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**SKIN BLEACHING
IN BLACK
ATLANTIC ZONES**

Shade Shifters

Shirley Anne Tate





Skin Bleaching in Black Atlantic Zones

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▶ **Skin Bleaching in
Black Atlantic Zones:
Shade Shifters**

Shirley Anne Tate

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*For my family – Encarna, Soraya, Damian, Jenna,
Tev’ian, Lachlan, Arion, and Nolan – for all the joy, love
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finish this by doing the caring work that I can’t do.*

As always, for Mama

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Introduction: Skin

Abstract: *Skin speaks. It is not just organic matter but the most visible signifier of racial difference. This book looks at what Black lighter skin means in our 21st century 'post-race' world, through the prism of the cross-gender/sexuality/race/class/age/region practice of shade shifting through Skin Bleaching/lightening/toning. Skin bleaching analyses practices, ideologies and products as it looks at bleachers, lighteners, and toners' socio-political critique of the racialized gender libidinal economy of Black skin, as well as the political economy of racism, the importance of colourism in perpetuating the practice, and skin bleaching as decolonizing practice. The decolonial analysis speaks against the givens of Black self-hatred, low self-esteem or desire to be white because we are long past Fanon's (1986) 'mimic (wo)men' of colonialism.*

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Skin speaks. It is not just organic matter but the most visible signifier of racial difference (Mercer, 1994). Skin is a very powerful but everyday signifier through which all of our complex relationships with self and other occur (Connor, 2004; Mercer, 1994). Skin is the very matter from which identifications emerge in the to and fro of relationalities, the flow between body surfaces. As Chapter 1 shows, skin colour continues to be the building block of nations, racial affective economies, aesthetic gender hierarchies, transracial intimacies/dislocations and structural inequality within the United States, Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the African continent and, as emerging research suggests, it is a global issue (Pierre, 2008,2013; Fokuo, 2009; Ashikan, 2005; Osuri, 2008; Leong, 2006; Hope,2009; Brown-Glaude, 2007). Skin is both constituted by and constitutive of the self and is a marker of otherness/sameness in societies structured by racial dominance. Skin reveals who can occupy the category 'human', even in those (post)colonial societies which seem to be racially homogeneous (Pierre, 2013; Tate, 2015a, b). The importance of skin colour does not just resonate within the Black Atlantic (Gilroy, 1993) world, with its criss-cross of Black bodies, products, stylizations, ideologies and practices, even though from our parochial perspective on that world, it seems as though it only has relevance here (Chapter 1).

Skin's shade transformation through bleaching/toning/lightening and the possibility for societal change in everyday skin milieux has received very little sustained coverage in the academic literature, apart from that which focuses on the preference for light/white skin and its link to white supremacy, that (im)possible to attain category – white – and Black pathology (Chapter 2). Work which diverges from this line of discussion includes that of Jemima Pierre (2013) on Ghana, my own (2009; 2010; 2015a, b), Winifred Brown-Glaude (2007), Donna Hope (2011; 2010; 2009), and Christopher A.D. Charles (2009a, b) on Jamaica, and Katharina Fritsch (2014) on Tanzania. These writers look at the practice of Skin Bleaching/lightening/toning as part of the continuities and discontinuities of the 'race' regime in these 'postcolonies' (Mbembe, 2001) (Chapter 2). What is clear is that the 'white' category can only be achieved through white racial purity, and it is also brought to the surface of the body of women who are racialized as white through bleaching/lightening/toning (Chapters 1 and 4). Nevertheless, the discourse of Black pathology has found enormous resonance in the body of work on Jamaica (Chapter 2), as the 'elsewhere' of extreme bleaching, where that

despised other, ‘the bleached browning’, emerges, enables us to deny the extent of the practice within our own Black Atlantic locations, such as the UK, where class impacts state responses to it as dangerous/risky (Chapter 3), and the United States, where product advertising downplays its harm (Chapter 4). We can also deny that the practice exists in everyday ways which are taken for granted if we racialize cosmetic use as trans-racially we are all expected to seek luminous, young-looking, even-toned skin, even through the refinement of a dangerous practice (Chapter 4).

Skin bleaching is practiced globally by women; it is not a new practice (Chapter 1) and is complexly interwoven within global capital, the profits of multinational corporations, local entrepreneurs and glocal racial hierarchies (Chapters 3 and 4) (Mire, 2001; Glenn, 2008; Brown-Glaude, 2007; Pierre, 2013). Whatever its appellation, bleaching/lightening/toning – like no other aesthetic labour apart from hair straightening – has attached itself to the Black African descent body as a sign of failure (Chapters 2, 3 and 4). Such failure is not read as merely aesthetic but also as political, racial, psychic, economic and ethical (Conclusion). Black skin and what one does with it speaks its occupiers more than any other skin in our anti-African descent racism world. This is the case even though we are now nearly two centuries from the emancipation of enslaved people of African descent and the European colonization of Africa. Continuing afro-pessimism and anti-African descent racism in an Africa/African phobic world means that bleached/lightened/toned skin speaks Black negation, although skin bleaching/lightening/toning is a transracial global phenomenon, rather than an intra-racial, local, Black one.

This book looks at what Black lighter skin means in our 21st-century, ‘post-race’ world through the prism of the cross-gender/sexuality/‘race’/class/age/region practice of shade shifting through skin bleaching/lightening/toning. The analysis goes beyond the impact of global white supremacy and its market economies, which perpetuate whiteness as ideal and imbricate Black pathology. Skin bleaching analyses practices, ideologies products, and objects as it looks at bleachers, lighteners, and toners’ ‘re-skinning’ as a socio-political critique of the racialized gender libidinal and political economies of racism and colourism. In doing this, it locates skin bleaching as a ‘race’-performative decolonizing practice (Conclusion). The givens of Black self-hatred, low self-esteem, desire to be white, and the Black Nationalist ethical obligation not to bleach

are unseated because we are long past Fanon's (1986) 'mimic (wo)men' of colonialism. Instead, the book locates shade shifting as a 'post-race', self-affirming aesthetic enhancement and choice, in opposition to white supremacy and colourism. Chapter 1 now moves to a brief Black-white history of shade shifting.

1

A Brief Black/White/Light History of Skin Bleaching/Lightening/Toning

Abstract: *This chapter destabilizes the Manicheanism of iconic whiteness and authentic Blackness in skin bleaching's racialized gender, political and libidinal economies.*

The discussion begins with 'white face' in Europe, the Caribbean colonies and the United States before looking at the complex meanings of the practice among Black women in different Black Atlantic sites, which takes us beyond the usual tropes of 'self-hate' and 'low self-esteem'. The chapter thinks through 'post-race' skin bleaching within the 'third space skins' of Dencia and Mshoza. Neither of these women want to be white but to embody a lightness that is not antithetical to Blackness and a part of it. Third space skins emerge in the interstices of white supremacy and Black nationalism, as women embrace artifice through 'post-race', self-affirming, aesthetic enhancement and choice.

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Within the Black Atlantic, skin bleaching/lightening/toning occupies a negative social, political, cultural and affective space because of its imbrication with white supremacy, colonialism and Blackness constructed as lack/failure/pathology. The ‘social and organic’ Black ‘libidinal skin’ as ‘the surface crossed and the crossing’ (Lyotard, 1993:16) is marked by the memory of the intensity of its past devaluation by white supremacy, much as it is by what remains as (post)colonialism or ‘post-race’ colourism and its phobia of darker skin. The Black ‘libidinal skin’ is also marked by its value within Black Nationalism as something vulnerable which should remain in its natural state. Here darker skin is most prized because of its *philiic* connections to the African continent and the Black Atlantic diaspora. Black skin records its past and present value/negation in that ‘region of transmutation from one skin into a different skin’ (Lyotard, 1993:20), represented by skin bleaching/ lightening/ toning. Here libidinal economies of bleaching/lightening/toning as a sign of self-hate, low self-esteem and desire to be white produced by white supremacy and Black Nationalism overdetermine the Black ‘producer-body’ (Lyotard, 1993:16) as negative. However, libidinal economies of skin transmutation within the Black Atlantic can also be seen as racially positive, as *philiic* rather than *phobic*. First, bleaching/lightening/toning can be read as oppositional to white supremacy and colourism, and second, as ‘post-race’, self-affirming aesthetic enhancement and choice, which has nothing to do with a desire to be white or whiteness as an aesthetic ideal. These racially positive positions enable critique of lightness, which is the colour line of 21st century neo-liberal racialization, in which societal phobia of darker skin is obscured. The libidinal economy of Black skin operates in tandem with the political economy of racism and can be positive, in terms of attraction, alliance and affection, or negative because of aggression, phobia and violent consumption as

libidinal economy functions variously across scales and is as ‘objective’ as political economy. It is linked not only to forms of attraction, affection, and alliance, but also to aggression, destruction and the violence of lethal consumption [...] it is the whole structure of psychic and emotional life [...] something more than but inclusive of or traversed by [...] a ‘structure of feeling’; it is a dispensation of energies, concerns, points of attention, anxieties, pleasures, appetites, revulsions, phobias capable of great mobility and tenacious fixation. (Wilderson, 2010:7)

This chapter unpicks the racialized gender political and libidinal economies of skin bleaching/lightening/toning as racially performative

for Black, white and Black-white ‘mixed-race’ women in a number of sites and historical periods. First, let us look at Black skin’s political and libidinal economies.

Black skin’s political and libidinal economies

In our racialized anatomical economy, Black skin is under panoptical surveillance and catches the eye. There is a tenacious fixation on Black skin bleaching/lightening/toning as a problem requiring either nation-state policy intervention or Black Nationalist political solution. It is Black skin bleaching/lightening/toning which produces those negative emotional sensations through which its ugly affects are narrativized. Black skin as vulnerable and in need of protection exists within neo-liberal racialization’s libidinal economies in ‘post-race’ states such as the UK, the United States, Jamaica, South Africa and Brazil. The argument about the US and UK as ‘post-race’ states is an ongoing one. Suffice it to say that Jamaica became ‘post-race’ on independence from the British Empire in 1962, as did South Africa with the end of apartheid in 1994, while Brazil has always maintained its status as a racial democracy. However, racism and colourism are rampant in these states, as we have seen in 2015, for example, with the ‘Black Lives Matter’ campaign in the United States and the student movement, ‘Rhodes Must Fall’, at Rhodes University in South Africa.

Black skin might be vulnerable, but skin bleaching/lightening/toning is a global issue, and in 2014, about 15% of the world’s population bought skin lighteners. By 2018, sales are projected to reach US 19.8 billion dollars (www.iol.co.za/lifestyle/fashion/why-are-women-still-dying-to-be-white/1.1705800#.vsutqfnF-so, accessed 13 April 2015). Japan is the largest market worldwide: consumers, especially older women, spend more than women elsewhere on *bihaku* products. Globally, pills, potions, creams, soaps, lotions, suppositories, laser treatments, intravenous drips and injections are all part of the arsenal for beautiful skin which goes unremarked in the battle for enhancement. Skin bleaching/lightening/toning is invisible until the beauty regime switches to speaking instead of hydroquinone, mercury, corticosteroids, Glutathione and Black skin. Then we see that beautification and its market in products, brands and technologies already transport racial signification. We also see that skin and what we do with it is highly political individually, because racial

allegiances, self-esteem and identities are called into question. This is amplified for Black women through the prevalent discourse of a yearning for lightness/whiteness because of the impact of the global white aesthetic, economic, political, epistemological, technological and cultural supremacy (Hunter, 2011; Blay, 2009; Glenn, 2009; Lewis et al 2011; Hall, 2006; Pierre, 2013; Blay, 2009; Charles, 2003, 2009a; del Guidice and Yves, 2002; Fokuo, 2009; Al-Saleh et al, 2002).

The discussion in this book aims to critique and analyze skin bleaching/lightening/toning within the neo-liberal political economy of racism and the racialized gender anatomical and libidinal economies of Black diaspora identifications. This will enable a movement away from the discourse of Black pathology and a desire for whiteness as a particular Black psychic, skin and consumption orientation which implicates white supremacy's hold on Black psyche, identification and behaviour. Rather, what will be highlighted are the complexities which exist within the practices of skin bleaching/lightening/toning in a variety of Black Atlantic zones.

Globally, non-white skin is problematized as we see in the WHO (World Health Organization) report (2012) on mercury and skin lightening. According to the report, mercury is a common ingredient found in skin lightening soaps and creams and other cosmetics, such as eye makeup cleansing products and mascara. In some Black Atlantic states, skin bleaching/lightening/toning is reproduced in national public health discourses as an issue for public policy intervention, as states take action to protect their citizens from the health risks carried by the bleaching/lightening/toning agents, hydroquinone, mercury and corticosteroids. Skin lightening soaps and creams are commonly used in some African and Asian nations and among dark-skinned people in Europe and North America (ibid.). In Mali (25%), Nigeria (77%), Senegal (27%), South Africa (35%) and Togo (59%), women regularly use skin lighteners (ibid.). Forty percent of women surveyed in 2004 in China (Province of Taiwan and Hong Kong Special Administrative Region), Malaysia, the Philippines and the Republic of Korea used skin lighteners. In India, 61% of the dermatological market is skin-lightening products (ibid.).

The manufacture of skin lightening products, their marketing, consumption and surveillance is also a global enterprise (Mire, 2001; Glenn, 2008). Consumer protection agencies in the European Union and the United States found that mercury-containing products were manufactured in China, the Dominican Republic, Lebanon, Mexico, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand and the United States (ibid.). The Internet is

also the global marketplace for mercury-containing lightening products for the face, body, vagina and anus. A 2011 survey funded by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety found that people from Brazil, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico and the Russian Federation thought that mercury-containing skin lightening products were easily obtainable. As a result of consumer pressure, some manufacturers no longer use mercury as a preservative in mascara and eye makeup cleansing products. The sale of makeup products containing mercury compounds is still allowed around the globe, with controls over the amount used being the only restriction on its use (*ibid.*).

In 2011, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) advised that skin lightening creams should contain no more than a trace of mercury as part of the unavoidable impurities produced through manufacture (Hall, 2006). On 29 August 2006, the FDA ruled that another notorious and long-existing skin lightener, hydroquinone, should not exceed 1.5–2.0% of an active ingredient in over-the-counter (OTC) skin bleaching drugstore products (Hall, 2006). Since January 2001, the EU has prohibited the use of hydroquinone in cosmetics. Alternatives – for example, retinoids, azelaic acid, kojic acid, aleosin, ascorbic acid – have been proposed as replacements for hydroquinone in cosmetics, but their safety and effectiveness have yet to be carefully studied (Hall, 2006). Jamaica launched its anti-skin bleaching campaign, ‘Don’t kill the skin’, in 2007, and since then, controlling the circulation of bleaching products and public education has been a government concern. The public health campaign did not acknowledge the social and political implications of light skin in Jamaica and had very little effect, as it was based solely on changing people’s attitudes (Hope, 2009; Hunter 2011; Charles, 2009b; Brown-Glaude, 2007). Ghana’s campaign ‘Love your natural skin tone – say no to skin bleaching and toning’ began in July 2014 and was again based on changing attitudes, rather than looking at what structural and economic issues drive bleaching. In South Africa, skin bleaching is debated as much as it is an integral part of everyday life in a society enthralled by ‘yellow bone’, lighter skin as we can see from the Internet presence of skin bleaching businesses and clinics in South Africa.

We can also see everyday UK skin bleaching as unmarked trans-racial practice aimed at all women, if we go to a popular, low-cost brand retailer in the UK, where they stocked Langé Paris Crème de Nuit Éclaircissante (lightening night cream) which promises intense lightening, and its companion product, Correcteur de Tâches (dark spot corrector). The

Langé Paris site also carries Intensive Lightening Lotion and Intensive Lightening Mask and Day Cream. Langé Paris was set up in 2005, with its cosmetics based on natural products produced ‘in the French cosmetic valley’. The packaging, the store, and the website do not mention that this product is for Black consumers, but in the UK, a discursive attachment continues between the Black woman’s body and problematized bleaching in the medical profession, local authority trading standards services and the media.

Such attachment reproduces skin bleaching as a site of racialized disgust, contempt, guilt and shame on the part of Black individuals and communities alongside white racialized disgust, contempt and shaming of Black bleachers. This libidinal economy of Black skin bleaching, based on the discourse of the internalization of white supremacy, is a particular rendition of skin lightening as Black pathology. To reiterate, this ignores the fact that the practice is enabled by a multi-billion dollar global pharmaceutical and cosmetics industry, some of which is based in Europe and the United States, and that bleaching is transracial and transnational in scope (Mire, 2001). Furthermore, it ignores the fact that white bodies are also bleached/lightened/toned and, most importantly, that the aim of Black people who engage in skin bleaching/lightening/toning is decidedly *not* to be white (Tate, 2015a,b; 2010; 2009). Such desire is constituted by the rejection of what is normatively less attractive: that is, white skin. Black skin bleaching/lightening/toning disengages with the usual trope of desire to be white, whilst revealing subjects’ desire for self-fashioning as lighter but Black through the use of stylization technologies. Further, bleachers’ disengagement with the desire to be white illustrates that this practice can be for short-term strategic purposes to produce new subjectivities *through* skin shade transformation across Black Atlantic zones – the UK, the United States, the Caribbean, Latin America and the African continent.

Subjectivity mobility is brought into being on the surface of body through an activity vilified as dangerous, or at least risky for the health of Black skin and for the individual if it is achieved through under-the-counter (UTC) bleaching products. This vilification is not meted out to other aesthetic procedures such as micro-dermabrasion, peeling, face-lifts, botox, snake venom, lip enlargements, cheek implants, and other aesthetic industry-approved enhancement procedures, products and objects. Skin bleaching/lightening/toning, performed under medical supervision in clinics around the world, similarly is not seen

as dangerous. Racialized as Black, skin bleaching/lightening/toning/ is constructed as not adding value to the body because that body is valueless. However, the procedures, products and objects just listed are seen as signs of conspicuous consumption and, therefore, value, which elides the facts that white people also bleach and that whiteness is an aesthetic achievement. This analysis does not focus on whiteness but seeks to explore the dynamics of Black Atlantic zones' skin bleaching as practice, politics, aesthetics, psyche, and knowledge, as well as its affective relationalities and entanglements as it decolonizes the practice in its movement away from Black pathology/lack/failure.

Skin and cosmetic skin lightening have continued to have deep political implications in Black Atlantic zones because of their raced affective, political, cultural and aesthetic economies, where skin shade still matters for one's life chances: from the economy and the job market, to marriage and beauty. The case of the colonially constructed and socio-culturally instituted preference for lightness in Latin American and Hispanic Caribbean *mestizaje*, Brazilian *mestiçagem*, French Antillean *metisage*, and UK/US/ English-speaking Caribbean/ South African/Ghanaian 'brownness' attests to this. Thus, within (post)colonial, 'post-race' societies we must look at local practices such as skin bleaching within a theoretical framework of coloniality, as inflected by global figurations of 'race', identity, gender and power and the historical context of European empires (Pierre, 2013; Hunter, 2011; Blay, 2011).

Let us not forget that whiteness also has a place in skin-lightening history. The discussion which follows looks historically at skin colour in terms of gender, 'race' and class and the emergence of the 'English Rose' in the UK and its colonies through whitening, makeup and bonnetting, as well as the sexualized embrace of the *mulata* in Cuba and the denial of African descent but assertion of Caribbean indigeneity – *indio* – in Hispano-phone Caribbean (the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico) constructions of skin shade, before turning to the 'racial grammar' (Bonilla-Silva, 2014) of skin lightening. The Black Nationalist urge to reject colonial and enslavement colourism as a skin shade habitus where lighter skin has cultural, symbolic and economic capital then follows. The discussion moves to 'post-race' aesthetics and skin lightening products as part of the flow of global capital and skin shade aesthetics through the example of South Africa's skin-lightening product history and its most famous lightener to date – singer Nomasonto Mnisi – 'Mzhoza', as well as the latest skin-lightening pop star, celebrity Cameroonian-Nigerian

Dencia and her dark spot corrector, 'Whitenicious'. These women show that *re-skinning* the body is not about appearing 'natural' in a social context which views the body as a commodity, as Margaret Hunter (2011) claims. Rather, it is its very obvious fakeness which is significant, as it shows that its wearer has the money and the leisure time – that is, economic and social capital – to make the change happen. It can also be a change that is as permanent as one's money or stylization preferences will allow, which in turn imparts cultural capital. Now, let us look at skin colour, 'race' performativity and colonial 'race' regimes in selected Black Atlantic sites.

Performative whiteness, skin colour in Europe and colonial 'race' regimes

Cosmetic and chemical skin lightening by white women is a centuries' old practice within Europe, as it was practiced by ancient Greeks who used ceruse or white lead. White women in Europe used wheat powder (*blanchet*) to whiten their faces whilst Italian women used waters, paints and plasters on their faces in order to whiten their skins (Blay, 2011). There was a rapid increase in the manufacture and use of cosmetics in the late 16th century (Poitevin, 2011), and as Richard Dyer (1997) remarks, much of the development of Western makeup was focused on whitening the face. Cosmetics use was denounced by its detractors because of the link between cosmetics and 'fake' beauty, as well as the loose morals of 'the painted woman'. However, 'white face' was so necessary to Europeans that women continued to use skin whiteners, running the risk of accusations of prostitution or loose morals because the face was 'unnatural' (Pierre, 2013).

The impact of cosmetics on European women's faces can be illustrated if we look at changes in the meaning of 'complexion' over time. In 1568, the word meant 'the natural color, texture and appearance of the skin', but by 1601, the meaning had transformed to 'a coloring preparation applied to give a complexion to the face' (Poitevin, 2011: 64). White European women's complexions were applied through a preparation, literally painted on, to construct – to make up – the skin colour. In the 16th and 17th centuries, women applied rouges and used ceruse as a skin whitener. 'The English Rose', Elizabeth 1 herself, was constructed through artifice. She used ceruse and was also distinguished from her subjects by bathing

regularly every month, whether she needed it or not, at a time when 17th century Europeans rubbed themselves down with a coarse cloth and rose water (Blay, 2011). Interestingly, according to early European travellers, Africans were extremely concerned with cleanliness and everyday personal hygiene was based on using 'native soaps' to cleanse the body, and palm oil, lard and shea butter 'to anoint it' (Blay, 2011:13). From our understandings about hygiene and body care today, Africans cleansed and moisturized their skins, so they already had a 21st century approach to skin care prior to colonialism. Elizabeth 1's 'toilet' included a range of products, but the basis was white powder (Blay, 2011), and her fabricated white skin paleness became the Elizabethan beauty ideal, which again illustrates the racial importance of 'white face' to Europeans.

Ceruse produced the prized matte whiteness, but its lead contents' toxicity damaged the skin and led to hair loss, and long-term use resulted in death. Its toxicity was increased when it was used alongside lye and ammonia in skin-whitening products (Blay, 2011). After centuries of use in Europe, once it became obvious that ceruse was harmful, it was made illegal. A 1724 Act in England enabled the inspection of drugs, medicines and other preparations sold within a 7-mile radius of London. This radius might intimate that skin whitening was an urban practice, but rural European women also bleached. Whitening the skin continued to be aesthetically, racially and commercially significant, and in the 1700s, Doctor Thomas Beddoes conducted experiments with oxygenated air on Black people, as well as on himself, to develop the 'cosmetic art' of skin bleaching (Coleman, 2003).

As bearers of the 'race', white European women, irrespective of class or geographical location, had to bleach to achieve the ideal of whiteness, and the use of ceruse in cosmetics continued until the 19th century, when it was replaced by rice powder (Pierre, 2013). Whiteness affected 18th century women in ways similar to those that contemporary women experience because it was the feminine beauty ideal and the skin ideal in general. Thus, skin whiteners were the most popular cosmetic product in the 19th and early 20th centuries when beauty regimes began to be sold to women to perform their duty: preserving their 'natural assets' (Black, 2004). Advertisements for products aimed at protecting white skin from the tropical sun and harsh environments in the colonies, such as Elizabeth Arden's 'Bleachine', recommended bleaching creams for white women (The Modern Girl Around The World Research Group, 2008). Therefore, fake beauty, artificiality, began to be marketed 'under the guise of a natural, already present femininity' (Black, 2004: 35), which

just needed to be brought out through the consumption of bleach. Skin whiteners as objects of colonialism and capitalism trafficked in ideas of gender, 'race', class and the production of a femininity centred on complexion change.

The feminization of 'white face' cosmetics meant that women were important in the development of the colonial binary of white Englishness as the normative position for the human which served to highlight the infra-human difference of Empire's racialized others. Symbolic capital attached to white skin and had an exchange value in terms of racial privilege, power and class. However, 'white face' women also illustrated that being literally 'made up' to *become* white meant that skin colour was not a reliable marker of 'race', class or morality, and that whiteness, far from being an aesthetic or racial given, has always been a racialized construction (Poitevin, 2011), performatively brought into being through stylization. Women did not darken their skins because whiteness was prized. Indeed, to be 'truly beautiful [one had to be] rosier than pale skinned sisters and whiter than brown ones [such] perfect in-betweenness [was] achieved only through make-up [with] ground alabaster being used in early modern skin whiteners' (Poitevin, 2011:70–72). The most popular preparations used by white Victorian women were skin lighteners, and as production expanded, beauty preparations continued to mark class and racial boundaries (Black, 2004). Victorian skin lighteners and powders gave the pale, translucent look to the skin which continued to be valued in middle class/elite society, and which white women are still encouraged by cosmetics advertising to have today.

Alabaster skin established an image of natural delicate beauty – 'the English Rose' which was cosmetically produced. By the end of the 19th century, formal beauty and hair training courses were established in beauty schools or through correspondence courses (Black, 2004), and skin that was alabaster/ porcelain/matte white continued to be idealized. The 'race' performative construction of the white woman in the metropole through 'white face' cosmetics emerged alongside colonial expansion, the development of settler colonies, Empire and commerce, African enslavement and the existence of Black-white 'mixed-race' people through miscegenation.

Historically, in the United States, the vast majority of skin lightener users have been white women (Glenn, 2008). Throughout the 19th century, pale skin was the ideal for Anglo-American women, as it was in Europe. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, European American women, especially those from Southern Europe, sought whiter and

brighter skin through lighteners and bleaches (Glenn, 2008; Peiss, 2011). Nineteenth-century white American women inherited a tradition of cosmetic use and preparation from English women in the 1600s and 1700s who practiced 'cosmetic physic' (Peiss, 2011). Skin bleaching preparations were brought to the colonies by English immigrants and blended with Native American, French, Spanish and also West African traditions (ibid.). Recipes for cosmetics were published in the United States beginning in the late 18th century and expanded through the publishing boom in the 1840s (Peiss, 1998). In 1930, there were already 232 brands of skin lighteners and bleaches offered for sale to white women.

Irrespective of age or class, US- American women used products that were racially labelled – 'lily white', 'white wash' and 'white cosmetic' – so as to embody white bourgeois status and racial privilege. These names interpellated women as white because of the connection between whiter-than-white skin, Anglo-Saxon superiority, gentility and social mobility (Peiss, 2011). US-American women also used ceruse, and at the end of the Civil War, reports of their use of lead-based whiteners came to light (Blay, 2011). Also popular among white US-American and European women at this time was eating arsenic wafers, which produced a pale appearance because of their toxicity (Blay, 2011). Indeed, skin-whitening products contained mercury, lead and arsenic – all extremely toxic (Peiss, 2011). These women embodied the need for whiteness irrespective of risk, but as bleachers, they were charged with artifice and viewed as harlots, while white men who practiced skin whitening were ridiculed for their effeminacy in a homophobic appraisal of the practice (Blay, 2011).

However, bleaching continued because alabaster skin signified racially as well as in terms of class. For example, it showed a lack of physical labour and exposure to the weather and clear class boundaries; the use of powders to reduce perspiration and shine provided the illusion that women did not need to exert themselves, and using whiteners maintained indisputable 'race' boundaries (Black, 2004). Whiteness was so necessary that in large cities like Chicago, some Jewish women used skin lighteners and went to Black beauty salons (Glenn, 2008; Peiss, 2011). In the 1930s, tanning became acceptable as a signifier of wealth, travel and leisure on tropical beaches, and the fad for 'exotic' Mediterranean and Latina types emerged for 'the modern girl' (The Modern Girl Around The World Research Group, 2008). Makeup followed skin fads and was produced for olive complexions with brunette hair (Peiss, 1998). However, pale skin did not disappear, and a 1928 Helena Rubenstein ad

advocated bleaching to go from tanned to 'autumn beauty', encouraging white women to seasonally adjust their skin colour (The Modern Girl Around The World Research Group, 2008). By the 1980s, the damaging effects of sun exposure became known, so skin bleaching/lightening/toning among whites resurfaced as a major cosmetic market for smooth, unblemished, glowing skin, without age spots (Glenn, 2008). The cosmetic treatments and products offered to achieve white skin were the same as those for Black darker skin – hydroquinone, skin peeling, exfoliants and sunscreen (ibid.).

Victorian racial hierarchies meant that white women had to enable, maintain and display their undisputed whiteness in order to ensure privilege, even though this was constrained by gender, as the white Anglo-Saxon man was at the top of the racial hierarchy (Black, 2004). The class privilege of white skin denied the labour of Black women, women of colour and working-class white women, which enabled middle-class and elite white women to have lives of ease and protection without the perspiration and facial shine of physical labour. Skin bleaching illustrates the skin insecurities among Victorian and US white women because of the need to reinforce their place in the class and racial hierarchy through their very skins. Emphasizing racial difference through white women's skin denied their connection with enslavement and their involvement in transracial intimacies in plantations and colonies (Francis, 2010; Tate, 2011).

White colonial British Caribbean life meant that women had to have whiter-than-white skin because of the racial hierarchies of enslavement. Skin lightening through reproduction 'to lighten the family line', make-up, bleaching and reduced sun exposure obtained/maintained privilege and demarcated the free body within the enslavement pigmentocracy. Whitening through miscegenation was a transgenerational process, where 'white men copulated with their "mixed-race" offspring over several generations, with the object of producing "pure" white progeny' (Coleman, 2003:171). This was a white male supremacist fantasy, as the 'one drop rule' of hypodescent meant that the only white person was 'racially unmixed' (Monahan, 2011).

