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MARKETING THE MYTH: THE RACIAL COMMODIFICATION AND RECLAIMING OF
AUNT JEMIMA

A Thesis
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in Southern Studies
The University of Mississippi

by Holly Robinson
May 2018

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ABSTRACT

Through an analysis of print advertisements and of research gathered at the Jim Crow Museum of Racial Memorabilia at Ferris State University, this thesis intends to explore how the Aunt Jemima brand from the early 1890's to the present day has utilized multiple marketing strategies in order to garner consumer attention. Focusing specifically on Karen Cox's notion of the "southern tableau," M. M. Manring's investment in Aunt Jemima as a *Slave in A Box*, and Patricia Yaeger's theory of the "throwaway body," this thesis will look at how elements of print advertising, the Aunt Jemima pancake-box, and historical racist memorabilia intersect. In order to experiment with the topic, this thesis has adapted Yaeger's theory of the "throwaway body," and has applied to the life cycle of the Aunt Jemima pancake box, with the acknowledgement that if the icon is transformed into an item of racial memorabilia, she may be saved from disposal. Differentiating itself from previous scholarship on Aunt Jemima, this thesis uses visual images in order to close-read the layers of symbolism behind the iconic character, and draw attention to the strategy employed in Aunt Jemima marketing. Due to an interest in the nexus of race and gender, this thesis takes an intersectional theoretical approach to the topic, and thus combines the author's interest in Southern Studies and Gender Studies. It aims to examine how the decisions made by marketing and business executives have impacted the legacy of Aunt Jemima, and her prominence in American consumer culture.

Keywords: Aunt Jemima brand; Southern Studies; Southern Tableau; print advertising; racial memorabilia; gender; race; marketing; consumer culture

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While they say “it takes a village” to raise a child, I also believe that this phrase can apply to writing a thesis.

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INTRODUCTION: TAKING THE STAGE

The Creation of Aunt Jemima

In Chicago, 1893, at the World's Fair: Columbian Exposition, an African American woman prepared herself, ready to take to the stage. The woman in question, Matilda Sissieretta Joyner Jones, also known as Sissieretta Jones (or by her stage name "The Black Patti"), prepared to wow the crowds. Having — in the two previous years— sung at New York's Steinway Hall, and at the White House for President Benjamin Harrison, Jones was by no means unknown ("Topics in Chronicling America - Sissieretta Jones" *Library of Congress*). The fair itself marked the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' discovery of the New World, and for the three months it was held, intended to demonstrate the best of what modern America had to offer its public. Yet, despite her popularity, Jones was not the "best" who attracted crowds in delight, and became a household sensation. Instead, it was Nancy Green — a fifty-nine year old servant for a Chicago judge, who had been "born into slavery on a plantation in Montgomery County, Kentucky." The music that attracted the crowds was not The Black Patti's operatic tones, but Nancy Green's folk songs as she stood "in a booth designed to look like a giant flour barrel," "greeted guests," and "cooked pancakes...all the while singing and telling stories of life on the plantation, some real, some apocryphal" (Manring 75). Green's act was so successful that to keep the crowds moving on, special police details were positioned around the exhibition (Kern-

Foxworth 67). Those who gathered to watch received a souvenir button, “on it was the likeness of [Green’s face]; below her smiling face was the caption “I’se in town, honey.” In return for their efforts, the company who employed Green received 50,000 orders of the pancake mix that she was selling (Manring 75). Yet, the name that was spread across the exhibition was neither The Black Patti’s or Nancy Green’s, but instead Green’s commercial persona. At the World’s Fair, a legend was “born”— and her name was Aunt Jemima.

Aunt Jemima’s origin story begins in Missouri, where in 1888 Chris L. Rutt and Charles G. Underwood purchased the Peal Milling Company (Kern-Foxworth 63). Regardless of the fact that Rutt was a journalist for the *St. Joseph Gazette*, and Underwood a mill owner, and that neither had a culinary or food-related background, the two men were invested in using flour as a base to create a new product. Acknowledging that “pancake batter was difficult to make with any consistency, and [that] it used a relatively large amount of flour, Rutt and Underwood began experimenting with a self-raising flour that, when mixed with milk and cooked on a girdle, would produce pancakes.” In contrast to their competitors, Rutt and Underwood found their unique selling point in the ‘ready to use’ element of mix, as it was premixed, packaged, and branded at the same location (Manring 64). However, despite their innovative brilliance, “Rutt and Underwood could not raise the necessary capital to promote and market the product effectively” and “soon ran out of money” (Kern-Foxworth 65). In spite of a lack of capital, they did retain ownership over the Peal Milling Company, and so a few months later “with renewed optimism and a new moneyman” they re-launched their company under the name “The Aunt Jemima Manufacturing Company” (Marquette 143). The name ‘Aunt Jemima’ supposedly originated from Chris Rutt’s visit to a “local vaudeville house” in the autumn of 1889, where

“[on] the bill was a pair of black-face comedians, Baker & Farrell” performing their minstrel act. According to Arthur Marquette, the official biographer for the Quaker Oats Company:

[the] show-stopper of the Baker & Farrell act was a jazzy, rhythmic New Orleans style cakewalk to a tune called “Aunt Jemima” which Baker performed in the apron and red-bandanna of the traditional southern cook...[Rutt] appropriated not only the song’s title for the name of his pancake flour, but also the likeness of the southern “mammy” emblazoned on the lithograph posters advertising the Baker & Farrell act (Marquette 142-143).

It is unlikely, that even with his interest, Rutt fully understood the commercial power of the image he took as his own.

In 1893, the same year that Green’s characterization appeared at the Columbian Exposition, the Aunt Jemima Manufacturing Company was sold to the R. T. Davis Milling Company (Wallace-Sanders 60). R. T. Davis, “having large manufacturing facilities, money, and an established reputation with wholesome and retail grocers” in Missouri, was a much better fit for a product with such potential. In 1914, he renamed the company the “Aunt Jemima Mills Company,” a decision that Kimberly Wallace-Sanders attributes to the popularity of Aunt Jemima at the Columbian Exposition (Wallace-Sanders 60). However, it is also likely that the move to replacing “Manufacturing” with “Mills” better conformed with the image of nostalgia and antiquity that Green played up as part of her characterization. Yet, the name change did not stop the eventual loss of the brand to the Quaker Oats Company, who bought Aunt Jemima in 1926 for over four million dollars (Wallace-Sanders 60). The move transformed Aunt Jemima

from a mix with a side-gimmick into an industrial culinary powerhouse. Marquette in *Brands, Trademarks, and Good Will; The Story of The Quaker Oats Company* attributes the modern success of Aunt Jemima to the Quaker Oats acquisition, since their:

selling organization quickly proceeded to expand Aunt Jemima's spotty and limited representation in grocery stores to a truly national distribution. Traditionally, most of its business came from a handful of metropolitan markets in which unusually good broker connections represented the brand. Quaker's wholesale distributors put Aunt Jemima in retail stores all over the country (153).

The smart business sense of Quaker Oats extended to recognizing the power of Aunt Jemima as a commercial symbol. In April 1937, in an attempt to avoid competition and imitation by other companies, Quaker Oats became the first to register the Aunt Jemima trademark ("Our History" *Aunt Jemima Official Company Website*).

In 1955, Quaker Oats sought to give Aunt Jemima a physical location once again, but rather than placing her at the site of a plantation, they chose to move her to the 'happiest place on earth' — Disneyland. At Aunt Jemima's Pancake House in the California theme park, Aylene Lewis took on the full-time role for three years, appearing for the patron's entertainment, alongside Disney's popular characters. The venture was a success, and in 1962, Disneyland and Quaker Oats "expanded the restaurant to accommodate more customers and changed its name to Aunt Jemima's Kitchen" (McElya 253). McElya remarks that "in addition to the obvious benefit

of allowing a more varied menu, the change in name also served to lock Aunt Jemima conceptually within the private sphere of the home” (253-254). The move took place parallel to the growing Civil Right’s movement, among the after-effects of *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka*, the year long bus-boycott instigated by Rosa Park’s act of defiance, and James Meredith’s enrollment at the University of Mississippi. Within the protective kingdom of the ‘happiest place on earth,’ Aunt Jemima lost the commercial independence and ownership that the title of her former establishment suggested, and was relocated back to the kitchen. The Civil Rights Movement did not rattle the ambitions of The Quaker Oats Company, as they sought to diversify the Aunt Jemima brand by creating further ranges that complemented the infamous pancake ready-mix. In 1966, sensing a connecting market, Quaker introduced the Aunt Jemima pancake syrup under the Aunt Jemima trademark to accompany their original product. Two years later, Quaker moved away from the pancake market to offer an alternative breakfast meal with their frozen waffles, which were sold in grocery stores across the U.S. In 1970, the original pancake and waffles mixes were simplified for the consumer with the introduction of a “just add water” version that was “geared toward convenience.” Finally, two more products, both syrups, were added. The Aunt Jemima Lite Syrup and Aunt Jemima Butter Rich Syrup appeared in 1979 and 1991, respectively (“Our History” *Aunt Jemima Official Company Website*) In 2001, Pepsico acquired the Quaker Oats Company for \$13.4 billion in stock, and remains Aunt Jemima’s “owner” to the present day (“Pepsico Said to Aquire Quaker...” *New York Times*).

Harnessing Blackness

Despite the glamorous and regal appearance that Sissieretta Jones presented to the world at the Columbian Exposition, her grandeur did not translate to American popular culture and become an example of African American female imagery, as Green's Aunt Jemima did. While Jones no doubt emphasized the dramatics of her image for performance, she was very much real, unlike her Columbia Exposition counter-part. Both "The Black Patti" and "Aunt Jemima" were stage names that harnessed race as a signifier of identity, but only the latter used a stage identity that capitalized on stereotypes of African-American appearance, demeanor, personality and emotions. In understanding Aunt Jemima, understanding the background of stereotypes is crucial. Aunt Jemima's image as a culmination of stereotypes, and the public dissemination of them, validated white beliefs of African-American inferiority and African Americans acceptance of the racial caste system. In turn, the beliefs led to the purchase of Aunt Jemima products, as racial capital became a commodity that could be bought as part of the pancake-mix. Grace Hale believes that the white validation comes as the result of Aunt Jemima's status as a "spokeservant," the first of its kind— an event where "the speaking servant" becomes "a nationally known image." According to Hale: "The "Spokeservant" drew from two earlier idioms, the visual vocabulary that figured African Americans as servants and an iconography of romanticized images of African Americans at work, which drew in turn from literary descriptions of the happy slave" (Hale, *Making Whiteness* 164). Hale's reference to the 'happy slave' recognizes the basic stereotypical personalities attributed to African Americans, as outlined by Lawrence Reddick. In addition to the 'Happy Slave', Reddick also lists eighteen additional

stereotypes: the ‘Savage American,’ the ‘Devoted Servant,’ the ‘Corrupted Politician,’ the ‘Irresponsible Citizen,’ the ‘Social Delinquent,’ the ‘Petty Thief,’ the ‘Vicious Criminal,’ the ‘Sexual Superman,’ the ‘Unhappy Nonwhite,’ the ‘Superior Athlete,’ the ‘Natural Born-Cook,’ the ‘Natural-Born Musician,’ the ‘Perfect Entertainer,’ the ‘Superstitious Churchgoer,’ the ‘Chicken and Watermelon Eater,’ the ‘Razor and the Knife Toter,’ the ‘Uninhibited Expressionist,’ and the ‘Mentally Inferior’ (Reddick 369 in Kern-Foxworth 79). Other academics writing in the modern day have added further elements. For example, Wayne Martin Mellinger believes that the “African-as-child” is a more prevalent stereotype that was justified by an ideological defense of slavery as an institution that was a “paternalistic rather than a profit-oriented system of labor” (16). Regardless of the stereotype in question, the majority are defined by the position of ‘Other’ to the “cherished values” of “European American” (interpreted to be white) culture. This construction of blackness as Other establishes whiteness as the fixed point of meaning, creating “boundaries of difference” between those who are white and non-white, despite the fact that the concept of the self is “relational” (Mellinger 4). Through the creation of difference, African-Americans are not only established as ‘Other,’ but are established as the ‘inferior Other.’

With the exceptions of the ‘Superior Athlete,’ ‘Natural Born-Cook,’ ‘Natural-Born Musician’ and the ‘Perfect Entertainer,’ the stereotypes are largely negative, and serve to position the white counterpart in a positive light. With the African-American positioned as ‘savage,’ the European White American by association becomes ‘cultured’ or ‘refined.’ Even characteristics such as ‘happy’ and ‘devoted’ — that can otherwise be considered positive — are of negative

historical significance, and are in the interest of European White American Culture. The ‘Happy Slave,’ according to Mellinger,

served to position black subjects in a racist regime representation which preserved and defended the racial privilege of European Americans. In [the] impudent images of the ‘happy darkeys,’ African Americans are pictured as submissive, singing and dancing, and resigned to their proper place on the plantation of the ‘good ol’ days (4).

The commercialization of the racialized image existed prior to Aunt Jemima’s creation, despite her being the first spokeservant of her kind. In 1893, postcards depicting stereotypical racial images went on sale in the United States as “commodity souvenirs, but later assumed a prominent place in middle and upper-class life [and their]...photocard [albums]” (Mellinger 5). The postcard “My Face is My Fortune” (painted by G. E. Shepard and published by Raphael Tuck and Son) from the series “Among the Darkies” provides illustrative evidence of the ‘Happy Slave’ though the wide smile expressed through overemphasized lips (a physical stereotype also ascribed to African-Americans) (Mellinger 7).

If American-Americans expressed joy at working at the plantation, their labor there was resultantly justified. Such a notion politely ignores the fact that many were enslaved, worked to death, were sexually assaulted, and feared starvation or retaliation of violence if they escaped the plantation. This ignorance was in favor of white society. It maintained social inequality, as it ensured low-cost labor, the creation of leisure time, and the position of superior citizenship for an elite planter class, who upheld the hierarchical social system. According to Katherine Frith, the

superior citizenship allowed whiteness to exist as a form of “cultural capital,” that granted certain parties the power to enact “symbolic violence” through the perpetration of racial images. The symbolic violence was “a kind of discrimination or domination which [worked] not through brute force such as military or police actions, but through a gentle and invisible form of power.” The racial images acted as a social force implemented by those in power that then reiterated in society, creating a “collective faith” in the images as natural (2), or in Clifford Geertz’s words, establishing their “normalness” (14). If society rejected Sissieretta’s image of blackness with her refined appearance and talent, and instead focused on naturalizing the stereotypes that came to make up Aunt Jemima as a personality, discrimination and domination remained ‘reasonable.’ Of the nineteen personalities listed by Reddick, Kern-Foxworth asserts that Aunt Jemima fits with three; the ‘Happy Slave,’ the ‘Devoted Servant,’ and the ‘Natural Born-Cook’ (79). These images may have already have been in circulation within society, but Aunt Jemima served to give the stereotypes a familiar image, and therefore credibility and normality in the consumer’s eyes. One stereotypical image that Reddick seems to have missed is that of ‘The Loyal Mammy.’ The Mammy may have indeed incorporated characteristics of the other images attributed to African Americans, but her matriarchal prominence in white households, and conflicting politics regarding her position, warrants her a reputation of her own.

In terms of appearance, the Mammy character ignores the fact that there is no single African American body shape, in order to typify the black female body. Encapsulating what Patricia Yaeger refers to as the “gargantuan,” or in plain-speaking terms “enormous,” body, Aunt Jemima is defined by her rounded torso and rounded face (126). The body of the African-

American Mammy figure was not supposed to be desirable, and this is captured in Aunt Jemima's image through her "large breasts, muscular arms, and wide hips" - the antithesis of the beauty ideals favored in white womanhood (Inness 70). Gargantuan bodies are bodies that "don't follow the rules," that is the ruling society's expectation that the female body should be "slim as a reed," "fragile," and "graceful," so as to be sexually desirable, and establish difference from the male-body (Yaeger 126). Unlike the female body, the Mammy resembles the male body, which is expected to take up more surface area as a sign of domineering masculinity (Yaeger 120). As with Aunt Jemima, the Mammy figure is not a true depiction of African American women. Although "black women did work in white homes, cooked innumerable meals, cared for white children, and surely formed emotional ties to white family members at times...the mammy was — and is — fiction" (McElya 4). No doubt a result of the superimposing of white voices over black narratives, a chronicle of admiration was created around the Mammy as a "cantankerous" women who provided constant care, and acted as a "disciplinarian" for the children that she loved (McElya 8). Indeed, the care and disciplining was done out of love, but as became evident after emancipation when African American women remained care-workers in return for pay, "the love was not for employers but for their own families" (Sharpless XIV). This did not matter however, since the romanticized notions of the Mammy's enforced slavery remained in white consciousness.

Such appreciation for the Mammy is evident in the writing of Scholar Carter G. Woodson who, in 1930 wrote:

The Negroes of this country keenly resent any such thing as the mention of the Plantation Black Mammy, so dear to the hearts of those who believe in the traditions of the Old South. Such a reminder of that low status of the race in the social order of the slave regime is considered a gross insult (Woodson 369 in Sharpless XVI).

Woodson's statement highlights the conflict for the white owners of slaves; the Mammy figure was loved by those who she reared in the household, yet she nevertheless was considered to be of 'low status' as a result of her race. Aunt Jemima may have been a cook, but for her race, her appearance, and the love and care she bestowed upon the consumers who in turn loved her, the cook and Mammy became conflated to form a single image, and a single character.

Establishing Position

Through three interconnected chapters, this thesis intends to explore how marketing has been used by the various companies who have owned Aunt Jemima, and how their decisions have impacted the legacy of the character, and her prominence in American consumer culture. It intends to triangulate how Aunt Jemima's various owners, in order to push a commercial and social agenda, utilized print advertisements, the ready-mix pancake box, and racial memorabilia in such a way that they intersect. In Chapter 1 "Marketing the Myth" this thesis opens by examining how Karen Cox's concept of the "Southern Tableau" can be traced throughout Aunt

Jemima print advertising from 1894 to 1955, and how it was used to communicate ideas of white race and class superiority, especially in the light of the Civil Rights Movement gaining momentum. Additionally, it looks at how James Web Young — the manager of the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency— took the themes communicated within Cox’s Southern Tableau and brought them into the commercial world through the creation of various mythical Aunt Jemima storylines. In Chapter 2 “The Mammy & The ~~Mistress~~ Housewife” the themes of the Southern Tableau are explored further in light of the absence of a mistress within Young’s myths, a strategic maneuver on behalf of Aunt Jemima’s various owners, in a time period where the growing ready-meal market liberated women from the home. The chapter leads onto a discussion of the utility of the pancake box, and a symbolic reading of how the box comes to represent Aunt Jemima in a ‘Buy-Store-Use-Discard’ process, by adapting Patricia Yaeger’s concept of the “Throwaway Body.” The final chapter explores what happens when the Aunt Jemima body is not throwaway as this thesis argues the pancake box to be, but remains in the home in the form of a physical and usable object, paying special attention to the Aunt Jemima rag doll, and how this marked the beginning of the end for racial objects, as well as the fall of Aunt Jemima from the status of revered icon to a problematic brand ambassador.

Focusing specifically on object-material culture, this thesis will analyze the print advertisements found in ladies’ and lifestyle magazines in order to look at how the Aunt Jemima product (and the product’s namesake) was infused with notions of femininity, race, modernity and leisure. Due to the fact that the print advertisements frequently pushed not only the mix, but also premiums and objects (that were racially caricatured by nature) as incentives to purchase the

Aunt Jemima product, these must also be considered. With the decision to prioritize the physical mediums of print advertisements and objects comes the decision to reject studying radio and television advertisements. The decision was not made lightly, since the daily lives of those seeing and buying the Aunt Jemima products were likely made up of an experience that involved both print and motion-visual mediums, and these experiences intersected. It would be wrong not to acknowledge that a consumer who interacted with an Aunt Jemima advertisement when reading a magazine may have also seen an advertisement on the television when they sat down after dinner, and that it was the combination of both that encouraged a consumer to reach for the Aunt Jemima pancake box over her competitors. However, this thesis is more interested in concentrating on the physical mediums of advertising to ensure that proper attention is paid to the forms, and that detail is not overlooked. In doing so, this thesis is also able to differ itself from existing Aunt Jemima scholarship, which is certainly not in short supply.

