SEGREGATIONIST DEPICTIONS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN AND JEWISH WOMEN IN THE LATE 19TH AND EARLY/MID-20TH CENTURY AND THE CONCEPT OF THE WHITE FEMALE BODY AS A SYMBOL OF THE NATION

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the role that white women took in southern societal life as 'mothers of massive resistance' in the face of increasing racial integration and equality across the United States. In particular, this thesis will attempt to demonstrate the relationship between the portrayal of minority women - specifically of African American women in the southern United States and Jewish women in Nazi-era Germany. By analysing and understanding the overlap in depictions of these groups in their respective contexts, we are also able to understand how the white, non-Jewish female body was used to enforce a segregationist approach to femininity in these times and places.

This thesis' analysis will focus primarily on depictions of black and Jewish women which focus on aspects of their beauty and citizenship, such as adherence to perceived beauty standards of the time to their conformity to the acceptable religious and cultural moulds of a model citizen as defined in such societies. Once it becomes clear how such concepts exist as a tool of segregation through depiction of black and Jewish women as 'less human' or 'less female' when compared to the white, Christian middle-to-upper class citizen of European and American societies, this thesis hopes to make clear how the idea of femininity and the imagined white female body as symbolic of the nation is a crucial aspect of 'othering' women. In doing so, this thesis will show how such othering becomes the basis of ensuring a white supremacist social structure.

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INTRODUCTION

In a country whose north-south cultural, financial and legislative divide had only deepened since a civil war a century earlier, the issue of racial discourse in the American south was driven by an actor that has been often overlooked: the white, southern, middle-to-upper class woman. These women, who were themselves the products of a highly racialised society, became key drivers of racial discourse in this period, acting as a bonding agent between racial discourse, ongoing debates surrounding gender issues and the idea of southern femininity (Elizabeth Gillespie McRae 2018, 6). Simultaneously, the rigid structure of gender roles in the American south at the time meant that women found themselves not in positions of political power, but in positions of administration which were crucial to societal life (Elizabeth Gillespie McRae 2018, 4). This often took place in the public arena, where the presentation of their white, female bodies, served as a tool to alienate those minorities deemed hostile by the upper classes of the era, who often held white supremacist views.

In the context of the southern United States, occupying these supplementary positions often saw women work as secretaries, librarians, clerks, nurses and many other roles deemed 'womanly', affording white southern women of acceptable social stature the status of an old guard of femininity in the south. Roles like the aforementioned are important because by occupying them, white women were able to participate in the maintenance of white supremacy within four critical arenas, which McRae (2018, 6) states were local politics, social welfare and access to it, popular culture and public education. By doing this, they were the *de facto* enforcers of this femininity in the face of an increasingly active civil rights movement that sought the equality of black women, and thus their features of beauty and femininity alongside those of white women.

Thus, this thesis will seek to discuss how the idea of the white body and womanly beauty became an active factor in the normalisation and maintenance of segregation. In doing

so, the thesis will engage with theories of authors such as Elizabeth Gillespie McRae and George Mosse regarding the connection between race, gender and bodily appearance in different historical contexts, such as through drawing comparison between the racialised gender dynamics of Jews in Nazi-era Germany and African Americans living in the American South during the period. This thesis will specifically discuss the concept of the white female body and its role in American racial discourse.

Furthermore, the thesis will demonstrate how white American women, who during this time were connected within different cultural arenas, such as the literary sector, were able to use their positions to produce and disseminate materials which reinforced white female beauty standards above all else. By engaging in popular culture as writers of books on beauty, femininity and motherhood, as well as being writers for magazines and newspapers which disseminated female-oriented, gender-role-specific information that was aimed at white women, connection in such arenas that affected the shaping of culture was a vital tool of white female enforcement of white supremacy. This took the form of black southern women being portrayed oftentimes in certain manners relating to the roles they occupied, such as that of a maid or a nanny, and with exaggerated features which starkly contrasted them to white women, such as heavily accented speech that relied on slang and had lower-class intonations, and through physical features such as abnormally large lips or sexual organs that were often attributed to black, and not white women, in many forms of European and American written and visual works for centuries. Through this portrayal, white upper-class women were able to distinguish themselves in many ways from black women as being refined, cultured and socially acceptable, while the features often ascribed to black women were associated with being lower class, uncultured, and in a purely racial context, as primitive, brutish and even somewhat animalistic.