The gendered practice of 'flying' or 'skinning' the body with astringent lotions in order to achieve whiteness/lightness by white, Black and 'mixed-race' women was remarked on by Edward Long (2010), Jamaican planter, white supremacist and historian (Coleman, 2003). During enslavement, skin lightening was a transracial practice, as is still

the case in contemporary times. Long's (2010) assertion is supported by James Grainger's (1764) poem 'The Sugarcane', which states that white Caribbean creole women bleached their skin using cashew nut oil. In the 1700s, this highly toxic oil removed freckles and sunburn, literally burning off layers of skin to maintain whiteness (Coleman, 2003). Within a racial ordering where colour was linked societally and legally to class, privilege and freedom, women's skin being whiter-than-white was indispensable in white hegemony, as the 'mixed-race' population's complexions were lightened through miscegenation, because being 'quinteroon' meant the possibility of legal whiteness (Coleman, 2003). The 'mixed race' population's bodily threat to white purity made cashew nut oil essential in the battle to preserve racial governance through 'white face', as white Caribbean creole women continuously laboured to be lighter than Black-white 'mixed-race' women. White Caribbean creoles also sent their daughters to Europe to lighten their complexion 'to the red and white roses of the classic English complexion' (ibid.: 173) even though the English Rose look was achieved cosmetically.

White 'brown' skin was acceptable whiteness in the metropole, but in white Caribbean creole society, the English Rose was preferred (ibid.). In the Caribbean, white brown skin would have appeared too 'mixed-race' to be white. The (im)possibility of white brown skin meant that bleaching, bonneting, masking the face from the sun, and visits to the UK maintained lily whiteness. These whitening practices mark Caribbean whiteness as a wilfully constructed racial category that illustrates that

the rigid, inflexible obsession with purity of blood and whiteness needs to be seen as the irrational symptom of a society that is in fact too fluid, too given to racial and sexual intermixture. And it is this fluidity that was leading to an inauthentic whitening of the population, making it sometimes impossible to distinguish between "real" and imitation whites. (Ibid.:179)

White Caribbean creoles feared 'imitation whites', such as *quinteroons*, becoming part of 'pure' white family bloodlines through passing. Enslavement ideology was based on sex, gender and 'race', in which the artificially whitened white woman's body came to represent freedom (Coleman, 2003). By the late 1770s, the future of whiteness depended on white women because white male concubinage undermined white racial purity and threatened white cultural identity, as well as the white family.

From the 10th to the 19th centuries, Spaniards regarded female beauty as only white (Williams, 2000). This beauty ideology was transported

to the Hispanophone Caribbean through discovery and colonialism, but *mestizaje* – mixing – produced complexly labelled racialized and gendered skin colour variations and ‘racial types’ (Miller, 2004). Cuba was a space of transculturation and transracial intimacies through the interaction of different foods, cultures, bodies and aesthetics (Miller, 2004; Ortiz, 1995). Here too, ‘race’ was (re)produced within (and reinforced) the chromatism that determined social status according to minutely delineated categories of ancestry as Black/white (Miller, 2004). *Indio* was also used in Cuba and Puerto Rico as a racial category, where *guajiro* and *jibaro* signified indigeneity (Miller, 2004). Whilst transracial marriage was not condoned in the Anglophone Caribbean, in 19th-century Cuba, white men could marry mulatas, but white women could only marry white men (Miller, 2004). Cuban hetero-patriarchal law illustrated at that time that white power and privilege flowed through men’s blood, and contamination of bloodlines was only possible from transracial intimacy between Black men and white women. This law also reflects white males’ skin preference for ‘the beautiful mulata’ developed in 19th century Cuba (Williams, 2000). Mulata (feminine) is derived from the Latin *mulus* (mule) and was perhaps a reflection of early ideas that the mulata/mulato (masculine) could not have children. Mulata/o as a racial category was not a form of praise, nor was its ungendered English version, ‘mulatto’, which has been negatively connoted since the 1600s (Arrizón, 2006). Critical of the racial status quo, Cuban poets valorized mulata beauty, but she was constructed as non-white, hyper-sexual and ‘loose’ to differentiate her from idealized white female beauty (Williams, 2000). Mulatos undermined Spanish European racial regimes in the Caribbean colonies, which changed aesthetic representations of Black women (Williams, 2000). Irrespective of the recuperation of Black women’s beauty during the *negrista* movement and 1940s nationalism in Cuba and Puerto Rico, or continued mixing in the 21st century, whiteness remains the beauty ideal in Cuba and Puerto Rico (Williams, 2000).

Blacks and mulattoes formed the majority of the population in the Dominican Republic during enslavement, but *Taino* (indigenous Caribbean) descent was favoured as emblematic for the nation (Candelario, 2005; Miller, 2004). The Dominican Republic’s national psychic erasure of its African ancestry constructed a mythical *mestizaje* (‘race’ mixing), in which the Spanish man and the ‘Indian’ (Taino) woman were the basis of the nation. Erasing African ancestry meant that new skin colour categories had to be constructed, such as *indio puro* (pure Indian) and *indio claro*

(light-skinned Indian), to replace those, like *mulato/a*, marked as African (Candelario, 2007; Miller, 2004). As neither white nor Black, the *indio/a* category gained ascendancy during the Trujillo regime (Miller, 2004; Candelario, 2007). Anti-African racism meant that the Taino woman and her mestiza daughter were located above Black women and *mulatas* in the Dominican Republic's established racial hierarchy (Arrizón, 2006; Candelario, 2007). In the Dominican Republic, although historically there were ideas of biological whitening to create pure white societies, light skin – *not* white skin – is the ideal in the 21st century. Indeed, access to the 'hot *mulata*' body underlies the representations and expectations of much sex tourism to the Dominican Republic and Cuba. This continues an aesthetic of sexual desire in which the *mulata*'s many skin shades serve national and transnational corporate capital. Within highly racialized societal configurations such as these, *some* darker skinned Black women would have practiced, and still will practice, skin lightening with products designed to modify skin in line with characteristics correlated with colour privilege, read as economic, aesthetic, socio-political or cultural, as is the case with other Black Atlantic sites.

Historical antecedents and contemporary skin bleaching in the Continent and Black Atlantic sites

The Black Nationalist message of Black aesthetic pride has been the same across the Black Atlantic. What this has established is that it is important that people of Black African descent should rid themselves of the shackles of white aesthetic psychic enslavement by valorizing Black bodies – dark skin, more 'afro' hair, features racialized as not phenotypically white. Whether that message was delivered by Marcus Garvey and Rastafarianism (Jamaica/United States), Leopold Senghor (Senegal), Frantz Fanon (Martinique/France), Steve Biko (South Africa), Julius Kambarage Nyerere (Tanzania), Blocos Afro (Brazil), *Negrismo* (the Dominican Republic), or Black Power (the United States/ the UK/ the Anglophone Caribbean/Latin America), the aesthetic requirement remained. This is the case even though the political message emerged at different historical periods. To not see Black bodies as beautiful, to not valorize darker skin, was to remain mentally enslaved, shackled to colonialism and white aesthetic, social, political, cultural, ideological and epistemological supremacy.

Despite this cultural, socio-political, ideological and intellectual history, skin bleaching/lightening/toning is a common everyday practice in Africa, Asia and Latin America in countries formerly colonized by European nations or those that have a significant contemporary US American presence (Hunter, 2011). I should also add here that the UK and the United States are also significant zones of this practice, even though this continues to be downplayed. Thus, studies such as Margaret Hunter's (2011) can claim that skin lightening has reached 'epidemic proportions' in scores of countries globally. This is claimed to be the case in many African nations, including Ghana, Senegal, Tanzania, Kenya, Mali, South Africa and Nigeria, as both women and men try to acquire lighter skin and its attached socio-economic status, cultural capital, aesthetic capital, and heterosexual marriageability, all of which are conceived as 'racial capital' (Hunter, 2011; Lewis et al; Glenn, 2009; Pierre, 2013, 2008; Thomas, 2009; Blay, 2011). This increase in skin bleaching around the globe is seen by some commentators to be the by-product of ideologies of colonialism, white 'race' supremacy, and new technologies of the body produced through 'commodity racism' (Hunter, 2005, 2011; Blay, 2011; Thomas, 2009). Indeed, ads for skin lighteners appeared around the globe from around the 1920s–1930s (The Modern Girl Around The World Research Group, 2008). Again, just to emphasize what was said about the UK/United States, if colonialism, white 'race' supremacy, and commodity racism drive this practice, then those countries must be prime zones for the continuation of and technological innovations in the practice.

Jemima Pierre (2013:xii) relates skin bleaching in present day Ghana to the legacy of enslavement, British colonialism, empire making, 'race craft – the design, practice, enactment and politics of race making' – and continuing racialization in what is assumed to be a homogeneous Black state in which 'race' should not matter, and colourism should not exist. The common practice of skin bleaching in Ghana is based on the rigid pigmentocracy that continues to exist, even post-independence, because of the global configurations of white supremacy's power and identity within the global political economy, as well as Blackness within the transnational diasporic politics of identification, belonging and aesthetics (Pierre, 2013). However, there is still valorization of light skin in Ghana today, even given pan-Africanism and Black racial consciousness. As is the case elsewhere in the diaspora, light skin as an aesthetic preference equates with colourism and is always perceived as a symptom

of internalized racism. Lighter skin continues to equate with privilege, including prominent societal and occupational positions. Indeed, being 'mixed-race' in Ghana and across the Black Atlantic is the Black ideal because of its link to material wealth, social status, aesthetic, political, cultural and intimate relational power.

The colour line of light skin preference was formed through white Western influence in Ghana dating back to the early 16th century and during colonialism, when the somatic norm was defined as the corporeality of the 'racially indeterminate class' (Pierre, 2013: 115). The Gold Coast, as modern-day Ghana was known, had a history of prominent Black/white 'mixed-race' families in the 18th and 19th centuries who were distinguished from the non-mixed community and articulated an identity historically based on white ancestry, intermarriage, aesthetics, wealth, influence and power (ibid.). For example, the Grants, Van Dykes, Bohams, Reindorfs, and de Grafts are notable Euro-Ghanaian families (ibid.). Light skin in Ghana still has power because of its link to racial whiteness and global white supremacy and colourism: that is, light skin valorization. This skin context extends from the African continent to the United States, UK, Latin America and the Caribbean (ibid.:117).

Like other Black Atlantic sites, Ghana has a racial somatic inheritance allied with an economy, politics, culture and practices which link to colourism. However, lightness does not automatically connote privilege, as class is significant, even though lightness can help in the attainment of upward social mobility and cultural capital (Pierre, 2013). The meanings of lightness are complex in Ghana, as is the case elsewhere, because of the continuation of Black racial pride as well as Ghana's assumed racial homogeneity (Pierre, 2013). In Ghana, light-skinned women – usually African American and exemplars of the US Black community's own colourism – are used in ads for beauty products. These exemplars illustrate the global market in and circulation of skin shades. In a country where being light is linked with beauty and success, it is no wonder that bleaching is practiced by many people, especially those who are urban, upwardly mobile, young and see themselves as 'modern' (ibid.). In the 21st century, we still see 'the modern girl', an idea that made its first appearance in the 1920s United States, continuing its psychic and material life through consumption of skin lighteners linked to local-global (glocal) racial formations.

Although Tanzania is not part of the Black Atlantic, it is worth looking at studies on skin bleaching there to see what light they can cast

on our sites of interest. Even though Nyerere spoke out against this practice, and the government has launched anti-bleaching campaigns, skin bleaching continues to be a part of everyday life. Kelly M. Lewis et al's 2011 study sought out the motivations for women's skin bleaching in Tanzania. These were to remove pimples, rashes and skin diseases; have soft skin; be white, beautiful, more European-looking; remove the effects of extended skin bleaching – hyperpigmentation; satisfy one's partner or attract males, and satisfy and impress peers. Lewis et al (2011) linked skin bleaching in Tanzania to self-objectification, colonialism, Westernization and internalization of external standards of beauty. Tanzania was colonized in turn by Germany and the United Kingdom, but the long term political and economic hegemony of the Indian and Arab descent population has shifted the focus from European whiteness per se to the lightness of these two groups, who are racially dominant because of their economic supremacy (Fritsch, 2014). Thus, Indians and Arabs as 'white' within the Tanzanian context is impacted on by class relations, and other ethnic groups are also seen as white – the *Warangi*, *Wachagga*, *Wasambaa* and *Wapare*. In the Tanzanian context, white is very locally inflected, and the upper class is already seen as lighter skinned (Fritsch, 2014). Whiteness has very little to do with European descent or the European. Those who are white locally must practice bleaching to achieve what should be naturally given to them because of their class. The middle and working classes are obliged in turn to bleach to be lighter, in order to achieve upward social mobility.

The use of skin lighteners in Southern Africa has a long history, according to Lynn Thomas (2009; 2008). Skin lighteners were first marketed in South Africa in the early 1930s with the South African company Keppels' ad for *Freckle Wax* in the Black newspaper *Bantu World* (The Modern Girl Around The World Research Group, 2008). Keppels ran an ad in 1945 in the *Cape Times* aimed at 'coloured women' which promised to restore 'pristine' skin colour and texture. These ads show how a South African white owned company appealed to a marketplace structured by racial hierarchies through 'science' and asserting skin colour distinctions as being to do with climate rather than racial structuration (The Modern Girl Around The World Research Group, 2008). By the late 1980s the market in lighteners had grown into a \$27 million business. Skin lightening was opposed in the 1960s by nationalist political ideology in the anti-apartheid struggle and by medical professionals concerned with skin and health risk. These ideologies and concerns led to a ban in South

Africa by 1991. It is certain that US commodities and 'race' ideologies dynamized the marketing and manufacture of lighteners in South Africa (Thomas, 2009). However, local economic relations and racial hierarchies based 'on slavery, segregation and apartheid, as well as skin color preferences that likely predated European colonization' also impacted their use (ibid.:189). Indeed, the preference for 'yellow bone', not white skin, still exists in South Africa today. The South African case makes obvious that 'the appeal of skin lighteners emerged from the dense intersection of racial hierarchies, capitalist commerce and individual desire for betterment' (ibid.). This interaction was not only local but also globally inflected by US racial dynamics within the marketing of skin lighteners, which located African Americans as aesthetic role models (The Modern Girl Around The World Research Group, 2008).

Currently, there is a rise in lightener use with simultaneous attempts by governments to ban products and restrict the trade in and access to harmful products such as hydroquinone, mercury and corticosteroids (Glenn, 2008). It is important to note, of course, that these products are also made in the EU, United States, Asia and other African countries and exported to South Africa. For example, mercury soap that was sold in South Africa as antiseptic soap was made in Ireland by Killarney Enterprises until the company closed on 17 April 2007, and Italy also produces and exports this product, although its sale is banned in the EU (Glenn, 2008). In South Africa, there were transnational entanglements in the surge in demand and the market for skin lighteners, when African American products were introduced in the 1920s–1930s (Thomas, 2009). 'Apex' skin bleach, manufactured by an African American-owned New Jersey-based company, was the earliest ad to appear in a Black South African newspaper (The Modern Girl Around The World Research Group, 2008). This surge in demand and expansion in the consumption of skin lighteners continued in the 1930s as local whites controlled the lightening industry (Thomas, 2009). In the 1940s after World War 2 South Africa became the centre for the manufacture and marketing of skin lighteners within the African continent and also had a market share across the Atlantic. In the 1950s and 1960s especially in *Drum* magazine, ads for US-manufactured skin lighteners and bleaches were prominent, despite harmful levels of ammoniated mercury and hydroquinone (The Modern Girl Around The World Research Group, 2008). These markets have expanded since the 1970s, and bleachers now are mostly urban women, some of whom are rural migrants seeking to better themselves (Thomas, 2009).

Today, if you Google 'skin bleaching in South Africa', an array of ads for skin lightening clinics aims at the Black market, such as a list of skin lightening clinics in South Africa at whatclinic.com and links to the 'Yellowbone Factory' site. There are also a range of skin-whitening products, seemingly aimed at the white market, based on the images on the sites, from Olay, Pond's, Garnier, L'Oreal, Vaseline, and Decl or, as well as a range of skin whitening creams, lotions, pills and injections with Glutathione that are aimed at the Black/ 'mixed-race'/Asian market. Seventy-seven percent of women in South Africa use skin lightening products smuggled in from all over the world or bought online, where the trade appears to be unregulated. Skin lightening continues to be big business, much as it was in the 1960s when Abe and Solly Krok made their fortune selling 'Super Rose Complexion' cream before fleeing to Australia before legal action was taken against them for the irreversible cosmetic endochrinosis it caused. Abe Krok went on to fund the anti-apartheid museum in Johannesburg, which his detractors claimed he did solely so he could build a casino. Steve Biko, father of Black consciousness philosophy, was a vociferous opponent of skin lightening and hair straightening because for him Black people should be proud of their looks and these cosmetic processes were tantamount to wanting to be white and accepting white superiority (overcomingapartheid.msu.edu/people.php?id=65-251-1E, accessed 5 August 2015). 'Super Rose Complexion' cream was so dangerous that the apartheid regime banned it when they instituted a prohibition in the 1980s on 12% hydroquinone in cosmetic products. If we remember as stated above, that the US FDA only approves levels of 1–2.5% and hydroquinone is banned in the UK, we can see how dangerous skin bleaching products were prior to the ban in South Africa. In the early 1990s the medical profession allied with the Anti-Apartheid Movement and called for a ban on these products. The government responded by banning products containing dangerous levels of hydroquinone and ads for cosmetics to 'bleach', 'lighten' or 'whiten' (www.iol.co.za/lifestyle/fashion/why-are-women-still-dying-to-be-white/1.1705800#.vsutqfnF-so accessed April 13, 2015). However, the desire for 'yellow bone' continues and in South Africa in 2015 young Black people on Instagram make themselves lighter using the available technology so lightening can be safely practiced without skin harm.

For Yetunde M. Olumide (2011) skin bleaching in Nigeria is based on ideas of the inferiority of dark skin and the attractiveness of light skin. This is a cross gender phenomenon in common with South Africa, as a

study of market traders in Lagos showed that 27.6% of men and 49.7% of women bleached (Olumide, 2011). According to Olumide (2011: 245) the harm caused by skin lightening creams because ‘they alter the chemical structure of the skin by inhibiting the synthesis of melanin’, means that they should be regulated as drugs rather than assumed to be merely cosmetics. In 1995, the Nigerian Food, Cosmetics and Drugs Regulatory Agency prohibited the manufacture and sale of cosmetics containing hydroquinone and mercury but endorsed a new cosmetic product, ‘Venus Skin Toning Cream’ (Olumide, 2011). State endorsement of a product could mean that as a whole Nigeria sees skin bleaching/lightening/toning not as an issue to do with low self-esteem, or not wanting to be Black and that lightness is not an ‘unnatural’ desire on the part of Nigerians. The name ‘toning cream’ also removes it from the realms of dangerous bleaching whilst ‘Venus’ relates it to that goddess’s alabaster skinned beauty. As cosmopolitan, Nigerians also have an eye to lighter/darker skin globally as can be seen if we look at the ‘Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria’ (MBGN) beauty pageant from which the winner is sent to Miss World and Miss Universe (Oluwakemi, 2012). Miss Universe is part of Donald Trump’s corporate enterprises and is focused on modelling so the MBGN chooses someone tall, slim and dark-skinned because dark skin is seen as ‘exotic’ within modelling as we can see from the example of Alek Wek and actress Lupita Nyong’o as one of the 2015 faces of the *Lancôme Advanced Genifique* campaign. Miss World is a British pageant owned by the Morley family, and although it is flexible with height and shape the MBGN winner must be lighter skinned (Oluwakemi, 2012). In Nigeria, lighter skin is part of the socio-cultural landscape whether it is produced by bleaching or not and it is something that can be strategically used for different purposes locally and globally.

To circumvent bans on toxic products new ingredients of unknown toxicity to humans, such as niacinamide, oxybenzone and triethanolamine, have been introduced into the Nigerian market (Olumide, 2011). Some products are not adequately labelled and lax regulation means bleachers in Nigeria have access to substandard and misbranded toxic products which have led to more intractable complications because of ‘the additives and the methods of application’ (ibid. 346). Bleaching in Nigeria continues to be driven by other factors besides government backing for a product, such as treating skin blemishes. Further, prominent women such as those in the entertainment industry lighten their skin and compared with non-bleachers, bleachers think that lighter skin

has a role in self-esteem, perceptions of beauty and youth, marriage and employment opportunities (Olumide, 2011).

According to Carolyn Cooper (2004) there is a trend in the contemporary Caribbean of darker skinned Black women bleaching usually their face and neck to approximate the light skinned ideal in an attempt to erase racial identity. She asserts that the 'mask of "lightness", however medically dangerous, is a 'therapeutic signifier' of status 'in a racist society that privileges melanin deficiency as a sign of beauty' (ibid. 135). However, she also notes that the meanings of skin bleaching to its practitioners are complicated and, therefore, need not be read as being only about the erasure of racial identity which she explicates through her example of a Jamaican skin-bleaching male DJ. He had what she calls a 'practical sense of seasonal browning' in which he knew that lighter skin was not an essential part of his identity but much more of a fashion accessory that would enable his visibility in the Christmas season, his peak time for event bookings (ibid. 137). Bleaching is contentious, but the DJ illustrates that it is not about imitating a light/white ideal. Instead, it is about re-presenting 'the original browning' – the person born light skinned – as a construction in a way which is meaningful to the bleacher. This construction simultaneously makes his own darker skinned Blackness clear as he becomes a 'bleached browning'.

Thinking about aesthetics and dancehall women in Jamaica, Bibi Bakere-Yusuf supports Cooper's view of skin bleaching 'as a superficial form of styling, nothing more than an appropriative aestheticization of a bodily form, a simple borrowing from another representational regime' (Cooper, 2004:139). Bleaching is not about a desire by dancehall women and other bleachers in Jamaica to become that which they are miming – 'the original browning' – as they already make a distinction between this and their own 'bleached browning' location. Thus, we should think about bleaching as a 'superficial form of styling, [...] another form of adornment, along the same lines as wearing green or pink wigs or wearing latex batty riders' (ibid. 139). It is adornment through the skin, not identification, which is significant here.

Skin shade has mattered for centuries in the African American community. For example, the paper bag test was used to determine eligibility for membership in elite organizations (Glenn, 2008). There are references to African Americans using powders and skin bleaches in the Black press from the 1850s and by the 1880s advertisements for skin bleaches appeared in the Black press (ibid. 2008). For instance, a Crane

and Company advertisement promised to turn Black and brown skin 5/6 shades lighter and a 'mulatto' completely white (Peiss, 2011). Lighteners and bleaches had been sold to African American women by white owned businesses, for example, 'Nadinola' made by the National Toilet Company and 'Black and White Cream' made by Plough Chemicals (later named Plough Shearing), which are existing brands today (Glenn, 2008). They were also sold by businesses owned by Black men-Kashmir, Dr Palmer, Poro, Overton – which did not use mercury but products like hydrogen peroxide and borax (Peiss, 2011). Key women entrepreneurs such as Annie Turnbo Malone and Madame C.J. Walker refused to sell these products (Black, 2004; Glenn, 2008). During Walker's lifetime her product ads represented racial pride and were opposed to 'whiteness' or 'lightness' (Baldwin, 2008). Her 1928 ad promised to bring out the beauty of already existing Blackness by bestowing 'transparent tone' to both darker and lighter skin (The Modern Girl Around The World Research Group, 2008: 44). Walker canvassed the US and the Caribbean selling her products (Baldwin, 2008). However, after her death in 1919 her successor F.B. Ransom produced 'Tan-Off' which was a best seller in the 1920s and 1930s (Glenn, 2008).

In the Black community, beauty culture was a political issue long before second and third wave feminism and post-feminism made it so (Peiss, 2011). Throughout the 20th century, many African Americans decried bleaching as white emulation and Black self-hatred, but advertisements for skin bleaches continued in such Black publications as Marcus Garvey's *Negro World*, the *Chicago Defender* and the *Crusader* (Glenn, 2008). By the late 1950s and into the 1960s, African American political activism became linked to beauty culture. The Black Power movement politicized appearance which led to decreasing use of skin lighteners and hair straighteners and a critique of the beauty industry linked it to white supremacy in the service of white capitalist profit from which Black people did not benefit (Black, 2004). Ronald Hall's (2006) work on the United States finds what he termed a statistically significant relationship between self-identified skin colour correlated with light skin colour, which, for him, provided evidence for 'the bleaching syndrome'. Hall relates this to the long history of the establishment of European whiteness/ Black lightness as the aesthetic ideal, which links skin bleaching to white domination. I would like to reiterate, in common with Evelyn Nakano Glenn (2008), that as is the case in other Black Atlantic sites, lighter skin is valorised, *not* white skin. Further, as is the case for

Black Atlantic sites of bleaching, we need to think about what ideal is being internalized and emulated. That is, we need to think about what shade governmentalities are being mobilized across the Black Atlantic and within specific spaces.

In her review of discussions on skin lightening on internet forums, Glenn (2008) found that most women wanted ‘to be two/three shades lighter’ or ‘to get rid of dark spots and freckles’, or ‘to even out their skin tone’. These are all effects that skin lighteners claim to produce. It is clearly not the white Western ideal that is being sought or marketed. Instead, perhaps it is a combination of a local and Black diasporic ideal of light-skinned mixedness that circulates through iconic skin, such as that of Beyoncé (lightened in L’Oreal ads and on her album covers), Nicki Minaj (a dougla Trinidadian skin lightener), Mariah Carey (of African-American and US-white ‘mixed-race’), Alicia Keys (of Jamaican [already a ‘mixed-race’ category] and European American descent), Hallé Berry (of African-American and white English ‘mixed-race’), Thandi Newton (of white English and Black Zimbabwean ‘mixed-race’) and Rihanna (a ‘mixed-race’ Barbadian). This circulation of lighter skin and lighter skinned mixedness makes it necessary to look at the racial grammar of skin bleaching as not necessarily being about subjectivation to the governmentality of continuing white supremacy.

The ‘racial grammar’ of skin lightening and debating skin bleaching as a remnant of global white supremacy

There is a ‘racial grammar’ (Bonilla-Silva, 2014) of skin lightening, as we can see from the brief history of this practice in selected Black Atlantic sites above. This racial grammar is inextricably linked to the pigmentocracy of enslavement, colonialism and post-colonialism. Colonial skin shade hierarchies still affect psyche and social life across the Black Atlantic because of the embeddedness of skin colour within power and privilege structures. Indeed, power and privilege can still be read from skin itself. This is even the case when we see mixedness being positioned as the marker of the nation as in some Caribbean states, or when mixedness is held up as the ‘post-race’ aesthetic even though this transports inherent anti-African Black darker-skinned racism. Thus, one aspect of the racial grammar of skin lightening is this very dislike of darker skin which we see in Fanon’s (1986) description of

the problematics of the colonial psyche where Africa and the African are feared, viewed with disgust and contempt and vilified as the uncivilized, base, inhuman, immoral, ugly (Mbembe, 2001). However, as I said above, I want to propose that we do not need to assume that skin lightening in the 21st century is linked to this white constructed Black negation. This is so, as we see another versioning of Black skin colour politics springing out of the Black Nationalist vision. This re-versioning of Black skin colour politics is also cognizant of the very way in which shade still configures Black darker-skinned lives and the representational strategies which makes darker skin inassimilable within the nation. This is the case even within global post-Obama politics and those countries putatively described as Black by government, the ancestry of their people, self-naming and geo-political location. Thus it is that skin lightening can itself be seen to be a critique of existing pigmentocracies as the practice makes such societal structures visible.

Therefore, we can change the orientation from bleaching/lightening/toning being a symptom of white supremacy and Black pathology. That is, we can decentre whiteness and decolonize bleaching, if we ask some 'what if' questions in terms of the impact of global white supremacy. I will not dispute the position of the impact of global white supremacy but merely shift the reasoning somewhat. What if local whiteness/lightness no longer has traction as the ideal because of modern Blackness as is the case in Jamaica (Thomas, 2004; Tate, 2009)? Here modern Blackness signifies that the urban poor dispossessed and working class Jamaicans have engaged with an aesthetic parsing of 'browning' through bleaching to insert their own aesthetic socio-political and affective histories within the dispossession within which they find themselves. This would mean that the self-hate/ low self-esteem/ identity crisis explanations based on the continuation of white supremacy's aesthetic impact would founder. Further, what if that European-US whiteness no longer has traction nationally because of the socio-economic and political significance of individuals of non-European ancestry, such as Arabs and Indians in Tanzania (Frisch, 2014) and Chinese, Lebanese, Syrian, Jewish, and light-skinned people in Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago (Tate, 2015b)? What if looking 'mixed' rather than being a lightness which necessarily comes from Black-white mixing and UK-US racial hierarchies and pigmentocracy is the global aesthetic ideal? What if this new global aesthetic of mixedness also includes its production by skin bleaching? What if bleaching produces new 'race' performativity which unsettle global racial

certainties in which the racial capital of lightness can be bought rather than merely born? What if this very buying and application of the ‘mask’ of lightness removes the aesthetic, cultural, social, political and affective value of whiteness in (post)colonial, ‘post-race’ times?

The processes and institutionalization of light skin privilege are themselves contested through bleaching/ lightening/ toning if we look at the ‘race’ performativity that is instantiated when the bleacher applies the creams, lotions, takes the pills, has the injections, is hooked up to intravenous drips, inserts the suppository into the anus, or uses the soaps. ‘Race’ performativity – being lighter skinned through bleaching in, for example, Ghana and Jamaica, in which white is no longer European or white American – decolonizes the Manicheism of Black and white skin essentialism so necessary for the white supremacy argument. This is so, as it makes us note that ‘race’ is brought into being onto the surface of the body through the ‘race’-ing stylization of the process and products of bleaching as well as through recognition as a bleached Black body (Tate, 2009). Further as my own work (2009, 2010; 2015a,b), Frisch’s (2014) on Tanzania; Hope’s (2009; 2010) and Brown-Glaude’s (2007) on Jamaica show, whiteness is not what is being aimed for at all. Rather, what is being sought is approximation to *local lighter* skin aesthetic ideals which are linked into national political economy, status hierarchies and libidinal economies. Skin bleaching/lightening/toning produces a multiplicity of bleached Black shades which practitioners know are approximations and, as experience has taught, these approximations are reversible if the treatments discontinue. However, women with financial resources such as Kenyan model Vera Sidika insisted in a television interview that her skin lightening was permanent <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1YEdTBhoY3c> accessed 20 May, 2015). She had her lightening done by a dermatologist in the UK at a cost of 15 million Kenyan shillings. She had the procedure done because her business as a ‘socialite’ is dependent on her body looking good and she claimed the change had already helped her with bookings. Every part of her body has been lightened she claimed and ‘if you do it the right way you stay that way forever’. It is after all only *bleaching* that is done ‘in the River Road’ but she has paid millions to be irreversibly *lightened*. In being a lightener who does it the right way she establishes herself as a taste former and cultural intermediary between the UK technology of skin lightening and the Kenyan/ wider African continental public.