Key texts already existing in the field of Aunt Jemima include M. M. Manring's *Slave in a Box: The Strange Career of Aunt Jemima*, and *Brands, Trademarks and Good Will: The Story of The Quaker Oats Company* by Arthur Marquette. Manring's study is arguably the most comprehensive, as it is the only source to focus extensively on Aunt Jemima, rather than additional Quaker brands or culinary "spokeservants" of her kind (Cohen-Ferris 288). Manring's book does provide a wider study of the advertising used by the Jemima corporations, from print advertising, to racist memorabilia, radio advertising, and television. Incorporating both historical and symbolical studies of Jemima, his notion of the "slave in a box" has been massively influential in developing this thesis's ideas. However, in contrast to Manring, this thesis is more

interested in the ideas symbolically invested in the Aunt Jemima brand than the historical facts, and so aims to take his idea of the “slave in a box” a step further in terms of Aunt Jemima and the consumer relationship to the literal pancake box. Manring’s use of primary sources surpasses all other scholars invested in Aunt Jemima, as his research involved visits to numerous archives, including the J. Walter Thompson Company Archives at Duke University, and the Walt Disney Archives in Burbank, California. Marquette’s book is a more complicated secondary source. Rather than exercising a form of analysis, the intention of the source is to give an intensive history of the Quaker Oats brand, with subsections focusing on each of its major products, Aunt Jemima included. In each of the subsections, there is a greater focus on the advertising and marketing history of the brand rather than the production of goods, and so is useful given this thesis intends to focus on the same area. More specifically, unlike other scholarship, Marquette’s book gives a detailed ‘behind the scenes’ background of the stories utilized by the Aunt Jemima brand to sell its ready-mix product. For example, a profile of James Webb Young (Jim Young), a manager for the J. Walter Thompson Company — who took over Quaker Oats advertising in the 1920s — reveals inspiration behind the advertisements. However, as will be discussed later, elements of the book’s facts and endorsement raise questions over the reliability of using it as a credible source.

Another source of note would be *Aunt Jemima, Uncle Ben, and Rastus: Blacks in Advertising, Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* by Marilyn Kern-Foxworth. Kern-Foxworth’s study is not as exclusively focused on Aunt Jemima as Manring’s is, but she nevertheless surpasses Manring in her exploration of how race played into the Aunt Jemima brand, including

her research into Lawrence Reddick's 1994 study of the "stereotypical characteristics attributed to blacks" (79). Additionally, Kern-Foxworth is arguably one of the only scholars that explores consumer reactions to Aunt Jemima in recent history by including focus-group research on the icon's brand recognition. Other sources of merit that deserve recognition but do not focus on Aunt Jemima specifically include *Dreaming of Dixie: How the South Was Created in American Popular Culture* by Karen Cox, *The Total Package: The Evolution and Secret Meanings of Boxes, Bottles, Cans and Tubes* by Thomas Hine, and *Mammy: A Century of Race, Gender, and Southern Memory* by Kimberly Wallace-Sanders. In *Dreaming of Dixie*, Karen Cox focuses on representations of the South by both Southerners and Northerners (the latter being more influential) within the spheres of radio, television, travel brochures, and advertising. Especially pertinent to studies of Aunt Jemima is her chapter "Selling Dixie," which explores an advertising phenomenon that she names "The Southern Tableau" whereby notions of antebellum Southern space are capitalized on by businesses for profit. *The Total Package* is useful as a source in so far as it provides a detailed look into food wrapping and covering, and how it has evolved into packaging as we know it today. Hine's book — unlike the majority of sources used in this paper — focuses specifically on the history and facts surrounding food packaging, allowing this paper to build and call attention to the emblematic relationship between the character of Aunt Jemima and the pancake box, and build on Manring's *Slave in a Box*. Wallace-Sanders's *Mammy: A Century of Race, Gender, and Southern Memory* is also predominantly historical, and provides key insight into the caricature on which Aunt Jemima is based. Wallace Sanders's interest in the Mammy extends beyond advertising to literature, which potentially lessens its usefulness as a

source, since only the former involves the intention of a monetary exchange as a result of the communication of ideas. However, her featuring of protest art depicting Aunt Jemima and Mammy does present an alternate way of looking at Aunt Jemima in the present day.

In the third chapter, this paper faces the challenge of limited texts which discuss racist objects, and more specifically, racist objects in the shape of Aunt Jemima. The two main scholars in the field are Kenneth Goings and David Pilgrim, and their approaches differ greatly in that Goings' focus on racial objects is purely academic (he does not intentionally collect) and is historical and chronological in its approach. In contrast, David Pilgrim is concerned with social and activist discussions of what to do with the objects in the present day, and how they can be used as teaching tools for the next generation. He takes his debate beyond the pages of his books to the Jim Crow Museum at Ferris State University where he is the curator and largest donor. Goings takes a more romantic view of the objects believing that he has "earnestly tried to listen to the stories that Aunt Jemima and Uncle Mose and their kin told me" (Goings XI). Goings' stance is completely unlike Pilgrim's who, in both his books and a private interview, states that if the objects are not being housed in a museum, they should be in the "garbage can" (Pilgrim, personal interview, March 8, 2018). The amount of scholarship surrounding the character and brand of Aunt Jemima may be plenty, but it is not until it is brought into discussions with alternate scholars such as Hine and Pilgrim that new avenues of looking at the icon will emerge. As this thesis seeks to demonstrate, Aunt Jemima may be a character of historical significance, but there nonetheless remains fresh and innovative ways to look at the ways that she has interacted with American society. However, in order to look forward, we must first look back.

CHAPTER 1: MARKETING A SOUTHERN TABLEAU

The Beginnings

Utilizing the iconic Mammy caricature, the various owners of Aunt Jemima have used the past as a marketing tool, in order to capture a market and maintain a certain public image. Aunt Jemima, as a representation of the image of the Mammy, has ensured that associations of the Aunt Jemima brand and the plantation South have become undeniable, inseparable, and a key vehicle in the brand's marketing strategy. The use of the Southern figure in Aunt Jemima advertisements is, as many scholars observe, an example of a "southern tableau". The term, proposed by Cox, is defined as being "most often some scene set in the Old South, generally a plantation but not always. It might include belles in hoop skirts, cavalier southern gentleman, and, of course, ready-to-please servants" (Cox 43-44). Cox's understanding is an adaptation of the term 'social tableau,' a form of advertising developed in the 1920's and 1930's, that used "atmospheric advertising" to depict a fictional "slice of life," whether that be of a place, time period, or social situation (Cox 43). The concept of the southern tableau originates from what historians have titled a "new tradition" — "a myth of the Gothic Old South/New South" where all white people had black servants or slaves (particularly a mammy), and all the servants or slaves were "happy to be working for the master." (Goings 8) The southern tableau took the ideas of the "new tradition" and turned them into a visual form that is more aesthetically pleasing and

is easily conceivable to a consumer. This transition allowed for companies to communicate images to a consumer in a faster and more efficient manner than written text. A social tableau depicted people “in such a way as to suggest their relationship to each other or to a larger social structure” through “living pictures” (Marchand 165). In the social tableau, the people depicted would play a key part in communicating the advertisement’s message, with props and landscape being used as instruments to manipulate the beholder’s understanding of the hierarchical and social relationship between the people. Like the social tableau, the purpose of the southern tableau was not to be the everyday mundane, but the desirable ideal. It was to

give the impression of quality and prestige...these tableaux depicted scenes reflective of contemporary cultural values so as to make a product synonymous with that culture. These ads’ messages were not simply slogans, but entire stories created by scenes. The advertised item served as a memory trigger, “transporting the consumer back through time (Cox 43).

Through buying the product, the consumer was buying the Southern imagery attached - an image of the South “interweaving...commerce, memory, and racial nostalgia.” (Wallace-Sanders 60-61) In analyzing her concept of the southern tableau, Cox does not make a detailed link between the politics of the tableau and any real product, the addition of which would have been beneficial to her dialogue. Although she briefly mentions Aunt Jemima, she does not cover the character in depth. Cox is certainly not the first to study how marketing corporations have used images of the South, but she coined the phrase ‘southern tableau.’ In her writing, she misses the opportunity to

look further at the impact of the nostalgic imagery on popular culture— particularly when it comes to Aunt Jemima. By utilizing the southern tableau, and putting a historical focus at the center of its advertising, Aunt Jemima marketing executives overwrote the three-dimensional geographic space of the South with a two-dimensional influential campaign. However, the capitalization of Southern imagery in Aunt Jemima campaigns (with the exception of the infamous logo, which has remained [albeit with change] throughout) has indeed been a roller-coaster— the measuring of which can be used to comment on the commercial, cultural, and historical atmosphere at the times of which they were released.

Despite the initial platforming of the southern tableau at the Chicago World Fair in 1893,



Figure 1. Advertisement for the Trade Register, November 10th, 1894.

just one year later R. T. Davis —who owned the corporation at the time— initially showed a reluctance to transfer his use of the South from stage to page. In an advertisement for the Trade Register, dated November 10th 1894, Davis pushed the relatively-recent product by using a black and white ink printed advertisement with a characterization of Aunt Jemima (Figure 1). With the exception of the image of the Aunt Jemima Mammy, and what became the company’s long and infamous tagline “I’se in town, Honey” (which utilized a pidgin stereotype of African-American dialect), the company did not capitalize on images of the South. In fact, in the 1894

advertisement, not one reference to the American South was made. Instead, the advertisement aimed to captivate and lure the consumer by presenting the concept of leisure, something which the ready-mix enabled (and a concept to be further explored in chapter two of this thesis), and a novelty that made time-occupying cooking with individual ingredients unnecessary. Aimed specifically at women, the advertisement pushed expected gender roles of the nineteenth century in its line: “Does your husband complain of late breakfasts? Does he come home cross? Do you want more rest? Buy a package. Give him a pancake. Use pancake flour.” (Trade Register, Vol 3 (45), Pg. 6. November 10 1894., University of Washington Archive). The less time required to prepare the food for her family, the more time the housewife had to partake in her own leisure. The word “ready” itself suggests something that is already in existence waiting to be used, possessing a type of eagerness that puts it at the beck and call of the consumer, as if the pancake mix is a personified slave. This is further propagated by the self-presenting catchphrase represented in the advertisement: “I’se in Town Honey!” which signals Aunt Jemima’s availability to ‘save the day’ for the white consumer, and absolve her from labor, through her always-obtainable pancake mix. The irony, of course, is that domestic slaves would not have much choice regarding their stationing, and would likely have to remain in the home. As a result, it “represent[s] vividly the emancipation of the American housewife from the drudgery of virtual slavery in her kitchen to the ease of food preparation in today’s wonderland of easy-to-cooks, ready mixes, ready-to- serves, and frozen prepared foods at prices every housewife can afford. [Their] emancipation begins with Aunt Jemima” (Marquette 139).

In Thorstein Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class*, to have the choice to negotiate how one spends time, and the option to forgo laborious activity, is highly correlational to a person's social class. Labor, as explained by Veblen, was "associated in men's habits of thought with weakness and subject to a master" (36). However, it could be argued that references to the South or the presented ideal of leisure were unnecessary- the image of the Aunt Jemima Mammy-figure was enough to push the leisure concept. The relationship between the consumer and Aunt Jemima "represented the idealized master/slave relationships of a bygone era that was highly desired by American consumers" (Cox 39). The traditional housewife with all her freedom has the opportunity and choice for leisure, but the enslaved Aunt Jemima would not. As stated by Manring, Aunt Jemima existed as an "icon of Old South, white leisure" (80). Traditional slavery

had been outlawed almost thirty-years prior (although many African-Americans still maintained domestic jobs in white homes at this time), and so for many who viewed the advertisement, the image of a black slave (or domestic servant), would not be unfamiliar. The advertisement capitalized on the white nostalgia of servitude, but was able to capitalize on actual memory, rather than later more romanticized imaginations of what it would be like to have domestic help.



Figure 2. Advertisement for *The New York Times*, October 28th, 1917.

The same push of leisure and refrain from Southern imagery can be seen in an Advertisement from the *New*

Quaker Oats' thrust of Southernness, where the remarks on the region become fully-fleshed signifying images. The southern tableau, once hesitant or mildly mentioned, becomes the focus piece of the print. The move can be clearly seen in a 1924 full-page piece from *Ladies' Home Journal* (Figure 3.) with the quarter-page sized illustration of a smiling Aunt Jemima happily making her pancakes for finely dressed people (a woman in a layered hoop dress and the men in neutral-toned suit and ties), and the circular transom windows of an entry way in the background — a style symbolic of New Orleans architecture. Introducing the product being advertised, the piece starts:

From New Orleans, the Southwoods, the Carters and the Marshalls came frequently, for it wasn't so far up the river to Colonel Higbee's mansion. But folks came too from all over the South, even from far Virginia. And it wasn't alone because the Colonel so royally entertained. His spacious home there on the Mississippi rang with the laughter of guests week in, week out largely because— Aunt Jemima was his cook. And Aunt Jemima's breakfasts were not to be had anywhere else!

Showing Southernness, the advertisement name-drops New Orleans, Virginia, and the the Mississippi river as key geographic locations. The scene did not just tell the reader of the renowned Aunt Jemima and the prestigious company for which she cooked, instead it *showed* them. The unusual use of color (only available to companies with large revenue) and grandness of the scene in comparison to other advertisements of the time no doubt intended to inspire the

same awe in the reader as the woman watching over Aunt Jemima's creation with her hands clasped in front of her—a body position theatrically known to express glee.

The same grandeur of the 1924 advertisement carries on into one from 1927, printed in *McCall's* magazine (Figure 4.). Without his friends beside him, the illustration of Colonel Higbee and Aunt Jemima extends from a quarter-page image into one that takes up a half-page. The background behind the character becomes far clearer than the 1924 *Ladies' Home Journal*

advertisement, with the 1927 advertisement defined by the white walls, French doors, sweeping curtains, patterned fireplace, fine china, and painting— excessive examples of consumerism in full view. Her master dines at the cloth-laid table, while Aunt Jemima brings the pancakes to him for consumption. Despite also being what can be considered an example of a southern tableau, the 1927 advertisement lapses by lessening the image of leisure and socialization the 1924 *Ladies' Home Journal* gained from the company of Higbee's friends. In its place, the advertisement instead expedites the theme of loyalty. The language focuses on the secrecy of the product, denoting how “While her master lived, so the story goes, Aunt Jemima refused to tell a soul the secret of wonderful flavor in the tender pancakes she baked for him and his guests. It was only long after the war that she was finally persuaded to sell it to the representative of a now



Figure 4. Advertisement for *McCall's Magazine*, January 10th, 1927.

celebrated milling company.” It is within this advertisement that we see Aunt Jemima fully embodying the triangular personalities of ‘The Happy Slave,’ ‘The Devoted Servant,’ and ‘The Natural Born-Cook,’ as referenced in the introduction by Reddick. With the recipe listed in the corner of the southern tableau illustration, the reader becomes enfolded in the trusted relationship between Colonel Higbee and Aunt Jemima. However, with Colonel Higbee shown to already be serviced with the recipe in the tableau, there is a suggestion that Aunt Jemima’s loyalty to the reader is secondary, with Colonel Higbee remaining her master. No matter how much Quaker Oats may wish to place the consumer and Colonel Higbee at the same place on the hierarchy — to give the consumer a feeling of importance that may make them more inclined to buy their product— they are nonetheless reliant on the myths of Aunt Jemima’s loyalty to Colonel Higbee to give their product that unique selling point.

Tracing the Myths

Colonel Higbee played a key role in the myths surrounding Aunt Jemima that not only “became part of American folklore and helped to create the Aunt Jemima mystique,” but also “became an important part of the advertising campaigns and thus helped in the successful implementation of promotional strategy” (Kern-Foxworth 73). The first story to be mythologized, “The Life of Aunt Jemima, the Most Famous Colored Woman in the World,” was created by Purd Wright in 1893. It situates Aunt Jemima in the Southern plantation as a loyal cook for Louisiana’s Colonel Higbee. The story posits that, during the Civil War, Higbee was in

danger from Union Soldiers who threatened to rip off his mustache, but the day was saved by Aunt Jemima's intervention with pancakes made from her secret recipe. The colonel managed to escape from the Northerners, and the soldiers were so impressed that they persuaded Aunt Jemima to share her secret (Manring 124). The story evolved over time, partly at the hands of James Webb Young, the talented manager behind the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency¹. When Young took over advertising for Aunt Jemima in 1909, he rewrote Aunt Jemima's story. In the new myth, Aunt Jemima still worked on the Louisiana plantation "near the junction of the Red and Mississippi Rivers" owned by Colonel Higbee, and it remained the case that she developed her flour recipe that courted fame in the South there. What changed was her input into the sale of the product, for the new myth — as referenced in the 1927 advertisement — told how after the Civil War, "the R.T. Davis Milling company sent a representative to see her, who then bought her recipe and "hired her to supervise" the production of the flour mix at a mill in St. Joseph" (Cox 40). No longer steeped in history, Aunt Jemima is given a more realistic cover, albeit still extremely southern-based in focus. The story continued to experience minor changes throughout the 1900's, but the loyalty of Aunt Jemima, and her servicing of Colonel Higbee's plantation remained the same.

Young's inspiration behind the advertisements is discussed in *Brands, Trademarks and Good Will: The Story of The Quaker Oats Company* by Arthur Marquette. According to Marquette, Young learned about Southern "uniqueness" from his parents. His father, a

¹ Until his death, R. T. Davis handled the advertising for Aunt Jemima. Upon the takeover, James Webb Young and N. C. Wyeth maintained the legend and created the myth. In the 1930's, the responsibility for Aunt Jemima advertising was transferred to Lord and Thomas until J. Walter Thompson Company resumed control in July 1953. (Manring 146-148)

Mississippi riverboat captain, would regale his son with stories of traditions and folklore leading to Young's desire to, as he says, "develop a series of what you might call the Americana of the Deep South. I think you could say that the series was the first of what I could call 'the romantic school.'" As Marquette recognizes, "[i]t was a departure from nearly all advertising of the day" (150). This type of advertising that Young believes himself to have coined could be interpreted to be a linguistic example of, or a predecessor to, the southern tableau. The influence of Young's upbringing on his work seems particularly evident in further Aunt Jemima advertisements, particularly "The Night that the Emily Dustan Burned" (1920). In the advertisement discussed by Marquette, Aunt Jemima watches a Mississippi riverboat burn out on the water, only to have pancakes ready for the grateful (and undoubtedly white) passengers when they came ashore (150). In the Emily Dustan narrative, in addition to being the nurturing Mammy, Aunt Jemima also becomes a form of savior, providing food-based comfort for those in need. The multitude of Aunt Jemima origin stories could be interpreted as a failure to establish a consistent narrative by the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency, but it could also be considered a way to create Aunt Jemima as a legendary figure. Like other mythical characters — such as King Arthur— the lack of certainty of Aunt Jemima's origin would work to add to her 'allure,' and gives alternate angles for the agency to use in their marketing.