In order to achieve this, I will rely on a variety of primary sources for this thesis. In particular, the publications of the later 19th and earlier 20th centuries; be it through art, news reports or fashion publications, will be useful for understanding and seeing how women were portrayed in terms of their bodies, fashion choices and roles during the aforementioned eras. This can be achieved through analysis of well-known publications with a wide reach that were intended for a primarily female readership, such as Vogue magazine.

The content of such sources will prove useful in demonstrating how white women spoke of themselves and played a role in maintaining their socio-economic image as members of the middle-to-upper classes and therefore the keepers of femininity. Beyond this, it can also show segregation of female-oriented literature played a role in the development of femininity in communities that were excluded from mainstream American fashion. Given this, we could begin to see how minorities in the south, particularly African American women, were denied certain aspects of their femininity by virtue of the deliberately European-centric social and beauty standards that white middle-to-upper class women maintained in wider societal thought.

Within this thesis, there will also be the opportunity to conduct a literature review on several secondary sources that have become crucial to understanding the concepts I discuss and that my thesis is based on. Specifically, this will involve the use of texts such as George Mosse's 1985 book, *Nationalism and sexuality: middle-class morality and sexual norms in modern Europe*, and Elizabeth Gillespie McRae's 2018 book *Mothers of Massive Resistance: White Women and the Politics of White Supremacy*. These sources, the former of which allows us to examine the relationship between nationalism and gender in modern European societies, and the latter of which allows us to understand the role white southern middle-to-upper class women played in American society, give us a basis through which we can see just how intertwined with and fundamental to the white female body has become with regard to

white nationalism. They do so both in the period of study and in the contemporary through the principles which underpin this phenomenon both within and outside of the American context.

Ultimately, this thesis seeks to highlight how the depiction women during this thesis' period of focus, in particularly those members of minorities in the American south and Nazi Germany, respectively, have a number of parallels which aid such depictions in furthering the goal of segregation on an ethnic basis. In achieving such a state, regimes which seek to oppress their respective minorities succeed in dehumanising these minorities by create myths surround their detriment to society or supposed incompatibility with what such a society has deemed to be its values, and ultimately legitimise widespread discrimination. The presentation of minority women, both with regards to their features and personality traits, was crucial to achieving this through propagandised written and visual materials. By placing an idealised image of the white, female body above all else as the standard for femininity, and representative of the nation itself, the white female body as an idea can become weaponised for the purpose of justifying segregation and racial discrimination through the guise of protecting the nation from sinister influences.

1.0 - BACKGROUND

1.1 - Theories of gender and race

For the purpose of analysis, this thesis will follow the theories of George Mosse towards sexuality and nationalism, especially with regards to the ideas of respectability, femininity and subservience. In his book *Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe*, Mosse (1985) stipulates and discusses two key theories of the power relations between gender and nationalism in the European context. With regards to this general power relation, Mosse argues that a sense of national identity and unity is predicated upon the promotion of gender roles and identities, where women equally, to a certain extent, but most certainly separately from men, are responsible for certain aspects of the nation's upkeep the same way that men are in different fields. Mosse's discussion of Germany allows us to highlight the example of womanhood and motherhood in Nazi Germany, where a woman's social status could be elevated through 'acceptable' notions of motherhood. If a mother produced strong, fit, ethnic German boys free of medical hindrances that would prevent them from being useful workers or soldiers with a similarly ideal German husband, then 'Reichsdeutsche' women could receive awards such as the 'Mutterkeuz", or "Mother's Cross", a civilian honour bestowed upon German women by Nazi authorities for exceptional meritorious acts of motherhood in benefitting the German nation (Benz 2008).

Conversely, Mosse argues that women who embodied such gender roles and became proficient home keepers and mothers become 'motherly' symbols of national pride by becoming embodiments of the nation themselves (Mosse 1982, 235). This notion of women symbolising the nation by executing traditional gender roles and identities in daily life further reinforces the entrenched separation of gender roles in nationalist ideology by further 'fragilisation' women and the nation and lending credence to the notion that men, as

embodiments of strong, masculine national strength and character must defend women for foreign, non-conformist threat.

This notion is critical to the thesis not only because of its explanation of how white women in the south were able to mutate white femininity into a force of segregation, but because of how white femininity and white women's participation in southern white supremacy became intertwined with white supremacist men and the 'white crusade' against African Americans, who were often hypersexualised in white southern American collective thought during the early 20th century. In the southern context during this period, this phenomenon directly relates to Mosse's second theory that is critical to this analysis, where Mosse discusses the ways in which women's involvement in nationalist movements is often limited by societal expectations and gender roles, as well as by the male-dominated nature of these movements. He argues that women's contributions to these movements are often overlooked and undervalued, even though they play a crucial role in their success.