Thus the 'authentic Black skin' becomes mobile through bleaching much as the notion of 'authentic white skin' does and indeed identification with whiteness as the norm, the ideal is undermined (Tate, 2005; 2009; 2010; 2015b). Therefore, if we think of skin bleaching as decolonizing practice we decentre whiteness and tropes of authentic Blackness in terms of skin. Instead, as decolonizing practice bleaching reinstates Black skin multiplicity as normative and as achievable cosmetically. It thus gives us another purchase on 'natural' and 'unnatural' lightness. That is, lightness as related to descent *vis a vis* lightness as purchased and reveals the slippages in the continuing privilege of chromatism. In the racial grammar of skin lightening, the 'third space skins' produced by bleaching/lightening/toning point to changing racial configurations in Black states as well as globally because whiteness is decentred and Black multiplicity is re-centred even whilst we know that skin shade can also be faked.

Faking it, 'post-race' aesthetics and looking lighter: Mshoza and Dencia as 'third space' skins

Homi Bhabha's (1990) idea of the 'third space' of identification makes us see that bleaching/ lightening/ toning are practices of stylization and therefore normalized *as Black* aesthetic practice, though they continue to be contested. As 'third space' practices they are translations which never reproduce the original because of the original's very (im)possible claim to authenticity. The skins produced through bleaching/lightening/toning become Baudrillardian (1981) simulacra. They are endlessly reproduced without any recourse to what can putatively be established as the original. It is this very difference that is productive of skin bleaching / lightening/toning's mimicry (Bhabha,1994). For Homi Bhabha (1994), in the colonial context mimicry is one of the strategies of colonial power/knowledge as the colonizer requires the colonized other to adopt *his* values and norms.

Anne McClintock (1995) critiques Bhabha's work for its ungendered mimicry which also ignores class in its focus on 'race'. For her, his mimicry is a male elite strategy which does not distinguish between colonial and anticolonial mimicry. Bhabha's linkage of mimicry to hybridity makes mimicry's *decolonial* potential clear in terms of identifications, politics and ideology. It is this linkage which is the threat to colonial power as

colonial mimicry is about the civilizing mission and the production of mimic men. However, Bhabha's *decolonial* mimicry looks at hybridity as a displacement of the eye of power, a refusal of its surveillance of bodies and their interpellation as this or that. He shows that there have always been reciprocities and negotiations across the colonial divide which makes the relationship between the colonizer and colonized complex, ruptured and rife with contestation. The hybrid mimicry Bhabha writes is a 'speaking back' that produces something other than was entailed through colonial discourse's construction of the other. Here I want to read 'speaking back' not as literally *speaking* but as a decolonial mimicry which involves *translation* of Blacknesses across the diaspora and the inscription of different shades of lightness onto bodies through the 'race'-ing stylization of skin bleaching. Such decolonial mimicry re-produces that which is constructed as authentic, that is Black skin, as an undecidable (Derrida, 2002).

Black skin as undecidable is ultimately politically unsettling. It unsettles the givens and norms of white supremacy and pigmentocracy because it continually reveals their very lack of fixity. In other words, it reveals their skin ideal precariousness. We can say then that bleaching/lightening/toning never really constitute a third skin term once and for all because 'the bleached brown' is itself multi-shaded. Skin shade is made undecidable by stylization practices so that different meanings emerge as skin colour shifts between the Black darker skin/lighter skin binary as neither/ nor and either/or. However, the endless shifting between poles called into being by skin shade undecidability is halted by the body as racialized sign of otherness. This means that bodies racialized as Black also over-determine the possibility of translation of lighter skin and can never occupy the location of white skin. When something other is produced through the translation of skin bleaching/lightening/toning, the body speaks such translation as Black and it speaks the body as Black through the discourses and processes of production in which it is embedded.

The Black body also continues to be reproduced through another speaking back which interpellates the bleached Black body as lack, as a Black *not*. That is, a speaking back to colonial discourses on the Black other and Black Nationalist discourses on the Black self which expect specific responses. In not finding those responses they resort to invocations of Black pathology – low self-esteem, racial hatred, betrayal of 'the race' – which become stock negations of bleachers. Bleaching/

lightening/toning as ‘race’-ing stylization practices (Tate, 2009) deny the racialized discourse of white beauty iconicity *and* destabilize the Black anti-racist racializing discourse on authentic Blackness. In this denial and destabilization what I call ‘en-racing’ occurs (Tate, 2009). By en-racing, as I showed in my previous work (Tate, 2005), I mean that ‘race’ is performative. Thus, ‘race’ can be evoked differently, and its ‘certainties’ can be disrupted through stylization and its various wilfully produced embodiments. In this en-racing, discourses on/of Blackness and the value of Black skins are never replaced permanently with a new paradigm. Rather, in this skin mimicry, which speaks back to both white supremacy and Black Nationalist discourses of pathology, skins are made mobile and faking lightness is now an integral part of ‘post-race’ Black aesthetics.

On Youtube, for example, there is a video from Lightsculpt Aesthetic Clinic Pty Ltd which shows Khanyi Mbau and Nomasonto ‘Mshoza’ Maswanganyi – South Africa’s most famous skin lightener – having intravenous ‘skin brightening treatment’ with Glutathione. They both say they are having the treatment ‘to look beautiful for the summer’ thereby inviting viewers to come and share in the treatment. Interviewed on BBC News in 2011 Mshoza caused a stir. The newscaster said that in South Africa researchers estimate that 1 in every three women lighten their skins some using legal products and some illegal ones. In this interview Mshoza said that she engages in skin transformation treatment to be ‘light not white’, she is ‘still Black’ and ‘Black is beautiful after all’. She lightened her skin because she wanted to see ‘the other side’, she just wanted to be light skinned. She still sings Kwaito, has Black kids and a Black man and doesn’t think that lightening her skin has changed her ‘inner me’. It is not about being Black or white but about being light. She is ‘white for Black’ (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=usR-uTFc3og> accessed 1st April, 2015).

In ‘Mshoza Exit interview’ she says that bleaching is nothing, it is just a part of beauty so ‘don’t worry about it’. They (bleachers) do it because they love it and they won’t stop whatever is said. It is just like changing your style or your makeup (Katch it with Kanyi https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=52r_ok5Yv7o accessed 1st April, 2015). She highlights what has been said earlier about lightness as the ideal and lightening as stylization placed as being like applying make-up. However, what can she mean when she says she is ‘white for Black’? Clearly, ‘white’ here cannot mean that she thinks that she has crossed the racial lines into whiteness in

South Africa. What she shows in being ‘white for Black’ is that whiteness is not a stable, naturally given aesthetic category not that she is a dupe of white supremacy as her ‘inner me’ has not changed. Mshoza makes clear that stylization technologies can make one light looking enough to destabilize the colour line and whiteness could potentially be occupied by a variety of skin shades – as it indeed already is. If racial structuration and the essentialist notion of ‘race’ allowed it, bleached Black skin could also occupy that position. Using ‘white’ as a description of bleached skin appears repeatedly across the Black Atlantic even though bleachers know that their ‘whiteness’ is impossible in societies structured by white racial dominance.

In 2013 Nigerian-Cameroonian pop star Dencia became the spokesperson / spokeswoman for her own line *Whitenicious* dark spot remover and since then she has been the centre of controversy. She is called out as ‘race traitor’ in interview after interview on whether or not she is a good role model for young Black women; questioned about if she bleaches because she hates being Black following the Black anti-racist aesthetics rejection of skin bleaching; and asked why she is selling a skin bleaching product as a ‘dark spot remover’. In a television interview rebroadcast on Youtube as ‘The Advise Show: Self-hating Dencia Defends Whitenicious and Says White is Pure’, Dencia says she does not equate ‘looking lighter with looking beautiful’ and everyone can look however they want to look. Whitenicious is a dark spot corrector and the ‘icious’ means whitening is pure not white skin in general. Her product is a way for Black women to ‘say goodbye to dark spots and hyper-pigmentation’ (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3yeKTEeMGUe> accessed April 2nd, 2015). She claims to not be selling anything other than a dark spot corrector and that 50% of her clients are African American. She asserts that she was not uncomfortable with her skin colour and that was not the reason for her change. The percentage of African Americans consuming the product supports what was said earlier about the United States as a zone of contemporary skin bleaching/lightening/toning.

‘BBC News – Focus on Africa’ also interviewed Dencia in ‘Skin whitening what Africa’s ‘Lady Gaga’ really thinks’ (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HHPMSODEhe4> accessed April 2nd, 2015). Here Dencia says that she uses what she sells. She uses a dark spot remover. For her nothing is wrong with being Black and skin change ‘just happens’. When pressed by the interviewer about why she bleaches in terms of self-hatred she asks a very apposite question: ‘Why do you perm your hair?’ Getting

no reply, she then says that the reason the presenter perms her hair is the same reason Dencia does what she does. By making this response, Dencia places skin bleaching as being related to a variety of motivations, and she also positions it as a normal practice of beautification, much in the same vein as perming hair. Linking it to hair is also interesting, as she shows her awareness of the politics of hair and skin alteration that is very much alive in the Black Atlantic.

In 'Dencia interview on the Magazine Show@DaMagazineshow' ([https:// www.youtube.com/watch?v=IuQwr2dBoYY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IuQwr2dBoYY) accessed 2 April 2015), Dencia again admits to bleaching herself but maintains that there is not enough product in a bottle of 'Whitenicious' to bleach the whole body, as it is a dark spot corrector. Bleaching her skin was not something she had thought about her whole life. She had acne spots and went to a dermatologist in Beverley Hills who treated these with bleaching agent. For Dencia, changing skin colour is not about being happy, sad or having low self-esteem: it was entirely her own choice. She merely got into a market that does not have much competition because people have been bleaching for ages, but she is capitalizing on a dark spot/hyper-pigmentation remover. Clearly, the market was there, because it sold out within 24 hours of being released. Bleach is the only way, Dencia claims, to get rid of hyper-pigmentation. Whatever we might think of her – and generally the media presents her as someone who as a role model for young Black women should know better than to bleach her skin and to sell this product – we should say that dark spot correctors have been on the market for some time. This has been the case for the assumed white market, with brands like Clinique, and there has been absolutely no media furore about this. Dencia's lightened skin, blonde wigs, breast and bottom enhancements a la Nicki Minaj have made her fair game for a media which she says we should not be influenced by.

Conclusion

Skin bleaching/ lightening/ toning has been shown as a global issue which is not just pertinent for the body of Black women but which sticks obstinately to that body as prime vilified site of the practice. This chapter set out to look at the white supremacy history of skin bleaching whilst critiquing global white supremacy as the explanation for skin transformation. It sought to destabilize the Manicheanism of iconic whiteness

and authentic Blackness in the skin lightening debate and instead to think through 'post-race' skin bleaching/ lightening/ toning within the 'third space skins' of Dencia and Mshoza. Both of these women claim to not want to be white, and thus, they resist whiteness as a normative aesthetic orientation and locate it as an impossibility for an African woman. They want to embody a lightness that is not antithetical to Blackness but an integral part of it though one not fixated on the idea of darker skin as authentically Black. It is in the interstices of these two positions that refuse Manicheanism that 'third space' skins emerge. Both Dencia and Mshoza unashamedly admit to practicing skin lightening. They embrace 'fakeness' as part of a beauty regime which they can afford as celebrities. Buying social and aesthetic capital is part of the arsenal of celebrity female life when the body is expected to show skin distinction and class position through consumption as that is what counts in 'bling culture' (Tate, 2009). Lightening one's skin speaks to infamy or fame simultaneously depending on one's political position on skin bleaching / lightening /toning which adds to one's celebrity status. The next chapter takes up the discussion of one of the ideological and psychologized positions on Black skin colour transformation, that of self-hatred.

2

Self-Hate: An Old Debate Revisited

Abstract: Bleaching/lightening/toning is affective, whether vilified by non-bleachers or valorised in communities forged through pain in Jamaica and South Africa.

Bleaching produces bodies and communities engaged in 'race' performativity, which does not produce the failed whitening of colonial mimicry. Instead, it produces a third body which actively engages critique of the political economy of Black Atlantic skin inequality. Bleaching makes the body's subalternity known through its marks on the body and recoups social, cultural, political, affective and economic capital from the transnational community of bleachers. Wilful failure, through the repeat of 'the original browning' critiques the symbolic /material boundaries of class, 'race' and colour inequality. Thus, self-hate and low self-esteem do not drive skin bleaching, and lightness is the global Black skin ideal, which is re-versioned.

Tate, Shirley Anne. *Skin Bleaching in Black Atlantic Zones: Shade Shifters*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

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This chapter takes on the old debate of skin lightening as the direct consequence and signifier of Black self-hate and low self-esteem by going beyond this to continue to look at skin's fluidity. It begins by looking at whether or not there is a difference between Black and white shame in terms of skin lightening, a comparison made specifically to delve into what it is about Black skin lightening that makes it less valuable societally and the source of racialized body stigma. This is accomplished through the use of the Jamaican animated satire, 'Penado go farrin for the summer', interviews with Mshoza, and the TVJ (19 June 2013) 'All Angles' documentary on skin bleaching in Jamaica as data. The chapter argues that we can read from, and into, this practice to see it as a marker of practitioners' awareness of skin shade fluidity, classed shade boundaries, the economic benefits of lighter skin and engagement with risk and pain, as skin is treated as a commodity in the trade in shade aesthetics and affects. US-UK 'post-race' sensibilities encourage us to think about identifications and bodies as fluid. This is by way of going beyond the essentialism of 'race' certainty towards unsettling the givens of 'race' and racial identities. However, the workings of 'race' enable some bodies (white) to be fluid, and even to disappear from view, while leaving others perpetually marked by 'race' (Yancy, 2008; Mills, 1997; Fanon, 1986), as we see in Jamaican modern Blackness. This is well illustrated if we include the workings of class and masculinity into the discussion. The bleached darker-skinned Black man's body – as exemplified by Vbyz Kartel, the bleached 'bad man' in Jamaican dancehall culture and a bleaching entrepreneur – enables a discussion of a bleached Black masculinity which is conscious of its production of an-other Black man's body. For Kartel, this does not mean he is no longer Black, nor has he forgotten the Black Nationalist teachings of Marcus Garvey. Cognizant of his Blackness, he brings another Black male, working class body, based on the insurrection of class critique, into view through bleaching as convivial practice and cultural aesthetic, rather than that produced through the failed 'whitening' of colonial mimicry (Bhabha, 1994) and colonial psyche (Fanon, 1986). First, let us revisit the debate on self-hatred, white supremacy and darker-skinned shame as the basis for skin lightening.

Debating skin lightening, Black self-hatred and shame

For some commentators, the quest for lightness is shown by the rise in the use of skin lighteners within the Black Atlantic world and globally

(Glenn, 2008; Hunter, 2011). This is said to be driven by the devaluation of darker skin, which is a remnant of colonialism and its inculcation of the 'white skin ideal' as an ideology which still resonates in today's world and in countries long independent from European empires. This ideology is seen to have so much traction that some critics still focus on white supremacy as the driver of skin bleaching (Hunter, 2011; Blay, 2011). Indeed, if we look at the media consternation at the changing skin and hair colour of Brazilian footballer, Neymar, we can see their reading of his transformation as being a reflection of his internalization of white supremacist aesthetics in Brazil and globally. Read by the media as an attempt at racial change, Neymar's transformation – lighter skin and blonde hair – is seen as a signifier of his racial shame and his visible admission of his own anti-Black 'race' hate. Lightened skin and bleached blonde hair are read almost as if it was anti-Black racial hate speech embodied by a 'mixed-race' Brazilian man. It is not read as stylization. This reading of Neymar's skin and hair relates to the colonial discourse on Black 'race' shame because of features constructed as Black. Living in a world in which darker skin has little value can lead to the attachment of shame to embodiment judged as African continental/African descent especially if this is impacted on by daily experiences of racism and colourism (Tate, 2009).

Shame is very often a transitory affect (Tate, 2009; 2013). It may be experienced very intensely in, through and on the body because of humiliation (Sedgwick, 2003), being made to feel ashamed. Further, such experiences can be sedimented in the psyche as shame scripts (Munt; 2007; Probyn, 2005). The psyche here refers not only to the darker-skinned person/group being demarcated as shameful, but also the lighter-skinned or white group which shames because it has the aesthetic, ideological, socio-political and economic power to do so. Shame scripts are re-stimulated on the part of the shamed so that they feel ashamed in the face of the reproduction of their bodies, persons and characters as shameful. Through the discursive and structural positioning of dark skin as valueless, lighter skin as potentially more valuable, and white skin as ideal in societies structured by racial dominance, different 'shame scripts' (Munt, 2007) and subjectivities as shamer/shamed are produced. Teresa Brennan (2004) speaks about the transmission of affect within and between groups across time and space, and this applies to the aesthetic 'race' shame of skin. Skin shame can continue to be felt trans-generationally because shaming skin judgements are made

based on racialized beauty ideals. Shaming skin judgements not only tell us who we are, but also make us aware that someone else has power over us: power to hurt us and mark our consciousness through that injury (Munt, 2007). Shaming skin judgements emerge from within and without the Black communities within the diaspora, where being lighter skinned continues to bestow value to bodies because lightness still has social, cultural, economic and aesthetic capital. However, it is also the case that Black Nationalist politics mean that shaming skin judgements simultaneously emerge for those who visibly bleach and damage their skin. The medical profession also vilifies bleachers who risk their skin and bodily health through the use of hydroquinone, mercury and corticosteroids.

For Nakedi Ribane (2006), lighter skin preference in South Africa is the by-product of both English and Dutch colonialism and traditional African aesthetics. Colonialism brought with it a reverence for all things white, and 'coloured beauty' is still at the forefront of South African beauty today. 'So-called "Coloured" models are sometimes referred to in the industry as "cappuccinos". If the models are Black, they have to be really dark, and then they get treated as a novelty – exotic and erotic' (Ribane, 2006: 11). Traditionally, in South Africa, for a woman to be considered beautiful, she would have to be 'well fed and healthy, with a buxom body and shapely legs [...] good complexion and [...] strong, white teeth' (ibid.: 19). For Ribane, beauty extends beyond the physical, because a woman also has to be a hard worker as well as respectful of the elders and her culture. So beauty is not just about skin. The introduction to this book established the emergence of lightness as ideal in the Caribbean, the UK, Ghana and the United States, so it will not be repeated here. What Ribane's (2006) analysis shows is that across the Black Atlantic, far from being able to judge skin shade value impartially, discourses of the impossibility of the beauty of darker skin can produce racialized skin shame linked to the continuing haunting spectre of colonial constructs of Black ugliness – read as physical, moral, social and cultural.

However, Black skin's history has not only been about shame. The emergence of Black Atlantic diaspora-derived counter-discourses to white skin's iconicity began in at least the 19th century in the United States (Rooks, 1996; Baldwin, 2008). Inspired by Garveyism, Jamaica's Rastafarianism in the 1930s insisted on the value of Black people and darker skin; in the 1960s, Black Power in the United States, the UK

and the Caribbean, and 1970s Afro-aesthetics in Brazil continued this valorization. The basis of this valorization is a Black anti-racist aesthetics which is a cultural criticism constructed from efforts to grapple with the governmentality of the Manicheanism of white beauty/Black ugliness in Black experiences (Taylor, 2000). All skin is a potential reservoir of shame, as we see from the disdain meted out to bleachers, distrust of the Black identity and politics of the lighter skinned, and the contempt for *puok* (white people) in Jamaica. Although shame is culturally instituted – situated in discourses maintained by politics – Black anti-racist aesthetics show that it is capable of transformation by communal and individual practices so that self-hatred ceases. However, Black self-hatred as a by-product of white supremacy still continues to be used as a reason for skin bleaching in scholarly texts and is a viral form of vilification of bleachers on many Internet sites.

The claim of Black self-hatred points to the need to look at psychology and sociology, from whence these claims have arisen in scholarly work. For Marcia Elizabeth Sutherland (2011), Western psychology derives from Graeco-Roman culture and philosophy. Psychology was developed in the US and Europe to explain the psychology of people of white European descent, and it assimilated the norms and values of the Western white social order, such as universalism, logical positivism, rationalism, the Cartesian mind-body dualism and Social Darwinism (*ibid.*). People of African descent have mostly been neglected in psychological research, and when it has been done, they have been negatively positioned as deficient in terms of the white standard against which they are judged. This judgement of deficiency reveals the longstanding contempt for people of African descent (*ibid.*).

Christopher A.D. Charles' (2003) work on skin bleaching, self-hate and Black identity in Jamaica set out to test this Afro-centric claim premised on assumptions about the persistent psychological scars of enslavement and simultaneous internalization of Black inferiority and ugliness. He compared the self-esteem scores of a small convenience sample of skin bleachers with those of a control sample who did not bleach. He found that skin bleaching did not occur because of low self-esteem. Instead, there were a variety of reasons for it, as there is a range of Black identities in a nation where 90% of the population is of African descent and proclaims itself to be Black. In a subsequent study, Charles (2009a) completed a content analysis of the reasons participants gave for bleaching their skins. He found that they bleach to remove facial blemishes, make their faces 'cool',

conform to peer influence, lighten their complexion, appear beautiful, attract a partner, follow a popular fad, and have the visual stimulus of the bleached skin, which makes them feel good (Charles 2009a). Undeniably, though, skin bleaching in Jamaica occurs within the hegemony of lightness as ideal, which guides the behaviour of skin bleachers (ibid.).

According to Sutherland (2011:1186), research in the Caribbean basin suggests that some Black children dislike being Black, as 'they believe they would be rich if they were born white'. This finding alludes to the children's astute reading of continuing white economic and societal privilege in the Caribbean (Tate and Law, 2015a). Further, Black skin remains a site of shame (is shameful) because of continuing Eurocentrism, and there are people who possess a 'roast-breadfruit mentality' – highly Europeanized, Black on the outside and white on the inside (ibid.). Elite Jamaicans of all shades of skin and racial backgrounds find expressions of 'African Black consciousness such as Black History Month, Emancipation Day or Marcus Garvey's philosophy unsettling' (ibid.). In Jamaica and other societies, people bleach to achieve a lighter skin tone – known as 'browning' – which is perceived to be attractive and related to upward social mobility in Caribbean societies (ibid.). So, again, there is an astute reading of the existing link between colour and societal status – pigmentocracy – and aesthetic action taken to circumvent it.

Writing from the viewpoint of the early 1970s, an important point in terms of 'Black is beautiful' politics in the United States, Jerold Heiss and Susan Owens (1972: 360) claimed that for many years there had been 'the firmly entrenched sociological truism' that Black people had lower self-esteem than whites. There also seemed to be repeated studies such as Clark and Clark's (1958) now discredited 'doll studies', and the evidence of hair straightening and skin bleaching as everyday practices in Black communities, which were used to support the claim of low self-esteem. Many studies subsequently showed that the view of Black self-hate was methodologically flawed, and indeed, it is wrong to assume that Black people use 'whites as significant others' (Heiss and Owens, 1972). Rather, they use more achievable and relevant Black models (ibid.: 361). Further, criteria of worth may not necessarily be those of the dominant society, and a 'system blame interpretation of failure' insulates against poor self-esteem (ibid.). This study also found that in terms of the association between light skin and high evaluation of such skin, darker skinned people do not consider themselves unattractive, so there is no evidence that Blacks are crippled by low self-esteem (ibid.).

Lighter skin undeniably has social capital (Glenn, 2008), which, for Margaret Hunter (2011), darker-skinned people buy as ‘racial capital’ through skin bleaching, as stated above. However, this is not to say that Black men and women have internalized global white supremacy and succumbed to its discourse of darker skin as valueless. What these studies show us in terms of building a critique of the self-hate and low self-esteem hypotheses is the socio-economic basis of continuing darker skinned African descent oppression and the ideological, political, aesthetic and psychological mystifications that occlude it through the very terms ‘self-hate’ and ‘low self-esteem.’ They occlude the fact that in the Black Atlantic, we exist within what Paul Gilroy (2004) calls a ‘racial nomos – a legal, governmental, and spatial order’ which is resistant to change. In this order, transnationally, ‘race’ is reified as skin colour, and through that genetic inheritance is read as an unseen force which determines one’s current life chances and future prospects. Black self-hate and low self-esteem as individualized and communal pathology erase anti-Black African descent racism. They also erase the astute readings and critiques of social conditions and politics which skin bleachers make. We will see this as we turn now to readings of Ludlow Penado, the TVJ documentary, and, again, to South Africa’s Mshoza.

Ludlow Penado, TVJ, Mshoza and the value of Black skin

The short Jamaican animated comedy, ‘Penado Go Farrin for the Summer’, deals with skin bleaching among school children in Jamaica and presents an anti-bleaching point of view: Ludlow Penado is shamed by his teacher. It begins with a darker-skinned teacher watching the children coming into school and praising their attention to the school uniform requirements. Penado’s appearance – a light face and darker arms and neck, his ‘Apple Bottom’ skin-tight khaki trousers, with his knock knees very evident – makes the teacher ask ‘Penado, is that you?’

Penado replies ‘Yes, sir.’ The teacher then asks, ‘When school went on holiday for the summer, what colour was your complexion? Speak up.’ Penado says, ‘I was kinda dark then, sir’, to which the teacher replies, ‘You were dark skinned. What is going on with your complexion? You are brown today.’ Penado then says that he went to New York for the summer and didn’t go outside, to which the teacher replies, ‘Air conditioning can’t make you so brown when yuh [you’re] dark skinned. Yuh bleaching!’

After Penado says that he is using a cream from the doctor for his eczema, and admits that his mother is also a bleacher, the teacher suspends him for ten days because he does not want his teachers to be confused as they had previously taught a Black child and are now teaching a brown man. Penado is told, 'Don't call the school; the school will call you!' (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TusGJjGLjMs>, accessed 1 February 2015).

Darker skin clearly has value in this cartoon, as skin bleaching within families, as well as the excuses used to hide the practice, are ridiculed and the bleacher punished by being excluded from the non-bleaching school community. This comedy illustrates that there is colourism in Jamaica as well as Black Nationalist pride. This pride leads to Ludlow's shaming, through its discourses of Eurocentric ideals from the United States that devalue Blackness being imported into Jamaica and becoming apparent through young people's product consumption and aesthetic practices.

This apparently also happens in actual fact, as we hear in the TVJ (2013) documentary from one of the interviewees, Monica, that at the start of the school year, children were excluded from school for bleaching. There is considerable state, elite, education and health authority surveillance in keeping bleaching outside of the school gates, keeping it within its more working class, assumed 'ghetto inner city' location. Children can only return to school once their colour is judged to have returned to 'normal', with no evidence of continued bleaching.

In the TVJ (19 June 2013) documentary 'All Angles – The Skin Bleaching Phenomenon', journalist Dionne Jackson Miller documents some bleachers' views (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OgxYhRcu7KM>, accessed 1 February 2015). One of her findings was that people bleached because of the 'fashion ova [over] style' aesthetic. In Jamaica, Bogle, a fashionista and legendary dance hall dancer, gave the most lasting gift to dancehall culture, the phrase 'fashion ova style'. Style is something you create or something that is of a certain time, which expresses its zeitgeist, such as 60s, 70s, or 80s style. It can also be a certain designer's trademark: for example, Coco Chanel's suits. Fashion is a trend that goes in and out and belongs to mass culture and its media apparatuses, which define and reproduce new trends. So fashion ova style speaks to being on trend.

Given its origins within dancehall culture, the phrase continues to be stylization's *raison de être*, whether for clothes, skin, nails or hair. Annette (TVJ, 2013), for example, describes what her skin bleaching was about and what it meant: 'Fashion ova style we'd ah seh. Mi pretty dem time. Mi did have a cousin and she was a original browning but mi

look like a white woman next to her' ['Fashion ova style, we'd say. I was pretty then. I had a cousin, and she was an original (born) browning, but I looked like a white woman next to her.'] When asked by the interviewer if she is not pretty when she does not bleach, Annette replied, 'The Black skin nuh guh whe ah jus fashion ova style ah duh it but my complexion much baddah. Mi love mi Black complexion' [The Black skin does not go away. It's just fashion ova style that is important, but my complexion is much more beautiful. I love my Black complexion.']. She is proud of bleaching and thinks she is still pretty when not bleaching, as she says she is 'pretty plus tax'.

Fashion ova style dictates whether she bleaches or not, rather than unhappiness with her skin colour. Wingie also supports this, saying, 'Ah di style. Is a fashion kinah ting like di clothes whe yuh wear' [It's the style. It's a fashion sort of thing, like the clothes that you wear.]. Like clothes, then, it can be taken on and off as the bleacher likes. Donna Hope (2009: 101) supports these bleachers' assertions of fashion ova style, saying

Current manifestations of skin lightening/bleaching are more appropriately associated with modern modes and models of appropriate fashion and style that are socially and culturally relevant on the terrain of identities that flit across dancehall's stage. Thus while skin bleaching is viewed as the epiphenomena of an identity in crisis or the effluent of mental instability, it is more appropriately figured as an almost grotesque reversion of ideas of beauty. In the final analysis when skin bleaching is coded as feminine by non-bleachers, it is figured as a gendered, aesthetic rite of a fashioned and styled personhood that reflects the Fashion Ova Style ethos of contemporary dancehall culture.

Hope's 'grotesque reversion of ideas of beauty' within the dancehall is an interesting point of view. First, she judges the reversioning as grotesque, and second, she sees beauty as performance. I would like to look at 'reversion' and 'grotesque' through both Jamaica's 'Jonkunu' and Mikhail Mikhaïlovich Bakhtin's (1984) 'carnival'. Jonkunu is a Christmas festival with roots going back to enslavement; it originated in 18th century Jamaica, then spread throughout the Anglophone enslavement territories. It was a Black saturnalia with origins in West Africa, in which the enslaved sang satirically against the masters in the Great House before returning to their own quarters to make music and dance as they liked. Originally, Jonkunu troupes comprised a mixed-gender chorus, masked and costumed, a lead dancer wearing a house-shaped head-dress, and a goombay drum – associated with the invocation of ancestral spirits – played with the hands. In Jamaica, Jonkunu is now largely practiced

within the context of the commodification of tourism or state sponsorship of folkloristic performance (<http://www.yale.edu/glc/belisario/Bilby.pdf> accessed 14 June 2015). Masking and satire enabled the enslaved to actively mock the white plantocracy and subvert the status quo through carnivalesque performances in which the goombay drum called on the ancestral spirits, even though African religious rites were forbidden by the plantocracy.

