miles ahead in the self-optimization quest. But, importantly, wellness culture places its subject in a constant loop of realizing they are behind and attempting to catch up.

The trouble is that these fantasies of self-empowerment, as Sarah Banet-Weiser demonstrates, presuppose a meritocratic, “can-do” framework that not only obscures but further marginalizes people that are “always already at risk of falling into the “can’t do” category” (2012, p. 85). The type of ‘alternative’ healing, bodily autonomy, and optimization sold by Paltrow and goop is, at best, only *almost* achievable by able-bodied, cis-gendered, and wealthy individuals, and, as we have seen, the unequal distribution of capacities for transformation, improvement, optimization is a technology of biopower. Assigning white womanhood the task of societal change through her own self-improvement is nothing new, and we cannot separate the stratified nature of late-nineteenth century imperial white femininity from the current “white feminist fantasy” of a world rehabilitated, liberated, and, ultimately, “optimized by the empowerment of women” (Schuller, 2021, p. 257). Idealized white womanhood carries with it a history of leveraging fantasies of self-control and bodily malleability. Foregrounding how white femininity was once an axis of biopower affects our understanding of the functioning of power in which we find ourselves today.

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Appendix

List of coded themes

Theme	Description
Influencer	This theme identifies sections in Ruppert's work in which she discusses her "vast experience" and "expertise" treating a wide range of skin and bodily ailments and refers to either her consultation services or beauty products as prescriptive solutions to these problems.
Beauty can be made	This theme refers to moments when Ruppert emphasizes that one should not be devastated if they were not born beauty as beauty, to a certain extent, can be made through a regimen acting directly onto the surface of the body.
Duty to beauty	This theme refers to sections when Ruppert explains what she considers to be a woman's duty, which is to be beautiful for the sake of her husband and family.
Empowered by beauty	Empowered by beauty identifies moments when Ruppert discusses beauty as something that imbues women with a uniquely feminine social power.
Agony aunt	This theme refers to the tone Ruppert sometimes employs when addressing the reader directly, giving them warnings about what devastating things could happen if one does not subscribe to the duty to beauty
Beauty recipe	Ruppert provides specific recipes as cures to skin and bodily ailments, often as alternatives to cosmetics or products and practices she deems harmful to beauty. The recipes contain products the reader is expected to purchase from a pharmacist and mix at home in the correct amounts as outlined by Ruppert. The recipes include moisturizers and tonics for application to the skin, hair, or nails, but also recipes for cosmetics like rouge and hair dye in her earlier work.
Beauty is woman	This theme emerges when Ruppert discusses beauty exclusive association to womanhood and femininity and alludes to the eternal nature of feminine beauty.
Beauty criteria	This theme refers to the sections in the Ruppert's work that outline what a beautiful woman is, often referring to a specific part of the body, such as the nose, the arms, or the nails. The criteria are almost always followed by suggestions on how to achieve them.
Harmful beauty	This theme identifies warnings about harmful cosmetics and beauty products that will either harm one's chances of being beautiful or literally cause physical harm to the body according to Ruppert.
Beware of quackery	This theme refers to moments when Ruppert warns her readers against buying cures advertised and sold by "patent medicine" firms without the guidance of a "specialist" such as herself, lest they be cheated out of their money or poisoned.
Harmless alternative	This theme refers to when Ruppert offers recipes and products she assures are harmless as alternatives to examples of harmful and/or poisonous products
Cosmetics whether you like it or not	This refers to moments when Ruppert acknowledges and sometimes begrudgingly accepts that cosmetics use is pervasive among women in London and that the use of certain cosmetics is acceptable as long as they are not too opaque and do not "paint" or cover the face.

Theme	Description
Advertisement/self-promotion	This theme identifies sections where Ruppert directly advertises her products, usually her Face Tonic
Endorsed	This refers to 'press extracts' reproduced in Ruppert's books in which a third party speaks well of Ruppert herself, her products, her lectures, and her services.
Beauty benefits of open air and nature	This theme identifies sections where Ruppert explains the beauty benefits of exposing the skin to the open air, the wind, and the sun in the correct amount and on a regular basis to increase the skin's firmness.
Bad impressions	This theme refers to Ruppert's discussions of bodily habits, external elements, emotions, and other stimulations that have a negative effect on the appearance of the body.
Good impressions	This theme refers to Ruppert's discussions of bodily habits, external elements, emotions, and other stimulations that have a positive effect on the appearance of the body.
Coarseness	This theme identifies sections where Ruppert outlines habits, products, foods, and other things that may cause the complexion to look more "coarse," which she associates with masculinity and is understood as the opposite of delicacy.
Wrinkles	This theme identifies any time Ruppert mentions wrinkles, what causes them, how to avoid them, and how to cure them.
But not too delicate	This theme refers to moments when Ruppert advises women to avoid making their skin too soft and delicate, because she argues this makes the skin vulnerable to exposure to elements that can create wrinkles or darken the skin.
Preserving beauty	This refers to any time Ruppert discusses beautification as a process of preserving the complexion rather than trying to alter it or in opposition to neglecting it.
Danger of neglect	This refers to moment when Ruppert warns her readers against neglecting their bodies and complexions, arguing that preserving beauty means regular maintenance through a regimen.
Regimen	This theme identifies sections where Ruppert either explains the necessity of regular maintenance of the body and complexion, or outlines which habits and products need to be employed regularly.
Whiteness	This theme refers to Ruppert's discussions of whiteness as part of beauty criteria and how to achieve white skin, or how to avoid darkening the skin.
Physiognomy	This theme appears in sections where Ruppert discusses beauty criteria and provides a physiognomical explanation as to why a particular physical trait is beautiful, such as a small nose being beautiful because it indicates something positive about one's character.
Teach our daughters	This theme refers to moments when Ruppert emphasizes the need to begin preserving one's beauty early on in life and encourages her readers to teach their children to implement a regimen of bathing, hair brushing, and exercise as well as to avoid wrinkle-causing habits such as constant frowning.
Better see a doctor	This refers to anytime Ruppert suggests a bodily issue may be beyond her realm of expertise and suggests the reader see a doctor if her proposed remedy does not work.
Dermatological signs of internal disease	This theme refers to moments when Ruppert attributes a particular skin issue, such as a rash or redness in the face, to a possible issue with the blood.
Face Tonic	When Ruppert discusses and advertises her Face Tonic (or Skin Tonic)