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Cassaundra Elyse Hill April 9, 2018

Plastic Sapphires:

Black Femininity and the Market of Sexuality

by

Cassaundra E. Hill

George D. Yancy
Adviser

Philosophy

George D. Yancy
Adviser

Paul J. Buchholz
Committee Member

Calvin L. Warren
Committee Member

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Cassaundra E. Hill

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Abstract
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This thesis explores the role of black aesthetic appropriation in contemporary culture. Through the lens of pop culture, I intend to show how liberal ideologies and dilemmas of race, sex, and class are inexorably tied, and have led to widespread normalizations of antiblackness by means of aesthetic exploitation in the 21st century. Consumerism has infected the body, so to speak, under the operation of capitalism and within the context of white hegemony, science, medicine, and technology have denaturalized the body into a utopian dream of plasticity, always open to scrutiny and change. Yet this dream falls short of ideal when understood in contextual reality, and it becomes much less liberal in its application upon further inspection. Using the example set forth by the United States' most preeminent reality television stars, the Kardashians of popular show *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, I explore how contemporary mass culture's neoliberal subject is predicated on a history of white racism and antiblackness. By engaging in a discussion of modern aesthetic trends in cosmetics I will explore the ways in which our current cultural moment presents itself as nothing more than a technologically advanced continuation of its past. The exploitation, minstrelsy and negrophilia, and other traditions important for the maintenance of whiteness that are found there, in other words, are still with us today, hidden behind a curtain of liberal 'progress' and I argue they have major influence on the way the body is viewed today.

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Introduction

Desire and Difference

In 1810, an African woman of the Khoikhoi tribe, given the name Sara Baartman by her captors, was displayed as a sideshow attraction in Paris and London, under the heading "Hottentot Venus" on account of her body—differing in its proportions, its fat distributions, unknown to the Europeans who laid claim to it for purposes of scientific study and voyeuristic pleasure—the dissected remnants of which were put on display long after her existence. American author Hortense Spillers, in her critical essay, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book" explains how: "the captive [Black] body becomes the source of an irresistible, destructive sensuality" that "at the same time—in stunning contradiction" she says, is reduced "to a thing, becoming being for the captor."[1] Georges Cuvier, the scientist responsible for the dissection, produced body casts and even preserved "her decanted brain, stiff skeleton, and dissected genitalia."[2] Baartman's body cast and skeleton was on display at the *Musee de L'Homme* in Paris, France, prior to its being removed and returned to her home of South Africa. Writing in the 21st century, Sadiah Qureshi, in "Displaying Sara Baartman, the Hottentot Venus", explains that something significant lies not only in the fact of her display but in how she was displayed:

> The display exemplified her perceived value as a scientific specimen. …The positioning of the skeleton and cast, in profile and facing away from the viewer, emphasized her steatopygia whilst reinforcing its status as the primary reason for interest in her body. The juxtaposition of the apparently 'normal' skeleton with the cast, and its 'anomalous' form, also drew attention to the steatopygia. The cast presented her bare body as if naked, save a diminutive piece of fabric between her legs, placing her sexuality at the core of the interest in her body.[3]

Baartman's so-called "condition," *steatopygia*, serves as a means of understanding the white imaginary in contemporary racial discourse: as Qureshi points out, all measures were taken

to ensure attention was called to Baartman's rear-end, apparently larger than that of the average European's, and her sexuality was placed "at the core of" these researchers interest in her body, suggesting an uninterrogated white sexual desire really at play in their so-called scientific inquiry. Contrast such violence endured by Baartman while alive and deceased with the willful, 'shallow exhibitionism', as understood by critical theorist bell hooks, of the modern white American female celebrity, constantly entrenched in the world of sex and sexuality for means of mass spectacle and personal financial gain. Spillers explains that the captive body, during slavery, becomes a site of both 'otherness' and 'powerlessness' which lends itself to 'pornotroping', or reducing a body to mere flesh, a site of domination, and that "these undecipherable markings on the captive body render a kind of hieroglyphics of the flesh whose severe disjunctures come to be hidden to the cultural seeing by skin color." As Spillers notes, in the process of making a body captive, "we lose any hint or suggestion of a dimension of ethics, of relatedness between human personality and its anatomical features, between one human personality and another, between human personality and cultural institutions." And, "To that extent," she says, "the procedures adopted for the captive flesh demarcate a total objectification, as the entire captive community becomes a living laboratory." The symbolic captivity of blackness today, surveilled by the white gaze and thus subject to the white imaginary, functions as a form of violence against the black body. This is further explicated by author Melissa Harris-Perry in *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotype, and Black Women in America*, who writes: "pervasive myths account for the most common forms of misrecognition of black women: sexual promiscuity, emasculating brashness [this is the stereotype of the *Sapphire* as understood by Harris-Perry], and Mammy-like devotion to white domestic concerns…drawn from a web of racial and gender stereotypes that also

ensnare African American men and implicate white women."[4] This symbolic violence is driven by a desire for difference and ambiguity, if only as a means of obtaining plasticity—and therefore social capital for the white subjectivity. Plastic, representing our time in a myriad of ways, functions twofold here. While plasticity denotes on the one hand a sense of malleability and receptiveness to change, which can be understood positively, it also signifies the ease with which permanent change can be had in the physical sense—and thus, plastic, as 21st century society has learned, can be a double-edged sword, so to speak. The increasingly expansive white drive for scientific knowledge, invoked above by Spillers' use of the word 'laboratory', has fueled many racist expeditions into the territory of "the Other." It only seems ironic that an obsession with black aesthetics has afflicted the white mainstream despite years of anti-blackness being instilled into the population's imaginary at every level, particularly legal and cultural. But the eagerness with which whiteness has aimed to appropriate black aesthetics for its own benefit, and of its own insecurity, has long been endured by the black subject.

In an attempt to parse out the historical and racial implications of today's popular culture, using the stars of popular television show *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* as a model for mass American ideology in its current form, this thesis aims to describe and contextualize a phenomenon that, at first glance, can be seen as paradoxical in nature, but will later be understood as nothing short of routine, albeit continually disturbing. The Kardashians' show has always rested on the achievements of black culture, but they alone are not the progenitors of this cannibalistic trend—what contemporary philosopher Cornel West refers to as the "Afro-Americanization of the white youth" in his pivotal book *Race Matters,* has contributed greatly to their credibility and success, as well as that of others like

them.[5] Reality television has greatly impacted the speed and direction of this process, arguably continuing the legacy of white hegemony by means of entertainment and style. Hyper-emphasis on sex and sexuality in mainstream entertainment media today, and particularly in *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, brings to mind the time-tested advertising aphorism: *sex sells*. Evidently, if sex sells, then over-sexualized bodies will sell *en masse* as they once did—or at least the profitable aesthetic qualities they provide will, today. In conceptualizing contemporary culture's obsession and overvaluation of the role of sexuality in identity formation, it is crucial to look back at history as a means of understanding a clear pattern of thinking in popular discourse. If, as Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx wrote in the 19th century, "The mode of production in which the product takes the form of a commodity, or is produced directly for exchange, is the most general and most embryonic form of bourgeois production", then perhaps so far the most advanced form of bourgeois production is that in which the product has disappeared and been transcended by the seller: in essence, that in which the seller has the ability to willingly become the product.[6] Specifically, this applies to today—i.e., the social media age, and what has led to it, namely the acceptance of an ideology in which the maintenance and documentation of the body is understood as a natural part of life, even common sense. Technology and social media platform pioneering have made the masses eager to commodify themselves, so long as the supposed benefits outweigh the constant lack of privacy and ever-present danger of losing one's personal information. As a result, celebrity-status has become more and more attainable for the average consumer and more and more profitable for those who already sell themselves willingly. Seeing that our social ontology today is strongly informed by the presence of media in every direction—television is but one example, social media the newest—further