The carnivalesque brings us to Bakhtin's (1984) carnival – the lens through which I would like to link earlier Jonkunu sub-versions and dancehall culture's re-versions as subaltern resistance. Sub-versions here are both about transgression and a subalternity which does not enter representation (Spivak, 1994), whereas dancehall cultures do. In Jonkunu, as in dancehall, carnival temporarily abolishes societal rank. Like carnival, the dancehall is a space for the creation of a collective based on commonality, though one which is in a constant state of flux and renewal, rather than a fixed collective order. During the carnival of the dancehall, new selves emerge through excessive performances, including skin performances, which enable different voices to interact and be heard (Stanley-Niaah, 2006; Hope, 2011; Cooper, 2004). The dancehall is a space in which participants deconstruct dominant culture in terms of aesthetics, class, skin and taste, and replace this with a new libidinal economy based on equality as well as politico-social and cultural critique. Affectively, the dancehall space produces unity as a process of becoming Black, through its sounds, lyrics, stylizations, 'grotesque reversions of beauty' and skins. The skin politics of colourism is transgressed through overt bleaching within dancehall culture. However, this transgression never fixes a new skin colour politics because no new status quo on colourism emerges. Rather, there is a reiterative questioning of colourism's social inequalities whenever bleach is applied to the skin. This is when Bakhtin's carnival as play ceases. Instead, Jonkunu, as the lived collective body of the urban dispossessed, breaches the dancehall space to comment on colourism's continuing inculcation of societal inequality, which blocks the lines of social mobility through invoking skin colour privilege as born, not made.

The grotesque reversions of bleaching make the very shades it produces especially fearful for those who see bleaching as related to those with identities in crisis or suffering from mental instability. What is the reversion of which Hope speaks here? 'Reversion' is an interesting choice of phrasing – not inversion but re-version, a particular Jamaican way

of saying, 'to make the same thing anew', as in re-versioning in music. We can also see what this re-version means if we look back at Annette's comparison of her skin to that of her cousin, who was an 'original browning'. She is re-versioning browning and the 'white woman' through her stylized lightening. In this stylized lightening for the dancehall, according to Hope (TVJ, 2013), skins are prepared for the video light: 'The video light takes you places globally, you become famous, you are on television, something is happening for you' and that is very significant for people imprisoned trans-generationally in Jamaica's ghettos and inner cities (ibid.). The video light means you can be invited to parties all over the world (ibid.). Thus, there is traffic in lightened skin globally, in which dancehall women and men play a part at the local level, as they recreate and recoup cultural, racial, social and political capital, such as Nicki Minaj's – as they produce 'third skins'. The 're-' here means these skins do not pretend to be or to stand in for 'the original browning', but stand apart from that as something else, something different which has no original of which it is a translation. The only original is what the skin returns to when the bleaching stops, and even that can be a much-changed original if it has been damaged and now exhibits stretch marks, cancer, ochronosis, pimples, or fungus, for example.

Dancehall culture men and boys also practice fashion ova style bleaching. Boys as young as 12 bleach their skins, darken their hair, shape their eyebrows and style their sideburns/moustaches/beards so as to frame the face because dark hair makes the face look lighter (ibid.). In Hope's research, she found that boys thought that skin bleaching made their skin look 'cool, avoided skin breakouts and its resulting hyper-pigmentation from acne scarring, has a positive impact on self-esteem and gives them status as they become highly visible to young women' (ibid.).

Notwithstanding the heterosexual turn of this last reason for skin bleaching, there are two things I would like to go back to: self-esteem and 'cool' skin. It is unclear here if self-esteem is related to being lighter, which would support the white supremacy idea, or if it is because the overall fashion ova style metrosexual styling produces the self-esteem because of its attraction for opposite/same sex partners. This attraction need not be to lightness itself but to the fact that the bleacher has the economic resources to engage in such costly stylization, as well as the leisure time to bleach. The attraction would most likely be based on economic, social and cultural capital within skin lightening culture, rather than on the 'racial capital' that Hunter (2011) states accrues to

bleachers/lighteners/toners. In Jamaica, when someone says your skin looks 'cool', this is not an assertion about colour or fashion. Instead, what is meant here is that there is no shine; the skin looks matte, whether you are darker or lighter skinned. Indeed, when I was growing up in Jamaica if they were prone to oily skin, teenagers used to wash their faces with Noxema medicated cream and water if they were prone to oily to give them cool skin: that is, skin that is deeply cleansed of impurities without any shine, which is what people who now bleach say that they are aiming for. The cool in bleaching relates to having matte skin without any shine of sweat or sebum, which would be a classed sign of outdoor, manual labour. One person who talks about cool skin is bleacher and metrosexual Jamie (TVJ, 2013).

Jamie began bleaching after seeing his sister participating in the practice. He bleaches on and off – not constantly: 'Dis minute mi white an dis minute mi dark' [This minute I am white, and this minute I am dark.], he says. For Jamie, there is nothing wrong with being Black, and that is not the reason for his skin bleaching. It is very expensive, at \$1000 a week to buy Nadinola, Ambi and Omic gel (ibid.). Skin bleaching's economic cost, for those who can maintain it, shows they have money available for consumption. According to Jamie, 'Some people start with the first run and can't maintain it', so they become 'Black again'. Annette attests to its expense, setting the cost of bleaching at \$2,000 a week. The secret is to bleach for longer periods, as the more you bleach, the cheaper it becomes, according to Jamie (ibid.).

I want to go back to Jamie's use of 'white', as in 'One minute I am white, one minute I am dark', because of the chameleon-like character of this skin. For him, white is opposed to dark instead of to Black, which he leaves for the colour return of those who cannot afford to bleach. 'Dark' and 'white' are possibilities for the body of the bleacher, even though he knows he is not white biologically, because of the carefully drawn parameters around white purity in the Caribbean (Monahan, 2011).

To place white and dark as the two poles of the Black bleacher's body makes us see bleaching as a critique of essentialist narratives premised on white and Black purity. Jamaican whiteness is removed from the merely biological. It is something that can also be brought into being on the surface of the body through the 'race' performativity of bleaching stylization. Here we see the Jonkunu of the dancehall being brought into social life. The body becomes a mobile palimpsest for the dark/white Black body. This is a mobile re-versioning of skin and its putative

immobility, as skin colour is supposed to be only 'born': a birthright which determines societal, aesthetic, racial and economic position in societies structured through racial dominance. In such societies, skin colour is surveilled through discourses of Black pathology read as low self-esteem/self-hate/ugliness, produced when Black people succumb to global white supremacy.

The re-versioning of skin, even if it is grotesque because of the colour, draws societal attention to the browning/lighter-skinned ideal as both problematic for Jamaica's 'Out of Many, One People' dictum and the national romance with mixedness. Such mixedness produces the Jamaican types we can see in the Miss Jamaica beauty pageant and its precursor, the Ten Types beauty pageant (Tate, 2009). In the Miss Jamaica contest, as in Miss Nigeria, the lighter-skinned, more 'European-looking' women are sent to compete to be Miss World, while the darker skinned, with features that are racially constructed to be more obviously of African descent, go to Miss Universe. There is no place for the bleached browning here. Or rather, we should say, obviously bleached, because 'toning' and lightening are a part of contemporary elite and middle-class life. Indeed, Hope (TVJ, 2013) makes the distinction between middle-class toning and ghetto/inner city bleaching. Toning shows class, taste and distinction through skin capital, as is the case elsewhere in the Black Atlantic.

The fashioned and styled personhood of Jamaican dancehall culture women and men does not just emerge through expendable income. It also appears through aesthetic labour, pain, risk, and the positive affect attached to the emergence of lighter skin underneath the mask of darker skin. There is a rebirth of the Black (fe)male body, if only temporarily, and even if only for the strategic purpose of an event (dancehall), time of year (Christmas) or occupation (cosmetology) (*ibid.*). Aesthetic labour involves knowledge of the chemical bleaching process passed from person to person by word of mouth. For Monica (*ibid.*), bleaching in Jamaica is not anything new, and people can use ordinary household products – cake soap, ackee, toothpaste, and curry powder. To 'get the glamour look', according to Wingie, or 'to bring yuh [you] up', as Monica put it (*ibid.*), takes time, effort and money. If you want 'to come faas [speed up the lightening process]', you can put hydrogen peroxide in the cream if it is not strong enough, according to Noogle (*ibid.*). Then, once the first layer of skin comes off, you stop using hydrogen peroxide because it is too strong for the skin.

I want to look at Noogle's use of the word 'come' before looking at further bleaching advice. Here, 'come' means to become something through the bleaching process, so it is interesting that this is used to talk about lightening because it shows that colour is seen by bleachers as a becoming, not a being. Further, the words 'get' and 'bring up' relate bleaching to the arrival of something positive. In fact, to 'bring yuh [you] up' can relate to the lightness produced, as much as it can to societal status because of lighter skin.

Wingie also speaks of bleaching through layers of skin; she advises bleaching until getting to the third layer, and then stopping. We also should not bathe when we are bleaching, but we should put 'chemical on top of chemical', if 'yuh waan fi come quick' [you want to get light quickly] (ibid.). After the third layer is revealed, then you should bathe with Fab soap and use the Fab lotion. For Annette and Bobbet, you must wrap the body with 'plastic' [cling film] over the bleach every day to 'come faas' [lighten quickly] (ibid.). You also need to cover your body completely in several layers of clothing, so as to sweat, as this literally peels off layers of skin. When 'yuh bleach an [and] white out', Annette says, then you should use 'Idol' lotion all over, to start tone in yuh [your] body' (ibid.). Bleachers wear hats to protect their faces from the sun and gloves with bleaching gels and creams inside to bleach the hands so there are no tell-tale dark fingers and knuckles (ibid.). For Noogle, 'Cover up ah di numba one in ah bleachin' [Covering up with clothes is really important in bleaching.] (ibid.). This is reminiscent of the masking and bonneting practiced by creole women during enslavement in the Caribbean.

What can we say about the physical pain that must be involved in systematically peeling off layers of skin with chemicals? As medical reports have shown, it is not good for the skin or the body it wraps around. Submitting oneself to such pain, and embracing it as a rite of passage in skin transformation, must make one wonder how it is that bleachers have not been dubbed masochists. How could we view masochism and pain as a productive process of bringing new skins into being rather than bleaching as a mimicking activity bound to failure as in enslavement's 'flaying the skin white'? For Amber Jamilla Musser (2014), masochism has been significant for fin de siècle sexologists, early 20th century psychoanalysis, mid-20th century decolonization theory, existential philosophers, 1970s–1980s feminists, and queer theorists in the 1990s. Musser uses the trope of masochism to look at how racial power becomes attached to difference by being experienced as sensation. She links Black

women's bodies to un/under-theorized corporeality and discusses the exclusion of Black queer women's bodies from contemporary theory. For her, sensation enables an exploration of corporeality without reifying identity. This is crucial because, as perceiving subjects, we use it as a tool to sense the world as an object to be perceived. Sensation helps us to understand structures beyond the discursive by illuminating how, in acting on bodies, structures can be perceived as having multiple forms and affects which opens up the availability of difference.

Masochism links to our purpose here, of looking at pain and skin bleaching, by establishing a relationship between sensation and power. This relationship enables the theorization of difference through self-induced skin pain, which produces a continual engagement with agency, subjectivity and difference. Musser (2014) uses Audre Lorde's (1980) 'erotic' to dynamize a model of masochism's de-subjectification and the re-subjectification and community produced through pain. Pain undercuts established identitarian dimensions of experience such as class, 'race', sexuality and skin colour so as to re-version community. Sharing pain in common generates skin bleaching community as much as other affects, such as shame, joy, hope, despair and fascination. Skin bleaching is an affective, transnational activity, watched avidly in person or virtually on proliferating skin bleaching sites, so that global community emerges through the shared pain of skin transformation.

More broadly, we suffer for style; tight stilettos which deform the feet and corsets which make us breathless (Jeffreys, 2005) come to mind here. Further, within mainstream body culture and gym work, we are told 'no pain, no gain'. So pain is an accepted by-product of body enhancement. Perhaps the pain of the transformation that only bleachers will know gives social and cultural capital within this community forged through pain. For Musser (2014), pain and masochism are about feeling through another, which becomes a space of multiplicity, rather than imperialism or erasure, as neither self nor other is destroyed because we experience corporeal affinities with others through sensation. As I hope is clear, I do not want to see bleaching as self-harm born of self-hatred or low self-esteem, but rather as pain which brings newness into the world. I want to make this point about newness drawing from Elaine Scarry's (1985: 52-53) view

The most essential aspect of pain is its sheer aversiveness [...] the very content of pain is itself negation. If to the person in pain it does not feel aversive, and if it does not in turn elicit in that person aversive feelings towards it, it is not in either

philosophical discussions or psychological definitions of it called pain. Pain is a pure physical experience of negation, an immediate sensory rendering of 'against' of something being against one and of something one must be against. Even though it occurs within oneself, it is at once identified as "not oneself", "not me", as something so alien that it must right now be gotten rid of. [Pain is] an almost obscene conflation of private and public. It brings with it all the solitude of absolute privacy with none of its safety, all the self-exposure of the utterly public with none of its possibilities for camaraderie or shared experience.

If it does not turn you away from it, or feel like negation or as if you are against yourself, it is not pain. The pain of skin bleaching is not felt as 'not me', and it brings the camaraderie of shared experience, even as a public/private practice read by non-bleachers as self-harm.

For Peaches, 'If yuh waan come yuh hafi bear it' [If you want to come, you have to bear it' (TVJ 2013). 'It' here is pain and heat. This pain is also something that is shared and empathized with across dancehall culture bleachers. If we see pain as affective, we can say that there is an 'erotic life' (Lorde, 1980) of skin bleaching, as it produces communities of people outside of the mainstream through the mark of past/present bearing of the pain on the skin. Therefore, bleachers stand outside of white supremacy and Afro-centricity ideals and discourses, as they make themselves visible as practitioners, even though, as Hope suggests, they know that in corporate Jamaica, as soon as the reddish lobster look of the bleachers is seen, they are problematized (ibid.). This 'look' transmits the person's lower class status and the possibility that they will not be familiar with the required habitus (Bourdieu, 1988) for corporate life, so they will not be employed. For Annette (TVJ, 2013), 'Dem nevah seh dem have a problem but mi hafi tone down di bleachin becaas di type ah peep dem wudn approve' [They never said they had a problem, but I had to bleach less obviously, because those sorts of people wouldn't approve]. Monica supports this by saying that employers disapprove of all body modifications like bleaching and tattooing, which they should not because 'Ah yuh qualifications, is whe deh up deh suh' [(It's your qualifications; it's how clever you are) that matters (ibid.).

After the pain of bleaching out comes pleasure, as you 'look bright', but then the risks set in with continuous bleaching. Monica doesn't bleach anymore because 'bleaching mek mi Black mi is brown but bleaching mek mi Black now' [bleaching made me Black. I am brown, but bleaching made me Black now]. She has to go to the doctor for treatment to try to reverse the visible signs of hyperpigmentation on her cheeks. Anna Kay

started bleaching because she wanted to be brown for fashion ova style, but then she got 'break out an[d] damages.' That is to say, she got bad stretch marks that she now has to cover with tattoos. Natassia also supports this, saying, 'Di buss dem come in like is somebody chap yuh. Peepl piint yuh out and discriminate yuh' [The stretch marks look like you have been cut by someone. People point you out and discriminate against you.] (ibid.). The unsuccessful bleacher also has to face severe consequences for failure, as lighter skin is marred by the mark of failure itself. As a cosmetologist and bleacher, Noogle's point of view is that when you are bleaching, you 'should not wear tight clothes,' as they pull the skin and cause the stretch marks because skin is delicate. Loose clothes should be worn instead.

Anna Kay is a repentant bleacher, as she says that it did not work for her because she 'break out'. She also says, 'Ah no everybody bleachin fit. Some peepl Black and more beautiful than peepl who bleach. Mi pretty because ah who mi is.' [Bleaching does not suit everyone. Some Black people are more beautiful than people who bleach. I am pretty because of who I am.] (ibid.). This confession of failure is followed by a critique of the practice as not necessarily bestowing beauty. Anna Kay also reverts to the very common idea that she is beautiful because of who she is, not because of her skin colour; she uses the 'beauty comes from within' discourse, in other words. She speaks against the Jamaican adage Hope quotes, 'Anything Black nuh good' (ibid.), by stating that beauty is more than surface, more than skin colour. In doing this 'Black skin is beautiful' comparison, she reinscribes herself within an Afro-centric version of aesthetics and critiques the pigmentocracy of Jamaican society as well as the fashion ova style aesthetic of skin lightening if it is done for beauty.

Mshoza has already been mentioned, but here it is important to review that she says about herself, as South Africa's most famous Black aesthetic enhancement addict, having already spent hundreds of thousands of rand on rhinoplasty, breast augmentation, a tummy tuck and skin lightening (www.biyokule.com/new_content.php?articleid=5533, accessed 15 April 2015), as well as lip augmentation and 20-minute facelifts, which cost 6,500 Rand at Lightsculpt Aesthetic Clinics. As someone who admits that she 'can't afford to age', Mshoza reportedly spends 2,700 Rand a week on bleaching injections and wants to have a 'Brazilian butt job' (55,000 Rand) and calf augmentation (45,000 Rand) (drum.co.za/celebs/mshoza-tops-up-on-her-beauty-fix/, accessed 15 April 2015). She is having the total body transformation popularized by Li'l Kim, Nicki Minaj and Dencia, who are all global skin-bleaching celebrities.

Therefore, she asserts her global relevance through her body changes, of which skin lightening is just one aspect. She caused considerable consternation globally and nationally when she said in *Drum* magazine that she wanted to 'be Cristina Aguilera white', and that her skin changes were because she was tired of being ugly (rollingout.com/entertainment/African-singer-speaks-openly-about-bleaching-her-skin-other-celebs-accusedofbleaching, accessed 15 April 2015). Let us pause for a moment to think about Cristina Aguilera's whiteness and ponder if it could not also be produced cosmetically. If this very 'whiter than white' look is cosmetically produced, Mshoza is aiming for skin that is not 'natural'. So she is aiming to produce a simulacrum of a simulacrum (Baudrillard, 1981).

Mshoza went on to say that lightening to be 'Cristina Aguilera white' was just something she

wanted to do. It has nothing to do with my esteem and issues being black. It's just sad that people with weaves and all other cosmetic enhancements to make themselves look western are on high horses judging me. I just wanted a lighter skin. Our parents have been burning themselves with skin lightening creams for decades. It was never an issue of self-esteem and 'race'. People must calm down.

Mshoza's words here show a clear rebuttal of the idea of Black poor self-esteem and self-hatred, as she says self-esteem is not at issue. She locates skin bleaching as a transgenerational and aesthetic practice of enhancement through stylization, much like weaves. Further, her critique of weaves and other enhancements as making people look 'western' also implies that she sees her bleaching as something that is part of specifically Black South African aesthetics. It is something you can take off or put on. Mshoza also locates what she does as different from burning oneself with skin creams, and in doing this, she recoups social, class and cultural capital to herself as someone with the money to lighten her skin without risk. She says

When all is said and done, I will look like a white person. From head to toe. I might also have to redo the rhinoplasty to fit my new skin. But this doesn't mean I'll start singing pop music or act differently. I'll still be the same person my fans know. In the past I had to use heavy make-up to hide the blotches on my face. I've always had skin problems and it somehow lowered my confidence. At least now I can do something about it [...] I am just doing what I love. The same people that are criticizing me for doing this have fake hair, nails and lashes. (www.biyokule.com/new_content.php?articleid=5533, accessed 15 April 2015)

This statement sets her skin bleaching again as an aesthetic practice through which she can correct problem blotches but which will only make her skin white, not herself as a person within that lightened skin. ‘She looks at a white female in the room at the Lightsculpt clinic and says, “I want to look just like you”’ (drum.co.za/celebs/mshoza-tops-up-on-her-beauty-fix/, accessed 15 April 2015). What does this ‘I want to look just like you’ do in that moment? Some will read this as proof of self-hatred/low self-esteem because she admits to wanting to be white. What would happen, though, if we read this as a threat to whiteness instead, even though we all know that she can’t be white like that woman? It is a threat because, in that moment, she is showing that white woman that whiteness can be bought, can be put on as a mask by those who in the past and present of white South Africa were/are seen as racially inferior. It is a threat because, like the ‘quinteroons’ of Anglophone Caribbean plantation life, she poses an uneasy problem to white supremacy, by producing a body which can pass for that which it is not through aesthetic enhancement. With a change in direction from self-hate to Black threat through consumption of white ‘race’-ing technology and expertise to produce a third-space body, the natural Black body ideology of Black anti-racist aesthetics, colourism and white supremacy is called into question. Her third-space body is as much the product of modern Blackness as it is of ‘race’-ing stylization technologies. It could then be said that her aesthetic labour is beginning to decolonize ‘the natural Black woman’s body’, which means that she must be put back in her ‘proper place’ – Black African woman – through the censure of the mantras of ‘self-hate’ and ‘low self-esteem’. Someone else who is accused of low self-esteem and self-hatred is dancehall artist Vybz Kartel, now in prison for murder. Kartel positions himself as a decolonizer of Jamaican colourism through his skin bleaching, rather than occupying the identification of a bleacher suffering from self-hate and low self-esteem.

Vybz Kartel: the bleached bad-man in Jamaica, decolonizing colourism and developing a ‘race’ critique of self-hate and low self-esteem

Jamaica is the international ‘elsewhere’ for the bleaching of Black bodies in skin bleaching literature. Locating bleaching elsewhere erases the fact that bleaching has been practiced as part of popular aesthetics across the

West for centuries, as shown in the preceding chapter. Today, if you walk into any Black beauty and hair store in the UK, skin bleaching products produced in the United States and the EU are wall to wall and floor to ceiling. At more mainstream beauty counters, bleaching products from Clinique and L'Oreal, for example, are available for white women and women of all ethnicities. However, what is often obscured in discussions of skin bleaching globally is that men also bleach their faces and bodies. Indeed, what Hope (2009; 2010) terms 'bad man masculinity' is not out of place with bleaching in Jamaica, even though it has been and continues to be critiqued within the wider society and dancehall culture itself as both non-masculine and anti-Black, as homophobia interacts with Black 'race' pride.

The Jamaican Government's Ministry of Health attempted restrictions on skin bleaching products in 1999 to no avail, and their 2007 'Don't Kill the Skin' campaign did not succeed in eliminating skin bleaching. As is the case in other Black Atlantic diaspora sites, this is because the government based its medicalized intervention on health risk and skin damage, as well as reiterating the conjoined white supremacy and Black Nationalist claim that people who bleach suffer from the mental pathology of self-hate and low self-esteem and have a roast breadfruit mentality. As we have seen, studies cited above in Ghana, Tanzania, the United States and the Caribbean show that skin bleaching is inextricably connected to readings of the national and global context in which bleachers find themselves, their social, aesthetic, cultural, political, intimate and economic skin capital in these contexts, and their access to 'race'-ing technologies like skin bleaching and other body enhancement technologies and practices. Indeed, the possibility of transforming the body and enhancing its marketability through skin bleaching, already marks one as urban/modern/trendy, and if done without harm to the skin, as wealthy in the African continent and the Black diaspora. Thus, Jamaica's anti-skin bleaching campaign also failed because it depicted 'skin bleaching as deviant in public discourses [and] attempt[ed] to recenter hegemonic conceptions of blackness and to discipline bodies so that they adhere to these conceptions for a variety of political and social reasons' (Brown-Glaude, 2007: 35). These social and political reasons become obvious in Vbyz Kartel's readings of dancehall culture's and his own bleaching as a 'race' and class critique of Jamaica's existing anti-Black pigmentocracy.

Kartel, aka Adidja Azim Palmer, dancehall recording artist and entrepreneur owner of a rum factory and his own line of skin bleaching

products, was jailed on 13 March 2014 for the murder of Clive ‘Lizard’ Williams in August 2011. He is now serving a life sentence but appealing against his conviction, which his attorney, Tom Tavarez-Finson, maintains was the result of a Jamaica police force conspiracy (Palmer and Dawson, 2012). Kartel is Jamaica’s most famous bleacher and is a vociferous supporter of the practice. He bleached to cause discussion about poverty and dispossession within Jamaica (ibid.). The impact of that discussion is claimed to be anti-bleaching ads on television, and roundtable discussions, talk shows, and television documentaries on the practice (ibid.). In *The Voice of the Ghetto*, Adidja Palmer (Kartel) and Michael Dawson (2012) speak about origin as being insurmountable within the Jamaican class system, where the elite is parsed as ‘uptown Jamaica’, and ‘ghetto people’, as a class, cannot breach the ramparts of the upper classes, even with ‘the right’ money, job and material possessions

Some people that aspire to be considered upper class believe that if they get the right job, make the right money, drive the right car, move into the right neighbourhood, then the “Joneses” will accept them. Not so, uptown Jamaica don’t work suh [doesn’t work in that way], once a ghetto youth, always a ghetto youth. In fact you have names for us: skettle, ray ray, gengling, jing bang, bong – the list is endless. A suh the system set [that is how the system is set]. It is designed to hold ghetto people in a position of subservience to the rich and sometimes it is only through faith that ghetto people survive day to day. (Palmer and Dawson, 2012: 20)

Kartel’s analysis of the system in Jamaica shows that class is not merely read as economic but also as origin, habitus and birthright. In his analysis of the political economy of poverty and colour in Jamaica, the system vilifies ghetto people, who are made subservient to the rich because of grinding poverty. At other points, Kartel criticizes Euro-Christianity, makes repeated references to Jah [God], showing his Rastafarian faith, and makes Rastafarian-inspired interpretations of the treatment of women and girls. For him, sexual abuse of poor domestic workers of rural origin, ill treatment of mothers and baby mothers by their sons and partners, and teenage pregnancies are immoral and must stop (Palmer and Dawson, 2012).

So Jamaica’s leading male bleacher is a Rastafarian within Jamaica’s modern Blackness. As someone who critiques the link between skin colour and poverty in Jamaica, his bleaching says something much more than ‘Black self-hatred and low self-esteem’ can possibly encompass. This becomes clear not only if one listens to what he has said about his

bleaching, but also if we remember Rastafarianism's aesthetic tenets that Black skin and hair should not be altered from their natural state. As a bleacher, he already transgresses this boundary when his lighter skin emerges. If we set his obvious bleaching within dancehall culture, we can see that he is at the forefront of a class and 'race' critique of Jamaican society made from within that space. Within Jamaica's modern Blackness, Rastafarian aesthetics have been re-versioned so that the lightened body can become a specifically Black African descent zone of contestation over continuing poverty and dispossession because of colourism. As what was once called a 'baal ead Rasta' [a Rastafarian without dreadlocks], Kartel's bleaching illustrates that Blackness and Black consciousness, linked to African descent, is not erased because of this fashion ova style practice, but instead, is aesthetic practice turned to political critique from the ghetto, the utmost margins of Jamaican society.

Kartel claims to be outrageous, controversial and the mirror for *all* dancehall people, irrespective of gender or age. In his view, he is by, for and from the people, whether because of intellect or skin bleaching. He speaks openly about his bleaching, because while most Jamaicans do it, 'uptown' people do not admit to the practice. Kartel's view is that bleaching does not have the same meaning today as it did 25 years ago, as is the case for other body modification practices. Seeing bleaching as body modification refuses the claim of self-hate or low self-esteem. He insists that bleaching is not counter to the Garveyite message of Black pride and valuing Black skin, hair and bodies. Importantly for Kartel, bleaching reinvigorates Paul Bogle's message of revolt, which implies knowing and wilful subversive agency aimed at challenging and transforming societal structures, a re-versioning of those structures, so to speak. As insurrection, bleaching asserts practitioner knowledge that it alone will not lead to social mobility within such a divided society. He consistently locates bleaching within dancehall culture practices, social commentary, and critique of the double standards of Jamaica's 'out of many, one people' national motto, because of the continuing oppression of the Black urban/rural poor and dispossessed on the basis of 'race', ethnicity and class. As a dancehall artist and a skin bleacher within Bogle's rebellion, Kartel aligns himself with a radical Black political and philosophical tradition of breaking from (post)colonial racial and class hegemony and, in fact, decolonizing society. He politicizes skin bleaching as Black radical practice necessary for social transformation from the margins

of Jamaican society (Vybz Kartel lectures at UWI, 10 March 2011; Vybz Kartel live CVM-TV Onstage – talks about bleaching).

His decolonization of Jamaican colourism is carried in his assertion that the society is unequal in terms of 'race', ethnicity and class. Kartel's Jamaican modern Blackness critical 'race' analysis establishes structural inequality as one of the reasons for the practice. Jamaican modern Blackness is 'a notion of blackness in the here and now that accepts and validates the immediacy of contemporary popular cultural practices, such as dancehall, and reflects the transnational experiences of the majority of the population' (Thomas 2004: 13). Through bleaching as part of dancehall culture, Kartel rails against continuing chromatism and the impact it has on the urban/rural poor Black dispossessed. In this chromatism, whites and browns absolutely control the economy, live in better neighbourhoods across the country and have more professional jobs. However, those who are of darker-skinned African descent largely continue to be socially, spatially and economically segregated, as well as trans-generationally poor and un/under-employed (Brown-Glaude, 2007). Skin colour is crucially tied to political economy, as, 'the rise of skin bleaching in Jamaica correlates with the contraction of the economy, especially in the 1990s when the society was still reeling from the effects of structural adjustment' (Brown-Glaude, 2007: 49). Kartel's critical 'race' analysis illustrates that skin bleaching is inextricably linked to the political and libidinal economies of 'race' and not to the notions of low self-esteem, self-hatred or the wish to be white that emanate from white supremacist and Black Nationalist ideologies.