In some instances, the myths have become intertwined. An article from March 7th, 1957 that was printed in *The Daily Reporter* (a newspaper from Greenfield, Indiana) featured an article entitled "Kiwanis Plans Pancake Dinner." According to the paper:

Aunt Jemima's fame began in the days "before the war" when she was cook for Colonel Higbee whose Louisiana plantation was a mecca for visitors. Often, entire families "happened in." Aunt Jemima served them memorable meals and her pancakes were famous as the "speciality of the house." When the Mississippi side-wheeler, Emily Dunstan, caught fire near Higbee's Landing, Colonel Higbee opened his home to the survivors. Men, women and children were comforted by Aunt Jemima's cheering words and batches of her famous pancakes revived their spirits, Years later, the representative of a northern flour mill heard the story of her pancake while traveling down the river of the "Robert E. Lee." At Higbee's Landing the two men went ashore to persuade Aunt Jemima to share her recipe with the homemakers. Aunt Jemima was at first reluctant to reveal her "secret," but the opportunity to make so many facilities happy with the ease and satisfaction of serving her mouth-watering pancakes was irresistible and Aunt Jemima left her cabin to begin travels which have taken her up and down America. (*The Daily Reporter* (7 March, 1957))

The newspaper does not sacrifice one myth for another, but adds to the uncertainty around Aunt Jemima's true origin. It does not state that this history is a mythical one, but instead advertises the presence of Aunt Jemima for people to "come," "meet," and "know" her as a "'real life" personality." Although the article does not specify whether it is sponsored by J. Walter Thompson, the enticing language used to encourage people to come to the event and the positioning of a visiting Aunt Jemima as a real being, rather than a fictional character, would be of benefit to the Aunt Jemima brand. The lack of citation in many sources makes tracking the

myths of Aunt Jemima to be a complex process. There are undoubtedly questions raised regarding the validity of the information on “The Night that the Emily Dustan Burned,” and also Young’s childhood within *Brands, Trademarks and Good Will*. Marquette provides no notes, footnotes, or works cited to reference any of the information printed, nor does he reference any conversation with Young. He does not clarify whether the information on “The Night that the Emily Dustan Burned” comes from Young, the archives at the J. Walter Thompson company, or from other sources - such as *The Daily Reporter*. However, this does not mean that Marquette’s information is false, or his book uninformed, for James Webb Young *did* endorse Marquette’s book by writing its preface “On a Sense of History.” He states “this book makes an important contribution to modern business management by its examination of an important result of advertising — the organic growth of a business.” (3). It is unlikely that he would have gone ahead to issue such a statement after reading the book if he had qualms about the legitimacy of Marquette’s words.

According to *Endorsements in Advertising: A Social History*, Marquette worked as a “Quaker account man with the firm’s ad agency” (75), and thus he was likely to have known Young, and had first-hand access to behind-the-scenes knowledge. Of course, this raises even more concerns about the validity of *Brands, Trademarks and Good Will*. It is entirely possible that the book is biased or exists as another form of advertising. In which case, its purpose may be to cement as truth the stories that the advertising company utilized in order to endorse the Aunt Jemima product. It is also plausible that the book was commissioned by Young or the J. Walter Thompson Company. Whether Marquette’s book is a trusted source is already a question that has

been raised by other scholars, such as Doris Witt. In *Black Hunger: Soul Food and America*, Witt, as a result of discrepancies in research that she herself has undertaken, holds other Aunt Jemima stories featured in Marquette's book in dispute. With regards to the origin story of the Aunt Jemima brand where Charles Rutt witnessed the Baker & Farrell Vaudeville performance, Witt propagates that it too is mythical in creation. Witt's research reveals that the newspaper record for nineteenth-century US Theater includes no reference to Baker & Farrell amongst its listings in that time frame, only a solo act by P. F. Baker— indicating possible discrepancies (28-29). With this exposure of the truth, it is possible that it is not only the southern tableaux in the advertisements of the Aunt Jemima companies that paint a romantic picture of the past, but the supposedly realistic recounting too.

Although this thesis intends to closely analyze the advertisements to look at the racial and gender hierarchies that they are trying to portray, and the kind of lifestyle that they are attempting to encourage consumers to buy into, the concept of Marquette's book as a form of mythical marketing itself is an interesting notion that warrants attention. The book could be interpreted as an incognito form of advertising, one that does not appear as such, since it diverges from typical print-based marketing. If so, the origin story of both Aunt Jemima the character, and Aunt Jemima the brand, can therefore be accused of pushing a commercial agenda. Scholars and the general public alike take books — particularly those that are historical-based — as fact, and so the book's existence gives plausibility to the background information put forward about the company. This information could consequently be unknowingly misused by scholars. The gap in information offers new avenues for scholars of Aunt Jemima to take in future scholarship,

ensuring that the topic does not become exhausted in spite of being discussed extensively. It also raises questions for future scholarship on advertising about how to define print-based advertising. Can books exist as a form of print advertisement? If so, within books, where does the line fall between considering the language to be informative, a means of propaganda, or something which encourages consumerism? Despite the inconsistencies, lack of documentation, and questions over the truth of its claims, Marquette's book remains a crucial source in analyzing the Aunt Jemima phenomenon. Its publication in 1967 foregrounded it as one of the founding books in the study of the Aunt Jemima brand. It is both an influential and frequently-cited source in prevailing Aunt Jemima scholarship, including the majority referenced within this paper. The promotion of the Colonel Higbee myths reveal how nostalgia for the South influenced the marketing technique of the J. Walter Thomson Company, as well as the possible cracks within the Aunt Jemima history. James Webb Young's investment in Southern nostalgia is inclined to fail when applied to an African American consumer, although it is unlikely that the Aunt Jemima brand would be concerned by this, since their targeted demographic was white Americans.

An Advertising Conundrum During the Civil Rights Era

However, it is perhaps too simplistic to assert that the owners of the Aunt Jemima brand would have been totally unconcerned with African American responses to their product, and so the southern tableau comes back into play. Judy Foster Davis argues that "By World War II, advertisements no longer depicted Aunt Jemima on the plantation, but as a domestic, cooking

and providing support in white households.” (27) Judging by a March 1940 advertisement from *Good Housekeeping* (Figure 5.), Davis’ assertion could be constituted as true, with the apparent abandonment of the southern tableau. Even though Aunt Jemima in her bandana remains, the plantation and related imagery that had appeared in the previous advertisements analyzed appear to be history, as they are replaced by a five-board comic-style series of photographs. The photographs, through imagery and speech bubbles, detail how Aunt Jemima works with the well-dressed ‘good’ housewife to help get the infamous pancakes on the table for her lady’s family. Gone are the hoop skirts and ornamental china, and in their place is the modern soon-to-be termed ‘nuclear family’: the “idealized...two-parent suburban



Figure 5. Advertisement for *Good Housekeeping*, March 1940

household” that “bombarded” Americans via all forms of advertising” from the 1940’s to 1960’s (Inness 86). The advertisement remains problematic with its romanticization and (arguably) endorsed proclamations of slavery. The first frame in the comic-strip positions Aunt Jemima as an applicant for the “SITUATION WANTED: COOK— NO WAGES.” Once again arousing notions of Reddick’s “Devoted Servant,” the advertisement rushes to ensure the viewer that the “World’s most famous pancake cook, Aunt Jemima, wants to go work in your kitchen fixing delicious breakfasts for you— at no wages!” What Davis fails to mention is that the 1940’s move

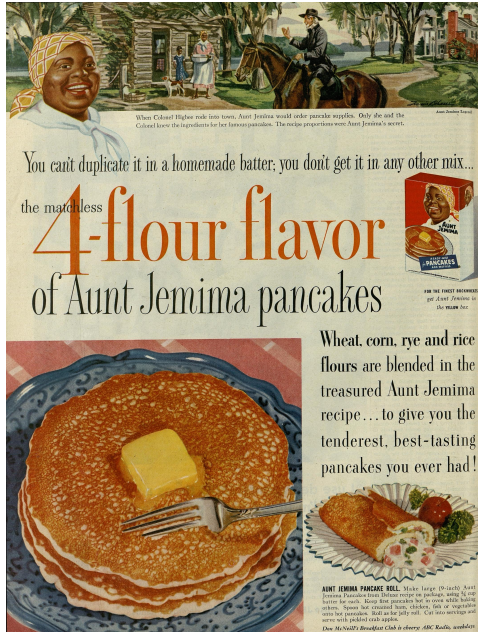


Figure 6. Advertisement for *Ladies' Home Journal*, February 1954.

away from the southern tableau plantation setting is not a sustained decision, for it returns again in the early-mid 1950's. In the February 1954 issue of the *Ladies' Home Journal* (Figure 6.), the top horizontal banner illustrates Aunt Jemima and a child standing outside her cabin, with Colonel Higbee riding past, and his plantation in the background. The southern tableau is more subtle than previous examples, as it only occupies approximately 1/6th of a page that is otherwise modernized by photographs of various food items.



Figure 7. Advertisement for *LIFE*, April 15th, 1955.

In contrast, the same can not be said of an advertisement released in *LIFE* one year later (Figure 7. dated April 15th 1955), as in the advertisement the southern tableau returns to a full-page spread. The fashion in the advertisement lays out the image of glamour and class. The men are dressed in suit jackets and carrying top hats, while the woman clinging to Aunt Jemima is in a layered dress of frills and a ribbon-tied bonnet. The male “guest” smiles at the women, maintaining distance from Aunt Jemima and the female guest, and there is a noticeable gap between his body

and theirs. Colonel Higbee stands immediately next to Aunt Jemima looking down at her, hand brought to his face in contemplation, and he is represented as the only person in the image not smiling. Despite the hierarchy and what would be real life tension and violence (whether symbolic, emotional, or physical) between Aunt Jemima and the white planter elites who surround her, they are all shown to be (especially Aunt Jemima and the woman) smiling, as if laughing gaily together. The move to release an advertisement that was highly conspicuous in terms of its Southernness may have been a strategic move on the part of advertisers to capitalize on the then-current state of popular culture. Just under one year prior to the *LIFE* advertisement, the wildly popular film adaptation of *Gone With the Wind* (1939), which featured a romanticized image of the South, returned to public consciousness through rerelease in a widescreen and refigured form, taking in \$7 million at the box office (Hannan 372 n. 52 and 74). The film demonstrated that images and stories of the Southern plantation continued to be popular, therefore giving the brand good reason to sway from the modernization of advertising, and return to a fraudulent image of a 'simpler' way of life where leisure came about as the result of others work, not the housewife's own drudgery.

Nevertheless, it is possible that there was an ulterior motive for the return to the Southern Tableau in 1954 and 1955. Both advertisements follow a wave of racial turbulence with the advancing of the Civil Rights Movement. Although the *Ladies' Home Journal* advertisement in 1954 was released three months prior to reverse of the *Plessy* precedent in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the fervor caused by the judge's request to rehear *Oliver Brown et al. v. The Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (post the judge's citation of *Plessy* in the ruling) in the fall of 1953

may have played a role in Aunt Jemima's own media reverse. The Supreme Court's decision, along with the subsequent brutal murder of Emmett Till (1955) and the Montgomery Bus Boycotts (1955-1956) would undoubtedly occupy the pages of newspapers read at the breakfast table, next to a stack of Aunt Jemima pancakes. As a character in dominant culture, the return of Aunt Jemima to the traumatic plantation site may have been viewed as an advertiser's own way of hampering the protest, visibly reminding African Americans of the inferior position they held in society's hierarchy. The 1955 advertisement in particular acts as a reminder of the vulnerability of African Americans within white rule, and holds particular value for scholars for exposing silent hierarchies both on and off the printed page. The stances and facial expressions of Aunt Jemima and Colonel Higbee could be perceived to be an exposure of the darker side of the southern tableau—the sexual assault of enslaved African American women by their planter masters. As noted by Painter, “male slaveowners in the South counted sexual access to enslaved women as one of the prerequisites of masterliness” (Painter 91). The African American woman's status of possession, and the fear of violence towards themselves or their families during the slave era, meant that any resistance was futile. Furthermore, there was the societal belief that the white males who carried out acts of rape and sexual abuse were the innocent party, as “most whites — and some blacks — agreed that black women's morals were so deplorable that they welcomed the advances of white men” (Painter 128). Although Aunt Jemima happily serves Colonel Higbee, and their relationship maintains the gaiety of the advertisement for a white audience, the gaze of Colonel Higbee is the warning that lies behind it.

less personal image of the freshly prepared meal, gone is the face of Aunt Jemima.

This shift is particularly evident in the November 1955 *Ladies' Home Journal* full page advertisement (Figure 8.) offering housewives a recipe with an innovative way to make the “chicken 'n Ham” take on a “Short-Cut Shortcake” using Aunt Jemima or Quaker Oats corn meal. Given that the advertisement is from the same year as the *LIFE* southern tableau, the difference between the two messages communicated is astronomical. Unlike the majority of Aunt Jemima marketing that preceded it, there is a complete absence of any reference to the past. The greatest volume of the page is taken up by a photograph of the final cooked product, and a heading with a large-font size chronicling what is being cooked, as well as a body of text at the bottom of the page explaining how to cook it. In the corner are two dime-sized photographs, one of Quaker Oats's spokesman and one of Aunt Jemima— a far cry from her previous center-placing. The two brands are mentioned, but the font used to name Quaker Oats is substantially larger than the font used to name Aunt Jemima. The decision to prioritize the Quaker brand could be due to the fact the Quaker Oats Company owned Aunt Jemima, and wished to push their own-name branding above the other product under their control in order to maximize brand visibility.



Figure 9. Advertisement for *Ladies' Home Journal*, March 1958.



Figure 10. Advertisement for *Better Homes & Gardens*, April 1958.

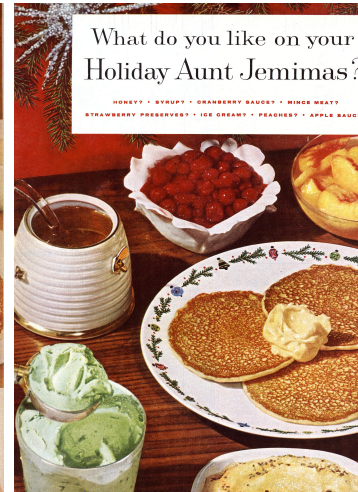


Figure 11. Advertisement for *Better Homes & Gardens*, December 1958.

However, the receding visibility of Aunt Jemima in place of food-related photography continues even without the presence of the Quaker. Whether it be in the March 1958 issue of the *Ladies' Home Journal* (Figure 9.), or the April 1958 issue of *Women's Magazine* (Figure 10.), or more extreme, the December 1958 Christmas advertisement from *Better Homes and Gardens* [Figure 11.], (which is also notable due to an absence of the images depicting Aunt Jemima or the pancake box), the previously iconic symbol is side-lined. Had the brand wished to use their power over African American imagery to curtail the Civil Rights Movement, they could have continued with the southern tableau and pushed the visibility of their popular Mammy post-1955. By reducing the visibility of Aunt Jemima, the racism endorsed by their company seems less overt. Food photography would be a strategic and neutral way of endorsing the product, without giving the impression that the company was siding either for or against African American advancement, thus avoiding controversy. Aunt Jemima's main target market of the caucasian

consumer may have remained, but African American consumer power was growing steadily throughout the 1950s. Led by Harvey C. Russell, Pepsico, through strategic community support, concentrated its efforts in the early 1950's on increasing the number of African American Pepsi-drinkers within New Orleans. In exchange for three Pepsi bottle tops, African American children within the region were given access to theater matinees, which built favor amongst local consumers. Pepsico's efforts were successful, as after the campaign, sales of the drink in the area rose by 62% in four weeks (Weems 51). Given that PepsiCo later bought Quaker Oats, their strategy is especially interesting.

Other companies, who desired to mirror Pepsi's profitable success, similarly attempted to reach what became termed the "Negro Market," which led to a greater concentration on African American consumers and the creation of "Negro Market specialists" (as part of the National Association of Market Developers) to match (Weems 51-52). Companies came to recognize that as a result of segregation, the buying power of many African Americans within the home food industry was equatable with their white counterparts. The recognition was aided by help from *Sponsor's* (an advertising trade journal concerned with the broadcasting imagery), who responded to the question proposed by "prospective buyers of advertising on black-orientated radio": "Does the Negro have a standard of living (and a product consumption) that compares with the standard of living U.S. whites?" *Sponsor's* determined:

Negroes are denied many recreations in many parts of the country that whites take for granted. I mean access to theaters, restaurants, night-clubs, beaches, vacation resorts,

travel facilities and the like...As a result, Southern Negroes can be considered largely as having as much money to spend on non-recreation items. Even in Northern, Midwestern, and Pacific areas where the discrimination is much less than in the South, this is true to quite an extent....The Negro therefore will spend much more money in food, clothing, appliances, automobiles, and other items...Negro standards of living, in many categories of goods, are a match for white standards. (Weems 42)

Sponsor's response highlights the quandary that Aunt Jemima's owners would have faced. Do they retain their original white market by continuing to push southern tableau advertisements that openly promoted white leisure on the basis of black labor? Or, do they change their advertising in order to open themselves up to new streams of revenue, thus increasing their market share and potential for profit? The neutrality assumed through prioritizing food-based photography within their advertisements during the beginning of the Civil Rights Era suggests that ultimately, capitalism won out.

The southern tableau is an important element to consider when looking at the marketing strategies employed by the various Aunt Jemima companies, as it lays the groundwork for considering the pancake box and racist memorabilia. The ability of the southern tableau to trigger a nostalgic longing for a simpler time was an advantage that Rutt and Underwood with their Pearl Milling Company (and to a lesser extent, R. T. Davis) did not necessarily capitalize on. The image of Aunt Jemima alone was certainly an image of the Old South, but the combination of her image with that of the plantation architecture, happy guests and rural backgrounds was a recipe

for success that only Quaker Oats (with assistance of the J. Walter Thompson) thought to employ. The stories of Aunt Jemima that they sold may have been numerous, contradictory, and full of falsehood, but they certainly were effective in establishing brand recognition amongst consumers. The turn of advertising style at the dawn of the Civil Rights era demonstrates that even if they were not willing to give up their symbol of the Mammy, The Quaker Oats Company and J. Walter Thompson advertising agency were aware of the racial significance of Aunt Jemima and anticipating the forthcoming changing times. The change was advantageous for the company if not only because it absolved them from answering a difficult question as more people debated what it meant to have a Mammy in the magazines and on the pancake box: Who was Aunt Jemima's Mistress, and why was she never pictured?

CHAPTER 2: THE MAMMY & THE MISTRESS HOUSEWIFE

Hiring Aunt Jemima

Aunt Jemima may be the most important figure in the advertisements for pancake mix, and consequently the previous chapter has endeavored to trace her image in the southern tableau, but she is not the only person whose presence should be catalogued. As recognized by multiple scholars invested in the branding and resultant connotations of Aunt Jemima, advertisements featuring the southern tableau are missing an important figure — the mistress of Colonel Higbee. Aunt Jemima and her master frequently appear pictured in the plantation setting, but the latter remains unattached to any figure who could reasonably pass as a wife. In the previously analyzed February 1924 advertisement for *Ladies' Home Journal* or the April 1955 advertisement for *LIFE*, the white Southern belle-hoop skirt wearing women are in attendance, but there is a special effort made in the illustrations to maintain a gap between them and Colonel Higbee. In both instances they remain separated by, or are aligned with, another man. This strategy clearly communicates that neither of the women are romantically attached to the Colonel. The failure to provide evidence of a Mistress Higbee is not accidental, scholars argue, but a strategic decision on behalf of “the creators of the Aunt Jemima legend” (Inness 75). Sherrie Inness states that they: “wanted the white woman consumer to insert herself into the story as Colonel Higbee’s wife and the mistress of his plantation, to imagine herself being waited on by contented black

servants and a doting husband” (*Kitchen Culture in America* 75). Likewise, M. M. Manring asserts that “White women were to fill in the blanks in the ad and place themselves, as consumers, in a different context with the help of the product.” (141). Manring is the scholar to have made the most cohesive arguments regarding the appeal of Aunt Jemima, and he largely attributes it to this strategic decision. As he argues:

The absent mistress, rather than a simple oversight, was a key part of the ads’ appeal. The women whom JWT targeted in its ad campaign could not find or afford a household servant, let alone one as talented and loyal as Aunt Jemima. They certainly did not share the lifestyle they were invited to visit in Aunt Jemima ads...The Southern mistress does not appear in the ads because they were designed to require the white housewife to complete the thought themselves and place themselves in that role. They were the mistresses of their respective homes. Aunt Jemima, a real person, a real slave, with an actual Old South recipe, was working for them. In reality, they could not have Aunt Jemima, let alone a hired servant. But, the ads seemed to be saying to the white woman, you can approximate the lifestyle once created for plantation mistresses by the efforts of female slaves through purchasing the creation of a former female slave. The ads urged white housewives to have Aunt Jemima, not be Aunt Jemima. JWT was selling the idea of a slave, in a box. (140)

In making the housewife at home the mistress of Higbee's Landing, the J. W. Thompson company and the handlers of Aunt Jemima who preceded them provided the housewife with a triage of opportunities: the opportunity to position herself as belonging to an upper class, the opportunity to partake in leisure at the expense of another, and the opportunity to exert racial hierarchies. By inserting themselves into the narrative of the southern tableau, the advertisements provided a fantasy fully-formed for the white housewife to walk into, complete with a wealthy husband, a beautiful picturesque home, a time uncomplicated by Civil Rights actions, and someone willing to happily take over the housewife's labor.