integrating the social sphere with the sphere of capitalism, popular media is an important tool for understanding modern culture. As can be gleaned from their abundant presence in said media, the Kardashians serve as an excellent model for this kind of inquiry. Media's influence on culture, especially given its context in the last century, has invigorated a desire *to be seen* in the masses, and thus, commodification is understood as a natural part of existence in the twenty-first century. Exemplary of this trend in today's market is *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* star, Kim Kardashian West—the prodigy of the well-known, business-oriented family—a celebrity stylist turned model, actress, spokesperson, businesswoman, and most visibly and importantly, reality star. Kim exploits not only her own Armenian ethnic background in marketing herself, but too, that of black and brown "others" in order to reap the benefits of racial ambiguity that originate in American culture. While Kim is far from a trailblazer in this regard, she is currently the most visible manifestation of a huge trend, particularly in the fashion modeling world, which appropriates and profits off of the aesthetic qualities of blackness while at the same time denying any accordance with racist ideologies or abiding by racist ideologies despite profiting off of black existence. Juxtaposed against the disturbing reality of Baartman's being put on display against her will, as well as her prolonged captivity, the tendency of Kim, and those who admire or emulate her, to 'celebrate' modern diversity and multiculturalism, as it is defined by neoliberalism, by means of appropriating black and other non-white aesthetics, particularly when it comes to the body, becomes clearly problematic in terms of historical and ethical responsibility.

(1)

Mythology and Masses

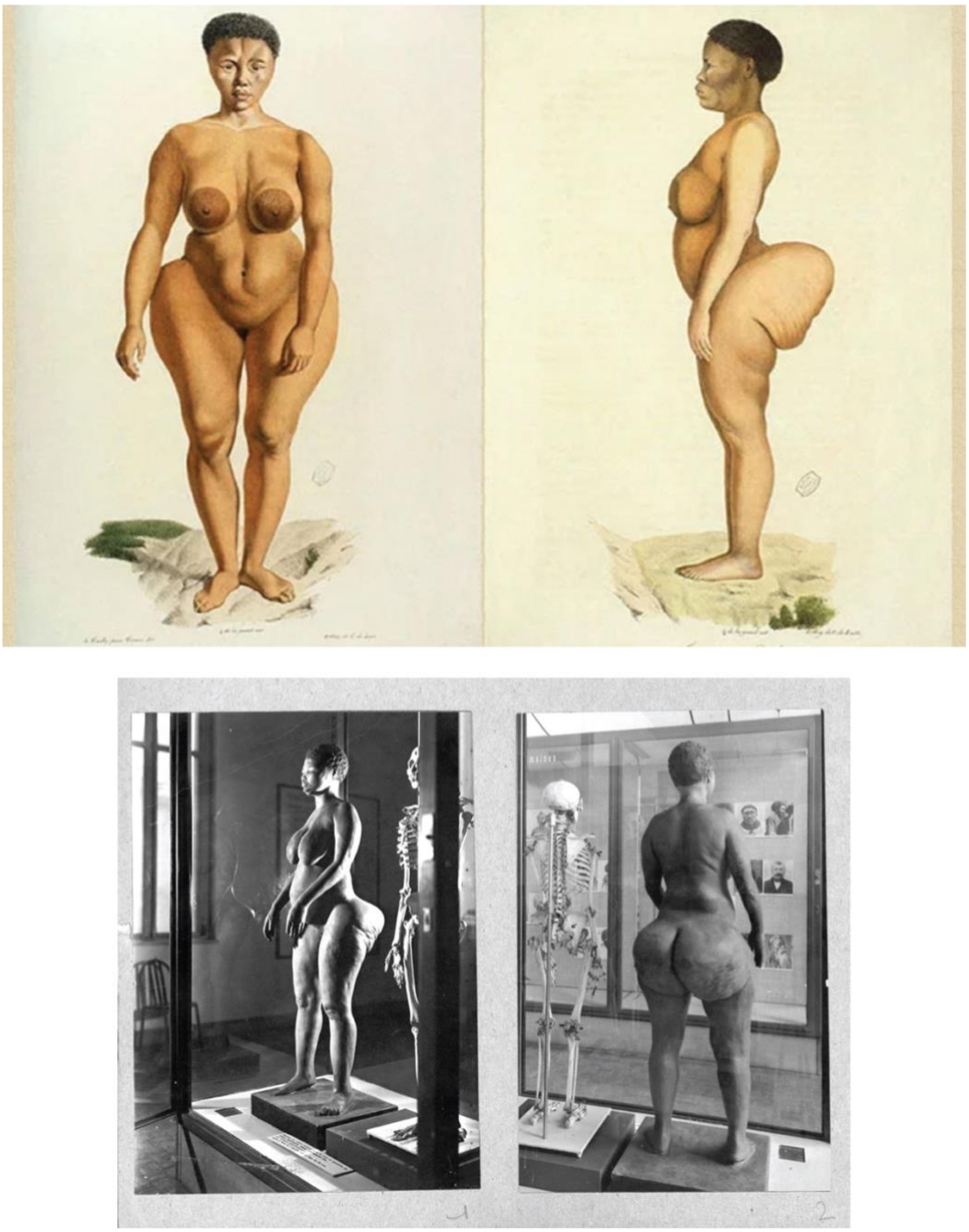

Figure 1: Images of Sara Baartman, the second being her body cast on display at the Museum of Man in Paris, France.

'Explorers', as they have been called, such as those responsible for bringing Baartman to Europe, must be contextualized as being a part of another inquisition, ideological in nature, as described by French philosopher Michel Foucault as well as Spillers, cited above. While the practice of colonialism may have begun and thrived under the guise of Christian duty, it also took on a new form in the modern age. An ideological shift regarding the body was the result of centuries in the making of military expansion, industrialization, and optimization. The body, exemplified by the soldier in Foucault's narrative, has been objectified, weaponized, empowered, and commodified—in that order:

> By the late eighteenth century, the soldier has become something that can be made; out of a formless clay, an inapt body, the machine required can be constructed…a calculated constraint runs slowly through each part of the body, mastering it, making it pliable, ready at all times, turning silently into the automatism of habit… The classical age discovered the body as object and target of power. It is easy enough to find signs of the attention then paid to the body — to the body that is manipulated, shaped, trained, which obeys, responds, becomes skillful and increases its forces.[7]

In other words, the body of modernity, represented here by the soldier, differs from the body that existed in and before feudal times, which was marked by the ever-present threat of death. What Foucault refers to as *discipline* becomes the ideology which we aspire to now, shaped by medieval forces, diverging into two 'poles', "around which the organization of power over life was deployed."[8] Again, set up "in the course of the classical age," Foucault explains, "this great bipolar technology—anatomic and biological, individualizing and specifying," was "directed toward the performances of the body, with attention to the processes of life—characterized a power whose highest function was perhaps no longer to kill, but to invest in life through and through."[9] All of this and more leads to the invention of what Foucault calls "bio-power," which becomes the central theme of centuries to come, not to mention bio-power was "without question an indispensable element in the development

of capitalism; the latter would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production" he explains, "and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes". Furthermore, Foucault explains that: "If the development of the great instruments of the state, as institutions of power, ensured the maintenance of production relations," then the development of these bodily power systems and the institutions they created such as "the family and the army, schools and the police, individual medicine and the administration of collective bodies", he says, "operated in the sphere of economic processes, their development, and the forces working to sustain them" and "acted as factors of segregation and social hierarchization, exerting their influence on the respective forces of both these movements, guaranteeing relations of domination and effects of hegemony."[10] His assessment of this subject functions as a means for later introducing the "deployment of sexuality" into the discussion: "Broadly speaking, at the juncture of the 'body' and the 'population,' sex became a crucial target of a power organized around the management of life rather than the menace of death."[11] The concepts of sex and sexuality in combination with the already present culture surrounding the body, on Foucault's account, have served as a means of mass control and fuel for capitalism's fire, so to speak, on both an individual and societal level.