Kartel establishes skin bleaching as problematized practice within the nation because of its association with the aesthetics of a particular cultural fraction of Jamaica, even though the majority of the population engages in bleaching/lightening/toning. This shows the hypocritical nature of Jamaican social and cultural life, because bleaching is not problematized when it is done by the middle or elite classes and termed 'toning'. Thus, the common ideas of Black self-hate and low self-esteem are further decolonized as subtexts of the idea that bleaching results from global white supremacy. Kartel reminds us of earlier generations of Black working class Jamaican bleachers who might have had different motivations alongside the new approach of bleaching as social critique, aesthetic practice and body technology embedded within the contemporary socio-political, cultural and economic context. In a similar vein, Donna Hope (2009: 103) writes

Many bleachers in contemporary Jamaica [...] view skin lightening/bleaching in much the same way white Europeans or Americans view skin tanning/darkening – as a technology of the body that refashions towards an idolized ideal that has positive connotations for a particular group where it may denote wealth, luxury or economic and social privilege.

It must be said here that many white and lighter-skinned Jamaicans also tan to produce the idolized ideal: browning, which is a Jamaican modern Blackness aesthetic category (Tate, 2009). The ‘ing’ in bleaching performatively brings into being the bleached browning, whose emerging skin destabilizes the givens of Jamaica’s pigmentocracy. Bleached browning skins do this by showing that anyone can achieve brown skin, if they have the economic capital. It is produced through aesthetic labour, and as such, it is an achievement, not a birthright (Tate, 2009). The gaze from Kartel’s bleached browning positioning reproduces Black, poor Jamaicans as having an equal place in the nation. This place is continually being negotiated through their critique of the national ‘mixing’ ideology contained in the lighter skin ideal, which refuses continuing prejudice against darker-skinned Jamaicans (Tate and Law, 2015a; Brown-Glaude 2007; Hope 2009).

Conclusion

The low self-esteem, self-hate thesis of white supremacy and Black Nationalism is not relevant for skin bleachers. When used to vilify bleachers as pathological, these governmental discourses deny the political and libidinal economies of ‘race’ and racism and the contestations in which skin bleaching is embedded in times of ‘post-race’, neo-liberal racialization and the multiple reasons for engaging in the practice. Bleaching/lightening/toning is transnationally affective, whether vilified by non-bleachers or valorised in communities forged through pain. Bleaching produces bodies and communities engaged in a ‘race’ performativity, an active en-race-ing, which does not produce the failed whitening of colonial mimicry. Instead, bleaching produces a third body, which actively critiques the social politics of inequality irrevocably marked on the skin at birth across the Black Atlantic. Bleaching also makes the body’s subalternity known through its marks on the body, and in doing that, recoups social, cultural, political, affective and economic capital to the body from the transnational community of bleachers. The only

failure is when the body protests, for example, through stretch marks, darkening of the skin and fungal infections. Failure in the repeat of the original browning (lighter-skinned) body also critiques the symbolic and material boundaries of class, 'race' and colour inequality by making its attempts at re-version known. White skin as an ideal loses traction as the driver of skin bleaching in this analysis, as the Black skin ideal re-versioned in bleaching is lightness. The next chapter looks in more detail at the political and libidinal economies of skin shade in the UK, in which the poor bleach, and the middle class/elite tone and lighten.

3

The Political and Libidinal Economies of Skin Shade: The Poor Bleach, the Middle Class/Elite Tone/Lighten

► *Abstract: Bleaching is labelled medically harmful and risky by the UK state and its National Health Service and illegal by UK Local Authority Trading Standards Services when it is practiced by poorer Black women using unregulated products from elsewhere containing mercury and hydroquinone. However, middle class/elite skin lightening/toning in Harley Street clinics is part of the global market in acceptable approaches to skin enhancement. The UK's 'post-race' ideology erases the political and libidinal economies of racism, where racial branding affects life chances because the focus of the state/society is on bleaching as Black pathology as the practice is read as the desire to be white. However, we need to think about the relevance to skin lightening of changes in Black Nationalist politics, 'post-race' Black aesthetics, and the racialized gender political and libidinal economies of racism and colourism.*

Tate, Shirley Anne. *Skin Bleaching in Black Atlantic Zones: Shade Shifters*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

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The racial project of whiteness contained in the national ‘mixed-race’ imaging in 21st-century UK maintains white skin as the aesthetic norm. I will argue that this is a significant driver of bleaching within racialized gender, political, and libidinal economies, in which whiteness is anticipated and its fall-back, lightness, is expected in its absence. However, far from being naturally given by birth, ‘lightness’ and ‘whiteness’ are both the results of aesthetic labour through the course of one’s lifetime. Skin shade expectation and anticipation exist within a market in skins where self-enhancement and work on the body is necessary, if not obligatory. This particular skin shade governmentality, in terms of whiteness/lightness, means that everyone bleaches, even unknowingly, as over-the-counter cosmetics, such as a number of brightening products, contain lighteners. However, bleaching is problematized for those bodies racialized as Black in that ‘racialized sensorium’ (Wiegman, 2015) in which Black skin colour catches the eye as it moves from shades of dark to shades of light through bleaching/lightening/toning. A part of the racialized sensorium of skin shade is also the affects attached to shifts in tone, which we know to be related to artifice. Affects carry racial sensations attached to the skin’s transformation, as skin bleachers/lighteners/toners shift across the lines of Black skin shades, knowing full well that the thin line of racialized whiteness is impossible to breach. Thus, whiteness is not a driver of skin tone transformation, even though we still tend to think about the individual’s ‘inner plantation’ (Anim-Addo, 2015) as the basis for lightening, if we begin from a position of the insidious character of global white supremacy and its continuing hold on the Black psyche. This chapter looks at skin’s market value in the UK in terms of lightness, locates lightness as ‘race statecraft’, examines class and lightness within Harley Street clinics, and considers state enforcement allied with skin harm education for poor bleachers.

The UK’s market in lightness

As we saw in the previous chapter, as agents, we engage in analyses of society in which we see that class matters for one’s life chances. Skin lightening/toning used to be the preserve of those with economic, social, political and cultural capital. However, we now have the emergence of an aesthetics of enhancement as seen on websites, blogs and YouTube postings which insists on performatively producing these capitals on the

Black working class/poor/urban dispossessed body through lightening. These representations take pride in the before and after revelation, rather than keeping this hidden because of guilt or shame. Notwithstanding this pride, there is always an affective precariousness of exposure as a formerly darker-skinned body. Here, shame/guilt is never far from the surface of the skin, if the demand is that darker skin be valorised, or that browning skin must be based on birth alone. Thus, a practice that seeks to transform and usurp colour hierarchies in the 21st century becomes notorious when it is called 'bleaching' and is practiced by socially marginalized bodies. In this rendering of brown middle class aesthetics onto the darker-skinned, urban/rural/dispossessed/poor/working class body, the uncertainties of the class/'race' divide become clear as Fanon's (1986) historico-racial schema and racial epidermal schema are refused. Fanon's schemas bring to light how white abhorrence of Black skin is emblazoned into the colonized and colonizer's psyche, as well as that of the metropole. Through this white constructed schema, the Black body and its epidermis was 'battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, [and] slave ships' (ibid.: 112).

However, the refusal of these schemas also illustrates that light-skin privilege remains and can now be obtained cosmetically, rather than through the longer, more generational process of reproduction to lighten the line. Skin privilege can now be bought in a jar, tube, injection, pill, suppository or intravenous drip.

The political economy of skin lightening within the history of racialization and pigmentocracy across Black Atlantic zones shows that being lighter skinned has always been a site of privilege. This was the case during enslavement as much as it is now in post-independence states in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, as well as the UK and the United States (Glenn, 2009; Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Herring et al, 2004; Telles, 2009; Brown-Glaude, 2007). The political economy of 'race' continues to be linked to the politics of skin colour. Thus, skin bleaching/lightening/toning should be seen as practices which participate in this political economy. This dooms healthy skin campaigns, such as the Jamaican government's 'Don't Murder the Skin', to fail, as much as any public health pronouncements of the risks of skin bleaching in the UK, because the underlying inequalities based on skin shade as a marker of African ancestry have not been removed. This will remain the case because of persistent anti-African racism, in which darker skin still provides the essential binary which textures white skins and white

identities. Thus, hypodescent is as relevant today in the UK as it was during enslavement and colonialism. In the 21st century, it is pressed into use to rule the UK's internal racial colonies within a contemporary political economy of skin, in which 'mixed-race' lighter skin is expected and is an emerging aesthetic ideal if we look at the media and advertising take-up of Black/white 'mixed-race' Thandi Newton and 'Golden Girl' Jessica Ennis as marketable skins.

Lightness is expected so that you can be within a UK civility that marks you as 'kin'-but-at-a-distance, an other who might be admitted to the national skin, rather than the 'other other' (Ahmed, 2000) of the Black, putatively 'unmixed' population, who are refused entry. This assumption of being pure, unmixed Black is fallacious if we bear in mind the miscegenation which was a cornerstone of white male colonial rule and plantation carnal economies. To assume that mixing only occurs here in the UK erases the white, male shame of having mixed in the past and produced a Black side of the white family. Black people in the UK live within a political economy of skin in which there is another affective precariousness of exposure based on skin's potential to be 'too dark'. We saw how this worked for white women in Chapter 1's brief history of skin bleaching. For Black people, being 'too dark' still impacts one's life chances and experiences within the neo-liberal racialization of 'post-race' UK, much as it does in the United States (Bonilla-Silva, 2004). Darker skin continues to be potentially the body's organ of shame (Tate, 2009) through its very visibility, if lightness/whiteness is the ideal, the expected and the obligatory.

As we saw in Chapter 1, the expectation of lightness arose within the racial reproduction regimes within enslavement. Here, 'mulattaroons' (De Vere Brody, 1998) were enshrined by their white fathers in the Caribbean and US colonies as being aesthetically, morally, intellectually and racially superior to unmixed Blacks. In the Caribbean, this began a tri-partite racial classification system, within which newcomers, such as Indian and Chinese indentured labourers and Jewish, Lebanese and Syrian immigrants, were placed as Black (Indians and Chinese when indentured labourers), and then honorary whites (Chinese when they entered the merchant class, Jews, Lebanese and Syrians). It is the case that mixing in the colonies was no guarantee of freedom or access to white privilege (Salih, 2011), or indeed, of acknowledgement as belonging to the white family. This was so because of the investment of the colonial enterprise in white purity (Monahan, 2011). We can see

'mixed-race' bodies being set apart historically in the UK if we remember the life of Dido Elizabeth Belle (Lindsay) who was set apart from the white side of the family, even though she was the daughter of an aristocrat (Tate, 2015b).

Nonetheless, the white UK mindset was that white 'blood' meant something. That something running through your veins equated to innate superiority, so their 'mixed-race' progeny were superior to their own Black mothers/aunts/sisters/brothers/uncles/grandparents. 'Mixed-race' people formed an intermediate societal layer within plantation societies, with labels that equated with white blood quantum, so as to continue the myth of white superiority and the ideology and practice of white supremacy. The colonial mulatto and half caste translated to the space of the UK, as well, and today we see this light-skin privilege being reinvigorated in the world of work, popular culture, aesthetics and intimate relationalities, much as is the case in the United States (Herring et al, 2004). There, racism can no longer speak its name because of 'post-race' sensibilities (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; 2004), and this libidinal space exists in the UK, as well. Of course, no mention is made of the continuation of the ideology of white supremacy and Black subordination born in colonialism and enslavement where colourism has come to stand in for anti-Black racism. This racism is now silenced as the UK follows the United States in a Latin Americanization of society based on skin colour variations (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Light skin preference in the UK, as in the United States (Herring et al, 2004), is actively invoked in hiring preferences, intimate pairings, educational possibilities, career progression, advertisements, television, cinema and stage, to name a few locations of its psychic, aesthetic and embodied life. In the UK, the Black/white 'mixed-race' body has come to stand in for the darker-skinned Black body in the public sphere, especially that of women and children. This has enabled the UK's long standing aversion to darker-skinned African and African-descent bodies, and the racism embedded in such aversion, to go unremarked because hypodescent means that the Black/white 'mixed-race' body in representation is still Black. The erasure of darker skin from the public sphere alerts us to the continuing colonial tri-partite racial scheme within the contemporary UK. It also reminds us that the darker-skinned Black body is still viewed as being apart, at best, and at worst, it is a zone of disgust/contempt/fear, much as it was during enslavement and colonialism. There is a continuing coloniality of skin colour which refuses erasure because it is essential

for the maintenance of the Manichean view of the world within which we live.

The expectation of lighter skin keeps colourism integral to the political, affective and aesthetic economy of skin in the UK. It is a given that colourism is part of normative aesthetics and social life which refuses being taken up as an issue for anti-racist politics or anti-racist legislation in the UK. Colourism as normative, and thus unmarked, obscures the historical vilification of Black/white 'mixed-race' communities (Carby, 2007; Christian, 2008) and their continuing location as dysfunctional, 'culture stripped' and 'marooned between communities'. This is the case even though Black and white are kin. An important point to remember within this, though, is that increasing shade diversity will mean that anti-racist legislation will have to keep up with the lived experience of different skin tones in an increasingly colourist state. Here we no longer have the minute attention paid to blood quantum or the appellations 'mulatto', 'octoroon', 'quadroon', 'sambo', 'quinteroon' or indeed, 'half-caste', for example. These colonial colour names have been erased in favour of 'mixed-race' in the UK and have become subterranean subaltern categories within a 'post-race' racial nomos (Gilroy, 2004). However, within the white nation, we have aesthetic regard for and valorisation of eyes that are not brown, facial features that have been constructed as white European, hair that is loosely curled/straight, and skin tone that is just dark enough to make you look exotic (Ali, 2005). There is a turning of the nation towards this embodiment as an accepted and acceptable way to do being Black-but-not-quite which does not disturb the 'white bodily orders' (Yancy, 2008; 2012), as we can still see the body's trajectory as being towards that white aesthetic ideal within which the nation is embedded. Indeed, keeping this brown ideal in place as an (im)possible whiteness, as never-white, enables the perpetuation of the idea of a quest for whiteness. However, Black and Black/white 'mixed-race' women do not want to be white but to participate in a global economy of brownness which we see exemplified in the spread of the browning ideal from Jamaica out to its diaspora (Tate, 2009; 2010; 2013).

Thinking about skin tone from the perspective of the South, in this case Jamaica, we see that 'brown's' boundaries are under surveillance and under attack in the UK. It is not whiteness that is at stake here, as those boundaries are sealed off because of the necessity for white purity and the incommensurability of Black difference. Going back to the expectation of the Black/white 'mixed-race', lighter-skinned look invokes a

different historico-racial schema and racial epidermal schema in the 21st century UK. The mark of Blackness still means negation, but lightness bears the same promises in the 21st century as it did during enslavement and colonialism – freedom, possibility, mobility, inheritance, advancement – but this time through subaltern agency. So, light-skin privilege is not just taken as a given but must be allied with class, ability, equality and access in the 21st century environment of racial stakes. Further, white kinship can also produce abandonment, negation and being barred from sociality because of ‘race’. Thus, light skin is a recuperated good object of coloniality and ‘post-race’ temporalities because it points to (un)belonging, which is about a disavowal of colonialism’s violence and the violence in the representation of what light skin stands in for now in the (post)colonial internal racial colony: that is, the disavowed Black other, the shame of racial mixing and the desire for racial purity. We need a resignification of Fanon’s (1986) schemas as one of (im)possibilities because of the colourism that operates in both Black and white masks, which Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2014) describes as ‘racism without racists’.

‘Economies of color constitute and are constituted by economies of race’ (Harris 2009: 5). As is the case in Brazil, skin colour in the UK has now come ‘to signify ‘race’ as it is based on a combination of physical characteristics including skin color, hair type, nose shape and lip shape’ (Telles, 2009: 10) Again, as in Brazil, ‘one’s value [accords] with general Western racial ideology that valorises lightness and denigrates darkness’ (ibid.). Colour ‘race statecraft’ in the UK obfuscates the politics of the contemporary light/white skin colour line, in which lighter skin is marketed as extendible to both Black and white consumers in a way that darker skin is not. There is a market value attached to lighter skin in the Black Atlantic, as it accrues political, economic, cultural and aesthetic value to capital. We can see this in 2015, for example, in Alicia Keyes as the global face of Givenchy’s ‘Dahlia Divin’ and Thandi Newton as the global face of Olay. Such colour value continues racism’s denial and propels us to that ‘post-race’ future/present where brown is the new Black. We now have a world in which the browning produced by bleaching/lightening/toning is an aesthetic tactic (de Certeau, 1984) to enter the market in bodies as employee, partner, and friend, for example.

This is important to keep in mind within societies such as the UK, in which the state is active in patrolling racism through legislation and bureaucracy but has not been able to produce a ‘post-race’ state at the levels of individual experience, national psyche or affective relationalities.

Indeed, we are now at a point in neoliberal racialization in which racial liberalism speaks of 'choice' to remove any possibility of the charge of racism. So, for example, we are free to change our skin colour, as being 'post-race' would mean that it does not impact the racial hierarchies which we are told do not exist. We are also free to choose to put ourselves at risk through toxic chemicals because that is a private issue and not based on any form of inequality. Neoliberal racialization places the focus on skin colour's mobility, complexity, dynamism and value. It also shows that there are many colour discourses based on labour, migration, colonization, conquest, national identity, gender, class and 'race' (Harris, 2009). Skin colour is part of the material economies of 'production, exchange and consumption' where the beauty industry intersects with consumer capitalism as that intersects with 'race' and the social mobility produced through skin (ibid.: 2). There are also economies of affect attached to skin colour which dictate what is acceptable to do with that skin in different contexts. Given the importance of skin colour, can or does the British state intervene in the lightness cycle?

The lightness cycle: locating skin colour as 'race statecraft' in the UK

As colonizers and enslavers, the white UK's own discourses had an impact on its psyche. This brings to mind Charles Mills' (1997) take on the epistemologies of ignorance that emerge from the racial contract. As signatories to this contract, whites and those non-whites who are also signatories, 'world the world', so as to maintain white privilege and power globally, according to Mills. A white worlding produces epistemologies of ignorance based on colonial thinking, in which there is a wilful forgetting of white privilege and whiteness as a racialized position, because white superiority and Black inferiority are taken as givens, as truths. We see this still being maintained in 2013 in a UK parliamentary document on skin bleaching and bleached bodies as bad objects of (post)coloniality. This 'race statecraft' places the practice elsewhere: among the 'natives' of Africa and people in Latin America and the Caribbean. Here, products imported into the UK pose a public health risk to the population, which Local Authority Trading Standards Services must deal with. The Health Protection Agency, the National Health Service, Parliament and local government are silently waging a war on what they see as a dangerous

practice by non-white migrant communities without the national public campaigns of other countries being launched, as we see if we look at the 2013 Parliamentary Paper on skin lightening treatments in the UK, which ties in with the production of national white racial formation. Even though it does not explicitly refer to European racial whiteness, it silently reproduces it through its critique of skin bleaching by racialized others set apart from the nation in those external zones which whiteness knows are problematic.

This parliamentary paper tells us that historical and anthropological studies focused on Africa and Asia 'suggest that skin-bleaching is rooted in traditional values and beliefs, but heavily influenced by European colonialism and Western ideology'. It states that in some parts of the African continent, 'native conceptions of beauty' valued lighter skin tones and European colonialism's racial hierarchy meant that dark-skinned 'native Africans' were considered 'primitive' and 'inferior'. It also claims that in India, light skin was associated with belonging to a higher class under 'the traditional caste system', which was also strengthened by colonialism. It is the case, though, that before European colonialism and the impact of US/European conceptions of 'race', Indian epics and artefacts refer to darker-skinned superior beings (*The Modern Girl*, 2008). Skin colour hierarchies were made more complex by Turkish and Mughal conquests from the 13th to mid-19th centuries. Their codifications passed into British colonial records, and the Moghul preference was for lightness, not whiteness (*ibid.*).

The paper asserts that the practice of skin bleaching spread from women in these problematized communities to men and children. It claims there is no reliable data on the use of treatments in the UK, but the use of both hydroquinone and steroids in cosmetic products is illegal, if products are sold there. The paper sets up the UK as being under threat because many countries have not banned the use of these dangerous products. Indeed, UK Trading Standards agencies have confiscated imported skin lightening creams containing hydroquinone, steroids and mercury. The paper demarcates these banned products from a variety of cosmetics available from retailers that also have a high SPF to prevent skin from becoming tanned, which are marketed as skin lighteners, whose effects are usually 'temporary and reversible'. However, 'products bought online or from street markets may contain active ingredients in excess of safe limits or illegal ingredients (such as mercury) and have long-lasting, irreversible effects'. The Parliamentary Paper goes on to

note, 'an increasingly global ideal of beauty links light skin with notions of success, modernity, sophistication and desirability, which is perpetuated and reinforced by mass media'. The impact of this has been that some 'women report using skin lightening products to increase their status and attractiveness, to secure a job or because it is perceived as fashionable. Research also supports the perception that the preference for lighter skin has social, economic and political implications, which has been termed "colourism" or "pigmentocracy"'. The paper further states that while women of all classes and education levels use lighteners, 'adverse health impacts disproportionately affect poor women who are more likely to purchase dangerous products', but it 'is unlikely that using skin lightening products obtained from reputable sources would result in serious health effects if used according to guidelines'. This is so, as the main health risks arise from using products that do not conform to safety standards, and the sale of 'illegal skin lightening treatments is a problem in some parts of the UK'. However, trading standards in Southwark and Hackney councils have 'seized sub-standard and counterfeit cosmetics and prosecuted businesses' while 'Public Health England has produced guidance on skin lightening creams for the public and doctors' (Houses of Parliament – Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, 2013, 'Skin lightening treatments', http://www.parliament.uk/documents/post/postpbo11_skin_lightening_treatments.pdf, accessed 22 April 2015).

Gender and age are used as indicators of the pervasiveness of the practice and its unbelievability – men and women bleach and also use the creams on their children. Such lack of civility claimed for 'other' bodies is contained in the notion of causing harm to one's children through product use. Bleaching and harm are also maintained to be elsewhere through the insistence that there is 'no reliable data on treatments in the UK'. This claim is particularly interesting alongside the statement about a market in illegal imports and Internet sales of skin bleaching creams which contain substances banned in the UK. The idea of 'no reliable data' is rather telling here. As early as 1992, Hywel Williams, in an article in the *British Medical Journal* (*BMJ*), called for a temporary ban on over-the-counter products containing 2% hydroquinone because 'without population based surveys, extrapolating from isolated hospital reports [of ochronosis and other side effects of under-the-counter skin bleaching creams] probably grossly underestimates the scale of the problem in Britain' (Williams, 1992: 904). As well as this, Yetunde Olumide's (2010) research reported in the *BMJ* provides evidence of the high use of skin

lightening creams in both male and female attenders – 1 in 5 – at an Inner London general practice among a group of multi-racial patients, alongside a lack of awareness of the risks associated with using skin-lightening cream

22% (21/97) of responders stated they had used skin lightening cream at some point in their lives, three of whom were men. Of those using cream, 52% (11/21) said they had used it daily. The highest use was found in people of Black-African (58%), Indian (25%) and Pakistani origin (17%). Of 20 users, eight (40%) had bought their skin lightening cream from abroad (mainly India and Pakistan), where illegal skin lightening creams containing toxic chemicals are more readily available. Eight cream brands were detailed in the questionnaire of which two (Ambi and Avon), contain the potentially toxic chemical hydroquinone. Of 88 responders, 59% agreed with the suggestion that some skin lightening creams can be harmful.

Based on these findings, the report made public health suggestions needed for further education within these communities in the UK about the dangers associated with illegal skin lightening cream use. For African/African diasporic or Asian origin patients who present with suspected kidney impairment, general practitioners (GPs) should consider asking whether or not skin lightening cream is being used. If lightening cream is being used, the Health Protection Agency recommends that GPs liaise with their local biochemistry laboratory and Health Protection Unit to check blood mercury levels and analyse the product being used by the patients (*BMJ* 2010; 341 doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.c6102> (Published 23 November 2010) (<http://www.bmj.com/content/341/bmj.c6102/rapid-responses> accessed 20 April 2015).

This research was conducted before the Parliamentary Paper was written, yet no mention was made of it as providing reliable data from which extrapolations could be made. Indeed, researchers and funding bodies have been as slow as government in realising the necessity for larger scale research studies, and the UK's first study of skin lightening, by the Open University, is a one-year pilot project of 300 women from Black and minority ethnic groups in London, Leicester and Birmingham who use skin lighteners. Funded by the British Academy, this study seeks to establish skin lightening as a public health agenda item in England (<http://www.open.ac.uk/ccig/research/projects/skin-lightening-in-england-a-baseline-survey>, accessed 20 April 2015).

The slowness of government action and researcher take-up of skin bleaching as an issue in the UK, points to the location of this 'elsewhere'

that we see in the Parliamentary Paper. Here, that elsewhere is located in 'native' African traditions overlain by colonialism, within which darker-skinned 'native' Africans were seen as primitive and inferior to Europeans, and the Indian caste system reproduced its lightness requirements, which were strengthened under colonialism's colour hierarchy. It is outrageous that a 2013 UK government document contains the word 'native' with reference to Africa, and 'traditional' as a euphemism for non-Western and backward. This shows the continuing white supremacist view of Africa and the African as atavistic, primitive and riven with feelings of inferiority because of colourism and white supremacy. Although Asia is mentioned, only India is spoken about in any detail, so it stands in for a whole continent, which is very diverse. Latin America and the Caribbean are also mentioned, but such anthropological detail is not given. These subaltern zones are beyond interest, because by the time this paper was written, research had emerged about skin bleaching/lightening/toning in these regions. The paper also reminds us that pigmentocracy has impacts at the level of political economy.

The Parliamentary Paper highlights the illegality of hydroquinone and steroids in cosmetic products sold in the UK, even though other countries 'have not banned their use' and products from 'overseas suppliers' can contain these harmful banned chemicals. Again, the UK is being presented as a zone without risk, and 'the elsewhere' of 'overseas' as zones of threat because of the 'imports of skin lightening creams containing hydroquinone, steroids and mercury'. However, it distinguishes between these and 'cosmetic products marketed as having a skin lightening effect [...] available from retailers [which] may contain one or more ingredients' that are claimed to lighten the skin and high SPF. Such cosmetic products also have 'temporary and reversible effects'. These latter products are not viewed as harmful nor are any moral judgements made about them. Rather, the Parliamentary Paper notes that the necessity to lighten, or the preference for light skin achieved through bleaching

is rooted in traditional values and beliefs, but heavily influenced by European colonialism and Western ideology within a racial hierarchy within which dark skinned native Africans were considered "primitive" and inferior compared to light-skinned Europeans [...] Researchers have noted [...] an increasingly global ideal of beauty links light skin with notions of success, modernity, sophistication and desirability, which is perpetuated and reinforced by the mass media.

If researchers note something just like anthropologists, this means that within this Parliamentary Paper, we can read these discipline-specific, partial points of view as facts.

Further, even racist ‘facts’ become facts, so they cannot be queried or examined for inconsistencies and, indeed, refuse such examination. This links back to Charles Mills’ (1997) thoughts on the epistemologies of ignorance in the racial contract, in which the white version of the world simply ‘is’ and must not be questioned further. Thinking about the mass media globally, and which media has the most penetration within that, we can see that the US’s racial ideology of beauty as relating to lightness/whiteness has been and will continue to be extremely influential globally and inscribe its skin hierarchies locally. This means that the US’s contemporary ‘mulatticity’ will also be at the global forefront, as it markets ‘generation ethnically ambiguous’ (Sharpley Whiting, 2007), or a Blackness which is not darker skinned, as is the case in the UK, because in both countries, darker-skinned Black women remain at the bottom of the beauty hierarchy. The Parliamentary Paper does, however, note the ‘social, economic and political’ impact of colourism without debating the white stake in that particular state of affairs, or indeed, white perpetuation of that ideal and what that might mean for whiteness itself as a racialized category.

Interestingly, products from multinational corporations such as Ambi and Avon, which are over-the-counter products, are listed as potentially toxic in Professor Olumide’s (2010) research. The Parliamentary Paper establishes the difference between over-the-counter products bought by the well-off – which should not be problematic when used according to the guidelines and under medical supervision – and the dangerous, often illegal products bought under the counter or on the Internet by poorer women seeking lighter skin capital and its possibility of social mobility. Again, no judgement is made of over-the-counter products and skin bleaching, as it ‘is unlikely that using skin lightening products obtained from reputable sources would result in serious side effects if used according to guidelines’. In Jamaica, Ghana, Nigeria and South Africa, for example, poverty and class dictate those who tone or lighten and those who bleach, and engage in risky behaviour with potential long-term harm as its inevitable outcome.

Class: Over-the-counter products, toning and the Harley Street clinic

Two very interesting things emerged from the Parliamentary Paper for my purposes here. One is that no moral judgement was attached to

bleaching. This could be because whiteness/lightness as norm and regulatory ideal is taken as a given by the writer of the document. Indeed, as we saw in the paper, Africans were ‘natives’, so one can only assume that those within the African diaspora will be viewed in the same way, even when they are British citizens. The Black anti-racist aesthetics politics, which negates skin bleaching as a practice, does not appear in the paper (Tate, 2009; Tate and Law, 2015a). Instead, what we have is a reassertion of colonialist white superiority in which ‘natives’ are simply doing what they have always done – mimicking whiteness and harming themselves in the process of dying to be white.

The second point of interest in the paper is the insertion of class-based value in terms of the distinction made between what the poor can do and what those with money are enabled to do in the search for light-skin capital. Class is almost reified here as something that passes transgenerationally through bodies and into the present. This means that the poor will be always be caught in a vicious cycle of using harmful and illegal under-the-counter products or products bought on the Internet, whereas those who can afford it can lighten their skin under medical supervision. This latter process is not presented as being at all harmful. Thus, lightening the skin is demonstrated to be part of medicalized care in the UK, but also part of a particular moneyed, middle- or upper-class habitus, relevant for those with the spare cash for body enhancement. The different classed lightening values highlight that skin bleaching/lightening/toning is part of the multi-billion dollar cosmetics industry, in which, undoubtedly, poor Black women and men – in the UK, as elsewhere – are most at risk of epidermal and bodily harm. This produces an otherness which is much more marginal because of the mark of harm from bleaching on the skin, and the possibility this produces for assertions of Black pathology – whether as a self-hater or as someone with low self-esteem who wants to be white – as the bleacher’s body is read as injured.