Mosse emphasises the importance of women as physical symbols of revolution, nationhood and purity through the presentation of their bodies, as demonstrated by his discussions of Marianne, a fictional figure often depicted in art as the personification of the French nation, and who is famously depicted leading French revolutionaries into battle in Eugène Delacroix's painting *Liberty leading the People*. Even then, Marianne could not escape the humility and chaste demeanour expected of women at the time. Despite being portrayed during the revolution as a scantily-clad, unashamed and powerful figure soldiering over the barricades at the front of a sea of revolutionaries, as France transitioned from crumbling Monarchy to relatively stable Imperial Republic, Marianne was eventually tamed and increasingly feminised according to the patriarchal ideas of modest women at the time, eventually being widely depicted as what Mosse refers to as 'sedate and fully clothed figure' that eclipsed her former 'tomboy rival' (Mosse 1985, 91).

Figure 1: Liberty leading the People (Delacroix 1830)

1.2 - Fashion and femininity in civil rights-era America

To better reflect on the segregationist experience of gender in this era, a useful tool can be found in both visual and written media. For women, who at the time were still restricted in the literary space in terms of their roles as both writers and readers, white upper-class femininity came to be preserved, and ideas surrounding its definition disseminated through the vector of fashion. This literature came to fruition in the pages of major fashion magazines that became critical to the middle/upper class southern woman's choices of self-presentation, fashion and sense of morality. In doing so, the fashion ideas of white women at the time became inherently critical to separating white women and the features unique to them from features unique to black women regardless of class.

Given this, sources such as Vogue fashion magazine covers can be analysed through a variety of different academic lenses, such as through a feminist, lens, postcolonial lens and a classist lens. To this effect, not only can we interpret the idea of the white woman and it's distance from black femininity through such sources, but we can also see a major subtext of conflict between white women of lower socioeconomic status in the south, and their 'blackening' through being othered with the racial minorities of the south on the basis of their lack of ability to attain and present themselves in the fashionable and 'proper' manner as defined by publications such as Vogue. As a driver of American femininity and fashion Vogue magazine during the era of study has also been a major factor in explicitly tying American femininity to European femininity and grouping the two fashion scenes, however different in their approaches to what is deemed fashionable, as inherently linked on the canvas from which fashion stemmed from: the slender, pale and healthy upper-class white European woman's body.

Figure 2: Vogue covers from 1954, 1964 and 1972 (Vogue 2023)

To the white woman in the American south, the idea of the 'Southern Belle' became crucial to maintaining a number of social precedents crucial to upper class white society at the time. Southern Belles were pinnacles of white feminine beauty, being dressed in ornate

dresses and vivid makeup which showed off the Belle's physical features, allowing her to be slightly flirtatious by design while still being an upper-class, chaste and moral woman of the south's evangelical culture. A Belle's features, which required being clean, with tidy, often intricately-braided hair, and a visibly young, white, healthily slender body, epitomised the pinnacle of white female southern beauty in the antebellum south. Furthermore, they were continuing the precedent of the original Southern Belles of the mid-19th century - a time rife with separatism, civil war and economic prowess for the south's slave-dependent economy, which kept it largely separate from the social and economic innovations of the American north and the expansionist creation of the American west (Hade 2011).

1.3 – Theoretical Discussions

In order to better understand how the role of white women and the concept of white female bodies were utilised to an end of maintaining racial segregation in the American south, the following section will attempt to frame critical theories of George Mosse in relation to how black womanhood and white womanhood were represented in contrast to each other in different forms of media and other forms of information dissemination. This thesis will attempt to show how George Mosse's theory of womanhood as inherently representative of the nation and national purity highlights to us a similar approach to the portrayal of black womanhood and white womanhood as Jewish womanhood and Aryan womanhood were contrasted in the propaganda of the Nazi regime in Germany between 1933 and 1945. While the causes and execution of the holocaust and institutional slavery in the American south were incredibly different, the imagery of white, Christian, European womanhood were inherently tied to the idea of sovereignty, national pride, strength and purity in both cases, which resulted in the sexual 'othering' of black women in the American context, and Jewish women in the Nazi-era German context.