Especially functional for enslaving and holding bodies captive, this methodology of discipline, and the subsequent ideology it created, was largely engaged with during the Atlantic slave trade and prior exploitative endeavors on behalf of Europeans. This is illustrated by the story of Baartman, whose body was objectified and commodified in the name of science, but whose legacy is formed by the hyper-sexualization her body was used to prove "real." As Foucault remarks, this is when racism began to take shape, "in its modern,

'biologizing,' statist form": "it was then that a whole politics of hierarchization, and property, accompanied by a long series of permanent interventions at the level of the body, health, and everyday life" he explains, "received their color and their justification from the mythical concern with protecting the purity of the blood and ensuring the triumph of the race."[12] And of course, while he might mean the human race, this can be understood in terms of specifically the *white* race in the context of this thesis. Spillers' contribution to this discussion is indispensable, seeing that she locates this in the history of white racial hegemonic power:

> The captive body, then, brings into focus a gathering of social realities as well as a metaphor for value so thoroughly interwoven in their *literal* and *figurative* emphases that distinctions between them are virtually useless. Even though the captive flesh/body has been 'liberated,' and no one need pretend that even the quotation marks do not matter, dominant symbolic activity, the ruling episteme that releases the dynamics of naming and valuation, remains grounded in the originating *metaphors* of captivity and mutilation so that it is as if neither time nor history, nor historiography and its topics, shows movement, as the human subject is 'murdered' over and over again by the passions of a bloodless and anonymous archaism, showing itself in endless disguise.[13] [My emphasis]

What Spillers' analysis concludes is that violence is still done to the once-captive body symbolically, through a process that thrives on intentional misunderstanding or misinterpreting of the importance of its historical context. The Atlantic slave trade's legacy is still with us, although the trade itself ended long ago. Coupled with Foucault's discussion of a societal transfer from a blood-oriented to a sex-oriented politics, this discussion becomes part and parcel of the Kardashian modality.

While the idea of 'mixing races' is never brought up explicitly, the myths surrounding it, and thus, sexual mythology surrounding the black body, still linger throughout the popular show, especially since the Kardashian-Jenner sisters almost all have mixed race children. In the eleventh episode of season nine of *Keeping Up with the Kardashians,* for instance, Kim and her mother/manager—colloquially called her 'momager'—Kris Jenner take a trip to

Vienna for an appearance at the Vienna Ball, at which she is taunted by white Europeans several times for being in a relationship with rapper Kanye West simply because he is black, and for having a mixed-race child.[14] While this was apparently traumatizing for both Kris and Kim, and eventually will be for her child, North, as her life is played back to her on television later on, this troubling scene is followed up with an even more troubling remark made by Kim's younger sister Khloé, who claims proudly, "I only like black cock." Although meant in a defensive, assuredly positive manner, this kind of seemingly inconsequential, discursive truncation—reducing black men, for instance, to their genitalia—is not uncommon in reality and on reality television. And it goes to show that the fascination with the apparent differences between white and black bodies transcend the logics of blood and racial purity, and our bodies today may still, in fact, carry the weight of a previous time, despite any contrived belief in a "post-racial" society. As philosopher George Yancy voices in *Black Bodies, White Gazes*: "Just as the Black man was constructed as a walking penis," black women too have come to be constructed not *qua* human, "'but rather as a titillating curiosity'"; one that is not only "deemed exotic," but also seen as "at once desirable and undesirable, known and unknown."[15] Khloé's insistence that she "only likes black cock" is representative of a whiteness that is still uncomfortable with black sexuality, that still feels the need to cling to stereotypes in order to build a stable selfhood, while at the same time trying to eschew any accusations of racism in a so-called politically correct world.

That being said, the process by which the human body has come to be understood as having the capacity to be trained, and the implications this has had, are what are apparent in Foucault and Spillers' narratives. This capacity for training has always been there, but it is no longer the same, as it has been exploited rather than properly equipped. It seemingly

began with the extensive training of soldiers, yet has been absorbed into mainstream thinking, projected into mass consciousness as an ideal, and all the while has been so forcefully shaped by racism and the legacy of slavery that it cannot be ignored, especially now—and yet it has been, in so many ways! The appeal of celebrity today, particularly amongst followers of mainstream culture, is strong enough to decenter the ways in which race has shaped our notions of selfhood. The aforementioned ever-present threat of death that characterized pre-modern times, described by Foucault, has arguably been usurped by an ever-present feeling of insecurity in regard to its absence; which, in turn, could explain the proliferation of celebrity culture in the twentieth century. As author Susan Buck-Morss describes, in chapter four of *Dreamworld and Catastrophe*, "Culture for the Masses": "the masses", are "anonymous, fungible, and rootless" and she takes them to be "a physical force, a lethal weapon, and as such indispensable to sovereign power."[16] The masses are the people at large, in all their vanity and newfound venality under capitalism and modernity, as Buck-Morss explains:

> Mass *society* is a twentieth-century phenomenon. How it differs from mass military institutions is an organizational question. Whereas communication in the latter follows hierarchical lines of command, society as a mass is addressed directly. Modern media technologies are indispensable here, not only for the manipulation of the masses but for mass solidarity in a positive sense. … Mass cathexis onto one person is a powerful organizer, but it requires at least the trace of a physical presence: an image, a voice [something of] the person in whom the mass's psychic energy is invested. The written word, in contrast, is decorporealized. … As a consequence, a certain kind of mass cathexis is impossible…there were no heroes as media stars before the photograph.[17]

Mass society, in other words, is what enables power to thrive; if you are selling something—whether it be a product or an ideology—you need someone to sell it to, and this is function of the masses, on Buck-Morss' account. Hollywood, an invention of mass desire, as Buck-Morss describes it, played an important role in the deployment of sexuality to the masses,

insofar as it "created a new mass figure, the individualized composite of the 'star.'"[18] The star, as far as Buck-Morss is concerned, was "quintessentially female", "a sublime and simulated corporeality", and "fulfilled her mass function by obliterating the idiosyncratic irregularities of the natural body" by undergoing aesthetic changes to fit an idealized image of femininity (e.g., rhinoplasty, orthodontic alignment). "Like an advertising logo," the face of the Hollywood star "was instantly identifiable" Buck-Morss explains, and "the star's body"—magnified by close-ups of her "mouth, eyes, legs, heaving breast"—"was itself a sign" which pointed to "erotic sexuality."[19] Ultimately, it can be understood that the Hollywood star is a product of the hetero-sexist white imaginary, and her legacy has so impacted the century following her creation, that the masses still ensure her replication, although it may have updated with the times, to some degree. However, she was and remains white.