Curiously, there seems to be an effort taken by the Aunt Jemima brand in the southern tableau to ensure that the lack of a Higbee mistress goes unnoticed by the housewife. There is no reference (in any of the advertisements studied) to the bachelor status of Colonel Higbee, nor any overt invitation for the housewife to insert herself into the fantasy. The closest that the advert comes to implicating the housewife in the story is the direct address of "you" in the phrase "you can't duplicate it in a homemade batter; you don't get it in any other mix...the matchless 4-flavor pancake mix" that appears in the May (Figure 12.) and December 1954 (Figure 13.) advertisements for *Better Homes and Gardens*, amongst many others. The phrasing is fairly

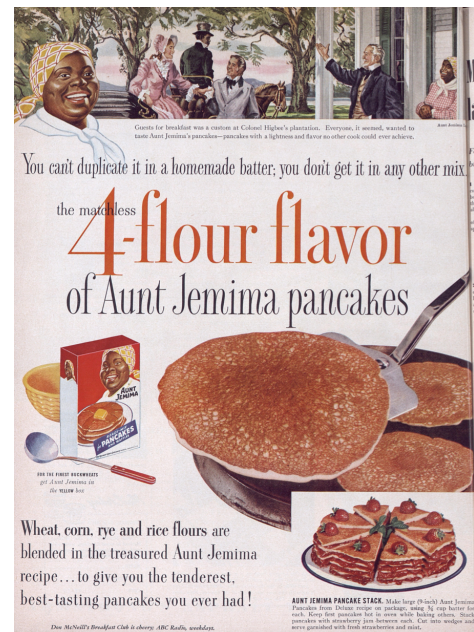


Figure 12. Advertisement for *Better Homes and Gardens*, May, 1954.

innocuous. In spite of the above banner images depicting Colonel Higbee and guests sampling the pancakes, the invitation of the advertisement is for the housewife to try the mix for herself, not for her to sit down with those in the tableau.

The attempt of the Aunt Jemima advertisers to make the housewife-consumer aware of the multiple “opportunities” that the ready-mix can give them becomes much more conspicuous in later advertisements that continued to capitalize on the South, but not with an Old South tableau. Lacking subtlety, later advertisements appear to openly acknowledge they are pushing an agenda. In contrast to having an absent mistress, the advertisements place a housewife in the role (a position that the average consumer may find easier to align herself with), and the the advertisements depict her as benefitting from the opportunities offered. The difference can be discerned in a study of two comic-style advertisements from the 1940s. In the first, an issue of *Good Housekeeping* dated March 1st 1940 (Figure 14.), Quaker advances the ideal of belonging to an upper class as a means of appealing to the consumer. Popularizing the idea that by buying Aunt Jemima’s pancake mix at the supermarket, the consumer at home can have the “perfect” pancake, Quaker encourages a consumer desire to possess hired help. The inducement for purchase is undisguised in the line: “WITH A BOX OF YOUR READY-MIX IN



Figure 13. Advertisement for *Better Homes and Gardens*, December, 1954.

MY KITCHEN, IT'S LIKE HAVING YOU THERE IN PERSON, AUNT JEMIMA!" Arguably, the desire is one that echoes the time in which the advertisement was printed and the desire to maintain a house with help is an attempt to convey status.

Discussion considering how the human body can be used as a way to reject status is featured in theoretical works surrounding consumption and leisure, such as Thorstein Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. Published in 1899, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* coined the terms "conspicuous consumption," and "conspicuous leisure" in his criticism of the lavish lifestyle of those in the elite social circles, whom he called "The Leisure Class." According to Veblen, the

"conspicuous consumption" of valuable goods was a "means to reputability" (56). The Leisure' Class's spending on commodities was not driven solely by a desire to acquire the comfort that luxuries provided, but also by the significance of possessing such commodities. Acting as visual signifiers of wealth, the luxuries acted as a sign of a "pecuniary strength" that established the owners as belonging to a ruling class of "success and superior force" (Veblen 135). Veblen suggested that an employer's ownership over domestic workers categorized them as a commodity that too signified a level of wealth, noting that "[t]he need of vicarious leisure or



Figure 14. Advertisement for *Good Housekeeping*, March 1940.

conspicuous consumption of service is a dominant incentive to the keeping of servants.” (Veblen 62) He justified his argument that domestic workers were unnecessary “in the modern industrial communities” by asserting that “the mechanical contrivances available for the comfort and convenience of everyday life are highly developed.” (64) Veblen perceived the development of modern technology to be so advanced that “body servants, or, indeed, domestic servants of any kind, would now scarce be employed by anybody except on the ground of a canon of reputability carried over by tradition from earlier usage.” (65) In attempting to replicate the lavish lifestyle of the Leisure Class, Aunt Jemima could be a housewife’s greatest tool.

On the other hand, it could be argued that the exclamation in the advertisement was not an attempt to convey status by the standard of the current day, but acted as a link to the past. Despite not being a southern tableau representative of the Old South, it nevertheless tries to maintain the notions of wealth that the plantation environment and Colonel Higbee’s ownership of Aunt Jemima suggests. The affordability of the packet mix endeavored to alter the socio-economic demographic of those who were able to own domestic workers, or at least provide an initiation of a personal domestic worker. As acknowledged by Inness,

as most white American households could not actually afford a live-in cook, advertisers of certain processed foods engaged in commodity fetishism whereby the black cook’s face appeared on the box of pancake flour to suggest that she would be going home with

the consumer as a spiritual guide during the cooking process (*Kitchen Culture in America* 70).

The ad-line is not only attempting to capitalize on notions of wealth, but also issues of race. The advertisement seeks to replicate the racial hierarchies of the old South. Under this social structure, hiring help gave the employer a feeling of greater status and social superiority, particularly if, in addition to being of a lower class, their worker was non-caucasian. Aunt Jemima, as both a former slave and a black woman, satisfies both aspects. Therefore, the Aunt Jemima mix would enable consumers with a lower income to exercise racial superiority over the Mammy within the home environment as those who employed the physical human did. As Grace Hale comments in *Making Whiteness*, Aunt Jemima:

offered a spokeservant and a branded product that promised convenience to white middle-class homes increasingly without real servants. The national rise of Aunt Jemima in particular and the spoke servant in general, then, occurred as fewer white families outside the South could find or afford domestic help, and as African American women made up a sharply increasing percentage of the dwindling number of domestic servants. For those Southerners and many Northerners who continued to employ domestic workers, Aunt Jemima embodied everything that a servant should be. Competent and capable and yet subservient and inferior, Aunt Jemima brought the romance of the old plantation into the most modern of white American homes. (164)

The desire on the behalf of the Quaker Oats Company to replicate the master-slave relationship within the home of the modern housewife is evidenced in a *Good Housekeeping* advertisement from February 1940 (Figure 15.). Made conspicuous by the large, bold, and more formal-in-style type, the words “SITUATION WANTED COOK — NO WAGES” take an up-center place position in the advertisement. Given that the text is the most pronounced print on the page, and that consumers read the English language chronologically, it is highly likely to be the first thing someone gazing upon the advertisement reads. Underneath the heading, the copy begins “WORLD’S MOST FAMOUS PANCAKE COOK, AUNT JEMIMA, wants to go to work in your kitchen fixing delicious breakfasts for you — at no wages!” The advertisement does not explicitly state “Aunt Jemima can be your slave” to the consumer, but the implication that Aunt Jemima would partake in labor without payment echoes the African American’s lack of remuneration during the antebellum period. Curiously, “SITUATION WANTED” is an awkward turn of phrase, especially given that food and the Aunt Jemima brand are both symbols of comfort. Unlike alternative phrases such as “HOME WANTED” which align better with the company image, the chosen phrase comes with a detachment of emotion.



Figure 15. Advertisement for *Good Housekeeping*, February 1940.

The awkward phrasing contributes to the ambiguity of the advertisement. Designed as a job advertisement, it could be interpreted as help sought by either the housewife or Quaker Oats. Initially, it seems as though it is the housewife who has taken the ad out in order to express her desire for a domestic worker, especially since it is ordinarily the person with an opening who takes the initiative. Naming their fantasy, they want to hire someone without remuneration. However, since the text underneath the heading addresses the consumer-housewife reading the magazine, the advertisement implies that it is Quaker Oats seeking a placement for Aunt Jemima. Regardless, the Quaker Oats Company through the advertisement acts as an authoritative figure who seeks to comfort the advertisement's audience, reassuring them that it is acceptable to nostalgically want the master-slave relationship (implied via the lack of wages), even though slavery had been outlawed over seventy years prior. The advertisement further encourages the viewer by emphasizing that Aunt Jemima *wants* to work for free, thereby invoking the notion of the servile and "happy" black worker. Aunt Jemima does not say herself that she desires to work without payment, as in her order of "let me come into your kitchen and happify your folks," money is not mentioned (not even via a strategic mention of the low cost of the mix). As Aunt Jemima's 'master,' it is the Quaker Oats Company who act as the point of contact between Aunt Jemima and the consumer-housewife. It is they who say Aunt Jemima wants to enter the consumer's home, not Aunt Jemima herself. Their intervention means Aunt Jemima is neither an active agent in putting out the job advertisement nor in speaking to the consumer, and therefore it can be considered a means of controlling an African American figure who does not even exist out

of the confines of the text. Despite their differences in approach, no matter whether the housewife is present in the advertisement or not, the shared commonality between the two types of advertisement is that by buying the pancake mix, the consumer is buying Aunt Jemima as a cook for their home.

It is unsurprising that across America, housewives forged such a connection with the Aunt Jemima product and her ability to enter their home. For as acknowledged by Patricia M. Gnatt: “identification of the self with food is especially well entrenched for women, whose traditional roles have required them to plan, shop for, prepare, serve, and clean up after its consumption.” (63) Gnatt does not acknowledge the sheer time input involved in the steps to food consumption that must be consistently repeated multiple times a day. Unlike vacuuming or laundry, the cycle of eating can not be delayed and must be fulfilled. The need to be absolved from the cooking process, or at least to lesson the time spent by the housewife in the kitchen stemmed from three events: growing consumer confidence, the rise in women seeking leisure, and the advance of women leaving the domestic work of the home and joining the public workforce. In the early nineteenth hundreds, the United States fell victim to a “new American tempo” where “people were worried that the “stream of life” would surge past them, and that their neighbors would leave them behind” in the ownership of goods (Marches 4). The fear, combined with the increase in general employment that facilitated an increase in disposable income, meant that people were “quicker to take up new ideas, to sample new products, to test new services” (Marches 4). One of the commodity markets to gain the most out of this new

American bravery was the convenience food sector. A few products, such as Aunt Jemima, had existed prior to the early nineteenth century. However, they did not gain momentum and become popular until past the mid-1920s, when powerhouses such as J. Walter Thompson took control of their visibility and propelled them to the forefront of American culture. Since, as Inness acknowledges, convenience foods were “an integral part” of the new American “image of modernity and progress” and were celebrated in the media as “a way to turn cooking into a quick and pleasant task” (Inness, *Dinner Roles* 158). The consumer confidence combined with the celebration led the housewife to show a greater interest than ever before in what the modern world could offer them, as the access to instant foods made them appear to be a ‘new woman’.

Modernity created new paths for women; no longer did women “have to stick to their grandmothers’ labor-intensive, old-fashioned cooking methods. At a time when modernity was thought to be everything that was new and exciting, connecting women to modernity helped distance them from more traditional ideas about women’s behavior.” (Inness *Secret Ingredients* 18-19) With the increase in expendable time that came with the access to convenience foods, and the slow abandonment of the traditional meal-making process that made up the role of the traditional housewife, more women were able to partake in leisure activities. By “[u]tilizing modern foodstuffs...[women] could prepare meals and still have time for their own personal activities, such as shopping at the local department store or pursuing an afternoon golf game” (Inness, *Dinner Roles* 143), activities arguably more enjoyable for them. However, despite the growth of brands in the convenience food market in the 1920’s, scholars such as

Sherrie Inness argue that it was not until the 1950's that "they came into their own" (Inness, *Dinner Roles* 158). Likely facilitated by the slow move of women into the workforce who were also in the midst of helping "put their husbands through school, their sons through college, or to help play the mortgage" (Friedan 17), the convenience meal became more than a friendly face. As acknowledged by Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique*, "a third of women now worked" (Friedan 17), however, the occupations held by women in the late 1950's were not necessarily professional, in fact they were more likely to be "part-time jobs, [from] selling to secretarial" work (17). Nonetheless, the ready meal, as a tool, helped women balance the world of the workplace and the responsibilities of the home while on a budget. This advantage continued with the increased migration of women from the home into professional and non-professional areas of work, enabled by the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960's-1970's.

The concept that Aunt Jemima could solve the working women's problems was not one that J. Walter Thompson would have to pay for and extensively plan, for popular culture was all too willing to take on this role for them. Through the *Imitation of Life* (1934), housewives were able to actively view on the big screen the way in which Aunt Jemima could work for them. The movie follows Bea Pullman (a widower and mother to Jessie, played by Claudette Colbert) and Delilah Johnson (a black housekeeper and mother to Viola, played by Louise Beavers), with the latter accidentally happening upon Pullman in a state of domestic distress. Delilah, along with her fair-skinned daughter, move into the Pullman family home where she shares her secret pancake recipe with the financially struggling mother who uses it to garner fame and riches for

them both. The motion picture opens with a frazzled Bea Pullman trying to balance getting her daughter ready for nursery, preparing a kettle, stirring a pot, and talking on the phone to a Mr. Auburn as she manages her deceased husband's maple syrup business. Likely a scene with which the housewife viewing the film can sympathize, Bea is saved by Delilah who prepares breakfast using the excuse "Well I see you in such a flummox, I thought I would just lend a hand." Delilah attempts to entice Pullman into hiring her, only for Pullman to cry "I'm afraid I just couldn't afford it, I wish I could." Delilah, embodying the stereotype of an African American who wishes to serve whites for no or minimum payment and enjoy the opportunity, replies: "Oh, don't worry about wages if that's what's on your mind, if I could just get a home for my little girl, I'd be glad to work for just room and board." The scene anticipates the sentiments of the 1940 *Good Housekeeping* advertisement in the lack of desire for wages, but the connection between Aunt Jemima and Delilah does not become apparent until Delilah becomes 'Aunt Delilah' (ironically mirroring the sound pattern of the famous trademark's name) and reveals that she has a "special secret" pancake recipe passed down from her "granny" to her "Mammy" that is going to "die" with her. Despite Aunt Delilah's adamance, she proceeds to immediately whisper it to Pullman, who then takes credit for Delilah's secret by publicly posturing that the recipe belongs to her, as she declares "You see, I have a marvelous formula for making pancakes, and it's my intention to rent a store and have a pancake place and sell syrup on the side." She maintains this narrative, never divulging the real owner of the recipe.

Despite the supposedly balanced partnership in which Pullman promises to make Delilah famous, she never asks Delilah's permission to use the recipe, nor whether Delilah would want to market it. In what is perceived to be a fantastic opportunity for Delilah, it becomes abundantly clear that in the excitement is not a request, but an order as Pullman tells Delilah "we're going into business...You're going to make your pancakes and I'm going to sell them on the boardwalk." The supposed caring relationship between the two women is noticeably one-sided in that it is Delilah who massages Pullman's feet twice, and when it appears that Pullman is to do something in turn for Delilah (such as make her a cup of tea when Delilah is upset over her daughter), the gesture never materializes on-screen. Yet the unequal relationship and the fact that Pullman enjoys life in a mansion while Delilah is relegated to downstairs is justified by Delilah's devotion. Despite their new status as business-partners, Delilah shows a desire to maintain the status quo, requesting that Bea "don't send [her] away" because she is her "cook and [she] wanna stay [Pullman's] cook." To make Delilah's happiness at the arrangement abundantly clear to the modern audience, Delilah rejects the fame and money that Pullman receives as a result of the recipe, emotionally proclaiming: "I gis it to you, honey. I'll make you's present of it. You's welcome." The relationship resembles a marriage in that Aunt Delilah is the male breadwinner who brings in the money and beautiful Bea Pullman is the one who spends and benefits from it, but unlike the nuclear family arrangement, it is Pullman as the head of the household who is revered. Throughout the film, Pullman changes from a woman unable to handle her domestic duties to one able to throw glamorous parties, from a mother not able to make it home to see her daughter go to bed to one that takes the time to play Go-Fish. She puts her daughter ahead of

love, and grows from the business woman struggling to stay afloat to a savvy and successful entrepreneur. Ahead of her time, Pullman becomes a woman who is able to ‘have it all’ — with thanks to Aunt Delilah. The movie ends with Pullman maintaining her wealth (interestingly without a man by her side) and Delilah’s heartbroken death over her and Viola’s estrangement. The profiting off of Delilah’s recipe, Pullman’s resultant credit, and the difference in end-place for the two characters mirrors the relationship between the housewife and the Aunt Jemima pancake box. One may do all the work, but it is the other who is rewarded. One lives to appreciate the wealth with the promise of a romantic future, the other is prepared for burial.

The Power of the Pancake Box

A pancake box may seem a trivial point of focus in contrast to the mass-marketing efforts of the J. W. Thompson Company and Quaker Oats, but the packaging of the Aunt Jemima product is nevertheless a key component in the success of the advertising campaigns and longevity of the Aunt Jemima brand. Prior to 1870, single-use food-related packaging had been completely absent due to the shopping-process in which consumers would take their own empty containers to the store to be filled before later carrying them home. The shopping method changed once a mechanical process to create a paper bag was developed, and the customer’s purchasing power was no longer constrained by what they had already planned to buy and what would fit in the containers. The new “mass-produced paper bags allowed buyers to carry home as much as they wanted of what they saw in the store.” (Manring 63) The paper bags, although

useful, were not revolutionary in the same way that the cardboard boxes that followed were. Although boxes had been used to store food since the late seventeenth century, the disposable folding-box as we know it today was not produced in the United States until 1879, when “Brooklyn-based producer of printed flour, seed and grocery bags” Robert Gair had a “happy accident” when “considering the problem of how to produce an efficient folding box in quantity.” (Hine 62) Using boxes in food-packaging has, as acknowledged by Hine, numerous benefits. In the shipping process, “Boxes are far less likely than bags to rupture...spilling their contents, which attracts vermin and lowers profits.” Furthermore, they are “far more effective than bags in keeping their contents from being crushed, which makes them more attractive.” Once they reach the store, the boxes have an ability that the bags do not: they can “stand straight and smart in store displays” as a means of in-store advertisement and attracting the customer (61). However, the greatest benefit of the introduction of the cardboard box was discovered by The National Biscuit Company: “It was strong enough to allow brand names and symbols to be printed directly on it” (Manring 64). It was no longer only the advertisements seen by consumers prior to purchase that companies could use in an attempt to sway consumers to part with their money, but also their packaging. As a result, since the start of the 1930’s

package design has been subjected to a substantial amount of psychological research, which has tended toward the conclusion that shopping is an irrational process and that packaging is effective primarily insofar as it appeals to the subconscious...The first

package the shopper examines is almost always the one that is bought. The instantaneous emotional reaction carries the greatest weight. (205)

The ability to tap into the consumer conscience through the combination of advertising and packaging is arguably Aunt Jemima's greatest strength.