More specifically, Mosse's theory of white Christian womanhood as the manifestation of national purity and strength can be seen through the hypersexualisation of sexual minorities, be it in film, print or in practice with acts of sexual violence against 'inferior' women in both cases. Techniques used in propaganda in both cases often see the caricaturisation and brutalisation of the image of women belonging to inferior social groups and races. emphasising physical qualities deemed to be 'unwomanly', with the aim of masculinising women of 'undesirable' races to differentiate them from women deemed superior. This often resulted in portrayals showing women deemed inferior with traits that were starkly opposite to strict European beauty standards, while simultaneously attempting to make women deemed inferior seem inhuman. This helped portray them as a threat to the nation through association with entities deemed to be inhuman, dangerous, and generally foreign to a pure, utopian domestic landscape that was central to the idealised image of the United States that Americans in the south felt was under threat after slavery's abolition.

2.0 – FEMININITY AND DEPICTIONS OF GENDER

2.1 - Gender roles and the exclusionary nature of white southern womanhood

Within the ongoing work to understand how womanhood was racialised in this period in the American south, it has become clear that the imagined white female body, though separate and distinct, was nevertheless inherently tied to and fundamentally inseparable from the racialised landscape of women's bodies. White southern womanhood, as defined by the fashions and gender roles of the time, was an ideal that was openly discussed and glorified in many available forms of media in order to create a standard to which white women were to aspire towards. This aspiration, regardless of whether white women took to it, was fundamental not only to reinforcing gender roles through the representation of women in certain roles, be it a nurse, secretary or housewife, but to the division of white women's bodies from black women's bodies on several different bases.

The gender role was crucial to this separation by virtue of how southern society saw the role of white and black bodies regardless of gender. In her 2018 book *Mothers of Massive Resistance,* Elizabeth McRae defines this separation of female bodies in southern society as a distinction based on access and purpose. White women, to McCrae, were largely defined by their exclusion of black women from white female gender roles and fashions. By being manifestations of the jobs and looks that society had deemed fashionable and acceptable, the exclusion of black women from jobs such that white women occupied, and fashion styles purposely designed around their white European female physique became critical to the essence of white southern womanhood itself. Conversely, black southern womanhood was further differentiated from white womanhood because of the black body's purpose, both historic and present, in the southern American social structure.

Black women, their perceived physiques and their sexuality was defined by their role as slave labourers on the plantations of the American south. This resulted in a lens through which black women, similarly to black men, were little more than labourers whose strength in the face of adverse conditions was not testament to their strength or their tenacity, but to their perceived masculinity and natural tendency towards manual labour and unrefined lifestyle. This was in turn a result of their exclusion from the 'proper' European lifestyles of the southern elite (Elizabeth Gillespie McRae 2018, 114-116). For the purposes of justifying the slave status of the past that many African Americans were forced and born into, white supremacist writers such as Mildred Rutherford glorified the status of African American women as domestic servants and field workers (Elizabeth Gillespie McRae 2018, 52), and in doing so promulgated what could be described as a 'soft' version of white supremacy, intended to be more palatable to the mass readership.

One of the most common arguments used to this effect followed the notion that within this social structure, black southerners were considered by the planter class as part of the family, however inferior, rather than as free citizens. In doing so, supporters of segregation and the confederacy often assert that the tension of racial integration is much more present and a consequence of emancipation, and that during the slavery status quo of the antebellum south a natural order had emerged that benefited slavers and the enslaved. In reality, these differences were the result of the exclusion of black southerners from the opportunity to participate in the Eurocentric lifestyles deemed fashionable by the southern elite of the times, and in the case of black women, by denying them the opportunity to attain era-appropriate beauty standards through the enforcement of discriminatory beauty standards and the representation of black women as starkly contrasted to the beauty standards of white America throughout various forms of written and visual media.

In segregation-era texts that claim the dynamic between black labourers and slaves and the slave owning planter class of the south was amicable and familial, gender is often intentionally overlooked and downplayed for the sake of emphasising that race, above all else, was the key factor in the claimed favourable social dynamic between planters and slaves. Not only does this indirectly seek to minimise the importance of black and white womanhood in the racial tensions and social debates of the morality of a southern culture predicated on the general abuse of poor black slaves and their descendants, but such an argument is often used in conjunction with 'lost cause' arguments relating to the justification for secession and the existence of the Confederate States of America (Alan Skerrett Jr, 2011).