Accordingly, this replication of a sexually desirable image, a newfound mimetic process in identity-formation invested in and promoted by capitalism, was also described by 20th century German writer Sigfried Kracaucer in his conceptualization of the "mass ornament." In discussing the visual phenomenon that is the masses, specifically in reference to the stage productions produced with large groups, or choruses, of performers dancing and dressed in accordance with one another, Kracauer describes the significance of such a newly-refined practice: "A current of organic life surges from these communal groups—which share a common destiny—to their ornaments," these ornaments effectively being the *bodies* of these performers when appearing *en masse*, "endowing these ornaments with a magic force and burdening them with a meaning to such an extent that they cannot be reduced to a pure assemblage of lines."[20] This kind of disciplined performing is reminiscent of Foucault's account of the military procession, and for Kracauer, is seemingly a function of the same

impetus: "The mass ornament", he explains, "is the aesthetic reflex of the rationality to which the prevailing economic system aspires."[21] The organizational principles on which society rests, due to the history it comes out of, are eagerly forced upon the realities of nature:

> Since the capitalist production process does not arise purely out of nature, it must destroy the natural organisms that it regards either as means or as resistance. Community and personality perish when what is demanded is calculability [...] thinking promoted by capitalism resists culminating in that reason which arises from the basis of man. The current site of capitalist thinking is marked by abstractness. The predominance of this abstractness today establishes a spiritual space that encompasses all expression.[22]

By means of this demand for calculability, the masses have been inducted into the world of management and control that the military and other institutions have already inhabited; a utopian vision of disciplined existence cast onto the self. Moreover, the "spiritual space that encompasses all expression" established by abstract-thinking, described by Kracauer above, is arguably personified by the social media platform today. Antiquated principles regarding ideals such as security, property, and liberty, guide our discourse around these platforms despite their novel capabilities. The effect of this, in combination with the anti-black sentiments fostered around slavery, and the quasi-empowerment found in the alienated consumer attitude described above, helped to produce the phenomena that are here of particular interest, those portrayed by the Kardashians in their reality television show. The goal of stardom has become routine in American society, and celebrity acts as a strong influence on our collective psyche, allowing for the proliferation of stardom-seekers and their stories—and more and more it has been centered on the body. The Kim Kardashian brand, her look, is replicated in the fashion Kracauer describes. Mimesis has always accounted for trends in fashion, but trends in appearance and body size and shape, via makeup, surgery, and other disciplined cosmetic styling go deeper than mere fashion.

(2)

Codification and Co-option

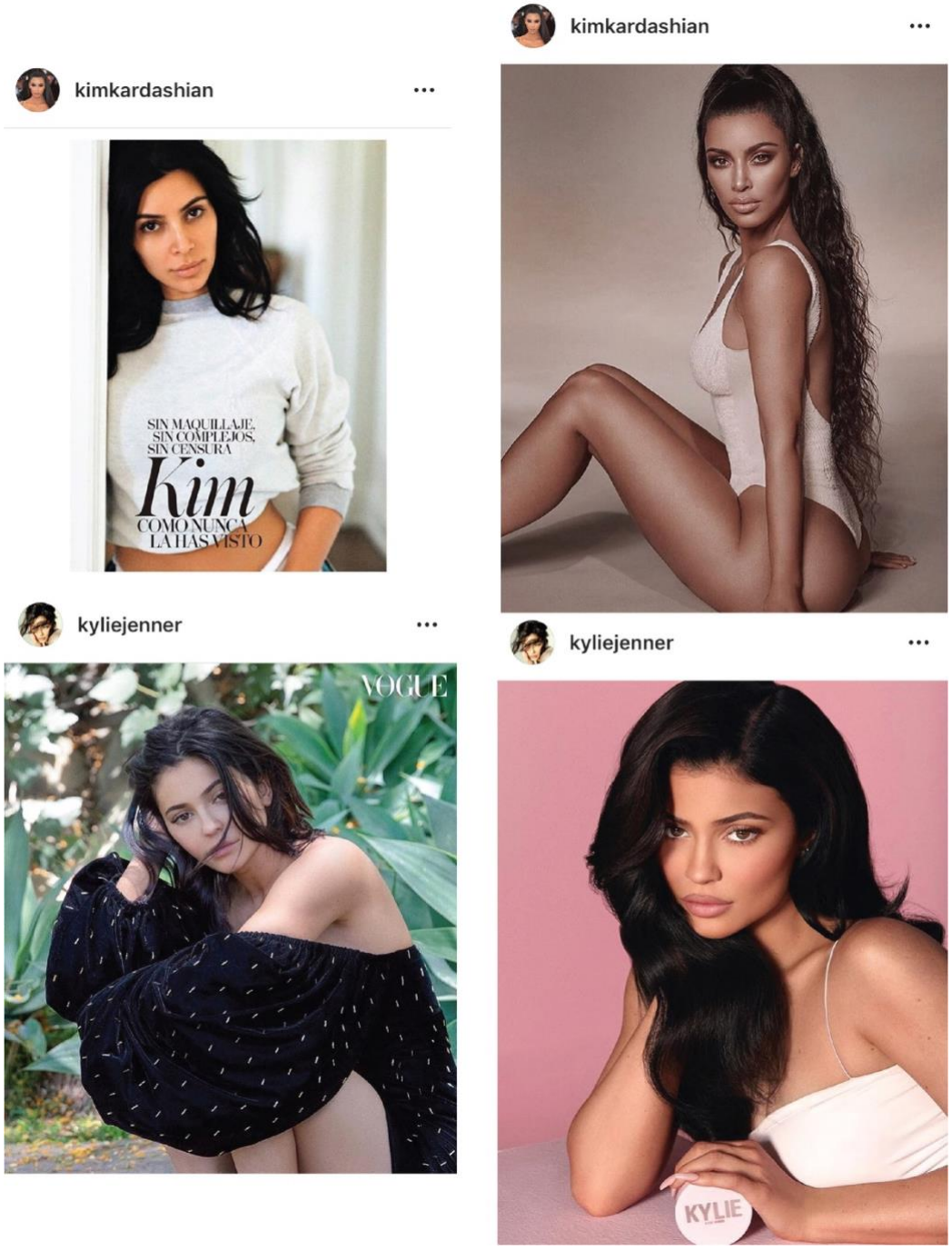

Figure 2: Images from Kim Kardashian West's and Kylie Jenner's Instagram pages reveal the racial imagery found in their "made-up" world. The images on the left were intended for European and Australian audiences and the right for primarily American audiences.

While a sort of empowerment comes along with the self-centered nature of the technological age, it is highly contrived and as such must be looked upon with careful suspicion; as understood by Foucault, the practice of discipline "requires *enclosure*, the specification of a place heterogeneous to all others and closed in upon itself."[23] This enclosed space is represented by the body, and the body as a site of power is then understood as a place of freedom by means of its individuality, specifically on account of its potential regarding sex and sexuality. Hence the sex-positive movement within current manifestations of second-wave feminism, for instance, that has so heavily influenced the Kardashian mindset—which here represents the mindset of the masses. Feminisms supported by the biologizing force of an ideology centered around sexual and bodily freedom (i.e., white feminisms) have eclipsed the ways in which race matters are presently regarded, insofar as their emphasis on personal choice has eluded discussions of historical and ethical responsibility regarding the body. Recognizing that Kim Kardashian has thrived on her versatility, the kind that comes with being racially ambiguous, and reclaimed her ethnic background as her own, in doing so, she too has eclipsed the ways in which race plays a role in her so-called 'look'. Her marriage to world-famous hip-hop star Kanye West also plays into her style choices, as well as their having biracial children together. The images above are but one example of the ways the black aesthetic is mirrored through careful hair and makeup styling; the images on the right are both from American campaigns for cosmetics, whereas the images on the left were intended to show the "real" Kim and "real" Kylie, to European audiences. The looks on the right reflect an attempt to appear "sexy"—apparent in the way these white women are styled is the lascivious vision of women that is popular in advertising. Tanned skin, textured hair, hourglass figures, "fat" asses, and the like, are centered on and

have come to pass as novel beauty techniques to look "healthy" and "glowing." When in fact, black women have been criticized for simply *being* darker skinned and varying in body shape and size, long before the Kardashians gained their fame. All of this becomes more problematic alongside the fact that Kim was once told by Beverly Hills-based, world-renowned plastic surgeon, Jason B. Diamond, that of all of the photos brought in from patients begging to look like a star, that her face and body are the *most* requested from aspiring look-alikes going under the knife.[24] What does it mean for a white woman, in an anti-black world, to try and look black, and then become a model of beauty?