Those whose skin is marked by bleaching are set aside as an ‘other’ category; they inhabit a ‘lateral otherness’ (Gunaratnam, 2015) as bleachers, in a way that white people who bleach do not. This is so for two reasons. First, they open up a space of (im)possibility for the browning body to emerge through inhabiting the border of skin stasis/change; second, privilege ensures that white bleaching is not problematized but is only about dark spot correction, age spot removal, luminous skin, cell regeneration, skin rejuvenation, or acquiring a youthful glow. The lateral otherness of Black bleached skin also transmits affect across the diaspora, for example,

as empathy, fear or hate. Empathy emerges within the diaspora to build a community of skin, in which it comes from the margin occupied by the skin-bleaching community, rather than the privileged subject. This form of empathy – based on lack of privilege – calls on those who also lack privilege to empathize in order to build community. It destabilizes the racialized logics of white aesthetics and Black anti-racist aesthetics' fear and hate of those who refuse to remain in their birth skin-ordained social locations. Skin bleaching is fearful and hated because it is not about apathy and stasis, nor about active disengagement, which sustains the racial skin status quo of Black/white domination to ensure self-preservation. Rather, skin bleaching binds personal resistance to the power to intensify empathy globally, which can make community cohere, as it disconnects from the mere local, in which the politics of the in-between/the margin of skin bleaching is inhabited. This inhabiting highlights the multiple and contradictory identifications that exist in the subject simultaneously. So, unlike Fanon's Blacks, who are excluded from the very self/other relation that makes identification possible because they are not even 'the other', skin bleachers make a mockery of the idea that they have fallen prey to white global supremacy as resisters of (post)colonial self/other relationships. In not being Fanon's 'other', in not seeking to mimic whiteness, they are outside of the existing colour hierarchy.

The UK government's distinction between legal – harmless with proper supervision – and illegal – harmful related to a lack of spending power – continues class distinctions. It also points to implicit knowledge that skin-lightening products abound in High Street stores such as Boots and the health food chain, Holland and Barrett. We see this in the following article by Rebecca Ley from the *Daily Mail* newspaper, whose headlines read, 'As Holland & Barrett come under fire for selling a controversial skin lightening cream, the women who'll do anything to have whiter skin'.

- ▶ Former model Irene Major is the wife of Canadian oil tycoon Sam Mail.
- ▶ She has used skin-lightening creams to drastically change her appearance.
- ▶ Angela Agor, 41, is a black television presenter from North London.
- ▶ She bought many different products to lighten a patch of dark skin.
- ▶ She doesn't understand the fuss over the Holland & Barrett cream. (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2850927/As-Holland-Barrett-come-fire-selling-controversial-skin-lightening-cream-women-wholl-whiter-skin.html>, accessed 22 April 2015)

The article's headline boldly states 'The women who'll do anything to have whiter skin'. The assertion of 'whiter skin' at once makes it not only the ideal that Black women seek, but also instantiates its location as the result of aesthetic labour, rather than a necessarily 'race'd skin category, which only pertains to those discursively constructed as racially white. Interestingly, the article goes from the story of Irene Major, a darker-skinned Black woman, now browning, who is the wife of an oil tycoon, wants to set up a band, and apparently used creams to get many shades lighter to a TV presenter, Angela Agor, who wanted to lighten a patch of darkened skin. However, are they lightening for the same reason, and does one equate with the other? Both women see nothing wrong with skin lightening, even though they practice this for completely different purposes. The use of 'whiter skin' here presents something peculiar to skin lightening when it comes to African-descent bodies, as it is taken as a given that whiter skin is the goal, though one which readers will know is impossible to achieve, because of 'race' always being read as biology. Further, it is clear from the pictures of the women that they are not whiter at all – just one case is noticeably lighter – while for the other, there is even-toned darker skin on display.

Major's and Agor's motivations for using creams are very different, but both women appear in an article that deals with women who want to be white. White as the norm is all-pervasive, which we can even see on the labelling of creams and beauty products throughout the UK that have a lightening effect. Major's money, of course, means that her skin transformation would have been done under medical supervision and probably also included intravenous drips, injections, suppositories, microdermabrasion and pills, as she can afford such treatments. She wanted to be lighter, and alongside Agor, who wanted dark spot correction, she cannot see the reason for the furore over the sale of the cream by Holland and Barrett. If we take these two women as barometers for the nation, we can say that, as claimed earlier, the UK accepts that light/white skin is the normative expectation within our skin markets, in which lightness is still best, and even skin tone, whatever its colour, 'race', gender or age, is a must. Major's lightening, so that she could form a band, shows her reading of the current state of affairs in terms of skin shade in the UK. Here, shades of brown might be more enabling of success in the pop music business, where, to achieve success, the market – consumers, music companies, and promoters, for example – must identify with you. If we look at successful female popular music stars in the UK with a national

and international audience, very few have been darker skinned. Major is making an astute call in terms of what sells, and by this, she shows the UK's continuing pigmentocratic regime.

The Parliamentary Paper's insistence on the necessity for medical supervision to minimize harm does not mention that skin lightening is practiced in clinics in Harley Street in London but only speaks about illegal products bought under the counter or over the Internet. To admit that medicalized skin lightening occurs in the UK already gives state approval to a practice which the paper sets up as body work from elsewhere undergone by those formerly colonized others who lack civility and sound self-esteem. To place this practice within the UK locates neoliberal skin regimes in terms of colour within the nation as an integral part of its racialized logics. Within this medicalized, state-approved skin lightening, we have the spectres of colonial representation of white skin superiority and its old, colonial inequalities being re-inflected and used to texture 'post-race' skins. This re-inflection and texturing occurs within a white, reflexive repositioning of privilege which attempts to go un-noticed even whilst being attuned to the subterranean zones to which anti-Black racism has been moved so as not to unravel the sensibilities of the 'post-race' moment. The politics of white superior positioning in the Parliamentary Paper enables those other bodies to be available to be affectively impressed upon (Ahmed, 2000; Gutierrez Rodriguez, 2007; 2010; Tate, 2015b) as aberrant and unworthy of notice or empathy. There is still a residue of superiority in the white psyche and social skin that refuses to be dislodged. If we read the paper as an artefact of 'race statecraft', we can see this transgenerational transfer of colonial positioning, colour hierarchy and the affects of disgust and contempt for the Black other which keep the bleached Black body outside of the circles of white empathy or representation as only being notice-worthy because of illegality and risk. What we have, then, is an individuation within difference that does not critique capitalism, neo-colonialism, continuing pigmentocracy or the production of markets in skin lightening technology and products within the UK. Instead, in the paper and the clinics, we see the use of the discourse of the individual affective precariousness of the exposure of Black skin as lack. This affective precariousness (re)produces the Black other as existing within a vulnerability of despair and need for repair, which can only be achieved through medicalized intervention.

Those UK skin-lightening clinics with an Internet presence include 'The Face and Body Clinic' where skin lightening can be done for 20

minutes at a cost of between £150-165, 'Dr Sarah Shah City Cosmetics', 'Harley Cosmetic Surgery Partners' and the 'IV Nutrient Therapy Centre' (Skin lightening London-What Clinic.com accessed 20 April 2105). These clinics show that skin lightening is not something that can be engaged in by people without access to substantial and continuous financial resources. This is especially so as there is a need to continue with follow-up maintenance to keep lightness a part of the skin. One very popular treatment across the globe for those with access to money is glutathione, as we saw earlier, a skin lightening treatment which is also sold as an intravenous nutrient.

At the IV Nutrient Therapy Centre in Harley Street, potential clients are told to 'infuse vigour into [their] veins' with 'vitamins and minerals straight to your cells without the wait'. These vitamins and minerals are glutathione enriched with vitamin C, which is sold as an antioxidant, a cell regenerator and an intravenous bleaching agent. This treatment uses in-clinic drips once a week under medical supervision, in conjunction with suppositories to be used at home 'for optimum results', and consequently, it is not cheap. The intravenous cocktail of glutathione and vitamin C costs £150; one 500 mg glutathione suppository costs £5, with one twice a day being the recommended dose. The cost of the medical personnel and visit are not stated. The results are not sold as permanent on the site, but once the result is achieved, then the maintenance programme is necessary. Mzhoza also uses this cocktail regimen in South Africa, as we saw earlier, and this lightening product is sold online and marketed globally through YouTube infomercials and 'edu-mercials'. For example, YouTube videos from the Philippines highlight the miracle of glutathione injections and kojic acid if one wants to be a 'light skinned *mestiza*'. None of its users or sellers, including Harley Street clinics, mention that this product has not yet passed any safety tests for its use on humans as a skin lightener. Yet it is not illegal in the UK and is openly advertised by this particular clinic for a global audience. Illegality and risk do not play a part in this more upmarket sector of the medicalized skin lightening global industrial complex. Medical supervision is seen to take away all the possible risks to humans of a product which is advertised online as produced in the human body, even though no one knows what the possible side effects of long term use will be.

If glutathione is considered too risky because of its intravenous application or because it has not been tested for harmful side effects, or indeed, if it is too expensive, then laser treatment with Derma White products is

also offered. The name of the product also clearly links the treatment to whiteness, even though this is impossible and the Laser Treatment Clinic does not mention it as its aim. The treatment involves microdermabrasion, which is a transracial beauty treatment. The clinic presents it as a relatively pain-free procedure for ‘pigmented uneven skin’, using

sophisticated technology [which] involves an advanced form of deeper skin exfoliation, which encourages skin rejuvenation, over the pigmented uneven skin which removes the affected superficial layers from the epidermis level, revealing the new skin beneath. You should feel no more than a sharp scratching sensation. The laser ultrasonic is then applied, accelerating the microcirculation process which helps raise the active metabolism of the skin cells. The skin rejuvenates faster stimulating fresh young cells promoting new collagen growth and the collagen remodels for a clearer, brighter, healthy looking skin tone and texture’. (‘Black skin care’, Laser Treatment Clinic, London, <http://www.thelaserclinic.com/laser-skin-care-treatment/black-skin-care/>, accessed 20 April 2015).

This process of deeper skin exfoliation sounds similar to the peeling off of the layers of skin done in harmful bleaching, but we are told it is virtually pain-free. Exfoliate is from the late Latin *exfoliare* or early 15th-century English ‘exfoliate’, which means ‘to strip of leaves’. Peeling or stripping must, indeed, be painful. Blinded by derma-science speak and the “before” and “after” pictures, one wonders how this differs from the treatments that white women undergo. Microdermabrasion, and possibly Derma White bleaching products, are white-generated aesthetic technologies being marketed to Black communities as a panacea for problem skin – whether that is stretch marks, acne scarring or uneven skin tone. No prices are given on the site, and little is said about whether or not it is necessary to have post-treatment maintenance. Clearly, though, like other aesthetic treatments, they do have to be repeated to get the desired result. Under the title ‘Black Skin Care’, here is how they sell their services online to potential Black clients as specialists in Black and Asian skin care through ‘safe’ and ‘effective’ Derma White treatment

The Laser Treatment Clinic Skin Experts specialise in black and Asian skin care concerns and offer safe effective Derma White treatment for all types of pigmentation and scars caused by excessive sun exposure especially in childhood, harsh product use, strong lightening product use, acne scars and pigmentation, childhood scars, stretch marks, mosquito bites, tribal marks, dark lips, dark under-arms, dark bikini area, dark feet and hands and other similar types of black and [A]sian skin concerns, brown marks

and pigmentation. *We can achieve lightening of the skin about one or two shades lighter than what it may currently be, to leave the skin with a naturally lighter, brighter, even skin tone, and our clients are very happy with these natural[-]looking results. But please note, we cannot and do not 'whiten' the skin to a colour that is not naturally of your own ethnic background.*

When dark skin types, such as Asian or black Afro-Caribbean skin, are damaged, the healing process can result in an increased production of melanin around the site of the injury, causing darkening of the skin. Unfortunately, this can make the affected area more noticeable, and the hyper-pigmented patches will tend to darken, particularly if strong harsh products have been used on the skin at this time, or the skin is exposed to the sun's rays, or both. *There are now safe, effective treatments available to treat darker skin types. Our cutting edge treatments and products are an extremely popular choice for people who want a naturally radiant, lighter, brighter, even skin tone.* [my italics]

The clinic establishes itself as knowledgeable about the potential problems, problem areas and concerns of the darker-skinned Black and Asian customer. They claim that their treatments and products are popular for people who want 'a naturally radiant, lighter, brighter, even skin tone' and are also safe and effective for darker skin types. Here we have the usual sales pitch for aesthetic enhancement, where bleaching becomes skin lightening/toning. As Mire (2001) also shows, in the world of skin-lightening cosmetics, similar phrases are used as selling points and promises of skin colour changes, without using the word 'bleaching'. Radiant, lighter, brighter, even skin tone, are euphemisms for bleaching, even as they are being presented as natural. Calling them 'natural' denies the aesthetic labour and chemicals involved in producing that skin. 'Natural' is also a promise of value, as the lighter skin appears natural because one's skin is reborn through the technology and cosmetic treatment on offer. What is on offer, though, is not whitening, as the clinic claims to only be able to achieve lightening of the skin to within one or two shades lighter than the original tone. Indeed, they do not 'whiten the skin to a colour that is not naturally of your own ethnic background'. Thus, the clinic has already got in mind a racialized boundary around white and non-white skin, which it intends to police. This disclaimer at the point of advertisement also shows their lack of understanding of Black skin because what colour is 'natural' to that skin? If we look at the variety of 'born' shades that exist naturally in the diaspora, we can see that they are not working within the very wide divide between white and Black skin shades.

In the UK, we could say that there are neoliberal skin lightening regimes based on marketized lightness and the minimization of risk if we look at the Parliamentary Paper, which says there is no evidence of the number of these treatments being used in the UK, alongside the *Daily Mail* article and this Harley Street clinic advertisement. Googling those who advertise their services online shows some of what happens in Harley Street, which could well be an undisclosed and unpoliced global skin bleaching centre if Kenyan model Vera Sidika is to be believed (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1YEdTBhoY3c> accessed 2 April 2015). Further, if we do a Google search for anti-skin bleaching campaigns by the UK government, we come up with nothing, but this is not the case for African countries, where nations such as Senegal and Ghana have launched such campaigns. In the Caribbean, Jamaica has had such a campaign, but there does not seem to have been a sustained one in Brazil, most likely related to its continuing, fallacious idea of itself as a racial democracy (Telles, 2009).

However, we should not assume that where there is no campaign, skin bleaching/lightening/toning is not practiced. To do so would be wrong, as we see from the case of the UK. Perhaps what we need to do instead is to think about the political economy of skin lightening in the UK, where, again, poorer people bleach, using products mixed at home or bought under the counter, while lightening/toning is done at clinics in London's Harley Street. The support for medical entrepreneurship in the global skin lightening trade, which is good – as opposed to bleaching, which is bad – is also achieved through the state's policing of those very boundaries via enforcement and public health campaigns which seek to remove the 'fake' lightness of poor bleachers from the national terrain.

Removing fake lightness from the terrain of the nation: National and local government enforcement and skin education

The Health Protection Agency is an independent organisation set up by the Government in 2004 to protect the public from threats to their health from infectious diseases and environmental hazards. The agency identifies and responds to health hazards and emergencies caused by infectious disease, hazardous chemicals, poisons or radiation. It provides advice and information to the general public, to health professionals such as doctors and nurses, and to national and local government. Skin

lightening – from what have been defined as hazardous chemicals – falls within its remit in terms of protecting the public from threats. We see the idea of threat to health also replayed in the Parliamentary Paper. The health protection campaign in terms of skin lightening is waged through the pages of the magazine ‘NHS Choices – your health your choices’, which has a page on ‘skin lightening risks’ that tells the public the medical risks involved in hydroquinone and mercury, as well as speaking about the illegality of providing skin-lightening creams containing hydroquinone and corticosteroids and their possible consequences. Indeed, the law takes the skin- and health-damaging effects of these products seriously

In November 2012, a man pleaded guilty to possessing skin-lightening creams for supply, as well as prescription-only medications. The skin-lightening creams contained hydroquinone. The man was fined £1,000 and ordered to pay prosecution costs of £1,375. In March 2009, a man who sold unlicensed medicines and banned cosmetics, including skin-lightening creams containing corticosteroids and hydroquinone, was ordered to pay £80,000 in fines, costs and repayment of illegal earnings. (NHS Choices 2014)

The enforcement of UK law means that there is a very heavy financial cost for those who break the law and supply banned substances, which sends out a clear warning to those members of the public who sell these products (<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/skin/Pages/Skinlightening.aspx> *Skin-lightening risks* accessed 22 April 2015).

While skin-lightening clinics in Harley Street make a healthy living because of the medicalization of skin lightening/toning, we have local governments in the UK providing health information for their residents on the safety of skin lightening products, and, like the Hackney and Southwark councils that are mentioned in the Parliamentary Paper, acting against illegal product sales and their sellers. As far north in England as Newcastle, skin lightening has become a problem for local government, as we see from their webpages. Under the title ‘Safety of skin lightening products’, Newcastle Council’s Trading Standards Service warns the public about the dangers ‘associated with the supply of illegal skin lightening creams’. The other names for this product are listed as ‘fade creams’, ‘skin toners’ and ‘bleaching and whitening’ agents, so the public will be aware of exactly what is being spoken about as they read through the frequently asked questions section of the site. The council sees its audience as being both suppliers and consumers, who in Newcastle are primarily Afro-Caribbean women, although the products are marketed

to women from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Interestingly, the site also claims that some of the skin lighteners are now marketed to men.

The Newcastle council site makes a very non-judgemental assessment of the variety of reasons for the products' use – to deal with 'localised blemishes' and to become lighter, 'a personal desire driven by complex social, cultural and historical factors'. Undoubtedly, these factors would most likely be the same as those highlighted by the Parliamentary Paper. The reasons for lightening that are given here, although related to the individual desire for lighter skin, highlight socio-cultural and historical factors which allude to the creation of skin lightening markets through continuing pigmentocracy in the UK. Members of the public are then informed about the bodies responsible for law enforcement – the Trading Standards Service – and the laws relating to skin lightening products, whether they are sold as cosmetics or medicines, and advised to go to the Council's Cosmetic Product Regulations 2013 webpage, and in the case of steroid creams, the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

The seizure of illegal cosmetics and prosecution of their sellers is enabled by the Cosmetic Products (Safety) Regulations 2013 (SI 2013 No. 1478), which came into force on 11 July 2013. The regulations revoke earlier regulations and implement the current European Directive: Regulation (EC) No 1223/2009. The nature of cosmetic products is also defined legally through the European Directive as

any substance or mixture intended to be placed in contact with the external parts of the human body (epidermis, hair system, nails, lips and external genital organs) or with the teeth and the mucous membranes of the oral cavity with a view exclusively or mainly to cleaning them, perfuming them, changing their appearance, correcting body odours.

'Substance' and 'mixture' are also defined for the consumer, so as to minimize their confusion. A substance is a chemical element and its compounds in the natural state or obtained by any manufacturing process, including any additive necessary to preserve its stability and any impurity deriving from the process used by excluding any solvent which may be separated without affecting the stability of the substance or changing its composition.

A mixture is defined as 'a mixture or solution composed of two or more substances', (<http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/business/trading-standards/campaigns/safety-skin-lightening-products>, accessed 20 April 2015)

which is, of course, relevant for the substances called ‘rubbings’ in Jamaica and those made in the UK by users through mixing various skin lightening agents. Users of lightening products in the UK can get instructions for what works and how to mix these substances from others within their lightening networks locally or globally through the Internet.

The National Health Service (NHS) and the Health Protection Agency also actively seek to eliminate the harm caused by bleaching through bulletins on surgery websites and bulletins such as that below from the chief medical officer on 13 August 2010 for health professionals in NHS Wales. This bulletin, entitled ‘Risk of mercury exposure from illegal skin lightening creams’, highlights users of illegal creams as being women of Asian and African origin. The illegality of creams containing high levels of mercury sold online and in the UK is branded onto the bodies of Asian women and those of African descent who are located as outside of the law in their habitual use of these illegal substances, as well as being bodies at risk of nephrotic syndrome because of high levels of mercury. The chief medical officer asks the Wales NHS to be on high alert and vigilant about these cases of illegality

Risk of mercury exposure from illegal skin lightening creams

A letter for health professionals providing information/recommendations on illegal skin lightening creams containing mercury has been recently published by the Health Protection Agency (HPA). Skin lightening creams are widely used by women of Asian and African origin. The HPA has become aware that illegal creams containing mercury are being sold in the UK and on the Internet. Trading Standards across the UK are in the process of investigating the source of these products and have removed supplies. Mercury blood analysis from those using the cream has shown elevated mercury concentrations and it has been thought to be the cause of nephrotic syndrome. Mercury blood concentrations can become elevated within a very short period (48 hours) of using the cream and can remain elevated for up to 45 days after discontinuing its use. (NHS Wales, <http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/888/news/16869> Chief Medical Officer’s 2010 letter, <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/hss-md-2-2010.pdf>, accessed 20 April 2015)

Conclusion

The continuation of what is consistently being spoken about as harmful and illegal when practiced by poorer Black women points to the impact

of continuing pigmentocracy in a UK which prides itself on being in its 'post-race' future. In this 'post-race' future, skin colour or 'race' no longer matter, and racism does not, in fact, exist. Whilst this 'post-race' idea persists, we will have a case similar to Brazil's, in which structural effects on the continuation of the practice will not be addressed, as neoliberal racialization relates bleaching to individual desire for lighter/whiter skin. The political economy of racism, in which the racial branding (Wingard; 2013; Tate, 2015b) of skin continues to impact life chances, will not be seen to be the issue, but the focus will be on continuing Black pathology related to the psychic need to be white. This very explanation exists within white supremacy itself as the driver of skin bleaching. However, the discussion thus far has shown that far from this single-focus explanation, we need to think about changes in Black Nationalist politics, 'post-race' Black aesthetics, and the political and libidinal economies of racism and colourism as relevant for the continuation of skin bleaching/lightening/toning. The next chapter looks at the global transracial products Nadinola and glutathione as part of this continuation, as they refine and advance a dangerous practice through 'scientific' developments.

4

Nadinola and Glutathione: Refining and Advancing a Dangerous Practice

► *Abstract: Skin bleaching is a big, international business, participated in by global capital and local entrepreneurs, where brands become globally transgenerational as well as transracial. The chapter looks at Nadinola ads in newspapers, magazines and online from the 19th to the 21st century, as well as online infomercials for glutathione, and edu-mercials to see what excitable speech and subjectivation emerge in terms of skin. Bleaching products are not happy objects of 'post-race', neoliberal racialization, because they cannot erase the problematics of the inequities of colourism and racism, or darker skin's subterranean psychic life as lack. Within racialized gender libidinal economies, bleaching products are cruel products whose risk to the body is downplayed by ads and which make the skin conform to colourist and racist norms and ideologies that devalue darker Black skin.*

Tate, Shirley Anne. *Skin Bleaching in Black Atlantic Zones: Shade Shifters*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
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Introduction

One of the important things that we should not lose track of is that skin bleaching/ lightening/toning is big, international business. One aspect of this business is branding: brands become global, transgenerational household names through advertising. However, bleaching products are not 'happy' objects (Ahmed, 2010) of 'post-race', neoliberal racialization, because they cannot erase the problematics of Fanon's (1986) 'colonial psyche', or the inequities of continuing colourism and racism, or the affective nature of skin. Within racialized gender libidinal economies, bleaching products continue to have unhappy psychic and social lives that are riven by politico-cultural and societal contestation. As such, they are 'cruel' (Berlant 2006) products, as they are not only subject to potential misreadings by non-bleachers at structural and ideological levels, but they constitute risk to the body. Further, the skin value promised by skin lightening products makes it conform to colorist and racist norms and ideologies that devalue darker Black skin, which continues its psychic life as lack.

The chapter will look at the marketing of the brand Nadinola in newspapers and magazines in the United States in the 19th and 20th centuries and online, as well as glutathione ads online. The discussion does not rehash the excellent work already done on the marketing by major multinational cosmetics companies like Nivea, Shiseido and L'Oreal who sell their bleaching products globally (Mire, 2001, Glenn, 2009; Thomas, 2009; Hunter, 2011). In the 21st century, there are more ways to achieve luminous, even skin tone than ever before, with some companies claiming that their products are 'suitable for all ethnicities' – the euphemism for races in our 'post-race' world. However, historically, Nadinola, with ammoniated mercury and hydroquinone – now also available in a hydroquinone-free formula – has been sold transracially and transgenerationally, as we will see below. This brand has leapt the racial divide and gone back again. Thus, it has historically been impossible to racially brand it as Black, even whilst that market is its mainstay.

There is a discursive divide here between those who use science in producing their products to refine the practice of skin shade transformation through technological advancement, and those at the local level who engage in producing and/or marketing risky, under-the-counter products that are a threat to both bodies and national health systems.

Glutathione, the latest skin-lightening product, will be looked at here again because it claims to enable bleachers to never be Black again. If one can never be Black again, this has implications for 21st century Blackness itself. Thus, the chapter moves to engage with the academy's 'death of the essential Black subject' by asking who occupies that subject position in contemporary 'post-race' times in terms of skin shade and what skin shade transformation does in regard to that idea. It concludes by looking at the (im)possibilities of change to colourism through skin lightening, which in its very performance reinstates lighter skin shade preference divides but with a difference. This difference is produced by what Black Nationalists and those invested in the politics of brownness would call inauthentic or fake, as now that preference can be brought into being on the surface of the body through skin lightening. This skin's inauthenticity gives it a critical edge, as it transgresses the shade inequality of the Black social skin. First, let us look at transracial skin lightening and Nadinola.

Marketing transracial skin-lightening globally: Nadinola

Both glutathione and Nadinola are skin bleaches; the latter is a registered company brand name, and the former a name of a bleaching product. Brands are cultural forms within markets that are a reflection of the product marketer 'imagining the consumer' (Lury, 2004: 7). As brands, Nadinola and glutathione are something

to which some feeling or action is directed; [the brand] is an object-ive in that it is the object of "a purpose or intention," or even a whole series of purposes [...] The brand is not a closed object, but is, rather, open, extending into—or better, implicating—social relations. It is some-thing that is identifiable in its doing. (Ibid.: 1)

Nadinola and glutathione sell the idea that by 'consuming scientifically produced cosmetics one can assume a cosmopolitan, upper-class look that makes one desirable and modern' (The Modern Girl, 2008: 41). As brands, Nadinola and glutathione are also embedded in the 21st century social relations of (post)colonialism, continuing racism in 'post-race' states, 'post-race' aesthetics in which ideas of choice, freedom and enhancement are paramount, and colourism within Black Atlantic aesthetic politics. They are part of the production and contestation of

local and Black Atlantic racial formations, as capitalism creates and transmits ideas of femininity, 'race' and respectability through ads (Thomas, 2008). Ads also transmit ideologies of skin shades' political, economic, aesthetic, and affective social and cultural values. As brands, these products construct the identification 'bleacher' at the same time as they transform identifications, for example from beautiful to ugly, from darker-skinned to browning, from underclass to potential middle class. These bleaching brands engage 'race' performativity (Butler 1993; Tate 2005) as well as produce both positive and negative affects. These affects circulate within the diaspora's aesthetic racialized gender libidinal economies. When these brands are applied on the skin, consumed orally or anally, or taken intravenously, or when they become a household name, this brings the consumer – the bleacher – into view, into being. Until the point of the skin being transformed, their use is not known. The bleacher exists within another affective plane: that is, within the affective precariousness of exposure, as was said above. Here, exposure as a bleacher through skin change can transport positive or negative affects, depending on who makes that judgement and on the impact of the bleaching agent on the skin itself.

In South Africa, for example, Lynn M. Thomas (2009) tells us that the evidence of skin-lightening product use – the *chubabas* (dark purple patches of skin on cheeks and under the eyes) – on the epidermis signals someone up-to-date and modern. However, to a dermatologist or a Black Nationalist, this would be a sign of harm at best and, at worst, of internalized colonial Black hatred. Skin lightening products still continue to come up against existing discourses on racist aesthetics and neoliberal racialization: we can all change our skin colour, in terms of the latter discourse, and 'light' or 'white' is still right, as in colonial times, according to the former discourse. These are hard-wired into societal structures within the Black Atlantic diaspora and enable the continuation of the 'racial contract' (Mills, 1997), in that only those skins that are 'right' have any aesthetic, cultural, political, economic or social value. Further, only skins that are right can produce any surplus value for nations or, indeed, for individuals – think, for example, of the selling of the *mulata* body in sex tourism in the Dominican Republic, or the darker-skinned Rastafarian male 'rent-a-dread' in Jamaica's romance tourism. In terms of this latter, we need only consult work on marriage and other intimate pairings and success in the labour market (Keith, 2009; Thompson, 2009) to remember that the skin you inhabit matters!

Cosmetics, including skin lighteners, ‘are an intriguingly literal manifestation of what Michel Foucault termed a “technology of the self” as this resonates with our contemporary practices of bodily enhancement through artifice’ (Thomas, 2009: 189). For Foucault, individuals can resist normalization through effecting operations on their own bodies, souls, thoughts, conduct and ways of being by themselves or with the help of others, and through these, transform themselves so as to live a better life (Thomas, 2009). This point of view shows that individuals are imbricated within structures and sociality, as well as being impacted on by them. Following the Foucaultian perspective illustrates that individuals can resist the hold of global white supremacy on their psyches, which is seen by some as the source of the surge in skin lightening, and also build communities of skin lighteners who are connected globally through the to and fro of products such as Nadinola and glutathione, bodies, aesthetic politics and skin knowledge across the Atlantic.

We have already seen the centrality of Nadinola’s place in the skin bleacher’s beauty arsenal in Jamaica from the TVJ documentary. The *Jamaica Star* ran an article written by its staff reporter, Leighton Williams, in which the headline ‘Big Bucks From “Bleach”’ shows us that skin bleaching is about profit as much as it is about aesthetics and reframing the colonial colour line that still exists in the Black Atlantic. The article states, ‘Vendors do good business with the selling of bleaching creams, such as yellow and white Nadinola, Ambi and Neoprosone. The creams, especially the Nadinola, have opened a wide market for the vendors, so much so that most of them have discarded their other goods and are selling them only’ (Jamaica-star.com/the_star/20040130/news/news1.html, accessed 14 May 2015).

In the same article, we are told that Cutie, a vendor, buys a wholesale bucket of Nadinola every week at a cost of \$15,000 Jamaican. From this bucket, she ties out bags, each costing \$60, \$100, \$300 or \$600, and when sold with another bleaching agent, the cream costs more. She makes \$30,000 Jamaican on a weekly basis, double the amount she paid wholesale.