Even deeper than this, however, is the European racism that existed according to Mosse since the 18th century, when black people often were described as uncivilised not only because of their unindustrialised societies, but because of their inability to 'control their sexual passions' (Mosse 1985, 133), as demonstrated through the hypersexualised physical features attributed to them. This aspect of black hypersexualisation by European societies lends itself to the notion that sexuality was something that needed to be controlled, and civilised societies such as European societies exemplified this through the chaste, modest mannerisms that many women were forced to adopt to be considered 'respectable'. It further lends itself to the idea of Christian modesty as the righteous path, with conversion of slaves in the south being a way in which black people could be somewhat 'saved' from their hypersexual predispositions, and the role of the white saviour being fulfilled.

2.2 - Segregationist depictions of black and Jewish women

Within their historic contexts, there are a multitude of techniques and implications in the portrayals of Jewish women and Black women that overlap as part of an effort to contrast them to the fabricated view of the white female women as a modest, capable and more

beautiful according to the beauty standards of 20th century European societies. These similarities span the portrayal of Jewish women and black women in relation to their labour, their social status, their ethnic origin and the difference this imposes on the subject in question, and perhaps most significantly, their sexuality. In order to achieve the goal of formulating a view of Jewish and black women as inherently inferior not just as members of their race but as women and their supposed failure to properly be womanly, the rhetorical depiction of Jewish and black women by Nazi authorities and southern right-wing governments and non-government organisations alike needed to emphasise 3 main points of contrast where supposedly inferior women failed to meet the standard of a 'good female citizen': devotion to God, devotion to the home and the family, and the pursuit of manifesting modest beauty.

Within the context of Nazi Germany and the southern United States, religion played a role as present but fractured, with a complex relationship to the state and the presence of longstanding different religions (or in the case of the south, more so a tension between different denominations of Christianity than widespread different religions). In both cases, one key aspect of the supposed inferiority according to white supremacist rhetoric is the godlessness prescribed to both the Jewish and African American people. In the Jewish case, one of the most prominent visual caricatures of Jews used throughout Europe is that of the devil worshipper or of being demons. Antisemitic caricatures have long shown Jews as inhuman beings with features associated with the devil, such as having horns, a pointed tail and otherwise being deformed and evil-looking in order to emphasise the inhumanness and inherent sinister nature of the fabricated connection between Jews and the devil (Antisemitism Policy Trust 2020). Within Nazi Germany, such tactics were employed in order to portray the Jewish people as an enemy to Germans not only because of their

supposed ethnic inferiority, but also based on their supposed religious connection to the devil, thus automatically placing the Jews as a threat to the historically Christian German nation.

In the case of black southerners who were converted to Christianity as a result of white preachers preaching to slaves, tensions rose as the black evangelical community began to merge with the white evangelical community as a result of integration and the end of slavery. Many black southerners grapple with their exclusion from the image of a good, God-fearing southerner based on being labelled as using Christianity as a tool of political gain. According to Esau McCaulley, a professor studying black experiences and evangelicalism in the United States, the perception of black evangelicalism as an inherently politicised and racialised exercise emerged in the early 19th century as more and more slaves were converted to Christianity. In this case, the moral dilemma of believing in a Christian God who has ordained all people as his equal children is contrasted with the institutionalised slavery and dehumanisation of black people in the United States. Consequently, white evangelicals often dismiss their black compatriots as fundamentally godless on the basis of their evangelical beliefs being 'fake', with their association and purported Christianity only being used consciously as a tool to advocate for the political goals of integration and civil rights for the African American population (McCaulley 2021).

Figure 3: caricature showing a devilised Jew (Antisemitism Policy Trust 2020), and a sinisterly depicted slave with political ambitions (Knoles 2006).