At the point of conception, the investment of The Aunt Jemima Company in the pancake flour as an innovative commodity took priority over making the packaging appealing to the consumer. Failing to even include an image of the cook whose name marketed the product, the sack (originally used to contain the product) "had no name at all except a generic description of exactly what it was: self-raising pancake flour" (Marquette 141). It was not until 1895, following the takeover by the R. T. Davis Milling Company, that the Aunt Jemima product began "to be distributed in folding boxes rather than paper sacks" (Hine 91). Yet, neither The Aunt Jemima Company nor R. T. Davis concentrated on making the cardboard packaging part of the lure of the Aunt Jemima product. As stated by Marquette, "Quaker was the first to approach packaging of merchandise as a sales lure rather than as a mere convenience of distribution and handling" (8). The featuring of Aunt Jemima's image on the ready-made mix was a point of pride for The Quaker Oats company, as evidenced in a report from the J. Walter Thompson Agency regarding the new packaging released in 1916. The report stated:

After several months of study, a package was finally designed that stands today as one of the most striking and powerful appeals in any line of grocery products. Not only has all unnecessary type matter been removed from the package, but the head of the Southern Mammy has been changed from a mere trademark to an irresistible suggestion of Southern hospitality and good cooking” (Cox 34).

FOR FAMILIES AND FOR THE TABLE
AUNT JEMIMA'S
PANCAKE FLOUR
GRIDDLE CAKES,
HUFFLES,
WATFIES

Your Grocer Has a Fresh Supply
Now that fall is here, *Griddle Cakes* will be the order for breakfast—let yours be the good, old-fashioned kind, light and digestible—smoking hot, delicious and brown.
You get this result every time with
Aunt Jemima's Pancake Flour
This wonderful flour is made from wheat, corn and rice, so blended that there are no failures. No trouble to prepare. Just mix and put on a hot griddle.
No Increase in the Cost of Living
Aunt Jemima's Pancake Flour is made just the same as it was made years ago and sold at just the same price.
Delicious Waffles
You will be surprised and delighted with the crisp, waffle waffles that you so readily make with Aunt Jemima's Pancake Flour. They have a distinctive, delicious flavor all their own. Simple directions on every package.
Delightful Muffins
You will say that you never tasted real muffins until you make them with Aunt Jemima's Pancake Flour. Serve them and your family will eat and eat and eat and then say that they wished they had room for more.
Keep a few packages of Aunt Jemima's Pancake Flour in the house. It is always ready for instant use. It requires no salt, yeast or baking powder.

Something New
Aunt Jemima's Special Cake and Pastry Flour
On application we will mail you Aunt Jemima's Special Cake and Pastry Recipe Book.
The Devin Milling Company, St. Joseph, Mo.

Climbing Aunt Jemima Doll
This Coupon or a coupon from a package of Aunt Jemima's Pancake Flour, or Aunt Jemima's Special Cake and Pastry Flour with no credit in stamps or silver will bring you a magnificent treasure, the popular Aunt Jemima Climbing Doll. Give some credit number, name and address.
The Devin Milling Company, St. Joseph, Mo.

Figure 16. Advertisement for *Ladies' Home Journal*, October 1910.

Reducing Time and Costs

luscious pancakes came every time. In a few months, the miller perfected special machinery to prepare and mix the ingredients of this recipe. Soon he was ready to furnish, not the recipe, but all the ingredients accurately proportioned and packaged, ready for use, to every housewife in America.

The old word-of-mouth method would not suffice to carry these packages to new breakfast tables as fast as the revolving machinery turned them out.

Magazines and newspapers were going into these very homes. Street cars were taking these housewives to their grocers' stores. Through these magazines, newspapers and street cars, the genial smile of Aunt Jemima, with the picture of the cakes and the package that held the ingredients complete, was introduced to millions of housewives in one pancake season!

The first shipment of Aunt Jemima pancake flour was 1,000 cases. To-day, in one-third the time that it took the South mammy's recipe to creep by the town in which lived, the fame Aunt Jemima's pancakes has spread that they are served yearly 60,000,000 breakfast tables.

Today, many grocers sell one month, more cases than entire first shipment amounted to.

Machinery has made large-scale production possible. Its economies, it has brought within the reach of millions who before could be enjoyed only by the chosen few.

The economies of advertising have made large-scale selling possible. At the cost of a fraction a cent per home, advertising carried direct and over night millions of homes the message new products—products which save time, labor, money—products which, while raising the standard of living, reduce its cost.

J. WALTER THOMPSON COMPANY
New York
Chicago Boston Detroit Cincinnati

Thirty-five years ago, a well-known, old Virginia family, was famous for its pancakes. Its Southern mammy, the story goes, stood with her face bent over the soapstone griddle and deliberately tossed over her shoulder, into the middle of the kitchen, every pancake which did not come up to her standard.
Gradually relatives, then friends, copied upon mammy or wheeled their famous recipe from her.
Twelve years ago, a miller in Missouri had a wonderful recipe for pancakes. Unlike the Southern mammy, with his recipe,

Figure 17. A staff newsletter for the J. Walter Thompson Company, dated December 4 1964 from the J. Walter Thompson Company Newsletter Collection at Duke University, South Carolina.

Aunt Jemima no longer merely stood for a symbol of consumer identification, but rather she became a statement that endorsed the care of the consumer through the ready-made mix package. The differences noted in the report can be seen through the lens of advertisements,

notably featured in the October 1910 *Ladies' Home Journal* (Figure 16.) and a staff newsletter (Figure 17.) for the J. Walter Thompson company, dated December 4th, 1964 (detailing the profiling of the Aunt Jemima Company in a 1918 story for *Ad Club News*). Despite the fact that the text surrounding the box may prove distracting initially, upon closer study it becomes apparent that the change between the packaging illustrated in the two texts has been under-exaggerated by Cox. Although it should be acknowledged that Cox may have been tracking the change across different sources, she is remiss in saying Aunt Jemima has simply “been changed from a mere trademark to an irresistible suggestion.” With the erasure of the majority of text, and the inflation of the smiling Aunt Jemima’s face to the extent that it takes up the whole of the front-facing cover, the packaging does not merely show Aunt Jemima. There is the daringly suggestive statement that the pancake box *is* Aunt Jemima, and in a way that is more physically tangible than an insinuation in an advertisement, the change gives the consumer a real impression and corresponding experience that they are taking Aunt Jemima home with them. This is the idea of the “slave in a box” that Manring employs in his book of the same name (140). In spite of *Slave in a Box* being the title of Manring’s work, it is not a phrase that the book references frequently. Nevertheless, it is a phrase that simply, accurately, and effectively conveys the idea that Aunt Jemima (in her pancake box) was a substitute slave that could be bought at the supermarket, and taken home for use by the housewife. However, what Manring fails to do in his analysis is look at the symbolic parallels between slavery and the pancake box.

The Buy-Store-Use-Discard Process

This thesis attempts to rectify Manring's overlook and argues that the reactions and treatment of African Americans in antebellum society (and arguably at times also post-emancipation) is symbolically replicated in the modern housewife's purchase, storage, use, and throwing away of the Aunt Jemima pancake box. Such a comparison takes a trivial experience with an inanimate object and measures it against a traumatic human experience, but in engaging in a comparison, it becomes evident that symbolic interactions have the potential to have real power over consumers. The supermarket, a relatively new invention from 1907, changed the way the consumer shopped (Hine 130). It was facilitated by a new appreciation for packaged purchase-ready products, such as Aunt Jemima, which did not require a cashier's labor to measure out ingredients. The Supermarket, this thesis argues, can be perceived to be a symbolic representation of the slave market. Both are examples of centers of trade in which consumers came together to study objects (whether it be slave bodies or the packaging on a shelf) with the intention to buy. Behind both the slave market and the supermarket was an intention to appeal to the consumer at the point of purchase, whether this be by making the packaging of a product appealing, or undressing slaves so that those buying people on behalf of a planter could examine the body. The latter move was "[i]n theory...done to ensure that they were healthy, able to reproduce, and, equally important, to look for whipping scars—the presence of which implied that the slave was rebellious." (Goings *Understanding Jim Crow* 108). In both the physical and symbolic trade, money changes hands. Then, upon completion of purchase, the body of the

African American, or the body covering the pancake box leaves the center of commerce and is transported to the home.

Although in the antebellum side of the comparison the African American body upon arrival at the plantation would be more likely to enter the field than the kitchen, the comparison nevertheless has the potential to hold up when scrutinized. There are recorded instances of cooks being sold in a commercial environment outside of the owner-to-owner direct-purchase advertisements that their offerings would customarily be found in. The proof for such occasions can be found in a *Charleston Courier* (1825) article:

A French Cook. By A Tobias. This Day, will be sold before my store, at half past 10 o'clock, without reserve, being the property of a person going to France, A Wench, about 36 years of age; An excellent French cook, and capable of plain washing. Conditions at sale. (*Charleston Courier*, April 12th, 1825, page 3.)

In both instances, the move of the slave body and also that of Aunt Jemima from the public to the private sphere is accompanied by a restriction of freedom and possibility. The field or cookery slaves may not necessarily have been in a state of freedom when at their place of purchase, but the move to the home comes with the body being constricted by the boundary of the property and a solid concept of ownership. In the instance that the person working in a field may have been relocated to the kitchen, the space which they are allowed to occupy is again reduced. The

balance of confinement in the comparison is perhaps more weighted to Aunt Jemima, who is more likely to find herself locked away in a cupboard rather than being openly exposed on the kitchen countertop, but given the difference in severity of the two situations, Aunt Jemima's imprisonment is of notably less consequence.

The next step in the symbolic replication would be the 'use' of the Aunt Jemima product — the stage that is used to appeal to the consumer via advertising and is actualized upon purchase in the consumer's kitchen. Just as Aunt Jemima lessens the burden of labor for the modern housewife and grants the illusion of leisure for the modern consumer with the ready-mix, the enslaved antebellum African American works within the kitchen or field. Their efforts accord a life of leisure for the plantation master, who does not then have to cook or cultivate fields for themselves. Additionally, the slaves generate profit allowing the plantation master to refrain from seeking alternative non-laborious employment. Considering that time can be measured in momentary terms, it could also be said that the black body of Aunt Jemima provides the housewife with the same luxury. If the housewife does not have to spend all day tending to a meal to ensure she fulfills a family obligation — and assuming that social barriers permit her to do so — then she is able to leave the home to undertake employment, thus securing a secondary income for the family. Aunt Jemima does the work, but it is the consumer who reaps the benefit. Of course, those who bought the mixtures would never fully actualize the full nostalgic Southern experience, since the “particular possession [of the Mammy was an experience originally, and throughout the time of Jim Crow, only] available to the most elite Southern families...an access

to black labor that went far beyond purchasing a box of pancake mix” (McElya 126-127). The box would never display the same loyalty as the Mammy, for the box of mixture would inevitably run-out once the pancake was cooked and Aunt Jemima’s purpose was fulfilled, unlike the Mammy who would be passed down through generations.

Nevertheless, the argument can be made that a new box of Aunt Jemima’s mix can be bought from the store post-consumption to compensate. Such a statement mirrors the easy replacement of African American slave labor (since their value depended on their physical, and not emotional labor), a concept referenced by McElya who explains that despite an alleged love of the Mammy figure, in referring to her as “Aunt,” her status becomes indefinite (30). Even in the present day, the retaining of the title ‘Aunt’ in reference to Aunt Jemima means that the race-relations of the Old South are replicated, despite African Americans now having access to the same title-address as white Americans. As acknowledged by Kenneth W. Goings, the use of “Aunt” and “Uncle” in application to African Americans stemmed from slave communities in which younger slaves (who were forbidden to refer to the elders by the white epithets of “Mr.,” “Mrs.,” “Sir” or “Ma’am”) used the titles in order to show respect to elder slaves. The practice was supposedly “instrumental in acculturating the children into the slave community and was also a part of the community building process itself. Southern whites borrowed the terms to show their affection for slaves who were in personal service to them.” (xxiii) The titles possessed a level of familiarity that separated the personal slaves from others owned by the family, but also maintained the hierarchy for whites who would not use formal titles in referring to their ‘lesser’

peers. However, McElya denotes another effect of the term “Aunt.” She contends that in the antebellums use of the term ‘Aunt’ — and the later adoption of it by the Aunt Jemima brand— there was a lack of personal signifier that “denoted a kind of interchangeability” amongst African American women (30). The connection between the lack of individual existence and short-term usability of black bodies leads to the climax of the symbolic relationship between the Aunt Jemima box and the physical black body: the disposal.

The distinctive feature of the supermarket-sold modern cardboard packaging that housed products, and what differentiated it from the previous jars and containers that would be taken to be filled at the store, was that the packaging was designed to be for single-use. The companies selling products cared little about what happened to the product once it had been used, so long as the consumer returned to buy more. The Aunt Jemima product only has value to the consumer when it can offer a service, that of pancake provision. When this provision is fulfilled, the box is disposed of, an action defined as “to get rid of or to throw away; it is the fate of detritus, of garbage, of objects generally thought to be unclean or dirty, debris-ridden, worthless” (Yaeger 71). This thesis’s concern for the disposal of the pancake box is not merely the result of the environmental waste; the pancake box is supposed to be disposable, it is supposed to be of no account. Yet, with the argument shaped throughout this thesis that — as a result of advertising and packaging design — the pancake box emblazoned with the face of Aunt Jemima is symbolic of her body, more weight must be given to the action of throwing it away. For the ‘throwing away’ of black bodies is not a new phenomena. As Patricia Yaeger examines in *Dirt and Desire*,

there is a precedent, one that is currently being investigated and played with by writers of Southern literature. The work of female authors she references reflect a “growing obsession with disfigured bodies, with the culture of neglect and landscapes made out of throwaway bodies... with whiteness as pollution, and with the demonic of the racial gaze.” (62) Yaeger recognizes how the low value placed on black lives within white cultural sphere leads to the creation of the Black body as the “throwaway body.” This is, as she explains, the body for those “whose bodily harm does not matter enough to be registered or repressed — who are not symbolically central, who are looked over, looked through...[and outside] white southern culture’s dominant emotional economy.” (Yaeger 68) She argues that whether in slavery, or in later periods of white-enacted violence (such as lynchings), a lack of concern for black pain and right to life leads to a culture of neglect in which black lives are “not properly registered”, are “taken for granted”, and “not present (in terms of dominant culture)” (69). As a result of the culture of neglect, violence, and continual death, the black body henceforth becomes a “disposable body” — one “intended to be disregarded after use.” (Yaeger 69) The disposable body remains irrevocably intertwined with the Southern landscape, as post-death the disposable body moves underground for burial. In a culture that uses black bodies for white gain, both the black body of Aunt Jemima and the black body referenced in Yaeger’s work are relegated to below the earth — Yaeger’s “throwaway body” to a grave, and Aunt Jemima’s to the landfill.

With Quaker Oats’ employment of the southern tableau, the housewife consumers who had access to Aunt Jemima advertisements were not merely told what the Mammy could do for

them, they were shown. The advertisements being marked by the lack of female mistress opened up a world for white housewives, where they could partake in leisure time during the burgeoning of US consumer culture while maintaining their traditional role of domestic provider. The possibility of the housewife to step into a fantasy narrative wielded by the J. Walter Thompson offered white housewives, particularly those in low-income houses, to exercise the life of leisure, trappings of wealth, and social position that may have not been available to them in reality. When the southern tableau evolved into a comic-style advertisement, the Quaker Oats Company did not deviate from the appeal of free labor that the southern tableau implied, instead they amplified it. The idea that someone else's labor could substitute for that of the housewife filled a gap that opened in the mid-1950's, as more women moved out of the home and into the world of employment. The idea of the substitution of labor seemingly appeared in films such as *Imitation of Life*, but was actualized via the pancake box, which stood to represent the toil of Aunt Jemima. Aunt Jemima may have been the "Slave in [and on] the box," but it was the housewife who benefited most from the arrangement. While the ever-ready boxes of ready-mix stocked on supermarket shelves allowed the white housewife to thrive, it led to a repeated cycle of Aunt Jemima bodies becoming "throwaway bodies," in a pattern that symbolically resembled the life of antebellum-era enslaved African Americans. However, if not all Aunt Jemima bodies were intended to be disposable, there would be constant potential for disruption to the cycle, a prospect shown in the rise of racist memorabilia.

CHAPTER 3: OBJECTING AUNT JEMIMA

Culture of Collectibles

If the pancake box, with its final destination within the landscape, is considered a ‘throwaway body,’ how might we view instances in which the commercialized African American body is, in fact, preserved? The best example that we have of such instances comes from the common experience of everyday living, of spending time in kitchens, living rooms, play rooms and bathrooms, and being surrounded by the objects that take up space. As argued by Grace Hale, “representations of blacks...did not just promote and sell other products. In the late nineteenth century black-figured items, from mammy dolls to jolly nigger banks, became profitable commodities themselves.” (160) As Dr. Pilgrim — founder and curator of the Jim Crow Museum at Ferris State University and a leading scholar in racist memorabilia — states,

if you think of any object in the home, *any* object, there is a 99.9% chance that there will be a ‘racist’ version of that object, one complete with caricature-ish elements. At the Jim Crow Museum, I have really made an attempt to find a racist version of each and every object in the home, so that people understand the extent to which these objects permeated every instance of people’s everyday realities. (Pilgrim, personal interview, March 8, 2018).

These objects were sometimes created for private business-to-consumer purchase, but were more often premiums gifted to customers as a reward for loyalty after a customer sent the company tokens, boxtops, and in some cases, money as proof of purchase. Once considered low-value, objects shaped as or adorned with the faces of caricatures have since risen in price to the extent that they are now deemed to be antique collectibles. Kenneth Goings, a renowned scholar of racial memorabilia, officially defines such objects as those which are:

commonly understood to be items made in or with the image of an African-American. Literally tens of thousands of such items were produced in the United States, Europe, and Asia from 1880s to the late 1950s. They were almost universally derogatory, with exaggerated racial features that helped to “prove” that, indeed, African-Americans were not only different but inferior as well...these items were common household goods — advertising cards, postcards, housewares, toys and games, [and] kitchen decorations (XIII).

The derogatory images on the common household goods can be considered uniform in that they take shapes of particular characters. Arguably, the Mammy and Aunt Jemima constitute the vast majority of racial memorabilia. The objects adapt the grinning face, bandana, dress with apron and gargantuan body that graces the advertisements for the iconic character, and transpose them onto wood, metal, ceramic, and later, plastic. The Mammy is brought to life for proper use in the home. Memorabilia in the shape of the Mammy may not have necessarily been created and



Figure 18. Aunt Jemima Salt Shakers at the Jim Crow Museum, Ferris State University.

released by the various owners of Aunt Jemima — even when a specific Mammy item bears a striking resemblance to the character— as the popularity of Jemima merchandise lead to reproductions by other manufacturers seeking to profit off Jemima’s popularity. The most frequent item emblazoned by or shaped as the Mammy image is the salt and pepper shakers (Figure 18.), made to sit in pride of place on the kitchen table. Differentiated from pancake box Aunt Jemima who is intended to be used and disposed of, as a throwaway body, the Mammy salt and pepper shakers purposefully have rubber suctions or twist-cap seals on their bottom so that they can be refilled for future use (as evidenced in Figure 19.). The visibility of the object, along with its constant presence in the home rather than underground, means that one is able to view the black spokeservants as not just throwaway bodies, but also as permanently indisposable bodies.