Obviously, blackness, as it is understood in an aesthetic sense, has become the hottest commodity on the market since the gentrification of rap music, which has occurred this century from the mass exposure of whites to the world of hip-hop. Rap, previously determined by the white world to be a source of violence and delinquency, while at the same time exploited by it in the industry, has become a vital part of the mainstream music world. Harris-Perry too mentions, "Hip-hop has become the dominant form of youth culture in the United States."[25] And in this role, it has helped shape the careers of many artists black and white, despite its black origins, and has also had a significant impact on gender in the 21st century. She writes on the subject, "Hip-hop was never a progressive, biased-free space for black women's sexual liberation," she says, "but early hip-hop seemed to hold the promise of a modern blues aesthetic—one that would respond to black women speaking about their own complicated realities of sexual desire, action, autonomy, coercion, ecstasy, and abuse." This "blues aesthetic" serves the kind of sexuality understood by black lesbian poet Audre Lorde, who writes in her collection of essays *Sister Outsider* about the difference between the pornographic and the sensual, which also relates to Spillers' notion of "pornotroping."

Harris-Perry goes on to say, "But as hip-hop aged, the space for black women's voices narrowed. Overtly sexualized but strikingly one-dimensional artists like…[Lil] Kim, [Foxy] Brown, and [Nicki] Minaj are exceptions in this male-dominated industry." Moreover, she explains, "As hip-hop grew into a multibillion-dollar, corporate-owned entertainment industry" it "made black women into silent, scantily clad figures who writhe willingly behind male artists." These male artists are not totally to blame, and they have indeed gained a sort of "modern blues aesthetic" for themselves, but they are still at the helm of an institutional force which denies black women subjectivity. And while Harris-Perry warns, the genre "is not the sole or most problematic cultural force promoting hypersexualized images of women" and that, "sexual objectification of girls and women of all races is standard fare in contemporary American popular culture and marketing", she understands the sexual dimension of second-wave feminism as having "one set of implications for white women and a very different one for black girls and women, because it occurred within a long history of understanding black women as unethically sexualized."[26] In other words, she writes:

> Hip-hop videos put the Venus Hottentot's exaggerated sexual organs back on display for the voyeuristic pleasure of the paying public. Though separated from her by many decades, corporate-controlled hip-hop music and culture created a new set of tilted images portraying black women as lusty, available, and willing partners. (122-4)

Based on this harmful stereotyping of black female sexuality as "lusty, available, and willing," white musicians and artists have created a legacy for themselves of using black aesthetics, particularly via the interaction with rap culture, to signify their coming-of-age. In looking to examples such as Miley Cyrus, "The blue-eyed, rosy-cheeked, guitar-stringing, quintessential American sweetheart" who "crept out of the window of her little house on the prairie to sneak on over to the hood" as internet writer Diamond Alexis describes, the questionable actions of other, similarly situated artists become apparent.[27] On a similar front, so-called

'streetwear'—an amalgamation of brands and styles of clothing worn previously by black people "on the street"; i.e., that which was once considered "ghetto," a term frequently found in the Kardashian lingo-sphere—is the most sought-after fashion trend today. Box braids, corn rows, Fulani braids, Bantu knots, and dreadlocks have become targets of cross-cultural 'appreciation' or 'integration' despite years of black people being condemned or parodied for either the necessity for, or simply the look of these protective hairstyles, by the white gaze. While Kim and her sisters began to sport and be lauded by the fashion industry for cornrowed hairstyles long ago, it wasn't until 2017, for example, that black women in the armed forces were allowed to wear said protective hairstyles—just one case illustrating the cause for concern regarding current non-black appropriations.[28] In defending her own appropriation of black hairstyles, Kim has gone as far to say she "knows" what she is doing, she knows where the hairstyles come from, and she knows that they are African hairstyles.[29] Yet, she has not gone as far to say whether or not she cares that she is appropriating them.

Evidently, visions of a post-racial society fuel the determination of whiteness to expand, but in our cosmopolitan world, expansion has a unique form: what philosopher Helen Ngo, drawing on Shannon Sullivan's account, describes as *ontological expansion* captures what has happened to whiteness in the twenty-first century, that is, a shift in its managerial tactics. "In particular, [Sullivan] is concerned with questions of white embodiment at the level of unconscious habit," Ngo writes, "arguing that whiteness is most strikingly characterized by what she calls an 'ontological expansiveness'" or the idea that, as Sullivan writes, "white people tend to act and think as if all spaces—whether geographical, psychical, linguistic, economic, spiritual, bodily, or otherwise—are or should be available for them to move in and out of as they wish."[30] Thus, one of those spaces that Sullivan describes

can in fact be *otherness* itself, or at least the appearance of otherness. Liberalism has uplifted itself in American society over the last few decades by appealing to racial others as a means of diversifying the political sphere, in an attempt to democratize what many call the "American Dream." But appearing progressive while at the same time clinging to racist mythologies is arguably the pinnacle of contemporary white liberalism, and this has manifested itself in a number of ways. As Ngo notes, there are "different modes of ontological expansiveness" and "thinking about racism on the level of bodily gesture," she says, first requires understanding racism as a series of gestures. When it comes to the aesthetic realm, a pattern occurs on the level of bodily gesture, and white people can embody what bell hooks understands as 'imperialist nostalgia', in her essay, "Eating the Other." hooks writes:

> The current wave of 'imperialist nostalgia' (defined by Renato Rosaldo in *Culture and Truth* as 'nostalgia, often found under imperialism, where people mourn the passing of what they themselves have transformed' or as 'a process of yearning for what one has destroyed that is a form of mystification') often obscures contemporary cultural strategies deployed not to mourn but to celebrate the sense of a continuum of 'primitivism.' … The desire to make contact with those bodies deemed Other, with no apparent will to dominate, assuages the guilt of the past, even takes the form of a defiant gesture where one denies accountability and historical connection.[31]

Her analysis sheds light on current trends that try hard to profit off of the black aesthetic; they are cannibalistic towards blackness as a lived experience, which calls forth a myriad of racially-charged gestures on behalf of white people, some of which have been described above. Imperialist nostalgia, as a concept, can be used as a means of understanding the major part of white participation in multiculturalism today: "Whereas mournful imperialist nostalgia constitutes the betrayed and abandoned world of the Other as an accumulation of lack and loss," hooks explains, "contemporary longing for the 'primitive' is expressed by the projection onto the Other of a sense of plenty, bounty, a field of dreams."[32] This 'field of dreams' mentality towards the Other, namely towards people of color, found in the modern

white imaginary is crucial in understanding the commodification of race as we know it today, in politics, aesthetics, and how it is approached by the Kardashian business model. Commodification stamps out any history, any life experience, from an object. As understood by Marx, "[A commodity's] value is realized only by exchange, that is, by means of a social process."[33] The social process being informed by racism and white hegemony, evidently, does not bode well for black people, especially not for black women.