Moving from the idea of a lack of devotion to religion and God to the closely associated idea of devotion to the family, it becomes very clear just how similarly Jewish women and black women were portrayed. In this case, we can see this through the portrayal of Jewish women and black women as hypersexual. For the purposes of othering Jewish women in Nazi Germany, the purpose of this hypersexualisation was to portray younger Jewish women as temptresses who were fundamentally opposed to the Christian and conservative idea of the sanctity of marriage and sex as a reproductive activity rather than a sensual one, while simultaneously portraying older Jewish women as overweight and objectively not beautiful due to a lack of hygiene or other traits of disregard for physical beautification in an attempt to portray older Jewish women as lazy (Wehby 2012). This contrast of the hypersexual young Jewish woman and the lazy, ugly older Jewish woman as a chronology in propaganda helped the Nazi authorities disseminate several ideas about female Jewish sexuality on several fronts: through this chronology, the Nazis portray the hypersexualisation of Jewish women as inherently predisposed to ugliness and laziness, which is contrary to the labour-oriented aims of the Nazi party. It also shows a disregard for 'proper' relationships by showing Jewish women to be disloyal and untrustworthy as a result

of their supposed promiscuity, and thus a threat to German manliness. Such rhetoric surrounding the othering of Jewish women from German womanhood at the time and was coincidental with and evident through the construction of the Nuremberg laws which prohibited sexual or social relationships between Jews and Germans, and how people of mixed heritage would come to have their citizenship defined by the new regime.

In the case of black women, deep-rooted hypersexualisation in southern American society can once again be traced to the era of institutional slavery, where black women occupied very specific roles of servitude aside from that of the standard farm or plantation labourer. Black women very quickly became house servants, undertaking the female gender roles deemed to be below the station of a planter-class rich white woman, and became servants, maids, nannies, and even mistresses to wealthy male slave owners (Versluys and Codde 2013, 10). The intentional placement of a black female slave in the home rather than outside as a labourer can often be credited not solely to the need for someone to occupy the gender roles of housekeeper and maid that white women did not seek to occupy given their social stature.

By the same token, this became a relatively common practice because of the hypersexualised idea of the 'exotic' black woman that was suddenly at the disposal of a white male slave owner. This promiscuity is heavily contrasted with the image of the southern belle, which emphasised white European beauty traits and a tamed, modest flirtatiousness in the belle's appearance. Given the fashions of the late 19th and early 20th centuries often covered much of a woman's body, even in the hotter climes of the south, black women were further sexualised and made to seem like 'jezebels' given that their laborious role often required them to wear unflattering, dirty and ragged clothes that they could rarely get clean, replace or repair, and often covered less of their bodies given the need for more freedom of movement when carrying out their labour (Versluys and Codde 2013, 11).

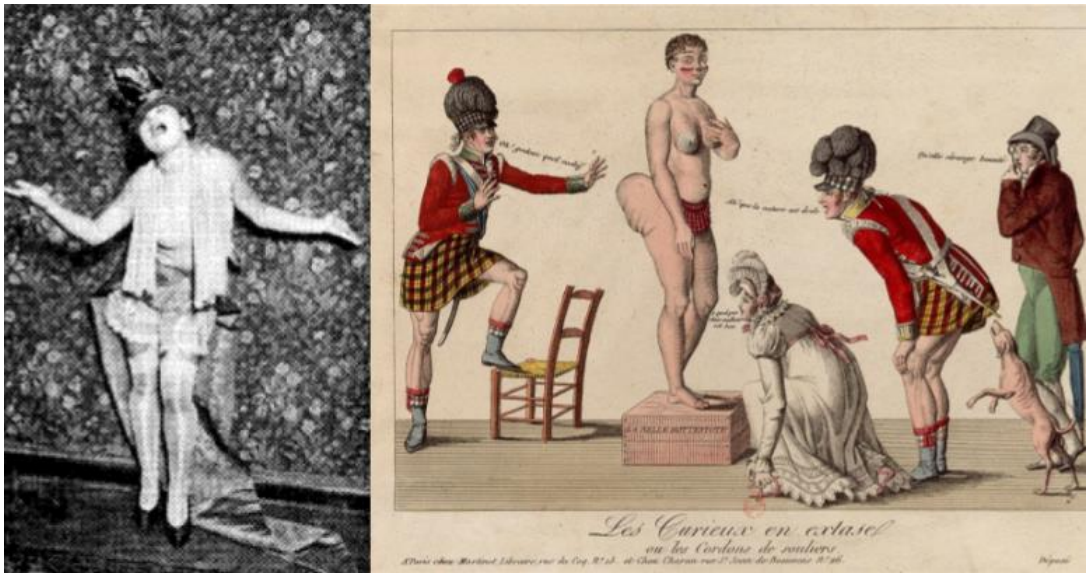

Figure 4: Images depicting a promiscuous young Jewish woman (Versluys and Codde 2013) and a hypersexualised African woman on display (British Museum 2022)