In addition to the Mammy, there were six additional characters that embodied the stereotypical African American personality traits referenced by Reddick, cited in the introduction to this thesis. The characters became objectified (both



Figure 19. Mammy Salt Shakers with removable caps on bottom surface at the Jim Crow Museum, Ferris State University.

in the sense of becoming an object and degrading black bodies to an object status) personas of their own, ones often separated by gender. If an African American feminized object was not constructed in the image of the Mammy, then it was likely that she was shaped as a ‘Jezebel.’ Named after the infamous Queen of the Old Testament, who brings destruction upon the Israelites through “her fanatical devotion to the false gods Baal and Ashtoreth,” the African American Jezebel is characterized as a seductive and hyper sexual temptress (Stark and Deventer 68). Used to “counter the assertion that Jim Crow period White men were sexually assaulting black women,” Jezebel objects feature overemphasized breasts and buttocks (“Jezebel” Jim Crow Museum). An example of a Jezebel object would be a 1930’s nut-cracker. Made of metal and shaped as the Jezebel, the nut is placed under the skirt of the figure, between the legs and is crushed.

Despite the fact that caricatured objects of African American women typically fall into aligning with the image of the Mammy or the Jezebel, they may occasionally take the shape of ‘The Savage’ (Figure 20.), although this is a designation often reserved for men. Drawing on notions of “pseudo-scientific early anthropological theories of the late 1800’s,” the savage



Figure 20. Racist memorabilia depicting the ‘Savage’ caricature at the Jim Crow Museum, Ferris State University

blurred the line between Africans and African Americans, caricaturing both as animalistic, comically cannibal and mentally regressive. Typically portrayed as naked or with very little bodily covering, the savage often has bones in their oversized lips, noses, or hair, and is often depicted against a jungle or forest landscape (“The Savage” Jim Crow Museum).



Figure 21. Racist memorabilia depicting the ‘The Tom’ caricature at the Jim Crow Museum, Ferris State University

Alternative caricature objects of men took the shape of ‘The Coon,’ ‘The Tom’ (alternatively, ‘Uncle Tom’), and ‘Sambo.’ As described by The Jim Crow Museum, The Coon caricature portrayed African Americans as “lazy, frightened, chronically idle, inarticulate buffoons. Although he often worked as a servant, the Coon was not happy with his status. He was simply too lazy and too incompetent to attempt to change his lowly position” (“The Coon” Jim Crow Museum). Differentiated by his work-ethic and desire to maintain the status quo was “The Tom” (Figure 21.), an image that provided comfort to white Americans, albeit not to the extent of the Mammy. Objects shaped as The Tom conveyed the message of “black men as faithful, happily submissive servants.” Originating in antebellum America, he “took the form of a

smiling, wide-eyed, dark-skinned server. A fieldworker, cook, butler, porter, or waiter” and “was dependable and eager to serve his...Master.” Unlike the Coon who was often depicted as young, The Tom was “old, physically weak, and psychologically dependent on whites for approval” (“The Tom” Jim Crow Museum). One of the more popular black caricatures, Sambo, resembled the Coon in that he was “lazy, easily frightened, chronically idle, [and an] inarticulate buffoon.” Yet, unlike the Coon, Sambo was “depicted as a perpetual child, not capable of living as an independent adult” (Pilgrim *Understanding Jim Crow* 129). He could be found wearing “raggedy clothes” while “loung[ing] under a tree, sleeping, or eating watermelon” (Pilgrim *Watermelons, Nooses, and Straight Razors* 14). The caricature, made famous through *The Little*



Figure 22. Racist memorabilia of the ‘Golliwog’ at the Jim Crow Museum, Ferris State University



Figure 23. Racist memorabilia depicting the “Pickaninny” caricature and objects related to “Sambo” at the Jim Crow Museum, Ferris State University

Black Sambo (1899), was originally Indian, but in some US editions the text was replaced with a “supposed Negro dialect” (Pilgrim *Watermelons, Nooses, and Straight Razors* 6), thus interlacing colonial racism with an Americanized variant.

As infantile as Sambo were “Golliwog” (Figure 22.) and “The Pickaninny” (Figure 23.). While both are distinguished by their emphasized eyes, unkept hair, and wide mouths, they are set apart by age and nationality. The Golliwog, an American-British invention that “gained fame as a sort of blackface version of the teddy bear” was created by Florence Kate Upton who was born in New York, but created the plush while in London. It starred in a series of children’s books, before being featured in 1910 on the jars for Robertson’s —a British jam-making company— who made the Golly image vastly more famous (“Golliwog” Jim Crow Museum). The Pickaninny, however, was “a caricature of a [child] of African descent” who was “often naked or near naked” and was depicted “eating huge slices of watermelon and being chased or eaten by alligators.” They were “nameless, lazy, little buffoons to be mocked or pitied” by those who gazed upon them (“The Pickaninny” Jim Crow Museum).

The exaggeration of appearance and traits in the caricatured object may have had the initial intention of creating humor, but in the modern day it serves a new function— driving up the price. As Dr. Pilgrim acknowledges, in the present, racism carries value; the more racist an object is, the more expensive it may be. Other factors, such as how rare an object is (which also applies to the antique market in general) may influence price, but this is not so much a guarantee

of momentary value since objects may be rare but undesirable to collectors (Pilgrim, personal interview, March 8, 2018). In *The Art and History of Black Memorabilia*, Larry Buster acknowledges that condition is also an important factor. (74) Listings for prices generally depend on the source of sale, but indications of prices are available via online merchandisers, chatrooms, in price guides, and in books— all specifically created for collectors. One such source, *The Encyclopedia of Black Collectibles: A Value and Identification Guide* (published in 1996) estimates that Aunt Jemima salt and pepper shakers (“plastic, red, black, and white, about 3” high”) in “high excellent condition” could be bought for \$30-40 (Reno 90). Fetching a far greater price would be an Aunt Jemima stove, an “electric premium that could be ordered from the company, red, steel, about 2” x 2”” and was in “excellent condition” for a collectible, with an evaluation of \$2,500-3,000 (Reno 97). Other options include a 6” Aunt Jemima syrup jug with the estimated cost of \$8-15 at the time of Reno’s publication, and which can now be found to retail for \$69 (“Aunt Jemima Plastic Syrup Pitcher - 1950’s” *The Ruby Lane*), thus reflecting the growing demand for collectibles since demand drives costs within antique marketplaces¹.

However, this thesis would be remiss if it did not recognize that the racist objects are not confined to sites of antique memorabilia, for sites such as Amazon (which sell unlimited numbers of commodities and is arguably the most dominant and powerful commodity marketplace of the twenty-first century) also sell racial objects— including an “Aunt Jemima Pancake Club pin” for \$13.99 (with an additional \$4.49 shipping cost). In addition to questioning

¹ If inflation is calculated, the price featured on Ruby Lane would be equal to \$42.96 at the time of Reno’s publication.

the ethics of items where a monetary price is put upon that which is grotesque and offensive, we must also ask what it means that a consumer can buy a feature film, a garden tool, food items, and racial memorabilia together— all in the same place. Of course, the moral ambiguity surrounding these objects extends to the practice of their pricing, for as Dr. Pilgrim notes, when selling, objects sellers would estimate prices, creating a problem as

people [start] assuming that's what that object was worth...I ran across a number of price guides that were someone else's collection but a photographer and an author would come in and take pictures of the collection and then between the three of them, create this book — write this price guide. (Pilgrim, personal interview, March 8, 2018)

Without adequate control, it is likely that those with the most power within antique markets are able to set the price standard for others to follow— something especially problematic when the initial purveyors are considered.

Originally, the objects were created in the image of stereotypes that white Americans developed, were produced and made by white manufacturers, and “disseminated” by white American advertisers to a white audience (Goings XIX) as forms of propaganda. However, there has been a change in the market in more recent years. Now rather than being purely sold to a white American audience, “African Americans collecting are just as likely to be in that group as the other”. When asked whether he noticed a change between past and present collectors, Dr.

Pilgrim recalled his twenty years of visiting thrift stores, antique shops, collectors' online markets and fairs. Commenting on The Black Memorabilia and Collectable Dolls Fair held every year in Maryland, he states:

I think there almost all the dealers are Black now, and it wasn't like that years ago when I went. Years ago when I went, I would say that almost all the dealers were white, of the negative stuff. Of the positive stuff, you'd find a black person with African American stamps and coins. These days though, it's mostly — not all — African American selling to African Americans, but that includes positive and negative stuff, not just the contemptible collectibles. For a long time, I would probably say for up the the first thirty years of me collecting, I never bought something from a black person, it was all white dealers. It's changed lately some (Pilgrim, personal interview, March 8, 2018).

Other scholars have attempted to trace the meaning behind the change. When Kenneth Goings asked two black collectors as to “why they preserve and study black memorabilia”, they replied:

If we don't portray it, people won't know how far we've come...Precisely by possessing these objects, black people rob them of their power. Silly and crude these things may have been, but...generations of black people lived in their shadow. The souls of millions of black people were trapped in these heaps of mass-produced junk. Now at last they are being set free. (xxiv)

Yet, not every collector views recontextualizing the objects as a progressive move that benefits society. Dr. Pilgrim recalls that when building the museum, he had to deal with blockades and criticism from African American collectors, one of whom “saw it as a shrine to African American shame” yet had what he considers to be a “large collection of Aunt Jemima and Mammy cookie jars.” Pilgrim remembers that the scene was extreme to the extent that it resembled the kitchen that the museum created as its own caricature, creating a situation that was “incongruent”. As he words it: “you have this in your home — your home, right? That’s the most personal place that you are — but you don’t want me putting this stuff and contextualizing it in a learning space on campus?” (Pilgrim, personal interview, March 8, 2018).

Playing With Aunt Jemima

The most popular items of black memorabilia offered by Aunt Jemima’s various owners were an assortment of dolls— items designed not to be owned by the consumer who bought the pancake mix, but with the intention that the dolls would be gifted to their children. The first doll, offered in 1895, required no additional payment beyond the purchase of the pancake box, since the new folding box packaging was the perfect medium on which to print a silhouette of Aunt Jemima that could be cut out for play (Hine 91). Proving popular, two years later, the dolls were adapted, and Aunt Jemima was no longer alone. Instead, she was accompanied by a family of three other “barefoot” members (Wallace-Sanders 62). The additional figures offered new play opportunities for children, allowing them to not just enact imaginative scenes featuring

themselves and Aunt Jemima, but also offered them the opportunity to create narratives between the different black characters. The R. T. Davis Milling Company assisted children in creating stories for their characters by providing them a narrative that was compatible with the myths that they were promoting within the Aunt Jemima advertising. Consistent with the myth that Aunt Jemima had sold her recipe to the company to use, the dolls were accompanied by an “overlay of new elegant clothing to fit over” their bodies. To help children differentiate between Jemima before and after the selling of her recipe, the company provided direction. Underneath the barefoot dolls was the caption “Before the receipt was sold,” then accompanying the clothing templates was the caption “After the Receipt was sold” (Wallace-Sanders 62). By being able to dress up-and-down, the children controlled the image that the family projected. According to Wallace-Sanders, “By assigning the Aunt Jemima family a rags-to-riches biography, the milling company placed them within the Horatio Alger tradition of American possibility.” (62) Yet, whether Aunt Jemima and her family could have actualized the riches sides of the story depended solely on the whims of the child playing with them.

Unlike the loyal and solid Mammy, the paper dolls would have been flimsy and liable to tear, especially with rambunctious play. The company clearly acknowledged the popularity of the paper dolls and sought to build on their success by trying a more



Figure 24. The Template for the revised rag dolls advertised by The Quaker Oats Company. Image provided courtesy of Becky & Andy Ourant

commercial option. In 1906, Robert Clark (after he took over the R. T. Davis Milling Company) took the Aunt Jemima dolls off the box, and offered a template that could be cut out and stuffed in order to create a rag doll (Figure 24.). In order to have access to one of the dolls, the customer had two options: they could either send in three boxtops and sixteen cents *or* four boxtops and a dime. (Manring 76). The offer changed slightly throughout the years, likely due to consumer demand and an understanding on the behalf of The Aunt Jemima Company as to what parents were willing to pay to get a doll for their child. As seen in a 1910 *Ladies Home Journal* advertisement (Figure 25.), just four years later, the cost of the dolls increased to four coupons “taken from a package,” along with the sixteen cents required previously. The success and longevity of the doll campaign becomes obvious upon review of a *Ladies’ Home Journal* December 1924 advertisement (Figure 26.) that featured the dolls in pride of place — eighteen years after its initial conception. Illuminated by color, the advertisement makes itself seasonally appropriate by



Figure 25. Advertisement for *Ladies’ Home Journal* October 1910.



Figure 26. Advertisement for *Ladies’ Home Journal*, December 1924

marketing the dolls not as a complimentary item that one can obtain by buying the pancake mixture, but as an exciting present that can be bought for children at Christmas.

As evidence for the proposition that the racial-objects were marketed at lower-class whites, the advertisement targets those without great disposable income, as seen in their question: “Where else can you get such delightful toys for so little money?” For the price of one “top from a package” along with “twenty-five cents” (a nine-cent rise from the 1910 price), the parents could obtain not just the one present for their children, but four. Appealing to the parents, the advertisement reads: “There’s Aunt Jemima herself, whose delicious pancakes have already made her so great a favorite with the children. And there’s Uncle Mose, and Wade, and Diana — four of them altogether, every one with a cheery smile, every one a perfect toy.” Although the advertisement paints an image of happiness, the language takes a more sinister turn when the dolls are described as a “a toy that will keep no matter how much it is thrown about, sat on, stepped on, or slept on...They’re such hardy, rough-and-ready, good-fellow playmates. Nothing to break, no sharp corners to hurt, and good for playing catch as for playing “house.” It is possible that the advertisement was drawing on consumer notions of nostalgia. The twenty-nine year difference between the printing of the doll template on the side of the box, and the release of the rag doll via a collection promotion would be more than enough time for the previous generation (who remembered the paper dolls from the side of the pancake box) to have had children, who would now be ready to play with toys. By referencing the durability, they may be

appealing to a childhood desire for a ‘tough’ Jemima, a characteristic that their original dolls lacked.

However, it is also conceivable that the advertisement is encouraging the children to be violent with the dolls — dolls that (albeit as caricatures) resemble African Americans. The advertisement suggests that it is fine for the white child to enact violence upon the doll, as the black body is not only able to take it, but that it is its very purpose, in order to provide entertainment. Given that public lynchings as vehicles for entertainment and demonstrating racial hierarchies were custom in the South, and that the advertisement preceded the lynchings of Floridian, Claude Neal (1934) and then Matthew Williams, of Maryland (1931), the suggestion inherent is that the doll serves as a preparation tool in teaching white children that black bodies can be “thrown about” and “stepped on” for play (Grace-Hale, *Making Whiteness*, 222). For as acknowledged by Reno, “A child growing up in the home of an average white family may not have been taught to hate blacks, but more than likely the child caught the basic principle of prejudice through day-to-day living.” (75) Goings, in agreement, discusses how toys and games were tools in the teaching of white children about their ‘superior’ place in society. He states:

With some toys the object was to beat an African-American over the head...With others the object was to reassemble the black person, for example by replacing his teeth...There were also toys on which different parts of a black person’s body could be manipulated for comical effect, as in the case of a woman’s head on a stickpin whose eyes could be made

to roll by pulling her whiskers. These toys conveyed the message that African Americans were not real people but objects that could be manipulated by the owner's (master's) will. (47-48)

The violence in toys and games referenced by Goings are certainly more overt than those involving Aunt Jemima, but both are part of a situation in which an authoritative commercial business becomes unobtrusively involved in the everyday lives of children. In an act of interpellation, the businesses shape children's perceptions of the world around them. In this situation, it is those with the money to obtain the toys who are directly responsible for the interpellation succeeding, and the profit made from indoctrinating children. Therefore, it is not surprising that a company may attempt to attain parental support. In the 1924 advertisement, it seems that this is the approach taken by Quaker Oats. For in the various types of forceful actions mentioned, the recommendation of violence is pronounced to the extent of almost comedic effect, insinuating that there was an inconspicuous joke between Quaker and parent, hidden under the guise of 'innocent' play.

To offset the violence, the advertisement suggests that a child could play 'house' with Aunt Jemima, arguably a manner of play more suitable to the brand's southern tableau and positioning of Aunt Jemima as a servant for a white household. For the adult consumer, it is the pancake box that simulates the relationship between the consumer and Aunt Jemima, allowing for white leisure, and enabling the consumer to exercise racial and class order in the home. For

the child, it is the rag doll who becomes their personal Mammy, and whose presence allows children to exercise their imagination. Given the fact that children are small in stature, and the size of the Aunt Jemima doll reaches 15” in height, the size of the doll in comparison to the child is not insignificant. Although dolls that could be grasped in small hands may have their own level of symbolism to be studied, there is less of a suggestion with the hand-held dolls that the doll is supposed to replicate the Mammy’s comfort and services. Given their size, the rag dolls are extremely visible whether it be to the eyes of the child, or those looking upon the child playing with the doll when the doll is carried around. Innocent playtime becomes a marketing tool as Aunt Jemima is able to enter the public and private sphere without the expense of a marketing campaign. Additionally, their visibility suits that signal which is referenced in Veblen’s *Theory of the Leisure Class* (and chapter one of this thesis), whereby having ‘help’ visible is a sign of pecuniary wealth. Likewise, supposing the child is white (as those who owned racial memorabilia frequently were), then the doll may also act as a signifier of that child’s privilege. This is not to say that children possess the same conscious or unconscious intention to replicate hierarchies of superiority as suggested with adults, who buy the pancake mix in order to own Aunt Jemima. Children’s general lack of awareness of the intricacies of societal landscapes makes it likely that the doll as a tool is not used to enact the hierarchies, but nevertheless remains the way in which they are learnt.

The children’s learning of society through play is then reflected in later play. When playing with a stuffed doll rather than a hand-held doll it is not necessarily up to the children to

create worlds where the characters interact with each other. Customarily, when playing with larger dolls, children bring the dolls into their own world, creating stories where they too are involved. If the doll then becomes 'real' in its way to a child, it becomes treated as a confidant, and the child is likely to speak, treat, and enact emotions towards the doll as if it is a real person. In this sense, if the child likes the doll and becomes attached to it, the doll becomes a symbol of comfort, not unlike the real life Mammy would have been to her white charges. The soft, plump, stuffed body of the rag doll not only resembles the caricature of the Mammy. With the possibility of the doll being able to be hugged and latched on to by a child in a time of emotional need, the doll comes to console the child in the same way that people believed Mammies of the past would have felt about those under their care. The feelings of comfort provided to the children and possible positive connotations of the Aunt Jemima doll have lead to Dr. Pilgrim considering it to be a "borderline piece," and have subsequently created some of "the best discussions that [he] has in [his] facility." When adult visitors to the museum walk past the lynching tree that stands out among glass cases of Aunt Jemima merchandise, items such as the doll promote conflict and discussions due to memories that people have from childhood. He acknowledges:

you can discuss it, but most people assume that lynching is wrong, so you don't really get anything. But Aunt Jemima is one of those pieces that, you know, can be sincere when people say "this reminds me of my grandfather, of sitting on his lap, of him telling me stories" and rather than just dismiss it as some nostalgic bullshit, the reality is that that's real for them. It's so connected with comforting experiences that we see as positive, like

eating, drinking, talking...So, that person is here. The person next to them is someone who sees it as the vestiges of slavery, of segregation, so it's that perfect piece. (Pilgrim, personal interview, March 8, 2018)

The accompaniment of the doll when parents would “tuck kids into bed” brought racist messages into the home, and naturalized them. Items such as the dolls “infiltrated the intimate spaces of people’s daily lives and reinforced ideas of white superiority and black servility as much as they sold products.” (McElya 27) Again, it is unlikely that the children carrying the dolls would have recognized the similarities between the Mammy and their Aunt Jemima. The majority of the working class white children playing with the dolls would not have had access to a black domestic servant (to stand in for the ‘Mammy’) due to a lack of wealth, or access to the historically-remembered Mammy, as a result of the time. Ergo, the doll not only took advantage of a white nostalgia for Mammy possessed by the parents who buy the toy, but it also manufactured nostalgia for the child who may not have even been aware of who Mammy was. The manufactured nostalgia of the time would likely have been entirely unproblematic for the children, but poses a challenge to the modern day adults that they have grown into.