Local vendors’ ability to get the wholesale bucket of Nadinola on the local market is tied to trade links and local licensing agreements. In terms of trade, the site ‘Duty Calculator-Import Duties and Tax Made Easy’ provides HS tariff codes, import duty and taxes, and restrictions for Nadinola for countries from A-Z (<http://www.duty-calculator.com/>, accessed 20 April 2015). This globally available and

globally traded product has a WTO tariff subheading of 3304.99. The existence of Jamaican Nadinola is marketed locally and globally as a local product. Given Jamaica's position as *the* site of bleaching, naming the cream Jamaican Nadinola gives it currency among bleachers and would-be bleachers globally. Nadinola is produced in Kingston and St. Thomas, Jamaica by E.W. Abrahams and Sons, who claim it as a flagship product (mobile.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20140908/news/news22.php, accessed 14 May 2105). E.W. Abrahams and Sons is a cosmetics and pharmaceuticals company, with registered offices in Kingston and Nadinola cream ranks second among its top five products. The product is sold locally but also exported to other CARICOM countries, Canada, the UK and the United States. Of 79 records available online, Jamaican Nadinola enters the United States through Port Everglades/Fort Lauderdale, Florida, destined for Armstrong Agencies in Tennessee, which receives 53 units of 1,433 kilograms each. (<https://panjiva.com/E-W-Abrahams-Sons-Ltd/1085096>, accessed 14 May 2015). One wonders how this company ships to the UK. (www.jamaicastores.com/nadinola-bleaching-225, accessed 14 May 2015) A company which also sells Jamaican De Luxe Nadinola Skin Bleaching Cream, states, 'With new verified confiscation reports out of the UK, unfortunately, this product can no longer be shipped to the UK'. For Nadinola to be confiscated in the UK means that it contains banned substances. So, just what is it, anyway, and how did this global phenomenon begin?

Nadinola was officially filed as a trademark by J. Strickland and Co., on 21 August 1931, after he borrowed \$500 US to start the company. Before this time, Nadinola Cream was advertised in the *El Paso Herald* in Texas on 15 April 1910 as a beauty complexion cream which 'rids the pores and tissues of all impurities' (texashistory.unt.edu.ark:/67531/metaph/16673/m1/2/, accessed 20 April 2015). We can assume that at this point the cream was being marketed to white women within this outlet. A milk glass container for Nadinola Cream, currently available for sale online, is embossed with 'Nadionola Cream: A Complexion Beautifier' and was produced by the National Toilet Company in Paris, Tennessee. This company was founded in 1899 and sold the cream to white women. Alvin Tyson and Walter Johnson, who were originally connected with the National Toilet Company, founded Tyson and Company in 1920 in Paris, Tennessee and started marketing cosmetics exclusively to Black women (www.visitdowntownparis.com/historydp.html, accessed 20 April 2015).

In 1960, the National Toilet Company was one of the country's oldest independent cosmetic companies, having marketed a line of cosmetics and speciality soaps under the name Nadinola since 1899. Ath-O-Med, which specialized in athletic medication, was acquired during this period, as the company became the Chattanooga Medicine Company (CMC) Network. The company saw increased interest in its products when it began the sponsorship of live shows and aired musical entertainment on the 'Black Draught-Soltice Show'. The company changed its name to Chattanooga, Inc. in 1976. The Nadinola skin products are still made under the Nadinola name brand by J. Strickland and Co. It is available at every retailer in the United States, where 75-80% of its customers are African American, and in 26 countries globally, with its largest customer base in Nigeria. As we saw earlier, Nigeria is the conduit for bleaching products into the African continent. Indeed Nadinola is on sale online in Brazil, Nigeria, South Africa, and Jamaica and at eBay, Amazon, Wal-Mart and CVS, amongst others. Indeed, one Internet site (toptalk.info/t-nadinola-skin-discoloration-fade-cream-extra-strength-formula-2-25-02-590372, accessed 20 May 2015) provides the costs of this globally available bleaching cream in the United States, China, India, Indonesia, Brazil, Pakistan, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Russia, Japan, Mexico, the Philippines, Vietnam, Ethiopia, Egypt, Canada, Iran, Turkey, Taiwan, Saudi Arabia, Germany, the UK, France, South Korea, Italy and Spain. We can only assume that the Nadinola on sale in EU countries will be that which is hydroquinone (HQ)-free, as state authorities will seize anything else.

Nadinola has a long history of being marketed to both the African American and white communities in the United States. We saw some of that marketing above in the *El Paso Herald's* 1910 ad. Blain Roberts (2014) states that the National Toilet Company first made whitening products for Black women, then began marketing to Southern white women in the 1920s in urban and small town newspapers and periodicals. However, this account and the year of the *El Paso Herald* ad are different historically. Irrespective of this, clearly Nadinola had transracial use, as we see if we look at the ads.

Dorothy Dignam, from the Chicago-based McJunkin Advertising Agency, established the company as a national name through mass circulation ads for women's magazines and newspapers nationwide (Roberts, 2014). Ads for Nadine Face Powder targeted Southern white women, presenting a product specially blended to match a Southern

woman's 'natural colouring' (ibid.). Ads for Nadinola Bleaching Cream, a company bestseller, promised to make outdoor complexions fair again by removing discolorations, tanning and freckles (ibid.).

What ads do in terms of the relationship of the brand with the consumer can be looked at through Butler's (1997a) theorization of 'excitable speech'. The content the utterance communicates, the events or effects it causes, and the act it constitutes are all significant. The brand interpellates the consumer through a citation of existing conventions, and thus inaugurates a particular subjectivity which is both recognized and recognizable as a precondition of subjecthood. The bleacher exists through both subjectivation to discourses and the address of others, whether they are bleachers or non-bleachers, and whether or not the recognition is positive. The ads' discursive conventionality, citationality and recognisability, as they interpellate bleachers as consumers and community, are what mark them as 'race' performative. That is, they produce subjectivities as raced, but also gendered, sexualized, classed and aged. 'Race' performativity within the analysis of the ads can be shorn of what the consumer as agent may intend or enunciate because it is the force of the citation of the discourses which brings bleached subjects into being. However, discourse can be out of control and excitable, which enables difference to emerge as recognisability regimes are instantiated (Butler, 1997b). It is the 'race' performativity of gendered cosmetics advertising and its incitements to act that are significant for our purposes. This is important, if we view ads as part of the technology of racialized aesthetic governmentality (Foucault, 1977), in which the ad draws us to a particular hegemonic, racialized aesthetic point of view on skin as much as it issues orders for action to achieve this racialized gender aesthetic. These orders for action – that is, buy the cream and apply it – exist within already existing beauty ideals, so they need not speak ethnically or racially about the need for the cream, which is already built into the racialized gender aesthetic system. If we read this racialized gender aesthetic system through Pierre Bourdieu's (1988) 'habitus', we can see it as a socially constructed system of dispositions in which the body is embedded, which generates a 'naturalized skin sense' within power relations, which is not necessarily amenable to self-fashioning through skin transformation. However, it cannot stop agency. As intersectional subjects, we know this system, and it orients us to act through its governmentality, or to act against its hold on our psyches and actions, if different ideologies and practices are known and implemented. Such subjugated knowledge on anti-skin bleaching discourses would

flow, for example, from Black Nationalist politics, healthy Black natural skin narratives, or medical discourses which run counter to the skin-bleaching industry.

Ads for Nadinola and Nadine Face Powder from the National Toilet Company appeared in a Texas newspaper, the *Amarillo Globe-Times*, on 1 July 1931, and in the *Afro American* on 14 March of the same year. This shows that the company built a transracial customer base in the United States. The ad, aimed at Black women, stated, 'DO THIS TO GET WHITER SKIN – Nadinola Bleaching Cream available at all drug stores and toilet counters.' Whitening the skin was the aim of both Black and white women in 1931. If it wasn't available locally, then all the reader had to do was send 50 cents or \$1.00, depending on the size required, to the company, and they would send the cream postage-free. Nadine Face Powder was also marketed in the ad, so Black and white women were using the same product, as the 'modern girl' was called up through the illustration transracially (*The Modern Girl*, 2008). 'Do this' already constitutes the order of the ad if the aim was to get whiter skin.

How could Black women, who did not have white skin to make whiter in the first place, have read this? This is an important question, because we still see whitening, becoming whiter, or being white used for shade of complexion in the Black Atlantic, even though it is also known that that is impossible because of race's immutability: if you are not white to begin with, you cannot become whiter. So, if one belongs to what Charles Mills (1997) would call 'sub-persons' because of the operations of the racial contract, whiteness is impossible. Therefore, one wonders perhaps this is part of the bleaching cream company's play on whiteness, which makes it a floating signifier: seemingly so attainable, even though, as Black, attaining whiteness is (im)possible .

Perhaps it is the case that since Black people were always already assumed to want to be white anyway which is a particular aesthetic epistemology of ignorance emerging from the racial contract, then the company could use the same ad for both Black and white consumers. Today, we still see ads touting whitening, brightening and lightening the skin as properties of Nadinola. From a 21st century standpoint, we could see the words as speaking trans-racially to its various consumers around the world for whom the aim of bleaching would be different. What do we do, though, with Jamie (TVJ, 2013), who in Chapter 3 described his bleaching process as being 'dark' one minute and 'white' the next? We must remember that 'whiten' is not 'white', if you are Black. It is about

lightness and also a parsing of Jamaican ‘whiteness’, which describes lighter-skinned Arabs, people of ‘mixed-race’, or the Chinese, for instance, rather than European or Anglo-American ‘whiteness’. Thus, we can see that ‘white’ takes on different nuances in Black Atlantic sites (Tate and Law, 2015a) now, as it undoubtedly did in the United States in the 1930s.

The ad also instructs its readers about how to get the product if it is not available locally. This scarcity allied with ease of access might have made the product seem more attractive, more exclusive, innovative, or rare, as not everyone had it. These are some of the effects of the ad at the level of creating desire for the product if one wanted to fashion oneself as lighter skinned because darker skin was constructed as less attractive. Becoming lighter through the application of the product produces pleasure: both in terms of skin colour change and in one’s capacity to use this latest, exclusive, skin lightening technology. There is a prescription to ‘Do this to get lighter skin’, not just in imagination towards lighter skin, as the desired imaginary object, but as an objective, with all of its racial attachments and affective, as well as political, entanglements. This is so, as there is also a prescription for export from desired object in the imagination to the actual object of the cream as brand linked to the objective of lightening itself.

In the 29 February 1924 *Evening Independent*, readers were told ‘FOR YOUR SKIN’S SAKE – Nadine is the individual, distinctive face powder of white Southern women. The first time you try it you will know that Nadine is for *your* skin, *your* coloring. It brings that peach bloom softness, the warm colortone, the youthful freshness and transparency’. White Southern women who bleached and powdered put on ‘white face’, so their whiteness came into being through a product perhaps aimed initially at a Black market. In the South, because of enslavement, colouring and skin colour had heightened significance for white Southern women. To already proclaim Nadinola’s companion powder as racialized technology for creating and maintaining Southern feminine whiteness on the skin as ‘freshness and transparency’ means that artifice is one method of maintaining white supremacy through the skin, though this artifice has to appear ‘natural’.

Indeed, Nadine enables the maintenance of a ‘peaches and cream’ complexion: youthful and transparent skin clearly prized by white Southern women at that time. Nadine performatively produces this white racialized skin on application. A woman’s white Southern skin separates her from both Northern white women and from Black-white ‘mixed-race’ and Black Southern women who might also use Nadine. White Southern

women are implored to use Nadine 'for your skin's sake', which speaks directly to them as a specific racialized and aesthetic skin category.

Two things constitute the performative enactments of this ad. The first is to establish the Southern white woman as a racial gender category and racialized subject, and then to interpellate her into the positionality of user of Nadine as *the* face powder for white Southern women. The second is to construct the Southern white women's peaches and cream complexion as a specific white skin category. The ad performatively brings into view white skin as various and multiple, unlike the white-constructed homogeneity of Black skin. This ad, as is the case for other Nadinola ads, does an enormous amount of white 'race' work for people racialized as white within a 'whiteness' which is a deeply engrained way of being in and seeing the world (Yancy 2008: 2012). Such whiteness is not the cause of shame, so ads for bleaching cream sold to white women would not unsettle white privilege to the extent of putting the viewer in the location of shamed and shameful because of skin colour privilege. Shamelessness on the part of these women is enabled by ads such as these, which do not censure because of lack in terms of the ideal, which ensures that white skin privilege continues unabated. The ad's presentation of the non-necessity for shame implies that just the mere application of the powder is all that is needed to be the ideal Southern belle. Racialized white skin continues in the world free from exculpation, which we see is not the case if we look at a selection of ads for Nadinola in *Ebony* and *Jet* from the 1950s to the 1960s.

From the 1950s until the 1960s, Nadinola bleaching cream was marketed extensively in *Ebony* magazine, to which we will turn to look at how they performatively bring the Black woman's bleached skin as beautiful, and its wearer as successful and modern, into being in the space of the ad. This is done not only by the model, who was chosen to epitomize the modern girl, but also, drawing from Butler (1997a), through constitutive acts within the ad itself. In *Ebony's* December 1959 issue, for example, the lighter-skinned, straight-haired model already sets up the beauty standard through the body itself. As ideal, she says to her reading audience, 'I've enough bottles, tubes and jars to beautify the sphinx – but this is the only one that counts NADINOLA BLEACHING CREAM'. My eye keeps going back to 'beautify the sphinx', because it seems as if the sphinx is being positioned as an impossibility in terms of beautification, or only as a possibility with a full arsenal of beauty products. The sphinx itself is made from brown stone, has a lion's tail and rear end,

and the claws of a lion at the front. The sphinx is at once an inanimate object, and an ugly part-animal, which is already entering into the arena of mythologized, impossible animal/human combinations. I wonder what was at the forefront of the advertiser's mind when that comparison was drawn between a Black woman's skin/body and that of the partially animal sphinx? Could the link be that the sphinx is incapable of beautification because it is darker skinned and animalistic, much as the Black woman has been discursively constructed in the Black Atlantic?

If we look at Carole Pateman and Charles Mills' (2007) work, we can see that Black women anchor the very bottom of the social gender and racial contracts and are not even 'subcontractors' in the way that Black men can be, or that white women most certainly are, within hetero-patriarchy. This genders Fanon's historico-racial schema and racial epidermal schema in very specific ways, because alongside the 'tom-toms, slave ships and cannibalism', there is also the impossibility of feminine beauty that is not white being set in train. Or, at the very least, beauty and civility that is not lighter skinned is impossible. Being incapable of beautification by many potions and creams, like the sphinx, makes Black women's skin a zone of shamefulness, which only Nadinola can alleviate. Shame emerges through critical appraisal of darker skin and self-censure at darkness on the skin as an inherent flaw within a white supremacist framework in which Black womanhood lacks privilege.

To continue this line of argumentation, lighter skin is both a mark of civilization and bodily beauty. Thus, very much like bleachers in Ghana today, bleaching creams were a way into modernity, civility and glamour for Black women who bleached in the 1950s and pre-Black Power 1960s. The content of the utterance then reproduces the cream as the only one that counts because it is the only one that can beautify the Black woman's skin through its bleaching effect. It is the only cream that can lead to civility and modernity because of its use as skin lightening technology, and the only one that can (re)produce civility, modernity and glamour on and through the skin. Through the selective distancing from darker skin and the exclusive association with the bleaching cream, Nadinola is produced as the only brand or product that is effective, and constituted as the brand leader in skin bleaching creams as beautifying aids, in which skin bleaching is not presented as a form of subordination to whiteness, or even as a part of that schema. Rather, it is as if Black women are speaking intimately to themselves about that peculiar intra-racial subordination – colourism. This intimate speaking – without censure

within a feminine aesthetic culture in which many creams have been tried and none have worked – produces a metonymic community of skin bleachers who are attracted to the ad because they all know what failure is about and are willing to try something new so skin lightening will succeed. Nadinola is the only cream that counts, the only one that makes a difference in skin lightening; this message has the effect of establishing Nadinola as brand leader and object of desire if one wants to be lighter skinned and maintain that look through its continuous application. This ad establishes Nadinola as *the only choice* in a market of cosmetics that do not work well and, thus, encourages the reader to buy the product. Its performative force lies in its encouragement to ‘buy and apply’ in order to attain the desired skin, to look like the ideal. Of course, we could also see the reference to the sphinx as the ‘subversive idea of Black Egypt as the archetype of civilization at its most beautiful and advanced [...] an idea popularized [...] by the Harlem Renaissance’ (The Modern Girl, 2008: 44). This interpretation places Nadinola as a product of racial pride and subversion of Euro-American racial hierarchies.

Page 24 of the March 1960 issue of Ebony features a special introductory half-price offer of Nadinola at \$1.00, accompanied with a picture of a lighter-skinned, straight-haired modern girl model. Here we also see shaming and shamefulness, as skin imperfections in terms of colour – a dark, dull complexion – and texture – big pores, blackheads, oiliness – are allied to life problems – lack of romance – and personality defects – lack of ‘charm’. Readers with these skin defects, which I would locate as part of the ‘controlling skin images’ which existed in society then and continue now, are already being interpellated as people with a problem which the cream can solve.

This sale of ‘THE BIGGEST BEAUTY VALUE you ever saw’ was ‘to introduce a new *family sized* jar of Nadinola De Luxe Bleaching Cream... that contains enough of this famous complexion-clearing cream to last three persons at least a month! (Or one person at least three months!)’. We are told to

Chase away those bad complexion blues! Don’t let a dull, dark complexion rob you of romance. Don’t let big pores, blackheads, oily skin cheat you of charm. Don’t let a poor complexion make you look older than you are. Try NADINOLA Bleaching Cream and see your skin become lovelier *fast!* CONTAINS WONDER-WORKING A-M! This remarkable complexion-clearing ingredient enables NADINOLA De Luxe to penetrate the skin cells to work *within* the skin to cleanse and clear, brighten and lighten, smooth and soften. Nothing, absolutely *nothing* will improve your skin so many ways

as NADINOLA! TEENAGERS TOO – NADINOLA De Luxe *with A-M* is especially effective for teenage complexion troubles – a real boon to sensitive boys and girls.

This ad relates Nadinola Deluxe to scientific advancement by claiming that it penetrates the skin cells. It links skin directly to life, to readers' skin, to personality, and to intimate desires. Nadinola sets up imaginings through the ad: 'a new you' which comes through the skin – as one lightens, one is reborn through the (re)birth of the skin. The new you is the subjectivity which is being inaugurated here. Skin problems, one of which is being dark, are set up here as the source of life problems, which the cream can solve. Applying the problem solver cream, lightening the skin, and improving your complexion make you younger, smoother, and with a more even skin tone, which can change your life. These claims about what the product does to the skin seem very similar to those made today. Cynically, 'wonder working a-m' is presented as a skin-bleaching panacea that penetrates the cells. Using ammoniated mercury to make it sound as if science had been applied to the cream was immoral because it was known at that time that this chemical was harmful to the skin. To call such a chemical 'wonder working a-m', occludes such harm and shows the lack of ethics when it is about the company's bottom-line.

This point of view is further compounded when we see that, in this ad, Nadinola has already set its sights on the teenage market for its 'complexion clearer', which cleanses, brightens, and lightens the skin of 'sensitive boys and girls'. The cross-generational use theme, which Nadinola went on to reproduce later with a cream called 'Generations', clearly extends from this and its need to capture a segment of the teenage market for lighteners. The use of 'sensitive' might not have been effective within this market, but if we think instead about parents buying products for their teenagers – and parents being more likely to read the ads – then we get a different perspective on the word. Parents with children with acne hyper-pigmentation, for example, could be easily appealed to by the word 'sensitive', because erasing the cause of their child's skin concern by applying the cream might be exactly what the child's self-esteem needs. Overall, the ad constitutes the act of trans-generational lightening through Nadinola as a necessary practice. Here, Nadinola begins to establish itself as a family product, rather than one for just women, and builds on the long-established habitus (Bourdieu, 1988) of taste for lighter skin and lighter skin distinction both within white supremacy and colourism.

Nadinola ads make us think about how to bend dominant taste in skin colour and note that one can believe that white supremacy exists, 'Black is beautiful' – but Black is also lacking. That is the link between the psyche and the social which ads navigate by only dealing with lack at the skin level, making Black's lack superficial, epidermal, and capable of amelioration through bleaching. Indeed, the white supremacist and Black colourism aesthetic present in the ads illustrates that disgust and/or contempt is not necessary. Rather, what is necessary is a disposition towards skin that is lighter, which is not a symptom of white supremacy or colourism, but is constitutive of these two anti-darker skin positions. As such, then, taste for lighter skin, as we see in the ads, resists any rational persuasion otherwise, if what is taken as necessary for feminine beauty is a clear, bright complexion.

In May 1960, a Nadinola ad on page 24 of *Ebony* reads, 'Life is a whirl for the girl with a clear, bright Nadinola-light complexion.' 'Brightening' as an effect of the cream is again stressed; bleaching is never used to describe what the cream does. Such obfuscation shows that skin bleaching was already negated in the movement for Black anti-racist aesthetics which started in the United States in at least the 1930s (Taylor, 2000). Tracing the etymology of 'bright', we see that in Old English (*bryht*) it meant 'splendid', 'clear-sounding', 'beautiful', 'divine', and 'glitter'. So 'to brighten' is to illuminate, maybe even to make divine-looking what is already there: in other words, to enhance the skin. In Old English, 'bleach' etymologically is related to *blæcan*, meaning 'to whiten', in Greek to *phlegen* (to burn), and in Latin to *flugrare* (to burn). To 'bleach', then, is to burn, to remove darkness or a stain, and to replace the natural with something else – and if we go to Old English, with something whiter. No wonder, then, that 'brighten' or 'lighten' is preferred to 'bleach', which would have also been already symbolically loaded within Black anti-racist and decolonial politics in the United States and the Black Atlantic.

The ad's words accompany a lighter-skinned, straighter-haired, professional-looking, chic young woman on the phone speaking to three Black men at once, which makes us think of the intimate in both its romantic and erotic modalities. As for other modern girl ads, here she is 'associated with dating, romantic love and premarital sex' (The Modern Girl, 2008: 35). Interestingly, the ad keeps racial boundaries in place and does not give a glance at the miscegenated coupling long known in US-American society – the white man and the Black woman (De Vere Brody, 1998). The ad claims that the cream can make one's life a romantic and erotic

whirl within the parameters of 'the race'. Reading this otherwise, we could say that the ad also maintains the white beauty ideal, because even when lightened, the Black woman would not be attractive to white men – which, as we know, is absolutely incorrect historically and contemporarily. Therefore, the ad interpellates racialized subjects within the racialized gender libidinal economy of racial segregation's norms at the level of the intimate couple, which is the basis of the nation (Povinelli, 2006). Transracial intimacy is not condoned. It is erased within the attachment to colourism, as well as the skin bleaching cream's relation of lighter skin with attractiveness to the opposite sex. The ad further says

Give romance a chance! Contains wonder-working A-M. Effective but oh so gentle! Nadinola acts so positively yet is so kind to your skin that we guarantee that you will be delighted with the results. There are two types – one for oily skin and one for dry skin. Choose one type that is right for you. Buy it confidently, use it happily.

'Buy it confidently, use it happily' hides the damage done to the skin by 'wonder-working' ammoniated mercury, which is not gentle or kind to the skin, and there might be no delight with the results. Rather, there might be despair as the skin peels and cracks, and hyperpigmentation, rather than 'brightness,' emerges. In the face of this, it is impossible to choose 'the type that is right for you,' whether in oily or dry skin formulations. However, the product still maintains the appearance of applying science: through wonder-working A-M and formulas for oily or dry skin – one type which will be 'right for you.' 'Typing' the skin leads consumers to assume that the product is scientifically tailored to their individual skin's needs, so there is no reason not to use the cream. In fact, to not use it is to maintain skin that has disvalues, that exist within a zone of negation that is so pervasive that the darker, problem skin maintains social liminality if it is not brightened. The very term 'bright', or its verb to brighten is problematic when applied to the skin because they are not only descriptive actions in terms of the skin, but they also constitute taste, as they reinscribe the deep habituation to dislike darker skin that is within colourism or white supremacy.

Romance can be guaranteed by lighter skin, which is sure to bring delight, even though 'wonder-working A-M' is ammoniated mercury. In 1934, Nadinola contained 10% ammoniated mercury, which was enough to cause serious skin damage, and remember: this was being marketed to both Black and white women. In response to customer complaints,

the company lowered the amount of ammoniated mercury in the late 1930s, and again in the 1940s (Roberts, 2014). Today Nadinola De Luxe Bleaching Cream and Jamaican Nadinola contain 3% ammoniated mercury.

In the October 1969 issue of *Ebony*, on page 71, there is an ad for a men's bleach, called 'skin toner'. 'Toner' changes the aesthetic from brightening or lightening to an affective orientation that leads to a retraining of Black, heterosexual, masculine taste through habituation. That is, if toning is about evening out the complexion, then Black men do not bleach, even though it is the same product that women use. We still see this distinction between bleaching and toning in Jamaica today in terms of class. In the assertion of 'toning', the cream erases the accusation of masculine vanity with an eye to compulsory heterosexuality or any claim that they are using a woman's product, which could render them effeminate or homosexual. In fact, the ad claims to fade blotches and leave men 'smoother to *her* touch.' To 'fade' is not the same as to bleach, which is simultaneously constructed as a feminine activity, and men's heterosexuality will not be brought into question through the fading of blotches. Black hetero-patriarchy is still kept intact even when using a product which has been feminized. Men can tone and 'win the game of love' through scoring the most points with 'toned/conditioned' skin, even though the product is still linked to Nadinola. The ad interpellates the Black, masculine, metrosexual subject through 'man', 'scoring points' – as in sports – and 'to score' – to gain sexual intimacy

Extra Points Skin Toner for Men by Nadinola – Extra Points fades dark blotches. Clears up skin. Leaves you smoother to her touch. How to win the game of love? Score the most points, man! Extra Points Skin toner/conditioner by the makers of Nadinola, National Toiletries Co, Chattanooga, Tennessee.

The packaging is white with a yellow and black stripe, which is echoed in the tube of cream. The ad for the toner is minimalist and does not call it 'bleach' at any point, even though skin lightening had long been a cross-gender practice. Again we see the heterosexual matrix within the game of love that the cream will help men to win through clear, conditioned, smooth – but not lighter or brighter – skin. The ad certainly appeals to Black metrosexuality, so Black men's grooming was well-advanced by this time, and went beyond just the shower, haircut, and facial hair grooming to issues of skin tone and texture. Of course,

we must remember that anywhere in the world where Black people lived was a potential marketplace for these products, as we see in the history of the marketing of skin bleaching products from the United States to South Africa (Thomas, 2008). This means that US-American aesthetic skin attitudes and ideologies were exported to these zones with the product. US imports habituated consumers to what constituted taste within the modern Black subject, irrespective of gender. So even if there was a belief that this cream carried with it a white supremacist mindset that was not one's own, perhaps there was not sufficient habituation to dislike bleaching and bleaching products instantiated across the Black Atlantic at this time. Further, believing in the right Black Nationalist ideology – not bleaching – is not sufficient to change tastes, especially if the tastemaker is advertising, which is available in magazines freely exported around the world.

On page 63 of the 29 October 1964 issue of *Jet*, the ad for Ultra Nadinola, which fades skin discolouration on the body, reads

Discover Ultra Nadinola for a brighter, lighter, more even-toned look in all those beauty areas. Not just face and hands – but elbows, knees and other “friction areas”. Ultra Nadinola gently fades these darker skin areas, wherever they occur, to a brighter, more even-toned look. Ultra Nadinola lightens and brightens your skin – fades dark areas and discolorations – moisturizes dry skin.

The cream has now evolved from just a face cream to one that can be used on ‘friction’ problem areas on the body itself, including the hands, where it removes ‘deep-seated “age spots” to more even-toned, youthful looking beauty’. For us today, Ultra Nadinola might well be marketed as a dark spot corrector and aimed at those with lighter or white skin. The cream encourages brand loyalty and still contains what it now calls the ‘medicated ingredient’, A-M. The word ‘medicated’ sounds like medicated soap, which removes bacteria as it deeply cleanses. Saying the cream cleanses implies that it removes impurities: whether read as the bacteria, dirt or the skin colour itself. Cleansing is a powerful claim to make for a bleaching product, as this act is something in which we all have to be involved.

No claims are made here for medical effects or necessity, but the similarity to medicated is interesting, as it perhaps tries to shift affective orientation to A-M by presenting the cream as something gentle, fading discolourations as it moisturizes, brightening and thereby toning

the skin. Nadinola now is medicated, so it must be better for our skin, especially if we think of the meaning of 'to medicate', which is to administer a drug or treatment. So the cream shifts from harmful cosmetic to medicine, and as such, we could infer that its effects have been tested and approved as non-harmful.

These ads in both *Ebony* and *Jet* seem to be aimed at maintaining brand loyalty through repeated claims of the cream's effectiveness, while encouraging the growth of new markets and consumers through repeated guidance or exposure to new knowledge claims – through habituation to be precise. Through the ads, such habituation leads to positive feelings about the product through language, the model and the cream on display. The ads predispose consumers to identify with the brand as a miracle worker, and to respond to it as such in the real world. In other words, they inculcate taste for Nadinola and produce skin-lightening subjectivities.

In *Ebony's* October 1965 issue, on page 19, surrounded by an article on racial amalgamation in Brazil, Ultra Nadinola appears as a 'Bright Idea' and continues the cream's marketing of brightening, lightening, toning and cleansing the skin on the face and body. Again, as in other ads, 'brightening' as a euphemism and product action, erases the inherent ill effects on the skin of hydroquinone and mercury. Its 'ultra' label is imparted by hydroquinone; A-M was still in the Deluxe and Regular Nadinola formulations. A prominently displayed picture of a woman's face progressively becomes three shades lighter in the ad, which promises the product will make the skin cleaner and brighter, and calls its users 'bright' for using a product that uncovers their 'natural' beauty

And bright you for discovering it, the new cosmetic skin lightener Ultra Nadinola – fades skin discolorations, lightens, brightens, makes skin cleaner, clearer. When you use Ultra Nadinola, please don't be shocked if other skin brighteners seem a trifle dull by comparison. Ultra Nadinola is that different, that effective! Its special ingredient, hydroquinone, actually searches out and fades discolorations, tones up skin to a lighter, lovelier, more golden glow. Its special moisturizer helps skin feel as dewy-soft and radiant as it looks. Little wonder so many women find Ultra Nadinola a bright idea in complexion care. Ultra Nadinola uncovers the natural beauty of face, neck, hands, elbows, knees in beautiful fashion. Nadinola is available with special ingredient A-M in Deluxe and Regular formulations.