The immodesty attributed to black and Jewish women alike is worth noting as a vector to other points through which one can analyse the segregationist depictions of women in these societies. Figure 4 serves as an example of the depiction of hypersexualised black and Jewish women, though it is important to note that the emphasis of their supposed hypersexuality is not as much a result of the actions they are depicted doing, but their clothing: the Jewish woman is scantily clad, especially by the standards of early 20th century Germany, with no skirt or trousers, the top of her stockings visible, and not much clothing covering her top, while the black woman in figure 4 is naked save for some cloth covering her hips, leaving the rest of her body bare – dressed and physically seeming like the idea of a 'savage'. Such a concept of bareskin exposure on women quickly became a deliberate measure to portray certain women as sexually deviant by failing to have humility in the face of other, decent members of society, and in religious cases, in the eyes of God.

3.0 – VISUAL REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

Beyond the pure notion of womanhood and who these societies came to accept as part of it is the expression of such womanhood. If we return to section 1.1, we can continue with the notion of the upstanding female citizen being someone who, among more communal efforts such as being a good Christian, is someone who not only devotes themselves to their family, and more specifically, their husband, but someone who turns their body into a manifestation of modest beauty. By understanding the white female body as a canvas, the act of manifesting modest beauty, through clothes, makeup, bodily proportions, skin tone and skin care among many other aspects of ensuring a 'fashionable' and yet respectable presentation is a performative act. This performative act, in keeping with Mosse's ideas, is an act of imposed obedience.

Bearing in mind the aforementioned example of Marianne, the emphasis placed on her physical presentation as the emblem of France and French revolutionary values was not represented primarily through the mere colour of her skin, but by the clothes she wore and the actions she was painted engaging in. Just as the earlier, revolutionary Marianne was depicted with musket and flag in hand, beckoning her compatriots into battle while wearing a torn dress that left her breasts exposed, the Marianne of the post-revolution Second French Republic was much more tame, depicting a more 'sedate' and 'respectable' France, whose clothes covered the sensitive areas of her body, were simple but still slightly more ornate than the plain, dirtied yellow dress of revolutionary Marianne, and posed in ways evocative of power (Mosse 1985, 91). In short, Marianne quickly went from a fellow revolutionary woman, symbolic of the countless working-class French men and women who themselves were the physical catalyst of the revolution, to becoming a goddess representative of a country, and less so any person.

Instead of holding in her hand a musket and a flag, both symbols of strength and power in times of conflict, Marianne now found herself holding and surrounded by the tools and symbols a country that had *dignified* strength, with remaining hints of physicalised sexuality, rather than the *heroic* strength seen in battle.

Figure 5: Depictions of a 'dignified' Marianne from the Second French Republic (Lestz 2015)

Marianne's new demeanour as a woman who did not engage in 'blasphemous' acts of bare-breasted war created a sense of dignified modesty which became critical to the use of fashion as a method of ensuring the exclusivity of femininity – an aspect of life in both the American South and Nazi Germany which was crucial to keeping black and Jewish women as far outside the definition of womanly as possible. Marianne's demonstration of how clothes and dignified demeanour were a factor in creating the idea of a beautiful white woman is crucial to understanding the fashion of white femininity, and how the American south used clothes to preserve and mould the idea of the nation, just as the Nazi regime used the idea of the physically fit, dirndl-wearing woman as the representation of what Germany was protecting through their racial segregation policies. Just as race became a determinant in what

fashions were afforded to you, so too did race and class intertwine as one's fashion became a determinant both of one's social status, but of one's degree of femininity.

3.1 – Depictions of white female bodies in relation to the nation

The precedents set by figures such as Marianne, Britannia and Germania as the female manifestations of the nation became a feature of American symbolism very quickly. Though the United States did not have one single female manifestation of the nation as other countries did, save potentially Lady liberty as derived from the Statue of Liberty in more legislative and legal contexts, America did not shy away from the idea of representing the nation through the image of white women.

Figure 6: An image of a woman, implied to be America, riding an eagle while waving red, white and blue streamers (Vogue 2023)

Americana as a theme would be featured regularly in pop culture, with Vogue being an example in figure 6. In the left image, we don't see the womanly personification of America as an entity, but as an example of the idea of an American woman: blonde, thin and fit, in a modest, ankle-length dress sitting upright, atop an eagle while waving streamers with

the colours of the American flag. This cover of Vogue's February 1938 American issue is quintessential in the sense that it depicts the American woman conforming to the modest clothing requirements of American society, with her body largely covered, but not so covered that her athletic figure is not invisible to the naked eye, and therefore performing the 'modest beauty that fashionable American women would be societally required to adhere to. Moreso, she is a white woman, whose features of flowing blonde hair and a long, slender face are representative of the 'desirable' American woman: a northern European, non-Jewish woman whose features sit in stark contrast to that of the minorities, be it Jewish women with stereotypically long noises and dark, curly hair, or black women, with dark skin, more pronounced facial features such as large noses or lips, and shorter, darker curly hair.