Despite the children’s possible lack of knowledge surrounding the Mammy, the rag doll “was a consistent success for the milling company” (Manring 76). In a 1925 company memo for The Aunt Jemima Company, Robert Clark expressed surprise at the consumer desire for the dolls and the need to “to hire extra help to process all of the “bushel baskets” of requests “for this delightful southern mammy that could be cuddled, dropped, thrown and sat upon, and would still

turn up, good as new.” Yet, despite the company expanding the workforce, Clark noted that “it was impossible to deliver the dolls quickly enough.” In late 1923, eager to measure the attraction of his rag-doll craze, the company “began offering consumers a choice”. They could pay:

either six cents for a sample package of buckwheat flour, a sample package of regular flour, and a recipe folder, or, for thirty cents, all of that plus the “jolly Aunt Jemima family” of rag dolls. When the responses to the ads in *Good Housekeeping*, the *Ladies’ Home Journal*, and the *Chicago Tribune* were tallied, 3,309 had chosen the six-cents offer and 4,853 the thirty-cent offer. In December 1923 the company had placed a series of ads across the country, offering the samples for free and the rag-doll family for an additional dime. The ten-cent offer received 6,692 responses, outdrawing the free offer’s 3,716 replies. (Manring 77)

According to Manring, the corporation’s reaction to their test was minimal, as the advertising memo only “only noted that it was “interesting” that the free offer was less attractive than the rag-doll offer, and that “the amount of money enclosed with the coupons had exceeded the cost of the space used to advertise the offer.” (77) The company lost nothing by testing their consumers.

Dolls are of special interest to this thesis not only for their use in the interpellation of children, but because they are the ultimate ‘returning’ object that simultaneously exists as a

throwaway and non-throwaway body. The fact that the Jemima-dolls have a purpose and are expected to remain in the home indefinitely — unlike the pancake box designed for the single use product — classifies the Aunt Jemima-doll as a non-throwaway body. In spite of this, not even the black doll can escape the connotations of waste and disposability that plague Yaeger’s account of the real life black body, as becomes evident in the cutting instructions for the Aunt Jemima rag-doll. When creating the doll, parents were instructed to:

Cut around body on dotted lines. Lay lithographed sides together and sew all around the BODY LINES except 2” space at side. Turn doll right side out, stuff with cotton battings, bran, saw, dust or soft clean rags through the 2” opening at side. Fill hands until fairly plump, sew up side and it is ready to play with. The Quaker Oats Co, Chicago. (Aunt Jemima Rag Doll Template, Jim Crow Museum)

The instructions themselves are fairly innocuous as they instruct the reader in how to create the doll, not unlike the instructions on the side of the pancake box that instruct the cook in how to prepare the pancakes. The process of “creating a doll ready to play with” does not feel so far removed from the concept of “the ready mix”— both phrases which could be perceived to feed into the idea of the servile African American servant awaiting instruction, but do not provoke the same level of unease in a modern reader as other Aunt Jemima phrases used to target consumers. However, laid within the instructions is an order by The Quaker Oats Company to primarily fill the dolls with *waste* products— elements that are byproducts or are otherwise disposable. With

the exception of the cotton battings, the bran, saw, dust and rags referenced are all items that are undesirable unless a use is otherwise found for them.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the definition of “bran” is “The husk of wheat, barley, oats, or other grain, separated from the flour after grinding; in technical use, the coarsest portion of the ground husk” (“Bran” *OED*). The reference to “saw” presumably is shorthand for “sawdust”, defined as “Wood in the state of small particles, detached from a tree, plank, etc. in the process of sawing” (“Sawdust” *OED*)². The term “dust” has multiple definitions that have connotations of waste. The immediate definition is: “Earth or other solid matter in a minute and fine state of subdivision, so that the particles are small and light enough to be easily raised and carried in a cloud by the wind; any substance comminuted or pulverized; powder.” Yet, alternate definitions include “The fine or small particles separated in any process” and “That to which anything is reduced by disintegration or decay” (“Dust” *OED*) The rags referenced in the template may have positive descriptors of “soft” and “clean”, but rags themselves are primarily defined as “Tattered or ragged clothes” or “piece[s] of old cloth, esp. one torn from a larger piece; (in early use) *esp.* any of the scraps to which a garment is reduced by wear and tear.” (“rags” *OED*) Rather than being items sourced from new, the template encourages the consumer to stuff the toy with items that may otherwise be thrown away or used in a lesser form, likely due to an acknowledgement on behalf of the Quaker Oats Company that the dolls would

² The Oxford English Dictionary’s study of the use of the word “sawdust” includes a reference to Rose Caroline Praed’s novel *Zero: A Story of Monte Carlo* (1884) in which a character states “My doll is stuffed with sawdust” implying that the presumption that Quaker uses “saw” to stand in for “sawdust” is indeed correct.

be bought by those without the expendable income necessary to buy higher-quality stuffing materials. The fact that the dolls are stuffed with products that would otherwise be thrown away makes the Aunt Jemima doll a literal representative of Yaeger's 'throwaway body.' Therefore, there is the same symbolic correlation between the African American physical body and the Aunt Jemima doll body as between the Aunt Jemima body on the pancake box and the African American physical body. Nevertheless, despite all being "throwaway bodies," the Aunt Jemima doll follows the opposite trajectory to the other throwaway bodies; its use as a permanent comfort-item to the child saves that specific black body, and the waste items stuffed within it, from the landfill.

The importance of dolls in instilling beliefs of identity within children has been discussed in scholarship of racist memorabilia, due to the involvement of discussions surrounding doll-play in the court case of *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka*. During the trial, Thurgood Marshall (acting for the NAACP) argued that "segregation not only violated the Constitution but had "adverse and lasting psychological effects on black children, making them feel inferior." (Goings 61-62) To defend their statement, the NAACP submitted to the court a "Brandeis Brief" that "consisted of Kenneth and Mamie Clark's "doll" study, which demonstrated that African American children indeed saw themselves as "different" and "inferior." (Goings 62) The study in question tested 253 children, where the

subjects were presented with four dolls, identical in every respect save skin color. Two of these dolls were brown with black hair and two were white with yellow hair. In the experimental situation these dolls were unclothed except for white diapers. The position of the head, hands, and legs on all the dolls was the same. For half of the subjects the dolls were presented in the order: white, colored, white, colored. For the other half the order of the presentation was reversed. (Clark and Clark 169)

The children were then set with several tasks, including “Give me the doll that you like to play with” and “like best”, “Give me the doll that is a nice color,” and “Give me the doll that looks like you” (Clark and Clark 169). Clark and Clark discovered that “66 percent of the total group of children identified themselves with the colored doll, while 33 percent identified themselves with the white doll.” Additionally, the older the child, the more likely they were to identify with the “colored” doll (Clark and Clark 131). However, Clark and Clark noted that despite this result:

the majority of these Negro children prefer the white doll and reject the colored doll. Approximately two thirds of the subjects (67% / 32%) indicated by their responses...that they like the white doll “best” or that they would like to play with the white doll in preference to the colored doll...that the white doll is a “nice doll” (175).

Clark and Clark’s study may have been measuring the response of African American children rather than white children to their dolls, but it nonetheless gives insight into how daily objects

that surround children shape notions of their identity and self. The use of the Brandeis Report as evidentiary support in *Brown* not only marked an instance in which the NAACP achieved a Civil Rights gain, but it also “sounded the death knell for the production of black memorabilia because it began to break down legal barriers.” For as Goings argues:

one of the reasons collectibles could continue to be made is that well into the 1950s there were clearly separate societies in the U.S where people of different races did not come into contact with each other. But once that segregation barrier began to fall, it was not as easy to maintain the old stereotypes. (62)

The NAACP achieved great success in having *Plessy* overturned, changing American society for evermore. Next, they sought to overturn Aunt Jemima.

The New Wave

Officially, the NAACP called for an official boycott of Aunt Jemima in 1965 (Marcie Cohen Farris 288). However, African American dissent and calls for a boycott of the brand can be traced back as far as 1918, when Cyril V. Briggs — the editor and publisher of *Crusader* magazine — launched his own call for African Americans to abort their use of the brand. Believing in the power of money, and in an attempt to use capitalism against the brand capitalizing off racism towards African Americans, Briggs spoke about how Black consumers

can “make the money they spend TALK to remove the insult to their race!” (Manring 153) Although Manring notes in *Slave in a Box* that he has not yet found evidence in the J. Walter Thompson archives of Aunt Jemima executives acknowledging Briggs’ call for a boycott, the New York *Crusader’s* market position of the second-most circulated Black journal means that it can be anticipated to have had an effect on at least the community that Briggs was writing for. The key difference between Briggs’ calls for boycott and that launched by the NAACP was that while the former targeted the brand as a whole, the NAACP’s target was merely a subsection of what made Aunt Jemima appealing to a white audience. Despite the fact that from its founding the NAACP had “sought to highlight black dissent against images in the media”, protesting against advertising was not at the forefront of its aims. There was a greater focus on challenging racism in new forms of popular media, including film, radio, television dramas and comedies—means of communication which essentially stood for American modernity (Manring 164).

The change in attitude of the NAACP in 1965 can likely be traced to Quaker Oat’s induction of the “Aunt Jemima Pancake House in the Disneyland park “Frontierland” (which in the first 8 years served pancakes to 1.6 million guests), and the subsequent in-person advertising campaign whereby traveling Aunt Jemimas appeared in public spaces across the country advertising the product (Manring 163). Since both the pancake house and traveling campaign featured an in-person visit from Aunt Jemima, in the eyes of African Americans, the move likely seemed ‘step back’ to the company’s initial Columbia exhibition. The effect was felt especially hard considering the brand had slowly begun to tone down elements of the southern tableau

within their print advertising in the previous year. The 1965 boycott sparked protests which lead to the cancellation of many in-house Aunt Jemima visits. According to the NAACP files, the protests were especially effective in Chicago (the home of the Quaker Oats corporation) and Massachusetts, where the Pittsfield locally-owned grocery chain store run by Jacob and Melvin Wineberg retracted their invitation for Aunt Jemima to visit (Manring 165-167). The protests were a success because unlike Briggs' attempts, the protest caught the attention of Robert Stuart, the Quaker Oats company president of the time. Although this may have been because of the proximity of the company headquarters to the dissent, it is also likely the result of the NAACP being "armed" with Raymond Harth, an attorney for their Illinois chapter. Harth contacted Stuart via letter and informed him that the organization was "opposed to [the] appearance of 'Aunt Jemima' stereotyped character at any time or place, and in any costume." (Manring 169) Despite the fact that the NAACP's focus was on the in-person appearances and not print advertising, it nonetheless brought to light the fact that African Americans as potential-consumers were not happy, and led Quaker Oats to start confronting the history that they had profited from for so many years.

In 1969, Quaker Oats bowed to pressure and instigated the first real change in Aunt Jemima's image; the bandana that had adorned her head was swapped for a headband, and her gargantuan body was made slimmer. However soon after, the image was to change again as the company geared up to prepare their campaigns for the 1990's. Naomi Henderson, the principal of Marketing & Research at RIVA conducted a "target focus-group study" in 12 American cities.

The study found that most of the women interviewed had a negative reaction to Jemima's headwear, as they "viewed it as a symbol of slavery" (Brown 1990, pg5 in Kern Foxworth 99). The company took note, and in 1989 —100 years of Aunt Jemima's existence— Quaker Oats marked the occasion by instigating the greatest change to the Aunt Jemima yet. Her skin tone was lightened, grey was added to her hair, her jawline was streamlined, and her body reduced in size. In terms of clothing, her check dress and apron were replaced by a lace collar. The headdress that had previously covered all but a strip of hair was removed to reveal a perfectly coiffed hairstyle, and her previously hidden ears were now adorned by a pearl earring. She "evol[ed]" into what Aunt Jemima's current owner considers to be a "contemporary look" ("Our History", auntjemima.com). The Mammy of the past disappeared, and was replaced by a figure who could be perceived to be either a housewife or business woman. The new Aunt Jemima, in a sign of newly-granted agency, was marked by abandonment of service clothes, and the adoption of class-signifiers such as pearl earrings. The change in image was defined by a huge effort on the behalf of Quaker Oats, since by the summer of 1989, the new image "adorned all forty Aunt Jemima products," a speedy and remarkable feat given that the change was not instigated until May of the same year (Kern-Foxworth 99).

Whether the change was successful is an argument up for debate. In a 1992 study, Kern-Foxworth and Susanna Hornig questioned students in three journalism classes "at a large Southern university" to judge their opinions of the Aunt Jemima and Betty Crocker trademarks. When presented with the 1989 revised Aunt Jemima, 68% of respondents classified her as

occupying a professional or managerial position, a socioeconomic improvement over the 78% of students who identified a 1936 image of Aunt Jemima as a household worker. Of the students questioned, only 42% recognized the modern 1989 Aunt Jemima trademark, in contrast to the 100% of respondents who recognized the traditional 1936 trademark (100). Kern-Foxworth does not establish what other professions the students responding to the images believe Aunt Jemima belongs to. However, the fact that a lack of cooking-based signifiers (e.g. the apron) only resulted in a minor change in student perception of Aunt Jemima's occupation, and that students had lesser familiarity with the changed image that had been on their tables and in their supermarkets for three years, indicates that the echo of the Mammy remained. Clearly, the Aunt Jemima brand needed to do more to distance themselves from their history.

Whether the company has done enough to distance Aunt Jemima from her past is an issue of contention. The Scripps Howard News Service viewed the change to be a notable improvement, as they indicated that Aunt Jemima had moved "from the plantation to New Orleans," and though it may have taken "more than 80 years...the symbol on the label of the best selling pancake mix made the transformation from freed slave cook to Creole cooking teacher" (Kern-Foxworth 90). In contrast, Wilson and Gutierrez express resignation that although "over the years Aunt Jemima has lost some weight, [the] stereotyped face of the black servant continues to be featured on the box" (Wilson and Gutierrez 114). Manring's issue with the change comes with Quaker Oat's lack of comment on whether the new Aunt Jemima image is super-imposed by a new Aunt Jemima narrative. Despite the altered appearance, Aunt Jemima is

seemingly the same person, and the company is silent on whether she has a different backstory than working for Colonel Higbee on the plantation. As he acknowledges:

Maybe [Quaker Oats] could have argued that the 100 year old Aunt Jemima, by late 1980s, was superannuated, released from servitude and allowed to wear her gray hair anyway she pleased and feed her grandchildren instead of Colonel Higbee and the Carters, Southwoods, and Marshalls. But they did not make that argument, because that would have meant acknowledging what an Aunt Jemima or a Mammy was and has always been— a slave. (177)

Whether the modern Aunt Jemima's change in image comes with a change in occupation has not been confirmed. Today, PepsiCo (the current owner), does little to promote the brand, suggesting that the brand relies on the myth and consumer recognition that Aunt Jemima has earned it, and has purposefully left the new Aunt Jemima's story untold. Indeed, the company's desire to erase, but not replace, the Aunt Jemima slave narrative can be seen on their website. Under the section 'Our History' there is not a single reference to any of the myths of the Mammy-like Aunt Jemima, nor are there any images of Aunt Jemima pre-1989. The company references the 1989 change in image on their timeline, recording that: "Aunt Jemima's image evolves to a contemporary look, adding pearl earrings and a lace collar," but does not state what she has been changed from ("Our History", auntjemima.com). The absence of contextual information has left a website that is white-washed and lacking the especially objectionable aspect of the brand's history.

Still, there are others who have worked harder to overturn the traditional history of Aunt Jemima that PepsiCo, despite revamping her image, seem wedded to. Repeatedly, artists, “through theater performance, painting, film, and other artwork” have attempted to reclaim Aunt Jemima’s autonomy to make her “militant, discontent, powerful, and able to speak for herself” so that she becomes “transformed” (Sotirin and Ellington 50). Kimberly Wallace-Sanders has questioned the artistic concentration on the figurehead. As she asks, “Why did so many artists choose the Aunt Jemima figure over stereotypes like Uncle Remus from the Disney film *Song of the South*, or other trademarks that played upon antebellum nostalgia like Uncle Ben, Rastus the Cream of Wheat Man, or the Gold Dust Twins?” (142) Wallace-Sanders attempts to answer the question herself, citing a political and artistic need to challenge “people to reconsider what might be behind or beneath Aunt Jemima’s smile” (142). However, another explanation could be that since it was the medium of art and theater that created and controlled Aunt Jemima in the first place, it is time for contemporary artists to release her via the same way. Despite their commercial intentions and questionable morals, the southern tableau paintings within the advertisements launched by Quaker Oats and its predecessors are examples of art. Likewise, the performances of various women enacting the role of Aunt Jemima at the Columbia exposition, various in-person appearances, and at Disney’s Frontierland are theatrical art forms of their own. If art is somewhat responsible for Aunt Jemima’s commercial captivity, perhaps it could also serve to play a role in her deliverance.

The most influential of Aunt Jemima protest-art is *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima* (1972), a piece created by Betye Saar. The piece shows a framed mammy-figure against a backdrop of Aunt Jemima images (circa 1968), with a broom in her left hand and a shot gun in her right. The combination of two items “signals,” as Soritin and Ellington note, “her traditional smiling subservience with the potential for violent resistance” (51). By her feet, at the bottom of the frame, lies cotton. The figurine is presumably a Mammy-memopad that has been re-worked so that the notepaper has been replaced by the image of a smiling African American woman clutching onto a white child. Where normally the piece would have been a naturalized object in the home, Saar takes it and disrupts the object’s neutrality as a way to challenge the Aunt Jemima brand and make the viewer uncomfortable. The discomfort is a stark contrast to the emotion that the Aunt Jemima brand has always attempted to project. The reaction of Kimberly Wallace-Sanders implies that Saar was successful in fracturing the image of cozy contentment. She acknowledges that the outer Jemima holds the broom and rifle together “as a way to indicate that her “liberation” will come by force if necessary and it will require her to put down the old tools of her trade as a domestic servant and take up the tools for revolutionary transformation.” (143) Despite Saar’s deliberate maintaining of the caricature grin, this is not the happy Aunt Jemima of the pancake box, but the woman who is willing to fight back. Kern-Foxworth notes how the cliché smile adds to the ready willingness that Wallace-Sanders perceives: “The smile, although quite broad, is also quite deceiving. It appears that she is not smiling because she is happy, and not to appease her white master, but at the prospect of one day gaining freedom.” (101) Through Saar, Aunt Jemima seems to be drawing one step closer to such liberation.