This ad mentions hydroquinone for the first time, even though Deluxe and Regular Nadinola still have the special ingredient, A-M. Hydroquinone is presented as a wonder ingredient produced by scientific innovation

that searches out and tones skin discolorations so that your skin has a 'golden glow', the preferred skin colour here – a natural shade of brown that all Black women can achieve by using a very dangerous chemical all over their bodies where dark skin resides. The cream's use then brings the golden-skinned woman that all Black women are onto the surface of the body, a 'fact' that encourages women who seek this look – and the subjectivities emerging from being golden-skinned – to buy the cream.

Nadinola HQ Free Skin Tone Cream has now entered the market of hydroquinone (HQ)-free creams, and the company has also used Nadinola Generations to capture new markets. Hydroquinone-free cream enables those who are sensitive to that compound or afraid of using it because of the harm it has been shown to cause for over a century, to bleach. The details of the product on Amazon are

- ▶ Nadinola HQ Free Skin Tone Cream for Sensitive Skin, made with ingredients found naturally in My. cranberry & pear tree leaves
- ▶ Visibly evens and renews the appearance of your skin and brightens your complexion. Our enhanced formula reverses the appearance of damage to your skin so skin tone is visibly more even. (<http://www.amazon.com/Nadinola-Hne-Free-Cream-Sensitive/dp/BooINY84DU> hydroquino, accessed 18 May 2015)

The product is made from the leaves of plants, which already makes it seem more natural, but it is also the product of scientific innovation, which still has the effect of visibly evening and renewing the appearance of skin and brightening the complexion. All skin bleachers would still expect these effects from Nadinola as a contemporary, global brand. It promises to reverse the appearance of damage to skin tone, making it visibly more even.

Visibility is significant for the bleacher, as the skin transformation occurs on the surface of the body on which aesthetic labour has been performed to bring into being the desired latent image (Tate, 1999). That latent image has affect attached to it – either despair at being darker-skinned or pride when the light skin appears. The aesthetic labour of bleaching is also affective labour on and for the self. As bleachers become lighter through this technology of the self, they effect affective changes in Black social and political relations within the Black Nationalist skin fixity/'post-race', neoliberal skin hybridity binary.

Nadinola also has brand loyalty – or markets itself as having that – through Generations skin bleaching cream, which is sold for outer beauty, implying that inner beauty also needs to be reflected on the

outside, as Black women have been doing for generations and continue to do today. Naming the cream 'Generations' already does the performative work of producing skin bleaching as a transgenerational practice in which this cream has a central location. The cream's centrality for the consumer also gives it a feeling of being handed down as a Black beauty secret within families and communities. Being handed down from grandmother to mother to daughter also erases the risk involved in skin bleaching. However, moving from mercury and hydroquinone to the new miracle product – glutathione – is still risky for the skin.

Science vs. risk: 21st century glutathione and transitioning from mercury and hydroquinone

Mercury inhibits the production of melanin, producing lighter skin; it is found in inorganic and organic forms in cosmetics. Inorganic mercury is used in skin lightening soaps and creams. Organic mercury compounds (thiomersal [ethyl mercury] and phenyl mercuric salts) are used as preservatives in eye makeup cleansing products and in mascara. On eBay, we are told that Nadinola De Luxe Bleaching Cream contains 3% ammoniated mercury. Walmart's online customers are advised to stop using Nadinola Skin Discoloration Fade Cream (also available on Amazon and sites which are dedicated to skin bleaching creams) 'if a gradual blue black darkening of the skin occurs'. It lists its active ingredients as HQ 3% (skin lightener) and octisalate 3% (sunscreen). Mercury and hydroquinone have been proven to be harmful to skin and health generally, but they are still in use across the Black Atlantic.

In the 21st century, glutathione has emerged as a skin whitener/lightener without skin or body risk, and its popularity has swept the world from the Pacific to the Atlantic zones. Just what is glutathione? If we look at the many infomercials through which it is marketed online or the edu-mercials that warn against its use, we see that glutathione is a compound generated by the liver. Its natural presence in the body persuades us against its risk because we are urged to see it as a natural compound which participates in body and cellular functions such as antioxidant defence, metabolism and regulation. It is composed of the amino acids glutamine, glycine and cysteine and is not required as a food supplement because it is abundant in fresh fruit and vegetables. 'It may have the effect, although also disputed by many, of skin whitening

by inactivating the enzyme tyrosinase, which is necessary in melanin production and converts the pigment to the lighter phaeomelanin'. If it is taken orally, its bioavailability is reduced because digestive juices hydrolyse it, and the liver further degrades it (www.doh.gov.ph/sites/default/files/Advisories_cosmetic_DOH-FDA%20Advisory%20No%202011-004.pdf, accessed 17 May 2015).

Such edu- and infomercials construct this product as a technological advance because of their use of quasi-scientific language, like 'bioavailability' and 'hydrolysed'. The global availability of glutathione in pill form is clear if we do a cursory check for this substance online. It is widely sold as an antioxidant and skin lightener, even though its low bioavailability in oral form must be clear to its producers and marketers. Not to be outdone by the body's degradation, there is also a healthy market in intravenous glutathione, again marketed as an antioxidant and skin lightener by clinics and entrepreneurs around the world. Intravenous administration does deliver very high doses directly into the circulatory system, bypassing the stomach. However, this 'may overload the renal circulation' (ibid.).

The dangers of intravenous glutathione have led to an FDA warning to the US public in 2011 on 'Safety on the off-label use of glutathione solution for injection (IV)'. This advisory states that the FDA has not approved the use of glutathione IV as a skin whitener and asks members of the public to refrain from its use for this purpose in light of potential harm resulting from its use

The alarming increase in the unapproved use of glutathione administered intravenously as skin whitening agent at very high doses is unsafe and may result in serious consequences for the health of users. There is inadequate safety information on the use of high doses of glutathione administered at 600 mg to 1.2 grams once weekly and even twice weekly. The only approved indication of the use of the intravenous format of glutathione is as an adjunctive treatment to reduce neurotoxicity associated with cisplatin chemotherapy.

Glutathione, which is sold globally, has not been stringently tested and proved safe for human consumption as a skin lightener in its intravenous form, even though it has GRAS (generally recognized as safe) status for use in food as 'L-glutathione' in the United States. The FDA has said, for instance, that the Luxe Whitening Enhanced Glutathione brand carries unacceptable claims as a food supplement, as it does not remove blemishes, pimples and acne problems; clean internal organs, especially the liver; detoxify the body and destroy free radicals that can cause cancer or protect

cells and is not needed by the body. Yet these are consistent and constant claims being made about glutathione by companies online, on eBay and Amazon, and by skin lightening clinics with an online presence. These companies seem to be operating on the premise that lighter beauty comes from within, rather than from the external application of cream, gel or makeup. Glutathione seems to be absolutely below the radar for NICE in the UK, and the one clinical trial on it as an oral whitening agent referenced by NICE in the UK was done in the Philippines in 2014 by the Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL) (<https://www.evidence.nhs.uk/Search?q=glutathione+for+skin+whitening>, accessed 18 May 2015).

In this clinical trial, the overall dosage of 1,000 mg a day had statistically significant results for skin lightening in a number of subjects. However, longer-term safety remains an issue, and more extensive clinical trials were suggested as a result. Irrespective of the need for further clinical tests, women and men continue to use a substance to lighten their skins that is only approved in cancer treatments, without any knowledge of its long-term consequences.

Further, skin lightening entrepreneurs are both creating a market and supplying the product and service to fill the demand. Glutathione's popularity stems from its being marketed as more effective than other products without causing the same skin damage and irritation as other products and procedures, such as ammoniated mercury, hydroquinone, kojic acid and microdermabrasion. It is also billed as a permanent way to lighten the skin, as long as the maintenance regime is followed. In Chapter 3, we looked at one aspect of that – the use of suppositories, which we can assume bypass the stomach, enabling high doses of glutathione to enter the bloodstream.

Far from being harmless, as its sellers and advertisers claim, the FDA Advisory No 2011-004 outlines several serious and potentially fatal side effects that have been reported from using glutathione intravenously for skin whitening. The information on one of the side effects – skin rashes – the potentially fatal and extremely painful Stevens-Johnson syndrome, and toxic epidermal necrolysis make for sober reading. Stevens-Johnson syndrome is a rare condition caused by overreaction of the immune system. The skin and surfaces of the eyes, mouth, throat and vagina blister and peel (<http://www.gosh.nhs.uk/medical-information/search-medical-conditions/stevens-johnson-syndrome>, accessed 18 May 2015). There is a similar blistering of mucous membranes in toxic epidermal necrolysis, where the top layer of the skin (the epidermis) peels off from

large areas of the body. Stevens-Johnson syndrome and toxic epidermal necrolysis usually begin with fever, headache, cough, and body aches. A flat red rash breaks out on the face and upper body, spreading to the rest of the body in an irregular pattern, often with blisters. The skin of the blisters is very loose and easy to rub off. In Stevens-Johnson syndrome, less than 10% of the body surface is affected, but in toxic epidermal necrolysis, 30% or more of the skin peels off, and the hair and nails can also fall out. The active stage of rash and skin loss can last from 1 to 14 days ([http:// www.merck manuals. com/ home/skin-disorders/hypersensitivity-and-inflammatory-skin-disorders/stevens-johnson-syndrome-sjs-and-toxic-epidermal-necrolysis](http://www.merck-manuals.com/home/skin-disorders/hypersensitivity-and-inflammatory-skin-disorders/stevens-johnson-syndrome-sjs-and-toxic-epidermal-necrolysis), accessed 18 May 2015).

Glutathione is just as harmful for the skin as the peeling resulting from mercury, hydroquinone, and bleaching creams made from mixing various creams and gels used in the diaspora. In these two life-threatening conditions, the epidermis separates from the dermis because of cell death. These potentially fatal side effects have led to glutathione intravenous kits purchased by mail order, which include needles and sterile solution being confiscated in the United States. The public was warned about the use of glutathione injectables in the Philippines (ABS CBN News, 1 June 2011) because of its serious health risk to users, and it has also been named illegal (www.abscbnnews.com/lifestyle/06/01/11/glutathione-injectables-not-legal-fda accessed, 17 May 2015). Even given this international movement against the skin lightener, the UK has remained silent, as has the EU.

Glutathione use can also affect the thyroid system, a side effect that is not mentioned in product labelling. This can have a profound impact on health, as the thyroid gland regulates the metabolic rate and produces hormones which affect heart and digestive function, muscle control, brain development and bone maintenance. Its functioning is dependent on a good supply of iodine from the diet, not from taking glutathione as a supplement. Glutathione use has also been suspected in kidney dysfunction, which can result in kidney failure or death. Severe abdominal pain has also been reported in patients receiving twice-weekly intravenous administrations. Incorrect intravenous administration techniques can lead to micro-organisms entering the body, resulting in serious infections, including fatal sepsis. Injecting air can also lead to potentially fatal embolus, while unsafe use of needles can result in HIV and hepatitis B transmission. Serious infections can also result from counterfeit glutathione, which has an increasing online market presence.

Refining skin shade transformation through the appliance of derma science is not going so well with glutathione in the United States, even though as we have seen with Mzhoza in South Africa, it is part of her weekly beauty regime, done in a clinic under medical supervision, so that she does not regain her natural pigmentation. Even in the face of all of these potentially fatal side effects, we still see glutathione being callously marketed online and in clinics around the world, including the UK, without regard for consumer risk. It seems to be the 21st century's ultimate skin-lightening solution, especially for those who can afford to have it under medical supervision. It is also a product which is marketed across ethnicities for permanent skin whitening/ lightening. This product has not yet been banned in the UK and is not a skin lightening substance whose sales have to be intervened in by Trading Standards Services. It does not either appear with the list of skin lightening problem products that we see on NHS pages. It is just part of the multi-billion dollar skin lightening business globally which, untested for hazards to humans, will most likely cause death or suffering to some consumers at a later stage. Therefore, if we can now lighten the skin in a way that is irreversible, as long as we keep up the treatment regime, what does that mean for Blackness in the diaspora and the African continent, and for the essential Black subject?

Colourism's reign: the death of the essential Black subject and the skin meanings of 21st-century browning

In the first week of August 2015, the story went viral on the Internet about a Russian laboratory that had invented a method of removing the upper layers of Black people's skin to quickly whiten them, and claimed that 254 people in Russia had already had this treatment (<http://trendingstylist.com/remove-the-black-skin/> accessed 24 August 2015). Remembering what was said above about the side effects of glutathione, one wonders if this is not Stevens-Johnson Syndrome or toxic epidermal necrolysis induced by the treatment. One of the pictures, which accompanied graphic images of a man passively submitting to his skin being peeled from his body, was of a white man clad in sports gear, biting his knuckles as if to say, 'OMG! That has to hurt!' Whether hoax or true, the text accompanying some of the reports says the Russian Government will consider paying for this treatment to enable darker-skinned immigrants

to fit in with their white Russian neighbours. If one peels off the skin, though, does one become white? Hardly – that is not how ‘race’ works, but this shows again that darker Black skin is problematized, even outside of the Black Atlantic. The Internet, with its ‘before’ and ‘after’ pictures, testimonials from consumers, and certifications from medical professionals, naturopaths and companies keeps the market in skin lightening/whitening turning over massive profits. Clearly ‘the play of images and signifiers, especially using computer technology, has become an important accompaniment of postmodern theoretical influences’ (Doy, 1999: 23). I would like to go beyond this and situate this play of images in our contemporary ‘post-race’, neoliberal racialization. Here we need to think about the making of global markets through computer technology, where virtual reality takes the place of reality as we enter the zone of Jean Baudrillard’s (1981) ‘simulacra’. As simulacra, changing Black skins decentre the authentic Black subject established by Black Nationalist and white supremacist discourses. This signals the end of fixed identities, Fanon’s (1986) historico-racial schema, racial epidermal schema, and ‘the essential Black subject’ located within the colonial psyche and Black Nationalist discourses.

The late cultural critic, Stuart Hall (1996), spoke about this demise of essence and the emergence of multiplicity when he looked at the politics of representation. For him, how things are represented and the representational ‘machineries’ and regimes play a constitutive role –not merely an after-the-fact role – in constructing Blackness and the Black subject. Postmodernism, as part of Eurocentric cultural theory, has come face to face with Black cultural politics, which Doy (1999) points us to earlier, so we are now in a space and time of ‘the death of the essential Black subject’ and the emergence of a Black “‘post-race’” aesthetics’

What is at issue here is the recognition of the extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences and cultural identities which compose the category “black”: that is, the recognition that “black” is essentially a politically and culturally *constructed* category which cannot be grounded in a set of fixed trans-cultural or transcendental racial categories which therefore has no guarantee in nature. (Hall, 1996: 443)

This means a fading of ‘Black’ serving as a guarantee for cultural practice or aesthetic value because

once you enter the politics of the end of the essential black subject, you are plunged headlong into the maelstrom of a continuously contingent

unguaranteed political argument and debate [...] You can no longer conduct black politics through a simple set of reversals, putting in the place of the bad old essential white subject, the new essentially good black subject. (Ibid.: 444)

There cannot be reversals, but there can be re-versionings of Black skin and its political allegiances through bleaching/lightening/toning, as we saw in Jamaica. The politics of skin colour in the 21st century Black Atlantic mean that the essentially good Black subject is no longer juxtaposed with whiteness as binary other, but rather with Blackness itself. Black Nationalist politics across the diaspora has not only meant that darker skin colour is valorised, but also that tampering with that in any way to become 'brown' means much more than just individualized, apolitical enhancement. As we have seen, for Black Nationalists, bleaching means that Black people have fallen prey to continuing white supremacy. In line with the critique of this position maintained throughout, what if we instead see this as Black people falling prey to continuing Black colourism and also producing skins with aesthetic, cultural, social and economic value in the context in which they find themselves? What if we instead think about why there is a continuing need for individuals to brand themselves as brown, rather than darker skinned within the diaspora on the part of some? What if instead we wonder why we have to say 'some individuals' here, because not everyone engages in skin bleaching, irrespective of skin colour, which would be the case if white supremacy was as hegemonic as claimed.

What we see if we refocus our political and aesthetic reasoning on Blackness itself is that there are multiple Black skins. There are also multiple Black subjects produced through skin transformations that make colour boundaries indeterminate and hybrid (Tate, 2005; Bhabha, 1994) as they produce the 'in-between' of the bleached Black body. This in-between is no longer mediated by those two master signifiers – Black and white – but rather remains within the Black signifier as the darker-skinned/ lighter-skinned binary within which bleached brownings are an-other term.

If the lighter skinned ideal is constructed for us within a neoliberal racial aestheticization ideology of freedom to choose what our skins look like, we need never feel guilt or shame as we try to emulate that ideal through bleaching. We can exculpate ourselves through selective association with skin brightening/lightening/toning and, thus, establish selective distancing from bleaching.

This need not be parsed as a turning away from Blackness but rather can become a widening of its skin possibilities, as is the case for other racial groups. Skin bleachers openly embrace the unnatural in order to reorient skins away from the rigid authenticity rules of Blackness and towards challenging the aesthetic rules of the racial contract in which whiteness is the only ideal. Bleachers also show themselves as active in skin colour enhancement, so they go beyond the necessity to be fake and the rule against skin colour transformation: that 'beauty comes from within.'

Conclusion

As we saw previously, in Jamaica there are original brownings and bleached ones. 'Original' points to skin colour privilege, whereas to be bleached imparts inauthenticity and being a poor copy of something more valuable. This value is measured aesthetically, politically, economically or culturally within a habitus of brown shades as ideal. Brownness, whether interpreted as Nadinola's 'golden' or browning multi-shaded skins, means that there can never be an original or copies of that original. This reminds us of Walter Benjamin's (1999) idea of translation, in which there is never the possibility of an exact copy but rather an endless possibility of difference. Highlighting the difference within brownness does not deny the fact of Blackness but refuses homology by negating the binary fake/original. This should be taken on board, especially if we recall that the only 'fake' white people are Black people trying to pass as white, or, as is the case with Rachel Dolezal, white people trying to pass as Black. We should also recall that this passing always relates to the political and racialized gender libidinal economies of racism and colourism in which individuals find themselves. Without change in these economies and their related ideologies and affective loads, the fake browning will comprise the third term within the darker/lighter skin dichotomy, so the new tripartite skin system will read darker/bleached/lighter. This change will continue to speak the political vulnerability of Black skin, especially if we look at the ethical imperative not to bleach which still persists within Black skin politics. The conclusion now turns to this focus, as we think further about decolonizing skin.

Conclusion: Decolonizing Skin: Do Black People Have an Ethical Obligation Not to Bleach?

Abstract: The conclusion decolonizes the racialized gender political, and libidinal economies of skin by asking, Can Black people construct skin colour tastes for Black bodies, rather than having such tastes always rooted in white supremacy? What would happen if those who are a negative aesthetic space occupy that space? What can be done to resist fetishistic objectification but also rank darker and lighter skin colour equally? Can affective orientation be shaped to favour all skin colours being of equal aesthetic value, and to transform skin colour taste by habitually thinking and acting on this premise? If skin colour taste resists rational persuasion and is also attached to negative and positive affect, how can the negative orientation towards Black darker skin be changed?

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Whenever the bleacher emerges in the Black Atlantic, there is a claim to citizenship, market participation, individuality and self-fashioning wedded to glocal consumer culture. Bleachers form part of the market of global capitalism and are a focus for Black Nationalist and white supremacist politics, as well as being models for those seeking to attain bleached glamour, cosmopolitanism and class mobility. However, the discussion has also looked at racialized gender, political, and libidinal economies in which Black skin is placed as vulnerable to harm because of bleaching. Black skin's political vulnerability relates to transnational community in terms of Black Nationalism, as well as to individual psyches that have been harmed because of white supremacy, which leads to harm for both individual and Black social skin. The question of whether Black people have an ethical obligation not to bleach is relevant within Black Nationalism. This is so as there is a 'race' duty to remain 'natural', which can be seen as an ethical issue.

This question of ethics also shows that the practice of skin bleaching has affective 'tone: [in] its global or organizing affect, its general disposition or orientation towards its audience and the world' (Ngai, 2005: 28). Skin bleaching bonds with dysphoric affect from within states and Black/white communities. However, it can also be the zone of positive affect for a glocal skin bleaching/lightening/toning community, as we saw when we looked at skin and the possibility for the formation of lightening communities forged through the erotics of pain. The question already sets up bleaching Black skin as already an ethical issue, as opposed to white skin bleaching, which is simply considered beautification, enhancement and stylization. This is the case even when we know that skin bleaching for white markets is absolutely ubiquitous. It extends from health food stores, to supermarket shelves, to drug store counters, to high-end international cosmetic brands, which all seek to lighten, brighten, fade dark spots, impart a youthful glow and even tone. White women do not have the ethical obligation not to bleach, as they just have to be wary about the whore/Madonna dichotomy that dictates age-specific, middle- and upper-class rules about make-up, dress, accessories, hair, behaviour and glamour for feminine, respectable women.

Black women, on the other hand, are despised, and even feared if they behave counter to Black Nationalism, which valorises darker skin, and which has stated for centuries that to lighten skin through make-up or bleaching is to fall prey to white supremacy, and therefore to be a traitor to the 'race'. The bleaching process is the same as for white women, as we have seen with Nadinola, above, but the racial project is seen differently

in terms of the political implications of bleaching/lightening/toning. White women bleaching their skin, as in colonial times, embeds whiteness as the ideal skin, something to be sought after by all white women. Bringing whiteness into visibility on the surface of the skin through chemical intervention makes whiteness an object of aesthetic labour as much as lightness is for Black women. The labour of producing skin fakeness might not, then, be the issue. What might be more significant is the affective and political modalities in which this fake skin is located as not being part of the Black body, as well as being kept apart from Black politics and the Black social skin. The very 'not' dictates bleached skin's marginality. However, as we have seen throughout, the Black social skin is itself a zone of multiplicity with more than one way to be Black across the Black Atlantic, no matter how much this matters politically. Black women and men live within the affective relationalities of love and hate both individually and communally, as the message is to love the skin you are in, and if this is not obeyed, then hate of the 'race' traitor ensues.

For Peter Hadreas (2007), personal love is about a pairing, an affective conjunction which resists difference through empathizing with the beloved's 'striving'. The Black Nationalist promise of love is contained, for example, in the Rastafarian greeting, 'One love'. One love exists within the diaspora as recognition of each other in aesthetic skin colour struggle as a point of political engagement through which empathy arises. In that recognition, as well as a communal link, each other's uniqueness is also perceived alongside the 'affective and volitional *and*' of transnational community (ibid.: 10). Black Nationalist ideology is about seeing people as bearers of 'immeasurable value' because we are 'in contact with them' through a conjoining of empathies which occurs in the surrender of ourselves as intentional subjects to this wider community (ibid.: 10-13). Such surrender to Black politics and, in that, to each other, as a Black, transnational community, transforms raced relationalities, as we come to be responsible for each other's conduct across the diaspora. We police the boundaries of Blackness and determine who counts as valuable within those boundaries. This is why bleaching is an ethical issue which necessitates surveillance, othering and governmentality, as we come to know the ideology of Black skin naturalness as a practice of skin ethics.

Politically othering those who do not comply with the ethics of Black skin naturalness begins the process of hate and being kept apart from the Black social skin if bleaching is suspected because of its marks on the skin. Hate is radical censure: a stripping away of the right to be part of the

'race', a disidentification with practice, body and politics, and a social and political othering which non-bleachers project onto the bleached Black body, which is now the bearer of Fanon's (1986) 'tom-toms, cannibalism and slave ships'. Within Black Nationalism, bleached skin becomes this bearer because of white supremacy and its white governmentality, which is revealed through bleaching itself. However, this is to privilege whiteness: its racial imaginary, ways of being, modes of seeing and practices of recognition. Privileging whiteness must produce unease because it buys into aesthetic epistemologies of ignorance which reproduce colonial aphasia – forgetting the fact of white European instantiation of colour-status hierarchies in the pigmentocracies established during the long reign of empire. Only by raising the dilemma of Black bleaching as racially unacceptable does skin become an ethical, anti-racist issue. The move to ethical anti-racism through Black skin, though, obscures the politics of white skin and reproduces bleaching as Black pathology.

Thus, the movement to hate is interesting, because it is based on two premises: one, that bleachers have pathological relationships to their own skin and hate themselves, and two, they can only be returned to the love of the community if they cease this practice. There is not a bleaching rule in place for white women; they are merely enhancing what they already have, whereas Black women who bleach are caught in fetishistic objectification easily attested to if we just look online at sites which 'out' famous bleachers or which show bleaching's harm to the skin.

Can Black people not construct skin colour tastes for Black bodies across the Black Atlantic, rather than such tastes being always already seen as rooted in white supremacy? Black women occupy a negative aesthetic space where there is a problem of unknowability related to the most known body – that is, the Black woman in all her shades of skin (Tate, 2015b). The Black woman is present as an unremarked absence, but what would happen if those who are a negative aesthetic space instead occupy that space? We see some of the negative affect directed at bleachers can be read as disgust, contempt, pity, or hate. At the base of all these negative affects are attempts to shame bleachers into a space of negation linked to subjectivities filled with 'race' guilt, as they are made shameful and to feel ashamed. This is significant, as shame sticks to the skin (Ahmed, 2004) itself, as it places bleachers as other within the authentic space of skin produced by the fetishistic objectification of Black Nationalist politics – where one Black shade is better than all others.

This presents another problem. What can be done to resist fetishistic objectification but also rank darker and lighter skin colour equally? This is an important political, aesthetic and skin health question which leads us to consider whether or not the market in skin bleaching products really speaks a white supremacist aesthetic, or just a lighter-skinned one that is no longer rooted in white supremacy. The argument throughout the book has been that it is colourism whose hold has to be broken rather than white supremacy per se. This is not to deny the historical connection between colourism and white supremacy in the colonial skin colour politics of Empire and (post)colonial domination. However, what looking at colourism does is place the critical lens on Blackness as the seat of skin colour discrimination and unseat whiteness as the space from which everything begins. This already instantiates a necessary decolonization of white supremacy: thus, negative self-esteem and the 'harmed Black psyche' approach to skin bleaching makes us recall that beauty is not just about a global, all-encompassing whiteness. Instead, there are local and national variations which hold more sway than the global white ideal. Indeed, not all the women want to be white (Tate, 2005; 2009; 2010; 2015a), though *some* might want to be light, so they may participate in the political and libidinal economies of those with lighter skin. It is lightness, though, which draws on local and transnational Black beauty models (Hope, 2009; 2010; 2011; Tate, 2009; 2015a) based on readings of the global market in skin in which bleachers want to engage. Globally, it might not be possible to break away from white supremacy, given transnational corporations' control over the cosmetics market and marketable skin representations, the burgeoning transracial market in lightening, and which bodies are transnationally judged as having economic, political, cultural, social and aesthetic value. Notwithstanding this, if we look across the Black Atlantic, we can see that lightness is prized, but darker skin also has a prized place in Black beauty, as has always been the case.

We are still left with a vitally important question in terms of bleaching as harmful skin practice. Skin value is related to affect and taste. Is it then possible to shape affective orientation in favour of all skin colours being of equal aesthetic value and transform skin colour taste through habitually thinking and acting on this premise? If skin colour taste resists rational persuasion, and is also attached to negative and positive affect, how can negative orientation towards Black darker skin be changed? Instead of having darker skin as an anti-type, it should be possible to

see Black skin of all shades as metonymic: that is, as skin that coincides with multiple Black bodies orienting us to different shades as objects of desire, rather than the negative affective space of disgust/contempt/hate/fear occupied by darker skin.

This would move us to a position of 'loving skins', which is the basis of many anti-bleaching campaigns across the Black Atlantic. Loving skins would enable an end to transnational manufacturers' violence against Black skin in the cynical interest of capital accumulation. Further, what these questions and the discussion illustrate is that Black diaspora aesthetics is not reducible to African American aesthetics, and there is no single Black skin. Rather, the Black Atlantic has been shown throughout to be a network within which questions of Blackness and of Black life, love, identifications and aesthetics are constantly being re-versioned, as the psychic life of racism and its powers of subjectivation are unravelled (Butler, 1997b). The question of whether or not to skin bleach is one of those which will keep being circulated, and it remains a question because not all Black people bleach, some white people bleach, and globally, bleaching is a trans-racial/class/gender/sexuality/age phenomenon.

How is it that some Black people do not bleach – and in fact speak against it – when Black women and men have been made targets of skin surveillance and aesthetic anti-objects in relation to the light-skin imperative that still persists in the Black Atlantic? The contestation around this must be about changing ways of seeing, in which to *look* is also to affirm darker skin aesthetics. A relationship must develop between the psyche and 'Blackly being in the world' (Yancy, 2008) to enable speaking out against bleaching as harmful to skin. Notice that skin harm is what would be critiqued, not the practice itself, with its judgements about the bleacher's mental health status or lack of 'racial pride'. There has to be a reversal of that epistemology of ignorance which places lighter skin first in the racialized skin hierarchy, and which is maintained through sayings such as, 'If you are white, you're alright. If you are brown, stick around. If you are Black, get back'. As part of this action against, we must overcome the invisibility nodes in which natural Black skin plurality exists, and claim personhood, the right to exist, and indeed, the 'alrightness' of all Black skin shades within the racialized skin hierarchy.

This all sounds really very old, and that is because it is. It is the same reasoning on which Black Nationalists, Rastafarians, adherents of Black Power's anti-racist aesthetics and Brazilian Afro-aesthetics are all in agreement. It is a sentiment that spans the 20th and 21st centuries. We

are still at the point at which we have to say that this ideology remains as politically relevant today as ever, if not more so, given the advance of capital and its inculcation of light and white bodies as valuable across the globe. Inculcation also carries an affective load, as we saw from the Nadinola ads, in which brightness, lightness and toned skin became objects of skin desire and skin imaginings of potential consumers. This desire and the imaginings are still with us today in the form of glutathione: the wonder product – and panacea, for some – of permanent skin lightening. We should not forget that such permanent skin lightening will not remove the givens of the ‘race’ divide but only destabilize the colour line. Such destabilization, however, critiques societal colourism, racism and class structures still based on the coloniality of skin power within the racialized gender political, and libidinal economies of our ‘post-race’ world.

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