These features are significant in the sense that they create a standard for American womanhood to aspire to. If we were to look at the image on the right of figure 6, for instance, we once again see an American woman, in a relatively covering dress, on the cover of the November 1941 beauty issue of Vogue. While this example doesn't have a woman displayed with blonde hair, her hair is still adorned with intricate golden jewels, and her clothes are complex and clean, rather than simple and poorly maintained – remaining emblematic of the middle-class nation critical to Mosse's theory of sexuality and respectability. While she does hint towards the purity of the female body by showing parts of her shoulders, the dress still covers most of her body, and the ideal American woman depicted in still modest, white and European.

More important to note however, is the depiction of the woman in this case as the cover of Vogue's beauty issue, and thus being representative of what one of the biggest fashion publications in America considered to be the epitome of 'American beauty'. The articles, which include tips on how to lose weight – and by implication attain the healthy, athletic body that white women are often expected to have in the context of both the southern

US and Nazi Germany, further reinforce the idea that white womanhood is defined by certain physical body features – and therefore those who do not meet this metric are not fashionable American women. This is not only specific to the period, as we can see in. figure 2, where the 1972 Vogue cover once again features articles on weight loss. It can be further noted that even in the case of a publication like Vogue, their cover models tend to follow a set algorithm which requires, white, slender women with well-kept hair and era appropriate 'chique' clothes that emphasise their curvature, thus repeatedly representing the white middle-to-upper class woman on the cover repeatedly.

On another note, it is important to consider the flow of fashion from origin to audience in these publications, which as we can see from figure 2, flows from Europe to North America. While the American fashion scene is distinct, the flow of European beauty standards flowing to American women through publications such as Vogue, helps further ensure that American beauty standards are predisposed towards American women of European background, and not women of other minority backgrounds, whose bodies may not be predisposed to the same body types, makeups and colour palettes that dominate American fashion.

In contextualising the above analysis, we can see how crucial the image of the imagined white female body is. In both the American South's context and the Nazi German context, by being something other than completely representative of these ideals placed one outside of the realm of 'true' femininity, and instead placed 'unacceptable' women who didn't adhere to these standards in a whole new position. In this position, although they may be women by virtue of biological gender, they are not *womanly* according to the standards of femininity within the nation.

CONCLUSION

There are a number of methods that different groups have employed through recent history to 'other' those who they deem inferior within the contexts of their societies. That being said, there are cases, such as the case of Jewish women in Nazi Germany and black women in the southern United States during these recent periods of history that highlight the importance of the white female body as a tool for the dissemination of racist ideals and the propagandisation of womanhood in order to dehumanise and defeminise those women that are deemed to be 'inferior'.

In both these cases, the thesis has highlighted how the portrayal of these women, from their features to their fashions, to the roles, social classes and religious affiliations play a key role in creating images within societal conversation that enables this process of dehumanisation. In analysing the methods and rhetorical devices used to achieve this, we can see what assumptions are used within these societal contexts and for what purpose, and how such propaganda outcomes are crucial to recognise lest they continue in our contemporary racial discourse. Considering that some representations that this thesis discussed, it is incredibly important that we recognise how and why these portrayals come to be a critical part in how we see each other and how the idea of white femininity. Particularly in American and European contexts, such dehumanising depictions can become a crucial tool of racial segregation and discrimination. It is especially important to note just how crucial the visual and written media that espouses such ideology is to the effective dissemination of these ideas.

We have to keep in mind the importance of recognising that the commonality in execution in both these cases despite the difference in contexts, there are demonstrable methods which one can employ across these contexts to achieve similar results in both areas. By demonstrating how representations of Jewish women in Nazi Germany and black women

in the American south have common tactics influenced by the idea of the nation as embodied by white Christian womanhood and the protection of it, we will better understand going forward how critical it is to have a pan-ethnic and pan-religious understanding of femininity for the sake of achieving a step forward in societal cohesion and peace.

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