(3)

Reality and Recognition

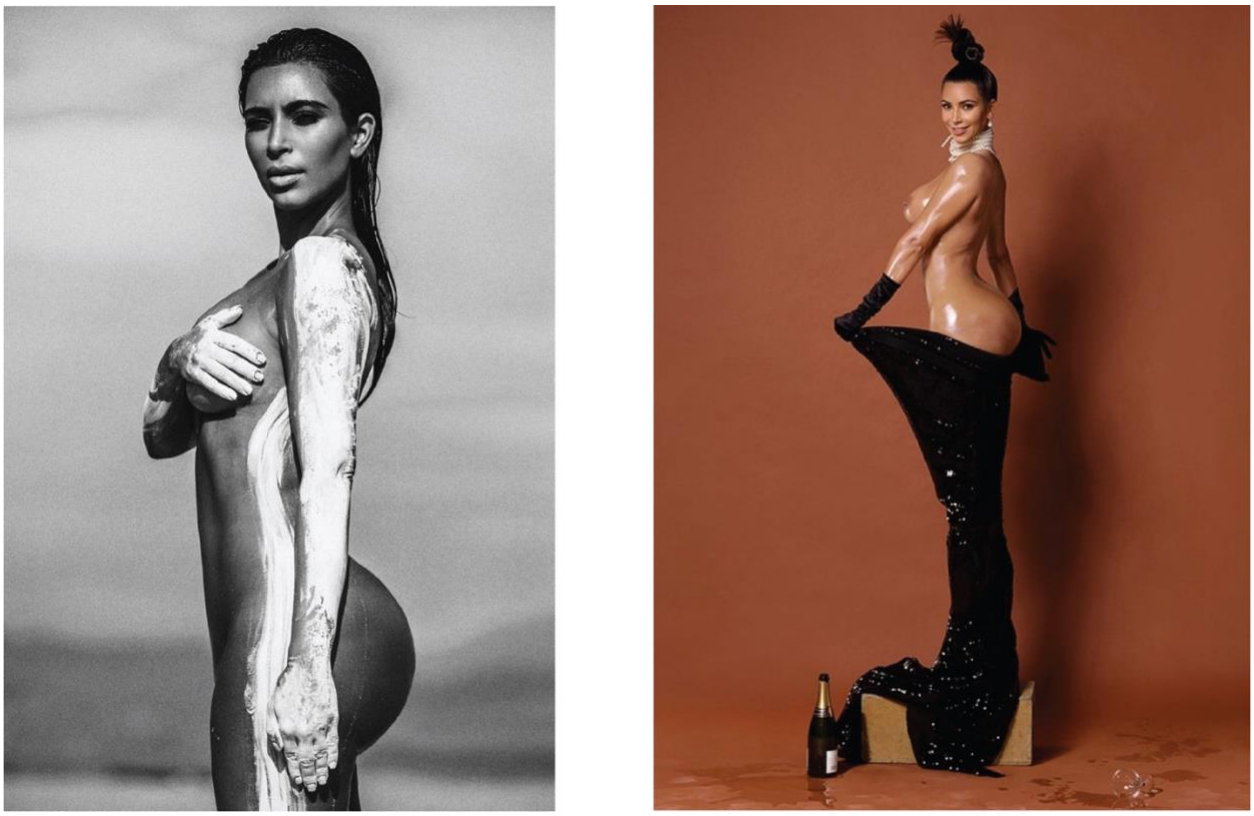

Figure 3: Images of Kim Kardashian from a private photoshoot (left) and her interview for *Paper Magazine's* Winter '14 issue (right), both of which overtly emphasize the size of her rear-end.

In the course of an episode featured during the show's ninth season, Kim studies a pair of red, strappy heels from her closet, turning to younger sister Khloé, who responds in defense of the shoes' value—for their being "ghetto."[34] Characterizations such as these that rely on stereotypes of blackness shaded by linguistic signifiers such as "ghetto," "hood," or "ratchet," are far from rare on the show, and they help to understand the ideology from which the characters operate. Interviews with the stars of the show do more of the work to illustrate how they operate from such static definitions of identity:

> **@papermagazine: You recently said that you thought having your first kid at 30 is "too late." Do you still feel that way?**
>
> **@kyliejenner:** I don't want to start [having] a baby when I'm 30! I don't believe in after 30 -- I don't know.
>
> **@papermagazine: What does your family think of that since your sisters have been 30 or older when they had their first kid?**
>
> **@kyliejenner:** But they all wanted to have kids before. Kim was like, "I better have two kids before 30." She always said that.[35]

In this interview with younger half-sister Kylie Jenner, a model and mogul in line with her sisters, it is made evident that she has followed in Kim's footsteps: here is one instance in which the family's intensely negative attitude towards aging, particularly amongst women, is revealed as being an active part of their static ideology. The aging process, known to everyone to be forthcoming and inevitable, becomes the target of scrutiny and refusal (via total and enthusiastic approval of anti-aging treatments for the body, shaming older people for their lack of youth, etc.) in the popular show, which represents a more widespread understanding of the body in American culture. The answer to sagging skin and wrinkles becomes medical intervention, and thus, cosmetic surgery arises as the quick fix to a deteriorating body. Whiteness, functioning as a fear of mortality, can account for this anti-aging ideology in the show and in American culture. Foucault's idea of discipline takes on a new level of intensity with the advent of cosmetics and cosmetic surgery as a widespread phenomenon. Moreover, once race becomes a factor—or rather, once it 'ceases' to be, as is the case in the world of the post-racialist—it is not a far reach to the 'correcting' and 'enhancing' of what are now considered undesirable traits. Evidencing this idea, both Kim and Kylie, but the latter especially, has been the subject of, and arguably progenitor of a trend in relation to the thinness of white lips as compared to that of other races' lips. An article in *W* magazine retells the struggle of her personal journey with her white insecurity:

> In 2017, Kylie opened up for the first time about her decision to get lip injections—something that had been the subject of longtime speculation: "I was 15, and I was insecure about my lips," she confessed during an episode of Life of Kylie. "I have really small lips. And it was, like, one of my first kisses, and a guy was like, 'I didn't think you would be a good kisser because you have such small lips.' But I took that really hard. Just, when a guy you like says that, I don't know, it just really affected me. I just didn't feel desirable or pretty. I really wanted bigger lips. I would overline my lips with lip liner just to create the illusion of bigger lips. And then, finally, I was like, 'This lip liner isn't doing it.' [I] ended up getting my lips done.[36]

As Kathy Davis notes in *Reshaping the Female Body*, "Whereas nearly all plastic surgery in the first part of the century was done to alleviate deformities due to disease, birth, or mishap," she explains, "in the second half of the century this was no longer the case," and this is evidenced by stories like Kylie's, "plastic surgery began to be performed for the aesthetic improvement of otherwise healthy bodies…spurred on by improvements in surgical procedures and technologies."[37] That is to say, it is currently the case that plastic surgery efforts are often directed at vanity, despite its being created for those with "deformities due to disease, birth, or mishap." The commodification of plastic surgery has in turn, amongst other things described here, led to the commodification of the body, and moreover, to the normalization of the latter. Davis continues: "The body is no longer simply a dysfunctional object requiring medical intervention, but a commodity" she says, "not unlike a car, a refrigerator, a house" or something else "which can be continuously upgraded and modified in accordance with new interests and greater resources" and "endlessly manipulated — reshaped, restyled, and reconstructed to meet prevailing fashions and cultural values." She concludes, "Cosmetic surgery is the cultural product of modernity and of a consumer culture which treats the body as a vehicle for self-expression."[38]

In other words, bodies have been moved out of their theoretical space of discipline and thrust into the material world of reality, in which they can be worked on like objects—

yet capitalism makes them not merely objects but products for sale. And thus, it becomes clear how easy it is for the Kardashian model to thrive in this century, working with a model that frames recognition as central to worth, and treats the self as a product. Technology makes this possible, of course, and when you have the means of production and only one product to be sold, exploitation is easy; and this is what the Kardashians do. In an article written for *Paper Magazine* in 2014, Kim is lauded for her ability to carry out this exploitation of herself to her benefit:

> … her willpower and self-discipline are a marvel. Imagine being filmed and photographed constantly, yet never saying anything seriously controversial or appearing unkempt. The effort involved seems torturous, impossible. And yet, though her life requires work of a sort — roughly two hours of hair and makeup each day, regular meetings for her assorted businesses, wardrobe fittings, photo shoots, 5:00 a.m. workouts — you don't get the sense that she is hiding or suppressing her true, private self. We're accustomed to our performers having onstage and backstage registers, but for her there is no division between the two. This is, indeed, the definition of a reality star. She's not performing, that is — at least not visibly. She is being, and being is her act.[39]

From the tone of this feature, which is not a critique, it is clear that Kim and her family's less racially-sensitive moments, particularly the several instances in which Kim was openly accused of sporting blackface, are not considered to be 'controversial'.[40] Our ideas regarding the self being grounded in discipline, and a hyper-emphasis on personal choice, have allowed for an understanding of the body as the physical manifestation of effort towards maintenance ("not unlike a car, a refrigerator, a house" as Davis says above) and as such we are absolved of ethical responsibility in favor of gratuitous capitalistic reason. One thing that informs this view of the body *qua* improvable and moreover, in-need of improvement, is the ideology found in reality television shows, what author Brenda Weber understands as "makeover logic," or the idea that "the makeover" is "a potent cure for the postmodern condition, bringing in coherence, solidity, and empowerment to the fractured and

schizophrenic state hypothesized as intrinsic to our highly mediated moment."[41] Weber goes on to explain, "How the makeover goes about achieving celebratory selfhood for its participants is varied, employing a vast range of ideological systems and discourses necessary to achieve its self-making goals" she writes, in *Makeover TV: Selfhood, Citizenship, and Celebrity*:

> These shows therefore mobilize a wide gamut of rationales, including neoconservative and new-age religious rhetorics, neoliberal marketplace ideals, feminist and postfeminist empowerment justifications, hyperconsumerist entitlement discourses, celebrity and fairy tale transformation scenarios, interventionist anti-addiction campaigns, SWAT-like property and raid re-enactments, talk-based therapeutic rejuvenations, boot-camp behavior modifications, and medicalized cautionary tales.[42]

Weber's comprehensive understanding of reality television as a makeover machine ties past to present in terms of reality television's history. "Regardless of the type, makeovers ardently promote an essentialized and authentic idea of self that is stable, coherent, and locatable," explains the author, "where gender unambiguously correlates to sexed identity." A correlation of self and sexed identity is illustrated in many forms across cultures and throughout history, but only recently has the idea of "self" become so highly incorporated with the consumer world presented through television via the "makeover maze" as Weber terms it. "Though the makeover authorizes change in order to achieve stable self, such transformation is teleological and unidirectional. Before-bodies become After-bodies, end of story."[43] It is precisely this "After-body" that is at stake in the Kardashian universe; Kim's ever-developing presentation of her own after-body—and that of others on the show, particularly Kris', Khloé's, and Kylie's (but not Caitlyn's, who was cast out of the show's limelight after becoming a woman through gender reassignment surgery, another aspect of the Kardashians' conservative actuality) after-bodies, are precisely what drives the show's

popularity and success. And as addressed in the critical tenth-season episode, "Lip Service", this enthusiasm for the after-body is driven by a strong desire to be happy with oneself. "When you are photographed all the time, it's natural to have insecurities or to want to change certain things about yourself," Khloé explains to the confessional camera, for instance. She proceeds to tell Kim, who has just gotten an artificial tan, about her procedure for that day: "I want to get my whole butt—the stretch mark and the cellulite laser," she continues, as the boutique clinic's surgeon walks in to greet them. Later on, a pastry cart is rolled in for them to enjoy, as viewers absorb the image of Khloé's exposed rear-end being lasered down to a more ageless state. "I mean we all have insecurities," Kim relates to the camera. Hesitantly, supermodel-younger-sister Kendall, of the Jenner clan, adds, "And if it makes her feel better about herself, then why not?" But later, mockingly, Kendall—one of the less obsessive after-body-searching sisters—does an impression of her younger sister in the company of Kim and Khloé, seemingly upending the lightheartedness of the conversation and, quite truthfully, hitting the nail on the head regarding the liberal attitude: "She's going to be like, 'I can live my life however I want. And if that's what I'm feeling, then that's what I'm going to do!'"[44]

Kim, Khloé, and Kylie's never-ending "struggle" with the plumpness of their lips, the cleavage-production of their breasts, and the size of their asses, points to and greatly illustrates the influence of contemporary consumerist feminism's desire to liberate women by means of managerial tactics like those described by Foucault. Being able to control how she is seen by herself and by others, seemingly informs Kylie, as well as the rest of her sisters, in searching for the after-body. Their constant talk of their bodies, exercising of their bodies, manipulating of their bodies, etc., to look a particular way results from harbored insecurity

about their own image. Later in the episode, Kim sits down with her younger half-sisters to talk, commenting on Kylie's lips. "Kendall said they were too big yesterday," Kylie tells Kim, Kendall interjects, "I don't know why you guys are even freaking out, or talking about this," she says, "nobody needs anything, everybody's beautiful!" Here, Kendall presents a perspective that is healthy; a conceptually fruitful feminist understanding of the body. But this is swiftly rejected in favor of by-any-means-necessary after-body talk by Kim. "No," she says, "I think if something makes you insecure and you've been feeling that way forever," she trails off, or what she says is strategically edited out, "who doesn't want to look amazing? You only have one life. And what I've realized from what all of us have gone through is, do what makes you happy." The harmless implication is that you should fix what problems you have with yourself, but the unstated, more dangerous implications are varied and plenty. Fame does not enter the discussion. As Kim seriously engages with this idea that her insecurities are valid and something to be dealt with, Kendall implores her to acknowledge that she probably wouldn't have so many if she weren't a celebrity—again, Kim responds in praise of liberal idealism and scopophilic (that is, sight-privileging) recognition.

Conclusion

(De)contextualizing Difference

In pursuing the Kardashian influence, and the influence of reality television generally, we could turn to feminist discourses. But as aforementioned, a feminism grounded in, and supported by the biologizing force of an ideology centered around sexual and bodily freedom, might laud the *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* production on account of its centrality on women and the apparent value it places on motherhood and female empowerment from both an economic and aesthetic perspective. And this type of feminism, the kind that Spillers accredits to "the subtle and shifting calibrations of a liberal ideology", does not allow for "the African-American female's historic claim to the territory of womanhood and 'femininity'" to be realized; it disputes the need for this claim in favor of a colorblind policy of 'everything goes' liberalism, in which white women can exoticize themselves to any degree they please, for any reason, regardless of the numerous implications and consequences, which all point to a history of racist mimicry and colonizing envy worthy of critical attention.