This chapter, through an analysis of both print advertising and racialized objects, has considered the effects of physical objects upon both American consumers and American culture. By looking at the racial memorabilia that graced the everyday lives of people, appearing on their kitchen tables and elsewhere in their homes, it becomes evident how ordinary objects spread messages of white racial supremacy and black racial inferiority. The objects, depicting, or in the shape of, African American caricature personalities such as the Jezebel and Sambo dangerously shaped cultural opinions of African American sexuality and work ethic. As a result of being intended for white working class people, the objects — such as the Aunt Jemima rag doll — were originally available cheaply through company promotions that required the consumer to demonstrate their loyalty through collecting tokens. However, in the current day, the once affordable objects have become expensive collectables that are collected and sold by (and for) both white and African Americans. While the object's original intentions may have been to crack nuts or entertain children, this thesis is particularly interested in their ability to prevent the African American body becoming a 'throwaway body.' If the single-use and easy disposability of the pancake box has lead to and mirrored the sending underground of black bodies at the hands of white bodies, racist memorabilia has the potential to keep black bodies above the surface. However, this does not mean that the concepts of disposability and black bodies are viewed as separate entities in the eyes of corporations; the instructions to use cast-off materials to fill the Aunt Jemima rag doll demonstrates that there remains symbolic suggestion of African American bodies as waste product. If the Clarks' doll study was a contributory factor in the Supreme

Court's decision to desegregate American schools, the potential of racial objects to alleviate the discrimination facing African Americans can be evaluated. In light of changes to the appearance of Aunt Jemima, it seems that Quaker Oats has also attempted to compensate for their role in suggesting African inferiority. However, the appropriation and modifications of the Aunt Jemima character by artists in protest demonstrate how some people are of the opinion that Quaker Oats has not yet done enough. Despite the breadth of topics covered in this chapter, it could be extended further by considering more recent articles of racist memorabilia aimed at modern African American icons (such as President Obama) and caricature memorabilia depicting other ethnicities. This chapter was somewhat limited by the deficit in texts discussing racial memorabilia. Given the prevalence of racial memorabilia in the everyday life of previous generations, scholars too must assume a level of responsibility in recognizing their impact, as this thesis has attempted to do.

CONCLUSION: HOW DO YOU SOLVE A PROBLEM LIKE JEMIMA?

Quaker Oats have tried in their own way to free Aunt Jemima from the public persona that they have trapped her in. Faced with a dilemma of their own creation, in 1993 the executives at Quaker Oats sought the help of a New York advertising agency Jordan, McGrath, Case and Taylor (JMCT) to develop a major advertising campaign to relaunch the Aunt Jemima brand in the fall of 1994. The brand, despite having previously “conducted brand and concept testing among African American consumers and mainstream consumers” that “concluded that African Americans did not find the contemporary Aunt Jemima figure to be particularly objectionable” nevertheless expressed concern. Quaker Oats were wary about how “white and black consumers, especially women, would perceive the creative approach, given collective memories about the brand’s image” (Davis 30). Quaker’s sentiment was echoed by Bruce Guidotti, group director and executive vice-president at JMCT’s Client Services Division. Guidotti acknowledged that “Quaker as a corporation despite current good intentions and current positive actions does not yet have the positive image in the African American community that would give it the benefit of the doubt if it does anything with the Aunt Jemima mark that is at all controversial.” (Davis 33) The original approach involved the initial marketing campaign “Aunt Jemima is alive and cookin’,” but the phrase did not test well with women who felt that the phrase carried connotations of slavery. Acknowledging their misstep, the phrase was altered to “Now you’re cookin’” (Davis

34). To prevent further distress, JMCT “retained the late Caroline Jones, who ran her own advertising firm, as a consultant...Jones was an expert on marketing to African Americans and was regarded as the most prominent African American woman in the advertising agency.” Jones, while seeking a solution, acknowledged the complicated nature of her new work. In a letter to Susie Townsend, she writes:

The intolerance we have for people “not like me” is bubbling beneath the surface today more than ever, and more than ever it boils over. It is into this setting that we re-introduce Aunt Jemima. White people may have long forgotten the slaves of the old, but no Black person can. Are we ready to “forgive and forget?” Maybe. But, it should be pointed out, you don’t have to remember the original Aunt Jemima to imagine her (Davis 31).

To make the connection between the original Aunt Jemima and the ‘new Aunt Jemima,’ JMCT and Quaker Oats sought to implement a celebrity spokesperson within the campaign. Original names suggested included Jackee, Gladys Knight, Tina Turner, Shari Belafonte, Robert Guillaume and James Avery (Davis 32-33). In the end, Knight was selected, and in 1994 she arrived on consumer television screens (following a run of magazine and print advertisements) as a “contemporary, working grandmother, enjoying breakfast in a modern kitchen with her (real life) grandchildren.” Davis does not provide sales numbers or revenue information, so the monetary success of the campaign cannot be deduced, but the fact that there was minimal backlash suggests a favorable outcome (34).

More recently, the Pepsico owned brand Quaker deliberated changing the image further in order to bring Aunt Jemima into the twenty-first century, and employed a new consulting company to assist. Dr. David Pilgrim was brought onto the project to give his opinion and provide suggestion. He identified four problematic areas for the brand. Firstly, he asked “can she eat?” He recommended that rather than Aunt Jemima cooking food for other people, she is allowed access to what she has prepared. As he said, “if i’m standing behind someone at a table where they’re eating, I am the servant.” The brand custodians were unsure as to what Dr. Pilgrim meant as the thought “had never occurred to them.” As Dr. Pilgrim acknowledges, not providing Aunt Jemima with a seat at the table is “both a gender thing and a racial thing. All to do with appetite. It’s also, other than race...[a] class thing. If you notice, with a lot of them, these Uncle Ben characters, you just never see them eating.” Following the consulting company’s hesitance, Dr Pilgrim suggested “let her sit down, even if she’s not eating. She can have a seat at the table...let her not just stand.” The company did not agree, so Dr. Pilgrim brought to their attention an issue that had been raised in the 1993 research: her name. While her first name is “just a name”, the term “Aunt” carries all these connotations,” so Dr Pilgrim suggested, “why don’t you just call her “Jemima or “Miss Jemima”?” The brand was unsure, so Dr. Pilgrim led them into his final suggestion: “let her close her mouth a little. Not all black people smile all the time, so just let her not grin. I don’t need to see her teeth to see her smile.” Yet, despite the consultation, “the boxes look just the same as they used to look,” almost thirty years later (Pilgrim, personal interview, March 8, 2018).

However, despite the Aunt Jemima brand's reluctance to change the appearance with immediate effect and effort to bury their past among the supermarket shelves, the rest of America has not been so forgiving and willing to acquiesce. In 2014, the heirs of Nancy Green and Anna Harrington (whose images were used for Aunt Jemima advertising campaigns) garnered press attention as they put forward a lawsuit regarding the contracts of their ancestors, with the expectation of \$2 billion in compensation (with a share in future revenue). They claimed that along with their grandmother's refining of the infamous recipe, they had struck an agreement whereby the Aunt Jemima owners would grant a percentage of revenue for each time the "likenesses of their "relative" were used to market the pancake mix." They did not succeed in their case. However, the statement released by Quaker Oats at the time claiming "the image symbolizes a sense of caring, warmth, hospitality and comfort and is neither based on, nor meant to depict any one person" ("Aunt Jemima' Family Demands \$2 Billion..." *Time*) led to criticism in the media and general public over the stereotype that Aunt Jemima represents.

In some cases, criticism has led to action. On 'Juneteenth' 2017, television executive Dan Gaby and entrepreneur B. Smith started a change.com petition in an effort to persuade Pepsico to discard the Aunt Jemima name and image, believing they should "set Aunt Jemima free." As Gaby reasons: "For 124 years, [that product] has been the very epitome of African-American female humiliation...You can't tell me that Aunt Jemima is positive" ("B. Smith's Husband is launching a petition..." *AdWeek*). Unlike when Quaker last revised the image of Aunt Jemima, the prevalence of modern communication and the rise of social media has facilitated the rise of the socially-conscious consumer who is not afraid to use the tools to make commercial change.

Following the February 2018 high school shooting at at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, companies were forced to publicly denounce ties and business deals with the NRA after a rapid call for action by users on the social media platform, Twitter. Within one week, the First National Bank of Omaha, Delta Air Lines, United Airlines, Allied Van Lines, North American Van Lines, Avis Budget Group, Hertz, Alamo, Enterprise, National, Starket Hearing Technologies, MetLife, Chubb, TrueCar, SimpliSafe and Symantec all severed ties with the organization (“A List of Companies Cutting Ties With the N.R.A” *The New York Times*). If the trend of calling out companies for not assuming an expected level of corporate responsibility continues, it may be that Pepsico will no longer be able to resist pressure.

Of course, forms of modern mummies are still prominent in popular culture, whether they are intended to resemble the caricature or not. In 2009, Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen introduced Annie the Chicken Queen, played by actress Deirdrie Henry. In what may be an attempt to distance themselves from the dilemma that Aunt Jemima currently finds herself in, Popeyes purposely remains quiet as to Annie’s occupation and background. Dick Lynch, Popeye’s global brand manager acknowledges that her story “is vague...It is really in the eye of the beholder” (“What’s Life Like for the Famous Popeye’s Lady” *Daily Advertiser*). Aunt Jemima may be the cook, but Annie could be cook, cashier, consumer, or even CEO. What Lynch spins as an attempt for the consumer to choose for themselves is possibly an attempt on the company to not have to commit to a firm confirmation or denial on the contentious issue. Yet, despite Lynch’s ambiguity as to Annie’s status, the image of a camera-facing smiling African American woman serving fast food (a form of food as convenient to the consumer as the ready meal)

prepared for the consumer with a secret recipe imitates aspects of representation used by Aunt Jemima.

Controversially, it could also be suggested that Aunt Jemima and Annie aren't the only African American women who come into the home of the consumer via advertising— television presenter and personality Oprah Winfrey does too. Despite the clear difference that Aunt Jemima and Annie are fictional characters while Oprah is very much a real person, all three are women whose faces are familiar across America, and whose first names stand alone without clarification. While Aunt Jemima entered the American home via the pancake box, Oprah entered via the television box on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* (1986-2011), which turned her into a cultural icon of billionaire status.. In ways not dissimilar from Aunt Jemima who had related memorabilia to boost her brand's image, Oprah's identity has become equally marketable with *Oprah's Book Club* and *O, The Oprah Magazine*. In her 2004 book *Black Hunger: Soul Food and America*, Doris Witt acknowledged the similarity between Aunt Jemima and Oprah stating: "If Aunt Jemima foregrounds one axis of U.S desire for African American women to be the ever-smiling producers of food, to be nurturers who themselves have no appetite and make no demands, then Oprah Winfrey surely foregrounds another axis" (23). Witt's assertion may have been true at the time of *Black Hunger's* publication, but the landscape for comparison changed in July 2015, when Oprah joined the Weight Watches corporation and — along with purchasing a 10 percent stake for \$43 million — became their "spokesdieter." In her most recent advertisement for the brand she is both the consumer and provider of food. For while she may be filmed eating, the shots are preceded by her question of "who wants a taco?" to the assembly of people gathered in her own kitchen ("Oprah Winfrey Cooks In Her Own Kitchen..." *ABC News*). In 1986 Oprah

appeared in a *Saturday Night Live* sketch where she fought with Lorne Michaels over an Aunt Jemima costume and declared “I don’t do Aunt Jemima” (“Saturday Night Live: Cold Opening — Oprah Clip”, *Hulu*). The fact that Oprah is a real living and breathing African American woman separates her from Aunt Jemima indefinitely, but with the public images that both portray, the parallels are liable to comparison.

If PepsiCo hopes to solve their Aunt Jemima problem in the future, they must be willing to look back on what the brand they have become responsible for has done in the past. As seen in Chapter One, the original owners of Aunt Jemima set the brand up with the acknowledgement that they were capitalizing on racist themes, even if they were viewed as more appropriate in the time of conception. Of the multiple caricatures attributed to African Americans, the image of the Mammy with all her connotations of care and comfort was catapulted from a position of relative popularity into the center of mainstream culture. By acknowledging Cox’s concept of the Southern Tableau, Chapter One explored how fictional themes of antebellum Southernness were put forward by the owners of Aunt Jemima in order to present an idyllic environment in which their brand and figurehead could thrive. Using plantation-related imagery of large houses, polite gatherings and happy slaves, the Aunt Jemima brand projected themes of leisure and comfort. Tracing the appearance of the Southern Tableau and its imagery chronologically across the print campaigns that appeared in various publications, most notably women’s magazines, Chapter One acknowledged that while advertisements prior to the 1920s did feature elements of a fictional Southernness, they did not go so far as to communicate these excessively. Tracing the change to the marketing collaboration between the brand and the J. Walter Thompson Advertising Agency,

and the involvement of James Webb Young, and employing a form of deep close-reading, this project has analyzed how the myths created by Young appeared within the print advertisements themselves, but also how the history of Aunt Jemima's creation outside of the print narrative may also have been shrouded in myth. While the Southern Tableau may have dropped in the 1940's, it was picked back up with great momentum in the mid-1950's amongst the successful re-release of the iconic *Gone With the Wind* (1939) and the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement. Chapter One thus considered how the resurgence may have been the consequence of the two events, and postulated that the running of advertisements featuring the Southern Tableau may have been an attempt on behalf of the company to navigate the racial strife. The Southern Tableau would reassure white consumers of Aunt Jemima's willingness and desire to serve them, which was important given that the product turned white supremacy into a commodity bought alongside the pancake box. Chapter One acknowledges how this approach did not last long, as the Quaker Oats Company soon took steps to remove all people and storytelling in order to focus solely on the food, as African Americans gained more rights in society and their consumer power grew.

Chapter Two considered why the Southern Tableau was such a successful and appealing prospect for the white American housewife. It acknowledged that despite the Southern Tableau being filled with elements denoting leisure, it lacked the appearance and mention of a plantation mistress. It is accepted by the majority of scholars discussing Aunt Jemima that the conspicuous absence was a strategic maneuver on behalf of the various Aunt Jemima owners to allow for the modern consumer to insert themselves into the fantasy narrative. The move would enable the white consumer — whether consciously or unconsciously — to feel that they belonged to a

member of an upper class, that they were able to partake in leisure at the expense of another, and that as a result of both, they possessed a form of racial cultural capital. Carrying on the close-analysis of advertisements from Chapter One, Chapter Two looked at how the three feelings were evoked via the use of targeted language and imagery. At a time in which notions of women's place in the home were slowly changing, enabled by the growth of the convenience food market, the Aunt Jemima brand capitalized on the idea of the figurehead's ability to provide the housewife with free labor, unencumbered by the complications and cost that employing a real domestic servant would bring. The idea of free labor led to Manring's denouncement of Aunt Jemima as a "slave in a box;" this project seeks to unpack that key phrase by tracing the life of the pancake box and the life of the antebellum slave through the "Buy-Store-Use-Discard" process, paying special attention to the final step by bringing in the idea of Patricia Yaeger's "throwaway body" in relation to the disposability of Black bodies, and the underground end place of the pancake box.

Acknowledging that there are black bodies that deviate from the end point in the "Buy-Store-Use-Discard" process, Chapter Three follows the Black bodies who stay in the home. The creation of black memorabilia allowed for inanimate Black bodies to survive consumer disposal at the cost of representing caricatures. Using research predominantly carried out at the Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia at Ferris State University in Big Rapids, Michigan, this thesis explored the numerous caricatures that had been made into physical objects by white companies and white manufacturers for white consumers to display in their homes. The objects which were always degrading in nature helped to 'prove' the inferiority of African Americans through the

embodiment of myths and exaggerated racially-coded bodily features and props. Although Chapter Three explored the nature of the market by referencing how the cost and collectors of the memorabilia have changed, this thesis remains predominantly interested in the symbolism that lies behind Aunt Jemima and her memorabilia rather than extensively mapping the historical specifics. Aunt Jemima may be an interesting case study when analyzing what she means in print and on the pancake box, but she becomes increasingly more complex when we study the memorabilia made in her likeness. This thesis chose to focus specifically on the Aunt Jemima rag doll line, in part due to its popularity but also because of the opportunities it offers to study how both spokes-servants and racist memorabilia reproduce cycles of racism. The dolls enabled racism to be brought into the home, and interpellated white children, teaching them the racial status quo organically via play. The rag doll revived the notion of the ‘throwaway body’ through the requirement of waste stuffing-materials, and provided a literal example as to the construction of the black body as a disposable (filled) object. This notion was concluded by examining how the ability of dolls to instill racial beliefs within children applied not only to white children, but also to black children, and led to the fall of Aunt Jemima from icon-status to an average (and upon change, less racist) trademark.

A need for brevity and a desire to focus at length on examining Aunt Jemima print advertisements and objects through a lens of theory and symbolism has at times obstructed a full and thorough study of actions taken by Aunt Jemima’s various owners and the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency. As such, the relation between print advertising and more modern mediums such as radio, television, and online advertising has gone unexamined within this

thesis. It can be suspected that television would be an especially interesting angle for scholars choosing to conduct further analysis of the brand. Given the likelihood of the brand using an actor to represent Aunt Jemima, and the success of the appearance of Aunt Jemima at the Columbian Exposition, it is possible that television advertising would be able to connect and communicate with audiences in a way that the printed medium could not. The choice to focus primarily on print advertising shaped the span of time that this thesis covered - had this thesis chose to focus more on modern digital mediums, it would have instead prioritized the 1940s-1980s. It is also likely that if a later time period was chosen for analysis, a greater focus on African American consumers as everyday consumers and not purely as protesters would be possible. This paper was limited by attitudes possessed by society at the time of focus, for it led to limited information regarding how the various Aunt Jemima brands acknowledged their African American consumer base. The secrecy of Quaker Oats and their protectiveness of the Aunt Jemima brand means that there is insufficient numerical or modern marketing information to form a more solid analysis. For future scholars of Aunt Jemima, there is the prospect of a changing landscape with different race relations, as generations change. In 2016, the first millennial consumers reached thirty-five, the peak spending age, and thus became the key target market for advertisers (“Generations Change...” Morgan Stanley). It will become crucial that Pepsico and Quaker Oats maintains appeal to the millennial generation if they hope to survive the shift in spending. If the reaction on social media to the Douglas Stoneman shooting is any indication of the new generation’s political power, Pepsico and Quaker Oats will likely have to take on greater corporate responsibility. It may be that future scholars studying Aunt Jemima will have new facets of information to analyze, whether it be a drop in the title “Aunt” from the

personality's name, or the promotion of Jemima from cook to CEO, as Uncle Ben has become. There may be a great deal of existing Aunt Jemima scholarship that this thesis is adding to, but by every indication, it remains a topic with inexhaustible possibilities. We are not out of ready-mix yet.

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Museum information board: “Golliwog.” 2012, Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia, Ferris State University, Michigan.

Museum information board: “The Pickaninny.” 2012, Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia, Ferris State University, Michigan.

Aunt Jemima Rag Doll Template. 2012, Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia, Ferris State University, Michigan.

VITA

EDUCATION & DISTINCTIONS

- Attended The University of Exeter, BA English with Study in North America (2.1), 2013-2016
- Study Abroad at Vassar College, New York, 2014-2015
- Inducted into Gamma Beta Phi (University of Mississippi Chapter), 2016
- Recipient of the Excellence at Exeter Scholarship, 2013
- Recipient of the British Association of American Studies Graduate Teaching Award, 2016
- Recipient of the Charles Regan Wilson Graduate Travel Fellowship, 2017
- Recipient of the Lucille and Motee Daniels Award for Best MA Thesis, 2018

INTERNSHIPS, ASSISTANTSHIPS & EMPLOYMENT

- Teaching Assistant: *The Center for the Study of Southern Culture*, The University of Mississippi (August 2016-May 2017)
- Historic House Graduate Assistant: *Rowan Oak* (former home of writer, William Faulkner), in association with the University of Mississippi (Ongoing)
- Image Sourcing Assistant: *Mississippi Encyclopedia Online*, in association with the University of Mississippi (Ongoing)
- Editorial Assistant: *Living Blues Magazine*, in association with the University of Mississippi (Spring Semester 2017)
- Receptionist: *Total People*, 2013.

- Library Shelves: *Aquinas College*, 2011-2013