As Weber notes, this type of feminism is strongly reinforced in reality television: "The neoliberal technology that structures makeover programming situates primarily female citizens as agents, empowered through their control of the gaze" she says. "Participants are only eligible for such citizen-subject status, however, if they mark themselves as visibly congruent with dominant race, class, and gender norms that verge toward *an elite whiteness*."[45] This kind of "elite whiteness" is exactly what the Kardashian ideology promotes; a kind of whiteness that does not age, that does not have skin that sags or wrinkles,

that does not suffer from thin lips nor flat asses, that does not have stretch marks, nor unseemly body hair, whose face is captured well on camera from every possible angle. Under the guise of staunch liberal acceptance of diversity and post-racial fantasy, as well as the passive bourgeois acceptance of technological advancements in cosmetic surgery as something to be taken for granted, white bodies under capitalism have seemingly achieved their goal of becoming plastic subjectivities, with no limits on their tendency toward expansion. Returning to the idea of plasticity, we can understand it now as problematic in so many ways. Our relationship with objects has caused us to view ourselves as objects; plastic is what we see, so perhaps plastic is what we want to become. Assuming that structuralism has had a significant influence on the 21st century, modern liberalism can be seen as seeking to eschew the rigidity of old categories and transgress them, albeit irresponsibly. This also brings us to the problem of racial ambiguity, which is mirrored in liberal discourse by 'colorblind' politics in a post-segregation America. Being able to escape racial categories is an idealist vision, not a reality. Harris-Perry writes, "many African Americans bristle at the idea of color blindness because it suggests that race is irrelevant to identity. They want to be understood as black and thus tied to a history and culture associated with blackness." Because, as the author states eloquently, "black women in America live under heightened scrutiny by the state" and thus "lack opportunities for accurate, affirming recognition of the self", it is irresponsible for white feminists to use them as aesthetic inspiration, particularly when it is for the sake of exercising their own personal autonomy and ridding themselves of body-related insecurity. Contending with what Harris-Perry deems their "hypervisibility" leaves black women in problematic existential territory. As hooks notes, "The over-riding fear is that cultural, ethnic, and racial differences will be continually commodified and

offered up as new dishes to enhance the white palate – that the Other will be eaten, consumed, and forgotten."[46]

Ultimately, the question of consuming the other, especially when that other is the black femme, is central to the inquiry at hand and the Kardashian question generally; it is what is at stake when it comes to understanding ideology that currently undergirds American society in regard to beauty and desire. It is an ideology exemplified by the popularity of *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* and those whose popularity helped them achieve their own. In her *Outlaw Culture*, in attempting to understand the cultural influence of pop icon Madonna, hooks writes that "[Madonna] assumes the role of high priestess of a cultural hedonism that seeks to substitute unlimited production and pursuit of sexual pleasure for a radical, liberating political practice, one that would free our minds and our bodies."[47] This 'cultural hedonism' is linked to the highly individualized desire to consume at will regardless of socio-ethical consequences that is promoted by current capitalist affirmations, what hooks calls "today's cannibalistic market economy."[48] As such, Madonna plays an important role in the phenomena described by Davis, as do other important celebrity icons, such as Kim Kardashian and her favored celebrity muse, Cher ("forever the 'O.G.'" according to Kim), who is described by Davis as being the "undisputed queen of cosmetic surgery", once claiming that her body is her "capital".[49] Accordingly, Kim has assumed this role herself, albeit in a much less open way: her insistence on perfection in regards to her body and style accounts for much of her appeal, her body too, is her capital. Her appropriative looks are a lesson learned from the queen of pop herself, whose mixed racial ancestry is, like Kim's, a point of public interest and a source for personal exploitation. However, Cher's looks usually kept within her own, particularly Native American and

Armenian, lineage whereas Kim's style often transcends her own racial designations. Yet, it is their use of the exotic feminine that draws them together here; for it is in endorsing the adaptation of the female body to the sexually desirable, fantastical standards men purport in regard to femininity in all of its forms, that they endorse an oppressive schema of power that places black female sexuality in captivity and makes difference "exotic" and therefore desirable. As hooks analyzes, in line with previously cited authors, "mass culture is the contemporary location that both publicly declares and perpetuates the idea that there is pleasure to be found in the acknowledgment and enjoyment of racial difference" she explains:

> The commodification of Otherness has been so successful because it is offered as a new delight, more intense, more satisfying than normal ways of doing and feeling. Within commodity culture, ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture. Cultural taboos around sexuality and desire are transgressed and made explicit as the media bombards folks with a message of difference no longer based on the white supremacist assumption that "blondes have more fun." The "real fun" is to be had by bringing to the surface all those "nasty" unconscious fantasies and longings about contact with the Other embedded in the secret (not so secret) deep structure of white supremacy. (21)

If whiteness can be understood as an ideology that shuts out, related to what Yancy understands as the act of *suturing*, that is, refusing to be receptive to what is outside of itself, it makes sense for the aesthetic sphere to be its favored *mode d'emploi*. If whiteness closes itself off, while for instance, blackness opens itself up—that is, it is receptive and open to new ways of being and new modes of thinking about the self—in any attempt to grow as a subject, whiteness fails, as it is unable unfix itself from where it is pegged. A white self is pegged on its indifference, its inability to be seen as other-than, whereas a racially marked self is pegged precisely to its marked-ness, its difference. And thus, transcendence of the body is made difficult for those whose features mark them as different; and yet, it makes it quite easy for

those whose features let them disappear into the majority, to "put on" the features of an Other-body, in an attempt to mask, or obfuscate their own mundane existence in the name of insecurity and personal freedom. This kind of anti-ethical, aesthetically-focused experimentation, lived under the auspices of liberalism, exemplifies American culture today and the Kardashian approach to celebrity and other white celebrities before them.

Although recognizing your insecurities as valid parts of your personality takes a certain level of self-awareness, it is the teleological attitude towards self-acceptance that can be seen as immature and driven by fear, and ultimately, what is problematic about the Kardashians' popularity and influence. Insecurity should not be given over to if it means consuming the Other. As hooks notes, "Currently, the commodification of difference promotes paradigms of consumption wherein whatever difference the Other inhabits is eradicated, via exchange, by a consumer cannibalism that not only displaces the Other but denies the significance of that Other's history through a process of decontextualization." (26) Ultimately, de- and re-contextualization of black feminine sexuality and stereotype in American politics and culture, in combination with the neoliberal force of individuality and choice that drives our actions today, has given the Kardashians their erotically-charged edge and accounts for much of their aestheticized fame.

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Notes

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[1] Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics* 17, No. 2 (1987): 67.

[2] Sadiah Qureshi, "Displaying Sara Baartman, the 'Hottentot Venus'," *History of Science* 42 (2004): 245.

[3] Ibid., 245.

[4] Melissa V. Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 97.

[5] Cornel West, *Race Matters* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 179. Here, Cornel West describes what he calls the "Afro-Americanization of the white youth" in America during the late 20th century. While I agree with this concept insofar as it did take place, and that it has substantial ramifications on race matters in the U.S., I do not agree with his assertion that this was for the better.

[6] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Capital, Vol. 1*, trans. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978), 328.

Chapter One

[7] Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 136.

[8] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Vol. 1,* trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 139.

[9] Ibid., 139.

[10] Ibid., 141.

[11] Ibid., 147.

[12] Ibid., 149.

[13] Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 68.

[14] Ryan Seacrest, "The Vienna Incidents," *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, episode 121 (aired June 29, 2014).

[15] George Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes: The Continuing Significance of Race in America* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 86-7.

[16] Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), 140.

[17] Ibid., 134.

[18] Ibid., 148.

[19] Ibid., 148.

[20] Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays,* trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 76.

[21] Ibid., 79.

[22] Ibid., 81.

Chapter Two

[23] Foucault, *Discipline*, 141.

[24] Ryan Seacrest, "Bun in the Oven," *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, episode 209 (aired January 15, 2018).

[25] Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen*, 125.

[26] Ibid., 125.

[27] Diamond Alexis, "Hip-Hop, It's Time to Slam the Door Closed on White Girls Like Miley Cyrus," *Black Entertainment Channel,* May 6, 2017.

[28] Chioma Nnadi, "New Order," Vogue, August 23, 2017.

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Chapter Three

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[37] Kathy Davis, *Reshaping the Female Body: The Dilemma of Cosmetic Surgery* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 15.

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[40] See "blackfishing" online for more information. There have been many instances in which Kim Kardashian West, Khloé Kardashian, and Kylie Jenner have been accused of what is known online as "blackfishing," or appearing black through means other than blackface, as well as blackface itself.

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[43] Ibid., 15.

Conclusion

[44] Ryan Seacrest, "Lip Service," *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, episode 139 (aired May 10, 2015).

[45] Ibid., 52. My emphasis.

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